

Ballysally Primary School



Anti-bullying Policy

*reflecting new legislation from The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016

Date ratified by Board of Governors: September 2023

Date of Review: September 2025

Introduction and Statement

All members of our school family have a responsibility to play an active role in ensuring the health, safety and positive well-being of our children and in preparing them to be responsible, caring members of society.

At Ballysally Primary School we believe that:

- ❖ *All forms of bullying behaviour are unacceptable.*
- ❖ *All pupils and staff have the right to learn in a safe and supported environment.*
- ❖ *We have a collective commitment to promoting an anti-bullying ethos in our school.*

This policy reflects the procedures which are followed to ensure the well-being of any pupils in our school who may be displaying bullying behaviour, or who are experiencing bullying behaviour.

Policy Context

We have developed and implemented a preventative Anti-Bullying policy for our school which reflects and complies with the following current legislation:

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 & 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)

We have taken cognisance of the recommendations outlined in the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 which:

- ❖ Provides a legal definition of bullying.
- ❖ Places a duty on the Board of Governors to put in place measures to prevent bullying behaviour, in consultation with pupils and parents.
- ❖ Requires schools to record all incidents of bullying behaviour and alleged bullying incidents.
- ❖ Sets out under which circumstances this policy should be applied, namely:
 1. In school, during the school day
 2. While travelling to and from school
 3. When under control of school staff, but away from school (eg. during a school trip)
 4. When receiving education organised by school but happening elsewhere (eg. in another school in the ALC)
- ❖ Requires that the policy be updated at least every four years.

Our policy also reflects the following key legislative points:

- ❖ 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)
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Our Ethos and Principles

Our school motto is “Learning Through Nurturing” and our practice is centred around the 6 key principles of nurture.

1. Children’s learning is understood developmentally.
2. The classroom offers a safe base.
3. The importance of nurture for the development of well-being.
4. Language is a vital means of communication.
5. All behaviour is communication.
6. The importance of transition in children’s lives.

These Principles help us to nurture an ethos within our school in which:

- ❖ We are committed to a society where children and young people can live free and safe from bullying and understand that bullying is a form of unacceptable behaviour.
- ❖ We celebrate the diversity of our children.
- ❖ Children feel safe and able to disclose and discuss alleged incidences of bullying behaviour.
- ❖ We value the views and contributions of all members of our school community, we will actively seek these views and we will respect and take them into account.

Through this policy our collective aim is to:

- Develop preventative, proactive, fair and restorative anti-bullying measures consistent with the nurturing ethos and vision within Ballysally Primary School and in line with our other Pastoral Care policy aims.
 - To develop robust procedures for recording and reporting incidents of alleged bullying behaviours.
 - To develop effective procedures for gathering information and dealing with alleged bullying behaviour, in order to make a positive impact on all involved.
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Consultation and Participation

In compliance with the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016, this policy has been developed in consultation with all stakeholders; pupils, parents and carers, staff, Board of Governors.

Pupil consultation measures:

- ✳ Covid 19 friendly focus group consultations have taken place with sample group of pupils from a variety of classes (June 2021) and these will continue regularly.
- ✳ PDMU activities within each class focusing on building an understanding of what bullying is, in line with the legislative definition given the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016
- ✳ Participation in Anti-bullying week.
- ✳ Online / in person assemblies (dependent on Covid 19 restrictions)
- ✳ Pupil questionnaires (age appropriate)

Parent / Carer consultation measures:

- ✳ Information shared with parents/carers through Seesaw.
- ✳ Consultative workshops with parents/carers where possible with Covid 19 restrictions.
- ✳ Questionnaires distributed to all parents/carers (online/paper) annually.

Staff consultation measures

While not required by legislation, it is good practice for schools to consult with all members of the school community when developing or reviewing policy. We do this through:

- ✳ Staff training - August Baker Day
 - ✳ Use of staff meeting time to discuss and evaluate preventative measures
 - ✳ Staff questionnaires- annually
 - ✳ Open door policy- staff encouraged to speak to leadership at any stage.
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What is Bullying?

We feel it is fundamentally important that all members of our school community have a shared understanding of what bullying is. The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016 contains a legal definition of bullying as follows:

(1) 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 group of pupils, with the intention of causing physical or emotional harm to that pupil or group of pupils.

(2) For the purposes of subsection (1), “act” includes omission.

Bullying is behaviour that is usually repeated, which is carried out intentionally to cause hurt, harm or to adversely affect the rights and needs of another or others.

While we wish to state that while bullying is usually acknowledged as repeated behaviour, there are instances of one-off incidents which our school will, at their discretion, consider as bullying, especially in cases where significant harm to well-being has been caused and where there is evidence of pre-meditation. 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 many of the written acts noted above
- Impersonating someone online to cause hurt
- Sharing images (eg. photographs or videos) online to embarrass someone

It should be stressed that this list is not exhaustive and that other behaviours which fit with the definition may be considered bullying behaviour.

We acknowledge there may be various motivations behind bullying behaviours, including those named in the Act. These include, but are not limited to:

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|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| * Age | * Pregnancy |
| * Appearance | * Marital status |
| * Breakdown in peer relationships | * Race |
| * Community background | * Religion |
| * Political affiliation | * Disability / SEN |
| * Gender identity | * Ability |
| * Sexual orientation | * Looked After Child status |
| | * Young Carer status |

Changes to language used within school when addressing bullying behaviour

Bullying is an emotive issue, therefore it is essential that we ensure we use supportive, understanding language when discussing these matters. For that reason, and in compliance with the NI Act (2016), we will encourage all members of the school community to use the following language when discussing bullying incidents:

- ❖ *A child will not be referred to as 'a bully', but as a child displaying bullying behaviours.*
- ❖ *A child will not be referred to as a victim, but as a target or a child experiencing bullying behaviours.*
- ❖ *The term 'perpetrator' will also not be used in our setting.*

In determining 'harm' we define (in line with DE guidance):

- ❖ *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.*

When could bullying happen?

We are mindful that bullying can happen at any time during a pupil's time in school and at any time in the school day, but most often it happens during breaks in the school day and on the way to and from school. For example, in the toilets, playground, dinner hall, beyond the school gates. In June 2021 our pupil focus groups stated that areas within school where they didn't feel as safe were:

- The playground

- The garden
- The toilets
- The wall in the senior playground and the benches
- Behind the green container
- Behind the wall

With regards to electronic communication between pupils outside of school hours, pupils are actively encouraged to tell their parents, take screen shots and report to their teacher the next day. Preventative measures are taken to raise awareness and equip children with the knowledge of how to deal with such situations. In addition, all staff encourage an ethos of getting help from a trusted adult so any incidents can be dealt with. An ethos of parents and school working in partnership is encouraged to help in all such situations.

Preventative Measures

Ballysally PS has implemented a range of measures to prevent bullying behaviour taking place. These measures also aim to promote a strong anti-bullying ethos within the school and the wider school community. In line with current legislation, the focus for all anti-bullying work should be on preventing bullying and creating a safe learning environment.

Examples of these include:

- * Raising awareness and understanding of our positive behaviour expectations, as set out in the Positive Behaviour Policy and through our class and school rules. Rewards are given for positive behaviours and to encourage positive behaviours.
- * Promotion of anti-bullying messages through the curriculum at age appropriate levels. Use of puppets, social stories and books to share messages. Addressing incidents which arise through circle time.
- * Whole school focus on promoting positive values, such as how to be a good friend, empathy and honesty.
- * Safeguarding team- pupils aware of who they can talk to in school if they feel worried.
- * Opportunities for pupils to explore, understand and respond to difference and diversity.
- * Through the preventative curriculum we actively promote positive emotional health and wellbeing and the feeling that school is a safe place.
- * Learning experiences which promote and encourage co-operation, sharing, positive communication and friendship skills- Play Based and Activity Based Learning.
- * Participation in the NIABF annual Anti-Bullying Week activities
- * Engagement in key national and regional campaigns, eg Safer Internet Day, Good Relations Week, NSPCC “Speak Out, Stay Safe” campaign etc.
- * School Council- to support the delivery and promotion of key anti-bullying messaging within the school (where possible with Covid 19 restrictions)

- ✳ Development of effective strategies for playground management, eg. Adequate, proactive supervision, zoning of playgrounds, inclusion of specific resources (buddy benches, playground pals) and provision of a variety of play options to meet the needs of all pupils.
- ✳ Focused assemblies to raise awareness and promote understanding of key issues related to bullying
- ✳ Development of effective strategies for the management of unstructured times (eg. break time, lunch)
- ✳ Provision and promotion of extra- curricular activities, aimed at supporting the development of effective peer support relationships and networks. For example, team games etc.
- ✳ Nurture strategies used in all classes.
- ✳ Counselling and art therapy provided for pupils in need of support.

The preventative measures we will put in place to prevent bullying behaviour on the way to and from school include:

- ✳ Development 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 travelling to and from school.
- ✳ Measures to empower pupils to challenge inappropriate and unacceptable behaviour of their peers during the journey to and from school.
- ✳ Regular engagement with transport providers (eg. EA Transport, etc.) to ensure effective communication and the early identification of any concerns.
- ✳ Promotion of key anti-bullying messages and awareness of behaviour expectations of pupils amongst the local community (eg. local shops, cafes, service providers, residents, etc), including information on how to raise any concerns with the school.
- ✳ Staff to walk their class to the gate each afternoon. Staff at the gate each morning as pupils arrive.

As a school we continue to raise awareness of the nature and impact of online bullying and support our pupils to make use of the internet in a safe, responsible and respectful way. To do this we:

- ✳ Address key themes of online behaviour and risk through PDMU and eSafety lessons, including understanding how to respond to harm and the consequences of inappropriate use.
- ✳ Participate in Anti-Bullying Week activities.
- ✳ Engage with key statutory and voluntary sector agencies (eg. C2k, PSNI, Public Health Agency, Safeguarding Board for NI e-Safety Forum, NSPCC) to support the promotion of key messages.

- ✴ Participate in annual Safer Internet Day and promotion of key messages throughout the year.
- ✴ Develop and implement robust and appropriate policies in related areas (eg. Acceptable Use of the Internet Policy, Mobile Phone Policy etc.)

It is important to remember that the Anti-Bullying Policy is one of a number of policies in the wider pastoral care and safeguarding suite of policies and they complement each other in order to ensure the most effective pastoral care provision for our pupils.

It is our committed hope that these key outcomes continue to actively keep children and young people safe and allowing them to feel safe in our school. We feel that those with most impact will be:

- Teaching of desired behaviours and raising awareness of what bullying is within PDMU lessons, workshops and assemblies.
- Having a climate where pupils feel that they can disclose concerns and that they will be listened to and supported.

These measures will continue to be regularly reviewed and evaluated, with changes made as deemed appropriate.

Responsibility

We understand that everyone has a responsibility for creating and maintaining a safe and supportive learning environment for all members of our school community. Everyone in the school community, including pupils, their parents/carers 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
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Reporting a Bullying Concern

Pupils Reporting a Concern

We are very keen to ensure that if a child in our school has a concern about a potential bullying situation, that they feel comfortable and able to share that concern. While we have a Safeguarding Team with identified key staff, we are also keen that pupils are encouraged to raise concerns with any member of staff, including teaching and non-teaching staff.

Pupils can report bullying concerns in different ways, including:

- ✳ Verbally- talking to a member of staff
- ✳ By writing a note to a member of staff
- ✳ By sending a Seesaw message to their teacher (during home learning periods)
- ✳ By posting a comment in a 'worry box' (which some classes have)

Any pupil can raise a concern about bullying behaviour, not just the pupil who is experiencing this behaviour. Through our preventative work taken forward under Section 6, this message should focus on 'getting help' rather than 'telling'. As such, all pupils should be encouraged to 'get help' if they have a concern about bullying that they experience or is experienced by another.

Parents/Carers Reporting a Concern

Parents and carers have a responsibility to raise concerns about alleged bullying behaviour with the school at the earliest opportunity. We endeavour to remind parents/carers of the need to encourage their children to react appropriately to bullying behaviour and to not do anything to retaliate or to 'hit back'.

The process of parents/carers reporting bullying concerns is as follows:

- ✳ 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 Vice-Principal or Principal.

Where the parent/carer remains unsatisfied that the concern has not been appropriately responded to, the school's complaints procedure should be followed. This usually involves making a formal, written complaint, to the Chair of the Board of Governors. Please see our school Complaints Procedure Policy.

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

All reports of bullying concerns received from pupils and/or parents/carers will be responded to in line with this policy and that feedback will be made to the person who made the report. No information about action taken in relation to a pupil can be disclosed to anyone other than the pupil and his/her parents/carers.

Responding to a Bullying Concern

See Appendix 1 - Bullying Concern Assessment Form (BCAF)

Our school will use the BCAF to record information about alleged bullying incidents.

Here is the framework for how all reports of alleged bullying behaviour, or any concerns identified, will be responded to by our school. The focus of any intervention must be on responding to the bullying concern and restoring the wellbeing of those involved. As such, any strategy for responding to bullying concerns must concentrate on the prevention of any further incidents.

Using the NIABF Effective Responses to Bullying Behaviour resource, designated staff will:

- ✳ ***Clarify facts and perceptions***

In order to assess the situation and its severity level it will be necessary to speak to pupils involved (usually separately) in an attempt to get both sides of the story. It is important to bear in mind the rights of all pupils involved. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide useful information. When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the staff member will seek answers to questions of what, where, and who, in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with the conflict non-aggressively. If a group is involved, each member will be interviewed individually and then the individuals will meet as a group. Each member will be asked for his/her

account of what happened to ensure that everyone is clear about what everyone else has said. Other pupils may also be interviewed to get a clearer picture.

✳ ***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- this will include:***

The **nature** of the bullying behaviour - for example deliberate teasing, excluding or hitting- will be identified. We will be mindful not to rate some bullying, particularly violence, as more serious than other subtle forms as this could leave us vulnerable to ignoring 'teasing' or 'exclusion', which includes intentionally choosing to stop someone from joining in or indeed 'omission', which is intentionally choosing not to mention e.g. there was football at lunchtime.

The **frequency** of the bullying behaviour (daily, weekly or less often) will be identified. This can help indicate intention. When considering repetition, 3 or more repetitious incidents involving the same target may be criterion used to assess. However, this may be viewed differently with electronic communication as if, for example, 1 post has been shared repeatedly.

The **duration** of the bullying behaviour will be identified- whether over a short or prolonged period of time.

The **perceptions** of the child being bullied will be identified. Staff may also take into consideration the resilience of the child/ren involved and the impact caused whilst contemplating any imbalance of power/specifically targeted behaviour.

✳ ***Identify intervention level- based on Appendix 2 levels***

See Appendix 2- The four main levels of intervention

Following the identification of the intervention level needed for each respective incident, staff will then:

✳ ***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. These will*** take account of:

- The level of severity, using this as a guide to select appropriate intervention(s).
- The legal status of the act e.g. assault.

- The age and ability of those involved.
- Whether an individual pupil or a group is involved
- The level of staff agreement, confidence and competence in adopting a restorative, behaviour changing approach.
- The agreement and support of the parents/carers in adopting a restorative, behaviour changing approach.
- Whether the pupil(s) displaying bullying behaviour acknowledge(s) the unacceptable behaviour and can be enabled to feel empathy for the pupil experiencing bullying, and act appropriately.
- The willingness to engage in a group intervention such as the Support Group Method.
- Whether it is realistic to expect that the bullied pupil can be strengthened adequately to deal with the situation.
- Whether or not the pupil experiencing bullying has acted provocatively.

✳ ***Track, monitor and record effectiveness of interventions***

✳ ***Review outcome of interventions***

✳ ***Select and implement further intentions as necessary***

Our measures are in line with the NIABF which advocates a restorative approach to responding to bullying behaviour. Interventions suggested in the Effective Responses to Bullying Behaviour resource focus on 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.

Information regarding any action taken regarding a pupil will not be disclosed to anyone other than that pupil and his/her parents/carers.

Recording

We note the 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, using the BCAF form, 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.

Department of Education guidance to schools encourages the use of the SIMS Behaviour Management Module for record keeping. 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

We recognise the need for appropriate and adequate training for staff, including teaching and non-teaching school staff. This will include:

- ✳ stating a commitment to ensuring that staff are provided with appropriate opportunities for professional development as part of the school's ongoing CPD/PRSD provisions
 - ✳ noting the impact of the training given on both the policy and its procedures - e.g. any amendments made, inclusions added etc.
 - ✳ ensuring that opportunities for safeguarding training are afforded to Governors and all staff – teaching and non-teaching on an annual basis.
 - ✳ stating that CPD records will be kept and updated regularly
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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 brief 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

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

Links to Other Policies

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

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

Information within these policies remains consistent and reflective of our continued practices within school.