



Anti-Bullying Policy

Policy Date: May 2024

Introduction

At Milltown Primary School we believe all forms of bullying behaviour are unacceptable. We believe that all pupils have the right to learn in a safe and supported environment. In Milltown the welfare and protection of each child is central. We recognise the dignity and worth of each individual and endeavour to keep all pupils safe from harm and to provide a secure, caring and happy learning environment for everyone.

The school fosters values of tolerance and mutual respect through promoting the self-esteem of all members of the school community. We are completely opposed to bullying in all its forms; bullying will not be tolerated.

Context

This policy has been developed in reference to the following legislation and guidance:

The Legislative Context:

- [The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2016](#)
- [The Education and Libraries Order \(Northern Ireland\) 2003 \(A17-19\)](#)
- [The Education \(School Development Plans\) Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2010](#)
- [The Children \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1995](#)
- [The Human Rights Act 1998](#)
- [The Health and Safety at Work Order \(Northern Ireland\) 1978](#)

The Policy and Guidance Context

- The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 Statutory Guidance for Schools and Boards of Governors (DE, 2019)
- [Pastoral Care in School: Promoting Positive Behaviour \(DE, 2001\)](#)
- [Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools: A Guide for Schools \(DE, 2017\)](#)
- [Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland \(Dept. of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, 2016\)](#)

- [Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland Policies and Procedures \(SBNI, 2017\)](#)

The International Context

- [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(UNCRC\)](#)

The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 provides a legal definition of bullying and places a duty on the Board of Governors to put in place measures to prevent bullying behaviour, in consultation with pupils and parents. It requires schools to record all incidents of bullying behaviour and alleged bullying incidents. The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 sets out under which circumstances this policy should be applied, namely:

- In school, during the school day
- While travelling to and from school
- When under control of school staff, but away from school (eg. school trip)
- When receiving education organised by school but happening elsewhere

The Education and Libraries Order (NI) 2003, requires the Board of Governors to:

- 'Safeguard and promote the welfare of registered pupils' (A.17)

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) sets out every child's right to:

- Be protected from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, maltreatment or exploitation. (A.19)
- Be protected from discrimination. (A.2)
- Express their views, in a supported and accessible way, on issues that affect them, and to have their opinions taken seriously. (A.12)
- Education. (A.28)

Ethos and Principles

The following ethos and principles underpin the procedures within Milltown Primary School:

- We are committed to a society where children and young people can live free and safe from bullying.
- We believe that every child and young person should be celebrated in their diversity.
- Bullying is highly distressing and is not tolerated in our school. All incidents of bullying are taken seriously.

- We are committed to a preventative, responsive and restorative anti-bullying ethos across the whole school.
- We value the views and contributions of children and young people, we will actively seek these views and we will respect and take them into account.
- A pupil's needs (whether a pupil displaying bullying behaviour or a targeted pupil) should be separated from their behaviour.
- Pupils who experience bullying behaviour will be listened to and supported.
- Pupils who display bullying behaviour will be listened to, encouraged to accept responsibility for their behaviour and supported to change their behaviour.
- We understand that everyone in our school community has a role to play in taking a stand against bullying and creating a safe and welcoming environment for all.

Consultation and Participation

The Board of Governors and Principal have developed this policy through a process of consultation with pupils, parents and staff regarding positive behaviour and bullying prevention measures, which must be in place.

- Pupils: Raising awareness through the curriculum, assemblies and through the use of online and paper based surveys.
- Parents: Raising awareness via newsletters; draft policy posted on school website for consultation.
- Staff: Awareness-raising training in understanding what bullying is, agreeing the school's definition and Levels of Intervention in responding to bullying behaviour and exploration and discussion of the draft Anti-Bullying policy.
- Governors: consultation before formal adoption of the policy.

We recognise the importance of working in partnership with parents, staff, and pupils in preventing bullying behaviour occurring and in responding to such unacceptable behaviour promptly and effectively.

What is Bullying?

The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 provides the legal definition of bullying:

The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016

Definition of Bullying

In this Act bullying includes (but is not limited to) the repeated use of-

(a) Any verbal, written or electronic communication.

(b) Any other act (*), or

(c) Any combination of those,

by a pupil or a group of pupils against another pupil or a group of pupils, with the intention of causing physical or emotional harm to that pupil or group of pupils.

(*) "act" includes omission.

The Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forum (NIABF) defines bullying as behaviour, that is usually repeated, by one or more persons intentionally to hurt, harm or adversely affect the rights and needs of another or others.

A One-Off Incident

When assessing a one-off incident, to make a decision on whether to classify it as bullying, the school shall consider the following criteria:

- severity and significance of the incident
- evidence of pre-meditation
- impact of the incident on individuals (physical/emotional)
- impact of the incidents on wider school community
- previous relationships between those involved
- any previous incidents involving the individuals

Any incidents which are not considered bullying behaviour will be addressed under the Positive Behaviour Policy.

The following unacceptable behaviours, when repeated, targeted and intentionally hurtful, may be considered a bullying behaviour:

Verbal or Written Acts

- saying mean and hurtful things to, or about, others
- making fun of others
- calling another pupil mean and hurtful names
- telling lies or spread false rumours about others
- try to make other pupils dislike another pupil/s

Physical Acts

- hitting
- kicking
- pushing
- shoving
- material harm, such as taking/stealing money or possessions or causing damage to possessions

Omission (Exclusion)

- Leaving someone out of a game
- Refusing to include someone in group work

Electronic Acts

- Using online platforms or other electronic communication to carry out any of the written acts noted above
- Impersonating someone online to cause hurt
- Sharing images (e.g. photographs or videos) online to embarrass someone

This list is not exhaustive, other behaviours which fit with the definition may be considered bullying behaviour.

Motivations behind bullying may include but are not limited to:

- Age
- Appearance
- Breakdown in peer relationships
- Community background

- Political affiliation
- Gender identity
- Race
- Religion
- Disability / SEN
- Ability
- Looked After Child status
- Young Carer status

Bullying is an emotive issue, therefore it is essential that we ensure we use supportive, understanding language when discussing these matters. For that reason, we will not refer to a child as 'a bully', nor will we refer to a child as 'a victim'. Instead, we will refer to the child by describing the situation surrounding that child, for example:

- **A child displaying bullying behaviours**
- **A child experiencing bullying behaviours**

We encourage all members of the school community to use this language when discussing bullying incidents.

In determining 'harm' we define:

- Emotional or psychological harm as intentionally causing distress or anxiety by scaring, humiliating or affecting adversely a pupil's self-esteem.
- Physical harm as intentionally hurting a pupil by causing injuries such as bruises, broken bones, burns or cuts.

Signs of Stress Which May Indicate Bullying

The following signs *may* indicate that a pupil is being bullied at school:

Behavioural

- unwilling to come to school / avoid days or lessons
- changing their route to school
- being late for school
- avoiding friends and others
- nail biting, jumpiness, forgetfulness, distracted
- deterioration of their work
- mislaying books, equipment, or money
- refusing to tell what is wrong
- underachieve and lack concentration

Physical

- have non-specific illnesses / feel sick frequently in class
- have unexplained cuts or bruises
- have possessions go missing
- have damaged clothing or belongings

Emotional

- become easily startled, irritable and aggressive
- lose confidence
- become withdrawn or tearful, restrict activities
- stresses shown at home (bed wetting, insomnia, nightmares)

It must be remembered that if a pupil displays any of these traits it does not necessarily mean they are experiencing bullying behaviour. These traits may be symptomatic of other problems.

Preventative Measures

The focus of all our anti-bullying work in Milltown Primary School is the prevention of bullying behaviours and the maintenance of a safe learning environment for all pupils.

Aspects of the provision in Milltown Primary School which contribute to the Anti-bullying ethos are:

- Raising awareness and understanding of the positive behaviour expectations, as set out in the Positive Behaviour Policy
- Promotion of anti-bullying messages through the curriculum e.g. in Literacy, WAU, PDMU, RE, The Arts focusing on desirable behaviours and attitudes
- Addressing issues such as the various forms of bullying, including the how and why it can happen, through PDMU/PATHS/RE
- Involvement in Peace IV Shared Education projects, supporting pupils to explore, understand and respond to difference and diversity.
- Using the preventative curriculum to actively promote positive emotional health and wellbeing (e.g. PATHS, Circle Time, School assemblies and celebration events)
- Participation in the NIABF annual Anti-Bullying Week activities
- Engagement in key national and regional campaigns and events, e.g. Safer Internet Day, Love for Life workshops
- Pupil Councils to strengthen pupil voice and support the delivery and promotion of key anti-bullying messaging within the school
- Playground systems: training for supervisors, zoning of playgrounds, provision of a variety of play options to meet the needs of all pupils.
- Provision and promotion of curricular and extra-curricular activities in pairs, small group and whole class structures to facilitate the building of relationships, social awareness and empathy.

While the vast majority of our pupils come to and from school by car with a supervising adult, further preventative measures are in place to prevent bullying behaviour on the way to and from school. This includes:

- The maintenance of a culture where pupils take pride in their school and are viewed as ambassadors for their school within the community. This includes regular reminders of the positive behaviour expectations of pupils whilst going to and from school.
- Measures to empower pupils to challenge inappropriate and unacceptable behaviour of their peers
- The promotion of key anti-bullying messages and awareness of behaviour expectations of pupils amongst the local community, including information on how to raise any concerns with the school.

- Staff present for the admittance to school from 8:40am or leaving school at designated hand-over times.

Within the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 schools have the authority to take steps to prevent bullying through the use of electronic communication amongst pupils at any time during term, where the behaviour is likely to have a detrimental effect on the pupil's education at school.

In Milltown Primary School pupils consider how to raise awareness of the nature and impact of online bullying and pupils are supported to make use of the internet in a safe, responsible and respectful way. This includes:

- Addressing key themes of online behaviour and risk through PDMU/UICT, including understanding how to respond to harm and the consequences of inappropriate use.
- Participation in Anti-Bullying Week activities.
- Engagement with key statutory and voluntary sector agencies (e.g. C2k, PSNI, Public Health Agency, Safeguarding Board for NI e-Safety Forum) to support the promotion of key messages.
- Participation in annual Safer Internet Day and promotion of key messages throughout the year.
- Development and implementation of robust and appropriate policies in related areas: Acceptable Use of the Internet Policy, ICT Policy and E-Safety Policy

This Anti-Bullying Policy is one of a number of policies in the wider pastoral care and safeguarding suite of policies.

Responsibility

Everyone has responsibility for creating a safe and supportive learning environment for all members of the school communities. Everyone in the school community, including pupils, their parents/guardians and the staff of the school are expected to respect the rights of others to be safe.

Everyone has the responsibility to work together to:

- foster positive self-esteem
- behave towards others in a mutually respectful way
- model high standards of personal pro-social behaviour
- be alert to signs of distress and other possible indications of bullying behaviour
- inform the school of any concerns relating to bullying behaviour

- refrain from becoming involved in any kind of bullying behaviour, even at the risk of incurring temporary unpopularity.
- refrain from retaliating to any form of bullying behaviour
- intervene to support any person who is being bullied, unless it is unsafe to do so.
- report any concerns or instances of bullying behaviour witnessed or suspected, to a member of staff.
- emphasise the importance of seeking help from a trusted adult about bullying behaviour when it happens or is observed
- explain the implications of allowing the bullying behaviour to continue unchecked, for themselves and/or others.
- listen sensitively to anyone who has been bullied, take what is said seriously, and provide reassurance that appropriate action will be taken
- know how to seek support - internal and external
- resolve difficulties in restorative ways to prevent recurring bullying behaviour and meet the needs of all parties

Reporting a Bullying Concern

If there is a concern that bullying behaviour is taking place within Milltown Primary School, the following procedures should be followed:

Pupils Reporting a Concern

Pupils can raise a concern with any member of staff in school, teaching or non-teaching staff.

Pupils can report bullying concerns by:

- Verbally - talking to a member of staff
- By writing a note to a member of staff (e.g. in a homework book)
- By posting a comment in a 'worry box'

ANY pupil can raise a concern about bullying behaviour, not just the pupil who is experiencing this behaviour. Pupils are reminded that by reporting a concern they are 'getting help' rather than 'telling'.

Parents/Carers Reporting a Concern

Parents and guardians should raise a concern about alleged bullying behaviour with the school at the earliest opportunity. Parents/guardians should encourage their children to react appropriately to bullying behaviour and to not do anything to retaliate or to 'hit back'.

To report a bullying concern;

- In the first instance, all bullying concerns should be reported to the Class Teacher
- Where the parent is not satisfied that appropriate action has been taken to prevent further incidents, or where further incidents have taken place, the concern should be reported to the Principal, Mrs Wright

Where a parent/guardian remains unsatisfied that the concern has not been appropriately responded to, the school's complaints procedure should be followed. This involves making a formal, written complaint, to the Chair of the Board of Governors, Mr Alan Mateer, C/O Milltown Primary School and label the correspondence 'Private and Confidential'.

While the majority of reports of bullying concerns will come from pupils and their parents/guardians, the school is open to receiving such reports from anyone.

All reports of bullying concerns received from pupils and/or parents/guardians will be responded to in line with this policy and feedback will be given to the person who made the report.

No information about action taken in relation to a pupil will be disclosed to anyone other than the pupil and his/her parents/guardians.

Responding to a Bullying Concern

The processes outlined below provide a framework for how the school will respond to any bullying concerns identified.

Using the NIABF Effective Responses to Bullying Behaviour resource, the member of staff responsible will:

- Clarify facts and perceptions
- Check records (SIMS/BMM)
- Assess the incident against the criteria for bullying behaviour
- Identify any themes or motivating factors
- Identify the type of bullying behaviour being displayed
- Identify intervention level
- Select and implement appropriate interventions for all pupils involved, including appropriate interventions, consequences and sanctions not listed in the Effective Responses to Bullying Behaviour resource
- Track, monitor and record effectiveness of interventions
- Review outcome of interventions
- Select and implement further intentions as necessary

When responding to a bullying concern, school staff will implement interventions aimed at responding to the behaviour, resolving the concern and restoring the wellbeing of those involved. Where appropriate, school staff may implement sanctions for those displaying bullying behaviour.

Recording

There is a legal requirement, as set out in the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016, to maintain a record of all incidents of bullying and alleged bullying behaviour.

The school will centrally record all relevant information related to reports of bullying concerns, including:

- how the bullying behaviour was displayed (the method)
- the motivation for the behaviour
- how each incident was addressed by the school
- the outcome of the interventions employed.

Records will be kept on the online SIMS Behaviour Management Module, which is part of the C2k system in schools. Access to these records will be restricted and only provided to those members of school staff with a legitimate need to have access.

All records will be maintained in line with relevant data protection legislation and guidance and will be disposed of in line with the school's Retention and Disposal of Documents Policy. Collated information regarding incidents of bullying and alleged bullying behaviour will be used to inform the future development of anti-bullying policy and practice within the school.

Professional Development of Staff

Milltown Primary School is committed to ensuring that all members of staff are provided with appropriate opportunities for professional development as part of the school's ongoing CPD/PRSD provisions. Opportunities for safeguarding training are afforded to Governors and all staff - teaching and non-teaching. Records of training are kept and updated regularly.

Monitoring and Review of Policy

To appropriately monitor the effectiveness of the Anti-Bullying Policy, the Board of Governors shall:

- maintain a standing item on the agenda of each meeting of the Board where a report on recorded incidents of bullying will be noted
- identify trends and priorities for action
- assess the effectiveness of strategies aimed at preventing bullying behaviour
- assess the effectiveness of strategies aimed at responding to bullying behaviour

It is a legal requirement that this Anti-Bullying Policy is reviewed at intervals of no more than four years. However, this policy will be reviewed following any incident which highlights the need for such a review. It will also be reviewed when directed to by the Department of Education and in light of new guidance.

This Anti-Bullying Policy shall be reviewed as required, in consultation with pupils and their parents/carers, on or before May 2025.

Links to Other Policies

In the development and implementation of this Anti-Bullying Policy, the Board of Governors has been mindful of related policies, including:

- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Pastoral Care Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Special Educational Needs Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Relationships and Sexuality Education
- E-Safety Policy & Acceptable Use of Internet Policy
- Educational Visits
- Staff Code of Conduct