Rathmore Primary School

Anti-Bullying Policy

Date Ratified:	May 2025
Date of Review:	In line with the school's schedule for policy review.

This policy has been written following a consultation process, ratified by the Board of Governors and communicated to the school community as required. It will be monitored and reviewed as part of the school's policy review schedule.

Anti-Bullying Policy

Article 19
Governments should ensure that children are properly cared for, and protect them from violence, abuse and neglect by their parents or anyone else who looks after them.

1. Introduction

At Rathmore Primary School we believe all forms of bullying behaviour are unacceptable. As a Rights Respecting School we encourage respect across the whole school community. We believe that all pupils have the right to learn in a safe, secure and supported environment.

We recognise that bullying is a concern for all of us, including pupils, teaching and support staff, parents and Governors.

2. Context

This policy is informed and guided by current legislation and DE Guidance listed below:

(i)   The Legislative Context

- Health and Safety at Work NI Order 1978
- The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 Article 3 (see DE 1998/25)
- Welfare and Protection of Pupils Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 2003
- The Education (2006 Order) (Commencement No 2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2007
- The Education (School Development Plans) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010
- Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016

(ii)   DE Guidance

- Pastoral Care in Schools: Promoting Positive Behaviour DE, 2001

- Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools. A Guide for Schools DE 2017 – to be read in conjunction with the following:
  - 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's (SBNI) Policies and Procedures 2017
- Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 Statutory Guidance for Schools and Boards of Governors 2019
- Children's & Young People's Emotional Health and Wellbeing in Education 2021

(ii)   The International Context

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

Key Points

- The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016:
  - ➢ 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:
    - In school, during the school day
    - While travelling to and from school
    - When under control of school staff, but away from school eg school trip
  - ➢ Requires that the policy be updated at least every four years

- The Education and Libraries Order (NI) 2003, requires the Board of Governors to:
  - ➢ Safeguard and promote the welfare of registered pupils

- 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
  - ➢ Be protected from discrimination
  - ➢ Express their views, in a supported and accessible way, on issues that affect them, and to have their opinions taken seriously

3. Ethos and Principles

(i)   Our Ethos

Rathmore Primary School seeks to be a vibrant, caring community dedicated to the development of each pupil. Through a culture of high expectation, pupils will learn the knowledge, attitudes and skills they need to realise their full potential, excelling now and in the future. Together we are committed to fostering independence and responsibility, individually and collectively.

This policy reflects the caring ethos of the school and focuses closely on the legislation and the UN Convention on the Rights of a Child.

(iii)   Aims

- To create a safe and secure environment for all
- To increase awareness, prevent, reduce and eradicate bullying in any form
- To provide support and protection for anyone being bullied
- To ensure that all pupils, staff and parents are aware of this policy and their obligations
- To work in partnership and harmony with parents to build children's confidence and resilience and maintain everyone's self-esteem.

(iii)   Principles

- We are committed to a society where children and young people can live free and safe from bullying
- We believe in a society where bullying is unacceptable and where every child and young person is safe and feels safe from bullying
- We believe that every child and young person should be celebrated in their diversity
- We are committed to a preventative, responsive and restorative anti-bullying ethos across the whole school
- We value the views and contributions of children and young people, we will actively seek these views and we will respect and take them into account
- We understand that everyone in our school community has a role to play in taking a stand against bullying and creating a safe and welcoming environment for all

4. Consultation and Participation

This policy has been created in consultation with Governors and staff. An opportunity for parent and pupil engagement and consultation is offered on an annual basis.

5. Definition of Bullying

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

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" included omission.

Definition used with pupils

- Bullying is a person, or people, doing nasty or unkind things to hurt or scare you, more than once.

- Bullying is done on purpose, more than once, making you unhappy and frightened.

'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' (Education Authority)

Criteria used to define bullying

The term bullying refers to a range of harmful behaviour, both physical and psychological.

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 relationship between those involved
- any previous incidents involving the individuals

Any incidents which are not considered bullying behaviour will be addressed under Rathmore Primary School's Behaviour Policy.

Socially Unacceptable Behaviour

The Anti-Bullying and Behaviour Policies for Rathmore Primary School both recognise that there is a range of socially unacceptable behaviours which contravenes everyone's right to be safe.

They include but are not limited to the following examples:

1. PHYSICAL - jostling, pushing, punching, kicking and other physical contact
2. VERBAL - name calling, insults, jokes, threats, spreading rumours
3. INDIRECT - omission, refusal to work with/talk to/play with/help others, interfering with personal property of someone and can include misuse of a digital device and/or social media platforms.

Socially unacceptable behaviours will be dealt with according to the school's Positive Behaviour Policy.

Every child can make errors of judgement behaving in ways that are hurtful to others. In most cases a quiet word and an explanation of how others feel is sufficient to make a difference. Children can and do learn over time how to care for themselves and for others. We believe that learning from mistakes and being genuinely sorry for them is part of growing up to be a socially well-adjusted person.

As outlined by EA, some examples of socially unacceptable behaviour are e.g. pushing, nipping, punching, spreading rumours etc. which can occur from time to time when children are playing together.

Socially unacceptable behaviour however can become bullying behaviour when the information gathered by members of staff and shared with members of the Anti-Bullying Support Team clearly demonstrates that the unacceptable behaviours meet the criteria listed below. i.e.

- Intentional
- Targeted at a specific pupil or group of pupils
- Repeated (but is not limited to this)
- Causing physical or emotional harm

Bullying Behaviour

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 spreading false rumours about others
- trying 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

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

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

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

In determining 'harm' we define:

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

6. Preventative Steps

Learning about Bullying

We encourage a whole school approach in which children and adults work together to create an environment where everybody gets a clear message that bullying is wrong and will not be tolerated, that bullying behaviour of all kinds must be challenged.

This will be delivered and reinforced through various areas of the curriculum;

- In Foundation and Key Stage 1 classes children will be taught to be aware of different forms of bullying behaviour and how to develop personal strategies to resist unwanted behaviour.
- This message will be reinforced in Key Stage 2 classes when children will be encouraged to recognise, discuss and understand the nature of bullying and the harm that can result from it.

Strategies to prevent bullying behaviours

Rathmore Primary School has established and will maintain the following strategies to prevent and reduce bullying behaviour:

- Ensure that the policy is implemented
- Ensure that the policy is reviewed and updated regularly ☐ Ensure that the policy is on the school website and accessible ☐ Ensure that the policy is shared with all new families to the school.

Proactive Strategies

Over the course of the primary experience Year 1 to 7, Rathmore Primary School will use the following strategies to raise awareness of Anti-Bullying:

- Promote the school ethos at all times
- Establish class charters to recognise and reward good behaviour, raising awareness and understanding of the positive behaviour expectations, as set out in the Positive Behaviour Policy.
- Development of our School Council and Rights Respecting Steering Group to support the delivery and promotion of key anti-bullying messaging within the school.
- Participate in the NIABF annual Anti-Bullying Week activities, promoting a positive message such as Kindness or Friendship Week.
- Engage in key national and regional campaigns, eg Safer Internet Day.
- Focused assemblies to raise awareness and promote understanding of key issues related to bullying.
- Use outside agencies for support and resources-eg. NSPCC, Action Mental Health, PSNI, Behaviour Support Team.
- Promote anti-bullying messages through the curriculum eg. inclusion of ageappropriate material specific to individual subject areas related to bullying, positive behaviour and inclusion.

- Address issues such as the various forms of bullying, including the how and why it can happen, through PDMU. Use of Listening School/ Circle Time to develop interpersonal and intrapersonal skills.
- Provide and promote the school counselling service and through the preventative curriculum actively promote positive emotional health and wellbeing.
- Develop effective strategies for playground management, eg. training for supervisors, timetables for supervision, zoning of playgrounds, inclusion of specific resources (buddy benches, quiet areas) and provision of a variety of play options to meet the needs of all pupils. Promote the P7 Buddy System.
- Provide support for vulnerable pupils, including new pupils to the school eg. through seating arrangements/ peer support/additional staff observation.
- Develop effective strategies for the management of unstructured times (eg. break time, lunch).
- Appropriate observations by staff to support the transition from school day to journey home (eg. staff at classroom doors, in playground).
- Promote good parental communication- eg. face-to-face, telephone, Seesaw.
- Consultation with pupils to monitor the effectiveness of this policy.
- Provide a questionnaire for parents and pupils at appropriate times.
- Provide staff training.

Reactive Strategies

The following steps will be taken when dealing with incidents:
- If bullying is suspected or reported, the situation will be dealt with immediately by the member of staff who has been approached
- A member of staff will respond to any claim of alleged bullying
- Reports will be taken seriously
- Attempts will be made to resolve a situation quickly
- Steps will be taken to ensure the pupil feels safe and secure
- Consequences, which are proportionate and clearly set out in the Positive Behaviour Policy, will be explained and used.

(i)   In school

- Promoting good discipline both in the classroom and playground so that children are aware of consequences of unacceptable behaviour.

- Promotion of anti-bullying messages through the curriculum eg inclusion of ageappropriate material specific to individual subject areas related to bullying, positive behaviour and inclusion

- Addressing issues such as the various forms of bullying, including the how and why it can happen eg through PDMU

- Encouraging parents to inform a member of staff if they are aware of or suffer from bullying

- Encouraging parents to inform the school if any incidents of bullying are known to them

- Recording and investigating as quickly as possible all reported cases of bullying

- Giving help, support and advice to the child experiencing bullying behaviour

- Ensuring that pupils, parents and staff (both teaching and non-teaching) are aware of the policy on anti-bullying

- Involving outside agencies for support and advice where appropriate.

- Applying sanctions as outlined in the Positive Behaviour Policy

Bullying can happen in any situation but we are particularly alert to the following settings; playground, toilets, dining hall, classroom, school trips, pupils arriving/ leaving school, pupils lining up.

(ii)   On the way to and from school

- Development of a culture where pupils take pride in their school and are viewed as ambassadors for their school within the community

- 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

- Appropriate deployment of staff to support the transition from school day to journey home e.g. escorting children to playground at end of school day/after school activity.

(iii)   The use of electronic communication

- Addressing key themes of online behaviour and risk through PDMU including understanding how to respond to harm and the consequences of inappropriate use

- Participation in Anti-Bullying Week activities

- Engagement with key statutory and voluntary sector agencies eg C2k, PSNI, Safeguarding Board for NI e-safety Forum to support the promotion of key messages

- Participation in annual Safer Internet Day and promotion of key messages throughout the year eg parent/pupil workshop on safer internet

- Development and implementation of robust and appropriate policies in related areas

The new legislation gives the authority to take steps to prevent bullying through the use of electronic communication amongst pupils at any time during the term, where that behaviour is likely to have a detrimental effect on the pupil's education at school.

7. Responsibilities

Individual Responsibilities

The issue of bullying is a matter of partnership including all pupils, staff and parents. Everyone has a responsibility for contributing to the creation of a safe and supportive learning environment for all members of the school community.

The Board of Governors

The Board of Governors will:

- Ensure that policies designed to prevent bullying involving a registered pupil at the school are pursued at the school;
- Determine the measures to be taken at the school (whether by the Governors, the staff of the school or other persons) with a view to preventing bullying involving a registered pupil at the school: - o On the premises of the school during the school day; o While travelling to or from school;
    - o While the pupil is in the lawful charge of a member of school staff o While the pupil is receiving educational provision arranged on behalf of the school.
- Review these measures at intervals of no more than 4 years and at such times as the DE may direct.
- Before determining or revising these measures, consult in a manner as appears to be appropriate with the school community
- In reviewing these measures give due regard to any advice given by DE;
- Prepare a written policy and ensure that all parents receive a copy

The Governors of Rathmore Primary School can consider reasonable measures to be taken by Governors, the staff of the school or other persons with a view to preventing bullying involving a registered pupil at the school which;
- Involves the use of electronic communication
- Takes place in circumstances other than those listed in this policy
- Is likely to have a detrimental effect on that pupil's education at the school.

The Board of Governors must ensure that a record is kept of all incidents of bullying or alleged bullying involving a registered pupil at the school that occur:
- On the premises of the school during the school day;
- While travelling to or from the school during the school term;
- While the pupil is in the lawful control or charge of a member of the staff of the school;
- While the pupil is receiving educational provision arranged on behalf of the school and provided elsewhere than on the premises of the school.

School Responsibilities

School staff will:

- Provide a safe environment for all children
- Promote an ethos of respect for the individual
- Foster positive self-esteem and self-respect
- Celebrate and promote appropriate behaviour, within the playground and classroom
- Emphasise the importance of seeking help from a trusted adult about bullying behaviour when it happens or is observed
- Take all aspects of bullying seriously, listening sensitively and providing reassurance that appropriate action will be taken
- Focus attention, and provide advice on anti-bullying education if required, to individuals, groups, classes or year groups.
- Create and maintain a listening culture
- Be alert to signs of distress and other possible indications of bullying behaviour
- Intervene to support any person who is being bullied, unless it is unsafe to do so
- Explain the implications of allowing the bullying behaviour to continue unchecked for themselves and/or others
- Explain how to seek support – internal and external
- Resolve difficulties in restorative ways to prevent recurring bullying behaviours and meet the needs of all parties
- Follow the procedures set out in this Anti-Bullying Policy and log all concerns using the appropriate paperwork
- Complete Child Protection and Safeguarding training, also receiving regular training on dealing with Anti-Bullying.

Pupil Responsibilities

Pupils will:

- Adhere to and promote the school's code of behaviour and charters • Behave towards others in a mutually respectful way • Avoid any bullying behaviour and/ or aggression.
- Report bullying

Parental Responsibilities

Parents will:

- Work in partnership with the school
- Report any concerns or instances of bullying behaviour to the school
- Model high standards of personal pro-social behaviour
- Encourage children to report and not retaliate (to avoid displaying bullying behaviour themselves)

- Try to resolve difficulties occurring outside school to prevent them continuing outside school

- Parents should understand that on-going issues or difficulties experienced outside school, within the community, are beyond the jurisdiction of the school.

8. Reporting a Bullying Concern

- As we take the issue of bullying seriously, all reported concerns will be dealt with accordingly and will be responded to in line with this policy.

- The concern may be reported by a child, parent etc. to a teacher or supervisor who will deal initially with the situation. If the situation falls under the category of socially unacceptable behaviour, it will be dealt with according to the Positive Behaviour Policy. If deemed to fall under the category of bullying behaviour the information will be passed on by the class teacher to the Anti-Bullying Support Team who will discuss and decide the next steps to be taken.

- The concern will be investigated thoroughly including separate discussions with both the pupil(s)/person(s) experiencing the bullying behaviour and the pupil(s)/person(s) displaying bullying behaviour. All relevant details will be recorded. The outcome of these discussions will be reported to the parents.

- It may be necessary under certain circumstances to impose sanctions to the pupil displaying bullying behaviour. They will be made aware that their behaviour will be closely monitored over a stated period of time. Sanctions may include exclusion from the playground. (Refer to the school's Positive Behaviour Policy for further details on sanctions.)

- The school may seek advice and support of the Educational Welfare Officer and Educational Psychologist through the Special Needs Code of Practice. Feedback will be made to the person who made the report.

- It must be noted, however, that no information about action taken in relation to a pupil can be disclosed to anyone other than the pupil and his/her parents/carers.

9. Responding to a Bullying Concern

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

Using the NIABF Effective Responses to Bullying Behaviour resource, the Anti-Bullying Support Team will:

- Clarify facts and perceptions
- Check records (SIMS)
- Assess the incident against the criteria for bullying behaviour
- Identify any themes or motivation factors

- Identify the type of bullying behaviour being displayed

- Identify intervention level

- Select and implement appropriate interventions for all pupils involved including consequences and sanctions where relevant

- Track, monitor and record effectiveness of interventions

- Review outcome of interventions

- Select and implement further intentions as necessary

When responding to a bullying concern, school staff shall implement interventions aimed at responding to the behaviour, resolving the concern and restoring the wellbeing of those involved. Where appropriate, school staff may implement sanctions for those displaying bullying behaviour (refer to the school's Positive Behaviour Policy).

Procedures for dealing with bullying

When dealing with bullying behaviour the school will aim to:
1. Stop the bullying behaviour.
2. Protect and support the pupil experiencing bullying behaviour.
3. Change the attitude and behaviour of the child displaying bullying behaviours.

In some cases, however, talking things through will not make enough of a difference and in these cases we reserve the right to apply a range of consequences which are outlined in the Positive Behaviour Policy. Such situations will be dealt with and communicated clearly by the staff in charge in a caring, supportive and fair manner, with some flexibility regarding age of the child and the individual's circumstances as far as consequences are concerned.

A restorative and solution-focused model will be used by school to move forward when responding to bullying behaviour.

The following preventative safeguarding measures are in place:
- Named persons have been designated to co-ordinate and monitor both our AntiBullying Policy and incidents, or alleged incidents, of bullying. They will also be responsible for periodically reviewing procedures.

- The Key Stage Leaders are the named persons to receive initial concern forms from staff. They will link with the Vice Principal or the Principal.

- The designated Governor for Child Protection and Safeguarding is consulted periodically should a serious incident occur.

- Rathmore Primary School is a Rights Respecting School and has a rights respecting school ethos.

- A Positive Behaviour Policy, outlining the ethos of the school and the Code of Behaviour expected is in place.

- Agreed procedures for responding to and recording incidents of bullying have been established. (outlined below)

If a parent is concerned that their child is experiencing bullying behaviours, they should follow the procedures of communication at Rathmore Primary School by contacting their child's class teacher.

10. Recording

Rathmore Primary School will record centrally 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

As well as hard copies of written records, records will be kept on the online SIMS Behaviour Management Module, which is part of the C2k system in school. 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.

11. Professional Development of Staff

Appropriate and adequate training for staff, including teaching and non-teaching staff will be ongoing. This will include:
- ensuring staff are provided with appropriate opportunities for professional development as part of their ongoing staff training provision
- noting the impact of the training given on both the policy and its procedures eg amendments made, inclusions added etc
- ensuring that opportunities for safeguarding training are afforded to Board of Governors and all staff, teaching and non-teaching
- ensuring that CPD records are kept and updated

12. Monitoring and Evaluation

This policy was formulated in consultation with school Governors, staff, pupils and parents. The Governors will be involved in the tracking and monitoring procedures i.e. this will be an item on the Agenda of Governor Meetings, relating to the efficacy or otherwise with regard

to individual interventions and strategies used or the overall effectiveness of the Anti-Bullying Policy and practice.

The school will use the ETI Safeguarding Proforma along with the SIMS.net records to check whole-school effectiveness. The school will continue to focus on helping children understand the difference between socially unacceptable and bullying behaviours making changes where needed to ensure they understand the differences.

The school will review measure in intervals of no more than 4 years or if directed by DE to do so e.g. new legislation introduced, following an ETI Inspection or after dealing with a particularly challenging situation which has highlighted the need for amendments to be made.

The Safeguarding Team/Anti-Bullying Support Team will on an annual basis review the data held regarding bullying behaviours, identifying trends and evaluate the effectiveness of anti-bullying strategies.

It is important to remember that staff, pupils and parents all have an active part to play and have a responsibility to ensure effective implementation and maintenance of this policy.

13. <u>Links with other Policies</u>

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

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

Anti-Bullying Policy

Parent Summary Sheet

My child is being subjected to bullying behaviour; What should I do?

1. Reassure your child that he/she was right to tell you.
2. Listen to and reassure your child that you and school will do everything you can to sort out the concern.
3. Find out the facts.
4. Confirm your child knows the difference between bullying behaviour and socially unacceptable behaviour.
5. Emphasise that he/she needs to tell the truth.
6. Allow him/her plenty of time to explain what is happening.
7. Record
    a. What happened and when
    b. Who else saw it
8. If the bullying behaviour is connected with school i.e. it took place in school or on the way to or from school- please contact us.

How do I approach a meeting at school?

- Remember we are here to help. We are as keen as you to resolve this concern. It is always going to be more helpful to work in partnership.
- Please contact the school to initially speak to the class teacher.
- Tell us how your child has been affected, what he or she is afraid of and what he or she feels might help. Describe to us the facts about the bullying behaviours.
- We will listen and reassure you that the matter will be responded to, dealt with and that you will be kept informed.
- We will stress the importance of keeping us informed of any further concerns or incidents.
- We will give you the opportunity to establish on-going communication with the school to monitor the progress of the situation.