

The Royal School Dungannon

Anti-Bullying Policy (2019)

Introduction and Statement

Royal School Dungannon is an educational community which aims to promote a secure, pleasant and purposeful environment for all its pupils and staff. A central aim of the school is to establish an ethos based on mutual respect, consideration and positive interpersonal relationships, where the needs of each individual are recognised and where all members are treated fairly and as individuals, irrespective of socio-economic background, race, religious beliefs, age, sexual orientation or disability. The Anti-Bullying policy forms an integral part of our policy for pastoral care for pupils and must be read in association with our Child Protection, Pastoral Care, Positive Behaviour and Discipline policies.

In RSD we seek to provide for our pupils a safe and caring environment where bullying behaviour will not be tolerated. Everyone in the school community is valued and is entitled to have their rights protected. They have the right to learn and work in a secure and caring environment and consequently each individual has the responsibility to contribute to the protection and maintenance of such an environment. The Anti-Bullying policy applies to pupil/pupil relationships and interactions.

Context

This policy has been developed in line with the legislative and policy/guidance framework applicable. This includes:

The Legislative Context:

- The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016
- The Education and Libraries Order (Northern Ireland) 2003 (A17-19)
- The Education (School Development Plans) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010
- The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Health and Safety at Work Order (Northern Ireland) 1978

The Policy & Guidance Context:

- The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 Statutory Guidance for Schools and Boards of Governors (DE, 2019)
- Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools: A Guide for Schools (DE, 2017)
- Co-operating to safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (Dept. of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, 2016)
- Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland Policies and Procedures (SBNI, 2017)

The International Context:

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 provides a legal definition of bullying. It places a duty on the Board of Governors to put in place measures to prevent bullying behaviour, in consultation with pupils and parents. Schools are required to record all incidents of bullying behaviour and alleged bullying incidents, in school (e.g. during the school day), while travelling to and from school, when under control of staff, but away from school (school trip) and when receiving education organised by school but happening elsewhere (e.g. in another school in the ALC). The policy must be updated at least every four years. The Education and Libraries Order (NI) 2003, requires the Board of Governors to, 'safeguard and promote the welfare of registered pupils' (A17).

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNRC) sets out every child's right to:

- Be protected from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, maltreatment or exploitation. (A19)
- Be protected from discrimination. (A2)
- Express their views, in a supported and accessible way, on issues that affect them, and to have their opinions taken seriously. (A12)
- Education. (A28)

Ethos and Principles

The Royal School Dungannon is a caring school. The pastoral work of the school is at the heart of the school's activity and has a central role to play in promoting the personal development of its young people. We aim to provide a happy and safe environment where each pupil has the opportunity to develop their self-confidence and reach their academic potential in an atmosphere of mutual respect. We believe in a society where bullying is unacceptable and where every child and young person is safe and feels safe from bullying. As a result, we are committed to a preventative and responsive anti-bullying ethos across the whole school. Strong relationships exist between pupils and staff and we aim to create an environment where each pupil feels valued and their welfare is safeguarded and promoted. We understand that everyone in our school community has a role to play in taking a stand against bullying and creating a safe and welcoming environment for all. Consequently, all staff, teaching and non-teaching, should know the procedures to be followed if an allegation of bullying behaviour is made. This policy sets out guidance on the action which is required where bullying behaviour is alleged and outlines the relevant procedures within the school. The policy applies to both Day and Boarding sections within the school.

Aims of the Anti-Bullying Policy

- To help all members of the school community understand what constitutes bullying and what procedures are in place to deal with it;
- To clarify for pupils, staff and parents that bullying is always unacceptable and is regarded by the school as a breach of our discipline policy;
- To enable pupils, parents and staff to work together to prevent bullying;

- To ensure that pupils and parents know how to raise a concern about bullying, in the confidence that any reported incidents will be taken seriously and thoroughly investigated;
- To reassure anyone who reports a concern about bullying that their identity will not be disclosed without their permission;
- To develop strategies to create a bully-free ethos and environment, including those to help individuals displaying bullying behaviours, and how these will be implemented.

Consultation and Participation

This policy has been developed in consultation with registered pupils and their parent/carers, in compliance with the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016.

Pupil Consultation

Pupils have been consulted and encouraged to provide feedback on the draft policy via the Pupil Leadership Team (PLT) and School Council members.

Parent/Carers Consultation

Parents have been emailed regarding the draft policy and made aware that feedback would be greatly appreciated. The draft policy was made fully available on the school website.

Staff Consultation

Staff have been consulted and encouraged to provide feedback on staff days and during pastoral meetings.

Wider School Community Consultation

Consultation with the Executive of the Board of Governors took place in September. Consultation with the Full Board of Governors took place in October.

What is Bullying?

The legal definition of bullying for Northern Ireland as outlined in the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act 2016:

1. In this Act “bullying” includes (but is not limited to) the repeated use of -
 - a) any verbal, written or electronic communication
 - b) any other act, or
 - c) any combination of those, by a pupil or group of pupils against another pupil or group of pupils, with the intention of causing physical or emotional harm to that pupil or group of pupils.
- (2) For the purposes of subsection (1), “act” includes **omission**”.

In summary, bullying behaviour may be defined as behaviour that is usually repeated, by one or more pupils carried out to intentionally hurt, harm or adversely affect the rights and needs of another or others.

While bullying is usually repeated behaviour, there are instances of one-off incidents that the school will consider as bullying. When assessing a one-off incident, to make a decision on whether to classify it as bullying, the school shall consider the following criteria:

- Severity and significance of the incident
- Evidence of pre-meditation
- Impact of the incident on individuals (Physical/emotional)
- Impact of the incident on the wider school community
- Previous relationships between those involved
- Any previous incidents involving the individuals

It is important to note that not all incidents reported will be bullying behaviour and therefore those which are not considered bullying behaviour will be addressed under the Positive Behaviour Policy.

Methods of Bullying

The following unacceptable behaviours, when repeated (but not always), targeted and intentionally hurtful, may be considered a bullying behaviour:

a) Verbal or written acts

These methods can be described as, but are not limited to:

- Saying unkind and hurtful things to, or about, others
- Making fun of others
- Calling another pupil hurtful names
- Telling lies or spreading false rumours about others
- Trying to make other pupils dislike another pupil/s
- Extort from, blackmail or exploit another

b) Physical acts

These can be described as, but are not limited to:

- Hitting
- Kicking
- Pushing
- Shoving
- Locking a pupil(s) inside a room, locker etc.
- Material harm such as taking/stealing money or possessions
- Other direct/indirect acts

c) Omission

The Act specifies that methods of bullying behaviour include omission. This includes where a pupil is intentionally left out and where there is a wilful failure to include a pupil. Other examples include, but are not limited to, a pupil being excluded or left out of:

- A group of friends
- Activities
- Games
- Group work in class

Exclusionary bullying behaviours are as serious as other verbal or physical acts.

d) Electronic Acts

These can be described as, but are not limited to:

- Using online platforms or other electronic communication to carry out many of the written acts noted above
- Impersonating someone online to cause hurt
- Sharing images (photographs or videos) online to embarrass someone

The use of electronic communication as a method of bullying behaviour is most commonly identified as cyber bullying. Cyber bullying is an aggressive, intentional act carried out by an individual or group against a target using, for example, electronic forms of contact and social media platforms.

(e) Any combination of the above

The Act acknowledges that various methods of bullying behaviour can occur separately or together.

It is important to note that the above lists are not exhaustive and other behaviours which fit with the definition may be considered bullying behaviour.

Motivations behind Bullying

These include, but are not limited to:

- Age
- Appearance
- Breakdown in peer relationships
- Community background/ethnicity
- Disability/SEN
- Ability
- Looked After Child Status

- Young Carer Status
- Political affiliation
- Gender/gender identity
- Sexual orientation
- Pregnancy
- Marital Status
- Race
- Religion/religious belief

Bullying is an emotive issue, therefore it is essential that we ensure we use supportive, understanding language when discussing these matters. For that reason, during the investigation, we will not refer to a child as 'a bully', nor will we refer to a child as 'a victim'. Instead, we will refer to the child's behaviours and the general situation surrounding that child. Staff investigating incidents will therefore be sensitive with language and will talk of, for example:

- A child displaying bullying behaviours
- A child experiencing bullying behaviours

We encourage all members of the school community to use this language when discussing bullying incidents.

As set out in the DE Guidance, in determining 'harm' we define:

- Emotional or psychological harm as intentionally causing distress or anxiety by scaring, humiliating or affecting adversely a pupil's self-esteem.
- Physical harm as intentionally hurting a pupil by causing injuries such as bruises, broken bones, burns or cuts.

Preventative Measures

We aim to promote a strong anti-bullying ethos, both within the Royal School Dungannon and the wider school community, and therefore place great importance on our preventative curriculum 'Anti-Bullying' Programme. Below are some examples of how we promote this ethos.

- Awareness and understanding of the positive behaviour expectations, as set out in the Positive Behaviour Policy, are raised via Form Tutor, Year and Whole School assemblies
- Promotion of anti-bullying messages (where possible) through the curriculum e.g. inclusion of age-appropriate material specific to individual subject areas related to bullying, positive behaviour and inclusion
- Addressing issues such as the various forms of bullying, including the how and why it can happen, through form period and PD/LLW (e.g. sectarian, racist, homophobic, transphobic, disablist, etc.)

- Involvement in meaningful and supportive shared education projects (St Patrick's Academy and St Joseph's, Donaghmore), supporting pupils to explore, understand and respond to difference and diversity
- Through the preventative curriculum actively promote positive emotional health and wellbeing (e.g. mindfulness training – 'Plug and Play', 'Take Ten' app, promotion of PHA '5 Steps to Well Being' message, 'Safe Space', 'Empowering Young Minds' Programme, 'Hopeful Minds' Programme, 'Resilience Skills' Programme)
- Participation in the NIABF annual Anti-Bullying Week activities
- Engagement in key national and regional campaigns, e.g. Safer Internet Day, World Mental Health Day
- Development of peer-led systems (e.g. Safer School Team) to support the delivery and promotion of key anti-bullying messaging within the school
- Focused assemblies (Form Tutor, Year and Whole School) to raise awareness and promote understanding of key issues related to bullying
- Development of effective strategies for the management of unstructured times (e.g. Safer School 'Drop-In session', 'Safe Space')
- Provision and promotion of extra- and co-curricular activities, aimed at supporting the development of effective peer support relationships and networks.

While many of the measures outlined above will support the development of an anti-bullying culture, there are a number of ways we can further build upon this related specifically on the journey to and from school. These include:

- Development of a culture where RSD pupils take pride in their school and are viewed as ambassadors for their school within the community. This includes regular reminders of the positive behaviour expectations of pupils whilst travelling to and from school.
- RSD pupils empowered to challenge inappropriate and unacceptable behaviour of their peers during the journey to and from school via Safer School Team messages, 'Resilience Skills' Programme, School Prefect intervention and senior pupil influence etc.
- Engagement with transport providers (e.g. Translink, EA Transport, etc.) to ensure effective communication and the early identification of any concerns.
- Promotion of key anti-bullying messages and awareness of behaviour expectations of pupils amongst the local community (e.g. local shops, cafes, service providers, residents, etc.), including information on how to raise any concerns with the school.

The new legislation also gives schools the authority to take steps to prevent bullying through the use of electronic communication amongst pupils at any time during term, where that behaviour is likely to have a detrimental effect on the pupil's education at school. RSD will endeavour to raise awareness of the nature and impact of online bullying and support pupils to make use of the internet in a safe, responsible and respectful way. This may include:

- Addressing key themes of online behaviour and risk through PD/LLW, including understanding how to respond to harm and the consequences of inappropriate use.
- Participation in Anti-Bullying Week activities.
- Engagement with key statutory and voluntary sector agencies (e.g. C2k, PSNI, Public Health Agency, Safeguarding Board for NI e-Safety Forum) to support the promotion of key messages.
- Participation in annual Safer Internet Day and promotion of key messages throughout the year.
- Development and implementation of robust and appropriate policies in related areas (e.g. Acceptable Use of the Internet Policy, Digital Devices Policy, BYOD Policy etc.)

Responsibility

Everyone at RSD has responsibility for creating a safe and supportive learning environment for all members of the school community. All members of the school community, including pupils, their parents/carers and the staff of the school are expected to respect the rights of others to be safe.

Everyone has the responsibility to work together to:

- foster positive self-esteem
- behave towards others in a mutually respectful way
- model high standards of personal pro-social behaviour
- be alert to signs of distress and other possible indications of bullying behaviour
- inform the school of any concerns relating to bullying behaviour
- refrain from becoming involved in any kind of bullying behaviour, even at the risk of incurring temporary unpopularity
- refrain from retaliating to any form of bullying behaviour
- intervene to support any person who is being bullied, unless it is unsafe to do so
- report any concerns or instances of bullying behaviour witnessed or suspected, to a member of staff
- emphasise the importance of seeking help from a trusted adult about bullying behaviour when it happens or is observed
- explain the implications of allowing the bullying behaviour to continue unchecked, for themselves and/or others
- listen sensitively to anyone who has been bullied, take what is said seriously, and provide reassurance that appropriate action will be taken
- know how to seek support – internal and external
- resolve difficulties to prevent recurring bullying behaviour and meet the needs of all parties

Reporting a Bullying Concern

Pupils Reporting a Concern

When a pupil has a concern about a potential bullying situation, they should discuss this with a member of staff that they trust. This will normally be either their Form Tutor or Head of Year but any member of staff, teaching or non-teaching, will be open to such conversations.

Pupils can report bullying concerns:

- Verbally - talking to a member of staff or school Counsellor
- By writing a note to a member of staff
- By sending an email to a member of staff or to the 'Whisper' button. If the 'Whisper' button is being used **full** pupil details must be provided (e.g. full name, year group and e-mail address)

ANY pupil can raise a concern about bullying behaviour, not just the pupil who is experiencing this behaviour. Through the preventative work within RSD, this message should focus on 'getting help' rather than 'telling'. As such, all pupils should be encouraged to 'get help' if they have a concern about bullying that they experience or is experienced by another.

Parents/Carers Reporting a Concern

Parents and carers should raise concerns about alleged bullying behaviour with the school at the earliest opportunity. Parents/carers need to encourage their children to react appropriately to bullying behaviour and to not do anything to retaliate or to 'hit back'.

- In the first instance, all bullying concerns should be reported to the Head of Year
- Where the parent is not satisfied that appropriate action has been taken by the Head of Year to prevent further incidents, or where further incidents have taken place, the concern should be reported to Senior Teacher Pastoral
- Where the parent is not satisfied that appropriate action has been taken by the Senior Teacher Pastoral to prevent further incidents, or where further incidents have taken place, the concern should be reported to the Principal.

Where the parent/carer remains unsatisfied that the concern has not been appropriately responded to, the school's complaints procedure should be followed.

While the majority of reports of bullying concerns will come from pupils and their parents/carers, the school is open to receiving such reports from anyone.

All reports of bullying concerns received from pupils and/or parents/carers will be responded to in line with this policy and that feedback will be made to the person who made the report.

However, it must be noted that no information about action taken in relation to a pupil can be disclosed to anyone other than the pupil and his/her parents/carers.

Responding to a Bullying Concern

The processes outlined below provide a framework for how the school will respond to any bullying concerns identified.

Using the NIABF Effective Responses to Bullying Behaviour resource, the member of staff responsible will:

- Clarify facts and perceptions
- Check records (SIMS)
- Assess the incident against the criteria for bullying behaviour
- Identify any themes or motivating factors
- Identify the type of bullying behaviour being displayed
- Identify intervention level
- Select and implement appropriate interventions for all pupils involved, including appropriate interventions, consequences and sanctions
- Track, monitor and record effectiveness of interventions
- Review outcome of interventions
- Select and implement further intentions as necessary

When responding to a bullying concern, school staff will implement interventions aimed at responding to the behaviour, resolving the concern and restoring the wellbeing of those involved. Where appropriate, school staff will implement sanctions for those displaying bullying behaviour. Since there are many different types of behaviour which can be categorized as bullying, each will require an appropriate and individual response. Sanctions can and will range from:

- a verbal warning (e.g. low level first offence)
- Friday detention (e.g. more serious first offence)
- Saturday detention (e.g. more serious offences where there could be, but not always, a significant age difference or group interaction, a prolonged and/or repeated offence).

In the most serious of cases RSD reserves the right to suspend a pupil. The PSNI will be consulted for advice and guidance as and when necessary.

Information in relation to any action taken regarding a pupil cannot be disclosed to anyone other than that pupil and his/her parents/carers.

Recording

As set out in the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016, all schools must maintain a record of all incidents of bullying and alleged bullying behaviour.

RSD centrally records all relevant information related to reports of bullying concerns, including:

- how the bullying behaviour was displayed (the method)
- the motivation for the behaviour
- how each incident was addressed by the school
- the outcome of the interventions employed

As per guidance from the Department of Education, records will be kept on the online SIMS Behaviour Management Module, which is part of the C2k system in schools. Access to these records will be restricted and only provided to those members of school staff with a legitimate need to have access. The senior staff and pastoral team will have overall responsibility for the maintenance of these records.

All records will be maintained in line with relevant data protection legislation and guidance and will be disposed of in line with the school's Retention and Disposal of Documents Policy. Collated information regarding incidents of bullying and alleged bullying behaviour will be used to inform the future development of anti-bullying policy and practice within the school.

Professional Development of Staff

RSD recognises the need for appropriate and adequate training for staff, including teaching and non-teaching school staff. We are committed to ensure that all staff are provided with appropriate opportunities for professional development in this area as part of our ongoing CPD/PRSD provisions. We continually note the impact of any training provided on both the policy and its procedures and amend/update as and when necessary. We ensure opportunities for safeguarding training are afforded to Governors and all staff, teaching and non-teaching. CPD records are kept and updated regularly.

Monitoring and Review of Policy

To monitor appropriately the effectiveness of the Anti-Bullying Policy, the Board of Governors will:

- maintain a standing item on the agenda of each meeting of the full Board of Governors where a report on recorded incidents of bullying will be noted
- identify trends and priorities for action
- assess the effectiveness of strategies aimed at preventing bullying behaviour
- assess the effectiveness of strategies aimed at responding to bullying behaviour

The Anti-Bullying Policy will be reviewed at intervals of no more than four years. However, the policy may be reviewed following any incident which highlights the need for such a review.

It will also be reviewed when directed to by the Department of Education and in light of new guidance.

This Anti-Bullying Policy shall be reviewed as required, in consultation with pupils and their parents/carers, on or before the 20th December 2023.

Links to Other Policies

In the development and implementation of this Anti-Bullying Policy, the Board of Governors has been mindful of related policies, including:

- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Discipline Policy
- Drugs and Substance Abuse Policy
- Pastoral Care Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Special Educational Needs Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy
- Internet Guidelines and Policy
- Digital Devices Policy
- RSD Privacy Notice
- Staff Handbook
- Complaints Policy