 **St. Ciaran’s & St. Manchan’s National School,**

**Boher, Ballycumber, Co. Offaly. R35 P448**

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***Anti Bullying Policy***

1. In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the code of behaviour guidelines issued by the Board of Management of St. Ciaran & St Manchan’s N.S. 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 positive school culture and climate** which-
* is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity;
* Encouragement of pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying in a non-threatening environment; and
* Promotes respectful relationships across the school community;
* **Effective leadership**
* **A school-wide approach** to preventing and dealing with bullying behaviour;
* **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
* which explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including, homophobic and trans-phobic 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, eg Restorative Practice)
* **On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.**

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 and individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time”.***

The following **types of bullying behaviours** are included in the definition of bullying:

* Deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip, and other form 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 or an ethnic grouping and bullying of those with disabilities or special education needs.
* Physical aggression
* Intimidation
* Name calling
* Damage to property
* Extortion

Isolated or once-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour, including a once-off offensive or hurtful text message or other **private messaging incidents,**while they do not fall within the definition of bullying, will be dealt with, as appropriate, in accordance with our 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 the 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*.

1. **Investigating Bullying**

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

* Class teacher(s)
* Support teachers (Learning support/Resource)
* Principal
* Designated Liaison Person (Child Protection) Mr. Paul McKeon,

Deputy Designated Liaison Person, Ms Carmel Gately

1. **Education and Prevention Strategies**

Education and Prevention strategies that will be used by the school are as follows:

* Facilitated workshops for 2nd – 6th classes by an outside agency, which include reference to homophobic and transphobic bullying for senior classes

eg. Anti-Bullying Centre workshops D.C.U*.,*

*Stick & Stones Anti-Bullying Programme* 087 9015199, when required or when possible.

* Dedicate a special school assembly at the start of each school year to outlining the school’s anti-bullying policy.

* All pupils will be encouraged to develop **empathy and respect** for other pupils and to understand the causes and effects of bullying behaviour.
* For infant classes, education and prevention strategies will focus on positive behaviour being kind to others and telling teacher or other school staff if any problems or worries arise in school.   Inputs from programmes such as the “Stay Safe” Programme, Fun Friends and the Religious Education programme will complement this approach.
* Visual cues will reinforce anti-bullying and positive behavioural messages delivered in class – pupil-designed posters, art, essays, or pupil commentaries on anti-bullying workshops. These will be displayed around the school.
* Age-appropriate classroom library books will be purchased to foster respect for differences; being kind to others, understanding the effect that bullying behaviour can have on others.
* In order to limit opportunities for cyber-bullying, we have a**ban on pupils bringing mobile phone/smart phones into school.** See Mobile Phone and Electronic Games Policy.
* Educational awareness measures aimed at senior classes and which focus on cyber bullying, will focus on discussion of appropriate online behaviour, how to stay safe while on-line and on reporting any concerns to a trusted adult in school. Programmes such as “Webwise” will be done in the school annually.
* Fostering a school culture which is respectful of all differences, including children with special education needs (SEN), will incorporate social inclusion measures to prevent isolation and encourage integration, developing social skills of SEN pupil and reinforce and reward good behaviour in all pupils.
* Opportunities for curricular integration and cross-curricular approaches will be used where appropriate to foster a wider understanding of the positive and negative effects on behaviour.

* As this is a Catholic School, an important emphasis will be placed on the spiritual aspects of our lives and our modelling of Christian behaviour with others.

* Literacy opportunities will be availed of to draw attention to cause and effect of conflict, which can be reinforced in SPHE AND SESE lessons as appropriate.
* Promotion of pupil self-esteem through highlighting achievements, both academic and non-academic, inside and after school, will take place throughout the school year. Celebration of individual achievements will be publicised in class, at school assemblies, in the school newsletter, and displayed in the main corridor, as appropriate.

1. **Procedures for investigation, follow-up and recording of bullying behaviour:**

* All incidents of bullying will be noted, reported, taken seriously and dealt with promptly, appropriately and effectively.
* Claims of bullying of a pupil must be brought, in the first instance, to the relevant teacher. If another pupil in the school is involved, 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 relationship of the parties involved **(rather than to apportion blame**);

If the bullying is being carried out on a pupil by someone outside the school (e.g. in a cyber bullying context), and it is having an impact in school, the relevant class teacher must be notified and he/she will discuss the matter with a member/s of the school team to arrange for appropriate supports for that pupil.

* In investigation of, 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;
* All reports, including anonymous reports, of bullying must 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 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;**
* Other school personnel (e.g. SNA’S, School Secretary, Visiting Specialist Teachers, Student Teachers) will be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher;
* 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 relationship of the parties involved as quickly as possible;
* It is very important that all involved (including each set of pupils and parents) understand the approach outlined at (i) to (v) above, from the outset;
* Teachers will take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents;
* Incidents will be investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved;
* **Restorative Conferences** should 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 and may be asked for their version of events.
* **Six core questions** that can be used 1:1 to mediate between two people in conflict are;

1. What happened?
2. What were you thinking?
3. How were you feeling?
4. Who else has been affected by this?
5. How could you do it differently next time?
6. What needs to happen for the damage to be repaired?

* When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour the relevant teacher/Principal/Deputy Principal will facilitate and guide the restorative conference. This should be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner; notes will be taken by the teacher/facilitator.
* If a group is involved, each member will, where practicable, be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved, will be met as a group.   At the circle-time 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 statement;
* It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s); this will be done at the teacher’s discretion and taking pupil ages in account.
* In cases where it is determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the pupils will be asked to complete the follow-up think sheet which encourages the pupils to reflect on their actions, see how their actions impacted on others and decide on a way of avoiding such actions in the future.
* In cases where it is 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. 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;
* 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 should be made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied:
* It will 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/ her parents and the school;
* Follow-up meetings with 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;
* 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 has occurred, it will be recorded by the relevant teacher in the recording template at **Appendix A**
* In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed, the relevant teacher must, as part of his/her professional judgment, 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 relationship between the parties has been restored as far as is practicable; and
* Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents, the school Principal or Deputy Principal;
* 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
* If 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

1. **Procedures for Recording Bullying Behaviour**

* While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must 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 discussion with those involved regarding same;
* 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 relationship of the parties involved.
* The relevant teacher must use the recording template at **Appendix A**to record the bullying behaviour in the following circumstances:

1. In cases where he/she considers that the bullying has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 days after he/she has determined that bullying occurred; and
2. Where the bullying takes the form of physical aggression, intimidation, damage to property or extortion. In such circumstances, the bullying will be reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal.

In each of the circumstances at (a) and (b) above, the recording template at **Appendix A**must be completed in full and retained by the teacher in question and a copy provided to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable.   It should be also noted that the timeline for recording bullying behaviour in the recording template at **Appendix A**does not in any way preclude the relevant teacher from consulting the Principal or Deputy Principal at an earlier stage in relation to a case.

1. **Programme of Support for Pupils**

The schools’ programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying will include the following: -

* Consultation with the pupil and his/her parent/s as to what type of school support would help for example:
* Individual “time out” from class to complete activities of the pupil’s choice (e.g. art, music, ICT)
* Small group work with friends in the Resource room setting
* Use of circle time by the class teacher to address issues
* Situational drama, social or pictorial stories in a class or group setting
* Focused workshop for the whole class

In the case of children for whom bullying is having a serious impact which cannot be dealt with satisfactorily in school, consultation will be made with the National Education Psychological Service (NEPS) as to whether formal referral to an outside, specialist agency (e.g. CAMHS, Child and Mental Health Services) may be necessary in order to support the pupil concerned.

The school will also offer support for pupils who are bullying others, following consultation with parent/s.   The options outlined above will be made available in such cases.

The school will also decide on support for parents who need help in this area (for example, organisation of an Information Evening for Parents; a list of specialist agencies to whom referrals could be made etc.)

1. **Supports for Parents**

Parents who wish to discuss their child’s difficulties in relation to bullying will be facilitated to meet on a one-to-one basis with the child’s teacher.   Any parental suggestion for appropriate supports for their child in the school setting, will be considered and implemented, as far as practicable, within school.

Any parent who considers that their child’s mental health is being affected by bullying, and having a seriously detrimental effect on their child, should also contact their own GP for referral, if necessary, to the HSE’S Child and Adolescent Mental Service (CAHMS).

Support and advice for parents and their child may also be available through local professional, accredited counsellors and psychotherapists, specialist organisations and support services.   Many websites also provide information for parents to help their child in relation to bullying.

Details of these services are contained in **Appendix D**

* 1. **Supports for Staff**

The Board of Management will ensure that members of the school staff have sufficient familiarity with the school’s anti-bullying policy to enable them to effectively and consistently apply the policy when required.   Supports for staff will be appropriate to the individual’s role and will enable staff to recognise bullying, implement effective strategies for preventing bullying and, where appropriate, intervene effectively in bullying cases.

Staff will be facilitated by the Board of Management to update skills on a regular basis in relation to bullying and its impact on pupils, and where approved in advance by the Board, funding will be made available for members of staff to attend training in specific areas at various centres or a s part of whole school training.

1. **Supervision and Monitoring of Pupils**

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

Pupils are supervised at break times in school and on arrival at and dismissal from school. Morning supervision commences at 9:00 am and pupils are admitted into school building at 9:10am. Only in very exceptional cases, e.g. very inclement weather conditions, will the pupils be admitted prior to 9:10am.

Supervision is not provided by school staff on bus transport to and from school, however, pupils are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying to their parent/guardians and/or the relevant teacher.

1. **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 ethnic groupings or of the Traveller Community.**

1. **Management and Oversight of the 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.    Surveys of pupils, staff and parents may be used to provide information and feedback about the effectiveness of the anti-bullying measures in place and identify any significant behavioural trends that may benefit from early intervention.

The implementation and effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy will be regularly included as an item at staff meetings so as to ensure that concerns about the policy and/or the welfare of individual pupils can be shared and effectively addressed.

Data gathered from Bullying Reports completed by relevant teachers **(Appendix A),**will be collated and analysed annually 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 retained and made available to the Board of Management.   Appropriate responses to any issues identified will be drawn up and implemented by staff.

Furthermore, the Principal will provide a report to the Board of Management at every B.O.M. meeting setting out;

* The overall number of bullying cases reported (by means of the recording template at **Appendix A**) since the previous report to the Board and
* 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 will record the above but in doing so will not include any identifying details of the pupils involved.

1. **Referral of Cases to Outside Authorities**

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) will be sought.

*Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011 (Child First)*and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools provide that in situations where “the incident is serious and where the behaviour is regarded as potentially abusive, the school must consult the HSE Children and Family Social Services with a view to drawing up an appropriate response, such as a management plan”.   Serious instances of bullying behaviour will, in accordance with the *Children First and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, be* referred to the HSE Children and Family Services and/or Gardaí as appropriate.

The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools also provide that where school personnel have concerns about a child but are not sure whether to report the matter to the HSE, the Designated Liaison Person must seek advice from the HSE Children and Family Social Services.

Any such referrals or consultations with NEPS Or HSE, in the context of this Anti-Bullying Policy, will be notified to the Board of Management by the Principal as part of regular reporting on Child Protection issues, which is on the agenda of each Board meeting.

1. **Review of Policy**

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year.

**Ratification of Policy**

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on ­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_--

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Principal

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, Chairperson of Board of Management

To be reviewed as necessary, or every two years.