Anti-bullying Policy

Introduction

1. 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 Patrick's Primary School, Tuam 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.

2. 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); and
   - On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

Definition

3. 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 5

Responsibility

4. **The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying is the class teacher. Any teacher can act as class teacher if warranted.**

Education & Prevention Strategies

5. The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically 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:
    - The SPHE curriculum: This makes specific provision for exploring bullying as well as the related areas of belonging and integrating, communication, conflict, friendship, personal safety and relationships.
    - The Stay Safe programme: This 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 Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) programme provides opportunities to explore and discuss areas such as human sexuality and relationships, which has particular relevance to identity-based bullying.
- Various other social, health and media education programmes available in the school will further help to address the problem of bullying behaviour.
- There is space within the teaching of all 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.

Procedures for reporting alleged incidents of bullying

6. The school's procedures for reporting, 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 pupil or parent may bring a bullying concern about bullying to any teacher in the school. This teachers will take appropriate measures regarding reports of bullying behaviour in accordance with the school's anti-bullying policy. This may include investigating the alleged incident or referring the matter to the relevant teacher, principal or deputy-principal.

Procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying

- 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 alleged incidents of 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 will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. In this way our pupils will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It will 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, are likewise encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant 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 will take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents;

- Incidents will generally be investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved. This will be achieved by interviewing pupils before or after school, during breaks or if short-term cover supervises the class.

- All interviews will 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 will seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This will 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 will be interviewed individually at first. Afterwards, all those involved may be met as a group. At this 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;

- Vulnerable members of a group will be supported through the possible pressures that they may face 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);

- In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved will 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 will 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 pupils;

- Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it will be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts will be made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied;

- It will also be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parents) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parents and the school;

- Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved may 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;

- Details of the incidents will be recorded by the teacher in written form, to provide a record and to aid resolving the issues.

- In cases where the relevant teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, it will be recorded by the relevant teacher in the recording template at **Appendix 3** ;

- In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant teacher will, 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 school Principal or Deputy Principal;

- Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents will 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.

Support for pupils affected by bullying

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

Pupils who have been bullied

The nature of the support provided for pupils who have been bullied will be commensurate with the severity, duration and effect of the bullying. Supports will range from;

- Occasional check back by the relevant teacher to ensure no reoccurrence has taken place.
- Occasional check back by the principal, if he/she has been involved, to ensure no reoccurrence has taken place.
- Longer 1:1 session with the relevant teacher
- Longer 1:1 session with the principal
- Liaison with parents through HSCLC
- 1:1 with SCP coordinator
- Therapeutic support through SCP
- Referral to NEPS
- Referral to HSE/CAMHS

Pupils who have been involved in bulling

The nature of the support provided for pupils who have been involved in bulling will be commensurate with the severity, duration and effect of the bullying. Supports will range from;

- Occasional check back by the relevant teacher to ensure no reoccurrence has taken place.
- Occasional check back by the principal, if he/she has been involved, to ensure no reoccurrence has taken place.
- Longer 1:1 session with the relevant teacher
- Longer 1:1 session with the principal
- Liaison with parents through HSCLC
- 1:1 with SCP coordinator
- Therapeutic support through SCP
- Referral to NEPS
- Referral to HSE/CAMHS

8. **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.

9. **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.

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

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

12. 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: _____   Signed:
_____
(Chairperson of Board of Management)   (Principal)

Date: _____   Date:
_____

Date of next review: _____

Appendix 2 Building a positive school culture and climate

In order to promote a positive and supportive school climate we will:

- Model respectful behaviour to all members of the school community at all times.
- Explicitly teach pupils what respectful language and respectful behaviour looks like, acts like, sounds like and feels like in class and around the school.
- Identify bullying "hot spots" and "hot times" in the playground/school yard/outdoor areas, changing rooms, corridors and other areas of unstructured supervision through occasional anonymous pupil surveys.
- We will monitor identified "hot times" and "hot spots".
- Run a "Bullying Awareness Day" in the school each October.
- Encourage "Speaking Out".
- Support the establishment and work of student councils.
- Display key respect messages in classrooms, in assembly areas and around the school. Involve pupils in the development of these messages.
- Catch pupils being good - notice and acknowledge desired respectful behaviour by providing positive attention.
- Consistently tackle the use of discriminatory and derogatory language in the school – this includes homophobic and racist language and language that is belittling of pupils with a disability or SEN.
- Give constructive feedback to pupils when respectful behaviour and respectful language are absent.
- Have a system of encouragement and rewards to promote desired behaviour and compliance with the school rules and routines.
- Explicitly teach pupils about the appropriate use of social media.
- Positively encourage pupils to comply with the school rules on mobile phone and internet use. Follow up and follow through with pupils who ignore the rules.
- Actively involve parents and/or the Parents' Association in awareness raising campaigns around social media.
- Actively promote the right of every member of the school community to be safe and secure in school.
- Highlight and explicitly teach school rules in pupil friendly language in the classroom and in common areas.
- Aactively watch out for signs of bullying behaviour.
- Ensure there is adequate playground/school yard/outdoor supervision.

Appendix 3 Template for recording bullying behaviour

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

Pupil concerned	
Other Pupil	
Parent	
Teacher	
Other	

4. Location of incidents

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	Racist	Traveller	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 _____

* Note: The categories listed in the tables 3, 4 & 6 are suggested and schools may add to or amend these to suit their own circumstances.

Appendix 4: Checklist for annual review of the anti-bullying policy and its implementation

	Yes /No
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*?	
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

Notification regarding the Board of Management's annual review of the anti-bullying policy

To: _____

The Board of Management of St Patrick's Primary School, Tuam wishes to inform you that:

o The Board of Management's annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation was completed at the Board meeting of _____ [date].

o This review was conducted in accordance with the checklist set out in **Appendix 4** of the Department's *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.*

Signed _____   Date _____
Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed _____   Date _____
Principal

Appendix 5: Types of Bullying

The following are some of the types of bullying behaviour that can occur amongst pupils:

o **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.

o **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.

o **Isolation/exclusion and other relational bullying**: This occurs where 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 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".

o **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, cyber-bullying 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.

o **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 namecalling 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.

o **Damage to property**: Personal property can be the focus of attention for bullying behaviour. This may result in damage to clothing, mobile phone or other devices, school books and other learning material or interference with a pupil's locker or bicycle. 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.

o **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.