Policy on Countering Bullying Behaviour

St. Caimin's Community School
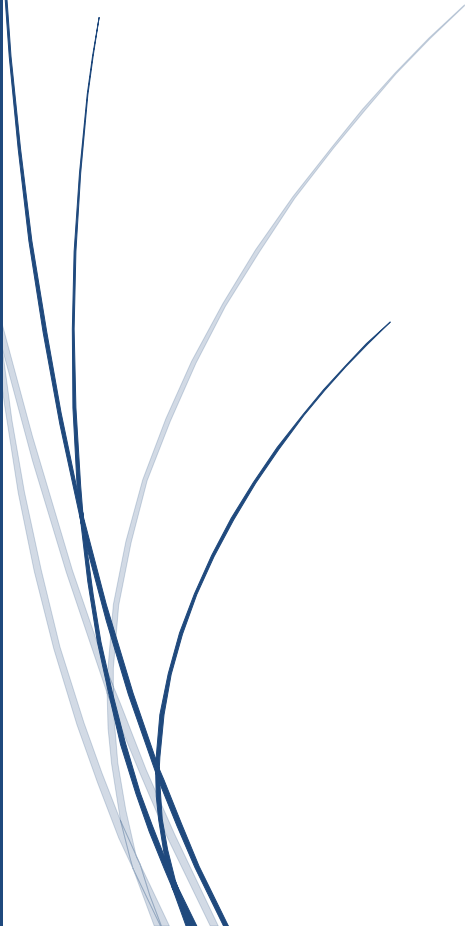
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1. Introduction

In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the code of behaviour guidelines issued by the NEWB, the Board of Management of St Caimin's Community School has adopted the following countering 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*

2. Rationale

The purpose of this policy is to outline the procedures in place in St. Caimin's Community School to develop a positive school culture and climate and to ensure effective treatment for reported cases of bullying.

3. Scope

This policy applies to staff, students and any other member of the school community.

4. Related policies and documents

- Acceptable Usage Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- CCTV Policy
- Dignity in the Workplace Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Relationships and Sexual Education Policy
- Special Educational Needs Policy

5. Principles of Best Practice

The Board of Management recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of pupils. The Board of Management is therefore fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour:

a) 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
b) Effective leadership
c) A school-wide approach
d) A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact
e) 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 homophobic and transphobic bullying.
f) Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils
g) Supports for staff
h) Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies) and
i) On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

6. Definition
In accordance with the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools bullying is defined as follows:

Bullying is unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical
conducted, by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which
is repeated over time.

The following types of bullying behaviour are included in the definition of bullying:
- Deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying
- Cyber-bullying and
- Identity-based bullying such as homophobic bullying, racist bullying, bullying based on a person's membership of the Traveller community and bullying of those with disabilities or special educational needs.

Isolated or once-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour, including a once-off offensive or hurtful text message or other private messaging, do not fall within the definition of bullying and should be dealt with, as appropriate, in accordance with the school's code of behaviour.

However, in the context of this policy, placing a once-off offensive or hurtful public message, image or statement on a social network site or other public forum where that message, image or statement can be viewed and/or repeated by other people will be regarded as bullying behaviour.

Negative behaviour that does not meet this definition of bullying will be dealt with in accordance with the school's code of behaviour. Additional information on different types of bullying is set out in Appendix 1 of this policy.

7. Relevant Teachers
The relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying may include any or all of:
- Subject or class teacher
- Special Needs Assistants
- Tutor
- Year Head
- Guidance Counsellor
- Chaplain
- Deputy Principal
- Principal
- Student support team

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

8. Education and Prevention Strategies

This policy derives from the Mission Statement:

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

It is directly linked to the aspiration in that statement that all people within the school should feel cared for and safe, whilst also giving expression to the school's culture of fairness and respect. The school, in its provision of curricular, extra-curricular and pastoral care programmes, provides prevention and awareness-raising measures across all aspects of bullying, and supports strategies to engage pupils in addressing problems when they arise. We work towards building empathy, respect and resilience in pupils. The education and prevention strategies (including strategies aimed at cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular homophobic and transphobic bullying) that will be used by the school are as follows:

School Wide Approaches:

- Activities aimed at raising awareness of bullying as an unacceptable behaviour are on-going. These include poster campaigns, the display of anti-bullying charters and posters throughout the school, and the provision of anti-bullying resources such as books and videos.
- The school promotes a positive sense of self-worth among its students.
- The student body is regularly consulted, by way of informal discussion and anonymous survey, to determine the extent – if any – and the nature of any bullying within the school. We are aware of the possible abuses that can arise from use of such questionnaires, and we exercise extreme caution in their use.
- The pastoral care structures within the school offer support, advice, protection, detection and expertise in this area.
- The diligent implementation of the Code of Behaviour for Students aims to minimise opportunities for bullying.
- Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extra-curricular activities. Non-teaching and ancillary staff will also be encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers. Supervision will also apply to monitoring student use of communication technology within the school.
- The school has a strategy of comprehensively supervising and monitoring students while out of class. This includes CCTV.
- The Student Council helps in heightening awareness of bullying and creates a positive atmosphere within the school community. The council is encouraged to report concerns to teachers, tutors, year heads, Deputy Principal or Principal.
- Students are encouraged to treat everyone with respect.
- Students receive support in developing an understanding of the effects that bullying behaviour can have on those involved.
- St. Caimin's is a community school is a co-educational school within excess of 700 students. Our students come from across a range of abilities and social backgrounds. As such, we have always

had students with a range of disabilities and special educational needs. We minimise the likelihood of bullying for such students by improving inclusion, focusing on developing social skills, paying attention to key moments such as transitioning from primary to post primary and cultivating a good school culture which has respect for all and helping one another as central.

- The fostering and enhancing of the self-esteem of all our pupils through both curricular and extracurricular activities. Pupils will be provided with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth through formal and informal interactions.
- The listing of supports and the identification of other supports available to the school on the student support page of the school website.

Implementation of the Curriculum:

- The school is committed to recognising and celebrating the diversity of backgrounds and identities of all in the school community. This includes supporting the sexuality of gay, lesbian and transgender people. The SPHE programme for all year groups, and particularly for fourth years, deals explicitly with the issue of identity-based bullying and in particular homophobic and transphobic bullying. The school has also welcomed guest speakers from the Red Ribbon Project. The words gay and lesbian, or words with similar meaning, must never be used as terms of offence, even in jest.
- Students are encouraged to discuss how to build positive relationships with others, and to form positive attitudes towards other people. This involves reflection on the nature and obligations of true friendship.
- The process of teaching and learning presents diverse opportunities to discuss aspects of bullying, and to explore appropriate ways of behaving towards one another. Such opportunities occur throughout the curriculum, as suggested in Anti-bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-primary Schools.
- The school is aware of the increasing incidence of cyber bullying. Our strategies in this regard focus on educating pupils on appropriate online behaviour, how to stay safe while on-line and also on developing a culture of reporting any concerns about cyber-bullying. We do this through our own curricular provision, and also invite guest speakers to address these issues with our students. First year students receive training in the safe use of social media. Furthermore, the Code of Behaviour for Students and the Internet Acceptable Usage Policy support appropriate behaviour. In addition, the on-line content within the school is moderated by external web-filtering.
- Encourage a culture of reporting, with particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders. 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.

- Involvement of students in contributing to a safe school environment e.g., mentoring, and other student support activities that can help to support pupils and encourage a culture of peer respect and support.
- Development of extensive co-curricular and extra-curricular activities to develop respect for diversity and difference e.g.:
  - Friendship week
  - Celebrate Us week
  - Stand Up Awareness week
  - Development of Junior Cycle Wellbeing programme
  - Student induction
  - LGBTQI+ club
  - Friends for Life programme
  - Breakfast club
  - Student Council

9. Procedures for Investigation, Follow-up and Recording

The primary aim 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). The school's procedures must be consistent with the following approach.

Every effort will be made to ensure that all involved (including pupils, parent(s)/guardian(s)) understand this approach from the outset.

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.

Reporting bullying behaviour:

- Any pupil or parent(s)/guardian(s) may bring a bullying incident to any teacher in the school.
- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying, will be investigated and dealt with.
- Teaching and non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), bus escorts, caretakers, cleaners must report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher.
- Any complaints are dealt with quickly, firmly and fairly, involving parents where appropriate.
- All allegations of bullying are referred to a Year Head, and may be referred upwards to the Deputy Principal or Principal

Investigating and dealing with incidents:

- In investigating and dealing with bullying, the (relevant)teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved.
- In so far as possible the Year Head investigates the incident and interviews the parties involved and any witnesses. In serious cases a written report is prepared, and a copy given to Deputy Principal.
- The parents of all parties involved are contacted as appropriate and kept informed

- Parent(s)/guardian(s) 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.
- Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach.
- Where possible incidents should be 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 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.
- 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 the interview by the teacher. It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s).
- In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parent(s)/guardian(s) 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 parent(s)/guardian(s) an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports provided to the pupils.
- Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has 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 must also be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parent(s)/guardian(s)) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school.

Follow up and recording
- 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.
  - Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parent(s)/guardian(s)s or the school Principal or Deputy Principal.

- Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved should be arranged separately with a view to possibly bringing them together later if the pupil who has been bullied is ready and agreeable.
- In the most serious cases of bullying the Board of Management may be informed.
- Where a parent(s)/guardian(s) is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parent(s)/guardian(s) must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures.
- In the event that a parent(s)/guardian(s) has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parent(s)/guardian(s) of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

Recording of bullying behaviour

It is imperative that all recording of bullying incidents must be done in an objective and factual manner. The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour are outline in Table 1.

Table 1: Procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour

Stage	How bullying is noted and recorded
Informal Predetermination that bullying has occurred	- All staff must keep a record of any incidents witnessed by them or notified to them. All incidents must be reported to the relevant teacher (usually the Year Head) - While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the relevant teacher must keep a written record of the reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same - The relevant teacher must inform the principal of all incidents being investigated.
Formal Stage 1 *Determination* that bullying has occurred	- 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. - The school in consultation with the relevant teacher/s should develop a protocol for the storage of all records retained by the relevant teacher.
Formal Stage 2 *Appendix 2 in this policy (From DES Procedures)*	The relevant teacher must use the recording template at Appendix 2 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.

When the recording template is used, it must be retained by the relevant teacher in question (most probably the Year Head) in the student's file and a copy will also be maintained by the principal.

10. Established intervention strategies

- Teacher interviews with all pupils
- Negotiating agreements between pupils and following these up by monitoring progress. This can be on an informal basis or implemented through a more structured mediation process
- Working with parent(s)/guardian(s)s to support school interventions
- Restorative practice
- Implementing sociogram questionnaires
- Peer mediation where suitable training has been given

11. Programme of Support

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

- The victim is kept informed as to how the case is being handled.
- It should be made clear to all pupils that when they report incidents of bullying, they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly
- A programme of support for those pupils involved in bullying behaviour is also part of the school's intervention process.
- The counselling facilities within the school are available to all parties. Counselling may, as appropriate, be provided by outside agencies.
- In certain cases, it may be necessary to invite the assistance of outside agencies such as general medical practitioners, An Gárda Siochána, social workers and community workers.
- In cases where the school has serious concerns in relation to managing the behaviour of a pupil, the advice of the National Education Psychological Service (NEPS) may be sought.

12. 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.

13. 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 travelling community.

14. Availability

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the Trustees if requested.

15. Ratification

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management annually. Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to the school community on the school website. A record of the review and its outcomes will be made available, if requested to the Trustees and the Department of Education and Skills.

This Policy was adopted by the Board of Management on the 5th of September 2024

The policy will come into effect from

Signed _Dr Éna Ní Chaoinkáin_
Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed _M. Neely_
Principal

Once ratified this policy will be shared on the school website and Staff Teams.

APPENDIX 1: Examples of Bullying Behaviour

Please note that the list of examples below is non exhaustive

General behaviours which apply to all types of bullying	• Harassment based on any of the nine grounds in the equality legislation e.g. sexual harassment, homophobic bullying, racist bullying etc. • Physical aggression • Damage to property • Name calling • Slagging • The production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other materials aimed at intimidating another person • Offensive graffiti • Extortion • Intimidation • Insulting or offensive gestures • The "look" • Invasion of personal space • A combination of any of the types listed.
Cyber	• **Denigration**: Spreading rumors, lies or gossip to hurt a person's reputation • **Harassment**: Continually sending vicious, mean or disturbing messages to an individual • **Impersonation**: Posting offensive or aggressive messages under another person's name • **Flaming**: Using inflammatory or vulgar words to provoke an online fight • **Trickery**: Fooling someone into sharing personal information which you then post online • **Outing**: Posting or sharing confidential or compromising information or images • **Exclusion**: Purposefully excluding someone from an online group • **Cyber stalking**: Ongoing harassment and denigration that causes a person considerable fear for his/her safety • Silent telephone/mobile phone call • Abusive telephone/mobile phone calls • Abusive text messages • Abusive email • Abusive communication on social networks e.g. Facebook/Ask.fm/Twitter/You Tube or on games consoles • Abusive website comments/Blogs/Pictures • Abusive posts on any form of communication technology
Identity Based Behaviours **Including any of the nine discriminatory grounds mentioned in Equality Legislation** (gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community).	
Homophobic and Transgender	• Spreading rumours about a person's sexual orientation • Taunting a person of a different sexual orientation • Name calling e.g. Gay, queer, lesbian...used in a derogatory manner • Physical intimidation or attacks • Threats

Race, nationality, ethnic background and membership of the Traveller community	• Discrimination, prejudice, comments or insults about colour, nationality, culture, social class, religious beliefs, ethnic or traveller background • Exclusion based on any of the above
Relational	This involves manipulating relationships as a means of bullying. Behaviours include: • Malicious gossip • Isolation & exclusion • Ignoring • Excluding from the group • Taking someone's friends away • "Bitching" • Spreading rumours • Breaking confidence • Talking loud enough so that the victim can hear • The "look" • Use or terminology such as 'nerd' in a derogatory way
Sexual	• Unwelcome or inappropriate sexual comments or touching • Harassment
Special Educational Needs, Disability	• Name calling • Taunting others because of their disability or learning needs • Taking advantage of some pupils' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to recognise and defend themselves against bullying • Taking advantage of some pupils' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to understand social situations and social cues. • Mimicking a person's disability • Setting others up for ridicule

APPENDIX 2: Template for recording bullying behaviour (also available as an online form)

1. Name of pupil being bullied and class group

Name _____Class_____

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

_____
_____
_____
_____

3. Source of bullying concern/report (tick relevant box(es))*	
Pupil concerned	
Other Pupil	
Parent	
Teacher	
Other	

4. Location of incidents (tick relevant box(es))*	
Playground	
Classroom	
Corridor	
Toilets	
School Bus	
Other	

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

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

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

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

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

8. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact

9. Details of actions taken

Signed _____ (Relevant Teacher)   Date _____

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal _____