

Benincasa Anti- Bullying Policy 2024-25

In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the code of behaviour guidelines issued by the NEWB (National Education Welfare Board), the Board of Management Benincasa 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 and Post-Primary Schools which were published in September 2013, the School's Code of Behaviour, the Complaints Procedure for Parents and Grievance Procedure for Staff and Teaching Council's Professional Code of Conduct for Teachers.

These procedures recognise that a cornerstone in the prevention of bullying is a positive school culture and climate that is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity and respect. DES Procedures 2013 1.4

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following school policies:

Code of Behaviour

Child Protection

Health and Safety

Grievance Procedures

Data Protection

Ethos:

Benincasa is a school for children with severe emotional and behavioural difficulties. In accordance with the ethos of Benincasa pupils and staff in the school have the right to:

- Recognition of a unique identity
- Be treated with respect and dignity
- Learn and work in a safe environment
- Be protected from any form of abuse

Pupils and their parents or guardians have further right to:

- Individual consideration of needs by staff that have responsibility for the children's protection.
- Expect staff to undertake duties and responsibilities in accordance with the school's policies.
- Be informed of the schools Behaviour Policy and other relevant policies including policy on bullying and complaints as well as the expected conduct of pupils and staff.

Underpinning values:

Everyone attending or working in this school has a right to:

- recognition of their unique identity;
- be treated with respect and dignity;
- learn and work in a safe environment;
- be protected from harm, violence, assault and acts of verbal abuse.

Pupils attending this school and their parents have a right to:

- individual consideration of pupil needs by the staff who have responsibility for their care and protection;
- expect staff to undertake their duties and responsibilities in accordance with the school's policies;
- be informed about school rules, relevant policies and the expected conduct of all pupils and staff working in school;
- be informed about the school's complaints procedure

Statement of Intent

We are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all of our pupils so they can learn in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at our school. If bullying does occur, all pupils should be able to tell and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. We are a *TELLING* school. This means that *anyone* who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell the staff.

- **Key Principles of Best Practice: Preventing and Tackling Bullying (Appendix 1)**
- A positive school culture and climate which-
- Is welcoming of difference and diversity and based on inclusivity.
- Encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment.
- Promotes respectful relationships across the school community.
- Effective Leadership
- A whole-school approach
- A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact.
- Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that-
- Build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and
- Explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying
- Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils.
- Supports for staff.
- Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

The Department of Education and Skills Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools are based on the principle that a welcoming and positive school climate the optimum environment not just to prevent bullying but also to encourage respectful relationships across the whole school. (Respect: PDST)

Definition of Bullying

In accordance with the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools bullying is defined as follows:

BULLYING IS UNWANTED NEGATIVE BEHAVIOUR, VERBAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL OR PHYSICAL CONDUCTED, BY AN INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP AGAINST ANOTHER PERSON (OR PERSONS) AND WHICH

IS REPEATED OVER TIME. THESE PROCEDURES MAKE CLEAR THAT THIS DEFINITION INCLUDES CYBERBULLYING AND IDENTITY BASED BULLYING SUCH AS HOMOPHOBIC BULLYING AND RACIST BULLYING. DES PROCEDURES 2013 1.4

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

- Deliberate exclusion
- Malicious gossip
- Name-Calling
- Intimidation
- Physical aggression
- Verbal Abuse
- Cyber Bullying
- Identity-based bullying such as homophobic bullying, racist bullying, bullying based on a person's membership of the Travelling Community and bullying of those with disabilities or special educational needs
- Damage to property
- Extortion

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

However, in the context of this policy, placing a once-off *offensive or hurtful public 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. Additional information on different types of bullying is set out in Section 2 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post- Primary Schools.

When differences between pupils, particularly those related to identity are treated with respect and dignity the confidence of all pupils to feel safe, supported and welcomed in school will flourish.
Respect: PDST

Relevant Teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows:

- Class Teacher
- The Principal
- The Deputy Principal

A school-wide approach (involving school management, staff, parents and pupils) to dealing with the problem of bullying behaviour is a key element of effective practice. Bullying behaviour affects not only those immediately involved. It can affect everyone in the classroom, in the school and, ultimately, in the wider community.

DES: Procedures 2013 6.3

A consistent and clear approach to dealing with bullying when it occurs is essential to effective practice. DES: Procedures 2013 6.8.

Education and Prevention Strategies

The education and prevention strategies that the school will implement must be documented in the Anti-Bullying policy and must explicitly deal with the issue of cyber -bullying and identity-based bullying.

- Anti -Bullying Procedures 2013: Department of Education
- Anti-Bullying Procedures 2013: Department of Education Circular 045/2013
- The Stay Safe Programme
- The Walk Tall Programme
- RSE Programme
- Webwise Materials: HTML Heroes
- PDST Materials: A Better Internet, Respect
- Cyber Safe Ireland Website
- School Awareness Day-Safer Internet day
- Posters / Visual Arts /Display of students' creative contributions in classrooms.
- Use of Poetry/Story
- SPHE Curriculum: Myself, Myself and Others, Myself and the Wider World
- Speakers invited to speak to students/parents /staff
- Friendship Week
- Co-operative games and sport

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.

The SPHE curriculum makes specific provision for exploring bullying as well as the inter-related areas of belonging and integrating, communication, conflict, friendship, personal safety and relationships. DES: Procedures 2013 6.5

The School's Procedure

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 :

Individual teachers must take appropriate measures regarding reports of bullying behaviour in accordance with the school's anti-bullying policy.

Parents and pupils are required to co-operate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving any issues and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved as quickly as possible.

It is very important that all involved (including each set of pupils and parents) understand the above approach from the outset.

When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the teacher should seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This should be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict.

DES: Procedures 2013 6.8

- Our school staff have a responsibility to model the school's standard of behaviour.
- Create a school ethos that is positive friendly and fosters a culture of respect.
- Each teacher will record any serious incident of negative behaviour within the classroom. If a pattern of bullying emerges then this will be dealt with by the class teacher with the help of the principal if necessary and reported to the principal.

- The teacher supervising the yard will record any incident of intentional negative behaviour and these will be dealt with in accordance with the school's code of behaviour.
- The yard books will be examined and recorded incidents will be dealt with under the school's code of discipline.
- Our Code of Discipline: class/yard and school rules are displayed in classrooms.
- Incidents are to be reported to the Principal. A serious incident will involve parent/guardian coming in to speak with the principal.
- If matters aren't resolved at this stage, it may be necessary to consider suspension.
- At all stages records will be kept of any intervention used to resolve the difficulties.
- Any serious once off incidents of bullying including cyberbullying, physical aggression and identity-based bullying will be dealt with under our Code of Discipline and Anti Bullying Policy and could result in suspension.
- Non-teaching staff such as the secretary and special needs assistants must be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them to the teacher, Deputy (Ms McNally) or Principal (Mr Delaney).
- Follow-up meetings with the relevant pupils involved should be arranged separately with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date if the pupil who has been bullied is ready and agreeable. This can have a therapeutic effect.
- Records are to be kept of all investigations, interviews, follow-up meetings and action taken by members of school community.
- Homophobic insults should be treated in exactly the same way as racist or other insults-the teacher can calmly explain that such insults are hurtful and not acceptable.
- Cases of Bullying are to be reported to the Board of Management including records of investigations, follow ups and action taken.
- Template (Appendix 2) is to be filled in by relevant teacher and given to Principal. This will be then presented to Board of Management.
- The Board of Management must undertake an annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation. Appendix 3: Checklist for annual review of the anti-bullying policy and its implementation.
- At least once in every school term, the Principal must provide a report to the Board of Management setting out: (i) the overall number of bullying cases reported (by means of the bullying recording template at Appendix 2) since the previous report to the Board and (ii) confirmation that all cases referred to at (i) above have been or are being, dealt with in accordance with the school's anti-bullying policy and the Anti Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary schools. The minutes of the Board of Management meeting must record the above but in doing so must not include any identifying details of the pupils involved.

There are 3 stages in dealing with bullying.

Stage One

Unless the incident is of a very serious nature, it will be dealt with by the classroom teacher who will talk to the children involved. Teachers respect the need to support the esteem of each party involved in an incident. When a teacher becomes aware that a child is regularly involved in incidents he/she will start a record of such incidents. The purpose of this record is:

- To aid memory by recording details of the incident
- For clarity in assessment of the situation
- For planning and intervention

Prior to a record of incidences being kept, parent(s) will be informed. Parents may also be requested to keep a written account of information they receive from a child.

When starting to explore an allegation of bullying it is important to be consistent in the way information is collected and processed. The following six questions, asked in a sensitive way, will provide a framework for discussion. The school's standard reporting form for recording incidents of bullying will be used.

- What happened?
- Who was/is involved?
- Where did it take place?
- When did/does it take place?
- Does the incident indicate that bullying was taking place and, if not bullying, what is the nature of the difficulty?
- What is required to try to resolve the difficulty now and in the future?

Assessing the Nature of an Incident

When trying to assess the nature of an incident and the type of responses needed, the following factors should be taken into account.

- Has the pupil who is experiencing the distress been subjected to repeated incidents of unacceptable behaviour? If 'yes' over what time period has the behaviour been occurring?
- Is there evidence that the behaviour is planned/pre-meditated?
- How does the pupil seem to perceive him/herself in relation to those allegedly involved?
- How distressed is the pupil and what effect is the situation having on his/her self-esteem, feelings about school, motivation, relationships with peers, physical well-being etc.?
- Which pupils are involved in the alleged incident?
- What is the age of the pupil(s) concerned?
- What seemed to trigger the difficulty?
- Where did/do the alleged incidents take place?
- Is there background to the alleged incident(s)?
- When was the alleged incident first reported? Who reported it and to whom?
- Are there any witnesses and how do they perceive the alleged incident?
- What explanations do they give for the alleged difficulty?

Procedures for Dealing with Incidents

If the investigation shows that bullying has taken place, the following measures should be taken against the perpetrator(s):

- Explain that the incident will be recorded and why.
- Make it clear that the type of behaviour exhibited is totally unacceptable in any circumstances.
- Explain to the perpetrator that his/her actions have an adverse effect on the victim and help him/her to consider the consequences of what he/she has done.

Disciplinary and Support Procedures

Disciplinary procedures against the perpetrator(s) are intended to change or modify behaviour. These strategies may include:

- Circle Time activities
- Positive behaviour strategies
- Setting of positive behaviour goals
- Withdrawal of privileges
- Daily conduct sheets/home-school diary
- Mentoring' or 'buddying' system
- Peer mediation
- Setting up social skills groups
- Class, group or individual discussion with staff about the effects of bullying, discrimination or racism

Support for the victim(s) is essential both immediately following the incident and during an agreed period of review. These strategies may include:

- Circle Time
- Peer support
- 'Mentoring' or 'buddying' system
- Staff support
- Parent support
- Outside agency support

It may be that parents/carers (victim and perpetrator) will require support from the school and/or other agencies.

Should the action taken at this stage prove not to have resolved the issue, staff should proceed to stage two.

Stage Two

The Principal will arrange to meet with the parents of the child who is seen to be bullying and separately with the parents of the victim of bullying. The children themselves may be required to attend part or all of these meetings.

The child who is bullying will be placed on report. This means that the child's behaviour in all areas is monitored during the day. The child has three meetings with his/her teacher and together they decide on what is to be written for that part of the day. All positive behaviour, progress on work etc will be noted. At the end of the day, the teacher writes his/her own comment. The purpose of this report to focus as much as possible on the positive qualities and efforts of the child, and to motivate the child to move away from negative behaviour.

The child should be able to see that parents and school are working together in his/her interest, so the co-operation of the parents is essential. Initially a review of the reports will be carried out on a weekly basis, in a meeting with the Principal, teacher, parents and child. If progress is being made, longer intervals between meetings may be decided upon.

The child who is the victim of bullying will also meet with the Principal and his/her parents. The aim of such a meeting(s) will be to address emotional needs and devise strategies for the child to deal with the bullying. This may involve reinforcing the programme being covered in class, or other strategies.

Stage 3

It is the duty of the school to provide a safe environment for all the children. Should the above interventions fail and the bullying continue, a programme of appropriate sanctions may be implemented by the Principal, in consultation with the parents and the Board of Management.

Sanctions implemented aim to encourage positive behaviour and support the esteem of the child. These sanctions may include a period of suspension during which there will be ongoing consultation with the parents to decide on appropriate action(s) to be taken in the best interests of the child.

Other responses which may be used include:

- Assertiveness training (victim)
- Use of report
- Involvement of external agencies
- Monitoring by Social Care Worker
- Peer support/peer mentoring
- Formal recording (racism, homophobia)
- Use of Behaviour Contract
- Liaison with parents/guardian/social worker
- Internal exclusion
- Fixed term suspension
- Permanent exclusion

7. THE SCHOOL'S PROGRAMME OF SUPPORT FOR WORKING WITH PUPILS AFFECTED BY BULLYING IS AS FOLLOWS:

- All staff dealing with a bullying incident will, as well as reasoning with the pupil perpetrating the negative behaviour, also offer support and comfort to the victim, but also recognises the need to uphold the dignity of all pupils involved.
- Pupils who have been bullied may need opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem.
- All pupils will receive the support and help they need.
- Follow-up meetings will be arranged for pupils, separately and together.
- Pupils who observe incidents of bullying behaviour should be encouraged to discuss them with teachers.
- Relevant SPHE programmes will be taught and referred to during lessons.
- Pupils involved in bullying behaviour need assistance on an ongoing basis

8. SUPERVISION AND MONITORING OF PUPILS:

The Board of Management confirms 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.

9. PREVENTION OF HARASSMENT:

The Board of Management confirms that the school will, in accordance with its obligations under equality legislation (Equality Act), take all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the sexual harassment of pupils or staff or the harassment of pupils or staff on any of the nine grounds specified i.e. **gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.**

Bullying by Adults

In the case of **intra-staff bullying**, Benincasa School will adopt the procedures outlined in Section C (c2) of the INTO booklet: 'Working Together: Procedures and Policies for Positive Staff Relations 2024'. A copy of this document is available for free download on the INTO website. The school policy on Positive Staff Relations outlines procedures in this regard.

In the case of **Teacher – Child bullying**, a complaint should in the first instance be raised with the teacher in question by the parent/guardian of the child if possible and then, if necessary, referred to the Principal. Where it has not been possible to agree a framework for resolution, the matter should be referred in writing by both parties to the Board of Management for investigation.

In the case of **Parent – Teacher bullying**, the Principal should be informed in the first instance, and if deemed necessary the Board of Management should subsequently be informed in writing.

In the case of **Parent/Visitor to the school – Child bullying**, the complaint should be referred in the first instance to the child's class teacher and subsequently to the Principal if unresolved.

In the case of **Principal – Parent/ Child bullying**, the matter should be raised with the Principal if possible, or referred to the Chairperson of the Board of Management.

Reference to other Policies/Procedures

The following policies will have a direct link with the Anti-Bullying policy:

- SPHE plan
- Code of Behaviour
- Data Protection
- Health & Safety
- Special Educational Needs
- Policy on Positive Staff Relations

Roles and Responsibility

- The Board of Management is responsible for ensuring that all members of the school community are enabled to deal effectively with bullying.
- The Principal has overall responsibility for the implementation of the policy and is responsible for embedding anti-bullying and anti-racism in the policies and practices of the school and ensuring that school board members, staff, pupils and parents/carers are aware of policies and procedures for dealing with incidents.

- The Anti-Bullying Coordinator is responsible for recording incidents and recording the action taken, during and after the investigation of an incident. The Anti-Bullying Coordinator will follow up incidents and ensure that these have been properly addressed.
- Every school staff member is responsible for adhering to this policy. All staff, including auxiliary and ancillary staff, has a responsibility to report any racial incident to the Principal/Coordinator. All staff need to be aware of what constitutes a bullying and/or racial incident and promote positive behaviour throughout the school. All those working with pupils must challenge behaviour and attitudes which lead to bullying, racism and discrimination prior to incidents arising.
- It is the responsibility of Parents/Guardians to encourage their children to behave in an appropriate manner and to adhere to the rules of the school. Parents can also watch out from signs that their child is being bullied or bullying others. They also have an important role to play in helping to build their child's self-esteem and confidence.

10. THIS POLICY WAS ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT ON:

available to school personnel and published on the school website and is otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request and provided to the Parents' Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

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 be otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request 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.

This policy was ratified on

This policy, or sections thereof, may need updating arising from changes to legislation, Circulars from the Department of Education and Skills or in light of events or experiences, as elements are being rolled out.

Signed: Margaret Ki Gualleto

Date: 02/02/2025

Chairperson of the Board of Management

Signed:

School Principal:

[Signature]

Date:

4/2/2025