

# Anti-bullying policy

## 1. Introduction:

In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the code of behaviour guidelines issued by the NEWB, the Board of Management of Donabate/Portrane Educate Together National School has adopted the following anti-bullying policy within the framework of the school's overall code of behaviour. This policy fully complies with the requirements of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools which were published in September 2013.

The Board of Management recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of pupils and is therefore fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour:

- A positive school culture and climate which-
  - is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity;
  - encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment;
  - and promotes respectful relationships across the school community;
- 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) that-
  - build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and
  - explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.

- Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils;
- Supports for staff;
- Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies);  
and
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

The Board of Management will be informed of all cases of bullying in the school. The Principal's report will include a section on bullying including the strategies and interventions that the school are employing.

Bullying behaviour thrives where there is confusion about what constitutes bullying, when strategies/procedures are not in place, when children are too fearful to tell or feel that nothing will be done about it if they do tell.

Pupils will be informed that when they report incidents of bullying they are acting responsibly.

A calm unemotional problem solving approach will be used to deal with bullying.

## **2. School Philosophy**

Children who attend Donabate/Portrane Educate Together National School will be encouraged to reach their full potential mentally, physically, spiritually, emotionally and socially, in an atmosphere and environment in which they feel safe, valued and secure and in which respect for self and others is the norm. The staff of our school, conscious of the need for a positive working environment, will encourage the involvement of the wider school community in the achievement of these ends through a 'whole school' approach whereby every individual is involved in the development of a school environment where each person is respected and valued.

### **3. Ethos**

Our school operates under the direct patronage of Educate Together. There are four underlying principles which form our ethos. Educate Together schools are:

- Co- educational
- Child- centred
- Democratically run
- Equality based

### **4. Definition of bullying:**

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

Bullying is unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time.

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

- deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying,
- cyber-bullying and
- identity-based bullying such as homophobic bullying, racist bullying, bullying based on a person's membership of the Traveller community and bullying of those with disabilities or special educational needs.

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

However, in the context of this policy, placing a once-off offensive or hurtful public message, image or statement on a social networking site or other public forum where that message, image or statement can be viewed and/or repeated by other people will be regarded as bullying behaviour.

Negative behaviour that does not meet this definition of bullying will be dealt with in accordance with the school's code of behaviour.

## 5. Types of Bullying

The following are some of the types of bullying behaviour that can occur amongst pupils:

- o **Physical aggression:** This behaviour includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping people. It may also take the form of severe physical assault. While pupils often engage in 'mess fights', they can sometimes be used as a disguise for physical harassment or inflicting pain.
- o **Intimidation:** Some bullying behaviour takes the form of intimidation: it may be based on the use of very aggressive body language with the voice being used as a weapon. Particularly upsetting can be a facial expression which conveys aggression and/or dislike.
- o **Isolation/exclusion and other relational bullying:** This occurs where a certain person is deliberately isolated, excluded or ignored by some or all of the class group. This practice is usually initiated by the person engaged in bullying behaviour and can be difficult to detect. It may be accompanied by writing insulting remarks about the pupil in public places, by passing around notes about or drawings of the pupil or by whispering insults about them loud enough to be heard. Relational bullying occurs when a person's attempts to socialise and form relationships with peers

are repeatedly rejected or undermined. One of the most common forms includes control: "Do this or I won't be your friend anymore" (implied or stated); a group ganging up on a person (girl or boy); non-verbal gesturing; malicious gossip; spreading rumours about a person or giving them the "silent treatment".

- o **Cyber-bullying:** This type of bullying is increasingly common and is continuously evolving. It is bullying carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as text, social networking sites, e-mail, instant messaging (IM), apps, gaming sites, chat-rooms and other online technologies. Being the target of inappropriate or hurtful messages is the most common form of online bullying. As cyber-bullying uses technology to perpetrate bullying behaviour and does not require face to face contact, cyber-bullying can occur at any time (day or night). Many forms of bullying can be facilitated through cyber-bullying. For example, a target may be sent homophobic text messages or pictures may be posted with negative comments about a person's sexuality, appearance etc.
- o **Name calling:** Persistent name-calling directed at the same individual(s) which hurts, insults or humiliates should be regarded as a form of bullying behaviour. Often name-calling of this type refers to physical appearance, e.g., size or clothes worn. Accent or distinctive voice characteristics may attract negative attention. Academic ability can also provoke name calling. This tends to operate at two extremes. There are those who are singled out for attention because they are perceived to be weak academically. At the other extreme there are those who, because they are perceived as high achievers, are also targeted.
- o **Damage to property:** Personal property can be the focus of attention for bullying behaviour. This may result in damage to clothing, mobile phone or

other devices, school books and other learning material or interference with a pupil's locker or bicycle. The contents of school bags and pencil cases may be scattered on the floor. Items of personal property may be defaced, broken, stolen or hidden.

- o **Extortion:** Demands for money may be made, often accompanied by threats (sometimes carried out in the event of the targeted pupil not delivering on the demand). A pupil may also be forced into theft of property for delivery to another who is engaged in bullying behaviour.

## **6. Who investigates incidents of Bullying/alleged bullying?**

Usually it is the class teacher who will initially investigate incidents of bullying. Sometimes another relevant teacher ( Support teacher or senior teacher) will conduct the initial investigation. The investigating teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved and will keep the principal informed. The teacher initially investigating the incident, or the parent, may refer the issue to the Principal or Senior Management team for further investigation.

## **7. Education and Prevention Strategies:**

The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber- bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying) that will be used by the school are as follows:

- In September every year we hold an Anti -Bullying Week. All classes from Junior Infants to Sixth Class will learn about bullying and what they should do if they are being bullied or if they know that someone else is being bullied. During Anti Bullying week the topics of Cyber bullying and homophobic bullying will be taught formally in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> classes.

- The Stay Safe Programme will be taught in Senior Infants, Second, Fourth and Sixth Classes. Time will be devoted to discussion on bullying at each class level, with particular emphasis being placed on re-affirming the children's sense of self-esteem. These lessons will be revised each year, they will be covered during SPHE or our Learn Together Programme.
- Our anti-bullying policy will run side by side with an anti passivity policy. Children will be encouraged and helped to say, "No," to bullying behaviour and to report experiences of bullying. They will be taught that there is a big difference between telling tales and asking for help.
- The SALT programme (Conflict Resolution) will be taught in Senior Infants, First and Second Class each year. The 4 steps (Stop, Ask, Listen, Talk) will be revised in the Senior Classes.
- Our Anti Bullying Code will be taught and displayed in all classrooms.
- During Human Rights Month (November) each year the Equal Status Act and the nine grounds on which discrimination is prohibited in Ireland are explored at an age appropriate level. The children in 6th classes will focus on the Sexual Orientation ground (Please see Appendix 1).
- SPHE lessons in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class will teach the children about staying safe online and will address the issue of Cyber Bullying. In February each year we will mark Internet Safety Day by addressing the issues surrounding keeping safe on the internet, the children will be taught about how to behave correctly on line in a manner that keeps both themselves and other people safe. There will be an assembly for the children on this topic in February each year.
- The 6<sup>th</sup> class children will be trained as Peer Mediators. They will offer a Peer Mediation service to the children from 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> class.

**8. The school's procedures for investigation, follow-up and recording of bullying behaviour and the established intervention strategies used by the school for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour are as follows:**

**STEP 1 : INVESTIGATION BY CLASS TEACHER AND/OR PRINCIPAL**

- Incidents of **alleged bullying** will initially be dealt with by the class teacher or other relevant teacher. Answers should be sought to questions of What, Where, When, Who and Why.

- Incidents which are of a serious nature, or which involve pupils from a number of classes may be referred to the Principal. Further investigation may be carried out by the principal and/or other relevant teachers.
- On being informed of an **alleged incident of bullying**, the teacher(s) dealing with it will first interview the alleged victim/s and discuss the feelings which the alleged victim/s experienced because of the bullying behaviour. An interview will then take place with the alleged perpetrator/s. Members of a gang should be met individually and as a group.
- In keeping with the Anti - Bullying procedures as issued by the DES, children who are not directly involved may also be interviewed in order to establish the facts.

### **STEP 2: SCHOOL ANTI BULLYING POLICY INITIATED**

- If the teacher determines at this stage that bullying has occurred the Principal and Senior Management Team will be informed.
- Records will be kept documenting the relevant incidents and will be kept in the Principal's office . Each confirmed case of bullying will be recorded on a template (see Appendix 3)
- The school Anti Bullying Policy will be followed.

### **STEP 3: RESOLUTIONS AND SANCTIONS**

- Having discussed the negative impact which bullying has on both perpetrator/s and victim/s responsibility will be placed on all individuals within the group to resolve the difficulty and to take appropriate steps to ensure that it does not happen again.
- Parents of all children concerned will be met.
- The main purpose of these procedures is to resolve issues for the children concerned. If the perpetrator is contrite and genuinely wants to rectify the situation sanctions may not be needed. Sometimes sanctions are necessary and suitable sanctions are listed below.
- The primary aim for the teachers investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame).
- Sanctions will be imposed at the discretion of the school



#### **STEP 4: FOLLOW UP:**

- Subsequent meetings will take place to ensure that there is no repeat of bullying behaviour and in order to monitor the situation as deemed necessary.

#### **STEP 5: IF PROBLEMS PERSIST:**

- If the meetings above fail to achieve an end to bullying behaviour, separate meetings between the teacher dealing with the problem and the parent/s of perpetrator/s and victim/s will take place to inform them of what has transpired, update them on the steps taken by the school, and to seek their support in arriving at a solution.
- In cases where individual pupils are repeatedly involved in incidents of bullying or in cases **where serious incidents** occur the school will give consideration to suspending or expelling pupils.

#### **Sanctions (not listed in sequential order)**

- Loss of yard time
- Letters of apology
- Additional work
- Red Cards
- Loss of golden time
- Exclusion from peers - In class Suspension
- Referral to senior staff
- Withdrawal from representing school ( playing sport, quiz teams etc)
- Withdrawal from class outings
- Parental supervision at yard time
- Parental supervision on the way to and from school
- Exclusion from school ( in compliance with the school Positive Behaviour Policy and the NEWB Guidelines for Schools)

**It will also be made clear to all involved (each set of students and parents that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the student being disciplined, his or her parents and the school)**

According to the PDST Anti-Bullying Support Material for schools there are 6 major methods of intervention in cases of school bullying.

- The traditional disciplinary approach
- Strengthening the victim
- Mediation
- Restorative Justice
- The Support Group Method
- The method of shared concern

The relevant teachers will use their professional judgement to decide which intervention is most appropriate to each individual bullying case.

#### **WHAT HAPPENS IF THE SCHOOL DETERMINES THAT THIS IS NOT BULLYING?**

- If following a thorough investigation (Step 1) the teacher determines that **bullying has not occurred** he/she will inform the parent of his/her findings and of their right to refer the matter to the Principal and the Senior Management Team if they wish. The teacher will also inform the Principal of his/her findings.
- Should the matter be referred to the Senior Management Team they will then return to Step 1 and make a decision as to whether bullying has taken place or not. This decision will be recorded and communicated to the parents concerned.
- If the Senior Management decide that bullying has happened the school Anti Bullying Policy will be followed. (Step 2)
- If following an investigation the school decides that a child is not being bullied parents are welcome to write to the Board of Management who will investigate further.
- In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

#### **9. The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows.**

- The child will be praised for speaking out about the bullying situation.
- Close communication between the child's home and school will form a vital part in the child's recovery from being bullied. Class teachers

are asked to keep in regular contact with the child's family to ensure that problems have not persisted.

- The Class teacher and the support teacher will work together to ensure that the child has the opportunity to communicate his/her feelings in school.
- The class teacher and/or the support teacher will work on rebuilding the child's self-esteem. This may take place in a class, small group or one to one setting.
- A buddy system may be set up for the child if necessary.
- Children who have engaged in bullying behaviour also need support and close communication between home and school. They may need to be encouraged to talk about and reflect on their behaviour. Programmes such as 'Stop, Think, Do' may benefit certain students and every effort will be made to facilitate this. Often children who bully have low self esteem and may need help to build their own self esteem.
- Parents of children who are bullied and parents of children who have bullied will be given a copy of our 'Tips for Parents' sheet. (see Appendix 2)
- More serious cases of bullying may need to be referred to the HSE, advice may be sought from NEPS.

## **10. Supervision and Monitoring of Pupils**

The Board of Management confirms that appropriate supervision and monitoring policies and practices are in place to both prevent and deal with bullying behaviour and to facilitate early intervention where possible.

## **11. Prevention of Harassment**

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

# ANTI - BULLYING CODE

**DONABATE/PORTRANE EDUCATE TOGETHER  
NATIONAL SCHOOL IS A 'BULLY - FREE '  
ZONE.**

- We say no to bullying at any level in this school.
- Our school community will not tolerate unkind, hurtful or insulting remarks.
- Pupils will support each other by reporting all instances of bullying.
- We do not accept excuses such as 'I was only... or I was just messing' as excuses for bullying behaviour.
- All reports of bullying will be taken seriously.
- We are a telling school - bullying is too important not to report.
- We want every child to feel welcomed and happy in our school.

## Appendix 2

### Advice/Tips for parents (if your child is being bullied)

If you are worried/concerned about **your child and feel that he/she may be being bullied in school** please read the advice below – it might help. Every situation is different, not all of the advice below will be relevant to your child's situation.

**Definition of Bullying:** Bullying is repeated aggression, verbal, psychological, or physical, conducted by an individual or group against others. (Dept. of Education Document on Countering Bullying Behaviour; Sept 1993)

- Reassure your child that with your support this problem will be resolved.
- Remember that children will all experience both good and bad times during their school life. Adults cannot solve everything for them but we can help and support them through difficult times.
- It may be difficult to achieve, but a calm, unemotional approach is best for your child. Try not to over react. An over emotional response by parents does not help the child and can make the situation worse. Show sympathy, praise your child for coming forward with the issue but try not to dwell on the situation.
- If you are worried about your child please make an immediate appointment to meet with your child's teacher.
- Remember you do not know all of the facts. There are at least two sides (and sometimes more) to every story. Talk to your child, hear their side of the story, tell him/her that you will be hearing the other side of the story too. Try to keep an open mind. Don't rush to defend your child until you have heard the facts/details of both sides of the story.
- The school is committed to promoting the happiness and safety of all pupils.
- Do not be too quick to use the term 'bully'. Check all the facts. Is this a bullying issue or a friendship issue which may be resolved naturally?

If having established all the facts and having spoken to your child's teacher you feel that your child may be being bullied then please give consideration to the following:

- Please trust the school to deal with this serious issue. All allegations of alleged bullying are thoroughly investigated; the school is committed to promoting the happiness and safety of all of our pupils. If issues of a sensitive nature are being discussed openly in the wider community the process towards resolution may be compromised.
- Be patient – bullying situations can take time to resolve.
- It is important that you advise your child to be assertive and to stand up for him/her self but not to fight back. (e.g. if your child is being called names encourage him/her to assertively say 'Don't call me that' or 'No I'm not' rather than telling them to call names back).
- Under no circumstances should you directly approach the child/children who are allegedly bullying your child in school.

Please see the other side of this page for advice if an allegation of bullying has been made against your child.

## Appendix 3

Advice/Tips for parents (if your child has been accused of bullying)

Please read this document **if an allegation of bullying has been made about your child** – it may help. Remember every situation is different and not all of the tips/advice below will be relevant to your child's situation.

**Definition of Bullying:** Bullying is repeated aggression, verbal, psychological, or physical, conducted by an individual or group against others. (Dept. of Education Document on Countering Bullying Behaviour; Sept 1993)

- Reassure your child that with your support this problem will be resolved.
- Remember that children will all experience both good and bad times during their school life. Adults cannot solve everything for them but we can help and support them through difficult times.
- It may be difficult to achieve, but a calm, unemotional approach is best for your child. Try not to over react. An over emotional response by parents does not help the child and can make the situation worse.
- If you are worried about your child please make an immediate appointment to meet with your child's teacher.
- Remember you do not know all of the facts. There are at least two sides (and sometimes more) to every story. Talk to your child, hear their side of the story, tell him/her that you will be hearing the other side of the story too. Try to keep an open mind. Don't make a judgement until you have heard the fact/details of both sides of the story.
- The school is committed to promoting the happiness and safety of all pupils.
- All alleged cases of bullying are fully investigated. The school only makes an allegation of bullying after a thorough investigation into the issue. The school does not use the term 'bully' lightly.

If following a thorough investigation the school determines that your child has bullied another child the school Anti Bullying Policy will be initiated and you will be informed.

- Reassure your child that with your support this problem will be resolved.
- Children who have been involved in bullying behaviour need to fully understand that their behaviour is unacceptable and that there are serious consequences to this. They also need support and guidance to make sure that they do not behave like this again.
- Adults need to look at the reasons behind the behaviour. Is the child trying to show off/impress others? Are they unaware of the effect their behaviour is having on another child? Do they need to develop tolerance towards personalities they don't like? Are they feeling insecure themselves?
- Children need to understand that if they have done something wrong they have the power to put it right.
- The school is committed to doing everything it can to resolve bullying issues, parental support is much appreciated.

Please see the other side of this page if you feel that your child is being bullied.

## Appendix 4

### The Nine Grounds of Discrimination under the Equal Status Act

#### Sexual Orientation

##### School Ethos

Donabate/Portrane Educate Together National School operates under the direct patronage of Educate Together. The key principles outlined in the Educate Together Charter of 1990 inform the culture and ethos of our school. The four main principles are:

- Equality Based
- Co-educational
- Child Centred
- Democratically Run

Children of all social and cultural groups and of all religious and atheist/agnostic backgrounds are equally respected. The Educate Together Charter of 1990 affirms that children of all social, cultural, religious and atheist/agnostic backgrounds have a right to an education that reflects their individual identity whilst exploring the different values and traditions of the world in which they live. Our students come from many diverse families and backgrounds, including single parent families and same-sex families.

Our patron body Educate Together have run a number of courses for primary teachers , in association with Belong To, on addressing homophobia in schools.

##### The Learn Together Curriculum

One of the general aims of our Learn Together curriculum is to raise awareness in the children of issues of human rights, justice and equality in society. One of the 4 strands of our Learn Together programme is Equality and Justice and the four strand units are:

- Exploring human rights
- Promoting equality
- Exploring the democratic process
- Activating equality through positive action.

## Human Rights' Month

Each year the school organises Human Rights Month (usually in November) with a whole school focus on Human Rights issues. We invite guest speakers to visit the school and address the children at assembly. All assemblies throughout the month focus on human right issues. In particular the children start to become familiar with Equality legislation and the Equal Status Act. The nine grounds on which discrimination is prohibited in Ireland are explored in an age appropriate manner. (see Learn Together Curriculum Page 30)

The nine grounds are:

- Gender,
- Marital status,
- Family status,
- Sexual orientation,
- Religious belief,
- Age,
- Disability,
- Race
- Membership of the travelling community.

## Sexual Orientation

In the Senior Classes (5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup>) the children look at how it is prohibited in Ireland to discriminate against people because of their sexual orientation. The class teachers will facilitate whole class discussion on this topic. Activities may include:

- A revision of all the nine grounds of discrimination
- The children learn what homophobia means (treating another person negatively based on their sexual orientation) and how it is an incitement to hatred in the same way as racism is.
- The children may draw up a charter for the class/school which will include things such as 'we will not use the word gay as a putdown'.
- Identifying a number of famous people who are gay e.g. Elton John, Senator David Norris , Stephen Fry , Senator Katherine Zappone, Anna Nolan, Ellen De Generes etc.)
- The story of Harvey Milk and his campaign to gain rights for the gay community in San Francisco may be read to the class. Through this story the children are helped to explore the concept of discrimination and to learn about people who have encountered discrimination and confronted it in a positive and proactive manner.
- The Stand Up short video (produced by Belong To) may be shown to the class. This video illustrates the importance of standing up for friends who may be



bullied for their sexual orientation.  
(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lrJxqvalFxM>)

Irish law and human rights legislation are underpinning our work in this area. Educate Together schools are welcoming to everyone and strive to ensure that there is parity of esteem for all our families and that our schools are inclusive to people from all walks of life. Accordingly, we are mindful of the fact that for some of our children and families this might be a sensitive issue. Teachers are very sensitive when dealing with this topic and before any discussion begins the teacher acknowledges that we all have different beliefs and we must respect the differing beliefs of our community.

The nine grounds of discrimination are studied in the Learn Together Curriculum under the Equality and Justice strand. (see Learn Together curriculum document Page 30)

This work is also supported by the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme. (Primary School Curriculum, NCCA). Among the aims and objectives of the SPHE programme are :

- 'to foster in the child a sense of care and respect for himself/herself and others and an appreciation of the dignity of every human being'.
- 'to enable the child to respect human and cultural diversity'.
- 'to develop a sense of personal responsibility and come to understand his/her own sexuality'.

In the Anti Bullying Procedures for both Primary and Post Primary schools (September 2013) the Minister for Education has asked all schools to put in place educational and prevention strategies, including awareness raising measures, to combat identity bullying (such as homophobic and racist bullying). We believe that our work in Human Rights month will go a long way towards fulfilling our requirements to raise awareness on this issue and to put educational and preventative strategies in place.

'In line with the commitment in the Programme for Government, I asked the working group to put a specific focus on homophobic bullying. Research shows that this is a particularly acute problem for young people who are either lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender or perceived to be so. It's important that we recognise that bullying behaviour sometimes stems from prejudice, from racism, homophobia or ignorance about a different culture or religion. Addressing such issues can be difficult, challenging and emotive, but prejudiced attitudes must be explored and dealt with. I

take the view that a culture that encourages respect, values opinions, celebrates differences and promotes positive relationships is better for all. All adults, children and young people should understand the role that they can play in preventing and tackling bullying.' (Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairi Quinn, 2013, Anti Bullying procedures for schools).

## **Tackling Homophobia**

'Everyone is an insider, there are no outsiders - whatever their beliefs, whatever their colour, gender or sexuality.'

Archbishop Desmond Tutu- February 2004

### **1. Zero tolerance to homophobic language.**

The word 'gay' is frequently used as a negative term. While this term is used derisively, many do not regard it as homophobic because it is not always directed at a person perceived to be homosexual. Many children repeat language without really understanding what it means.

All Staff Members should challenge the pejorative use of the word 'gay' and other similar words. This use of language must be challenged and students asked to reflect on the formation of stereotypes and the roots of prejudice.

- ✓ Communicate clearly to the child that we do not use language like this in our school community.
- ✓ Ask the child if he/she understands what he/she is saying.
- ✓ If the child doesn't know what 'gay' means explain that 'gay' is an adjective that has number of different meanings. It can mean to be bright or happy, it can also be used to describe a person who loves someone else of the same sex. Staff will endeavour to put it in the context of all the different types of people in the world - use age appropriate language.
- ✓ Explain that using the word 'gay' negatively/ derisively is using homophobic language and helps to spread hatred and makes some people feel isolated.

## **2. Record Incidents**

Staff are requested to write down any incidents that involve homophobic language or teasing. These incidents may be referred to the principal. Episodes should be given the same status and monitored in the same way as racist incidents.

## **3. Policy**

This issue will be dealt with under a few different policies -namely Anti Bullying, Adult Anti Bullying and Positive Behaviour.

## **4. Curriculum**

This issue will be covered in both SPHE and Learn Together. Rather than focussing on homosexuality as a discrete topic it will be covered in the context of diversity and equality in both SPHE and Learn Together throughout the school. In Sixth Class the children will look more closely at the nine grounds for discrimination in Ireland under the Equal Status Act, they will focus in particular on the Sexual Orientation ground.

## **5. Resources**

A number of websites offer helpful suggestions/lesson plans etc for covering homophobia including [www.tacklehomophobia.com](http://www.tacklehomophobia.com) [www.belongto.org](http://www.belongto.org) [www.stonewall.org.uk](http://www.stonewall.org.uk)

A number of books have been purchased for the school.