



# **Divine Word National School Anti-Bullying Policy**



**Prepared By: Anti-Bullying Committee**

**Effective June 2014**



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the code of behaviour guidelines issued by the National Education Welfare Board, the Board of Management of Divine Word National School has adopted the following anti-bullying policy within the framework of the school's overall code of behaviour. This policy fully complies with the requirements of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary Schools which were published in September 2013. The Divine Word School is a Catholic primary school that fosters respect for all members of our diverse community and values the dignity of each individual. With over 480 children enrolled, our school community represents over 50 different countries. The spiritual and caring ethos of our school is fostered and sustained by the Board of Management, the Principal, the parents, the teachers and staff of our school. Our goal is to ensure the total welfare of every child who is educated in our school. Divine Word School seeks to promote personal dignity and safety so that all members of our community may work and learn together in peace, free from all forms of harassment, bullying or negative behaviour. We are committed to maintaining an effective learning environment where:

- The parents / guardians are the primary educators
- Our children are valued
- Our children can feel secure and safe
- Our children are supported to develop their intellectual, social and emotional skills
- Our children learn to appreciate and view positively differences in others whether arising from race, culture, gender, sexuality, physical appearance, ability or disability
- Our children learn to take responsibility for their actions and behaviours both in school and in the wider community
- All forms of bullying and harassment are challenged





## 2. KEY PRINCIPLES OF BEST PRACTICE

The Board of Management, teaching staff and parents recognise the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of children. Our goal is to maintain a positive school culture in general and specifically in relation to repeated negative behaviour that impacts others. We are fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour:

- Effective leadership supporting a school culture and climate that celebrates diversity and welcomes difference and is based on inclusivity
- Promotion of respectful relationships across the school community
- Introduction of Restorative Practice, a programme which emphasises repairing harm and restoring friendship.
- Effective supervision and monitoring of children
- Encouraging the child to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment
- Empowering the child as a potential witness of negative behaviour to “tell”
- Shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact.
- Shared commitment to approaches that seek to repair and restore interpersonal relationships
- Implementation of education and prevention strategies that build empathy, respect and resilience in children and explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including homophobic and transphobic bullying in an age appropriate manner
- Support for class teachers in carrying out their duty of care
- Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy





### 3. THE DEFINITION OF BULLYING

In accordance with the Anti-Bullying Procedures for 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, such as persistent name calling or isolation.
- Cyber-bullying
- Identity-based bullying such as racist bullying, bullying of those with disabilities, physical differences or special educational needs, bullying based on a person's membership of the Traveller community and homophobic bullying.

Isolated or once-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour, including a once-off offensive or hurtful text message or other online **private** (direct post) messaging, do not fall within the definition of bullying and should be dealt with, as appropriate, in accordance with the school's code of behaviour.

However, in the context of this policy, placing a once-off offensive or hurtful **private** 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.

<http://www.divinewordns.ie>

Additional information on different types of bullying is set out in Section 2.2 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary which can be found at: [www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/Anti-Bullying-Procedures-for-Primary-and-Post-Primary-Schools.pdf](http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/Anti-Bullying-Procedures-for-Primary-and-Post-Primary-Schools.pdf)



This policy applies to activities and events that take place:

- During school time
- During yard time
- At assemblies
- On school trips
- At sporting events

The Divine Word School reserves the right to take action, if appropriate, against bullying perpetrated beyond the scope of the activities /events above. This will be the case in relation to cyber-bullying.

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## **4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN IMPLEMENTING OUR POLICY**

### **The Adults**

The Board of Management recognises the role of the adults in modelling a high standard of behaviour. The staff of the school together with the parents/guardians have a responsibility to model the school's standards. Their dealings both with the pupils and with each other is a powerful example and source of learning for our children. The way in which parents and teachers interact will provide the children with a model of good working relationships.

### **The Class Teacher**

For the purpose of this policy the relevant teacher will be referred to as the class teacher. The class teacher will explicitly teach the children educational and prevention strategies in relation to bullying. This will be done in the context of the Social, Health and Personal Education curriculum. It is the joint responsibility of the teachers and the parents to explain the contents of this policy to the child so that he/she clearly understands the consequences of breaching the policy. The class teacher will investigate and follow-up on all reports of alleged bullying, including anonymous reports (see section 6.1). The class teacher may consult the Principal / Deputy Principal as applicable at any stage in relation to a report of bullying.

### **Principal/Deputy Principal**

The Principal and Deputy Principal will continually promote and nurture the positive school climate. They will support the class teacher in his /her duty of care in implementing the policy. As part of any investigation by the class teacher the Principal/Deputy principal as applicable will advise as to the relevant staff members who need to be informed from the point of view of further investigation and observation of children. The Principal/Deputy Principal as applicable will report to the Board of Management on a regular basis the number, if any, of Department of Education and Skills Bullying Behaviour Record which have been filed.



### **The Board of Management**

The Board of Management will receive and minute the regular reporting of bullying forms by the Principal. The Board will discuss the progress in handling these reports of bullying. The Board will ensure that the policy has been made available to school staff, Parents' Association and is on the school website. The Board will ensure that the policy has been adequately communicated to all parents and children. The Board of Management will review the Anti-Bullying policy annually using the DES Annual Review Checklist.

### **The Policy Co-ordinator**

The Policy Co-ordinator will support the successful implementation of this policy by taking responsibility for:

- Assemblies to raise awareness about the importance of good relationships and the impact of negative behaviour including behaviour that is called bullying behaviour.
- Whole school events such as a "Friendship Fortnight" to promote healthy relationships and develop social skills for making and maintaining friendships through cooperative games.
- Outside speakers/agencies who are invited to our school for the benefit of parents, teachers and/or children
- Professional development in education and prevention strategies specifically in relation to identity-based bullying and cyber-bullying.
- Curriculum Resources to promote best practice throughout the school.

### **Special Needs Assistants**

The Special Needs Assistants are part of the school's effective supervision and monitoring system thus playing an important role in the prevention and reporting of bullying. The constant supervision by teachers and SNAs encourages a high standard of behaviour among the children. When an SNA witnesses negative behaviour in the classroom or on the yard he/she will intervene if necessary and in all cases report the incident to the class teacher.

### **The Anti-Bullying Committee**

In February 2014 a committee that included two class teachers, a resource teacher, two parents, a board member and the principal set about drafting this



anti-bullying policy. At the end of YEAR ONE the present committee will survey and seek feedback from all stakeholders involved in the implementation of this policy. A full review will be completed by the committee in advance of the Board of Management's annual review using the DES checklist.

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## **5. OUR EDUCATION AND PREVENTION STRATEGIES**

The education and prevention strategies approved by DES (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber- bullying, homophobic and transphobic bullying) and used by our school include:

- Social, Personal and Health Education curriculum: Walk Tall, Stay Safe, Alive-O and RSE
- The introduction of Circle Time into classroom management at least once a term
- Specifically addressing issues that may affect children with learning difficulties or special educational needs during the child's resource time or in the learning support groups
- The introduction of Restorative Practice with an emphasis on repairing harm and building relationships
- Visually prominent, child-friendly posters and displays promoting positive relationships and diversity.
- The teaching of social media etiquette for senior classes using educational platforms such as Edmodo and blogging.
- Internet Safety Week and Friendship Fortnight
- Annual internet safety talk for parents given by an outside agency such as Barnardos
- Acceptable Use of Computers Policy for parents and children
- Accord Day for 5th and 6th classes (relationships)
- Fostering and enhancing the self-esteem of our children through our extra-curricular activities: Drama, Music, Art, Chess, Performing Arts, ICT, Sports, Gymnastics
- Pupils of the Week: a class award presented at assembly



- Involvement of our student council in contributing to a positive school ethos: Looking out for others an item on the monthly agenda.
- Green Schools: committed members looking after our school environment.
- Merit awards: presented to individual children during Monday morning assemblies
- Weekly assemblies
- Whole school events: Marley's Got Talent, annual céili, annual sports day.



## **6. OUR PROCEDURES FOR INVESTIGATION, ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN, RESOLUTION/FOLLOW-UP AND RECORDING BULLYING**

### **6.1 Investigation**

- i. Children are consistently encouraged to disclose incidents of negative behaviour to any adult in whom they trust. Children are taught that “telling” is an act of kindness and friendship as defined in the Stay Safe Programme. children are constantly assured that any disclosure will be treated with sensitivity for all involved.
- ii. Once an allegation of bullying behaviour has been made it will be investigated and followed-up on by the class teacher. The class teacher will use his/her professional judgement in relation to the records kept, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding the same.
- iii. The classroom teacher will seek answers to the following questions: What happened? Who was present? When and where did the incident occur? This will be done in a calm manner. Incidents will be investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.
- iv. If a group is involved, each member will be interviewed by the class teacher, individually at first. Thereafter, the class teacher will meet all those children involved as a group. At the group meeting, each member will be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements.
- v. Each member of a group will be supported through the possible pressures that they may face from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher.



- vi. Where appropriate or helpful those involved will be asked to write down their account of the incident(s).
- vii. Children who are not directly involved may provide useful information and therefore may also be interviewed. All interviews will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all children concerned.
- viii. Parents of all those involved will be informed of alleged incidents and no blame will be apportioned. The class teacher will contact each set of parents in person or by means of a telephone call.
- ix. The class teacher must use his/her professional judgment to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation will be resolved. This will take time. Parents and children are required to co-operate with the 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.

## **6.2 Bullying as Part of a Continuum Behaviour**

Bullying behaviour can be part of a continuum of behaviour rather than a stand-alone issue. In the event of behaviour escalating beyond that which can be described as bullying to serious physical or sexual assault or harassment any such cases will be dealt with appropriately through the overall code of behaviour. Where appropriate a referral will be made by the Principal/Deputy Principal to relevant external agencies and authorities. In cases where our school has serious concerns in relation to managing the behaviour of a child, the advice of the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) will be sought.

## **6.3 Actions to be Taken**

Where it is determined by the classroom teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the perpetrator(s) involved will be contacted separately to inform them of the outcome and explain the actions being taken as laid out in the Anti-Bullying policy. The class teacher is obliged to inform the parents that if the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days it will be recorded on the official DES Bullying Behaviour Record and passed onto the Principal. The opportunity will be given to parents to discuss ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports for their child. Where the classroom teacher has



determined that a child has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it will be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy. Every effort will be made to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the child being bullied.

### 6.4 Reporting

Our school's procedures for the formal noting and reporting of bullying behaviour will be maintained in accordance with relevant data protection legislation. Our procedures are as follows:

The class teacher must keep appropriate written records that will assist him/her to resolve the issues and restore, as far as practicable the relationship of the parties involved.

The class teacher will use the Department of Education and Skills **Bullying Behaviour Record** (Appendix 2: The official template for recording bullying behaviour) to record the bullying behaviour in the following circumstances:

Where the class teacher 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 class teacher considers that the bullying behaviour constitutes serious misconduct (see Code of Behaviour policy) and must be reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal.

In each of these circumstances the DES Bullying Behaviour Record will be completed in full and retained by the class teacher in a secure, central location and a copy will be provided to the Principal or Deputy Principal. The Board of Management will be informed at the appropriate time.

The parents of a child or children who are implicated in a bullying case and who find themselves in a situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, are assured that this is a private matter between the child/children being disciplined, his or her parents and the relevant school personnel. Follow-up meetings with all relevant parties involved will be arranged separately.

Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents will be referred, as appropriate, to



the School's Complaints Procedures (see Appendix 1). In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school will advise the parent of his/her right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

### **6.5 Resolution / Follow-up**

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

Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased based on observation and in consultation with other relevant staff.

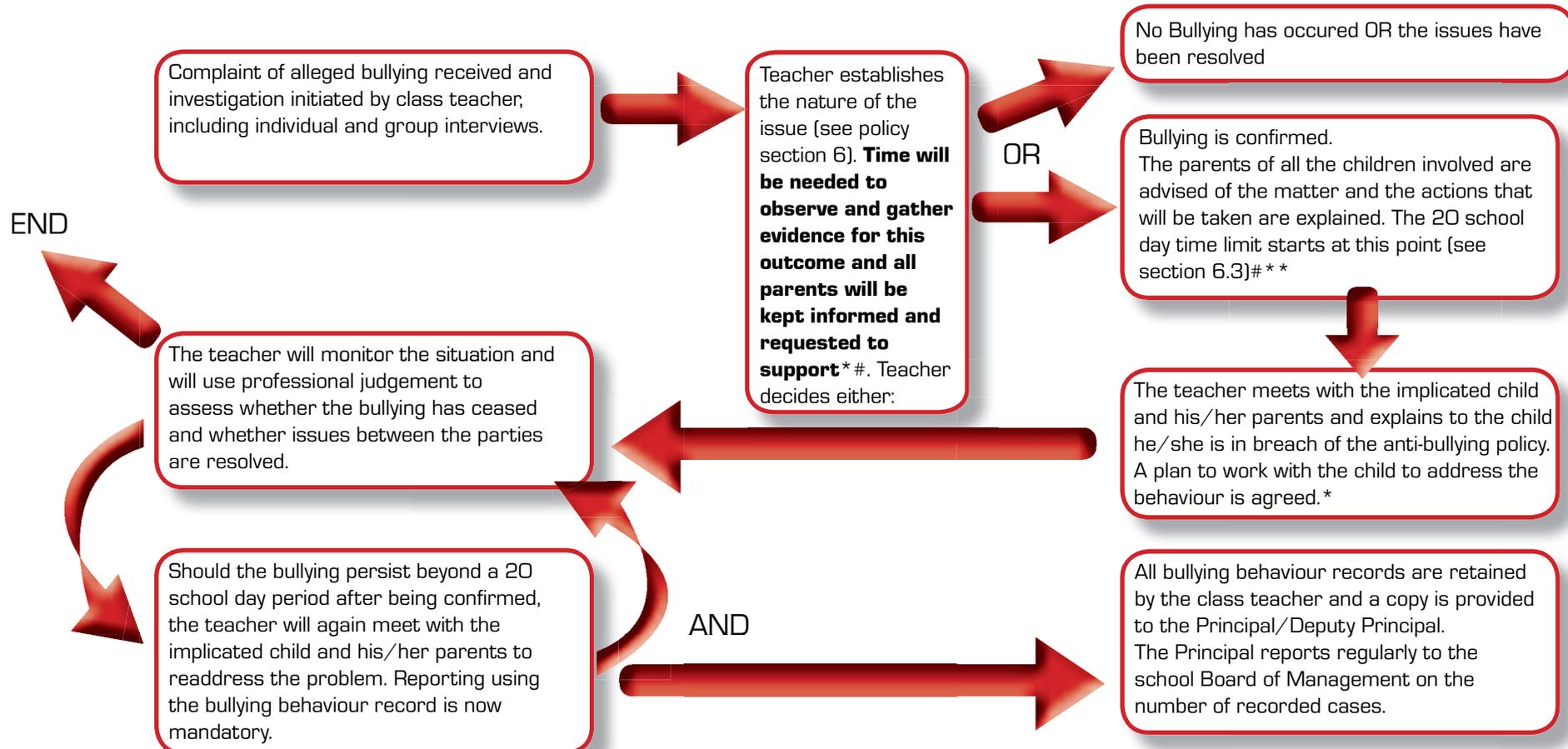
Whether issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable; Whether the relationships between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable; and

Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the school Principal or Deputy Principal.

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## 7. SUMMARY OF PROCESS DIAGRAM

### Summary Of Divine Word NS Investigation and Resolution Process (See Policy Section 6 for Details)



\* The primary objective will always be to resolve the issue and restore relationships between children insofar as possible.

#Where disciplinary action is required the parents and child are assured that this is a confidential matter between them and the relevant school staff and if appropriate the Board of Management. (See school's Code of Behaviour).

\*\* If the bullying behaviour is considered serious misconduct (as defined in the school's Code of Behaviour) the principal is informed and reporting on the bullying behaviour record is required.



## 8. OUR PROGRAMME OF SUPPORT

Our Programme of Support for working with children affected by bullying is as follows:

- i. A child who is affected by bullying may be supported, if necessary by a **“GO TO”** member of staff in whom the child has confidence and trust. The **“GO TO”** person listens to the child and reports back to class teacher only. This form of support is for the child. Parents must speak with the class teacher.
- ii. Special arrangements may be initiated to observe and support the child on the yard/school trips.
- iii. Parents and class teacher will work together to boost the self-esteem and resilience of the child.
- iv. Parents will have access to relevant literature in our library.

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## 9. SUPERVISION AND MONITORING OF PUPILS

The Board of Management ensures 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.

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## 10. 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 children or staff or the harassment of children 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.

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## 11. PUBLICATION

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

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## 12. ANNUAL REVIEW

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year. Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

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The Board of Management, Parents' Association and teachers extend a sincere word of thanks on behalf of our school community to the Anti-Bullying committee (Emer Slevin, Emer Gallaher, Marie Mahony, Hazel Mander, Martina Dempsey, John Williams and Anne Kernan) for their commitment and hard work in creating this new policy.

## 13. RATIFICATION

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on

Signed:   
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed:   
(Principal)

Date: 17 June 2014

Date of next review: June 2015



## 14. APPENDIX 1: COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

### INTO/CPMSA COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE GUIDELINES FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS.

The Irish National Teachers' Organisation and the Catholic Primary School Managers' Association reached agreement in 1993 on a procedure for dealing with complaints by parents against teachers. The purpose of the procedure is to facilitate the resolution of difficulties where they may arise in an agreed and fair manner. The agreement lays out in five stages the process to be followed in progressing a complaint and the specific timescale to be followed at each stage.

#### Introduction

Only those complaints about teachers which are written and signed by parents/guardians of child may be investigated formally by the Board of Management, except where those complaints are deemed by the Board to be:

- i. on matters of professional competence and which are to be referred to the Department of Education;
- ii. frivolous or vexatious complaints and complaints which do not impinge on the work of a teacher in a school; or
- iii. complaints in which either party has recourse to law or to another existing procedure.

Unwritten complaints not in the above categories may be processed informally as set out in **Stage 1** of this procedure.

#### Stage 1

- 1.1 A parent/guardian who wishes to make a complaint should, unless there are local arrangements to the contrary, approach the class teacher with a view to resolving the complaint.
- 1.2 Where the parent/guardian is unable to resolve the complaint with the class teacher she/he should approach the Principal with a view to resolving it.
- 1.3 If the complaint is still unresolved the parent/guardian should raise the matter with the Chairperson of the Board of Management with a view to resolving it.



## Stage 2

- 2.1 If the complaint is still unresolved and the parent/guardian wishes to pursue the matter further she/he should lodge the complaint in writing with the Chairperson of the Board of Management.
- 2.2 The Chairperson should bring the precise nature of the written complaint to the notice of the teacher and seek to resolve the matter between the parties within 5 days of receipt of the written complaint.

## Stage 3

- 3.1 If the complaint is not resolved informally, the Chairperson should, subject to the general authorisation of the Board and except in those cases where the Chairperson deems the particular authorisation of the Board to be required:
  - (a) supply the teacher with a copy of the written complaint; and
  - (b) arrange a meeting with the teacher and, where applicable, the Principal Teacher with a view to resolving the complaint. Such a meeting should take place within 10 days of receipt of the written complaint.

## Stage 4

- 4.1 If the complaint is still not resolved the Chairperson should make a formal report to the Board within 10 days of the meeting referred to in 3.1(b).
- 4.2 If the Board considers that the complaint is not substantiated the teacher and the complaint should be so informed within three days of the Board meeting.
- 4.3 If the Board considers that the complaint is substantiated or that it warrants further investigation it proceeds as follows:
  - (a) the teacher should be informed that the investigation is proceeding to the next stage;
  - (b) the teacher should be supplied with a copy of any written evidence in support of the complaint;
  - (c) the teacher should be requested to supply a written statement to the Board in response to the complaint;
  - (d) the teacher should be afforded an opportunity to make a presentation of case to the Board. The teacher would be entitled to be



accompanied and assisted by a friend at any such meeting;  
(e) the board may arrange a meeting with the complainant if it considers such to be required. The complainant would be entitled to be accompanied and assisted by a friend at any such meeting; and  
(f) the meeting of the Board of Management referred to in (d) and (e) will take place within 10 days of the meeting referred to in 3.1(b).

**Stage 5**

- 5.1 When the Board has completed its investigation, the Chairperson should convey the decision of the Board in writing to the teacher and the complainant within five days of the meeting of the Board.
- 5.2 The decision of the Board shall be final.
- 5.3 This Complaints Procedure shall be reviewed after three years.
- 5.4 CPSMA or INTO may withdraw from this agreement having given the other party three months' notice of intention to do so.

**In this agreement 'days' means school days.**

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## 15. APPENDIX 2: BULLYING BEHAVIOUR RECORD

### DIVINE WORD NS BULLYING BEHAVIOUR RECORD

1. Name of pupil being bullied: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Name(s) and class(es) of pupil(s) engaged in bullying behaviour


3. Source of bullying concern / report (tick)

Pupil Concerned	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Pupil	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parent	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Location of incident (tick)

Yard	<input type="checkbox"/>
Classroom	<input type="checkbox"/>
Corridor	<input type="checkbox"/>
Toilets	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

1. Name of person(s) who reported the bullying concern

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2. Type of Bullying Behaviour (tick relevant boxes)

Physical Aggression	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cyber-bullying	<input type="checkbox"/>
Damage to property	<input type="checkbox"/>	Intimidation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Isolation / Exclusion	<input type="checkbox"/>	Malicious Gossip	<input type="checkbox"/>
Name Calling	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Where behaviour is regarded as identity-based bullying, indicate the relevant category:

Disability / SEN	Racist	Membership of Traveller Community	Homophobic	Other (specify)



4. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact

5. Details of actions taken

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

Date submitted to Principal / Deputy Principal: \_\_\_\_\_



## 16. APPENDIX 3: HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT YOUR CHILD

### **If your child tells you that they are being bullied:**

- Remain calm and ask questions – who, what, why, where, when. Get the facts, write it down, keep the text/phone messages or take a screen shot from the computer so you are informed when you approach the school, internet or phone provider, or Gardaí.
- Talk to your children; let them know that they can talk to you; keep the channels of communication open
- Teaching a child to say “No” in a good assertive tone of voice will help deal with many situations. A child’s self-image and body language may send out messages to potential bullies.
- Children should not be encouraged to engage in violent behaviour. Teaching children to be more assertive and to tell is far more positive and effective.
- In cases of Cyberbullying don’t lose your temper; above all don’t threaten to take their phone or internet access away – this will just guarantee that they will never tell you anything again.
- Parents should approach their child’s teacher by appointment if the bullying is school related. It is important to understand that bullying in school can be very difficult for teachers to detect because of the large numbers of children involved. Teachers will appreciate bullying being brought to light. School bullying requires that parents and teachers work together for a resolution.
- Remember many children with a little help will overcome this problem very quickly.

### **What If Your Child Is Bullying?**

- Don’t panic. This may be a temporary response to something else in the child’s life e.g. new baby, death in the family, problems in the home. Give your child an opportunity to talk about anything that could be upsetting him/her.
- Don’t punish bullying by being a bully yourself. Hitting and verbal attack will only make the situation worse. Talk to your child and try to find out if there is a problem. Explain how the victim felt and try to get your child to understand the victim’s point of view.



- Bullies often suffer low self-esteem. Use every opportunity you can to praise good, considerate, helpful behaviour. Don't only look for negatives.
- Talk to your child's teacher and find out more about their behaviour in school. Enlist the teacher's help in dealing with this. It is important that you both take the same approach.

### **17. APPENDIX 4: SUPPORT SERVICES**

#### **Anti-Bullying Support Services:**

PDST: Information Booklet for Schools

[www.pdst.ie](http://www.pdst.ie)

Department of Education and skills (2013). Action Plan on Bullying: Report of the Anti-Bullying Working Group to the Minister of Education and Skills

National Anti-Bullying Coalition

[www.nabc.ie](http://www.nabc.ie)

Bully 4U

[www.bully4u.ie](http://www.bully4u.ie)

Anti-Bullying Ireland

[www.antibullyingireland.com](http://www.antibullyingireland.com)

Sticks and Stones

[www.sticksandstones.ie](http://www.sticksandstones.ie)

087 9015199

Barnardos

[www.barnardos.ie](http://www.barnardos.ie)

4530355

Childline

[www.childline.ie](http://www.childline.ie)

1800 66 66 66

Text 50101



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