Mitchelstown C.B.S.

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

SECTION 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 C>B>S> Secondary School Mitchelstown 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.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all pupils of CBS Secondary School Mitchelstown and relates to all school activities including extra-curricular activities during and outside normal school hours, and both on and off the school premises.

This policy was drawn up in consultation with all the school partners, including Board of Management, staff, parents and students.

RATIONALE

- The Department of Education and Skills requires that schools have a written policy on bullying in place, and that the policy will comply with the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary schools, issued in September 2013.
- There is a legal obligation on the Trustees to have a policy in place that reflects the principles and values of the religious and educational philosophy of the school.
- Involving all partners within the school community in the development, formulation and reviewing of the policy promotes partnership, ownership and implementation of a living policy.

SECTION 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.

The Code of Behaviour aims to provide for the effective and safe operation of the school, creating an environment of care and respect – respect for self, others, property and environment – so that a positive and co-operative atmosphere of learning is created.

It encourages a spirit of partnership and mutual respect between parents, pupils and staff, in accordance with the ethos of Edmund Rice schools.

LINK TO SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT

This policy has as its core the mission statement of the school, which identifies a real caring concern for all as a core value. The policy is incorporated into the Code of Behaviour which aims to provide for the effective and safe operation of the school, creating an environment of care and respect – respect for self, others, property and environment – so that a positive and co-operative atmosphere of learning is created.

The pursuit of excellence in all areas of school life is central to the school's mission statement. A stable and secure learning environment is an essential requirement to achieving this goal. Bullying behaviour interferes with the quality of the education environment. An active and living anti-bullying policy is essential to the school's pursuit of its mission. The creation of a caring school environment is also a key element of the ERST charter which informs the school's Code of Behaviour.

AIMS OF ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

- To clearly define what constitutes bullying in our school community.
- To raise awareness of bullying as an unacceptable form of behaviour and its negative impact on members of our school community.
- To create and foster an environment which respects diversity across the nine areas covered in Equality legislation.
- To create an ethos and environment of our school as a "telling" community, one in which students disclose and discuss any incidents of bullying.
- To ensure that supervision and monitoring measures through which school activities are kept under observation are in place.
- To develop procedures for noting and reporting on incidents of bullying.
- To develop procedures for investigating and dealing with reports of bullying.
- To develop the pastoral care systems in the school to ensure appropriate programmes are in place to support those affected by bullying and those involved in bullying.

SCHOOL STATEMENT ON BULLYING

- Every pupil in C.B.S. Secondary School, Mitchelstown has the right to enjoy his learning and leisure time free from intimidation.
- When a person is made unhappy over a period of time because he is hurt, teased or left out of a social group, we call it bullying. Our school community will not tolerate any such unkind actions, remarks or behaviour.
- Pupils should support each other by reporting all instances of bullying. We are a "telling" school - bullying is too important not to report.
- Bullying will be dealt with seriously.
- Incidents of cyber bullying will be considered a serious offence.

SECTION 3

Definition of Bullying

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.

Characteristics of bullying

The following is a list of behaviours that might be characterised by bullying. It is used for illustrative purposes only, and is not an exhaustive list:

Physical: Hitting, pushing, kicking, throwing things, spitting, gestures, unwelcome touching, fights, damaging property, stealing or hiding property, extortion, graffiti.

Verbal: Name calling, jeering, slagging, insulting family, threats, noises, sarcasm.

Psychological: Excluding, ignoring, pointing, gestures, noises, sarcasm, spreading rumours, sexual comments, undermining, staring, whispering, intimidation, use/distribution of written material

Cyberbullying: bullying which is carried out using the internet, mobile phone or other technological devices. Personal intimidation, impersonation, exclusion, personal humiliation, false reporting.

Indications of Bullying/Behaviour – Signs and Symptoms

The following signs/symptoms may suggest that a pupil is being bullied:-
- anxiety about travelling to and from school – requesting parents to drive or collect them, changing route of travel, avoiding regular times for travelling to and from school;
- unwillingness to go to school, refusal to attend, mitching;
- deterioration in educational performance, loss of concentration and loss of enthusiasm and interest in school;
- pattern of physical illnesses (e.g. headaches, stomach aches);

- unexplained changes either in mood or behaviour; it may be particularly noticeable before returning to school after weekends or more especially after longer school holidays;
- loss of confidence or self esteem;
- visible signs of anxiety or distress – stammering, withdrawing, nightmares, difficulty in sleeping, crying, not eating, vomiting, bedwetting;
- spontaneous out-of-character comments about either pupils or teachers;
- depression, panic attacks
- 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 him/her.

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.

SECTION 4: Prevention of bullying, raising awareness

Roles and Responsibilities

> The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows:
>
> Student Support Team: Members include Principal, Deputy Principal, Guidance Counsellors and SEN Coordinator.

Students
We expect that students will

- Treat one another with dignity and respect.
- Not tolerate bullying.
- Report incidents of bullying.
- View the reporting of bullying as responsible behaviour and not as "telling tales"

Subject Teachers and class teachers
We expect that teachers will:

- Encourage students to adhere to the Code of Behaviour.
- Give support in implementing areas of the curriculum aimed at preventing bullying.
- Raise awareness that bullying will not be tolerated, and encourage the reporting by students of any incidents of bullying.
- Note incidents reported to them and to deal with them sensitively as per the agreed procedures.
- Pass on information regarding bullying incidents to the Student Support Team.

Senior management

We expect senior management to;

- Promote the use of the curriculum where possible to raise awareness and to combat bullying.
- Ensure that teachers, parents and students are informed regarding the school's anti-bullying policy.
- Provide for the correct noting and recording of bullying incidents, and monitoring and evaluation of the policy and procedures.
- Deal with cases of bullying in accordance with agreed procedures.
- Support staff and students in dealing with cases of bullying
- Contact and work with parents involved.
- Co-ordinate the implementation of the policy.

The Student Support Team

The Student Support Team may consist of the Principal or Deputy Principal, the Guidance teacher, the Pastoral Care co-ordinator, the Special needs co-ordinator, SPHE teacher, class/subject teacher.

We expect the Student Support Team to:

- To provide a co-ordinated approach to the issue of bullying.
- To implement the anti-bullying policy.
- Meet regularly to co-ordinate the implementation of the policy.
- To meet and discuss reported offences as per agreed procedures.
- To work with staff in organising anti-bullying education.

Non-teaching staff

The school recognises that non-teaching staff, including SNAs, secretarial staff, caretaker and cleaning staff have a very important role to play in the implementation of the anti-bullying policy.

We expect non-teaching staff to:

- Report any incidents of bullying they witness to a member of the Student Support Team.

Mentors

Fifth and Transition Year students trained as Mentors to First Year students are in a position of trust. We expect that any reports of bullying they receive will be passed on to a member of the Student Support Team.

Parents

We expect that parents will:

- Watch out for signs /symptoms of bullying behaviour in their son(s)
- Contact a member of the Student Support Team if they suspect their son is being bullied.
- Support their son and the school in its effort to deal with the problem.

SECTION 5: Preventative strategies and raising awareness

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:

1. Raising awareness through the Anti-bullying policy. The Policy will be included in Student Journals, Teacher Journals and school website and will be provided to parents of all incoming students. The policy will be reviewed at least every 2 years.

2. The anti-bullying contract: Awareness and understanding of the anti-bullying code will form part of the Induction day for First Year students, and all new students and their parents will be asked to sign the contract.

3. Curriculum – use of specific subjects including SPHE and RE to deliver anti-bullying programmes, and using aspects of the curriculum in other subjects to raise the awareness of bullying as an inappropriate behaviour.

4. Annual awareness events to include focussing on the negative impact of bullying and the importance of being a "telling school".

5. Information evenings or talks for parents.

6. Induction programme and Mentor programme for First Year students.

7. Appropriate supervision and monitoring of school breaks and activities.

8. Acknowledgment of positive behaviour, promotion of self-esteem.

9. Staff focus on awareness and understanding of bullying and combating it, on fostering respect for all and combating prejudice.

SECTION 6: DEALING WITH BULLYING INCIDENTS

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

Reporting bullying incidents

Students who are witnesses to or victims of bullying are encouraged to report it immediately. We are a "telling" school – bullying is too important not to report. Reporting bullying behaviour is the strong, the right and the responsible thing to do.

Who to tell:
- Principal or Deputy principal
- Guidance Counsellor
- Pastoral Care co-ordinator
- Special Education needs Co-ordinator
- SPHE or religion teacher
- Class teacher
- Any other staff member you feel comfortable in speaking to
- Mentor
- Student Council representative

How to tell:
- Direct approach e.g. after class
- Online sociogram
- Hand up note with homework
- Phone call to the school
- Contact staff member through school email address
- Ask a friend or family member to speak to staff member on your behalf
- Ask a friend or parent to make a phone call on your behalf
- Meeting with or talking with staff member on any other matter

Investigating and dealing with reports of bullying

Rationale

The emphasis in our anti-bullying code is on restorative justice.

Our Code of Behaviour has RESPECT as its core value. Bullying is disrespectful. It is a violation a person's rights by another/others. The focus of our anti-bullying policy is on problem solving through dialogue, listening and negotiation.

We subscribe to the "Reform, not blame" approach in dealing with bullying. No blame does not mean no responsibility. The aim is that those responsible for wrong doing will acknowledge it, understand its impact on others, decide to put things right, and make reparation.

Dealing with incidents

First report received

1. Collect information.
   - Individual interviews are recommended where a small number of pupils are involved. Emphasis will be on listening, reassuring the victim.
   - Details should be recorded in writing and attached to the Incident report form.
   - Confidential questionnaires (possibly in class time) or bullying sociogram may be required if larger numbers of pupils are involved or to clarify information.
2. The impact of the behaviour will be outlined and the behaviour challenged as unacceptable. The perpetrator will be asked to acknowledge it and apologise for it. A written undertaking will be required promising that the behaviour will cease immediately, that the targeted student will be treated with respect, that the incident will not be discussed with other students, and that there will be no other incident arising from it.
3. If both parties agree a meeting may be arranged between them, with the staff member present.
4. Additional assistance from the school guidance department will be offered to both parties.
5. The completed report and additional written records will be filed in an Incidents file in the Guidance/Deputy Principal's office.
6. As a follow-up to a bullying issue being resolved, the relevant staff member will meet separately with the relevant parties to review progress.

Second report

Students who have bullied previously and are being interviewed for bullying for the second time will also be spoken to by a member of the Student Support Team. An agreement will be signed by the student and Student Support Team member, and must be counter-signed by the parent/guardian. Additional sanctions from Code of Behaviour may apply.

Details of the procedure that will apply in the event of further reports will also be included.

Subsequent reports, serious acts of aggression or if first or second incidents were deemed to be very serious and/or not resolvable using the "reform, not blame" process.

- In such cases the incident will be referred to the Principal or Deputy Principal as lead members of the Student Support Team.
- A meeting will be held with the Principal/Deputy Principal, the student, his parent/guardian and the Student Support Team member.
- The details of the previous interviews and written promises will be read out.
- The school's Code of Behaviour will be used by the Principal in determining the appropriate sanction.
- A written contract including an undertaking to change behaviour, to be signed by both student and parent/guardian will be required and must be returned to the school before the student returns from suspension, if this applies.

SECTION 7: School support

The school's programme of support for students affected by bullying includes the following elements:

- Students who have been bullied will be offered counselling with focus on building self -esteem, social skills and resilience.
- Students who have bullied will be offered counselling programme dealing with empathy, social skills, feelings of self-worth.

Record keeping

An incident report form must be filled by the staff member dealing with each report under the school's anti-bullying policy.

Additional written accounts must be attached.

The written promise by the student, and any other relevant details should also be attached.

Incident reports are kept in an Incidents file by the Deputy Principal/Guidance Counsellor.

They may be accessed by the Principal and members of the Student Support Team. The information remains confidential to the Student Support Team unless subsequent reports are made.

Right of appeal

Where a parent/guardian or a student who is more than 18 years old is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with the school's Anti-Bullying policy and the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, s/he will be advised of his/her right to make an appeal to the Board of Management. Such appeals shall be submitted, in writing, setting out the grounds for the appeal, to the Chairperson of the Board within 15 school days of the parent/guardian informing the school that s/he is of the opinion that the school has not dealt with the bullying case in accordance with school's Anti-Bulling Policy and the DES Anti-Bullying Procedures.

Where a parent/guardian, having exercised his/her appeal to the B.O.M., is still not satisfied, s/he will be advised of his/her right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for children.

SECTION 8: Supervision and monitoring of anti-bullying in school

- 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.
- The implementation and effectiveness of the school's anti-bullying policy will be an agenda item for all staff meetings and Student Support Team meetings – so the concerns about the policy and/or welfare of individual students can be shared and effectively addressed.
- Data gathered through the reporting templates will be collated and analysed annually by the Principal with a view to monitoring levels of bullying behaviour and identifying issues requiring attention. This analysis will complement the information gathered through bullying surveys.
- At each Board of Management meeting, the Principal will provide a report to the Board of Management setting out the following:

- o The overall number of bullying cases reported (by means of the anti-bullying template) since the last Board meeting.
- o Confirmation that all cases referred via the recording template have been or are being, dealt with in accordance with the school's anti-bullying policy and the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary schools. The minutes of the Board of Management' meetings will record the Principal's report but will not include any identifying details of the students involved.

SECTION 9: Prevention of Harassment

Respect is a core value of our school community. This includes respecting the dignity of others.

The Board of Management confirms that the school will, in accordance with the obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the sexual harassment of students or staff or the harassment of students 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.

Policy Adoption and Review

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 29/03/2022.

Policy Dissemination and Publication

This policy will be made available to school personnel, published on the school website and in student journals and provided to the Parent Council.

Policy review

The Board of Management will undertake a periodic review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation in accordance with the procedures set out in Section 7.2 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools using the checklist included at Appendix 4 of those procedures.

The Board of Management will ensure that an action plan is put in place to address any areas for improvement identified by the periodic review.

Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parent Council.

Details of the review will be recorded in the minutes of the Board of Management meeting that adopted the review and a record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, will be made available to the Patron and the DES. In the case of the DES, it is appreciated that the Inspectorate will place a strong focus on the actions the school takes to create a positive school culture and to prevent and tackle bullying.