St. Brigid's National School, Drumcong

Anti-Bullying Policy

1. 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 St Brigid's 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.

2. 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) 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;

*see Appendix 1 (key elements of St Brigid's Positive School Culture)

(b) Effective leadership

(c) A school-wide approach

(d) A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact

(e) 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;

(f) Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils

(g) Supports for staff

(h) Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies); and

(i) On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

3. 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, isolation, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying,

- Cyber-bullying

- 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.

- Physical aggression

- Intimidation

- Name Calling

- Damage to personal property

- Extortion

Isolated or once-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour, including a once-off offensive or hurtful text message or other private messaging, do not fall within the definition of bullying and will 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 network 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. To "like" such public messages, images or statements, will similarly 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.

Some examples of bullying behaviours

General behaviours which apply to all types of bullying	• Harassment based on any of the nine grounds in the equality legislation e.g. sexual harassment, homophobic bullying, racist bullying etc. • Physical aggression • Damage to property • Name calling • Slagging • The production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other materials aimed at intimidating another person • Offensive graffiti • Extortion • Intimidation • Insulting or offensive gestures • The "look" • Invasion of personal space • A combination of any of the types listed.
Cyber	• **Denigration**: Spreading rumours, lies or gossip to hurt a person's reputation • **Harassment**: Continually sending vicious, mean or disturbing messages to an individual • **Impersonation**: Posting offensive or aggressive messages under another person's name • **Flaming**: Using inflammatory or vulgar words to provoke an online fight • **Trickery**: Fooling someone into sharing personal information which you then post online • **Outing**: Posting or sharing confidential or compromising information or images • **Exclusion**: Purposefully excluding someone from an online group • **Cyber stalking**: Ongoing harassment and denigration that causes a person considerable fear for his/her safety • Silent telephone/mobile phone call • Abusive telephone/mobile phone calls • Abusive text messages • Abusive email • Abusive communication on social networks e.g. Facebook/Ask.fm/ Twitter/You Tube or on games consoles • Abusive website comments/Blogs/Pictures • Abusive posts on any form of communication technology

Identity Based Behaviours
Including any of the nine discriminatory grounds mentioned in Equality Legislation (gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community).

Homophobic and Transgender	• Spreading rumours about a person's sexual orientation • Taunting a person of a different sexual orientation • Name calling e.g. Gay, queer, lesbian…used in a derogatory manner • Physical intimidation or attacks • Threats
Race, nationality, ethnic background and membership of the Traveller community	• Discrimination, prejudice, comments or insults about colour, nationality, culture, social class, religious beliefs, ethnic or traveller background • Exclusion on the basis of any of the above
Relational	This involves manipulating relationships as a means of bullying. Behaviours include: • Malicious gossip • Isolation & exclusion • Ignoring • Excluding from the group • Taking someone's friends away • "Bitching" • Spreading rumours • Breaking confidence • Talking loud enough so that the victim can hear • The "look" • Use or terminology such as 'nerd' in a derogatory way
Sexual	• Unwelcome or inappropriate sexual comments or touching • Harassment
Special Educational Needs, Disability	• Name calling • Taunting others because of their disability or learning needs • Taking advantage of some pupils' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to recognise and defend themselves against bullying • Taking advantage of some pupils' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to understand social situations and social cues. • Mimicking a person's disability • Setting others up for ridicule

4. The relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying are the relevant class teachers.
Any teacher may act as a relevant teacher if circumstances warrant it.

5. The education and prevention strategies to be used by St. Brigid's School are as follows

School-wide approach
- A school-wide approach to fostering of respect for all members of the school community.
- The promotion of the value of diversity to address issues of prejudice and stereotyping, and highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour.
- The fostering and enhancing of the self-esteem of all our pupils through both curricular and extracurricular activities. Pupils will be provided with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth through formal and informal interactions.
- Whole staff professional development on bullying to ensure that all staff develop an awareness of what bullying is, how it impacts on pupils' lives and the need to respond to it in terms of prevention and intervention.
- Professional development with specific focus on the training of all relevant teachers
- School wide awareness raising and training on all aspects of bullying, to include pupils, parent(s)/guardian(s) and the wider school community.
- Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extra-curricular activities. Non-teaching and ancillary staff will be encouraged to be vigilant and to report issues to relevant teachers. Supervision will also apply to monitoring student use of the school's communication technology.
- Involvement of the student council in contributing to a safe school environment.
- The school's anti-bullying policy is discussed with pupils and all parent(s)/guardian(s) are given a copy as part of the Code of Behaviour of the school on enrolment.
- Implementation of regular whole school awareness measures such as the use of assembly time, school notices/posters, friendship days or other means to reinforce awareness of the school's anti-bullying culture and ethos.
- A culture of telling is encouraged, with particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders. In that way pupils will gain confidence in 'telling'. Pupils can be fully confident that when they report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales; **they are behaving responsibly.**
- Pupils can tell in any way that suits them e.g.:
    - o Direct approach to teacher.
    - o Hand note up with homework.
    - o Make a phone call to the school or to a trusted teacher in the school.
    - o Anti-bullying box.
    - o Get a parent(s)/guardian(s) or friend to tell on your behalf.
    - o Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place.

Implementation of curricula
- The full implementation of the SPHE curricula and the RSE and Stay Safe Programmes.
- Continuous Professional Development for staff in delivering these programmes.
- School wide delivery of lessons on bullying from evidence based programmes, e.g. *Stay Safe Programme, The Walk Tall Programme.*
- The school will specifically consider the additional needs of Special Education Needs pupils with regard to programme implementation and the development of skills and strategies to enable all pupils to respond appropriately.
- The school will implement the advice in "Sexual Orientation advice for schools"
*see Appendix 2
Other school policies, practices and activities that are particularly relevant to bullying include

Code of Behaviour
Child Protections policy
Supervision of pupils
Internet Acceptable Use policy
Attendance

6. 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:

Procedures for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying

The primary aim in 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). Every effort will be made to ensure that all involved (including pupils, parent(s)/guardian(s)) understand this approach from the outset.

Reporting bullying behaviour

- Any pupil or parent(s)/guardian(s) may bring a bullying incident to any teacher in the school.
- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying, will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher with the assistance of another teacher.
- Teaching and non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), caretakers, must report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher;

Step by Step Procedure for handling alleged cases of bullying

- Listen to the report of alleged bullying incident, whether told by recipient of the alleged behaviour or witness and record as reported.
- Two teachers speak to the alleged victim in a safe, non-threatening environment.
- Two teachers speak to the accused party/parties in a non-threatening environment.
- Broaden the investigation to gather information from anybody who may have witnessed the behaviour in question in order to build up a true picture.
- Inform parents/guardians that a bullying incident is being investigated.
- In investigating and dealing with bullying, the relevant teacher and the teacher assisting him/her will exercise their professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved;
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) and pupils are required to co-operate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving any issues and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved as quickly as possible;
- Teachers will take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach.
- Where possible incidents will be investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved;
- All interviews will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this way;

- When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the teachers involved in the investigation will seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This should be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner;
- **If a group is involved, each member will be interviewed individually at first.** Thereafter, all those involved will be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member will be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements;
- Each member of a group will be supported through the possible pressures that may face from the other members of the group after the interview by the teacher;
  It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s)
- **In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parent(s)/guardian(s) 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).** The school should give parent(s)/guardian(s) an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports provided to the pupils;
- The use of emails by either the parents or pupils is an unacceptable means of communication in the process associated with this policy.
- Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it will be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts should be made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied;
- **In any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter solely between the pupil/s being disciplined, his or her parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school;**

Follow up and recording

- In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant teacher must, as part of his/her professional judgement, take the following factors into account:
- Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased;
- Whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable;
- Whether the relationships between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable;
  - Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parent(s)/guardian(s)s or the school Principal or Deputy Principal
  - Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved should be arranged separately with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date if the pupil who has been bullied is ready and agreeable.
- Where a parent(s)/guardian(s) is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parent(s)/guardian(s) must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures.
- In the event that a parent(s)/guardian(s) has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parent(s)/guardian(s) of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

Recording of bullying behaviour

It is imperative that all recording of bullying incidents must be done in an objective and factual manner. The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour are as follows:

Informal- pre-determination that bullying has occurred
- All staff will keep a written record of any incidents witnessed by them or notified to them and will recorded in incident book provided to each staff member. All incidents must be reported to the relevant teacher
- While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the relevant teacher will keep a written record of the reports , the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same on the form provided for recording bullying behaviour.
- The relevant teacher must advise the principal of all incidents being investigated. The principal will retain the paperwork and file in a confidential manner and in a secure location.

Formal Stage 1-determination that bullying has occurred
- If it is established by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred, 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. These records will be recorded on the form provided for this purpose.
- All records will be kept in a secure place by the relevant teacher pending completion of the process when they will be retained by the principal.

Formal Stage 2
The relevant teacher will use the form provided to record the bullying behaviour.

Established intervention strategies
- Teacher interviews with all pupils
- Negotiating agreements between pupils and following these up by monitoring progress. This can be on an informal basis or implemented through a more structured mediation process
- Working with parent(s)/guardian(s)s to support school interventions

7. The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows
(see Section 6.8.16 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools) :

- All in-school supports and opportunities will be provided for the pupils affected by bullying to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop friendships and social skills and build resilience e.g.
    Buddy / Peer mentoring system
    Group work such as circle time

- If pupils require counselling of further supports the school will endeavour to liaise with the appropriate agencies to organise same. This may be for the pupil affected by bullying or involved in the bullying behaviour.

- Pupils should understand that there are no innocent bystanders and that all incidents of bullying behaviour must be reported to a teacher.

8. 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.

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.

10. This policy was reviewed and adopted by the Board of Management on 19th April 2021.

11. This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

12. This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year (See Appendix 3)

Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, published on the school website, be otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request and provided to the Parents' Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department. Appendix 3

Signed: Mr. Francis Gilmartin   Signed: Angela White
       Chairperson of Board of Management   Principal

Date: 14-12-2020   Date: 14-12-2020

Date of next review: November/December 2021