**Anti-Bullying Policy**

***Assumption Junior School***

***Walkinstown***

***Dublin 12.***



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Introduction

In accordance with the requirements of the Education Welfare Act 2000 the Board of Management has adopted the following anti bullying policy within the framework of the school’s 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 2013

The BOM of the Assumption Junior School recognises the serious nature of bullying and the negative impact it can have on the child, their education and their family.

We believe that our pupils have the right to learn in a supportive, caring and safe environment. When a school is organised and prepared it can minimise the occurrences of bullying.

Our Mission Statement includes our aims to enhance pupils’ self-esteem and the development of personal responsibility. In our school, it is made clear that bullying is a form of anti-social behaviour. It is always wrong and will not be tolerated.

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 certain key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour.

We endeavour to promote a positive school culture and climate which-

* is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity
* encourages pupils to share and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment
* promotes respectful relationships across the school community
* displays effective leadership
* has a school-wide approach
* shares an understanding of what bullying is and its impact
* implements education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that-
* build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils
* explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular homophobic and transphobic bullying
* provides effective supervision and monitoring of pupils;
* provides supports for staff
* consistently records, investigates and follows up on bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies)
* regularly evaluates the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

What is 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

* 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.

Bullying is not…

* **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, the making public of a once-off offensive or hurtful 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.

Types of Bullying

The following are some of the types of bullying behaviour that can occur amongst pupils

* Physical aggression: This behaviour includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping people. It may also take the form of severe physical assault. While pupils often engage in ‘mess fights’, they can sometimes be used as a disguise for physical harassment or inflicting pain.
* Intimidation: Some bullying behaviour takes the form of intimidation: it may be based on the use of very aggressive body language with the voice being used as a weapon. Particularly upsetting can be a facial expression which conveys aggression and/or dislike.
* Isolation/exclusion and other relational bullying: This occurs where a certain person is deliberately isolated, excluded or ignored by some or all of the class group. This practice is usually initiated by the person engaged in bullying behaviour and can be difficult to detect. It may be accompanied by writing insulting remarks about the pupil in public places, by passing around notes about or drawings of the pupil or by whispering insults about them loud enough to be heard. Relational bullying occurs when a person’s attempts to socialise and form relationships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined. One of the most common forms includes control: “Do this or I won’t be your friend anymore”(implied or stated); a group ganging up against one person (girl or boy); non-verbal gesturing; malicious gossip; spreading rumours about a person or giving them the “silent treatment”.
* Cyber-bullying: This type of bullying is increasingly common and is continuously evolving. It is bullying carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as text, social network sites, e-mail, instant messaging (IM), apps, gaming sites, chat-rooms and other online technologies. Being the target of inappropriate or hurtful messages is the most common form of online bullying. As cyber-bullying uses technology to perpetrate bullying behaviour and does not require face to face contact, cyber-bullying can occur at any time (day or night). Many forms of bullying can be facilitated through cyber-bullying. For example, a target may be sent homophobic text messages or pictures may be posted with negative comments about a person’s sexuality, appearance etc.
* Name calling: Persistent name-calling directed at the same individual(s) which hurts, insults or humiliates should be regarded as a form of bullying behaviour. Often name calling of this type refers to physical appearance, e.g., size or clothes worn. Accent or distinctive voice characteristics may attract negative attention. Academic ability can also provoke name calling. This tends to operate at two extremes. There are those who are singled out for attention because they are perceived to be weak academically. At the other extreme there are those who, because they are perceived as high achievers, are also targeted.
* Damage to property: Personal property can be the focus of attention for bullying behaviour. This may result in damage to personal property. The contents of school bags and pencil cases may be scattered on the floor. Items of personal property may be defaced, broken, stolen or hidden.

Rights and Responsibilities

In the daily life and routines of the school the ways in which people interact with each other significantly affect each person’s sense of self-worth, belonging and well-being. The fostering of good quality interpersonal relationships among teachers, students, parents and ancillary staff is a responsibility shared by everyone.

All members of the school community have a role to play in the prevention of bullying.

***Responsibilities of the Board of Management***

* The Board of Management is responsible for ensuring that all members of the school community are enabled to deal effectively with bullying. The Board is committed to providing time and resources for the implementation of the policy. The Board will ensure that proper supervisory and monitoring measures are in place to prevent bullying and to deal with incidents appropriately as they arise.

***Responsibilities of School Staff***

* To acknowledge that bullying is a shared responsibility within the school.
* To model good behaviour and treat everyone with respect
* To implement prevention and intervention strategies which build and maintain safe learning environment for the whole school community.
* To empower students to deal with conflict in constructive ways.
* To take all reports of bullying seriously and to report them to the Principal if warranted.
* To document any serious bullying incidents using the Bullying Incident Report Form.

***Responsibilities of Pupils***

* To show consideration, respect and support towards others.
* To be able to identify bullying behaviour.
* To not bully others.
* To tell if they are being bullied or if they see someone else being bullied.
* To engage in responsible reporting when witnessing or experiencing bullying behaviour.
* To develop a sense of empathy for targeted members of the school community and as a result take safe and sensible action as a bystander.

***Responsibilities of Parents***

* To support the school in the implementation of the policy.
* To watch out for signs that their child may be being bullied.
* To speak to the class teacher if their child is being bullied or they suspect that this is happening.
* To speak to the class teacher as soon as they are aware that issues are arising which are affecting their child.
* To instruct their children to tell if they are being bullied or if they have seen other
* pupils being bullied.
* ·         To notify the school if they think that their child is displaying bullying behaviour and to work with the school in addressing this problem. They should not defer letting the school know of any issue, in the hope that the problem will go away.
* ·         To ensure that if their children are online that they are using social media in a safe and responsible manner; parental supervision is very important in this area as there are risks associated with internet/website access.
* ·         To never directly approach a student, or the parent of a student, at the school to intervene in behavioural issues.

Relevant Staff

The relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying in the Assumption Primary School are class teachers, support teachers, Deputy Principal and Principal. Any teacher may act as a relevant teacher if circumstances warrant it.

Strategies to prevent Bullying

***Links to the Curriculum***

The school implements the SPHE curriculum, according to our school plan, this includes the teaching of Stay Safe Programmes. This programme is taught in its entirety every second year. The Walk Tall Programme will be used to support the SPHE curriculum

The school will specifically consider the additional needs of SEN pupils with regard to programme implementation and the development of skills and strategies to enable all pupils to respond appropriately.

***School Community***

Throughout the school huge emphasis is placed on respect for all members of the school community; adults should model the type of behaviours they promote to pupils.

The promotion of the value of diversity to address issues of prejudice and stereotyping and highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour.

The fostering and enhancing of the self-esteem of all our pupils through both curricular and extracurricular activities. Pupils are provided with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth through formal and informal interactions.

Whole staff professional development on bullying to ensure that all staff members develop an awareness of what bullying is, how it impacts on pupils’ lives and the need to respond to it-prevention and intervention. Bullying is discussed at staff meetings.

School wide awareness raising and training on all aspects of bullying, including pupils, parent(s)/guardian(s) and the wider school community (eg: talks for parents on Stay Safe, Internet Safety/cyberbullying).

Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extra- curricular activities. Non-teaching and ancillary staff are encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers. Supervision also applies to monitoring pupils’ use of communication technology within the school. No child is allowed to have a personal mobile phone or tablet in school.

Buddy system and other student support activities that can help to support pupils and encourage a culture of peer respect and support.

The school’s Anti-Bullying Policy is discussed with pupils and it is available on the school website.

The implementation of regular whole school awareness measures, for example at group assemblies.

Encourage a culture of telling, with particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders. In that way pupils gain confidence in ‘telling’. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It should be made clear to all pupils that when they report incidents of bullying, they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.

Ensuring that pupils know who to tell and how to tell, e.g.:

* Direct approach to teacher at an appropriate time, for example after class.
* Hand note in with homework.
* Worry box for older children.
* Get a parent(s)/guardian(s) or friend to tell on your behalf.
* Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place. All teachers will teach children to recognise bullying behaviour and encourage them to use their voice to say ‘no’ to such behaviour

Identify clear protocols to encourage parent(s)/guardian(s) to approach the school if they suspect that their child is being bullied.

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Investigating Instances of Bullying

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 detailed below. The primary aim in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame).

Every effort will be made to ensure that all involved (including pupils, parent(s)/guardian(s) understand this approach from the outset.

***Reporting bullying behaviour***

* Pupils are encouraged to report bullying behaviour as soon as possible.
* Any pupil or parent(s)/guardian(s) may bring a bullying incident to the attention of any teacher in the school.
* All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying, will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher.
* Teaching and non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), caretaker, cleaners must report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher.

***Investigating and dealing with incidents***

* In investigating and dealing with bullying, the (relevant) teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved.
* Parent(s)/guardian(s) and pupils are required to co-operate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving any issues and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved as quickly as possible.
* Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach.
* Where possible incidents should be investigated outside the classroom to ensure the privacy of all involved.
* All interviews should be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this way.
* When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher should seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This should be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with conflict in a non-aggressive manner.
* Teachers who are investigating bullying behaviour should keep a written record of their discussions with those involved.
* If a group is involved, each member should be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved should be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member should be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other’s statements.
* It is school policy to request the assistance of another staff member in such investigations.
* Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that may face them from the other members of the group after the interview by the teacher;
* It may also be helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s) (if appropriate).
* Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school’s Anti-Bullying Policy and efforts should be made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied.
* In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the parties involved will be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken (by reference to the school policy). The school will give parent(s)/guardian(s) an opportunity to discuss ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports provided to the pupils.
* It must also be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parent(s)/guardian(s) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school.

Dealing with Instances of Bullying

In Assumption Junior School we try to enable those involved to engage in a mediated conversation, the purpose of which is to allow for the victim to have a voice and the perpetrator to understand the consequences of their actions.  All staff will be made aware of the importance of this practice.

* A verbal warning is given to the perpetrator to stop the offending behaviour. This is done in the presence of the perpetrator’s parent(s), the Principal and another teacher. The perpetrator is requested to apologise to the victim in the presence of the Principal and another teacher and to give an assurance that the offending behaviour will stop.
* There may be loss of specific privileges which may include the following: exclusion from break/lunchtime play for a specific number of days; parents may be requested to escort their child to and from school (this is in extreme circumstances).
* If bullying reoccurs, it may be deemed necessary to have the perpetrator sign a contract of agreement to stop the bullying behaviour. This would also be signed by the parent(s)/ guardian(s) The contract will be monitored regularly by the Principal with the assistance of the class teacher and another member of staff to see that the situation is resolved.
* If after the above, the bullying behaviour reoccurs a formal meeting of the perpetrator, his/her parents /guardians, the Principal and Chairperson of the Board of Management will be held, and a formal suspension may occur.

The Chairperson has the authority to enact an immediate suspension. Alternatively, in certain circumstances he/she may issue a final Chairperson’s warning to the perpetrator.

* While the school supports parents and pupils in dealing with issues that arise outside of school, parents should be aware that the school is limited in its power to deal fully with issues that arise while the children are not under our care.

Follow up

In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant teacher must, as part of his/her professional judgement, take the following factors into account:

* Has the bullying behaviour has ceased?
* Have the issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable?
* Have the relationships between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable?
* Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parent(s)/guardian(s)s or the school Principal or Deputy Principal

Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved should be arranged separately with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date if this is deemed necessary and if the pupil who has been bullied is ready and agreeable.

Where a parent(s)/guardian(s) is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parent(s)/guardian(s) will be referred, as appropriate, to the school’s complaints procedures.

In the event that a parent(s)/guardian(s) has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school will advise the parent(s)/guardian(s) of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

Recording

It is important that all recording of bullying incidents is done in an objective and factual manner. This school’s procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour are as follows:

***Informal- pre-determination that bullying has occurred***

* All staff keep a written record of any incidents witnessed by them or notified to them. All incidents should be reported to the relevant teacher.
* While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the relevant teacher must keep a written record of the reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same. The relevant teacher must inform the Principal of all incidents being investigated.

***Formal Stage 1-determination that bullying has occurred***

* If it is established by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher must keep appropriate written records which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.

***Formal Stage 2-known as Appendix 3 (From DES Procedures)***

The relevant teacher must use the recording template known as **Appendix 3**to record the bullying behaviour. This is available from the principal’s office.

It will be used only in the following circumstances:

* In cases where he/she considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour occurred; and
* Where the school has decided as part of its anti-bullying policy that in certain circumstances bullying behaviour must be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable.
* When the recording template is completed, it will be retained in the Principal’s office in line with our Data Protection Policy.

Established intervention strategies

* Teacher conversations with pupils.
* Negotiating agreements between pupils and following these up by monitoring progress. This can be on an informal basis or implemented through a more structured mediation process.
* Working with parent(s)/guardian(s)s to support school intervention
* SPHE lessons
* Circle Time and similar strategies in order to address issues.
* Anti-bullying programme (Stay Safe and Walk Tall) and awareness-raising throughout the school year.
* If a pupil requires further support NEPS will be contacted for advice.

Monitoring and Supervision of Pupils

The Board of Management confirms that appropriate supervision and monitoring is in place to prevent and deal with instances of bullying and bullying behaviour and facilitate early intervention.

There are agreed supervision practices in the school.

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 members of the school community 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 has been made available to school personnel and is published on the school website which is accessible to parents and pupils.  A copy of this policy will be made available to the Parent’s Association Department of Education and the Patron if requested.

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year, using Appendix 4 of Circ. 045/2013.