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## Anti-Bullying Policy

### Introduction

This anti-bullying policy should be read in conjunction with the Behaviour and Sanctions policy. This policy was redrafted following meetings between the staffs of Scoil Mhuire and Abbey N.S. in June 2017 in preparation for the opening of St. Comán's Wood Primary School on the 30<sup>th</sup> August, 2017.

This document is primarily used for child to child peer interactions. Bullying between child/adult will be addressed within child protection protocols and procedures. Adult to Adult interactions will be dealt with in existing employment legislation procedures.

St. Comán's Wood school community believes that each pupil has a right to an education free from fear and intimidation. Student behaviour in the school is managed without fear or coercion. Professional codes of conduct for teachers require consistent implementation by each staff member. Codes are on the school website. Children are taught about their rights and responsibilities. People have rights. As individuals, we have a responsibility to ensure other people's rights are valued and respected by us. Each person in St. Comán's Wood Primary School is

- Expected to respect the integrity of the child's family, be it two parent, single parent, foster parent, grandparent, guardian, significant other or LGBT parents.
- The school regards bullying as a serious infringement of individual rights and a serious threat to the self esteem and self confidence of targeted pupils. **Therefore, it does not tolerate bullying of any kind.**
- Every report of bullying is treated seriously and dealt with, having due regard for the well being of the targeted pupils and the perpetrator/s. The immediate priority, should a bullying incident occur, is ending the bullying (thereby protecting the person(s) being targeted) and resolving the issues and restoring the relationships involved insofar as is practicable using a **reform, not blame approach**.
- All pupils are expected to contribute to the creation and maintenance of a safe environment in the school. On becoming aware of any bullying situation, in or outside the school, involving members of the school community they should notify a trusted responsible adult. Bullying behaviour is too serious not to report.

- Pupil's participation in school life in general is encouraged through existing school structures. **Awareness of bullying and willingness to take action to prevent or stop it, is a part o this participation.**

### Anti Bullying Policy

1. In accordance with the requirements of the Education Welfare Act 2000 and the code of behaviour guidelines issued by the National Education Welfare Board NEWB, the interim manager (Until November 2017) and the Board of management of St. Comán's Wood Primary School, Roscommon have developed this Anti- Bullying policy within the framework of the school's overall code of behaviour. The policy fully complies with the requirements of the Anti- bullying procedures for primary and Post Primary Schools, which were published in 2013.
2. The Interim manager/Board of Management recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of the pupils and is therefore fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour.
  - A Positive school climate which is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity.
  - Models respectful behaviour to all members of the school community at all times
  - Explicitly teaches pupils what respectful language and respectful behaviour looks like, acts like and feels like in class and around the school. Consistently tackles the use of discriminatory and derogatory language in the school- this includes homophobic and racist language and language that is belittling of pupils with a disability or SEN.
  - Displays key respect messages in classrooms, in assembly areas and around the school. Pupils are involved in the development of these messages.
  - Catches children 'being good'-notices and acknowledges desired respectful behaviour by providing positive attention.
  - Gives positive feed back to pupils when respectful behaviour and respectful language are absent.
  - Has a system of encouragement and rewards to promote desired behaviour and compliance with the school rules and routines. Highlights and explicitly teach school rules in pupil friendly language in the classroom and common areas.
  - Explicitly teaches appropriate use of social media.
  - Positively encourages pupils to comply with the school rules on mobile phone and internet use.
  - Follow up and follow through with pupils who ignore the rules.
  - Actively involves parents and/or the Parent's Association in awareness raising campaigns around social media.
  - Actively promotes the right of every member of the school community to be safe and secure in school.

- All staff watches out for signs of bullying behaviour.
- Encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non threatening environment.
- 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.**
- 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 ongoing evaluation 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(s) and which is repeated over time**

The following types of behaviour are included in the definition of bullying-

- Deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying.
- Cyber bullying
- Identity based bullying such as homophobic bullying, bullying based on a person's membership of the travelling community and bullying of those with disabilities or special educational needs.
- Isolated or once off incidents of intentional or negative behaviour, including a hurtful text message or other private messaging, do not fall within the definition of bullying and should be dealt with, as appropriate (depending on the severity) 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 or site or other public forum where that image or statement can be viewed and/or repeated by other people will be regarded as bullying behaviour.** As early as first class children will be taught the potential of harmful images or statements n a social network.
- Negative behaviour that does not meet this definition of bullying will be dealt with in accordance with the school's code of behaviour. This definition includes a wide range of behaviour, whether verbal or written, whether physical or social, whether targeting person or property, whether carried out directly or indirectly or through electronic or other medium, which could harm a pupil or undermine her/his self esteem or self confidence.

- Specific examples of bullying behaviour are outlined in appendix 1 and Section 2 of Anti-bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools. Appendix 2 has advice for pupils and parents.
- **The relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows**
  1. the principal,
  2. the Deputy Principal
  3. all class teachers

**4. Education and Prevention Strategies- aimed at cyber-bullying and identity based bullying used by the school are as follows**

1. The anti-bullying module of the SPHE programme as it applies during each school year. The Stay Safe and RSE programmes at primary level are personal safety skills programmes which seek to enhance child's self protection skills including their ability to recognise and cope with bullying. Various other social, health and media education programmes can further help to address the problem of bullying behaviour.
2. Art, drama RE and PE are areas where cooperation and respect can be promoted. Sporting activities in particular can provide excellent opportunities for channelling and learning how to control aggression. GAA and soccer coaching is offered to senior pupils.
3. At least 5 awareness-raising exercises per school year for each class group 2<sup>nd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> pro actively explaining the nature and variety, causes, consequences and unacceptability of bullying.
4. Pupils are helped to examine the issue of bullying in a calm, rational, age appropriate manner, outside of the tense context of particular bullying incidents. In the process they are made more aware of the nature of the bullying and the various forms that it can take.
5. Pupils are made aware that the consequences of bullying behaviour are always bad for those who are targeted, even if this is not always obvious at the time.
6. Pupils are encouraged to recognise, reject, report bullying behaviour, either spontaneously or through questionnaires that are regularly used in the school. They are reminded that it is a 'telling' school. Talking to adults about incidents of bullying are helpful to both the bully and the bullied. Children are encouraged to talk to their parents at home about **everything** that happens in school.
7. They will know who and how to tell- ie- **a direct approach to teacher at an appropriate time, foe example after class, hand up a note with homework, make a phone call to the school or to a trusted teacher in the school, get a parent/guardian/friend to tell on your behalf, administer a confidential questionnaire once a term to all pupils, ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place**

8. Any pupil or guardian, teaching and non teaching staff must report any incidences of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them to the relevant teacher
9. Through presentations or other exercises, the school staff and parents/guardians are made aware of the nature of bullying and the signs that might indicate a pupil is being bullied. They are encouraged to be vigilant in watching out for signs of bullying and to report any suspicion of bullying they may have to the 'Relevant Teacher' ( in the case of staff members) or any staff member (in the case of parents /guardians)

**5. 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-**

- The relevant teacher, normally the class teacher investigates all incidents of reported or suspected bullying behaviour, whether within the school or outside it, with a view to establishing the facts and bringing any such behaviour to an end.
- The school through the relevant teacher reserves the right to ask any pupil to write an account of what happened as part of the investigation. This will be a standard procedure and does not necessarily imply that a pupil is guilty of misbehaviour.
- Pupils who are alleged to have been involved in bullying behaviour are interviewed by the relevant teacher using open ended questioning eg

**Examples of questions**

- To establish the nature and extent of the behaviour and any reasons for it. In the event that they have been involved in bullying behaviour they are asked to sign a binding promise that they will treat all pupils fairly, equally and respectfully including the targeted pupil(s).
- The relevant teacher does not apportion blame but rather treats bullying behaviour as a 'mistake' that can and must be remedied. S/he emphasises that the intention is not to punish perpetrators but to talk to them, to explain how harmful and hurtful bullying is and to seek a promise that bullying will stop. If that promise is forthcoming and is honoured there will be no penalty and that will be the end of the matter.
- Pupils who report bullying are therefore not getting others 'in trouble' so much as enabling them to get out of trouble into which they may ultimately get if the bullying continued.
- When an investigation is completed and/or bullying situation is resolved the 'Relevant Teacher' will complete a report, to include the findings of the investigation, the strategy adopted and the outcome of the intervention, as well as any other relevant information.

- If a pupil has signed a promise but then chooses to break that promise and continue the bullying behaviour, this can no longer be considered a mistake. In this event parents/ guardians will be informed and requested to countersign their daughter/son's promise. Breach of this additional promise is regarded as a grave matter and a serious sanction may be imposed by the school authorities. (See sanctions below)
- The parents of the bullied child will also be informed. A meeting will be arranged with the relevant teacher and principal to speak to the parents of the bullied child and the school's programme for supporting pupils who have been bullied, discussed, A plan of action will be decided.
- All documentation regarding bullying incidents will be securely retained in the school until the children involved reach 21 years of age. (9 years after the child leaves 6<sup>th</sup> class).

**6. Sanctions:** where a child has been found to be engaged in bullying behaviour, has formally promised to stop and has broken that promise, any of the following sanctions may be imposed-

1. S/he may be required to sign another promise, this time countersigned by a parent/guardian.
2. Parent/ guardians may be contacted by the relevant teacher and informed of the nature and extent of the bullying behaviour with a view to agreeing a strategy whereby a promise to end the bullying behaviour would be honoured.
3. Parents/ guardians may be invited to a meeting with the relevant teacher and the Principal and the pupil May be suspended from the school.
4. The case may be referred to the board of management and the pupil may be expelled from the school.

**7. The Schools programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows-**

**Bullied Pupils**

- Ending the bullying behaviour
- Ensuring the school culture fosters respect and empathy for bullied pupils and all pupils.
- Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through the awareness raising programme, through the speedy identification of those responsible and the speedy resolution of bullying situations.
- Making adequate counselling facilities available to pupils who need it in a timely manner and/or arrange a referral to an appropriate external agency.
- Helping bullied pupils raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra curricular group or team activities during or after school)

## Bullying pupils-

- Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are not blamed or punished and get 'a clean sheet'.
- Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are doing the right and honourable thing and giving them praise for this.
- Making adequate counselling facilities available to help those who need it to learn other ways of meeting their needs besides violating the rights of others.
- Helping those who need to raise their self esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that develop friendships and social skills.
- Using learning strategies throughout the school and the curriculum to help enhance a pupil's feelings of self worth.
- In dealing with negative behaviour in general, encouraging teachers and parents to focus on, challenge and correct the behaviour while supporting the child.
- In dealing with bullying behaviour seeking resolution and offering a fresh start and no blame in return for keeping a promise to reform.

## **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.

The board of management confirms that the school will in accordance with its obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps as are reasonably practicable to prevent the harassment of pupils or staff on any of the 9 grounds specified- ie gender, civil status,, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.

This policy was adapted by the BoM of St. Comán's Wood Primary School on \_\_\_\_\_

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school's website and provided to the Parent's Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the DES and to the patron if requested. All parents/ guardians of children being inducted into the school are made aware of the anti-bullying policy. Parents are asked to sign that they are aware of all school policies and support the staff in their efforts to provide a positive learning experience for the children in the school. Parents will be asked to sign this promise of support at the May meetings of the new entrants.

This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year. Written notice that the review has taken place will be notified to all school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents Association. Parents/guardians will receive an SMS or written notification of amendments to this policy.

A record of the review and its outcomes will be made available to the DES and the patron if requested.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson of the BOM

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

## Appendix 1

Bullying can take many forms. They may include any of the following (this list is not exhaustive)

Shouting and uncontrolled anger

Persona insults

Verbal Abuse

Offensive language directed at an individual

Continually shouting or dismissing others

Public verbal attacks/criticism

Domineering behaviour

Open aggression

Offensive gestures and unwanted physical contact

Intimidation, either physical, psychological or emotional eg- treating in dictatorial manner, persistent slugging, deliberate staring with the intent to discomfort, persistent rudeness in behaviour and attitude toward a particular individual, asking inappropriate questions, making inappropriate comments re personal life/family, social life or school work.

**Interference with property** eg. Stealing/damaging books, equipment, clothing or other property, demanding money with menaces, persistently moving, hiding or interfering with property, marking or defacing property.

**Undermining/ Public or Private Humiliation e.g.**

Condescending tone, deliberately withholding significant information and resources, writing anonymous notes, malicious, disparaging or demeaning comments, malicious tricks, derogatory jokes, knowingly spreading rumours, belittling others efforts, their enthusiasm or their ideas, derogatory or offensive nick names- name calling, using electronic or other media for any of the above (cyber bullying) disrespectfully mimicking a particular individual in his/her absence, deliberately refusing to address issues focusing instead on the person.

**Ostracising or isolating e.g.** deliberately marginalising an individual, deliberately preventing a person from joining a group or an activity, school work related or recreational, blaming a pupil for something s/he did or did not do.

## Appendix 2

### **Role of Staff:**

Exercise constant vigilance in the matter of misbehaviour- prevent rather than control. Positive behaviour is always recognised, affirmed and sought.

Any complaints of bullying are dealt with quickly, firmly and fairly following procedure in the anti-bullying policy. Awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour is addressed in the classroom, at school assemblies, through the school policy on pastoral care and other informal occasions when the opportunity arises.

Pupils are taught skills and encouraged to report any incident of bullying.

### **Advice for pupils**

Tell yourself that you do not deserve to be bullied and that it is wrong. Be proud of who you are. It is good to be individual. Try not to show that you are upset. It is hard but a bully thrives on someone's fear. Stay with a group of friends, there is safety in numbers. Be assertive= shout NO. Walk away confidently. Go straight to a teacher or member of staff. Fighting back makes things worse- so don't fight back. Report to a teacher or parent/guardians instead. If you need support find a friend and both of you speak to the teacher. Generally it is best to tell an adult you trust straight away. You will get immediate support. The teacher will take you seriously and will deal with the bullies in a way which will end the bullying and will not make things worse for you.

### **If you know someone is being bullied**

TAKE ACTION- watching and doing nothing looks as if you are on the side of the bully. It makes the victim feel more unhappy and on their own.

If you feel you cannot get involved, tell an adult immediately. Teachers have ways of dealing with the bully without getting you into trouble.

Do not, or do not pretend to be friends with a bully.

**Advice for Parents:** Look for unusual behaviour in your children, e.g. they may suddenly not wish to attend school, feel ill regularly or not complete work to their normal standard, ask for money or begin stealing money. Always take an active role in your child's education by enquiring how they are getting on.

If you feel your child may be a victim of bullying behaviour, inform the school immediately. Your complaint will be taken seriously and appropriate action will follow. It is important to advise your child not to fight back. It can make matters worse. Tell your child there is nothing wrong with him/her. It is not his/her fault that they are being bullied. Make sure your child is fully aware of the School Policy concerning bullying and that they will not be afraid to ask for help.