

Letterfrack NS Anti-bullying Policy.

The Letterfrack School Community believes that every pupil has a right to an education free from fear and intimidation.

The school regards bullying as a serious infringement of individual rights and a serious threat to the self-esteem and self confidence of targeted pupil(s). Therefore it does not tolerate bullying of any kind.

The immediate priority, should a bullying incident occur, is ending the bullying and resolving the issue, and restoring the relationships involved in so far as is practicable using a 'Reform, not Blame' approach.

All pupils are expected to contribute to the creation and maintenance of a safe environment in the school.

1. In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the code of behaviour guidelines issued by the NEWB, the Board of Management of Letterfrack NS has adopted the following anti-bullying policy within the framework of the school's overall code of behaviour. This policy fully complies with the requirements of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* which were published in September 2013.
2. The Board of Management recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of pupils and is therefore fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour:
 - A positive school culture and climate which-
 - is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity;
 - encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment; and
 - promotes respectful relationships across the school community;
 - Effective leadership;
 - A school-wide approach;
 - A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact;
 - Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that-
 - build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and
 - explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.
 - Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils;
 - Supports for staff;
 - Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies); and
 - On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.
3. In accordance with the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* bullying is defined as follows:

Bullying is unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical conducted, by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time.

The following types of bullying behaviour are included in the definition of bullying:

- deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying,
- cyber-bullying and
- identity-based bullying such as homophobic bullying, racist bullying, bullying based on a person's membership of the Traveller community and bullying of those with disabilities or special educational needs.

Isolated or once-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour, including a once-off offensive or hurtful text message or other private messaging, do not fall within the definition of bullying and should be dealt with, as appropriate, in accordance with the school's code of behaviour.

However, in the context of this policy, placing a once-off offensive or hurtful public message, image or statement on a social network site or other public forum where that message, image or statement can be viewed and/or repeated by other people will be regarded as bullying behaviour.

Negative behaviour that does not meet this definition of bullying will be dealt with in accordance with the school's code of behaviour.

Additional information on different types of bullying is set out in Section 2 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

4. The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying is (are) as follows: (see Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):

All class teachers in cohesion with the principal.

5. The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying) that will be used by the school are as follows (see Section 6.5 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):

Curriculum programmes:

- Walk Tall
- Stay Safe
- RSE

Extra Curricular:

- SALT Programme
- Zippy's Friends Programme

Pupils and Parents are urged to report all incidents of bullying and/or cyber bullying.

Biannually the children from 3rd to 6th classes will take part in a 'Positive School Environment' survey.

Parents Association to organise guest speakers on Cyber Bullying.

Children are not allowed to use Laptops without supervision.

6. The school's procedures for investigation, follow-up and recording of bullying behaviour and the established intervention strategies used by the school for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour are as follows (see Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*) :

Procedures for noting and reporting incidents:

- If parents have concerns about their child being bullied they should inform the class teacher.
- Once a report has been made the teacher should investigate and act appropriately. If the teacher suspects that bullying occurred, the Principal/Deputy Principal should be informed.
- The class teacher or principal investigates all incidences of reported or suspected bullying behaviour whether these take place within the school or outside it, with a view to establishing the facts and bringing any such behaviour to an end.
- The school through the class teacher or principal reserves the right to ask any pupil to write an account of what happened, as part of an investigation. This will be a standard procedure and does not necessarily imply that a pupil is guilty of misbehaviour.
- Pupils who are alleged to have been involved in bullying behaviour are interviewed in line with interview guidelines (see PDST support materials page 52) by the class teacher or principal to establish the nature and extent of the behaviour and any reasons for it.
- Parents of those involved should be notified and given an opportunity to discuss the matter with the teacher.
- It should be made clear that children reporting incidents of bullying are acting responsibly.
- The school's procedure for noting and reporting bullying behaviour must adhere to the following:
 - a) While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying, must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. The relevant teacher will use his or her professional judgement in relation to the records to be kept of these reports, the actions taken and any discussion with those involved regarding the same.
 - b) If it is established by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred the relevant teacher must keep appropriate written records which will assist his or her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as it is practicable, the relationship of the parties involved.
- The relevant teacher must use the recording template attached to record the bullying behaviour in the following circumstances:
 - a) in cases where he or she considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he or she has determined that bullying behaviour occurred.
 - b) where the relevant teacher has decided that the bullying behaviour must be recorded and reported immediately to the principal/deputy principal.
- Each teacher has an anti-bullying folder with the recording template. When the class moves on, the succeeding teacher should be informed of any problems that existed.

Procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying:

- Calm, unemotional, problem solving approach
- Incidents are best investigated outside of the classroom situation
- Teachers should speak separately to the children involved
- Members of a gang should be met separately and as a group
- Parents should be informed where it has been determined that bullying has occurred
- Once the bullying of the child has ceased, the teacher should check with the child on a regular basis that no further difficulties have arisen.

7. The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows (see Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*) :

It is the duty of the school to provide a safe environment for all the children. Should the above interventions fail and the bullying continues a programme of appropriate sanctions may be implemented by the Principal in consultation with the parents and Board of Management. Sanctions implemented aim to encourage positive behaviour and support the esteem of the child. These sanctions may include a period of suspension during which there will be ongoing consultation with the parents to decide on appropriate action(s) to be taken in the best interest of the child. Suspension for any period of time will be reported in writing by the Principal to the Chair of the Board of management.

A programme of support for pupils who have been bullied will also be put in place. They have opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise their self esteem, to develop their friendship and social skills and thereby build resilience when ever this is needed.

8. Supervision and Monitoring of Pupils

The Board of Management confirms that appropriate supervision and monitoring policies and practices are in place to both prevent and deal with bullying behaviour and to facilitate early intervention where possible.

9. Prevention of Harassment

The Board of Management confirms that the school will, in accordance with its obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the sexual harassment of pupils or staff or the harassment of pupils or staff on any of the nine grounds specified i.e. gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.

10. This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on February 12th 2014.

11. This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website (or where none exists, is otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parents' Association (where one exists). A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

12. This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year. Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, published on the school website (or where none exists, be otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parents' Association (where one exists). A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Signed: _____
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: _____
(Principal)

Date: _____

Date: _____

Date of next review: _____