



St. Catherine's Vocational School

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 St. Catherine's Vocational 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.

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 inclusion;
 - 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.

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 conduct, 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 Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.

Teachers Investigating Bullying Concerns

The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows:

- The subject teacher
- The class teacher
- The Year Head
- The Deputy Principal
- The Principal

This complies with Section 6.8 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools

School strategies for Preventing Bullying

The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber-bullying, homophobic and transphobic bullying) that will be used by the school are as follow:

- All staff foster a positive atmosphere of tolerance and mutual respect.
- Dissemination of the Anti-bullying Policy on the school website and in the Homework Diary
- The use of the Pastoral Care class to highlight bullying and the school's response to it.
- Vigilance by all staff in and out of the classroom in relation to bullying.
- A robust supervision system to prevent bullying in the school environs.
- Teaching about bullying when the opportunity arises across the curriculum including in subjects such as CSPE, SPHE, English, Art, PE, Geography and Social Education.
- Specific educational interventions including teaching about bullying in CPSE, SPHE and RSE as well as teaching the acceptance of minority groups.
- The School operates the WHO recognised Friends for Life Programme which aims to build positive relationships and resilience among young people.
- The use of the Induction Programme for First Years to ensure early preventative interventions.
- The display of posters and anti-bullying messages in prominent areas both in classrooms and around the school corridors.
- The use of an Anti-Bullying Charter in the school.
- Observation of National Anti-bullying week.
- The adoption of a Dignity in the Workplace Charter.
- Talks for parents on the school's policy and dealing with bullying as part of Information evenings
- Outside speakers are invited to address students on bullying, safe internet usage and cyber-bullying.

These strategies comply with Section 6.5 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*

School Procedures for dealing with Bullying Concerns

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:

A student or parent may bring a bullying concern to any staff member in the school.

The staff member will report the incident to the class teacher of the student affected by the bullying.

In general a shared concern and restorative approach to bullying is adopted.

Depending on the seriousness and nature of the concerns two different procedures may be adopted:

If in the professional judgment of the relevant class teacher the incident is quite small then the following procedure is applied:

- The class teacher (and another member of staff should the class teacher deem this necessary) on receiving the report will listen supportively, treat the incident seriously and subsequently record in writing on the appropriate form the concerns raised.
- The class teacher (and another member of staff should the class teacher deem this necessary) will talk to the other student(s) involved in the incident to ascertain his/her version of events.
- The class teacher may talk to other people including teachers, SNAs and other students to get a better picture of the behaviour and so make an informed and balanced judgment.
- All of the above interviews will take place outside of the classroom setting.
- The class teacher will use his / her professional judgment to determine if bullying has occurred.
- In the first instance a Restorative Practice approach is used to resolve the conflict to avoid apportioning blame and to repair the damaged relationship.
- The teacher will take a calm, unemotional and problem-solving approach with a view to securing a resolution.
- The class teacher may contact the parents of the students involved to help reach a resolution.
- If the shared concern or restorative approach has been unsuccessful then the incident is passed to the Deputy Principal. A second approach at a restorative resolution is attempted and if this is unsuccessful the Deputy Principal may apply a sanction provided for in the school's Code of Behaviour. This process will take a maximum of 20 days after which time the incident will be reported to the Principal.
- Either the class teacher or the Deputy Principal (if the incident has been passed on) will report the incident and the resolution to a member of the Pastoral Care team and to the Principal.
- The Principal informs the parents of the students involved of the incident and the outcome.
- The Principal informs the Board of Management at the next meeting convened.

If in the professional judgment of the class teacher the incident is of a more serious nature then the following procedure is applied:

- The class teacher (and another member of staff should the class teacher deem this necessary) on receiving the report will listen supportively, treat the incident seriously and subsequently record in writing on the appropriate form the concerns raised.
- The class teacher informs the student affected by the bullying behaviour that the matter will be referred to the Deputy Principal.
- The Deputy Principal (and another member of staff should the class teacher deem this necessary) interviews all of the relevant parties mentioned in the concerns raised in a sensitive manner and keep a written record of all versions of events as well as a record on the appropriate form.
- The Deputy Principal may talk to other people including teachers, SNAs and other students to get a better picture of the behaviour and so make an informed and balanced judgment.
- All of the above interviews will take place outside of the classroom setting.
- The Deputy Principal will use his professional judgment to determine if bullying has occurred.
- The seriousness of the incident will be stressed as well as the school's obligation under law to address the incident.
- Parents will be contacted and required to cooperate with the investigation and efforts to reach a resolution.
- Having heard all versions of the incident(s) the Deputy Principal may invoke the assistance of the Principal as necessary to assist in the investigation and resolution of the incident(s).
- The seriousness of the incident(s) will be reiterated as well as the school's obligation to deal with it.
- In the first instance a Restorative Practice approach is used to resolve the conflict to avoid apportioning blame and to repair the damaged relationship.
- The Deputy Principal will report the incident to a member of the Pastoral care team to ensure proper supports are in place for all parties involved.

- The Deputy Principal and/or other relevant person involved will take a calm, unemotional and problem-solving approach with a view to securing a resolution.
- Given the nature of the bullying concern parents will be invited to discuss the situation with a view to finding a resolution.
- If, after an investigation, no resolution has been found and the bullying behaviour continues for more than 20 days, the Deputy Principal will inform the Principal.
- The Principal will review all written records and listen to all parties involved in the matter.
- A further opportunity for a restorative solution will be explored with the students and parents.
- If after 20 days from the first date of reporting there has been no restorative solution the Principal records this on the appropriate form.

Having reviewed all of the reports and having listened to all parties the Principal will present a final opportunity for a restorative resolution to the matter. If this does not occur then a sanction from the Code of Behaviour up to and including suspension or expulsion may be imposed where a judgment of bullying is made against one or more students. Any sanction applied will be proportionate to the behaviour.

The Principal will have regard for the individual merits of each case.

- Expulsion may be invoked where there is clear evidence of serious wrongdoing and bullying as defined and described in this code and where there is no undertaking given that the bullying behaviour will not be repeated or where there is a repeat of the bullying despite assurances given.
- The appeals process for suspension and expulsion as laid out in the Code of Behaviour will be available to parents or students over 18 years of age.
- In extreme cases and depending on the circumstances the Principal may alert the Garda Síochána of the bullying behaviour.
- The Principal informs the parents of the students involved of the incident and the outcome.
- The Principal also informs parents of their right to avail of the school's complaints procedure if they are unhappy with how the procedure was dealt with.
- If the parent is still unhappy the Principal informs them of their right to complain to the Ombudsman for Children
- The Principal informs the Board of Management at the next meeting convened.

These procedures comply with Section 6.8 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.

School supports for Victims of Bullying

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

- Students who report bullying are listened to sensitively and their concerns are treated with the importance and respect they merit.
- Incidents are reported to the Pastoral Care Team and an appointment is made for the student(s) to discuss emerging issues.
- Parental contact may be invoked depending on the seriousness of the incident.
- Other interventions may be put in place to improve the self-esteem and confidence of the student affected by the behaviour including student mentoring, referral to outside agencies, targeted friendship development initiatives and so forth.
- The student involved in the bullying may be referred to counselling with a view to addressing their behaviour and in particular his/her relational behaviour.
- Students may be encouraged to become involved in team-building activities within or outside of the curriculum.
- Subject and class teachers may be informed so that they are sensitive and responsive to the on-going needs of all students involved.

These supports comply with Section 6.8 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools

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.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on _____ [date].

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website (or where none exists, is otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parents' Association (where one exists). A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

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, published on the school website (or where none exists, be otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parents' Association (where one exists). A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Signed _____

(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: _____

(Principal)

Date: _____

Date: _____

Date of Next Review: _____

Checklist for annual review of the anti-bullying policy and its implementation

The Board of Management (the Board) must undertake an annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation. The following checklist must be used for this purpose. The checklist is an aid to conducting this review and is not intended as an exhaustive list. In order to complete the checklist, an examination and review involving both quantitative and qualitative analysis, as appropriate across the various elements of the implementation of the school's anti-bullying policy will be required.

Has the Board formally adopted an anti-bullying policy that fully complies with the requirements of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools?	Yes/No
Has the Board published the policy on the school website and provided a copy to the parents' association?	
Has the Board ensured that the policy has been made available to school staff (including new staff)?	
Is the Board satisfied that school staff are sufficiently familiar with the policy and procedures to enable them to effectively and consistently apply the policy and procedures in their day to day work?	
Has the Board ensured that the policy has been adequately communicated to all pupils?	
Has the policy documented the prevention and education strategies that the school applies?	
Have all of the prevention and education strategies been implemented?	
Has the effectiveness of the prevention and education strategies that have been implemented been examined?	
Is the Board satisfied that all teachers are recording and dealing with incidents in accordance with the policy?	
Has the Board received and minuted the periodic summary reports of the Principal?	
Has the Board discussed how well the school is handling all reports of bullying including those addressed at an early stage and not therefore included in the Principal's periodic report to the Board?	
Has the Board received any complaints from parents regarding the school's handling of bullying incidents?	
Have any parents withdrawn their child from the school citing dissatisfaction with the school's handling of a bullying situation?	
Have any Ombudsman for Children investigations into the school's handling of a bullying case been initiated or completed?	
Has the data available from cases reported to the Principal (by the bullying recording template) been analysed to identify any issues, trends or patterns in bullying behaviour?	
Has the Board identified any aspects of the school's policy and/or its implementation that require further improvement?	
Has the Board put in place an action plan to address any areas for improvement?	

Signed _____ Date _____
Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed _____ Date _____
Principal

