Scoil Éanna Anti-Bullying Policy

This Anti-Bullying policy should be read in conjunction with the school's Code of Behaviour.

The Scoil Éanna school community believes that each pupil has a right to an education free from fear and intimidation.

The school regards bullying as a serious infringement of individual rights and a serious threat to the self-esteem and self-confidence of targeted pupil(s). Therefore it does not tolerate bullying of any kind. Every report of bullying is treated seriously and managed and dealt with under our anti-bullying policy, having due regard for the wellbeing of the targeted pupil(s) 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 issue 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. Pupils' 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 part of this participation.

Anti-Bullying Policy

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 Scoil Éanna has adopted the following anti-bullying policy within the framework of the school's 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.

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 & follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of intervention strategies);
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

<u>Definition</u>   In accordance with the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* bullying is defined as follows:

<u>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.</u>

The following types of 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 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 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 any electronic or other medium, which could harm a pupil or undermine his/her self-esteem or self-confidence. The following are some of the types of bullying behaviour that can occur amongst pupils, although the list is not exhaustive:

- **Physical aggression:** This behaviour includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping people. It may also take the form of severe physical assault. While pupils often engage in 'mess fights', they can sometimes be used as a disguise for physical harassment or inflicting pain.

- **Intimidation:** Some bullying behaviour takes the form of intimidation: it may be based on the use of very aggressive body language with the voice being used as a weapon. Particularly upsetting can be a facial expression which conveys aggression and/or dislike.

- **Isolation/exclusion and other relational bullying:** This occurs where a certain person is deliberately isolated, excluded or ignored by some or the entire class group. This practice is usually initiated by the person engaged in bullying behaviour and can be difficult to detect. It may be accompanied by writing insulting remarks about the pupil in public places, by passing around notes about or drawings of the pupil or by whispering insults about them loud enough to be heard. Relational bullying occurs when a person's attempts to socialise and form relationships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined. One of the most common forms includes control: "Do this or I won't be your friend anymore"(implied or stated); a group ganging up against one person (girl or boy); non-verbal gesturing; malicious gossip; spreading rumours about a person or giving them the "silent treatment".

- **Cyber-bullying:** This type of bullying is increasingly common and is continuously evolving. It is bullying carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as text, social network sites, e-mail, instant messaging (IM), apps, gaming sites, chat-rooms and other online technologies. Being the target of inappropriate or hurtful messages is the most common form of online bullying. As cyber-bullying uses

technology to perpetrate bullying behaviour and does not require face to face contact, it can occur at any time (day or night). Many forms of bullying can be facilitated through cyber-bullying. For example, a target may be sent homophobic text messages or pictures may be posted with negative comments about a person's sexuality, appearance etc.

- **Name calling**: Persistent name-calling directed at the same individual(s) which hurts, insults or humiliates should be regarded as a form of bullying behaviour. Often name-calling of this type refers to physical appearance, e.g. size or clothes worn. Accent or distinctive voice characteristics may attract negative attention. Academic ability can also provoke name calling. This tends to operate at two extremes. There are those who are singled out for attention because they are perceived to be weak academically. At the other extreme there are those who, because they are perceived as high achievers, are also targeted.

- **Damage to property**: Personal property can be the focus of attention for bullying behaviour. This may result in damage to clothing, school books and other learning material. The contents of school bags and pencil cases may be scattered on the floor. Items of personal property may be defaced, broken, stolen or hidden.

- **Extortion**: Demands for money may be made, often accompanied by threats (sometimes carried out in the event of the targeted pupil not delivering on the demand). A pupil may also be forced into theft of property for delivery to another who is engaged in bullying behaviour.

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

Behavioural Indicators of Bullying
The following signs and symptoms may suggest that a pupil is being bullied:
- Anxiety about travelling to and from school e.g. requesting parents to drive or collect him, changing travel routes, avoiding regular times for travelling to and from school;
- Unwillingness to go to school, refusal to attend, truancy;
- Deterioration in educational performance, loss of concentration and loss of enthusiasm and interest in school;
- Pattern of physical illnesses e.g. headaches, stomach aches;
- Unexplained changes either in mood or behaviour which may be particularly noticeable before returning to school after weekends or more especially after longer school holidays;
- Visible signs of anxiety or distress e.g. stammering, withdrawing, nightmares, difficulty in sleeping, crying, not eating, vomiting, bedwetting;
- Spontaneous out-of-character comments about either pupils or teachers;
- Possessions missing or damaged;
- Increased requests for money or stealing money;
- Unexplained bruising or cuts or damaged clothing; and
- Reluctance and/or refusal to say what is troubling him.

There may be other signs depending on the individual and his/her circumstances. The above signs do not necessarily mean that a pupil is being bullied but if repeated or occurring in combination, these signs do warrant investigation in order to establish what is affecting the pupil.

Roles and Responsibilities
All members of staff have a responsibility in the successful implementation of this policy.
Class teachers have the primary responsibility for the investigation of and dealing with reports of bullying. If a pupil reports bullying to a staff member other than the class teacher this information must be made known to the class teacher as soon as possible.

The Deputy Principal and/or Principal may deal with the report of bullying if the class teacher, after fully investigating and attempting to deal with the issues, feels it appropriate to fill and submit an official bullying report form where a successful outcome has not yet been reached.

In addition, the class teacher can, in accordance with our school's Code of Behaviour, automatically refer the report of bullying to the Deputy Principal or Principal if he/she deems that circumstances warrant such action and that the aforementioned procedure cannot be applied.

Educational and Preventative Strategies

At Scoil Éanna we aim to use effective, age appropriate practices and awareness raising measures across all aspects of bullying and implement strategies to engage pupils in addressing problems when they arise. It is envisaged that such strategies will build empathy, respect and resilience among our pupils.

As self-esteem is a major factor in determining behaviour, our school, through both our curricular and extra-curricular programmes, will provide pupils with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth.

Our school's approach to tackling and preventing bullying will take particular account of the needs of our pupils with disabilities or special educational needs.

Teachers can influence attitudes to bullying behaviour in a positive manner through a range of curricular initiatives. The **SPHE** curriculum makes specific provision for exploring bullying as well as the inter-related areas of belonging and integrating, communication, conflict, friendship, personal safety and relationships. The **Stay Safe** programme is a personal safety skills programme which seeks to enhance children's self-protection skills including their ability to recognise and cope with bullying. The **Stay Safe** programme is formally taught in all classes. The **Stay Safe** programme is also covered with SEN pupils.

At Scoil Éanna we recognise the opportunities within the teaching of all curricular subjects to foster an attitude of respect for all: to promote the value of diversity; to address prejudice and stereotyping and to highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour. This is a key value within our ethos as a Catholic school.

We are a school where the _**Incredible Years (IY)**_ behavioural management programme is implemented. The _**Incredible Years**_ programme places emphasis on positive and effective behavioural approaches and practices. Some classes also participate in the **"Friends for Life"** programme of lessons.

Seán Fallon's anti-bullying campaign materials are taught at each class level from 2nd class to 6th class. In 2014 -2015 school year, all classes will do the 2nd class programme.

Procedures for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying

Children are constantly reminded that the school is a 'telling school'. Talking to adults about incidents of bullying is helpful to both the bully and the bullied. Children are encouraged to speak to their parents at home about **everything** that happens in school.

The 'Relevant Teacher' does not apportion blame but rather treats bullying behaviour as a 'mistake' that can and must be remedied and an opportunity to explore the context for the bullying behaviour with an emphasis on remedial actions to prevent future recurrence. S/he emphasises that the intention is not to punish perpetrators but to explore the reasoning for the bullying behaviour, explain how harmful and hurtful bullying is, and to seek a promise that it 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 therefore, are not getting others 'in trouble' so much as enabling them to avoid the trouble which may ultimately come their way if the bullying were to continue.

Our school's procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows:
- The class teacher is normally the "Relevant Teacher."

- The primary aim for the class 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);
- 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;
- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the class 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;
- Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), bus escorts, caretakers, cleaners must be familiar with the anti-bullying policy currently in use and are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the class 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 relationships of the parties involved as quickly as possible;
- It is very important that all involved (including each set of pupils and parents) understand the above approach from the outset;
- Teachers should take a calm, unemotional, problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents;
- Incidents are generally best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved;
- 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;
- When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the class 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;
- 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;
- Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that may face them from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher;
- It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s). This will be a standard procedure and does not necessarily imply that a pupil is guilty of misbehavior;
- Where the class 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. The pupil is then asked to sign a binding promise that they will treat all pupils fairly, equally and respectfully including the targeted pupil(s);
- In cases where it has been determined by the class teacher that bullying behaviour has re-occurred, the parents of the parties involved should be contacted 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 children. If a firm commitment to improve is received the pupil may be required to sign a further undertaking to refrain from bullying behaviour and countersigned by a parent/guardian;

- If the school's Code of Behaviour needs to be invoked it must be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parents) that 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 the class 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;
- In cases where the class teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after s/he has determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, it must be recorded by the class teacher in the recording template;
- In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the class 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 Deputy Principal or 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;
- 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.

All records will be maintained in accordance with the school's Record Keeping and Data Protection policy.

Sanctions

Where a pupil has been found to be engaged in bullying behaviour, has formally promised to stop, has signed a binding promise to stop and has broken that promise, any of the following sanctions may be imposed:

- S/he may be required to sign another promise, this time countersigned by a parent/guardians;
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) 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;
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) may be invited to a meeting with the 'Relevant Teacher' and the Principal and the pupil may be suspended from school;
- The case may be referred to the Board of Management and the pupil may be expelled from the school.

Programmes of Student Support

Following reports and investigations of bullying class teachers can seek feedback from pupils and parents in order to monitor and observe. The school has access to outside agencies to support our pupils with issues and difficulties. The following agencies and programmes offer support and advice:
- NEPS
- ISPCC
- Rainbows

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.

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.

Ratification of Policy

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 17th June 2015.

Signed: _____   _____

              Chairperson Board of Management   Principal

Date _____/_____/_____

Date of next review: _____/_____/_____