



## **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. Colmcille's Senior National School has adopted the following anti-bullying policy within the framework of the school's overall Code for the Promotion of Positive 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 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
  - Uses a Restorative Approach to build positive relationships and friendships.
- 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
  - address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying.
- Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils
- Supports for staff
- Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of alleged bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies) and
- 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, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying.
- 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 Travelling Community.

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 shall 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 for the Promotion of Positive Behaviour.

**4. The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying is (are) as follows:**

A pupil or parent may bring a bullying concern to any member of staff in the school. The relevant teacher for investigating the allegation will, in the first instance, be the class teacher. The class teacher will inform the Principal or the Deputy Principal of the fact that they are investigating an allegation of bullying.

## **5. Education and Prevention Strategies**

St. Colmcille's Senior National School believes that the cultivation of a school culture and climate that is based on respect, trust, consideration and support for others is paramount in the prevention of bullying. This is reflected in our school motto of "*Treat others as you would like to be treated*". In our school, among the education and prevention strategies that will be used to cultivate this atmosphere and to address bullying, including cyber-bullying and identity based bullying, are:

### **Curricular Components**

- Social Personal and Health Education (S.P.H.E.)***  
This is taught in all classes. This programme addresses bullying as well as inter-related areas of belonging, integrating, communication, conflict, personal safety, friendship and relationship.
- Stay Safe Programme***  
All schools are required to implement this programme, which enhances children's self-protection skills and their ability to recognise and deal with bullying. We currently deliver this programme in 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class.
- Relationship and Sexuality Programme (R.S.E.)***  
In fifth and sixth classes, we will continue to provide a module presented by facilitators from Accord. This deals with changes during puberty and respectful attitude and relationships as we grow and mature in teenage years.
- Friends for Life/Lust for Life.***
- Restorative School.***
- Other School Policies***  
Our Code for the Promotion of Positive Behaviour, our Acceptable Use Policy and our Mobile Phone Policy all help to support our efforts to prevent bullying of any sort in the school.

### **Year Group Assemblies. (Tionóil)**

- These will be used to influence attitudes and set standards. Key themes of Respect for Others, Self-respect, Community, Contribution and Interdependence will be emphasised.
- Diversity and tolerance of difference will be specifically addressed. The message '*It's ok to be different*' will regularly be emphasised.
- Diverse achievements and talents will be highlighted.
- Senior pupils will be reminded of their leadership role in relation to modelling the highest standards of behaviour and respect. They will be regularly reminded of the influence they have on the behaviour of younger pupils in the school.

### **Internet Safety Seminars**

These take place each year across a range of year groups. Our current internet safety facilitators are Zeeko who also provide us with both staff and parent workshops.

### **School Houses (Tithe Scoile)**

- The six Tithe Scoile include one class from each year group. They have been specifically devised to cultivate a sense of belonging and community among pupils of different age groups in the school. The tithe scoile will continue to meet on a termly basis.

### **Nuachtlitir**

We will continue to use the Nuachtlitir as an important channel of communication between school and home. It gives parents and pupils an overview of events and activities in St. Colmcille's. It serves to promote and reiterate key messages in relation to the culture and values of the school.

### **Visits from Community Garda**

- St. Colmcille's S.N.S. liaises on a regular basis with our Community Garda. The Garda also visits our classes on an individual basis to discuss proper and safe use of the Internet and to highlight the dangers associated with cyber bullying.

**6. Our 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 in accordance with D.E.S. guidelines.**

**It is very important that all involved understand our approach from the outset. Our approach in St. Colmcille's will be a restorative one.**

**Our school has a consistent and clear approach to dealing with bullying when it is reported or when it occurs. A pupil or parent may bring a bullying concern to any teacher in the school who will then report the matter to the Class Teacher. It is common practice that the relevant teacher for investigation and dealing with bullying is the class teacher who deals with bullying incidents which affect any child/children in his/her own class. The Principal and Deputy Principal will be informed by the Class Teacher of the allegations and of their subsequent investigation.**

- i. 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.) **We try to move away from blame and punishment to healing and connection.**
- ii. In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved.
- iii. All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. In that way pupils will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It will be made clear to all pupils that when they report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.
- iv. Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), and other ancillary staff will be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher.
- v. Parents 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.
- vi. Teachers will take a calm, unemotional, restorative, problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents.
- vii. Incidents are often best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.
- viii. All interviews will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of the pupils concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information.
- ix. When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher will use our restorative questions (see list below).

### Restorative Questions

1. What happened?
2. What were you thinking at the time?
3. What have your thoughts been since?
4. Who has been affected and in what way?
5. What could you have done differently?
6. What needs to happen next? (Intention = connection & solutions)

- x. It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s).
- xi. In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved will be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken according to school policy. The school will 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.
- xii. 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 efforts will be made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied i.e. a restorative approach.
- xiii. Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved will 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. This can have a therapeutic effect.
- xiv. In cases where the relevant teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, it must be recorded by the relevant teacher in the recording template.
- xv. 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 parents or the Principal or Deputy Principal.
- xvi. Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures.
- xvii. In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

## **7. Procedures for recording bullying behaviour**

The Board of Management of St. Colmcille's Senior National School has clear procedures for the formal noting and reporting of bullying behaviour and these are documented in the school's anti-bullying policy. All records will be maintained in accordance with relevant data protection legislation. The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour adhere to the following:

- While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the relevant teacher will use his/her professional judgement in relation to the records to be kept of these reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same.
- When investigating allegations of bullying, before such allegations are verified, the teacher may record such allegations using the 'Alleged Bullying Incident' Template (Green Form)
- If it is established by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher will keep appropriate written records which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.
- The relevant teacher will use the Template for Recording Bullying Behaviour (Pink Form), a copy of which will be passed onto the Principal or Deputy Principal.

## **8. Bullying as part of a continuum of behaviour**

It is also important to note that bullying behaviour can be part of a continuum of behaviour rather than a stand-alone issue and in some cases behaviour may escalate beyond that which can be described as bullying to serious physical or sexual assault or harassment. To ensure that any such cases are dealt with appropriately, the school's anti-bullying policy must provide for appropriate linkages with the overall code of behaviour and provide for referral to be made to relevant external agencies and authorities where appropriate. In cases where a school has serious concerns in relation to managing the behaviour of a pupil, the advice of the National Education Psychological Service (NEPS) will be sought.

## **9. Referral of serious cases to the HSE**

It is also important to note that bullying behaviour can be part of a continuum of behaviour rather than a stand-alone issue and in some cases behaviour may escalate beyond that which can be described as bullying to serious physical or sexual assault or harassment. To ensure that any such cases are dealt with appropriately, the school's anti-bullying policy must provide for appropriate linkages with the overall code of behaviour and provide for referral to be made to relevant external agencies and authorities where appropriate. In cases where a school has serious concerns in relation to managing the behaviour of a pupil, the advice of the National Education Psychological Service (NEPS) will be sought.

#### **10. Supports for pupils affected by bullying**

Pupils affected by bullying will be supported and monitored by the school. They will at all times be assured that the bullying was not their fault. They will be provided with opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop their friendships, social skills and thereby build resistance whenever this is needed. Learning strategies will be applied within the school to allow for the enhancement of the pupil's self-worth. The social skills programmes in use in our school are 'Friends for Life' and 'Lust for Living'. Teachers may also draw support from other resources.

A programme of support for those pupils involved in bullying behaviour will also be a part of the school's intervention process. Pupils involved in bullying behaviour need assistance on an ongoing basis. For those with low self-esteem, opportunities will be developed to increase feelings of self-worth. Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour may need counselling to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others.

Pupils who observe incidents of bullying behaviour are encouraged to discuss them with teachers. This can be done through SPHE classes, Circle Time or Worry Box or in private conversation with the teacher.

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

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

#### **12. Ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the Anti-Bullying Policy**

The effectiveness of the school's anti-bullying policy will be subject to continuous review in the light of incidents of bullying behaviour encountered. The school will make provision for periodic examination of the prevention and intervention strategies in place. Data gathered from Recording Templates will be regularly collated and analysed with a view to monitoring levels of bullying behaviour and identifying any particular issues that require attention or any significant trends in behaviour. A record of this analysis will be made available to the Board of Management. Appropriate responses to any issues identified will be drawn up and implemented.

#### **13. 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 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.

#### **14. Oversight**

Periodic summary reports to the Board of Management.

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 recording 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 minutes of the Board of Management meeting must record the above but in doing so must not include any identifying details of the pupils involved.

**15.** This policy was originally adopted by the Board of Management in November 2013 and has been reviewed regularly thereafter. The current review took place in Spring 2020 and was adopted by the Board of Management on 18 November 2020.

**16.** 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.

**17.** This policy and its will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year. Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, published on the school website 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.

This policy was reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management **on 27 September 2023.**

**Signed:** Catherine Collins  
*Chairperson Board of Management*

Mary Cleary  
*Príomhoide*

*Date: 27/09/23*

*Date: 27/09/23*

**Date of next Review:** September 2024.