



Circular 045/2013

**To: The Managerial Authorities of Recognised Primary, Secondary, Community, and Comprehensive Schools
and
The Chief Executive Officers of Education and Training Boards**

Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools

1. Purpose of circular

The purpose of this circular is to inform school management authorities that *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools* (hereinafter referred to as “these procedures”) have been developed following consultation with the relevant education partners and replace the *1993 Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post-Primary Schools*. These procedures have resulted from a review of the 1993 guidelines and the implementation of the *Action Plan on Bullying – Report of the Anti-Bullying Working Group to the Minister for Education and Skills* which was published in January 2013.

2. General

The purpose of these procedures is to give direction and guidance to school authorities and school personnel in preventing and tackling school-based bullying behaviour amongst its pupils and in dealing with any negative impact within school of bullying behaviour that occurs elsewhere. These procedures apply to all recognised primary and post-primary schools and to centres for education (as defined in the Education Act 1998) which are attended by pupils under the age of 18 years. Where a school caters for vulnerable adults these procedures also apply to those adult learners. School authorities and school personnel

are required to adhere to these procedures in dealing with allegations and incidents of bullying.

3. Next Steps

All Boards of Management are now required to immediately commence the necessary arrangements for developing and formally adopting an anti-bullying policy which fully complies with the requirements of these procedures. It is expected that this will be completed by each school as early as possible in the 2013/14 school year but in any event by no later than the end of the second term of the 2013/14 school year. The school's anti-bullying policy shall then be made available to school personnel, published on the school website (or where none exists, be otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parents' Association (where one exists). A copy of the school's anti-bullying policy shall be provided to the Department and the patron if requested.

4. Summary of Main Elements

The following is a summary of the main elements of these procedures:

- All Boards of Management are required to formally adopt and implement an anti-bullying policy that fully complies with the requirements of these procedures. A template anti-bullying policy which must be used by all schools for this purpose is provided in **Appendix 1** of these procedures.
- The school's anti-bullying policy must be made available to school personnel, published on the school website (or where none exists, be otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parents' Association (where one exists). A copy of the school's anti-bullying policy must be provided to the Department and the patron if requested.
- Bullying is defined as 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 cyber-bullying and

identity-based bullying (such as homophobic bullying and racist bullying).

- These procedures outline key principles of best practice for both preventing and tackling bullying and require all schools to commit to these principles in their anti-bullying policy. The key principles are:
 - A positive school culture and climate
 - Effective leadership;
 - A school-wide approach;
 - A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact;
 - Implementation of Education and Prevention Strategies (including awareness raising measures)
 - Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils;
 - Supports for staff;
 - Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies);
 - On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

- 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. These procedures outline key elements of a positive school culture and climate and provide schools with some practical tips for building a positive school culture and climate.

- These procedures also highlight the importance of a school-wide (management, staff, pupils and parents) approach. In addition to the role of management and staff, parents and pupils have a role and responsibility in helping the school to prevent and address school-based bullying behaviour and to deal with any negative impact within the school of bullying behaviour that occurs elsewhere.

- These procedures require that the prevention of bullying must be an integral part of a school's anti-bullying policy. 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 including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.

- A school's anti-bullying policy must also set out the school's procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying and the school's procedures for the formal noting and recording of bullying behaviour. The school's procedures must be consistent with the guidance and direction set out in this document.
- These procedures emphasise that the primary aim in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and restore as far as is practicable the relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame).
- In any case where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred-
 - the parents of the parties involved should be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken (by reference to the school policy); and
 - the relevant teacher must keep appropriate written records which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.
- The relevant teacher must record the bullying behaviour in the standardised recording template **at Appendix 3** (and a copy must be provided to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable) in the following circumstances:
 - In cases where he/she considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour occurred; and
 - Where the school has decided as part of its anti-bullying policy that in certain circumstances bullying behaviour must be

recorded and reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable.

- The procedures include oversight arrangements which require that, at least once in every school term, the Principal will provide a report to the Board of Management setting out:
 - the overall number of bullying cases reported (by means of the bullying recording template in **Appendix 3**) to the Principal or Deputy Principal since the previous report to the Board and;
 - confirmation that all of these cases 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*.
- As part of the oversight arrangements, the Board of Management must undertake an annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation by the school. Written notification that the review has been completed must be made available to school personnel, published on the school website (or where none exists, be otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parents' Association (where one exists). A standardised notification which must be used for this purpose is included at **Appendix 4**. A record of the review and its outcome must be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

The above is a summary of the main elements of these procedures and should therefore be read within the context of the overall *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* document.

5. Queries

Queries in relation to a school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation of these procedures should be dealt with at school level.

General queries should be e-mailed to the Department at:

schoolgovernance@education.gov.ie

6. Dissemination of Circular

A copy of this circular should be provided to members of the Board of Management and school staff. A copy should also be provided to the Parents' Association. This circular and the associated procedures may be accessed on the Department's website at www.education.ie. An Irish version of this circular is also available on the Department's website.

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