



**MAHOONAGH**  
NATIONAL SCHOOL

# **Code of Behaviour**



## **CONTENTS**

- 1. INTRODUCTION**
- 2. POLICY FORMULATION**
- 3. AIMS & OBJECTIVES OF THE CODE**
- 4. WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH**
- 5. STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOUR**
  - 5.1 PUPILS**
  - 5.2 STAFF**
  - 5.3 PARENTS/GUARDIANS**
- 6. PROMOTING POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR**
- 7. INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR**
- 8. PROCEDURES FOR SUSPENSIONS & EXPULSIONS**
  - 8.1 SUSPENSION**
  - 8.2 EXPULSION**
- 9. NOTIFICATION OF A CHILD'S ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL**
- 10. RECORDS**
- 11. ANTI-BULLYING POLICY**
  - 11.1 BEST PRACTICE IN THE PREVENTION OF BULLYING**
  - 11.2 DEFINITION OF BULLYING**
  - 11.3 SCHOOL CONTACT PERSONNEL**
  - 11.4 EDUCATION & PREVENTION STRATEGIES**
  - 11.5 INVESTIGATION & FOLLOW-UP PROCEDURES**
  - 11.6 WORKING WITH PUPILS AFFECTED BY BULLING**
  - 11.7 SUPERVISION & MONITORING**
  - 11.8 PREVENTION OF HARASSMENT**
  - 11.9 POLICY ADOPTION**
  - 11.10 COMMUNICATION**
  - 11.11 IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW**
- 12. POLICY RATIFICATION**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In compliance with Section 23 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, the Board of Management of Mahoonagh N.S. has prepared and made available a Code of Behaviour for its Pupils, Staff and Parents.

The Code of Behaviour details:

1. The standards of behaviour that shall be observed by each pupil attending the school;
2. The whole school approach in promoting positive behaviour;
3. The measures that shall be taken when a pupil fails or refuses to observe those standards;
4. The procedures to be followed before a pupil may be suspended or expelled from the school concerned;
5. The grounds for removing a suspension imposed in relation to a pupil
6. The school's Anti-Bullying Policy; and
7. The procedures to be followed in relation to a child's absence from school.

The Code of Behaviour of Mahoonagh N.S. has been developed in accordance with *'Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools'*, National Educational Welfare Board, 2008.

## 2. POLICY FORMULATION

In formulating this policy the Board of Management completed the following steps;

- I. Parents and staff were informed that an initial draft of the code of behaviour was available and they were invited to make submissions on the content of the code within a specified timeframe.
- II. Class teachers were requested to discuss the topic of 'rules' with their classes and submit a list of pupils suggestions to the principal.
- III. The initial draft of the code of behaviour was reviewed and where appropriate amended in-line with the feedback received.
- IV. The finalised draft of the policy was submitted for the patron's approval.

## 3. AIMS & OBJECTIVES OF THE CODE

The aims and objectives of the code are:

- To allow the school to function in an orderly way where children can make progress in all aspects of their development
- To create an atmosphere of respect, tolerance and consideration for others
- To promote positive behaviour and self-discipline, recognising the differences between children and the need to accommodate these differences
- To ensure the safety and well-being of all members of the school community
- To assist school staff, parents and pupils in understanding the systems and procedures that form part of the code of behaviour and to seek their co-operation in the application of these procedures

- To ensure that the system of rules, rewards, and sanctions are implemented in a fair and consistent manner throughout the school.

## 4. WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH

The board of management recognises the importance of creating consistent values, policies, practices and relationships that support the code of behaviour. Such an environment may only be formed by involving the entire school community and in this respect the board acknowledges the importance of the roles played by, the principal, teachers, ancillary staff and parents in the review and operation of the code.

## 5. STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOUR

### 5.1 Pupils

#### *General Behaviour*

Each pupil is expected to:

- be well behaved and to show consideration for other children and adults
- show respect for the property of, the school, other children and their own belongings
- attend school on a regular basis and to be punctual
- Do his/her best both in school and for homework.

#### *Classroom Behaviour*

Each pupil is expected to:

- listen – to the teacher and other pupils if they are speaking
- work – to the best of his/her ability
- Value – school property and the belongings of fellow pupils.
- follow – the direction of his/her teacher
- obtain – his/her teachers permission to leave the classroom
- Respect – the teacher, other pupils and visitors to the classroom.

#### *Playground (Playing Pitches) Behaviour*

Each pupil is expected to:

- play – safely avoiding any games or play that are rough or dangerous
- follow – the directions of the playground supervisor(s)
- remain – on school grounds at all times
- obtain – permission before re-entering the school building during break periods
- respect – the yard supervisor and fellow pupils
- avoid – swearing, fighting or name calling

#### *Behaviour in other School Areas*

Each pupil is expected to:

- walk – in the school corridors and classrooms
- remain in their designated areas

- walk on entering and leaving the school grounds

### ***Behaviour during School Outings/Activities***

Each pupil is expected to:

- follow – his/her teacher's directions at all times
- remain – with the teacher/supervisors/other adults and group of pupils at all times
- behave – politely towards those they meet on such trips
- observe – the rules of general good behaviour

## **5.2 Staff**

It is the Principal's responsibility to ensure the school's Code of Behaviour is administered in a manner that is consistent and fair to all pupils. However, each staff member has responsibility for the maintenance of discipline within common areas of the school.

Teaching staff are specifically responsible for the management of behaviour within their own class. They will:

- Discuss the Code of Behaviour with their class in an age appropriate manner at the beginning of the school year.
- Ensure the rules are displayed in the classroom.
- Encourage self-discipline and positive Behaviour.
- Ensure there is an appropriate level of supervision at all times.
- Implement the reward/sanction scheme in a fair and consistent manner.
- Keep a written record of all incidents of continued, serious or gross misconduct. This record will indicate the advice and/or warnings given to the child on the misbehaviour and, the consequences of its repetition.
- Inform pupils when instances of misbehaviour on their part are being recorded.
- Report repeated instances of serious misbehaviour to the Principal.
- Recording of incidents as appropriate.

## **5.3 Parents/Guardians**

Parents/guardians play a crucial role in shaping attitudes in their children which produce positive Behaviour in school. Parents/guardians can assist the school by encouraging their children to abide by the school rules, encouraging punctuality and regular attendance and by ensuring that homework is given due time and effort.

Should a parent/guardian be concerned about any aspect of their child's behaviour they are welcome to make an appointment to discuss their concerns.

In cases of an identified pattern of misbehaviour parents will be invited to participate in the intervention process.

## 6. PROMOTING POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR

As a general rule the school will endeavor to create an environment where positive behaviour is reinforced through praise and reward. School staff will use encouraging language and gestures, both in class and around the school, so that positive behaviour is instantly recognised and positively rewarded. Special attention will be paid to pupils who have previously been associated with poor behaviour so that not only good behaviour but also improvement in behaviour is acknowledged.

A reward scheme for promoting positive Behaviour will be used. Such rewards will include;

- Verbal recognition for good and improved behaviour throughout the school day.
- A comment /smiley/sticker (age appropriate) in their copy
- A mention to the parent(s)/guardian(s) verbal/written.
- Reward of good behaviour with Special privileges/treats.
- Certificates to highlight a particular achievement to be sent home with the child (age appropriate)
- Good work/behaviour is acknowledged and praised within the child's own classroom, other classrooms or brought to the attention of the Principal.
- Student of the Week.
- Acknowledgement made by the principal of students putting extra effort into their work and behaviour.
- Positive reinforcement of students' achievements and good behaviour at assembly each morning and once fortnightly at General Assembly in the Community Hall.
- The school will follow the Incredible Years Programme and implement the Restorative practice procedures as a whole school to promote a better understanding of behavior expected.

## 7. INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR

In order to establish a common understanding and consistent response the Code of Behaviour classifies misbehaviour into three levels based on the degree of disruption caused by the misconduct. The Code also specifies the disciplinary actions and supportive interventions that will be employed.

The whole school will follow the same line of questioning used by the Restorative Practice Guideline when an incident arises. The line of questioning is as follows and always in the following order;

1. What happened?
2. What were you thinking at the time?
3. What have you thought about since?
4. Who was affected and in what way?
5. How could things be done differently?
6. What do you think needs to happen next?

These questions will be asked to all parties involved in an incident.

# Level One

## *Level 1: Behaviours*

Level 1 behaviours are those that interfere with the orderly learning environment of the school, classroom, and common areas. Students learn through their mistakes. To this extent, responses to the daily behaviours, which occur in school, will be developmentally appropriate, instructive and positive. Children will be taught what is expected and how they should behave. Listed below are some examples of the types of Behaviour that are included in Level 1. Please note the list is not exhaustive.

- Failure to prepare for class, as defined by individual teachers
- Running in the hallways
- Disturbing the work or play of others
- Disrespectful language, tone, or manner
- Ignoring staff requests

## *Level 1: Disciplinary Actions*

Consequences for Level 1 behaviour are dependent upon the severity and frequency of the specific behaviour. Teachers will discipline students at level 1. Some examples of Level 1 responses are:

- Verbal reprimand/reminder(s)
- Reinforcement of alternative positive behaviour
- Temporary separation from peers, friends or others (A Thinking Chair, Time out in the classroom or on the step in the play area)
- Recording of behaviour and warnings given by class teacher. On the third **warning** the teacher will bring the behaviour to the Principal's attention
- Prescribing additional work
- Loss of privileges
- Parent contact
- Behaviour contract

## *Level 1 Supportive Interventions*

Listed below are some examples of Level 1 supportive actions:

- Classroom-based interventions, such as Open Circle or class meetings, with the option of informal consultation, (e.g. with parent(s)/guardian(s) or staff members)
- Discussion of behaviour with the child
- Informal notes regarding incident/intervention/date. This information would be useful should a problem persist.

## Level Two

### *Level 2: Behaviours*

Level 2 behaviours are those that seriously interfere with the orderly environment of the school and are potentially dangerous to the safety and well-being of the students and staff. Listed below are some examples of the types of behaviour that are included in Level 2. Please note the list is not exhaustive.

- Repeated instances of Level 1 behaviour which have not been modified by intervention
- Behaviour which is dangerous to self or others (e.g. shoving, pushing, hitting)
- Possession of tobacco products or e-cigarettes
- Possession of alcohol, illicit drugs or other illegal substances
- Intentionally damaging school or personal property
- Stealing
- Cheating
- Use of profanity
- Derogatory reference to another person's race, gender, religion, physical condition, disability, or ethnic origin
- Disrespectful language or behaviour toward an adult
- Possession or use of dangerous toys or sporting equipment (e.g. bow and arrows, any kind of knives, etc.)
- Bullying
- Leaving the school without permission during the school day or leaving the care of school staff during school outings.

### *Level 2: Disciplinary Actions*

The disciplining of students for Level 2 behaviour is dependent upon the severity and frequency of the specific behaviour and developmentally appropriate levels. The disciplinary actions at Level 2 are administered by the Principal, and include the formal notification of parents, with written documentation. Some examples of Level 2 responses are:

- In school supervised detention
- Report submitted to the Board of Management
- Meeting with parent(s)/guardian(s)
- Suspension from school of one to five days, depending on the severity of the Behaviour
- Implementation of extensive Behaviour management plan

### *Level 2: Supportive Interventions*

Listed below are some examples of Level 2 supportive actions:

- Team conference to include classroom teacher, other involved staff, Assistant Principal or Principal.
- Request for assistance from external agencies such as the National Educational Psychological Service, Health Service Executive Community Services, the National Behavioural Support Service, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, National Council for Special Education.
- Referral of a Child displaying behavioural problems for psychological assessment (with the parent(s)/guardian(s) consent).

## Level Three

### *Level 3: Behaviours*

Level 3 behaviours are considered the most serious violations. These behaviours endanger the immediate health, safety and personal well-being of the pupils and staff of the school. They represent a direct threat to the orderly operation of the school environment. Situations, which include illegal activity, may result in contact with the Garda Síochána after parental involvement. Listed below are some examples of the types of behaviour that are included in Level 3. Please note that the list is not exhaustive.

- Repeated or serious instances of Level 2 behaviour which have not been modified by intervention
- Setting fires
- Intentional possession or use of weapons
- Violent fighting or intentionally causing physical harm to others
- Discriminatory or prejudicial activities or actions toward another person or group involving race, gender, religion, physical condition, handicap, or ethnic origin
- Consumption of tobacco products or e-cigarettes
- Consumption of alcohol, illicit drugs or other illegal substances

### *Level 3: Disciplinary Actions*

Behaviour at Level 3 may involve suspension from school. The length of the suspension will depend upon the severity and frequency of the specific Behaviour. Specific information about due process and procedures in respect of the issuing of a suspension is contained in this document. Level 3 responses:

- **Suspension from school for one to five days:**  
This response will occur with the first incidence of Level 3 behaviour or Level 2 behaviour of significant severity. The Principal following due process and procedure, can issue a suspension.
- **Suspension from school for five to ten days:**  
This response will occur with the repeated incidence of Level 3 behaviour or a severe expression of this Behaviour. A suspension of this magnitude will only be issued with the approval of the Board of Management.
- **Expulsion:**  
Repeated incidents of Level 3 behaviour can result in a pupil being expelled.

## **Covid-19 Control Measures**

- The Board of Management has, under guidance from the Department of Education, implemented a number of measures intended to control the spread of Covid-19. These measures are detailed in the school's response plan and the Covid-19 risk assessment. All pupils are required to comply with any Covid-19 control measures that the school has in place.
- These measures may change from time to time, according to advice received from the Department of Education and the public health authorities. Any changes will be communicated to parents. Pupils will be supported in adhering to the measures by their class teachers and other school personnel.
- Pupils who persistently fail to comply with the measures may be subject to disciplinary action under this policy.

## 8. PROCEDURES FOR SUSPENSIONS & EXPULSIONS

### 8.1 Suspension

#### *Definition of Suspension:*

*'requiring the student to absent himself/herself from the school for a specified, limited period of school days'*

Developing A Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools, National Educational Welfare Board

#### *Authority to Suspend:*

The Board of Management of Mahoonagh N.S. has formally and in writing delegated the authority to impose an 'Immediate Suspension' to the Principal Teacher. An 'Immediate Suspension' may be for a period of one to three school days depending on the severity of the specific Behaviour, in exceptional circumstances and with the approval of the Chairperson of the Board the suspension may be for a longer period but in any event will not exceed 5 school days.

Furthermore, the Board of Management has formally and in writing delegated to the Principal Teacher the authority to impose an 'Automatic Suspension' for named behaviours detailed in this policy. An Automatic Suspension may be for a period of one to three school days depending on the severity of the specific behaviour, in exceptional circumstances and with the approval of the Chairperson of the Board the suspension may be for a longer period but in any event will not exceed 5 school days.

The Board retains its authority to suspend a student in all other cases/circumstances.

#### *Immediate Suspension and Automatic Suspension*

An 'Immediate Suspension' will be deemed to be necessary where after a preliminary investigation the Principal reaches the determination that the continued presence of the pupil in the school at the time would represent a serious threat to the safety and wellbeing of pupils or staff of the school. An 'Immediate Suspension' may be for a period of one to three school days depending on the severity of the specific Behaviour, in exceptional circumstances and with the approval of the Chairperson of the Board the suspension may be for a longer period but in any

event will not exceed 5 school days.

An 'Automatic Suspension' is a suspension imposed for named behaviours. The Board of Management of Mahoonagh N.S., having given due consideration to its duty of care as prescribed by Health & Safety Legislation, has determined that the following named behaviours will incur 'Automatic Suspension' as a sanction;

- Physical assault/violence resulting in bodily harm to a pupil or member of staff
- or
- Physical violence resulting in serious damage to school property

An Automatic Suspension may be for a period of one to three school days depending on the severity of the specific Behaviour, in exceptional circumstances and with the approval of the Chairperson of the Board the suspension may be for a longer period but in any event will not exceed 5 school days.

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) will be informed of an Immediate or Automatic Suspension by telephone, and arrangements will be made with them for the pupil to be collected. In no circumstance will a student be sent home from school prior to his/her parent(s)/guardian(s) being notified. Formal written notification of the suspension will issue in due course, but no later than 2 school days after the imposition of the suspension. Such a notification will detail:

- the duration of the suspension and the dates on which the suspension will begin and end
- the reasons for the suspension
- any study programme to be followed
- the arrangements for returning to school, including any commitments to be entered into by the pupil and the parent(s)/guardian(s).

The Board of Management acknowledges that the decision to impose either an Immediate or Automatic Suspension does not remove the duty to follow due process and fair procedures. In this regard, and following a formal investigation, to be completed no later than 2 school days after the incident the Board will invite the pupil and his/her parent(s)/guardian(s) to a meeting to discuss;

- the circumstances surrounding the suspension,
- interventions to prevent a reoccurrence of such misconduct.

The Board of Management of Mahoonagh N.S. acknowledges the fundamental importance of impartiality in the investigation process. In this regard the following undertaking is given;

- i. No person with a vested interest or personal involvement in the matter will be involved in the organisation or implementation of the investigation procedure.

### ***Procedures in Respect of Other Suspensions:***

In cases other than those of Immediate or Automatic Suspension the following procedures will apply;

Where a preliminary assessment of the fact confirms serious misbehaviour that could warrant suspension, the Board of Management of Mahoonagh N.S. will initiate a formal investigation of the matter.

The following procedures will be observed;

A written letter containing the following information will issue to Parent(s)/guardian(s);

- i. details of the alleged misbehaviour, details of the impending investigation process, and notification that the allegation could result in suspension.
- ii. An invitation to a meeting, to be scheduled no later than 5 school days from the date of the letter, where parent(s)/guardian(s) are provided with an opportunity to respond before a decision is made or a sanction imposed.

The Board of Management of Mahoonagh N.S. acknowledges the fundamental importance of impartiality in the investigation and decision-making process. In this regard the following undertakings are given;

- ii. No person with a vested interest or personal involvement in the matter will be involved in the organisation or implementation of the investigation procedure, nor will such a person be involved in the decision-making process.
- iii. The person(s) involved in the investigation process will on presentation of a full report of the facts absent himself/herself/themselves from the decision-making process.

Where a decision to suspend has been made the Chairperson of the Board of Management will provide written notification to the parent(s)/guardian(s) and the pupil of the decision. The letter will confirm:

- the duration of the suspension and the dates on which the suspension will begin and end
- the reasons for the suspension
- any study programme to be followed
- the arrangements for returning to school, including any commitments to be entered into by the pupil and the parent(s)/guardian(s)
- the provision for an appeal to the Board of Management.

Where a suspension brings the total number of days for which the pupil has been suspended in the current school year to twenty days the parent(s)/guardian(s) will be informed of their right to appeal to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science under Section 29 or the Education Act 1998 and will be provided with information on the submission of such an appeal.

## 8.2 Expulsion

### *Definition of Expulsion:*

*'A student is expelled from a school when a Board of Management makes a decision to permanently exclude him or her from the school, having complied with the provisions of section 24 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000.'*

Developing A Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools, National Educational Welfare Board

### *Authority to Expel:*

The authority to expel a pupil is reserved by the Board of Management

### *Procedures in Respect of Expulsion:*

Where a preliminary assessment of the facts confirms serious misbehaviour that could warrant expulsion the following procedures will apply:

- a) A detailed investigation will be carried out under the direction of the Principal (or a Nominee of the Board if required)

As part of the investigation a written letter containing the following information will issue to parent(s)/guardian(s);

- iii. details of the alleged misbehaviour, details of the impending investigation process, and notification that the allegation could result in expulsion.
- iv. An invitation to a meeting, to be scheduled no later than 5 school days from the date of the letter, where parent(s)/guardian(s) are provided with an opportunity to respond

- b) The Principal (or BoM Nominee) will make a recommendation to the Board of Management

Where the Principal (or nominee) forms a view, based on the investigation of the alleged misbehaviour, that expulsion may be warranted, the Principal (or nominee) makes a recommendation to the Board of Management to consider expulsion.

In this event the Principal (or nominee) will:

- i. inform the parent(s)/guardian(s) that the Board of Management is being asked to consider expulsion
- ii. ensure that parent(s)/guardians have records of: the allegations against the student; the investigation; and written notice of the grounds on which the Board of Management is being asked to consider expulsion
- iii. provide the Board of Management with the same comprehensive records as are given to parent(s)/guardian(s)

- c) Consideration by the Board of Management of the Principal's (or BOM's Nominee) Recommendations & the Holding of a Hearing

If, having considered the Principal's report, the Board of Management decides to consider expelling a student a hearing will be scheduled.

The parent(s)/guardian(s) will be notified in writing

- i. as to the date, location and time of the hearing
- ii. of their right to make a written and oral submission to the Board of Management
- iii. that they may if they so choose be accompanied at the hearing

The Board of Management undertakes that the timing of such written notification will ensure that parent(s)/guardian(s) have enough notice to allow them to prepare for the hearing.

In respect of the expulsion hearing the Board gives an undertaking that;

- i. the meeting will be properly conducted in accordance with Board procedures
- ii. the principal (or BoM nominee) and parent(s)/guardian(s) will present their case to the Board in each other's presence
- iii. each party will be given the opportunity to directly question the evidence of the other party
- iv. the parent(s)/guardian(s) may make a case for a lesser sanction if they so choose

- d) Board of Management Deliberations & Actions following the Hearing

Where the Board of Management, having considered all the facts of the case, is of the opinion that the pupil should be expelled the Board

- i. Will notify the Educational Welfare Officer in writing by registered post of its opinion, and the reasons for this opinion.
- ii. Will not expel the student before the passage of 20 school days from the date on which the Educational Welfare Officer receives this written notification
- iii. Will in writing notify the parent(s)/guardian(s) of their decision and inform them that the Educational Welfare Officer is being contacted
- iv. Will be represented at the consultation to be organized by the Educational Welfare Officer
- v. Will suspend the student, if it is deemed likely that the continued presence of the student during this time will seriously disrupt the learning of others, or represent a threat to the safety of other pupils or staff.

e) Confirmation of the Decision to Expel

Where the twenty-day period following notification to the Educational Welfare Officer has elapsed, and where the Board of Management remains of the view that the student should be expelled, the Board of Management will formally confirm the decision to expel.

Parent(s)/guardian(s) will be notified in writing that the expulsion will now proceed. They will also be informed of their right to appeal to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998 and will be provided with information on the submission of such an appeal.

The Board of Management of Mahoonagh N.S. acknowledges the fundamental importance of impartiality in the investigation and decision-making process. In this regard the following undertakings are given;

- i. No person with a vested interest or personal involvement in the matter will be involved in the organisation or implementation of the investigation procedure, nor will such a person be involved in the decision-making process.
- ii. The person(s) involved in the investigation process will on presentation of a full report of the facts absent himself/herself/themselves from the decision-making process.

## 9. NOTIFICATION OF A CHILD'S ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL

Parent(s)/guardian(s) should adhere to the following procedures when notifying the school of a pupil's absence;

- The school should be notified of the absence on the first day the pupil returns to school
- The reason for the absence should be notified to the class teacher
- The absence should be notified in writing by letter / using the school journal
- Details pertaining to the absence, such as duration and reason, should be provided
- Significant absences caused by ill health (i.e. Absences longer than 10 school days) should be certified.

The school will inform the Educational Welfare Officer in writing where a child is suspended or expelled for 6 days or more, where the child has missed 20 or more days in a school year, where attendance is irregular and when the pupil is removed from the school register.

## 10. RECORDS

A standardised record system will be used to track an individual pupil's behaviour. Such records will contain;

- Incidents of misbehaviour,
- Interventions used to improve behaviour, including contact with parent(s)/guardian(s) or referral to other agencies
- Evidence of improved behaviour
- Any sanctions imposed, and the reasons they were imposed

Pupils will be told when a record is being made about their behaviour, and the reasons for keeping a record will be explained.

All records will be kept in accordance with the data protection act 1988 and the data protection (amendment) act 2003.

# 11. ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

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 Mahoonagh 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 by the Department of Education & Skills in September 2013.

## 11.1 Best Practice in the Prevention of Bullying Behaviour

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.

## 11.2 Definition of Bullying

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.

**Examples of bullying behaviours – this list is not exhaustive.**

<p><b>General behaviours which apply to all types of bullying</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harassment based on any of the nine grounds in the equality legislation e.g. sexual harassment, homophobic bullying, racist bullying etc.</li> <li>• Physical aggression</li> <li>• Damage to property</li> <li>• Name calling</li> <li>• Slagging</li> <li>• The production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other materials aimed at intimidating another person</li> <li>• Offensive graffiti</li> <li>• Extortion</li> <li>• Intimidation</li> <li>• Insulting or offensive gestures</li> <li>• Invasion of personal space</li> <li>• A combination of any of the types listed.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cyber</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Denigration:</b> Spreading rumors, lies or gossip to hurt a person's reputation or feelings</li> <li>• <b>Harassment:</b> Continually sending vicious, mean or disturbing messages to an individual</li> <li>• <b>Impersonation:</b> Posting offensive or aggressive messages under another person's name</li> <li>• <b>Outing:</b> Posting or sharing confidential or compromising information or images</li> <li>• <b>Exclusion:</b> Purposefully excluding someone from an online group</li> <li>• <b>Cyber stalking:</b> Ongoing harassment and denigration that causes a person considerable fear for his/her safety</li> <li>• Silent telephone/mobile phone call</li> <li>• Abusive telephone/mobile phone calls</li> <li>• Abusive text messages</li> <li>• Abusive email</li> <li>• Abusive communication on social networks e.g.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facebook/Ask.fm/ Twitter/You Tube or on games consoles</li> <li>Abusive website comments/Blogs/Pictures</li> <li>Abusive posts on any form of communication technology</li> </ul>
<p><b>Identity Based Behaviours</b>  <b>Including any of the nine discriminatory grounds mentioned in Equality Legislation</b> (gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community).</p>	
<p><b>Race, nationality, ethnic background and membership of the Traveller community</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discrimination, prejudice, comments or insults about colour, nationality, culture, social class, religious beliefs, ethnic or traveller background</li> <li>Exclusion on the basis of any of the above</li> </ul>
<p><b>Relational</b></p>	<p>This involves manipulating relationships as a means of bullying. Behaviours include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Malicious gossip</li> <li>Isolation &amp; exclusion</li> <li>Ignoring</li> <li>Excluding from the group</li> <li>Taking someone's friends away</li> <li>Spreading rumours</li> <li>Breaking confidence</li> <li>Talking about a child loudly enough so that the victim can hear</li> <li>Physical Intimidation</li> <li>Attacks</li> <li>Threats</li> <li>Use of terminology in a derogatory way</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sexual</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unwelcome or inappropriate sexual comments or touching</li> <li>Harassment</li> </ul>
<p><b>Special Educational Needs, Disability</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Name calling</li> <li>Taunting others because of their disability or learning needs</li> <li>Taking advantage of some pupils' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to recognise and defend themselves against bullying</li> <li>Taking advantage of some pupils' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to understand social situations and social cues.</li> <li>Mimicking a person's disability</li> <li>Setting others up for ridicule</li> </ul>

## 11.3 School Contact Personnel

The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying is (are) as follows:

- Class Teacher
- Principal Teacher
- Deputy Principal.

## 11.4 Education & Prevention Strategies

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:

- The anti-bullying module of the SPHE programme as it applies during each school year,
- At least five awareness-raising exercises per school year for each class group (*e.g. from the "Awareness-Raising" strand of the Anti-Bullying Campaign, via its website*), pro-actively explaining the nature and variety, causes, consequences and unacceptability of bullying.
  - Pupils are helped to examine the issue of bullying in a calm rational way, outside of the tense context of particular bullying incidents. In the process they are made more aware of the nature of bullying and the various forms that it can take.
  - Pupils are made aware that the consequences of bullying behaviour are always bad for those who are targeted, even if this is not always obvious at the time.
  - Pupils are encouraged to recognise, reject and report bullying behaviour, either spontaneously or through questionnaires that are regularly used in the school.

Through presentations or other exercises, the school staff and parents/guardians are made aware of the nature of bullying and the signs that might indicate that a pupil is being bullied. They are encouraged to be vigilant in watching out for signs of bullying and to report any suspicion of bullying they may have to the "Relevant Teacher" (in the case of staff members) or any staff member (in the case of parents/guardians).

Through regular reports in school newsletters and other communications as well as at meetings with parent/guardian groups parents/guardians are regularly informed of the activities of the school 'Anti-Bullying Team' and encouraged to support its work.

The school have implemented the Incredible Years Programme and Restorative Practices strategies in order to prevent bullying within the school. These programmes ensure the children are aware that their behaviours have consequence and put the responsibility on the child to acknowledge the wrong doing, and together with the teacher decide what is the next step to solve the issue. Through circle time, stories and drama the children will explore the impact bullying has on others and identifies all the behaviours that are considered bullying.

## 11.5 Investigation & Follow-Up Procedures

1. 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 (e.g. the six step approach available from the "Dealing with Incidents" section of the Anti-Bullying Campaign website) are as follows:
  - The 'Relevant Teacher' investigates all instances of reported or suspected bullying behaviour (including anonymous complaints), 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 parents/guardians of pupils who are alleged to have been involved in bullying behaviour will be informed.
  - The Relevant teacher will meet with the complainant and the pupils who are alleged to have been involved in bullying behaviour (in the presence of their parents/guardians) to establish the nature and extent of the behaviour and any reasons for it.
  - The Relevant Teacher will determine if bullying behaviour has occurred.
  - In the event that bullying behaviour is found to have occurred, it will be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy, the pupil is also asked to verbally agree that they will treat all pupils fairly, equally and respectfully including the targeted pupil(s). This will be recorded by the Class Teacher.
  - The 'Relevant Teacher' does not apportion blame but rather treats bullying behaviour as a "mistake" that can and must be remedied. S/he emphasises that the intention is not to punish perpetrators but to talk to them, to explain how harmful and hurtful bullying is and to seek a promise that it will stop. If that promise is forthcoming and is honoured there will be no penalty and that will be the end of the matter. Pupils who report bullying therefore are not getting others "in trouble" so much as enabling them to get out of trouble into which they may ultimately get if the bullying continued.
  - When an investigation is completed and/or a bullying situation is resolved the 'Relevant Teacher' will complete a report, to include the findings of the investigation, the strategy adopted and the outcome of the intervention, as well as any other relevant information.
  - If a pupil has made such a promise but then chooses to break that promise and continue the bullying behaviour, this can then no longer be considered a "mistake." In this event parent(s)/guardian(s) will be informed and requested to sign their daughter/son's promise. Breach of this additional promise by further bullying behaviour is regarded as a very grave matter and a serious sanction may be imposed by the school authorities, in accordance with the School's Code of Behaviour.
  - All documentation regarding bullying incidents and their resolution is retained securely in the school.

## 11.6 Working with Pupils Affected by Bullying

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

- Bullied pupils:
  - Ending the bullying behaviour,
  - Changing the school culture to foster more respect for bullied pupils and all pupils,
  - Changing the school culture to foster greater empathy towards and support for bullied pupils,
  - Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through the awareness-raising programme,
  - Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through the speedy identification of those responsible and speedy resolution of bullying situations,
  - After resolution, enabling bullied pupils to complete a victim-impact statement,
  - Making adequate counselling facilities available to pupils who need it in a timely manner,
  - Helping bullied pupils raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that help develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school).
  - Implementing a "buddy system" in the school (*if applicable*),
- Bullying pupils:
  - Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are not blamed or punished and get a "clean sheet,"
  - Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are doing the right and honorable thing and giving them praise for this,
  - Making adequate counseling facilities available to help those who need it learn other ways of meeting their needs besides violating the rights of others,
  - Helping those who need to raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school),
  - Using learning strategies throughout the school and the curriculum to help enhance pupils' feelings of self-worth,
  - In dealing with negative behavior in general, encouraging teachers and parents to focus on, challenge and correct the behaviour while supporting the child,
  - In dealing with bullying behaviour seeking resolution and offering a fresh start with a "clean sheet" and no blame in return for keeping a promise to reform.

## 11.7 Supervision & Monitoring

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.

## **11.8 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.

## **11.9 Policy Adoption**

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on March 9<sup>th</sup> 2016.

## **11.10 Communication**

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.

## 11.11 Implementation Review

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 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.

This policy was discussed and has been amended in conjunction with new procedures and initiatives taken on by the school in relation to behavior. This is a revision of the original document.

## POLICY RATIFICATION

The policy was ratified by the Board of Management of Mahoonagh N.S. at its meeting held on *Date 28<sup>th</sup> February 2019*

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Principal

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## PATRON'S APPROVAL

This policy has been approved by St. Senan's Education Office, acting on behalf of the Patron  
Bishop Brendan Leahy

