

Anti-Bullying Policy

Scope of Policy

This policy applies to the WMPS school community in their relationships to each other – Pupils, Teachers, Principal, Board of Directors, Administration, Parents and all ancillary staff. Bullying clearly runs counter to the school's ethos of caring for each other and showing respect. Insofar as possible we aim to prevent bullying behaviour by instilling the ideal in our school community that no one has the right to make another feel unsafe or fearful by any action, use of language or gesture.

Rationale of Policy

- The Department of Education requires that all schools have a written policy on bullying that is made available to the whole school community.
- The Principal and Board of Directors have a statutory obligation to see that a policy is in place that reflects the ethos and core principals of the school's philosophy.
- Involving and encouraging all members of the school community to respect this policy therefore promoting a collective ownership and best practice of a living policy.

School Ethos

Wicklow Montessori Primary School's ethos is contained within our [Mission Statement](#).

Policy Link to Ethos

- Pupils, Staff and Parents treat each other fairly; with care and respect thus providing an environment where each pupil can develop their full potential at their own pace.
- Bullying behaviour is not tolerated; this includes verbal, physical, psychological, damage to property, extortion, intimidation, racist or sexist abuse.
- Pupils, Staff and Parents feel safe and are able to report bullying without being afraid.
- The school community supports each other, blame is not apportioned and problems are resolved - this is vital if bullying situations are to be brought to an end.

What Constitutes Bullying?

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

Department of Education guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post Primary Schools' (Dublin: Sept 2013)

Types of bullying behaviour that are deemed inappropriate.

- **VERBAL BULLYING:** can include abusive language, spiteful teasing or making cruel remarks and spreading false rumours about the individual's appearance, size, schoolwork, family, family circumstances, race, religion, abilities, skills.
- **PHYSICAL BULLYING:** is the most obvious form of bullying and occurs when a person is physically harmed, through being bitten, hit, kicked, punched, scratched, spat at, tripped up, having his or her hair pulled or any other form of physical attack.
- **GESTURE BULLYING:** there are many different forms of nonverbal threatening gestures which can convey intimidating and frightening messages, e.g. insulting or threatening someone using a hand gestures.
- **EXCLUSION BULLYING:** this is particularly hurtful because it isolates the individual from his/her peer group and is very hard for the individual to combat.
- **EXTORTION BULLYING:** this type of bullying includes demands for money, possessions or equipment, lunch or food and is often accompanied by threats. Individuals may also be dared or forced to steal.
- **IDENTITY BASED BULLYING:** this includes homophobic bullying, racist bullying, bullying based on a person's membership of the travelling community and bullying of those with disabilities or special educational needs.
- **CYBER BULLYING:** utilises web pages, social networking sites, email and text messaging to abuse, intimidate and attack others, either directly or indirectly.
- **DAMAGE TO PROPERTY:** this can include ripping clothes, damaging books, destroying property and taking property.

(Isolated or once-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour including a once-off offensive or hurtful remark or a physical 'shoving' do not fall within this definition of bullying and should be dealt with, as appropriate, in accordance with the school's grievance procedure)

Preventing and Tackling Bullying Behaviour

The Principal, teachers and Board of Directors recognise the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can leave on the lives of pupils, and is therefore fully committed to the following key principals 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.
- 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.
- Embraces whole person development and a school-wide approach.
- Teaches a shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact.
- Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness-raising workshops and class circle-time) that builds empathy, respect and resilience in pupils and explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying. Continual teaching of S.P.H.E (Social, Personal and Health Education), facilitating anti-bullying workshops for 5th and 6th Class.

- Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils.
- Supports for staff.
- Vigilance in watching out for signs of bullying, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies)
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

Procedures for Dealing with Bullying Behaviour

The School is committed to resolving issues should a bullying incident occur. Our procedural steps for investigation, follow up and recording of bullying follow a culture of The Three R's:

RECOGNISE it for what it is.

REJECT it for what it does.

REPORT it so it can be effectively dealt with using a 'Reform, not Blame' approach.

1. The 'Relevant' teacher investigates all instances of reported or suspected bullying with a view to establishing the facts and bringing such behaviour to an end. This is done in a broad way. The whole classroom may be surveyed anonymously by the 'Relevant teacher', so to protect the source of the information from retaliation or further bullying. If unresolved repeated incidents may be reported to the Principal.
2. The Principal, through the 'Relevant teacher' reserves the right to talk to the pupils involved and to ask the pupils to write an account of what happened as part of the investigation. This is a standard procedure and does not imply that a student is guilty of misbehaviour or bullying.
3. Pupils who are alleged to have been involved in bullying behaviour are interviewed individually by the 'Relevant Teacher' to establish the nature and reasons for it. This is conducted in a non-adversarial and resolution focused manner.
4. The 'Relevant teacher' does not apportion blame but makes the bully(s) aware of the hurt and harm that they have caused and states that this behaviour must be remedied. The 'Relevant teacher' will ask for a signed promise (where age appropriate) from the pupil to stop his/her/their bullying behaviour and that they will treat all pupils fairly and respectfully including the targeted pupil(s). If that promise is honoured there will be no penalty and that will be the end of the matter. This way, pupils who report bullying are not getting others into trouble but enabling them to get out of trouble.
5. 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 investigations, the strategy adopted and the outcome of the intervention. Any other relevant information may also be included.
6. If a pupil has signed a promise and chooses to break that promise and continues the bullying behaviour, parent(s)/guardian(s) will be informed and asked to meet with the 'Relevant teacher' and/or The Principal. They will be asked to countersign their son/daughter(s) promise. Breach of this additional promise by further bullying behaviour is regarded as a very grave matter and serious sanctions may be imposed by the school. (see sanctions below)

(All documentation regarding bullying incidents and their resolution is retained securely in the school and is deemed confidential.)

Sanctions

- Detention or withdrawal of privileges
- Exclusion from certain school activities for a certain period of time
- A meeting with the school Principal, parent(s)/guardian(s) and perpetrator.
- In severe cases or where the perpetrator continues to break their promise the Principal and Board of Directors may consider suspending the pupil from school for a period of time or expelling them from the school.

Review

This policy will be monitored regularly by the Principal, teachers and the Board of Directors. The success criteria is the well-being and happiness of the whole school community in the light of any incidents of bullying behaviour. It was developed over time with consultation between the Board of Directors, the Principal and the teachers. The procedure of investigation, follow up and recording of bullying behaviour and our resolution programme has been endorsed by The Anti-bullying Campaign for Schools, Trinity College, Dublin and is recognized by the Department of Education, Dublin.