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Anti Bullying Policy

Date of Issue: **April 2025**

Review Date: **Annually**

(This Policy also forms part of the Dignity at Work Policy and Code of Behaviour as well as being a stand-alone 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. Brid's School has adopted the following anti-bullying policy within the framework 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 staff. Therefore the school is fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour by promoting:

- A positive school culture and climate which is welcoming of difference and diversity and encourage pupils to identify, disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment using whatever means of communication is available to them.
- Respectful relationships across the school community;
- Effective leadership with all adults providing models of behaviour that reflect the school ethos where diversity is accepted and celebrated;
- A school-wide approach involving management, staff, parents and pupils;
- 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;
- Recognition of the fact that cyber-bullying can occur via text and social media;
- Awareness that staff engage in behaviours toward pupils that could be interpreted as bullying;
- Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils throughout the school day;
- 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 using the school self-evaluation review system.

The Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools defines bullying 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.

Staff identified the following pupil to pupil behaviours which could fall within the definition of

1. Cyberbullying:
 - Inappropriate comments/photos, etc. on Facebook or other social media
 - Inappropriate texts/messages/photos via pupils' phones
 - Inappropriate pictures/websites on iPads, laptops, etc.
2. Physical: Pushing, pulling, kicking, spitting, pinching, hitting, squeezing, biting, choking, stabbing, scratching
3. Emotional: Exclusion, name calling, teasing, ignoring, intimidation, expression, body language, shouting, growling, taking or breaking possessions, destroying work, invasion of privacy, telling lies, verbal intimidation, peer pressure.

As all our pupils have diagnosed disabilities, we will promote acceptance of everyone within the school and use all opportunities to promote a tolerant school culture. Some of our pupils have issues with certain peers due to sensitivity to loud noises that they may emit or their unpredictable behaviour. The school will seek at all times to take these issues into consideration in the formation of classes. It may not be possible to predict these issues but staff will remain vigilant to the possibility of such behaviour occurring.

Isolated or one-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour, including aggression towards a peer do not fall within the definition of bullying and will be dealt with, as appropriate, in accordance with the school's code of behaviour. The one exception to this is one off comments which are communicated via social media. These fall within the remit of bullying as they can be shared by a wide audience almost immediately and are almost impossible to delete permanently.

In accordance with Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* the relevant teacher for investigating and dealing with bullying will be the class teacher.

The Principal and or Deputy will provide support and guidance where necessary.

Staff identified the following staff-to-pupil behaviours which could fall into the category of bullying in the context of our school:

- Name calling
- Shouting in an aggressive manner
- Criticising
- Being Dismissive
- Expecting pupils to achieve targets that are too difficult thereby setting them up for failure
- Talking down to them (condescending)
- Taking sides
- Favouritism
- Unnecessary physical handling
- Not giving a child a way out
- Talking about them as if they could not hear
- Talking negatively about them or their families.

AWARENESS AND PREVENTION:

The following awareness and preventative strategies and programmes are used in the school (see Section 6.5 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and post-Primary Schools):

- Careful planning of class groups each year – openness to changing this if necessary mid-term.
- Recognition that some pupils do not 'get on' with others.
- Identification and risk assessing 'Hot Spots' – playground, toilets, corridors, transitions from one activity to another, visiting other classrooms or areas of the school where the presence of another pupil causes anxiety, assembly times and home time –implementation of strategies to reduce identified risks such as delaying some pupils at home time, providing additional supervision in toilet areas, Behaviour Support Plans, etc.
- School transport – close liaison with escorts, drivers, parents and school staff regarding behaviours on school transport
- Handover information on pupils at the end of each year to next classroom.
- Staff awareness of pupils who have a documented history of engaging in risky behaviours and support provided to them to manage incidents where necessary.
- Certified training provided to staff of how to physically intervene in certain situations.
- Awareness of staff on the importance of taking the time to listen to children and to give them time to process what is said to them.
- Teaching relevant SPHE and Stay Safe programmes.
- Developing Social Stories on building respect, empathy and resilience
- Implementation of the School Rules.
- Active communication and liaison with parents, bus escorts and drivers.
- Regular team meetings with parents of relevant pupils.
- Implementation of positive handling strategies such as diversion, diffusion, de-escalation, re-directing etc.
- Use of relevant educational materials to promote and foster respect for others.
- A strong and active culture of child protection.

Other Relevant Related Policies:

- Child Protection Policy – Intimate Care and General Handling of Pupils Policies
- Child Protection Policy – Code of Behaviour
- Health and Safety Policies

Diversity and Difference:

The school promotes a positive school culture and climate which is welcoming of difference and diversity will avail of opportunities to respect and or celebrate the following:

- Use of materials that include pictures of persons from different cultural backgrounds
- Geography lessons – clothes, hairstyle, music etc.
- Social observances – for example respecting a child's cultural background.
- A cultural Day celebration.

FOLLOW UP OF BULLYING BEHAVIOUR:

St. Brid's procedures for the investigation and follow-up of bullying behaviour are as follows (as per Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):

Investigation:

- All reports, even anonymous ones will be investigated. All staff, parents & bus escorts, must be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them.
- The relevant class teacher will investigate and try to resolve any issues and restore as far as practicable the relationships of the parties involved. Teachers will take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour by pupils, staff or parents. When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher should seek answers to questions of what, where, who and why? The Principal and /or Deputy Principal will be kept informed.
- Parents of pupils will need to co-operate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving any issues.
- Any interview conducted during the investigation should be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all the personnel/pupils involved.
- The teacher will fill in the template in Appendix 1. This will need to be done outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all concerned. S/he will exercise professional judgement to ascertain if bullying has occurred. If more than one person is involved, each person will be interviewed separately initially and then brought together as a group where each person's perspective will be shared.
- If it is determined that someone has engaged in bullying behaviour, then the school will endeavour to make it clear that this behaviour is unacceptable by whatever means of communication is most effective for that person. This may include visual supports/social stories/comic book conversations/role play/video clips etc. The assistance of the multi-disciplinary team may be requested to develop appropriate resources/programmes in this regard.
- In cases where the teacher has decided that bullying has taken place, 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. The school will give parents support in developing ways they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and support their own child.

Follow Up:

- Where disciplinary sanctions may be required, it will be a private matter for the person being disciplined, his/her family and the school.
- Follow up meetings may be scheduled with the relevant parties as required or social skills programmes set up to develop co-operation and mutual respect.
- 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 must be recorded by the teacher in the template at Appendix 2.

- In determining if it has been adequately addressed, the teacher will take into account the following factors:
 - Has the bullying behaviour ceased?
 - Have the issues between the parties been resolved as far as is practicable?
 - Has the relationship between parties been restored?
 - Has any feedback been received from their families or the Principal or Deputy Principal?
- Where a parent is not satisfied with how the school has dealt with the bullying case, the parents have the right to complain to the Board of Management. If they remain dissatisfied with local representations, they can decide to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.
- Serious incidents bullying behaviour may be referred to the HSE Children and Family Services and/or the Gardai as appropriate.

Recording:

Allegations of bullying behaviour will be provided to the Principal or Deputy Principal. Data gathered from these reports will provide information in relation to the presence of bullying behaviour in the school. Appropriate responses to any issues identified should be drawn up and implemented.

Supports for children affected by bullying will include their engagement in programmes to develop their self-esteem, develop their friendship and social skills and promote their resilience to actions of a bullying nature.

SUPERVISION & 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 behaviours and to facilitate early intervention where possible.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on

This policy has been made available to school personnel and parents. 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. 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

Date: _____

Principal

Date: _____

Ratification and Communication:

This Policy will be circulated to all staff members and the Board of Management for approval.

Ratified at Board meeting on _____ .

Review date:

Signed: _____ Dated: _____
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: _____ Dated: _____
(Principal)