DUNDONALD PRIMARY
& NURSERY SCHOOL

Inspire. Believe. Achieve

ADDRESSING BULLYING POLICY

Our school is a UNICEF Rights Respecting School and Articles 3, 12 & 29 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child underpins our school vision:

"The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all things that affect children"

"Every child has the right to say what they think and to seek and receive all kinds of information, as long as it is within the law"

"Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child's respect for human rights as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures, and the environment"

September 2025

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

We aim to create a safe, secure and happy environment for all children and staff. As a Rights Respecting School we encourage respect across the whole school community and seek to ensure that all children be:

- protected from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, maltreatment or exploitation. (Article 19 UNCRC)
- protected from discrimination (Article 2)
- able to express their views, in a supported and accessible way, on issues that affect them and to have their opinions taken seriously (Article 12)

Dundonald Primary School is completely opposed to bullying and will not tolerate it. All members of the school community have a right to work in a secure and caring environment. They also have a responsibility to contribute, in whatever way they can, to the protection and maintenance of such an environment. The only effective way of eliminating bullying is for the whole school community to address the issue and work together to establish a safe emotional and physical environment.

Legislative and Policy Context

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

- Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016
- DE Circular 2007/20 - the Education (2006 order) Order (N.I.) 2007
- The Education (School Development Plans) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010
- Safeguarding and Child Protection in School: A Guide for Schools (DE, 2017)
- 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
- DE Circular Number 2003/13 - welfare and protection of pupils
- Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) order 2003 which amends Article 3 of 1998 N.I. Order
- Pastoral Care in Schools: Child Protection, DE, 1999
- Pastoral Care in Schools: Promoting Positive Behaviour, DE, 2001
- Safeguarding & Child Protection in Schools: A Guide for Schools DE 2017 (including amendments following yearly updates)
- Safeguarding Board for NI Policies & Procedures SBNI 2017
- Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (Dept. of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, 2016)

International Context

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

Ethos and Guiding Principles

At Dundonald, any behaviour/s deemed to be bullying, will always be treated with the greatest seriousness. Bullying in whatever form it is manifested is totally unacceptable and every effort will be made to resolve any problems that are identified.

As a school, 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 fees safes 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.

Rights & Responsibilities

- Every pupil has the right to a safe school and has the responsibility to help stop bullying.
- Every parent has the right to have his/her concerns listened to sensitively and taken seriously, and the responsibility to work with the school to resolve the problem.
- Every teacher has the right to effective support in maintaining safe and supportive classrooms, and the responsibility to ensure that all concerns are acted upon swiftly and effectively.

All members of our school community, pupils, parents and staff:

- ave a right to learn and work in a safe and supportive environment, free from intimidation and fear;
- will be mutually respectful of everyone's right to be safe and will behave in ways which keep everyone else both emotionally and physically safe;
- have a responsibility to speak up when there is a bullying concern, safe in the knowledge that their concerns will be listened to and responded to with sensitivity;
- will work together actively to promote and sustain a strong anti-bullying culture within the school; and
- will work collaboratively to promote the welfare and wellbeing of all its members.

What is Bullying?

The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016 provides schools with a legal definition which states:

"Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016", "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.

For the purposes of subsection (I), "act" includes omission, when someone has been left out or excluded with the aim of causing harm.

If we are to deal with bullying effectively, it is essential that we have a shared understanding of what bullying is.

"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."

In determining harm, we define:

- Emotional harm 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

We also take into consideration the child or young person's capacity to understand the impact of their behaviour. Legislation requires schools to consider the following when assessing whether an incident/s meet the legal definition of bullying type behaviour:

- pupil/s capacity to understand the impact of their behaviour

- developmental age and capabilities
- additional needs, SEN, behaviours displayed (diagnosed or undiagnosed e.g. SBEW, ASD, FASD, MLD etc.)
- Individual challenges / circumstances e.g. family circumstance, trauma
- Levels of resilience

All behaviour is communication to be addressed through a child/young person lens, for both those displaying and experiencing socially unacceptable/bullying type behaviour. Assessing bullying type concerns is not about labeling or blaming children but about identifying the appropriate supports for those involved and interventions to stop the behaviours. As such, all incidents will be addressed by the school in a relational, solution focused manner aligned to Safeguarding and SEND.

Types of Bullying Behaviour
Types of unacceptable anti-social behaviours, when repeated, targeted and intentionally hurtful which infringe everyone's right to be safe include:

- physical: jostling, hitting, kicking, causing material harm eg. stealing, damage to possessions
- verbal: name-calling, insults, jokes, threats, racist remarks, spreading rumours etc.
- indirect: isolation, refusal to work with/talk to/play with/help others, interfering with personal property
- electronic acts: using online platforms or electronic communication to carry out many of the written acts noted above, sharing images (photographs or videos) online to embarrass someone, using online tools to create fake photographs, videos etc.

The above unacceptable anti-social behaviours can constitute bullying behaviours when there is evidence that the behaviour:

- is repetitive / persistent
- is intentionally hurtful / harmful
- involves an imbalance of power, leaving someone feeling helpless to prevent it or put a stop to it
- is targeted towards a specific individual/s

All unacceptable behaviour will be dealt with in line with the Pastoral Care and Behaviour Policy's procedures. Anyone may be a victim of bullying behaviour; such bullying can be motivated by a range of factors, including: disability; appearance; race; religion; culture; gender; or perceived sexual orientation.

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" (but as a child "displaying bullying behaviours") nor will we refer to a child as a "victim" (but as a child "experiencing bullying behaviours"). We encourage all members of the school community to use this language when discussing bullying behaviours.

As a school we may be privy to confidential information about a child's background/needs that can build a picture behind the behaviours being exhibited. We work closely with parents of children involved in the bullying situation, taking account of all needs. We established a relationship based on trust that we are doing what is best for all children involved.

Electronic Communication *(link to Online Safety Policy)*
Bullying through electronic communication can be defined as the use of Information and Communications Technology (IT), particularly mobile phones and the internet, deliberately to upset someone else. School staff, parents and pupils aim to work together to prevent such behaviour and to act appropriately and effectively when it occurs. If instances occur outside of school, staff will discuss this with the parents of the child/children impacted on by the behaviour and appropriate advice/support sought.

Children should be encouraged to tell someone if they are being bullied in this way and staff will pass this information on to parents. Guidance is given to pupils during ICT lessons when they are taught about internet safety/online behaviours and visitors are used to address online safety and the safe and appropriate use of social platforms e.g. PSNI are invited in to speak to our children at an age appropriate level. Guidance is provided to parents via our monthly On-Line Internet Safety Newsletter and through our Safer Schools App.

Signs of Bullying may include:

Behavioural

- unwilling to come to school
- avoiding particular days or lessons
- being late for school
- avoiding friends and others at school
- standard of work falling
- mislaying books or equipment
- continually losing money
- refusing to tell what's wrong
- reluctance to talk about problems

Physical

- have mystery illness
- feel sick frequently in class
- have possessions go missing
- have damaged clothing or belongings

Emotional

- become withdrawn, isolated behaviour
- become easily startled, irritable and aggressive
- lose confidence
- being easily distressed

Measures to Prevent Bullying:

The school community works together to prevent bullying occurring by promoting and sustaining a robust anti-bullying culture through effective whole school relationships. We promote a positive, nurturing and restorative approach.

The main features of this are:

- a caring and supportive ethos where the rights, dignity and well-being of the child are paramount;
- promotion of anti-bullying messages through the curriculum (PDMU), assemblies, visitors and through activities linked to Anti-bullying week and Safer Internet day;
- an effective Positive Behaviour Policy which promotes safeguarding, positive behaviour management, celebration and an ethos of aspiration and achievement for all;
- involvement in shared education projects, supporting pupils to explore, understand and respond to difference and diversity
- a determination that bullying will not be tolerated and that incidents will be taken seriously and investigated thoroughly;
- create an open and telling environment where everyone in the school community gets a clear message that: bullying is wrong and will not be tolerated;

- classroom activities and strategies aimed at creating a climate where bullying becomes unacceptable amongst the children themselves;
- peer led systems e.g. School Council, Rights Respecting School Council to support the delivery and promotion of key anti-bullying messages within the school
- effective playground strategies and a wide range of after school activities to develop effective peer relationships
- clear procedures for staff, pupils and parents as to how concerns regarding alleged bullying should be handled;
- whole school strategies to be employed in dealing with specific bullying incidents;
- support for children who have been experiencing bullying behaviour;
- support for the child who is displaying bullying behaviour aimed at helping him / her to recognise and modify their unacceptable behaviour;
- monitoring and follow up arrangements to assess the effectiveness of any and all interventions; and
- school reviews on the effectiveness of the current anti-bullying policy.

Roles, Responsibilities and Expectations
The issue of bullying is a matter of partnership including all pupils, staff and parents. We must all work together to resolve difficulties in restorative ways to prevent recurring bullying behaviour and meet the needs of all parties.

The Board of Governors ensures that the bullying policy is regularly reviewed, that appropriate measures are in place to prevent bullying and that relevant records are kept.

Pupil Responsibilities
Dundonald Primary School expects its pupils to;
- refrain from being involved in any kind of bullying behaviour, even at the risk of incurring temporary unpopularity
- act in a manner which protects the pupil who is experiencing bullying behaviour, unless it is unsafe to do so
- report to a member of staff any witnessed or suspected instances of bullying behaviour

Anyone who becomes the target of bullying behaviour should:
- not suffer in silence but have the courage to speak out to ensure supports are put in place

Parent Responsibilities
- stress to children the importance of good social behaviour
- discourage bullying behaviour
- report any concerns to the school
- work in partnership with the school actively supporting the Anti-Bullying Policy
- be sympathetic and supportive towards their children, reassuring them that appropriate action will be taken
- stress to their child(ren) that retaliation is not helpful
- resolve difficulties occurring outside school to prevent them continuing inside school
- monitor their child's use of computers, phones & technologies at home while being mindful of the age restrictions for social media platforms/apps

Staff Responsibilities
- foster positive self-esteem; respect the right of others to be safe and at all times behave towards others in a mutually respectful way

- demonstrate by example the high standards of personal and social behaviour we expect of our pupils
- be alert to signs of distress and other possible indications that a child may be being bullied
- promote good discipline within the classroom and playground
- encourage pupils to TELL if experiencing bullying behaviour or if another pupil is experiencing bullying behaviour
- be alert to signs of distress and other possible indications that a child may be experiencing bullying behaviour
- listen sensitively to anyone who has experienced bullying behaviour, take what is said seriously, providing reassurance that appropriate action will be taken
- report suspected cases of bullying behaviour to the Designated Teachers and VP/Principal
- follow up any complaint by a parent about bullying behaviour and report back on the action which has been taken
- deal with observed instances of bullying behaviour promptly and effectively, in accordance with agreed procedures
- use strategies to support the pupil experiencing bullying behaviour as well as the child displaying the bullying behaviour in order to recognise that their behaviour is inappropriate and to repair relationships with those impacted by their behaviour

Governors' Responsibilities

- to regularly reviewed and updated the policy as required, in consultation with pupils and their parents/carers, on or before the September 2025.
- To appropriately monitor the effectiveness of the Anti-Bullying Policy, the Board of Governors shall:
  - maintain a standing item on the agenda of each meeting of the Board where a report on recorded incidents of bullying will be noted (Safeguarding item on agenda)
  - identify trends and priorities for action (where required)
  - assess the effectiveness of strategies aimed at preventing bullying behaviour
  - assess the effectiveness of strategies aimed at responding to bullying behaviour

Staff dealing with a bullying incident should:

- reassure those involved that now that the bullying behaviour has been shared, actions can be put in place to stop the behaviour
- support the pupil experiencing bullying behaviour;
- identify what has happened;
- act to stop the immediate bullying;
- avoid recriminations;
- help the child who is engaging in bullying behaviours to change his or her behaviour; and
- if appropriate, make the peer group aware and ask them to help the child experiencing bullying behaviour. This would need to be handled with great sensitivity (No Blame Approach)

Procedures for staff dealing with suspected Bullying

Each member of staff, whether teacher, supervisor, ancillary or administrative, has a duty of care to the children. Consequently, if a child, parent or other individual makes an allegation of bullying it must be taken seriously.

Involving bystanders is a very important aspect of tackling bullying because there are always people who know what is going on. Children will be made aware that **Dundonald is a 'telling school'**; pupils are encouraged to report incidents so that pupils are aware that as a school, we do not tolerate bullying behaviours.

At Dundonald we use a two-stage process. All problems should be reported to the class teacher in the first instance.

Stage One: This approach is best suited for those issues that can best be resolved informally by the class teacher. The teacher should:

- talk to the children involved;
- talk with their parents, if appropriate;
- discuss the incident with the Principal or Vice Principal; and
- keep a simple written record in the class log (Part 1 of the Bullying Assessment Form may be used depending on the outcome of above – see stage 2)
- put strategies in place in line with the age and ability of the children
- monitor and review the situation

Stage Two: This approach is best suited for more serious / persistent issues. Such incidents will be investigated and resolved by the Principal, Vice Principal, SENCO, Head of Key Stage.

The member of staff should:

- talk to the children.
- on the basis of evidence, complete page 1 of the 'Bullying Concern Assessment Form' (Appendix 1) to determine:
    - ✓ whether bullying behaviour has or has not occurred;
    - ✓ the type of bullying
    - ✓ the motivation behind the bullying; and
    - ✓ details of what happened
- use the "effective responses to bullying" outlined in this policy or in the NIABF's guidance document "Effective Responses to Bullying Behaviour" the following steps will be taken:
    - clarify facts and perceptions
    - check records for previous incidents
    - assess the incident against the criteria for bullying behaviour
    - identify the themes or motivating factors
    - identify the types of bullying being displayed
    - identify intervention level
    - select and implement appropriate interventions for all pupils involved, including appropriate interventions, consequences and sanctions not listed in the Effective Responses to Bullying Behaviour resource but that are detailed in our school's Positive Behaviour Policy
    - track monitor and record effectiveness of interventions
    - review outcome of interventions
    - select and implement further interventions if necessary
- to identify appropriate support interventions for resolving issues & repairing relationships.
- talk with the children's parents (it is important to note that information regarding action taken regarding a pupil cannot be disclosed to anyone other than the pupil and his/her parents/carers)

- Keep a written record of the incident, investigation and outcomes using the "Bullying Concern Assessment Form"; a copy passed to the Principal to be held on file. The contents of this file will be confidential and the file will be stored securely.

If the incident is being dealt with by the Principal or other senior member of staff, the class teachers of any children directly involved must be informed of the issue and how it is being handled.

It should be recognised that bullying behaviour may be going on without the person who is experiencing the bullying behaviour reporting it to those in authority. Members of staff should therefore be on the lookout for specific behaviour patterns that might indicate that bullying is occurring.

Most reports of bullying are resolved after one intervention from staff. A few may take longer to be resolved and will involve ongoing reviews.

Parents Reporting a Bullying Concern
We encourage parents to raise their concerns about alleged bullying behaviour at the earliest opportunity. When a bullying concern is shared, as a school we will acknowledge the parents concerns and ask for patience and time to thoroughly investigate the issue. This will initially involve meeting with the child experiencing the bullying behaviour prior to talking to the children who are alleged to be displaying the bullying behaviour. Parents should not encourage their child to retaliate or 'hit back' but to engage with the support staff in school investigating the bullying concern.

Recording Incidents of Bullying Behaviour
The school will centrally record all relevant information related to reports of bullying concerns (Part 1 to 4 of the Bullying Assessment Form), including:

- How the bullying behaviour was displayed
- The motivation for the behaviour
- How each incident was addressed by the school
- The outcome of the interventions employed

All records will be maintained in line with the relevant data protection legislation and guidance and will be disposed 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.

Effective Responses to Bullying
A number of different strategies will be used depending upon the nature of the concern with the ultimate aim to restore the wellbeing of <u>all</u> those involved. Appropriate Intervention strategies will be chosen from the Intervention Tables within the NIABF guidance document "Effective Responses to Bullying Behaviour" and from the following approaches:

The No Blame Approach / Robust Monitoring Approach
This will be used only at the early stages. The aim is to sort out the problem for the child experiencing the bullying behaviour rather than to punish the pupil displaying bullying behaviour. This overcomes the typical bullying cycle where the child experiencing the bullying behaviour is further targeted for having got those displaying bullying behaviour into trouble. Regular reviews of the situation are inbuilt, and the child experiencing the bullying behaviour is given a simple and unobtrusive means of reporting to the teacher / Principal regarding progress.

This is a very successful method in the majority of cases as in most cases the children displaying the bullying behaviour do not appreciate the effect their behaviour is having and once this is understood, or indeed once they see that the situation is being taken seriously and regularly monitored, the problem stops.

Involving Parents
Parents will be informed if their child is experiencing bullying behaviour or involved in displaying bullying behaviour. If the problem persists the parents of the child displaying the bullying behaviour will be asked to be involved in discussing the problem with school staff and in particular in agreeing a planned approach, setting out strategies, possible sanctions, and dates for review.

Peer Support
This involves identifying a small circle of friends who will be supportive to the child experiencing bullying behaviours and who will discreetly inform the class teacher if they continue to be targeted. This strategy will not be appropriate in all incidents and will in any event only be used after the parents of the child experiencing bullying behaviours have given their consent. The child displaying bullying behaviours will be centrally involved in identifying children who might be part of the circle of friends.

Redirection
Identifying activities, where possible, to redirect the child displaying the bullying behaviour to more productive and social activities.

External Support
Involving the Education Welfare Officer, CIDS Team or other support services in working directly with the child displaying bullying behaviour and his / her family.

Where restorative practices are not effective in addressing the bullying behaviour or whereby the incident is deemed a serious safeguarding issue then we may have to consider additional measures e.g. Temporary Exclusion.

Classroom Strategies
All teachers should be aware of the problem of bullying and of their role in cultivating a climate where bullying will not be tolerated by on looking children. To this end a number of classroom activities can be employed as part of the ongoing work in PDMU. This might include:
1. Drama and role-play
2. Specific PDMU / PATHS lessons / Circle time (for general discussion of bullying, not to be used for dealing with specific incidents):
children sit in a circle with their teacher and engage in a programme of activities to challenge and motivate the class / group to promote positive relationships; activities include a wide range of co-operative games, rounds, drama strategies and discussions in which children take turns to listen to one another
3. Video and discussion
4. Literature – stories / poetry
5. Art
6. Debate / discussion

While pastoral care is a continual focus in our classrooms, we also dedicate at least one session each term to look at issues linked to bullying.

In addition, each P4 – 7 class will have a secure 'Feeling Safe / What I have liked today' box, in which pupils can post notes about their worries or concerns regarding not only bullying but any other issues. Teachers will open these boxes regularly and follow up on any concerns that have been posted. P1-3 children will have a worry soft toy in their classroom that they can use to share their worries or happy thoughts. Teachers may also adopt a personalised approach to sharing worries/concerns linked to the needs and abilities of their class.

In the playground
A 'Buddy Bench' is available in the playground. Children who find themselves unable to join in a game or find a friend can sit on this bench; all children will be encouraged to look out for anyone sitting on the bench and to include them in their activities.

Links with other policies

- Positive Behaviour
- Pastoral Care
- Safeguarding & Child Protection
- Special Educational Needs
- Online Safety & Acceptable Use of Internet
- Mobile Phone
- Educational Visits

Professional Development of Staff
All staff are trained in line with the new Anti Bullying Act and this training will be reviewed annually in line with Safeguarding training.

Evaluation and on-going Consultation
As part of the regular development planning process parents, pupils, staff and governors are involved in a survey of school life every third year. The results of these surveys are analysed and feedback is provided to all participants. The results of these surveys are used to inform development priorities and identify professional development requirements

In order to assess the effectiveness of this policy the school will:

- Seek pupil's views as part of review process of school policies
- Provide pupils with regular opportunities to participate in decision making processes through the school council and through class discussions
- Closely monitor any reported incidents over a given period
- Ensure staff awareness and training is up to date