Scoil Mhuire, Davidstown

Anti-Bullying Policy

In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the *Code of Behaviour Guidelines* issued by the NEWB/Tusla, the Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire, Davidstown 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 by the Department of Education and Skills 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 and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies)
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the Anti-Bullying Policy.

Definition of Bullying

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

> *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
- "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*.

4. The relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows:

- Each class teacher
- Each supervising teacher on yard
- The Principal and/or Deputy Principal (when deemed necessary).

Isolated incidents of aggressive behaviour, which should not be condoned, can scarcely be described as bullying. However, when the behaviour is systematic[1] and ongoing[2] it is bullying. Bullying can also take the form of racial abuse. With developments in modern technology, children can also be the victims of non-contact bullying, via mobile phones, the Internet and other personal devices.

Types of Bullying

- **Physical Aggression**: It includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking, and tripping people up. It also may take the form of severe physical assault.
- **Damage to Property**: Personal property can be the focus of attention for the bully; this may result in damage to clothing, school books and other learning material or interference with a pupil's personal belongings. 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, in the event of the victim not promptly "paying up". Victims' lunches may be taken. Victims may also be forced into theft of property for delivery to the bully. Sometimes this tactic is used for the sole purpose of incriminating the victim.
- **Intimidation**: Some bullying behaviour takes the form of intimidation; it is based on the use of very aggressive body language with the voice being used as a weapon. Particularly upsetting to victims can be the so-called 'look' – a facial expression which conveys aggression and/or dislike.
- **Abusive Telephone Calls/Text Messages or On-line Bullying**: The abusive anonymous telephone call is a form of verbal intimidation or bullying. Inappropriate texting and on-line messaging can also be forms of intimidation or bullying. Posting abusive or insulting messages on social media sites is also a form of bullying. The

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[1] *Systematic – is characterised by actions that are planned and methodical and designed to undermine and intimidate the individual.*

[2] *Ongoing* – remaining in existence, developing, continually moving forward.

school's <u>Acceptable Use Policy</u> gives guidelines on proper use of the Internet and other electronic media.

- **Isolation**: A certain person is deliberately isolated, excluded or ignored by some or all, of the class group. This practice is usually initiated by the person engaged in the bullying behaviour. It may be accompanied by writing insulting remarks about the victim on blackboards or in public places, by passing around notes about or drawings of the victim or by whispering insults about them loud enough to be heard.

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

- **"Slagging":** This behaviour usually refers to good natured banter which goes on as part of the normal social interchange between people. However, when this 'slagging' extends to very personal remarks, aimed again and again at the one individual about appearance, clothing, personal hygiene or involves references of an uncomplimentary nature to members on one's family, particularly if couched in sexual innuendo, then it assumes the form of bullying. It may take the form of suggestive remarks about a pupil's sexual orientation.

Effects of Bullying

Pupils who are being bullied may develop feelings of insecurity and extreme anxiety and thus may become more vulnerable. Self-confidence may be damaged, with a consequent lowering of self –esteem. While they may not talk about what is happening to them, their suffering is indicated through changes in mood and behaviour. Bullying may occasionally result in suicide. It is, therefore, important to be alert to changes in behaviour as early intervention is desirable.

Characteristics of Bullying Behaviour

Schools realise that any pupil can be a victim of, or perpetrator of bullying behaviour.

The child who is bullied: Any pupil, through no fault of their own may be bullied. It is common in the course of normal play for pupils to tease or taunt one another. However, at a certain point, teasing and taunting may become bullying behaviour. As pupils are particularly quick to notice differences in others, pupils who are perceived as different are more prone to encounter such behaviour. However, the pupils who are most at risk of being subjected to bullying behaviour are those who react in a vulnerable and distressed manner. The seriousness and duration of the bullying behaviour is directly related to the pupil's continuing response to the verbal, physical or psychological aggression.

It is of note that some pupils can unwittingly behave in a very provocative manner which attracts bullying behaviour.

The child who engages in bullying behaviour: It is generally accepted that bullying is a learned behaviour. Pupils who bully tend to display aggressive attitudes, combined with a low level of self-discipline. They can lack any sense of remorse; often they convince themselves that the child who they bully deserves the treatment meted out. Pupils who bully can also be attention seeking; often they set out to impress bystanders and enjoy the reaction their behaviour provokes. They tend to lack the ability to empathise. They are unaware of or indifferent to the victim's feelings. Others seem to enjoy inflicting pain. It is of note that many bullies suffer from a lack of confidence and have low self-esteem.

It is not uncommon to find that pupils who engage in bullying behaviour are also bullied. They tend to be easily provoked and frequently provoke others.

The Bystander: Passive bullying includes being a bystander and watching a bullying incident and doing nothing to stop it, or encouraging another to bully. Bullying is a difficult problem that only gets worse when it is ignored. Research clearly demonstrates that bystanders play a significant and pivotal role in the management and addressing of bullying.

- Bystanders are present most of the time (around 85%), where adults are rarely present.

- Most young people feel uncomfortable but very few know what to do to stop it happening.
- Bullying behaviour is reinforced where people watch but do nothing.
- When bystanders do intervene, the bullying is more likely to stop quickly most of the time.

Indications of Bullying Behaviour/Signs and Symptoms

The following signs and symptoms may suggest that a child is being bullied:

- Anxiety about travelling to and from school – requesting parents to drive or collect them, changing the route of travel, 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 (headaches, stomach aches).
- Unexplained changes either in mood or behaviour; this may be particularly noticeable before returning to school after weekends or more especially after longer school holidays.
- Visible signs of anxiety or distress – stammering, withdrawing, nightmares, difficulty sleeping, crying, not eating, vomiting, bed-wetting.
- 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.
- Reluctance and/or refusal to say what is troubling her/him.

Those signs do not necessarily mean that a pupil is being bullied. If repeated, or occurring in combination those signs do warrant investigation in order to establish what is affecting the pupil.

Rights and Responsibilities

In the school's daily and routine life, the ways in which people interact with each other significantly affect each person's sense of self-worth, belonging and well-being. The fostering of high quality interpersonal relationships among teachers, pupils, parents and ancillary staff is a responsibility shared by everyone.

All members of the school community have a role to play in the prevention of bullying.

Responsibilities of Board of Management:

The Board of Management is responsible for ensuring that all members of the school community are enabled to deal effectively with bullying. The Board is committed to providing time and resources for the implementation of the policy. The Board will ensure that proper supervisory and monitoring measures are in place to prevent bullying and to deal with incidents appropriately as they arise.

Responsibilities of School Staff:

- To acknowledge that bullying is a shared responsibility within the school.
- To draw upon best practice, taking into account the age of the pupils.
- To implement prevention and intervention strategies which build and maintain a safe learning environment for the whole school community.
- To empower pupils to deal with conflict in constructive ways using Restorative Justice practices.
- To take all reports of bullying seriously and to report them to the principal if warranted.
- To document any serious bullying incidents using the Bullying Incident Report Form (Appendix 3).

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

- Displaying of class code in all classrooms, explicit lessons on these codes taught each September
- Displaying of yard rules, explicit lessons on this code taught each September (all classes)
- Stay Safe programme
- SPHE
- Walk Tall
- Circle Time
- Child Protection Policy.
- Code of Behaviour Policy
- Friends for Life
- Visits from Gardaí (Cyber-bullying-Senior classes).
- Friendship Week (all classes).
- Cross curricular lessons on other cultures/religions and raising awareness and celebrating difference.
- Posters on display around the school with positive behaviour messages
- Maintaining a positive school culture that encourages respect, trust, care, consideration and support for others, and where children are empowered to deal with bullying in an appropriate manner with the support of their peers and the adults in their lives (Appendix 2).
- "Shield My School" programme from ISPCC.
- Maintain strong lines of communication with parents
- Headstart Programme for parents and new junior infants

Responsibilities of Pupils:

- To show consideration, respect and support towards others.
- To be able to identify bullying behaviour.
- To not bully others.
- To tell if they are being bullied or if they see someone else being bullied.
- To engage 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.

Responsibilities of Parents:

- To support the school in the implementation of the policy.
- To watch out for signs that their child may be being bullied.
- To speak to the class teacher if their child is being bullied or they suspect that this is happening.
- To instruct their children to tell if they are bullied or if they have seen other students being bullied.
- To notify the school if they think that their child is displaying bullying behaviour and to work with the school in addressing this problem.
- To never directly approach a student or the parent of a student at the school to intervene in the behaviour issues.

Investigation Procedures

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.

In-Class:

If an incident of misbehaviour occurs that is not considered to fall into the category of bullying then it will be dealt with by the class teacher following the school's Code of Behaviour.

Where an alleged case of bullying has taken place during class the teacher will use his/her professional judgement to investigate by speaking to the parties involved and when necessary look for witnesses. The investigation may involve individual conversations with

each party and/or a group discussion in order to clarify exactly what happened. On occasion a teacher may ask the principal or a colleague to sit in on these meetings to observe.

Where bullying took place the teacher will write up a report, including as many relevant facts as possible (Appendix 3). This report will be kept on file.

During Lunch and Break times:

School begins at 9.20am and finishes at 2.00pm for infants and 3.00pm for children from 1st – 6th class. It is the responsibility of parents to supervise their children outside of these times. Therefore it is important to collect children promptly at the end of the school day and not leave children to school unsupervised early before the school day begins.

Where alleged bullying takes place on the school grounds the supervising teacher will be the first person to try to establish the facts by following the procedures outlined above. It is the responsibility of the class teacher, in consultation with the supervising teacher to write up a report, if it is deemed necessary. Where the incident involves children from more than one class the class teachers will agree on which one writes the report and copies should be given to all teachers concerned. A yard book is kept for all incidents taking place in the school yard.

The actions taken will follow those described under "In-Class" above.

Outside the School:

The type of involvement by the school in incidents which take place outside of school will very much depend on the nature of the incident and any issues that arise out of it that may directly involve the school. This decision will be based on the professional judgement of the teacher(s) and/or principal. When deemed necessary, especially where there is a potential "Child Protection" issue the school reserves the right to contact the parents of a child who has been subjected to bullying behaviour outside of school. The teacher(s) and/or principal may contact a parent in relation to information they receive about an incident that may have a negative impact on a child.

Other Points to Note:

(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 of bullying will be investigated and dealt with appropriately 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 and special needs assistants (SNAs)will be required 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 understand the above approach from the outset

(vii) Teachers will take a calm, professional, 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, whenever possible, to ensure the privacy of all involved

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

- Positive communications between school and home.

- Using "Circle Time", SPHE lessons where appropriate.

- Accessing outside professional advice when appropriate and available.

- Using mentoring and peer-support when appropriate, both in class and at break-times.

- Strong communication between all staff members.

- CPD facilitated by outside agencies, when available.

- Anti-Bullying workshops on occasion, when available.

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 ....

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 of Education and Skills 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 and provided to the Parents'

Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the Patron and the Department of Education and Skills.

Signed: _____   _____

                (Chairperson of Board of Management)   (Principal)

Date: _____   Date: _____

Policy Review:

REVIEW IN YEAR:	DATE:	SIGNATURE:
2017-2018		
2018-2019		
2019-2020		
2020-2021		
2021-2022		

Appendix 3 :Template for Recording Bullying Behaviour.

1. Name(s) of pupil(s) being bullied and class group

Name(s): _____Class_____

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

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3. Source of bullying concern/report.

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4. Location of incidents.

Playground	
Classroom	
Corridor	
Toilets	
Other	

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

Pupil concerned	
Other pupil	
Parent	
Teacher	
Other	

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:

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9. Details of actions taken:

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Signed: _____ (relevant teacher)

Date: _____

Date submitted to Principal / Deputy Principal:

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Appendix 2: Key elements of a positive school culture and climate

- The school acknowledges the right of each member of the school community to enjoy school in a secure environment.
- The school acknowledges the uniqueness of each individual and his/her worth as a human being.
- The school promotes positive habits of self-respect, self-discipline and responsibility among all its members.
- The school prohibits vulgar, offensive, sectarian or other aggressive behaviour or language by any of its members.
- The school has a clear commitment to promoting equity in general and gender equity in particular in all aspects of its functioning.
- The school has the capacity to change in response to pupils' needs.
- The school identifies aspects of curriculum through which positive and lasting influences can be exerted towards forming pupils' attitudes and values.
- The school takes particular care of "at risk" pupils and uses its monitoring systems to facilitate early intervention where necessary and it responds to the needs, fears or anxieties of individual members in a sensitive manner.
- The school recognises the need to work in partnership with and keep parents informed on procedures to improve relationships on a school-wide basis.
- The school recognises the role of parents in equipping the pupil with a range of life-skills.
- The school recognises the role of other community agencies in preventing and dealing with bullying.
- The school promotes habits of mutual respect, courtesy and an awareness of the interdependence of people in groups and communities.
- The school promotes qualities of social responsibility, tolerance and understanding among all its members both in school and out of school.
- Staff members share a collegiate responsibility, under the direction of the Principal, to act in preventing bullying/aggressive behaviour by any member of the school community.