Anti-Bullying Policy

*Definition; Bullying can be defined as the persistent, intimidating, unacceptable behaviour of an individual or group towards another. Unacceptable behaviour can be of a verbal, physical, or an emotional nature.*

**Introductory Statement**

**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.Conleth’s National School has adopted the following Anti-Bullying Policy with 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 2018.**

**Rationale**

Bullying at school can have a profound effect on children's lives and can have a lasting effect on them into adulthood. It can undermine their self-esteem and self- confidence and often result in them becoming bullies themselves. The policy on Anti-Bullying Behaviour has been drawn up within the school's ethos of promoting positive and good behaviour.

**We want to foster a secure and harmonious environment for all the school community and to this end have adopted the key principals of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour as outlined in the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2013.***

These principles are as follows;

* 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;
* Explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including , homophobic, and transphobic bullying.
* Effective supervision and monitoring of students
* 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 anti-bullying policy.

**Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of the School**

Our school seeks to cherish all children equally and in the pursuit of this vision to create a happy, tolerant, safe environment in which each child is encouraged to strive towards his or her unique potential. Our school focuses on respect for the individual and strives to provide an atmosphere free of intimidation. Bullying is inimical to this aspiration and the school will do everything in its power to minimise the incidence of bullying and to respond appropriately when bullying comes to light.

This policy addresses bullying behaviour, harassment and sexual harassment as outlined in the Employment Equality Acts of 2004. In this regard it addresses issues relating to the bullying of students, while at the same time also applies to teaching and other school staff and the wider school community.

**Aims**

• To create within our school community, an atmosphere/ethos of trust, which values, respects and protects the rights of each of its members to be within a safe and secure environment..

• To develop within the ethos and curriculum of our school attitudes, skills and activities which will help to prevent bullying.

• To foster trust among members of the school community so that bullying incidents can be reported, discussed and dealt with appropriately.

• To encourage and foster active parental support in achieving those aims.

• To align our anti-bullying policy with the Children First Guidelines-

* in seeking to identify and respond to incidents of child abuse.
* To equip the children with coping skills
* To develop comprehensive supervision and monitoring measures
* To develop procedures for noting and reporting incidents of bullying .

The School community includes: pupils, teaching staff, ancillary staff, school BOM, Parents and other visitors to the school.

**What is Bullying?**

Bullying is repeated aggression, verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against others. Isolated incidents of aggressive behaviour, which should not be condoned, can scarcely be described as bullying. However, when the behaviour is systematic and on-going it is bullying.

In accordance with the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools,* bullying is defined as follows.  Bullying is unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical conducted, by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time.

This behaviour includes:

* Name calling
* Hitting, kicking, punching
* Damaging or stealing property
* 'Ganging up' on people
* Teasing about personal or physical differences
* Teasing about family/domestic/cultural situations
* Threatening
* Shouting, swearing, verbal abuse
* Extortion
* (Malicious gossip)
* Forcing someone to do something they do not want to do.
* Bullying using mobile phone and social media.
* Harassment on any of the nine specific grounds outlined in the Equal Status Acts 2000-2004 namely; gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the travelling community.

In accordance with the *Anti-Bullying procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2013* the following types of bullying behaviour are included in our 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.

**How does the school seek to prevent Bullying.**

 The school seeks to raise pupil awareness about bullying by

* Implementing the Stay-Safe Programme in SPHE
* Integrating with other subjects (Religion, SESE  English etc,)
* Running an Anti-bullying/Stay Safe week in the school each Year.
* Poster competitions. Class displays
* Establishing class rules - children should be involved.
* Reinforcing school rules.
* Role-playing.
* Class discussion on bullying
* Class based discussion on cyber bullying and its effects
* Modelling of appropriate communication online
* Class based discussion on the value of diversity, addressing prejudice and stereotyping; including homophobic prejudice and gender stereotyping, where   appropriate.
* Drama activities…role play
* Circle Time/social groups
* Discussion of issues raised in T.V, newspapers etc.
* Comprehensive supervision and Increased vigilance
* Good home- school communication
* Co-operative games
* Easy access for reporting  ..privacy ensured…i.e. note left on teacher’s   table

 Our school will take all steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the sexual harassment of members of our school community or harassment  of any members of our school community on any of the nine specific grounds outlined in the Equal Status Acts 2000-2004 namely; gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the travelling community.

**What should pupils do if they are being bullied?**

1. If you are bullied in school tell your teacher, parent or another adult. If you are bullied outside school tell your parents or carer.

2. Pretend you are confident even if you are scared. Keep walking away and ignore them.  They will get bored eventually.

3. Do not stop if they confront you. Keep on walking.

4. Stay in a crowd. Bullies usually pick on children on their own.

5. Laugh at or ignore comments or teasing. Remember bullies want your reaction and  
humour or silence might throw them off. You have to keep it up for a while until they get bored.

6. You can tell them to 'Get Lost' or something to that effect. But you must say it  
confidently and walk away immediately. Practise this in the mirror.

7. Ask a member of the bully gang when they are on their own why it is necessary to gang up on one person,

**What should parents do to combat bullying?**

 Early intervention is the key to dealing with any behaviour problem such as bullying. There is no magic formula when dealing with such aggressive behaviour. Any advice followed should be applied consistently.

1. Teach responsibility for self and others.

2. Teach respect for self and others.

3. Teaching caring and gentleness.

4. Teaching the importance of truth and honesty.

5. Provide clear, consistent standards of behaviour.

6. Maintain a predictable, regular routine for everyday life.

7. Channel all shows of aggression by distraction or early intervention.

8. Supervise situations where aggression is likely e.g. walking to and from school.

9. Avoid exposure to violence on T.V., video/computer games, videos etc,

10. Never reward aggression - it must always have a cost.

**How can teachers spot children who are being bullied?**

 Signs which may indicate bullying.  
The child may: -

• Be unwilling to come to school and make continual excuses to avoid going.

•  Begin doing poorly in their schoolwork.

• Regularly have clothes, books or schoolwork torn or destroyed.

• Become withdrawn.

• Start stammering.

•  Start acting up by hitting other children.

• Develop stomach-aches or headaches.

**How can parents spot children who are being bullied?**

 Signs which may indicate bullying.

• Bed-wetting.

• Asking to be taken to and from school when this hadn't previously been the case.

• Change their route to school.

• No longer be seeing a group of friends.

• Show changes of mood.

• Become distressed or stop eating

• Crying themselves to sleep.

• Having nightmares.

• Refuse to say what's wrong.

• Having unexplained bruises/cuts.

• Continually losing pocket money etc.

Teachers will take each incident seriously and investigate immediately. They will discuss the issues with their class and include opportunities for this discussion in the Social, Personal & Health Education programme.

**What should parents do if their child is a victim of bullying?**

•  If you are worried that your child is being bullied, ask him/her directly.

• Be aware of the signs and symptoms of bullying - see the previous section.

• Take bullying seriously and find out the facts when told about an incident of bullying.

•  Don't agree to keep the bullying secret.

• Contact the school immediately if it is school bullying.

• Give your child a chance to vent her/his feelings about being bullied.

•  Keep a diary of all the incidents.

**What should parents do if their child is the bully?**

• Remain calm.

•  Don't bully or hit your child - this will make it worse.

•  Try to find out why your child is bullying.

•  Don't hesitate to ask for help. Talk to the child's teacher at school.

•  Set realistic, firm guidelines and rules to help your child control her/his behaviour.

•  Ensure that your child apologises, either in person or in writing to the child s/he bullied.

• Bullies need to achieve some success to make them feel good about themselves. Help them to find something they can do well and often their behaviour will change

**How does the School respond to bullying incidents?**

 The relevant teacher for investigating and dealing with bullying is the Class Teacher

 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)

 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.

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

**Investigating and recording;**

All incidents of alleged bullying are investigated by the school teaching staff. The victim, perpetrator and witnesses will be interviewed. Written records of the investigation will be kept in the school incident book.

The following guidelines **(5 R'S)** and steps are encouraged in the school.

**Reporting**

1. Listen

a. Keep Calm and Objective  
b. Don't jump to conclusions  
c. Don't be sidetracked  
d. Avoid sarcasm and criticism

2. Take notes / Brief and Factual stating  
a. Date  
b. Time  
c. Location

d. Names of those involved  
e. Names of witnesses  
f. Nature of incident

3. Reassure

a. "You did the right thing."

b. "It is not your fault. There is nothing    wrong with you."

c. Help is available

d. Action will be taken.

4. Ensure pupil safety

a. No immediate danger.

b. Supervision

c. Contact parents if necessary.

5. Explain process / Keep young person informed

a. Interview  
b. Response

**Respond**

1. Decide who to consult  
a. Principal  
b. Class teacher  
c. Parents of victim  
d. Parents of bully  
e. Outside agency

2. Decide who to interview  
a. Bully  
b. Witnesses  
c. Other pupils

3. Seek answers to  
a. What?

b. Where?  
c. Who?  
d. When?

e. Why?  
f. How

4.   Remember

a. Stay calm & unemotional

b. Interview in private or with witness

c. Adopt problem solving approach

d. Criticise behaviour not child

e. No threats

f. Don't humiliate anyone.

g. Time out

It is important when responding, that teachers are cognisant of the nature of the bullying behaviour. If any behaviour or disclosure in the course of interview gives cause for concern for any child’s welfare then these concerns should be immediately conveyed to the ***Designated Liaison Person*** *(Principal).*

**Resolution**

Most bullying cases at primary school can be resolved by explaining to the bully what is wrong with their behaviour. (Cf. Parents book page 14)

* Bring Parties together
* Talk make friends.
* Seek agreement to stop.
* An apology might be forthcoming
* Review class lessons on bullying .Occasionally, sanctions may be required. (School Code of Discipline).

**Sanctions**

a. Contact parents

b. Explain situation

c. Seek agreement on future behaviour

d. Hierarchy of sanctions (School code of Discipline)

Children may need further support as there maybe an underlying problem. They may need to be referred to NEPS.

Review

Set a date with the victim and bully to review. Give ample opportunity for feedback.

Refer

In the case of resistant or persistent bullying it may be necessary to revisit some of  
the steps taken. It might also be necessary to involve a wider group in the response:

1. Principal (if not already involved)

2. B.O.M.

3. Designated Liaison Person

4. Health Board

5. Gardaí

6. D.E.S.

Roles and Responsibilities.

 A whole community approach to the problem of bullying behaviour will be encourage. This will include management, teaching and non-teaching staff, pupils and parents.

Staffs as a whole will co-ordinate the implementation of this policy.

Parents should be aware of and support the school policy on bullying and discipline. They should encourage their children to abide by the rules of the school.

Children will assist in compiling rules on bullying. They will be encouraged to observe and report incidents of bullying behaviour..

School bus drivers, secretary, caretaker and others in contact with children will be encouraged to take a positive role in countering bullying behaviour. They will be encouraged to observe and report incidents to the school authorities and/or parents as appropriate.

Success Criteria

We will we monitor the effectiveness of this policy by;

* Questionnaires to pupils.
* Recording of incidents of bullying
* Monitoring their frequency
* Feedback from staff, pupils and parents.
* Co-operation of children in a none structured atmosphere

Timeframe for Implementation

The policy will be implemented once it has been ratified by the Board of Management in Sept. 2017.

Timeframe for Review

We will monitor our policy and procedures on an ongoing basis at staff meetings and review the policy annually. The school will also monitor the incidents in the interim to establish patterns of bullying.

Responsibility for Review

The policy has been drawn up in consultation with the whole school community- pupils, parents  
and staff. All of these will be involved in the review and will be consulted on any changes to the  
policy.

Ratification and Communication

This policy has been presented to the Board of Management and has been ratified by them as well as the parent body. A copy of the anti-bullying will be presented to parents when their child first enters school. A form of acceptance of the code of discipline and anti-bullying code will have to be signed and returned to the school.

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Chairperson BOM

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