

# **Athboy Community School**



## **Anti-Bullying and Inclusion Policy**

***Ratified 11 June 2024***

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 School Mission Statement**

ACS prides itself on creating a safe, caring, creative and culturally diverse environment and on offering an innovative curriculum which challenges students to achieve their full potential.

We promote an open culture in which relationships between staff and students are prioritised.

We commend and reward positive behaviour and encourage student participation in all aspects of school life so they can flourish academically, physically, emotionally, spiritually and psychologically.

“Mol an Óige agus tiocfaidh sí”.

Our Core Values are; Care, Inclusion, Safety, Creativity and Respect.

### **1.2 Rationale**

In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the Guidelines for Developing a Code of Behaviour for Schools issued by the NEWB (Tusla), The Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice (2019) and Cineáltas (2022), the Action Plan for preventing and addressing bullying, the Board of Management of Athboy Community School has adopted the following Anti-Bullying Policy within the framework of the school's overall Code of Behaviour/Learning Code.

This policy has been developed in conjunction with staff, the Student Council and the Parents Association. 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.

This policy applies to the bullying of students by students and must be observed:

- While in school,
- While travelling to and from school and
- While attending any school activity including trips, sporting and cultural events.

Furthermore, the school reserves the right to apply its policy in respect of bullying that occurs at a location, activity, function or programme that is not school related if in the opinion of the Principal and/or the Board of Management the alleged bullying has created a hostile environment at the school for the victim, has infringed on the rights of the victim at the school and/or has materially or substantially disrupted the education process or the orderly operation of the school.

### 1.3 Commitment to the key principles of best practice:

The Board of Management of Athboy Community School recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of students and is therefore fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour:

- a. A positive school culture and climate which
  - Is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity
  - Encourages students to disclose incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment
  - Promotes respectful relationships across the school community
- b. Effective leadership
- c. A school-wide approach
- d. A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact
- e. Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that
  - Build empathy, respect and resilience in students, and
  - Explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying
- f. Effective supervision and monitoring of students
- g. Supports for staff
- h. Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies) and
- i. On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the Anti-Bullying and Inclusion Policy

### 1.4 Definition of Bullying

In accordance with Cineáltas: Action Plan for Bullying 2022, bullying is defined as follows:

*Bullying is targeted behaviour, online or offline, that causes harm. The harm caused can be physical, social and/or emotional in nature. Bullying behaviour is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power in relationships between two people or groups of people in society.*

*The core elements of bullying behaviour are;*

1. Targeted behaviour
2. Repeated behaviour
3. Imbalance of power

In *Cineáltas*, the Dept of Education and Science has created a roadmap for preventing and addressing bullying, They first set out the four areas of Wellbeing – Culture and Environment, Curriculum (Teaching and Learning), Relationships and Partnerships.

The roadmap is composed of four elements:

- Prevention: Education and empathy generation are the foundation for knowledge, respect and inclusion
- Support: Tangible and targeted supports provide a framework for school communities to work together.
- Community: Inclusive school communities that are connected build positive relationships and partnerships.
- Oversight: Visible leadership inspires positive for children and school community

The Department of Education intends to develop an implementation plan for *Cineáltas*: Action Plan on Bullying which will contain actions and sub-actions as well as timeframes for implementation which will be welcomed in due course.

Behaviour that meets the *Cineáltas* definition of bullying will be dealt with in accordance with the school's Learning Code.

### 1.5 Thematic Approach to Anti-bullying

During the *Cineáltas* Consultation process, several themes emerged as requiring focus by schools in order to prevent and pre-empt bullying behaviour in schools. They include the following:

- **Culture and Environment:** creating a culture of promoting inclusion, equality, respect and diversity with zero tolerance for bullying, access to safe places within the school, the supports available for students and staff, when required; the importance of trying to prevent bullying instead of simply reacting to it; raising awareness of how to address bullying and the impact of bullying among all members of the school community
- **Curriculum (Teaching and Learning):** An inclusive curriculum, which includes education on diversity and respect for other cultures, anti-racism and an increased awareness of unconscious bias for the whole school community; the importance of evidence based, age-appropriate and culturally relevant anti-bullying programmes such as FUSE; Books and lessons which reinforce the message of inclusion and equality, and that reflect the evolving nature of society
- **Policy and Planning:** The importance of inclusive approaches to school policy development, involving the meaningful participation of children and young people; The wellbeing of the whole school community at the heart of policies and plans; The development of a range of effective approaches within schools to enable the safe reporting of bullying behaviour, including anonymity in reporting; The need for reporting of all alleged bullying incidents, including details of the type of bullying behaviour and the approach to addressing it; The importance of school staff being trained to implement a range of appropriate responses to alleged bullying behaviour; The value of the School Self -Evaluation process for wellbeing promotion.
- **Relationships and Partnerships:** The importance of positive relationships across the whole school community to promote empathy, understanding and respect and raise awareness of unconscious bias; The importance of all school staff keeping a 'watchful eye' on the children and young people in their care with all school staff being confident in their knowledge of best practice in how to address bullying behaviour; The importance of a trusted adult in relation to disclosure of incidents of bullying; The meaningful involvement of children and young people; The importance of engagement with parents in recognition of their key role in preventing and addressing bullying; The benefits of encouraging greater diversity of involvement across the whole school community, including student councils and school staff; The potential for student mentors to play a role in preventing bullying in schools; The valuable role that Student Support Teams have to play

### 1.6 Reporting Bullying to the Gardaí

Bullying can have legal implications for those involved. It can be considered a criminal act and

charges can be brought by An Garda Síochána against anyone who it is deemed to have violated the Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act, (1997).

Any student or their parent/guardian has the right to make a report to An Garda Síochána if they feel they have had a crime committed against them under the Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act, (1997), and may be encouraged to do so by the school. The school, however, will make every effort to protect the welfare of its students and in accordance with this policy, other relevant policies of the school and the laws of the state, the Principal acting on behalf of the school may report any instances of physical contact, treats and harassment he/she deems appropriate to An Garda Síochána.

## 2. Types of Bullying

The following types of behaviour are examples that are included in the definition of bullying:

<p><b>General behaviours which apply to all</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Harassment based on any of the nine grounds which apply in the equality legislation e.g. sexual harassment, homophobic and transphobic 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>➤ The “look”</li> <li>➤ Invasion of personal space</li> <li>➤ A combination of any of the type listed</li> <li>➤ Saying “I just don’t like you” to exclude someone</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cyber Bullying</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Denigration: spreading rumours, lies or gossip to hurt a person’s reputation</li> <li>➤ Harassment: continually sending vicious, mean or disturbing images to an individual</li> <li>➤ Impersonation: posting offensive or aggressive messages under another person’s name</li> <li>➤ Flaming: using inflammatory or vulgar words to provoke an online fight</li> <li>➤ Trickery: fooling someone into sharing personal information which you then post online</li> <li>➤ Outing: posting or sharing confidential or compromising information or images</li> <li>➤ Exclusion: purposefully excluding someone from an online group</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Cyber stalking: 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 or picture messages</li> <li>➤ Sexually explicit or pornographic text messages or pictures</li> <li>➤ Abusive email</li> <li>➤ Abusive communication on social networks e.g. Facebook/ Snapchat/Instagram/Twitter/YouTube or on games consoles</li> <li>➤ Abusive website comments/blogs/pictures</li> <li>➤ Abusive posts on any form of communication/technology</li> </ul>
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### **3. The Equal Status Acts and Inclusion**

The Equal Status Acts and the nine grounds identified therein provide a useful and framework for acknowledging difference and diversity in our school community.

#### **The nine protected grounds of the Equal Status Acts**

1. Gender: Identifying as male, female or gender non-binary
2. Civil (marital) status: single, married, civil-partnered, widowed or divorced
3. Family status: a person who is a parent/guardian, a person in loco parentis of a minor, a fulltime carer or a pregnant person
4. Sexual orientation: a person who is heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, asexual
5. Religion: a person with religious beliefs or none
6. Age: everybody over 18 years
7. Disability: all physical, sensory and intellectual disabilities, a wide range of illnesses and impairments
8. Race: a person's colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins
9. Membership of the Traveller community: people commonly called travellers, who are identified by travellers and others as being people with a shared history, culture and traditions, identified as a having a nomadic way of life in Ireland

#### 4. Bullying based on the Nine Grounds (Equal Status Acts)

<b>Identity Based Bullying</b>		
<b>Homophobic bullying based on actual or perceived sexual orientation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Spreading rumours about a person's sexual orientation or that of their friend(s) or family</li> <li>➤ Taunting a person of different sexual orientation</li> <li>➤ Misgendering/Dead naming</li> <li>➤ Deliberately asking intrusive questions</li> <li>➤ Name calling e.g. gay, queer, lesbian ... used in a derogatory manner</li> <li>➤ Physical intimidation or attacks</li> <li>➤ Threats</li> </ul>	
<b>Transphobic – bullying based on gender identity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Spreading rumours about a person's gender identity or that of their friend(s) or family</li> <li>➤ Taunting a person of different or no gender</li> <li>➤ Misgendering/Dead naming</li> <li>➤ Deliberately asking intrusive questions</li> <li>➤ Name calling e.g. he/she etc.....</li> <li>➤ Physical intimidation or attacks</li> <li>➤ Threats</li> </ul>	
<b>Race, nationality, ethnic background and membership of the Traveller Community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Discrimination, prejudice, comments or insults about colour, nationality, culture, social class, religious beliefs ethnic, Traveller, Immigration status, background</li> <li>➤ Exclusion on any basis of any of the above</li> </ul>	

<b>Relational</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Suggestive remarks</li> <li>➤ Calling someone an illness, eg, "cancer"</li> <li>➤ Making hurtful comments to someone about self-harming</li> <li>➤ Making hurtful comments in relation to suicide to someone</li> </ul>
<b>Sexual</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Unwelcome or inappropriate sexual comments verbal or through online messaging</li> <li>➤ Inappropriate touching of a sexual nature</li> <li>➤ Harassment</li> </ul>
<b>Ability</b>	Special Educational Needs, Disability or Students of High Academic Ability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Name calling</li> <li>➤ Using disabilities to insult others, eg "retard" or "dyslexic"</li> <li>➤ Taunting others because of their disability, learning needs or academic achievements</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 or ability</li> <li>➤ Setting others up for ridicule</li> </ul>



## 5. Inclusion

### 5.1 Inclusion and Identity Based Behaviours

A significant proportion of bullying is rooted in a lack of respect for difference and in social inequality, both of which have their foundation in wider society. This understanding has led to a large body of research on identity-based bullying which takes into account the significant extent to which students may be more vulnerable to bullying because of prejudice, stereotyping and stigmatising people with particular identities.

This policy specifies identity-based bullying in order to support students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or who identify as male, female or non-binary as well as all students who don't conform to expected gender behaviour norms.

The rationale for this is the belief that;

“By specifically addressing sexual orientation and gender identity in school policies, LGBTQI students are less likely to experience harassment at school; are far more likely to report incidents of harassment when they occur; and are twice as likely to have a teacher intervene in incidents of homophobic bullying” (Kosciw et al, 2014; Hunt & Jensen, 2006)

#### Realisation of LGBTQI Identity

Research has confirmed that the most common age of realisation of LGBTQI identity is 12 years. This coincides with the start of post primary education. The age of realisation of trans identity is younger than sexual orientation identity, with the majority of transgender students aware that they were trans before leaving primary school.

#### “Coming Out”

The most common age for “coming out”, ie, the process through which a person realises that they are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender and begin to disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity to others, is 16 years old.

### 5.2 A Transition Plan

Where a student discloses to a staff member that they wish to attend school in their preferred gender, the school will start the process of transition in line with the student's wishes, needs and concerns. The plan will address details for each aspect of the transition including a timeline for each aspect. Where possible the parents/guardians of the student should also be involved in setting out the plan.

## 6. Signs and Symptoms of Bullying

### 6.1 Physical Indicators

- Unexplained bruising cuts etc.
- Loss of/ damage to personal property
- Hunger or thirst
- Frequent minor illnesses, headaches, tummy
- Bedwetting
- Loss of appetite
- Obsessive behaviour, physical appearance, weight
- Stammering
- Requests for extra money

## Emotional/ Psychological Indicators

- Outbursts of anger, temper, irritability at home
- Bullying brother and sisters, parents
- Well behaved child suddenly troublesome
- Changes in: mood, appetite, sleep pattern
- Tiredness, neglect of appearance
- Expressions of sadness, worthlessness
- Nightmares, crying at night
- Restless, dangerous, wild, disruptive behaviour
- Cynicism, black mood
- Implied or overt threats of suicide

## School Related Indicators

- Reluctance to go, wanting to be accompanied
- Returning in bad form
- Changing route
- Avoiding certain days/lessons
- Nervousness in class
- Punctuality problems
- Poor concentration
- Deterioration in schoolwork
- Expressions of hopelessness
- Fewer phone calls, friends calling, invitations
- Reluctance to take part in activities
- Abusive phone calls, texts, email

## 7. Education and Prevention Strategies

**7.1** The education and prevention strategies used in the school are as follows;

- a. **Core Values** - We work hard to ensure that our core values of Care, Courage and Support are embedded in our Care System, in our Learning Code, in our policies, protocols and in our daily classroom routines.

- b. **Programmes**

The Care Team also run a series of programmes aimed at groups of students at different stages which include;

- *Tackle your Feelings* – a mental health programme aimed at developing student self-awareness, selfcare and their emotions encouraging them to take care of their mental health
- *.B* – a mindfulness curriculum for 11-18 year olds
- *MindOut* - a universal programme first developed in 2004 to support the social, emotional and mental well-being of young people aged 15-18 years old in Irish schools
- *Alert Programme* - A taught programme on self-regulation.
- *Getting It Together: Organisational Skills* programme developed by the NBSS

The SEN Team also run a series of programmes for students which include;

- *Check and Connect: A Structured Adult Mentoring Intervention* for students
- *Vocabulary Enrichment Programme* - An Intervention to Improve Vocabulary Skills with

First-Year Students but is suitable for older students too

- *SNIP* – a literacy programme
  - The School Completion Programme runs activities to support students at risk of leaving school early
  - *Transition Programme from primary to post-primary* - The AEN coordinator and the 1<sup>st</sup> year year head and class tutors work with the students to support the bonding process as they transition to secondary school
- c. **The Nurture Classroom** is a programme which runs parallel to the timetable in which a team of teachers work with small groups of targeted students for two to three hours a week. The trauma-based response to adverse childhood experiences aims to reverse a negative perspective of school which the students may have as a result of their life experiences. These students may be avoiding school, acting out in classes or have withdrawn from school life and friends entirely. The classes are tailored to create a safe space where students can build good relationships with teachers, SNAs and peers with a view to creating an attachment and a more positive view of school and education. Participating students' progress is measured through the Boxall Profiling System which provides a record of progress and a means for the school to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme.
- d. Referral to external programmes run by outside Agencies in the case of a few students for whom the mainstream setting proves very challenging such as:
- Alternative Learning Programme (ALP) run by the DDLETB over 3 days per week and coinciding with the academic term.
  - ASPIRE – run by the CDETB for trauma response based support for students, application in place, exact operational structure as yet untried
- e. **Student Leadership** – The school actively develops leadership opportunities for students, these groups include:
- Involvement of the Student Council in contributing to a safe school environment is encouraged e.g. Buddy System, student mentoring and other student support activities to encourage a culture of care and support.
  - IDEAL (Inclusion, Diversity, Equality and Love) is a group who promote the inclusion of students who are LGBTQIplus and help organise themed weeks, eg, Stand Up Week
  - Prefects – 6<sup>th</sup> Year Students who act as role models to younger students and who actively participate in positive behaviour promotion through the School Asset Portfolio System
  - Junior Mentors – a group of 2<sup>nd</sup> Years who work with 1<sup>st</sup> Years to help with the transition from primary to post primary school
  - Senior Mentors – a group of Transition Year students who help organise themed weeks, sporting events and other occasions throughout the year [RP Mentors]
  - Digital Student Team- a group of students interested in ICT and supporting students with their own devices
- f. **Continuing Professional Development** - The school encourages teachers to participate in CPD opportunities around student wellbeing as they arise. Whole staff professional development on bullying is given to ensure that all staff develop an awareness of what bullying is, how it impacts on pupils' lives and the need to respond to prevention and intervention.
- g. **Curricular Strategies** - There are a number of curriculum components and programmes

which are particularly relevant to the prevention of bullying and the promotion of respect for diversity and inclusiveness.

- The SPHE programme makes specific provision for exploring bullying as well as the inter-related areas of belonging, integrating, communication, conflict, friendship, personal safety and relationships. These classes give class tutors the opportunity to explore and discuss issues relating to bullying with the students they know well and have a relationship with. The 1<sup>st</sup> Years do Stand Up, Get Up, a resilience programme for young teenagers. The FUSE five week module is taught to students during their SPHE Class in 1<sup>st</sup> Year 2<sup>nd</sup> Year.
- **The Relationship and Sexuality Education programme** provides opportunities to explore and discuss areas such as human sexuality and relationships, which have particular relevance to identity-based bullying.
- Cross-curricular opportunities are made and allow for a fostering of positive relationships, CBA planning between departments can make topics come alive for students, (CBA Policy in draft for 2023-24)
- **General Subjects** - There is space within the teaching of all subjects to foster an attitude of respect for all: to promote the value of diversity; to address prejudice and stereotyping and to highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour. In English, we use literature to stimulate discussion. In Geography and History, we use references to colonisation, exploitation and dictatorships to illustrate the negative aspect of power. We extend the work into many other areas such as Art, Religious Education and Physical Education.
- All students from 1<sup>st</sup> to TY study Digital Media Literacy to ensure that our students understand the power of social media and of how to be safe and to observe safety protocols while using the world wide web.
- The **Gender Studies Module** in Transition Year tackles issues around stereotyping, LGBTQI Issues, transphobic and homophobic bullying and many other relevant topics.
- **Sustainable Development Goals Programme** in TY encourages students to consider how to live in a more sustainable way and how by working together in pursuit of common goals we can live more harmoniously together and plan for a better future.
- **Young Social Innovators (YSI) Programme** in TY looks at how students can develop a socially based initiative that will benefit some element of our community and by their actions show empathy and understanding towards others.

h. **Supervision** -

- CCTV is in operation and many aspects of bullying are interwoven into the school's Learning Code. We ensure that there is adequate supervision during the school day.
- Toilets are supervised at breaks and the school has a policy of three students being allowed in the toilets at the one time to minimize opportunities for bullying, intimidation or anti-social behaviour.
- Non-teaching and ancillary staff are encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to relevant year head.

i. **Awareness** - We work to raise the awareness of bullying so that all members of the school community understand what bullying is and how the school deals with bullying behaviour. The subject is discussed with each year group at the start of the year

- Students, parents/guardians are informed of the Anti-Bullying and Inclusion policy on admission. This policy is made available to all members of the school community. It is circulated to new members of staff and published on the school website.
- Clear procedures for reporting bullying for teachers and for students (Appendices 1A & B) are in place and visible around the school

- We organise themed weeks for the whole school community to create awareness of various issues e.g. Friendship Week; Stand Up Week; Multi-cultural Week
- We conduct annual surveys of parent(s)/guardian(s) students and staff in relation to mental health and wellbeing and specifically bullying.
- We use class sociograms (Appendix E) to investigate possible bullying behaviour
- We have regular school or year group assemblies hosted by Year Heads and attended by Care Team members, the Deputy Principal and Principal regularly
- **Extra Curricular Activities** provide opportunities to promote strong student/staff relationships. We promote co-operation and group enterprise through team sports, school clubs and societies as well as through practical subjects. Sporting activities in particular can provide excellent opportunities for channelling and learning how to control aggression.

## 8. Education and prevention strategies to counter Cyberbullying

- We promote the positive use of technology; discuss etiquette, personal safety issues and digital literacy.
- Social Media Policy - we are in the process of drafting our social media policy and it will be updated every year
- Junior cycle students do curricular ICT subjects in the form of Digital Media Literacy and Coding and through these subjects they learn about safe use of the internet
- The introduction of Yondr pouches is a response to negative social media interactions which put students at risk of cyber bullying. Phones are placed in pouches before entry into school and are locked until students leave in the evening.
- We run a Safe Internet themed week each year to focus on safe use of the internet We work to prevent Cyberbullying by educating students on appropriate online behaviour, how to stay safe while online and also on developing a culture of reporting any concerns about cyber bullying.
- Cyberbullying is treated as a whole school community issue and another form of bullying within the school's Anti-Bullying policies and procedures. We teach students that bullying is wrong. We help them understand that cyberbullying is hurtful and wrong and to always treat others on and offline with respect .
- Inform and educate students and parents of the School's Acceptable Use Policies (AUPs) and the sanctions for the misuse of ICTs to cause hurt and distress to others
- Teach students that the Internet is not a private place and they should guard their private information online.
- Teach students that they have rights and responsibilities online.

The following additional strategies may be used from time to time:

- Promote anti-bullying (including cyberbullying) awareness days and events.
- Parents are supported in their role by being able to meet with the CT, Year Heads and Care Team at any time.
- Workshops on Cyberbullying conducted along with regular updates on the correct usage of the internet.

## 9. Anti-Bullying Student and Staff Team

Each year the AB Team will targets specific types of bullying and does a cycle of research by gathering data from students, staff and parents about prevalent types of bullying in our school and designs an initiative aimed at targeting those behaviours through awareness raising and

through a campaign aimed at reducing such behaviours.

In 2023-24, a Student Support Team met together to discuss bullying, to come up with surveys for parents/guardians, students and staff. They then presented to the staff and at assemblies to all year groups to create awareness and to launch a campaign aimed at reducing racial bullying by highlighting it and clarifying how students can report bullying and being clear about what will happen when bullying is reported.

we chose racial bullying as our target area of bullying as a result of feedback from student surveys which indicated that name calling was the most common type of bullying behaviour (43%) and that racial name calling (12%) was the most frequently cited type of name calling. 20% students said bullying was a big issue in the school and 38% responded "Maybe" to this question. 35% students said they had seen or heard bullying in that academic year and 14% actually reported it.

This campaign will continue into 2024-25.

## **10. Learning Code and Online Privacy**

The school policy in relation to online privacy clearly states:

*Circulating, publishing or distributing (including on the internet) material associated with school life including, but not limited to, material in relation to staff and students where such circulation undermines, humiliates or causes damage to another person is considered a serious breach of the school's Learning Code and may result in a student proceeding immediately to Level 4 of the Learning Code. This may result in a recommendation to Expel being brought to the Board of Management. As part of such disciplinary action the Board of Management reserves the right to suspend or expel a student or students where it considers the actions to warrant such sanctions.*

## **11. Roles and Responsibilities**

### **11.1 Role of Parents/Guardians**

Parents know their children best and can quickly recognise when all is not well. Parents are expected to support the school by encouraging their children to tell teachers of any problems they may be experiencing or see others experiencing. Parents should contact the school themselves if necessary.

Parents have an obligation to ensure that their children do not engage in any form of behaviour which could be regarded as bullying. Parents must also ensure that their children fully understand the consequences for them should they choose to engage in this sort of behaviour.

Parents are advised not to say or do anything to those alleged to be involved in bullying that would have the effect of inflaming the situation. This type of intervention generally makes matters worse and far more difficult to resolve. This Anti-Bullying Policy forms part of our Learning Code and must be accepted by parents and students as a condition of entry to the school.

### **11.2 Role of Year Head**

While a pupil or a parent may bring a concern of bullying to any staff member in the school, the member of teaching staff who has responsibility for investigating and dealing with bullying in the first instance is the Year Head.

For the purpose of this policy the Year Head is the initial contact who may be in a position to

resolve the bullying issue quickly as a result of knowing the students involved already. During the weekly Year Head Meeting with the Deputy Principal and the Principal, an item on the agenda is Anti-Bullying so reports of bullying will be mentioned in this forum. If the matter persists, the Year Head will work with the Deputy Principal to resolve issues as they arise. The Principal may be involved as the investigation progresses.

A student should feel comfortable reporting an incident of bullying to any one of these people:

- Class Tutor and/or Year Head/ and/or any member of the Care Team.
- Any member of staff with whom the student feels comfortable e.g. One Good Adult.
- Principal or Deputy Principal.

A student should feel comfortable reporting a bullying incident by using one, or any, of the following approaches;

- Directly approaching a teacher. e.g. after class, break/lunch time
- Contacting a staff member by Teams
- Placing an anonymous note on the Anti-Bullying button on the school App
- Getting a parent to contact the school by ringing the Year Head or CT.

### **11.3 The Role of the Board of Management**

- To ensure 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
- To ensure that the school in accordance with its obligations under equality legislation, takes all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the sexual harassment of students or the harassment of students 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.

## **12. Procedures for investigating and dealing with Bullying**

The 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:

### **12.1 Reporting Bullying Behaviour**

- A student or parent may bring a concern of bullying to any staff member in the school who will refer it to the year head initially, who investigate it.
- All staff including non-teaching staff such as secretaries, SNAs, caretakers and cleaners are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the year head initially.
- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying, will be investigated and dealt with by the year head initially who will refer it to the Deputy Principal when it has been confirmed to be a bullying incident.

### **12.2 Investigating and dealing with incidents**

- The primary aim for the Year Head in receiving reports of bullying is to conduct an initial investigation and to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame). In investigating and dealing with bullying, the year head will exercise their professional judgement based on this policy to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might

be resolved. The year head will refer any issues which are not resolved after the initial report to the Deputy Principal/Principal.

- Year Heads take a calm, unemotional problems solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by students, staff or parents.
- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying will be investigated and dealt with by the year head. Interviews will be held with the relevant students and those involved will be asked to write an account of the incident.
- The Principal will be informed that an investigation is initiated.
- Parents and students 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 through counselling.
- Incidents will be investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved. All interviews are conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all students concerned. Students who are not directly involved also provide very useful information in this way. When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the year head seeks answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This is done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner. The sociogram interview (Appendix E) can be an effective way of establishing what happened if the year head deems it appropriate.
- In cases where it has been determined by the year head/ the Deputy Principal that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved are contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and to explain the actions being taken. The school gives parents an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports for their students.
- Where the Year Head/Deputy Principal has determined that a student has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it is made clear to them how they are in breach of the school's Anti-Bullying Policy and efforts are made to enable them to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied. If a student is involved in bullying they will be warned to stop and parents will be informed as above. The student may receive a Learning Code sanction such as a Red Note or a detention. Professional help may be recommended for the student where it is considered necessary by the school. The student's behaviour will be carefully monitored and recorded. Serious and continuous bullying may result in the student being brought to the Board of Management.
- It is made clear to all involved (each set of students and parents) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, their parents and the school.

### **12.3 Follow up**

In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the year head must, as part of their professional judgement, take the following factors into account:

- Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased;
- Whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable;
- Whether 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) or the school Principal or Deputy Principal.

Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved may be arranged separately with a view to possibly bringing them together through Restorative Practice at a later date if the student who has been bullied is ready and agreeable. This can have a therapeutic effect and is engaged with through the students.



Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents may seek a meeting with the Principal to discuss the matter in full and make a complaint if necessary through the school's complaints procedure.

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

#### **12.4 Procedures for recording bullying behaviour:**

All records must be maintained in accordance with relevant GDPR legislation. The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour adhere to the following:

- All staff must keep a written record of any incidents witnessed by them or notified to them. All incidents must be reported to the year head.
- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the year head.
- If it is established by the Year Head/ Deputy Principal that bullying has occurred, the year head must keep a written record of the reports using the Anti-Bullying Record Form (see Appendix C), the students' accounts will be recorded on Bullying Incident Statements (see Appendix D).
- A record of the actions taken and any discussions with those involved will also be retained.
- The year head will inform the Deputy Principal of all incidents being investigated.
- The school in consultation with the year heads will develop a protocol for the storage of all records retained by each year head.
- In cases where the year head/deputy principal consider that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 10 school days after they have determined that bullying behaviour occurred, the matter will be discussed in a meeting with the principal, deputy principal and year head with a view to resolving the situation.

The following list of behaviours must be reported to the Principal or Deputy Principal immediately in accordance with the school's Learning Code and Child Protection Policies:

- Any violent, verbal or physical aggression or action by a student directed towards another student;
- Any assault by a student on another student;
- Any form of sexual harassment or assault;
- Any sexually explicit or offensive text or picture, cyber or otherwise.
- Any possession of, or distribution of pornographic material; cyber or otherwise;
- Any comment by a student about themselves or another student which refers to suicide or self-harm;
- Any behaviour(s) deemed to require the intervention of An Garda Síochána, or the Health Service Executive.

The Principal will report any confirmed incidences of bullying to the Board of Management the next meeting.

It is not the remit of the Anti-bullying procedures to deal with reported allegations of bullying/harassment between students and staff and/or parents/guardians and staff. These should be dealt with directly by the Principal. In relation to staff-to-staff incidents the school's Dignity at Work policy should be referred to.

## 12.5 Supports for students affected by Bullying

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

- a. **Restorative Practice:** A support structure for students who have experienced bullying is in place in Athboy Community School which is called RP Connect. The Board of Management have invested in this three year licence which offers training, mentorship and resources to embed Restorative Practice as the underlying relational approach for staff and students.
- b. **Care Team** - Our Care Team meet weekly and maintain a register of students who need extra support around mental health and wellbeing. Within the Care Team a wide variety of supports are available to students. Our Chaplain and Guidance Counsellor offer one to one counselling for students through a referral system. Our Behaviour for Learning teacher operates a referral system for students in need of support with behaviour. Our Home School Community Liaison Teacher works with families in need of extra support. The SEN Coordinator is responsible for the Continuum of Support document in which all of the supports provided for students as well as the SEN register. The SENCO also oversees all of the Student Support Files and is familiar with the needs of the more vulnerable students in the school. The principal and deputy principal ensure that staff have access to the resources and to the time needed to maximise the supports given to students.
- c. We maintain open communications between the school, parents and outside agencies where necessary. We work together to resolve the situation and protect the person being bullied.
- d. A programme of support for those students involved in bullying behaviour is also part of the school's intervention process. Students involved in bullying behaviour need assistance on an ongoing basis. For those with low self-esteem, opportunities are developed to increase feelings of self-worth. Therefore, we recognise that it is important that the learning strategies applied within the school allow for the enhancement of the pupil's self-worth. Students who engage in bullying behaviour may need counselling to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others. The Care Team and the student's One Good Adult may be called upon to help the student in this regard.
- e. Students who observe incidents of bullying are encouraged to discuss them with teachers.
- f. In a case where sanctions need to be imposed, they will be enforced, as per the school's Learning Code, by the Year Head, Deputy Principal or the Principal.
- g. Following an investigated incident of bullying, relevant teachers, Year Heads, Class Teachers, members of the Care Team and break-time supervising staff will monitor the behaviour of the students involved.
- h. Staff will be informed of necessary developments in bullying incidents, at staff meetings or on a one-to-one basis with the Year Head. They will be asked to monitor and observe the students or classes involved in specific incidents and to pass on these observations to the relevant teacher(s).
- i. Parents or guardians will be informed of serious incidents and, if necessary, they may be required to join in the restorative based approach to resolving the issue.
- j. A referral system will be in place to ensure that all incidents will be dealt with. If those investigating can't resolve the issue it will then be referred onto the following people
  - Teacher/Tutor
  - Year Head
  - Care Team Member - Guidance Counsellor/Chaplain/AEN Coordinator
  - Deputy Principal
  - Principal
  - Outside Agencies

### **12.6 Referral of serious cases to the HSE**

In relation to bullying in schools, Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011(Children First) and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools provide that in situations where “the incident is serious and where the behaviour is regarded as potentially abusive, the school must consult the HSE Children and Family Social Services with a view to drawing up an appropriate response, such as a management plan”.

Serious instances of bullying behaviour (as determined in accordance with this policy) in accordance with the Children First and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, are referred to the HSE Children and Family Services and/or Gardaí as appropriate.

The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools also provide that where school personnel have concerns about a child but are not sure whether to report the matter to the HSE, the Designated Liaison Person must seek advice from the HSE Children and Family Social Services. (TUSLA)

### **13. Supervision and Monitoring of Students**

The Board of Management confirms that the 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.

### **14. 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 students or staff on any of the nine grounds specified, ie. gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, race, disability, and membership of the travelling community.

### **15. Circulation of the Policy**

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 trustees and the Department of Education if requested.

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management every school year. Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, published on the school website.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on [date]

Signed:  
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Date:

Signed:  
(Principal)

Date:

Date for next review:

## Appendix A

<b>Anti-Bullying Procedures for Staff</b>	
<i>Note: Bullying is behaviour that is repeated, targeted and involves an Imbalance of Power.</i>	
<b>When a student indicates directly or indirectly to you that they are being bullied, or in any way mistreated by another, please follow these procedures</b>	
1	Refer matter to the Year Head unless the nature of the report dictates that you inform the DLP immediately.
2	The Year Head speaks to the students involved discretely and individually in a private place. If the issue does not meet the above criteria, the year head will counsel all students involved appropriately. The Year Head will also contact parents of the child accused of bullying and the child who may have been bullied.
3	If the year head determines that the situation meets the threshold for bullying, ie, that the behaviour is repeated, targeted and involves an imbalance of power, they will report it to the Deputy Principal and will fill out Anti-Bullying documentation.
4	The issue(s) are further investigated by the year head who completes the Anti-Bullying Record. All students involved including witnesses to the behaviour fill out the Bullying Incident Report Form.
5	Parents of student(s) who has been targeted and students who have engaged in the behaviour are updated and may be invited to the school.
6	At all stages, students are offered counselling with the Care Team. Disciplinary sanctions may apply for repeated or serious incidents to the student(s) engaged in bullying behaviour, eg, red note, detention
7	Serious bullying may result in the student being suspended/expelled
8	All records are retained/filed by the year head, the Deputy Principal and the Principal
<b>All bullying complaints must be addressed within 10 school days of the first report</b>	

## Appendix B

<b>Anti-Bullying Procedures for Students</b>	
<i>Note: Bullying is behaviour that is repeated, targeted and involves an Imbalance of Power.</i>	
Anyone may report a possible bullying issue to a staff member who will immediately refer it your Year Head.	
1	<p>The Year Head will speak to the students involved individually and in confidence in a Year Head's Office.</p> <p>The year head will listen to the students involved and all witnesses to the situation to find out what happened and will decide if it should be reported as a bullying issue. If not, the students engaged in the behaviour will be issued with a warning to stop the behaviour.</p> <p>Parents/guardians will get a phone call to explain what has happened.</p> <p>At the weekly Year Head Meeting, Bullying issues are discussed with the Principal and Deputy Principal.</p>
2	<p>If the situation is reported, the student who had been targeted fills out the Bullying Incident Report Form.</p> <p>The student(s) who engaged in the behaviour fills out an Incident Form. Any witnesses to the behaviour may also be asked to fill out an Incident Form.</p> <p>The year head will discuss the situation with Mr O'Dowd/Ms Garrihy</p>
3	<p>The year head will formally meet the parents/guardians engaging in the behaviour into school to discuss the behaviour. Depending on the situation, a sanction may be issued at this point. Students and parents/guardians will be informed that any further incidence of bullying may result in a more serious sanction.</p>
4	<p>Parents of student(s) who has been targeted are updated and may be invited to the school.</p>
5	<p>At all stages of the process, students are invited to engage in a counselling session with the Care Team.</p>
6	<p>Serious bullying may result in a student being asked to leave the school.</p>
7	<p>All records are retained/filed by the year head, the Deputy Principal and the Principal</p>
<b>All bullying complaints will be addressed within 10 school days of the first report</b>	

## Appendix C Anti-Bullying Record Form

Name of person(s) making the Report:		
<b>Source</b>	<b>Name(s)</b>	<b>Year / Class</b>
Student about whom report is being made		
Student(s) accused of the behaviour		
Reported by		
Other parties (please specify)		

### Location of incidents *(please tick appropriate box(es))*

Yard	Corridors	Toilets	In class	On the Bus	On way to or from School	Other (specify)

### Type(s) of Bullying Behaviour *(tick relevant box(es))*

<b>Physical aggression</b>	
<b>Cyber bullying</b>	

<b>Damage to property</b>	
<b>Intimidation</b>	
<b>Isolation/Exclusion</b>	
<b>Malicious gossip</b>	
<b>Name calling</b>	
<b>Other (specify)</b>	

*Identity-based bullying (Indicate the relevant category if applicable)*

<b>Homophobic or Transphobic</b>	<b>Disability / SEN related</b>	<b>Racist</b>	<b>Membership of the Traveller Community</b>	<b>Religion related</b>	<b>Other (specify)</b>



## Brief Description of Bullying Behaviour and its Impact

### Details of Actions Taken

	Action	Date	Result
1	Referred to Year Head who speaks to the students involved Parents of student who has been targeted by the behaviour have been informed Parents of student who has been accused of the behaviour have been informed		
2	The Year Head assesses if the situation falls requires further investigation		
6	Student who had been bullied has filled out an Incident Form		
7	Student engaged in bullying has filled out an Incident Form		
	Referred to DP  Students have been referred to the Care Team		
8	Sanction, if appropriate, has been given (specify) as per the Learning code		
9	All students have been followed up on after the incident		

**Signed:**

**Year Head Date:**

Date submitted to Anti-Bullying Coordinators:

Date submitted to Year Head:

Date submitted to Deputy Principal:

Date submitted to Principal:





**Appendix E**  
**Anti-Bullying Survey (Sociogram)**

Name:

Class:

1. Can you describe the atmosphere in your class when teachers are there/not there?

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2. Who are you friends with?

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3. Are you being bullied in any way? (if the answer is yes, gather details and reassure the pupil that the problem will be addressed)

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4. Are you aware of students name-calling/laughing being directed at a particular student(s)? What type of name-calling? (Racial, homophobic etc...)

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5. Are you aware if anyone in the class has been left out or ignored?

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6. Are you aware if anyone in the class has been spreading rumours about others?

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7. Are you aware of anyone being threatening or being physical with others?

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8. Are you aware if anyone in the class has been using social media, in a way that makes anyone feel bad about themselves?

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9. Is there a group of students that the rest of the class are fearful of or are intimidated by? If so, who is in that group and how do they intimidate?

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10. Are pupils from other classes giving anyone in this class a hard time? Examples?

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11. What can you do to help students who are being bullied?

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12. Is there an adult you could report to? If so, who is it?

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13. Have you been accused of bullying anyone? How do you feel about this?

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## Appendix F

### Checklist for annual review of the Anti-Bullying Policy and its Implementation

The Board of Management (the Board) must undertake an annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation. The following checklist must be used for this purpose. The checklist is an aid to conducting this review and is not intended as an exhaustive list. In order to complete the checklist, an examination and review involving both quantitative and qualitative analysis, as appropriate across the various elements of the implementation of the school's anti-bullying policy will be required.

	Yes/No
Has the Board formally adopted an anti-bullying policy that fully complies with the requirements of the <i>Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools</i> ?	
Has the Board published the policy on the school website and provided a copy to the parents' association?	
Has the Board ensured that the policy has been made available to school staff (including new staff)?	
Is the Board satisfied that school staff are sufficiently familiar with the policy and procedures to enable them to effectively and consistently apply the policy and procedures in their day to day work?	
Has the Board ensured that the policy has been adequately communicated to all pupils?	
Has the policy documented the prevention and education strategies that the school applies?	
Have all of the prevention and education strategies been implemented?	
Has the effectiveness of the prevention and education strategies that have been implemented been examined?	
Is the Board satisfied that all teachers are recording and dealing with incidents in accordance with the policy?	
Has the Board received and minuted the periodic summary reports of the Principal?	
Has the Board discussed how well the school is handling all reports of bullying including those addressed at an early stage and not therefore included in the Principal's periodic report to the Board?	
Has the Board received any complaints from parents regarding the school's handling of bullying incidents?	
Have any parents withdrawn their child from the school citing dissatisfaction with the school's handling of a bullying situation?	
Have any Ombudsman for Children investigations into the school's handling of a bullying case been initiated or completed?	
Has the data available from cases reported to the Principal (by the bullying recording template) been analysed to identify any issues, trends or patterns in bullying behaviour?	
Has the Board identified any aspects of the school's policy and/or its implementation that require further improvement?	
Has the Board put in place an action plan to address any areas for improvement?	

Signed  
Chairperson, Board of Management

Date

Signed  
Principal

Date

## Appendix G

## **Notification regarding the Board of Management's annual review of the Anti-Bullying Policy**

To:

The Board of Management of **Athboy Community School** wishes to inform you that:

The Board of Management's annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation was completed at the Board meeting of [date].

This review was conducted in accordance with the checklist set out in **Appendix 4** of the Department's *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, **Appendix 4** of *The Athboy Community School Anti-Bullying Policy*.

Signed

Date

Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed

Date

Principal



































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