St. Caimin's Community School

Policy on Countering Bullying Behaviour

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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 St Caimin's Community 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. Principles of Best Practice

The Board of Management recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of pupils. The Board 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.

3. **Definition**

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.

Additional information on different types of bullying is set out in Section 2 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

4. Relevant Teachers

The relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying may include any or all of:

- subject or class teacher
- tutor
- year head
- guidance counsellor
- chaplain
- deputy Principal
- Principal

Which teachers may be involved at any one time will be determined by the nature of reporting (or how the incidents came to light), on the gravity of the allegations, and on the nature and effectiveness of the intervention strategies. In the majority of cases the Year Head takes responsibility for investigating and dealing with reports of bullying, and also maintains any records generated.

5. Education and Prevention Strategies

This policy derives from the Mission Statement:

Every person is valued equally in accordance with our Christian tradition at St. Caimin's School.
Each person within the school community can enjoy developing to the fullest, while feeling cared for and safe.
Our educational structures are ordered, based on tolerance, fairness and respect, while sensitive to our changing world.

It is directly linked to the aspiration in that statement that all people within the school should feel cared for and safe, whilst also giving expression to the school's culture of fairness and respect.

The education and prevention strategies (including strategies 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:

- Activities aimed at raising awareness of bullying as an unacceptable behaviour are on-going. These include poster campaigns, the display of anti-bullying charters and posters throughout the school, and the provision of anti-bullying resources such as books and videos.

- The school, in its provision of curricular, extra-curricular and pastoral care programmes, provides prevention and awareness-raising measures across all aspects of bullying, and supports strategies to engage pupils in addressing problems when they arise. In particular, we work towards building empathy, respect and resilience in pupils.

- Similarly, the school promotes a positive sense of self-worth among its students.

- The student body is regularly consulted, by way of informal discussion and anonymous survey, to determine the extent – if any – and the nature of any bullying within the school. We are aware of the possible abuses that can arise from use of such questionnaires, and we exercise extreme caution in their use.

- The pastoral care structures within the school offer support, advice, protection, detection and expertise in this area. In particular, the School Chaplain supports other teachers in their work with students and has a valuable contribution to make towards all aspects of anti-bullying policy in the school.

- The diligent implementation of the Code of Behaviour for Students minimises opportunities for bullying.

- The school has a strategy of comprehensively supervising and monitoring students while out of class. This includes CCTV.

- The Student Council helps in heightening awareness of bullying and creates a positive atmosphere within the school community. The council is encouraged to report concerns to teachers, tutors, year heads, Deputy Principal or Principal.

- Students are encouraged to treat everyone with respect.

- The school is committed to recognising and celebrating the diversity of backgrounds and identities of all in the school community. This includes supporting the sexuality of gay, lesbian and transgender people. The SPHE programme for all year groups, and particularly for fourth years, deals explicitly with the issue of identity-based bullying and in particular

homophobic and transphobic bullying. The school has also welcomed guest speakers from the Red Ribbon Project. The words *gay* and *lesbian*, or words with similar meaning, must never be used as terms of offence, even in jest.

- Students are encouraged to discuss how they get on with other people, and to form positive attitudes towards other people. This involves reflection on the nature and obligations of true friendship.

- The process of teaching and learning presents diverse opportunities to discuss aspects of bullying, and to explore appropriate ways of behaving towards one another. Such opportunities occur throughout the curriculum, as suggested in *Anti-bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-primary Schools,* (DES, September 2013)

- The school is aware of the the increasing incidence of cyber bullying. Our strategies in this regard 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. We do this through our own curricular provision, and also invite guest speakers to address these issues with our students. First year students receive training in the safe use of social media. Furthermore, the Code of Behaviour for Students and the Internet Usage Policy support appropriate behaviour. In addition, the on-line content within the school is moderated by external web-filtering.

- St. Caimin's is a community school with over 700 students. Co-educational, our students come from across the range of abilities and social backgrounds. As such, we have always had students with a range of disabilities and special educational needs. We minimise the likelihood of bullying for such students by improving inclusion, focusing on developing social skills, paying attention to key moments such as transitioning from primary to post-primary and cultivating a good school culture which has respect for all and helping one another as central

- Students and staff are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying.

- This policy is regularly reviewed, as is its degree of success.

6. **Procedures for Investigation, Follow-up and Recording**

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

- Any complaints are dealt with quickly, firmly and fairly, involving parents where appropriate.
- All allegations of bullying are referred to a year head, and may be referred upwards to the Deputy Principal or Principal
- The year head investigates the incident and interviews the parties involved and any witnesses. In serious cases a written report is prepared and a copy given to Deputy Principal.
- The parents of all parties involved are contacted as appropriate and kept informed
- Parents and pupils are required to co-operate with any investigation and assist the school in restoring, as far as practicable, the relationships of the parties involved as quickly as possible.
- The normal disciplinary sanctions as outlined in the Code of Behaviour for Students apply to any behaviours covered by this policy.
- In the most serious cases the Board of Management may be informed.
- 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, see Appendix.

7. **Programme of Support**

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

- The victim is kept informed as to how the case is being handled.
- It should 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
- A programme of support for those pupils involved in bullying behaviour is also part of the school's intervention process.

- The counselling facilities within the school are available to all parties. Counselling may, as appropriate, be provided by outside agencies.

- In certain cases it may be necessary to invite the assistance of outside agencies such as general medical practitioners, An Gárda Siochána, social workers and community workers.

- In cases where the school has serious concerns in relation to managing the behaviour of a pupil, the advice of the National Education Psychological Service (NEPS) may be sought.

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.

9. 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. Date

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 6th March 2014

11. Availability

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 Trustees if requested.

12. Review

This policy and its implementation 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 Trustees and the Department.

Signed: _Dr. Ena Dunlan_

(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: _John Cleary_

(Principal)

Date: _06/03/2014_

Date: _06/03/2014_

Date of next review: _March 2015_

Appendix   Template for recording bullying behaviour

1. Name of pupil being bullied and class group

Name _____Class_____

2. Name(s) and class(es) of pupil(s) engaged in bullying behaviour

_____
_____
_____

3. **Source** of bullying concern/report (tick relevant box(es))*		4. **Location** of incidents (tick relevant box(es))*	
Pupil concerned		Playground	
Other Pupil		Classroom	
Parent		Corridor	
Teacher		Toilets	
Other		School Bus	
		Other	

5. Name of person(s) who reported the bullying concern

6. Type of Bullying Behaviour (tick relevant box(es)) *

Physical Aggression		Cyber-bullying	
Damage to Property		Intimidation	
Isolation/Exclusion		Malicious Gossip	
Name Calling		Other (specify)	

7. Where behaviour is regarded as identity-based bullying, indicate the relevant category:

Homophobic	Disability/SEN related	Racist	Membership of Traveller community	Other (specify)

8. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact

9.   Details of actions taken

Signed _____ (Relevant Teacher)   Date _____

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal _____