**Balnamore Primary School**

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**Anti-Bullying Policy**

Reviewed: October 2021

Due review: October 2023

Introduction and Statement

At Balnamore Primary School we believe all forms of bullying behaviour are unacceptable. We believe that all pupils have the right to learn in a safe, secure and supported environment.

Context

This policy has been developed in line with the legislative and policy and guidance frameworks included below;

**The Legislative Context**

* The Addressing Bullying in School 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 School 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)

School Mission Statement

We believe that each child will achieve success through:

• The provision of a happy, secure and stimulating environment where every child is encouraged to reach his or her full potential.

• Innovative teaching and investigative approaches to learning.

• Our children being supported in developing an enquiring mind through a wide range of activities and curricular experiences.

• The provision of rich, varied and up to date learning resources.

• The children developing independence, self-esteem, self-confidence and self-discipline and learning to respect other people, property and opinions.

• The establishment and development of effective learning partnerships between home, school and the local community.

School Ethos Statement

• **Nurture** – we will care for, support and protect our children whilst they are growing and learning with us and encourage them to do the same for each other and the wider community.

• **Inspire** – we will strive to ignite enthusiasm and the desire to explore and learn.

 • **Flourish** – our aim is to equip our children to develop academically and socially to succeed in school and beyond.

These values underpin and shape all our school policies.

Aims and objectives of our anti-bullying policy

We believe that all pupils have the right to learn in an environment that is free from intimidation

and/or fear.

Accordingly, we will work to create an environment within which positive relationships will be fostered and violent behaviour of any sort, social, emotional and physical will be unacceptable. We will strive to create a school ethos which encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.

Within such an environment, bullying behaviour will not be tolerated.

Should bullying occur, the needs of victims of bullying will be paramount, and the school will take all reasonable measures to ensure that the situation is resolved and will not reoccur.

The school will seek to involve and inform parents in all areas of its anti-bullying work. We will develop procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying behaviour and will respond to the concerns of parents and inform them of follow-up action taken aimed at bringing the bullying to an end. Please see **Anti-Bullying Flow Chart** as guidance to how we deal with any bullying concerns at Balnamore Primary School. The **Bullying Concern Form** is attached should we use this as a follow-up action.

Links with other school policies

This anti-bullying policy forms part of the school's overall Pastoral Care policy.

It links with the child protection policy in which the school outlines the steps it will take to protect children from harm and develop their personal safety strategies. The anti-bullying policy and the procedures contained herein will therefore be within the remit of the school’s Child Protection Team; Mrs Graham (DT) and Mrs Fields (DDT), including the governor’s representatives; Mrs McKeeman, on Child Protection and Pastoral Care.

It links with the Positive Behaviour Policy in which the school outlines the types of behaviour which are considered appropriate and inappropriate, together with the sanctions which will be used as part of the disciplinary process.

Consultation and Participation

This policy will be updated regularly following discussion;

* with the pupils by a number of means, including but not restricted to;
* Pupil Voice
* School Council
* Class discussion, including class based activities
* with the parents by a number of means, including but not restricted to;
* information events with parents/carers
* consultative workshops
* engagement with PTA and other parent groups
* with the school community by a number of means, including but not restricted to;
* staff survey for all teaching and non-teaching staff
* staff involvement in the redrafting of the Anti-Bullying Policy
* engagement event for stakeholders

Agreed definition of bullying behaviour

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

This agreed definition is taken from the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland 2016)

Bullying includes (but is not limited to) the repeated use of;

1. Any verbal, written or electronic communication
2. Any other act or
3. 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 (‘act’ includes omission).

Examples of bullying behaviour include (but are not limited to):

**Physical**: kicking, nipping, pushing, tripping, spitting

**Interfering**: With another pupil’s property, by stealing, hiding or damaging it

**Verbal**: name-calling, teasing, spreading rumours, teasing, belittling another’s achievements, ridiculing another pupils’ appearance

**Emotional**: excluding from play, threatening, pulling faces, excluding another pupil from a group activity, ridiculing another pupil’s appearance, way of speaking or personal mannerisms, intentionally causing distress or anxiety by scaring, humiliating or adversely affecting a child’s self-esteem.

Balnamore Primary School recognise that, while bullying is usually repeated behaviour, there are instances of one-off incidents that we will consider as bullying. When assessing a one-off incident, to make a decision on whether to classify it as bullying, we shall consider the following criteria:

* Severity and significance of the incident
* Evidence of pre-medication
* 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 individuals

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

Terminology

We also reserve the right to only deal with ‘hurtful behaviour which is repeated and intentional’ as bullying type behaviour, unless deemed to fall within an instance of one off incident. All other incidents will be dealt with according to the school’s Positive Behaviour Policy.

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 following the directive of we will not refer to the Effective Responses to Bullying Behaviour Guidelines, published by the Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forum, which recommends that no child at primary school level should be labelled as a bully, nor another child as the victim, we will refer to the child by describing the situation surrounding that child;

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

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

Signs of Bullying

There are several signs which may indicate bullying. However, the following is not an exhaustive list of such signs and behaviours.

**Teachers and parents should realise that whilst these behaviours may be symptomatic of bullying, they may also be signs of other problems.**

**In School** -

• Increased or erratic absence from school

• Sudden deterioration in school performance including forgetfulness, distractibility, sudden loss of possessions, workbooks destroyed or defaced, spoilt packed lunches

• Reluctance to walk home at the same time as other pupils or to use the same route as others – looking for excuses to stay later in school

• Visible signs of anxiety or distress e.g. nail biting, non-specific pains, headaches, stomach aches

• Unexplained changes in mood or behaviour e.g. temper flare up, abusive language or impulsive hitting out

• Asking to sit elsewhere in class – avoiding contact with certain other pupils

• Trying to avoid going out to play at break and lunch times and, if persuaded to, remaining close to an adult supervisor

• Unexplained bruising, cuts, etc

• Isolation and the desire to stay with adults

• Reluctance to say what is troubling him/her

**At Home -**

• Anxiety about travelling to and from school

• Staying late at school

• Pattern of illness

• Visible signs of distress

• Bed wetting

• Sleep walking

• Continual need (increased requests) for extra money

• Repeated loss of personal possessions

• Reluctance to say what is troubling him/her

• Threats of, or attempted suicide

Preventative strategies

Here at Balnamore Primary School we believe that the implementation of preventive measures will help to reduce the incidence of bullying behaviour.

We will take the following steps:

* Ethos and Pastoral Care:
* We will seek to be a "listening school", in which pupils are encouraged to express their feelings, fears and concerns. This will be facilitated through measures such as class discussions.
* We will promote and reward positive behaviour through measures such as awards eg Pupil of the Week, Star of the Month etc

**Empowering Children**

Through assemblies and various curricular tasks, including 'circle time', staff members ensure that all children are informed -

• That they have the right not to be bullied.

• That it is the bully who has the problem, not them.

• That they are not alone, despite what the bully may have done to make them think so.

• That they cannot, and are not expected to, deal with a bullying situation by themselves, they must seek help.

• That they see it as their responsibility to stand against bullying, by reporting it and by supporting their peers when bullying happens.

• That they should ‘speak out’ and trust teachers to take their concerns seriously and sort them accordingly

Our School is a PATHS PLUS school, where we teach PATHS PLUS through our PDMU curriculum and adopt useful strategies such as Playground Pals and Friendship Group.

**Curriculum**

Through Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU), incorporating the PATHS PLUS programme, pupils will learn about personal safety teaching programme from P1 - P7. This programme will help children to develop a range of skills including assertiveness and communication skills and the development of positive relationships.

**Proactive Strategies**

Staff members use some of the following strategies in order to attempt to prevent bullying in our school -

• Circle Time

• School Ethos – School Golden Rules

• Recognising and Rewarding Good Behaviour

• Improved Supervision of playground – Use of School Buddies

• Curricular Provisions through PDMU, UICT, use of stories/character studies/role play

• Parental Communication through the newsletter and questionnaires

• Peer Support Schemes

• School Assemblies

• Home School Partnerships

• Anti Bullying Policy, Procedures & Anti Bullying Week

• Staff Training

• Agreed classroom/whole school rules and behaviour

• Use of outside agencies e.g. PSNI, Childline, NSPCC

• Regular reminders via notices throughout the school

• Class and School Councils

In addition, the whole school approach should include -

• Meeting and Greeting- Speaking to children as they enter school and targeting ‘quiet’ or ‘withdrawn’ children

• Effective Supervision- Ensuring that the exits are 'covered', that buddies are trained properly and that all members of staff are aware of the 'effective supervision' policy

• Pastoral Care forms – every child has a ‘running record’ of any incidents which may be of concern

• Effective dismissal procedures – staff will be present at exit gates when pupils are dismissed at 3pm and will remain at these gates until 3:05pm or until all pupils have vacated school premises each afternoon, which ever is the later. It is the responsibility of each parent to collect all children in P1-P3, and all children throughout the school involved in after school activities until later in the afternoon, from the school gate each day to ensure their safety on the journey home.

All staff have also agreed the following strategies to assist with the prevention of bullying in our school -

**Classroom**

Effective use of -

* Seating plans
* Lining up - exit and entrance strategies
* Settling activities
* Agreed classroom rules constantly reinforced
* Praising and rewarding good behaviour
* Close monitoring of opportunities for movement
* Integrating new children into classroom
* Pupil of the week and 'well done' awards

**Corridors**

* Ensuring teacher supervision during movement
* Classes and individuals walking on the left side of corridor
* Classes moving short distances before stopping
* Re-allocation of cloak pegs to be outside classrooms (as far as possible)
* Children not allowed back inside the school, without permission before school, at break/lunch time and after school

**Playground**

* Training and guidelines for supervisors in the playground
* More structured areas/activities, using equipment, in the playground, used on a rotational basis
* P7 buddy training

**Toilets**

* Limiting the numbers of children in toilets at any one time
* Teacher/ Monitor supervision moving to/from toilet & at toilet entrance
* During wet break/lunch times, limiting the number of children moving

to/from toilet and ensuring Teacher/Classroom Assistant being available to monitor supervision

**Reactive Strategies**

We hope to react to incidents of bullying in ways which are supportive of the child experiencing bullying behaviour and which seek to influence the behaviour of the child displaying bullying behaviours away from repeating this type of unacceptable behaviour.

All incidents of bullying must be reported and all such reports will be taken seriously. The school recognises that the speed of response is important and, wherever possible, incidents will be resolved quickly. However, significant incidents will involve investigation and time may be required to reach a resolution.

Pupils experiencing bullying behaviours will be reassured that they are not in any way to blame (unless there is good reason to think otherwise) and appropriate support and protection will be given.

All incidents of reported bullying should be recorded by the **class teacher** on a bullying concern assessment form and, when necessary.

These records can then be used a source of information for other staff (e.g. next year's teacher), parents or outside agencies if necessary and to monitor children's behaviour over longer periods of time. All alleged incidents are reported to the Principal and Designated Child Protection Teacher (DT) and/or Designated Deputy Child protection Teacher (DDT); Mrs Graham (DT) and Mrs Fields (DDT).

A child who has been displaying bullying behaviours will be expected to take responsibility for their actions. The reasons for their behaviour will be explored and they will be expected to improve and change. They will be encouraged to think and talk about the implications of their behaviour for the pupil who was their 'target'. Discussion should also involve the pupils’ parents to identify any relevant background information and to secure their support. It may also be necessary for the involvement of the SENCO to address any behavioural problems through a behavioural programme. The aim will be to resolve incidents, rebuild relationships and restore a safe environment for all. Incidents will be resolved in age-appropriate ways and any sanctions will be in line with the school’s Positive Behaviour Policy. The staff will also take account of the Levels of Intervention recommended in Effective Responses to Bullying (NIABF), as general guidance we will adhere to the following levels of intervention, however reserve the right to adjust these depending on the incident and/or the child/ren involved;

Level 1 Teacher speaks with the pupil (s) involved

Level 2 Friendship work undertaken in small group scenario (Paths Plus)

Level 3 and 4 Co-ordination between Child Protection team and parents with appropriate measure put in place

**Playtime provision**

Teachers, classroom assistants and lunchtime supervisors will promote positive play and strategies for dealing with incidents of bullying in line with the Positive Behaviour Management policy.

Agreed code of conduct for the school community

**Pupils:**

* Pupils have an entitlement to be educated in an environment which is safe, caring and respectful of their individual needs.
* Pupils have a responsibility to treat all other pupils, teachers and other staff with respect. They have a responsibility to refrain from engaging in bullying behaviour and to report it if they are aware of it occurring.

**Parents:**

* Parents have an entitlement to expect that their child will be educated in an environment which is safe, caring and respectful of their Child’s individual needs.
* Parents have a responsibility to ensure that their child co-operates with teachers, other staff and other pupils. They have a responsibility to inform the school of any incidents of bullying which they are aware of.
* We will actively seek parental support in asking parents to advise their children not to retaliate violently to any form of bullying.

**The Responsibilities of Parents**

We ask our parents to support their child and the school by:

* Advising their child to report any bullying type behaviour either to the Designated Teachers (Mrs McDowell, Mr Smyth or Mrs Lyons) or another adult within the school, and explaining the implications of allowing the bullying type behaviour to continue unchecked, for themselves and other pupils.
* Advising their children to not retaliate violently to any forms of bullying type behaviour.
* Being sympathetic and supportive towards their children and reassuring them that appropriate action will be taken.
* Cooperating with the school, if their children are accused of bullying type behaviour to try and ascertain the truth. Point out the implications of bullying type behaviour to the children who are experiencing it and to those who are accused of carrying out the bullying type behaviour.

**Teachers and other staff:**

Teachers and other adults in the school community have an entitlement to work in an environment which is characterised by respect and caring for all.

Teachers and other adults in the school community have a responsibility to contribute to the creation of such an environment and to work for the wellbeing of all pupils. Teachers will seek to demonstrate by example the high standards of personal and social behaviour we expect of our pupils.

Staff should:

* Teach the relevant aspects of the PDMU curriculum.
* Discuss Bullying with all classes, in an age appropriate manner, so that every pupil learns about the damage it causes to both the child who is experiencing bullying behaviours and the child displaying bullying behaviours and the importance of telling an adult in school about bullying when it happens.
* Be alert to signs of distress and other possible indications of bullying.
* Listen to children who may have been bullied, take what they say seriously and act to support and protect them.
* Report suspected cases of bullying to Principal, DT or DDT.
* Follow up any complaint by a parent about bullying, and report back promptly and fully on the action which has been taken.
* Deal with observed instances of bullying promptly and effectively, in accordance with agreed procedures.

Procedures for dealing with incidences of bullying behaviour

(including contact with parents and external agencies)

Each case of bullying will be dealt with individually and follow-up action will be tailored to meet the individual needs of the pupils concerned.

**Pupils reporting a Concern**

While key staff have been identified to pupils both verbally and through posters around the school it is always highlighted to our pupils, both in assembly and in class discussion, that they can report their concerns to any member of staff, both teaching and non-teaching. Pupils are encouraged to report bullying concerns by the following methods, this list gives examples and pupils are able to report the incident in ways in which they feel most comfortable sharing the details;

* Verbally – talking to a member of staff
* By writing a note to a member of staff
* By posting a comment in the worry box at the school office

**Parents reporting a Concern**

In the first instance parents will be encouraged to speak with the class teacher, either in person, via dojo, email or telephone call.

If the parent is not satisfied with the response and/or does not feel that the action taken will prevent further incidents or further incidents have taken place, the concern should be reported to the Principal or the Designated Teacher for Child Protection.

Where the parent remains unsatisfied that the concern has not been appropriately responded to, the school’s complaints procedure should be followed.

Following the reporting of an incident by a pupil, parent or another stakeholder the following steps will be followed.

**Reporting of an incident**

When a bullying incident is reported, the information will be passed on to the following people:

* The teacher of any child involved
* The principal – Mrs Wilson
* Designated Teacher for Child Protection – Mrs Graham
* Deputy Designated teacher for Child Protection – Mrs Fields

A record will be made of the incident on a bullying concern assessment form and in SIMs Behaviour Module

**Investigation of an incident**

The Child Protection team will meet to assess the alleged incident.

Pupils involved will be interviewed and a record made of their responses. The incident will then be assessed against the criteria for bullying behaviour and where appropriate the type of bullying behaviour being displayed will be identified and the intervention level decided upon.

Parents of all pupils involved will be informed of the school's action up to this point and will be kept informed of subsequent action.

**Agreeing a plan for resolution**

Working with the pupils concerned, the designated teacher and principal will devise a plan for resolution of the conflict. This plan will include targets for acceptable behaviour and will set out support measures which will be provided for the pupils concerned and recorded.

Any disciplinary action required will use the system of sanctions which is set out in the school's positive behaviour policy.

**Reviewing the situation**

The situation will be monitored and formally reviewed within one month of the initial report. This will be done by the designated teacher, in co-operation with the other teachers, pupils and parents concerned.

**Involvement of other agencies in provision of support**

When necessary, the school will draw on support from a range of outside agencies including Education Welfare Officer, Behaviour Management Team and the Educational Psychology Service. In most instances, the school will seek to deal with the situation from within its own resources. However, if it becomes clear that outside help is needed, the school will not hesitate to avail of it.

Electronic Bullying

Mobile phones have become very useful to all of us. The school recognises that they can be used when school is over. However, it is also true that mobile phones can be used for bullying through text messaging. Therefore, we at Balnamore do not permit any Mobile devices on school grounds.

In order to prevent possible incidents of Electronic Bullying we will be proactive in putting in place preventative measures such as discussing the proper use of the internet, mobile phones etc. and wherever possible will engage with outside agencies eg. PSNI, NSPCC to provide advice to both pupils and parents. The school’s UICT policy also promoted the safe use of the internet.

It should be noted that incidents of Electronic Bullying that happen outside of the school day are the responsibility of the parents and guardians. At Balnamore Primary School we adhere to Facebook, Instagram etc. policy that everyone who uses their service should be 13 years of age and therefore no pupil at our school should be using this service. Any difficulties arising from pupils’ use of Facebook etc are the responsibility of the parent/guardian.

**Professional Development of Staff**

Balnamore Primary School recognise the need for appropriate and adequate training for all staff, both teaching and non-teaching to ensure a consistent and appropriate response to all reported incidents of bullying and the recording of such.

**Monitoring and review of the anti-bullying policy**

Implementation of this policy will be monitored by the principal and designated teachers for child protection, as well as the Safeguarding governor, Mrs McKeeman. The Board of Governors will maintain a standing agenda at each meeting where a report on recorded incidents of bullying will be noted. The Governors will also identify any trends and prioritise any priorities for action. It will also be the responsibility of the Board of Governors to assess the effectiveness of the strategies aimed at preventing bullying behaviour and the effectiveness of strategies aimed at responding to bullying behaviour.

This policy will be formally evaluated and reviewed every three years, it will however be reviewed annually in line with all safeguarding policies.

Policy reviewed October 2021