Anti-Bullying Policy

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The Anti-Bullying Policy was revamped collaboratively by the staff of St. Colman's Boys National School, Kanturk, September 2010. It is now being reviewed in 2014. 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 Colman's Boys 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.

1.2 Statement on Bullying

- Every person in the school is entitled to respect and to be free of any type of bullying.
- The school will work proactively, as far as it can, to ensure that bullying does not take place.
- Reporting incidents of bullying is responsible behaviour.
- A record will be kept of all reported incidents of bullying in the incident book.
- The matter will be dealt with seriously.
- The school supports both the bully and the bullied.

Appropriate action will be taken to ensure that it does not continue

1.3 Relevance to School Ethos

At the centre of the whole school response to bullying is the creation of a positive school climate which focuses on respect for the individual.

1.4 Policy Aims

- To raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with school management, teachers, pupils, parents/guardians, this is done through our School Newsletter, notices in school, Anti-Bullying Weeks, visits to the classes by the Principal.
- To promote a school ethos which encourages children to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To ensure appropriate supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of school activity are kept under observation.
- To develop procedures for noting, investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To offer support to those affected by bullying behaviour and to those involved in bullying behaviour.
- To work with appropriate agencies in countering all forms of bullying and promoting anti-bullying behaviour.

1.5   Role of the Board of Management

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.

1.6   Relevant Documents

Child Protection Policy
S.P.H.E. Policy
P.E. Policy
Code of Behaviour Policy
Data Protection Policy
Attendance Policy
Alive -0 Programme
Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools

2   Bullying in the School Environment

2.1   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 messaging, 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 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.

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

Types of behaviour deemed to be inappropriate are:
- Humiliation, including name-calling, reference to academic ability etc.
- Intimidation, including aggressive use of body language.
- Verbal abuse, anonymous or otherwise.
- Physical abuse or threatened abuse.
- Aggressive or obscene language.
- Offensive joking, whether spoken or by email, text messaging etc.
- Victimisation, including very personal remarks
- Exclusion and isolation
- Intrusion through interfering with personal possessions
- Repeated unreasonable assignments to duties that are obviously unfavourable
- Repeated unreasonable deadlines or tasks.
- Threats including demands for money, - extortion.
- An attack by rumour, gossip, innuendo or ridicule on any individual's reputation.
- Cyber-bullying: It is bullying carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as text, social network sites, e-mail, instant messaging (IM), apps, gaming sites, chat-rooms and other online technologies.

2.2 Signs / Symptoms of Bullying
The following signs/symptoms may suggest that a pupil is being bullied:
- Anxiety about travelling to and from school – requesting parents to drive or collect them, changing route of travel avoiding regular times for travelling to and from school.
- Unwillingness to go to school, refusal to attend, 'mitching' 'ditching'
- Deterioation in educational performance, loss of concentration and loss of enthusiasm and interest in school.
- Pattern of physical illnesses (e.g. headaches, stomach aches).
- Unexplained changes either in mood or behaviour, it may be particularly noticeable before returning to school after weekends or more especially after longer school holidays.
- Visible signs of anxiety or distress – stammering, withdrawing, nightmares, difficulty in sleeping, crying, not eating, vomiting, bedwetting.
- Spontaneous out-of-character comments about either pupils or teachers.
- Possessions missing or damaged.
- Increased requests for money or stealing money.
- Unexplained bruising or cuts or damaged clothing.

- Reluctance and/or refusal to say what is troubling him/her.

These signs/symptoms do not necessarily mean that a pupil is being bullied. If **repeated** or **occuring in combination** these signs/symptoms do warrant investigation in order to establish what is affecting the pupil.

2.3   TEACHER BEHAVIOUR

A teacher may, unwittingly or otherwise engage in, instigate or reinforce bullying behaviour in a number of ways by:
- Using sarcasm or other insulting or demeaning form of language when addressing pupils.
- Making negative comments about a pupil's appearance or background.
- Humiliating directly or indirectly a pupil who is particularly academically weak or outstanding or vulnerable in other ways.
- Using any gesture or expression of a threatening or intimidatory nature, or any form of degrading physical contact or exercise.

2.4   PARENT BEHAVIOUR

A parent may, unwittingly or otherwise engage in, instigate or reinforce bullying behaviour in a number of ways by:

- Use of threatening behaviour or abusive language towards staff (Teaching and Non-Teaching) and other pupils.
- Arriving unannounced to the school and undermining or humiliating staff of other pupils.
- Engaging in any degrading physical contact.

3   Investigation of Bullying

3.1   Roles and Responsibilities

The class teacher and principal are responsible for investigating bullying. However L.S./R.T.,   where a disclosure is made during their classes may investigate same.

3.2   PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH BULLYING

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;
- Incidents of bullying will be recorded, dealt with and investigated.
- When looking at incidents/alleged incidents of bullying, seek answers to the questions: WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, WHO, WHY?
- Pupils are made aware that reporting incidents of bullying is not 'telling tales' but acting responsibly.
- A calm unemotional problem solving approach will be used to deal with bullying.

- Incidents of bullying will initially be dealt with by the class teacher. Incidents that are of a serious nature, or those that involve pupils from a number of classes will be referred to Principal/Deputy Principal.
- On being informed of an alleged incident of bullying, the teacher dealing with the report will first interview the victim(s) in the presence of a witness and discuss the feelings which the victim(s) experienced because of the bullying behaviour.
- An interview will then take place with the alleged perpetrator(s). If the bullying involves a group of pupils members of the group will first be met individually and then as a whole. 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.
- Teachers should keep a written account of the discussions involved.
- Ask those involved to write down their account of the incident.
- If on the conclusion of the preliminary investigation the teacher is convinced that bullying has occurred the Principal/Deputy Principal will be informed and parent(s) guardian(s) of all concerned will be contacted.
- Depending on the seriousness of the bullying some or all of Level 2 Supportive Interventions will be utilised as outlined in the Code of Behaviour.
- Repeated incidents of bullying behaviour will result in the imposition of sanctions. Such sanctions will be proportionate to the seriousness of the bullying behaviour.
- In the case of a complaint against a staff member or parent, the incident will be raised first with the people in question and if unresolved will be mediated by the Principal or Deputy Principal.
- Where cases of bullying remain unresolved at school, the matter will be referred to the Board of Management.
- Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), caretakers, cleaners must be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher.
- In cases 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). The school should give parents an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports for their pupils.
- Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's Anti-Bullying Policy and Code of Behaviour and efforts should be made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied;
- It must also be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parents) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parents and the school;
- When the issue has been resolved have follow-up meetings and informal conversations with both parties to encourage them and to ensure that improvements are maintained.
- At all times the procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying (*Section 6.8 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*) will be followed.

3.3 PROCEDURES FOR RECORDING BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

If we feel that that there is evidence of bullying the following strategies will be used:
- ➢ Parents will be informed.
- ➢ A written record will be kept in the school files. Template may used to record pertinent information. (Appendix 3 of the *Anti-Bullying procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*) :
- ➢ The number of bullying incidents will be reported periodically to the Board of Management.

3.4 SANCTIONS

Teachers will establish and clearly communicate expectations of behaviour and the unacceptable nature of bullying behaviour. This will ensure that the Anti-Bullying policy is pro-active rather than reactive.
The nature of the bullying and the age of the child will determine the strategy to be employed.
The degree of misdemeanour – minor, serious or gross will be judged by the teachers and Principal/Deputy Principal based on a common sense approach.

Sanctions will be as follows:
- The primary aim for the relevant teacher 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);
- Apology to others involved.
- Reasoning with the child – verbal reprimand and advise on how to improve.
- A record is kept and pupils may be asked to write an account of incidents and what they have learned on a reflection sheet. Parents and teacher must sign this account.
- Removal from an activity if endangering self or others.
- Other sanctions will also be carried out in accordance with Code of Behaviour as outlined in section **Inappropriate Behaviour.**

An account will be given to Principal/Deputy Principal. Any allegation of bullying will be recorded. In some cases the Gardai, N.E.P.S. / H.S.E. may have to be contacted.
The Board of Management will instigate suspension procedures if deemed necessary by the school authorities. Suspension will be in accordance with the Rules for National School and the Education Welfare Act 2000, as laid down in the Code of Behaviour.

4 Strategies for the Prevention of Bullying

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;

- The S.P.H.E. Curriculum, including the Walk Tall, Stay Safe and R.S.E. Programmes, promote an atmosphere of happiness, friendship, openness, mutual respect and tolerance.

- Positive self-esteem is fostered among the pupils by celebrating individual differences/achievements by acknowledging good behaviour and by providing opportunities for success.
- Pupils are helped to develop empathy by discussing feelings and emotions and by being given a forum for expression in an open and secure environment i.e. circle time.
- The school's anti-bullying policy is discussed regularly with the pupils
- Teachers respond sensitively to pupils who disclose incidents of bullying.
- Staff are particularly vigilant in monitoring pupils who are considered at risk of bullying/being bullied.
- All disclosed incidents of bullying are investigated.
- Members of the B.O.M. are familiar with the school's policy on bullying and actively promote it on a repeated basis among staff, parents and pupils.
- Parents contribute to and support the school's policy on bullying by encouraging positive behaviour both at home and at school, by being vigilant for signs and symptoms that their child is being bullied or is bullying others, by communicating concerns to the school.
- There are clear rules to follow when children are in the yard.
- There is on-going monitoring and supervision in place.
- Co-operative games are taught.
- Both the formal and informal curriculum is used to emphasise that bullying is unacceptable.
- Prevention and awareness raising measures will also deal explicitly with cyber-bullying. A focus on educating pupils on appropriate online behaviour, how to stay safe while on-line and also on developing a culture of reporting any concerns about cyber-bullying.
- Our school's approach to tackling and preventing bullying will take particular account of the needs of pupils with disabilities or with SEN.
- Regular training for staff on issues of Bullying Internet Safety.
- An Anti-Bullying Week is held every year, where competitions and events are organised and the Principal speaks to all classes about bullying. Children are reminded by their teacher and Principal, on a regular basis of the unacceptability of bullying.
- Information leaflets/publications on bullying to be distributed to pupils/parents when available.

5   Programme of Support for Pupils Affected by Bullying

The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows (see Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*)

- Cooperation with parents
- Improving self-esteem of targets by providing opportunities to improve their relationship with others. Counselling if needed.
- The subject of bullying will be dealt with through the SPHE programme.
- Efforts will be made to include material in various subject areas which will deal with the theme of bullying.

- Circle time, role plays etc. will be employed to explore the theme of bullying and to identify approaches to dealing with various situations that students may find themselves in.
- May consult HSE for support.
- Referral to C.A.H.M.S. if necessary.

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.

6 Implementation and Review

6.1 Roles and Responsibilities

- The B.O.M., Principal and Staff have responsibility for formulating and overseeing this policy.
- The Policy will be available to all staff members and available to view on the website for the whole school community.
- Staff and Principal have responsibility for the implementation of this policy. Each classroom will have a supply of Bullying Incident forms. It will also be a regular item on the Staff Meeting Agenda.
- Pupils are expected to co-operate with staff.
- Parents are asked to co-operate with staff.
- At least once in every school term, the Principal must provide a report to the Board of Management setting out:

    (i)the overall number of bullying cases reported (by means of the bullying re-cording template at **Appendix 3**) since the previous report to the Board and

    (ii) confirmation that all cases referred to at (i) above 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*.
- The Board of Management must undertake an annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation by the school**.**

6.2   Success Criteria

- A happy safe atmosphere, with a culture of openness where good relationships exist between all members within the school community.
- When children "tell" if they are bullied and trust that their concerns will be responded to promptly.
- Children are aware of and obey and are confident about reporting incidents to the school authorities.
- Staff apply the rules of listening, reporting and investigating.
- Growth in self-discipline.
- When parents and staff feel confident that incidents are being dealt with positively and fairly.
- When members of staff are supportive and co-operative in managing incidents.

6.3   Time Table for Implementation and Review

This Policy will be implemented immediately following ratification by the B.O.M.

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed annually by the Board of Management. Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, be readily accessible to parents and pupils on request. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

7   RATIFICATION

This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management of St. Colman's Boys National

School, Kanturk at its meeting held on _____

Signed:_____
     Chairperson, Board of Management.

Date: _____

Signed:_____
     Principal

Date: _____

This Policy is formulated in good faith and in the best interests of the children in our care.