St. Joseph's National School, Granagh, Kilmallock, Co. Limerick.

Roll Number 09927I

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. Joseph's 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.

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;
   - 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. 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 *AntiBullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

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4. The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying is (are) as follows: (see Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):

   At Primary level, the relevant teacher will normally be the class teacher (thereafter the Principal if necessary).

5. 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 (see Section 6.5 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):

   o Use opportunities to discuss aspects of bullying and the appropriate way to behave towards each other. In this respect the SPHE (Social, Personal and Health Education) programme is very important and especially the Stay Safe lessons addressing bullying, as well as the RSE Programme.
   o Organise the community in order to minimise opportunities for bullying; make sure that supervision is sufficient at all times
   o Deal quickly, firmly and fairly with any complaints, involving parents where necessary.
   o Regularly review the school policy and procedures and assess its success or otherwise.
   o When buying teaching materials (books, posters, software etc) ensure that nothing gives a negative view of any group because of their ethnic origin, gender etc.
   o Continue to have a firm and fair discipline structure.
   o Distribute a hard copy of the school's Code of Behaviour including Anti-Bullying Policy to all new parents and request parents to sign the Code of Behaviour Declaration as a requirement of the enrolment process.
   o When amendments are made to the Code of Behaviour, parents will be required to sign a new Code of Behaviour Declaration.
   o Encourage pupils to discuss how they get on with other people and to form positive attitudes towards other people. This includes work on friendship and what it really means.
   o Encourage pupils to treat everyone with care and respect.
   o Treat bullying as a serious matter and take every possible action to prevent it happening in our school.
   o Use and continue to update a variety of materials and resources available to assist us in devising appropriate anti-bullying programmes. Include workshops on bullying issues from outside agencies, where possible.
   o Engage pupils in addressing problems when they arise. In particular, such strategies need to build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils.
   o As self-esteem is a major factor in determining behaviour, the school will, through curricular and extra-curricular programmes, provide pupils with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth. Examples of this are through the use of circle time and team building activities.
   o Prevention and awareness raising measures must also deal explicitly with cyberbullying. The best way to address cyber-bullying is to prevent it happening in the first place. Prevention and any awareness raising measures will 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. The prevention and awareness raising measures will also take into account the scope for cyber-bullying to occur as a result of access to technology from within the school. The school has an Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) which is available for viewing in the school office. Parents are made aware at the start of each year of the role of the internet in the classroom.
   o Children are not allowed to bring mobile phones to school or on school related trips/ activities.
   o The promotion of relevant home/school/community links is important for all schools in regard to countering bullying behaviour and should be encouraged as a normal part of the school's effective operation.

- Approaches to decreasing the likelihood of bullying for pupils with SEN include 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.
- Co-operation is promoted through team sports, school clubs and societies as well as through practical subjects. Sporting activities in particular provide excellent opportunities for channelling and learning how to control aggression.
- Teachers will provide opportunities for the children to work collaboratively and co-operatively together in pairs, small groups, mixed ability groups, interest group settings etc.
- Initiatives and programmes focused on developing pupils' awareness and understanding of bullying, including its causes and effects, should deal explicitly with the issue of identity-based bullying and in particular homophobic and transphobic bullying.
- Each class will devise classroom rules at the beginning of each year which will promote inclusion, acceptance of difference and respect for one another.
- From time to time, an outside speaker may be invited by the school to speak with parents and/or pupils to discuss cyberbullying and safe internet usage.
- Anti-Bullying posters will be made, discussed and displayed in the classrooms/ school corridors.
- Additional lessons which deal specifically with bullying will be undertaken in each class e.g. PrimEd Bullying Series, with an emphasis on openness and discussion in this area. (Areas covered will include – What is bullying? Forms of bullying, Cyber bullying, Why do people bully? Bystander bullies, Silent witnesses, Effects of bullying, How does bullying make me feel? What can we do? Preventing bullying, Coping with bullying etc).
- Lessons will focus on addressing the importance of engaging in responsible reporting when witnessing or experiencing bullying behaviour, to feel empathy for targeted members of the school community and, as a result, take safe and sensible action as a bystander.
- The school has adopted an AUP and will monitor and review the policy on a regular basis.
- Sporting activities in particular can provide excellent opportunities for channelling and learning how to control aggression. Coaching is offered in GAA and soccer to some classes from outside agencies and teachers are also involved in coaching the school's teams.
- The schools does not permit pupils to harass other pupils. This prohibition also applies to staff or anyone who visits the school including parents, visiting sports teams etc.
- As pupils model their behaviour on that of adults, the Principal and teachers are careful to act as good role-models and not misuse their authority. Moreover, they should be fair, firm, clear and consistent in their disciplinary measures.
- An advice sheet on Cyber-Bullying (internet and mobile phone) will accompany this policy and will be distributed to all parents **(Appendix 1).**

6. 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 (see Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*) :

If bullying is alleged or suspected we talk to the alleged victim, the alleged bully (or bullies) and any witnesses. This will include the taking of a written record of what happened, clarifying the 'who, where, when and how' of the incidents.
Help and support will be given, as appropriate, to both the victims and the bully (bullies).

We support the person who is being bullied in the following ways:
- By offering them an immediate opportunity to talk about the incidents with their class teacher, or another teacher if they choose.
- By informing the victim's parents/guardians.
- By offering continuing support when they feel they need it.
- By taking one or more of the disciplinary steps described below to prevent more bullying.

We also discipline, yet try to help, the bully (bullies) in the following ways:
- By talking about what happened to discover why they became involved, the extent of their involvement and their understanding of their own culpability.
- By informing the bully's (bullies') parents/guardians.
- By continuing to work with the bully (bullies) in order to challenge negative attitudes as far as possible.
- By taking one or more of the disciplinary steps described below to prevent more bullying.

Disciplinary steps
The school's procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows:
(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);
(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 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;
(iv) Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), bus escorts, caretakers, cleaners must 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) It is very important that all involved (including each set of pupils and parents) understand the above approach from the outset;

(vii) Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents;

(viii) Incidents are generally best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved;

(ix) All interviews 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 in this way;

(x) When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher should seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This should be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner;

(xi) If a group is involved, each member should be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved should be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member should be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements;

(xii) Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that they may face them from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher;

(xiii) It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s);

(xiv) 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 relationships of the parties involved.

(xv) 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;

(xvi) 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;

(xvii) 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. Sanctions may include:
- Exclusion from break/lunch times for a specific number of days
- Parents may be requested to escort their child to and from school
- Suspension (up to a maximum of 3 days)
- Referral to the Board of Management and suspension for a maximum of 10 days in any one period
- In extreme circumstances the Board of Management may make the decision to expel a student

(xviii) Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved should 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;

(xix) 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 at Appendix 3. (see section below on RECORDING) and the information passed on to the Principal. Data gathered from these reports must be regularly (at least once in every school year) 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 must be retained and be made available to the Board of Management.

(xx) 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; and

- Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the school Principal or Deputy Principal;

(xxi) 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 Policy;

(xxii) 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.

Serious instances of bullying behaviour should, 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 school may seek assistance and advice from outside agencies if necessary, including National Educational Psychological Service, the National Educational Welfare Board, HSE (social services) and Juvenile Liaison Office.

A record is kept of all incidents of bullying and the subsequent investigation and disciplinary measures taken.

RECORDING: Noting and reporting of bullying behaviour is to be documented using the *template for recording bullying behaviour* (Appendix 3). All records must be maintained in accordance with relevant data protection legislation. The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour will adhere to the following:

(i) While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher(s), the relevant teacher(s) will use his/her/their professional judgement in relation to the records to be kept of these reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same

(ii) If it is established by the relevant teacher(s) that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher(s) must 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

(iii) The relevant teacher(s) must use the recording template at Appendix 3 to record the bullying behaviour in the following circumstances:

a) in cases where he/she considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour occurred; and

b) where the school has decided as part of its anti-bullying policy that in certain circumstances bullying behaviour must be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable. Such circumstances would include bullying related to physical aggression or harassment based on any of the following nine grounds outlined in the equality legislation i.e. gender (including transgender), civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller Community.

When the recording template is used, it must be retained by the relevant teacher in question and a copy maintained by the Principal.

At least once in every school term, the Principal will 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 will record the above but in doing so must not include any identifying details of the pupils involved.

7. 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*) :

The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying involves a whole school approach. Given the complexity of bullying behaviour, no one intervention/support programme works in all situations. Therefore various approaches and intervention strategies may be used including suggesting that parents seek referrals so that appropriate outside agencies in order to receive further support for the pupils and their families if needed.

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. This policy was reviewed and adopted by the Board of Management on __06/02/2024_____

11. This policy will be made available to school personnel, the Parents' Association and via the school website. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

12. 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 and provided to the Parents' Association (Appendix 4) - where one exists. The amended policy (if changes have been made) will be made available to the school personnel, Parents' Association and parents will be directed to the school website to view the policy. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Signed: Plunkett Hayes   Signed: Mary Hayes
   (Chairperson of Board of Management)   (Principal)

Date: 06/02/2024   Date: 06/02/2024

Date of next review: 2025