

Four Masters National School Anti-Bullying Policy

Introductory Statement:

The policy was formulated over the winter of 2013/2014 by the Board of Management and staff of the school in consultation with parent nominees on Board of Management and Parent Association Committee and also with senior pupils of the school.

Rationale

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 Four Masters National School 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 and also circular 0045/2013.

Relationship to characteristic spirit of the school:

Four Masters National School seeks to help the children to grow and develop into healthy, confident, mature adults, capable of realising their full potential as human beings. We strive to create a happy, safe environment for the pupils and staff where they feel secure, knowing that if they have concerns, they will be listened to with understanding and respect and they will be acted on. The school climate will encourage respect, trust, caring, consideration and support for others. As pupils model their behaviour on the behaviour of adults, the Principal and teachers will be careful to act as good role models and not misuse their authority. Moreover, staff will be firm, clear and consistent in their disciplinary measures. Techniques based on positive motivation and recognition have been shown to be more effective in promoting desired behaviour than methods that are based on threat and fear and positive motivation will be the cornerstone of our actions.

As self-esteem is the single most influential factor in determining behaviour and indeed a greater predictor of success than intelligence, teachers will provide pupils with opportunities to develop a positive sense of worth.

Research has shown that pupils can achieve significantly more in classroom situations where they are rewarded for effort and improvement and where expectations of their performance are positive. An integral part of this approach is the development of cooperative learning. Mutual respect between teachers and pupils and also between pupils themselves is important.

Policy Aims

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 will be encouraged, which
 - is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity;
 - encourages pupils and staff to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment; and
 - promotes respectful relationships across the school community;
 - Effective leadership will ensure that the policy is implemented
 - A school-wide approach will be the one taken
 - A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact will be fostered
 - Implementation of education and prevention strategies will be a priority.
- These will,
- 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 will take place.
 - Supports for staff, like in-service workshops will be provided as often as possible
 - Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour will take place(including use of established intervention strategies); and
 - On-going evaluation by the Board of Management of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy will happen at least once a year.

Definition of Bullying Behaviour

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.

The relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows: usually the class teacher but can also be the Special Education Needs teacher and the Principal and Deputy Principal of the school

Strategies which will be used to prevent Bullying Behaviour

- ❖ All sections of the playground, school corridors, toilets will be thoroughly supervised at break times.
- ❖ Pupils and staff will be constantly reminded at assemblies that Four Masters National School has a zero tolerance attitude towards bullying.
- ❖ Regarding Cyber Bullying: The highest level of filtering of school IT equipment is in place and will be maintained and monitored.
- ❖ No mobile phones, smart phones or any other smart technology e.g. iPad/iPod allowed in pupil's possession during school day or when pupils are away on school trips. If mobile phone is absolutely necessary the school must receive a written request from parents and the phone in question must be left in school office by child each morning and collected by child at end of school day. If mobile phone or any other smart device is found in pupils' possession during school day it will be confiscated and left in principal's office for collection by parent/guardian.

- ❖ 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:
 - All staff will teach lessons on bullying and its negative effects as part of the school's SPHE programme. Pupils will be made aware of what constitutes bullying behaviour.
 - Workshops on bullying in general and cyber bullying and identity based bullying in particular will be organized for pupils and staff at least every two years. These will be facilitated by experts in the field.
 - Self-esteem promotion through activities like Sport, Drama, Debating, visits to Adventure Centres, etc.
 - Talks on the topic of Bullying will also be organized for parents from time to time.
 - Every year a "Friendship Week" will be held in the school to highlight the importance of friendship for its own sake and also as a means of building resilience, empathy and respect in pupils.
 - Special Education Needs pupils will receive lessons regarding bullying from both mainstream and Special Education Needs teachers.
 - The SPHE curriculum, including the Walk Tall and Stay Safe programmes, will be used throughout the school to support our Anti Bullying Policy.

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:

- The primary aim of the investigation will be to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as practicable, the relationships of the parties involved, rather than to appropriate blame.
- All teachers will receive training regarding new Anti-Bullying Guidelines in April 2014 with refresher courses as deemed necessary.
- The teacher investigating will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine if bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved and will consult with other teachers / principal / deputy principal.
- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying, will be investigated noted and dealt with by teachers and children will be told they are behaving responsibly when reporting incidents of perceived bullying rather than telling tales.
- Non-teaching staff will be encouraged to report incidents of bullying behaviour to teaching staff.
- Parents and pupils will be required to co-operate with investigation.
- Teachers will take a calm, unemotional problem solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents.
- Incidents will be investigated outside the classroom situation for privacy of all involved.
- Interviews will be conducted with sensitivity – teachers will seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why.

- If a group is involved, each member will be interviewed individually at first – thereafter as a group – at group meeting each member will be asked to give his/her account of what happened to ensure everyone is clear about each others' statements.
- On occasion those involved may be asked to write down what happened.
- In addressing bullying behaviour as a school we use the Traditional Disciplinary Approach and we dip into other approaches also e.g. Strengthening The Victim and Restorative Practice.
- **In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved will be contacted by the teacher to inform them of the matter and to explain the actions being taken in line with the schools Code of Behaviour and Discipline.** A pupil who is found to have bullied other pupil(s) may be excluded from the playground at break times for a period and or be subject to special monitoring procedures. If bullying continues they may be suspended in accordance with procedures (by reference to the school policy). Every effort will be made, with the help of parents, to get the child who was bullying another to see the issue from the perspective of the victim.
- The relevant teacher must record the bullying behaviour. The standardised recording template attached must be used if he or she feels that the bullying incident has not been resolved within twenty days of it being reported to him or her. A copy of the completed template must be provided to Principal/Deputy principal.
- If a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying issue in accordance with these procedures, they will be advised of the school's Parental Complaints Policy. If they are still not satisfied, having exhausted this procedure, they will be advised of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.
- Teachers will keep written records, including dates of any reports of bullying and actions taken. Data Protection legislation must be adhered too.

The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows:

- If a pupil (pupils) i.e. victim seems to be seriously affected by bullying the school will do all in its power to make parents aware of counselling services available and / or opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise self-esteem, to develop friendship and social skills, thereby building resilience in the pupil (pupils) in question. Such pupils will be encouraged to approach their teacher or principal if they need to talk about that distress.
- Those involved in bullying behaviour will also be supported so that they will change. Their low self-esteem will be targeted by teachers and counselling may also be recommended.

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.

Referral of serious cases to HSE.

In relation to bullying in schools, Childrens First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011 and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools provide that in situations where “the incident is serious and where the behavior is regarded as potentially abusive the school must consult the HSE with a view to drawing up an appropriate response”. Serious Incidents of bullying behavior will be referred to the HSE and or Gardaí as appropriate.

Adult Bullying

For cases of adult bullying the procedures as outlined in the INTO / Management Bodies Publication “Working Together, Procedures and Policies for Positive Staff Relations” will be followed.

Prevention of Harassment of Pupils and Staff

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.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 25th March 2014.

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents’ Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management at least 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 and provided to the Parents’ Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Ratification and review

This policy will be reviewed once every two years or more often if deemed necessary.

This policy was reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management at a meeting in October 2019.

Signed: John Britton (Principal) Date: October 2019

Signed: Fr. Thomas Keogan (Chairperson) Date: October 2019

Appendix

1. Name of pupil being bullied and class group

Name _____ Class _____

2. Name(s) and class(es) of pupil(s) engaged in bullying behaviour

3. Source of bullying concern/report (tick relevant box(es))*

Pupil concerned	
Other Pupil	
Parent	
Teacher	
Other	

4. Location of incidents (tick relevant box(es))*

Playground	
Classroom	
Corridor	
Toilets	
School Bus	
Other	

5. Name of person(s) who reported the bullying concern

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6. Type of Bullying Behaviour (tick relevant box(es)) *

Physical Aggression		Cyber-bullying	
Damage to Property		Intimidation	
Isolation/Exclusion		Malicious Gossip	
Name Calling		Other (specify)	

7. Where behaviour is regarded as identity-based bullying, indicate the relevant category:

Homophobic	Disability/SEN related	Racist	Membership of Traveller community	Other (specify)

8. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact

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9. Details of actions taken

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Signed _____ (Relevant Teacher) Date _____

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal _____

*** Note:** The categories listed in the tables 3, 4 & 6 are suggested and schools may add to or amend these to suit their own circumstances.