Anti-Bullying Policy of Meán Scoil Nua an Leith Triúigh

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 Meán Scoil Nua an Leith Triúigh 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 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.

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 Section 2 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

3. The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying is (are) as follows: (see Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):

Aodán Mac Gearailt – Principal

Aoileann Nic Gearailt – Deputy Principal

Helen Griffin – Guidance & Counselling

Year 1 Class Teacher – Sally Ann Leahy & Helen Griffin

Year 2 Class Teacher – Fiona Ní Bhrosnacháin

Year 3 Class Teacher – Jonathan Lyne

Year 4 Class Teacher – John O'Callaghan & Gemma Donovan

Year 5 Class Teacher – George Lenihan

Year 6 Class Teacher – Karen Blennerhassett

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4. 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 (see Section 6.5 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):

Measures & Strategies to prevent bullying in our school:

- Through SPHE & Religion raise awareness of bully-type behavior including cyber-bullying, homophobic bullying, isolation and physical and verbal bullying.
- Both school based activities and extra-curricular activities provide pupils the opportunities to engage with their peers and to develop a sense of self-worth, confidence and belonging. Our school provides the following opportunities – Gaelic Football, Rugby, Spikeball, Running club, Circuit training, debating, Art and Business enterprise as well as a comprehensive range of activities and opportunities within school time.
- We have a full week each year focused on developing pupils awareness and understanding of bullying, including its causes and effects. Student surveys are carried out and students are made aware of supports provided by the school as well as the consequences of bullying actions on others. Parents are also made aware of these supports and sanctions through e-mail and are provided the opportunity to contribute to our campaign.
- Parental involvement is vital especially when it comes to cyber bullying. All parents will receive guidelines on the dangers of the internet and what signs to watch out for and the need to be involved and aware of their son/daughters activity on the internet. This information is given prior to enrolment, at parent evenings and through e-mail/letters etc.
- All Teachers and Board of Management members will be updated regularly at formal meetings and often at informal meetings i.e lunchtime break on all issues relating to

bullying. Potentially 'vulnerable' students are also identified and planned for. These may for example be students with emotional difficulties or students with certain SEN needs.

- The school has organized seminars for staff, students and parents in the past in the area of bullying with the focus this year being on internet safety and cyber bullying, a seminar given by a qualified Forensic Psychologist.
- Senior management and teachers are committed to promoting respect to all and have been briefed on our procedures for reporting incidents of bullying.
- Monitoring and supervision of students at all times is of the upmost importance whether in school or on school based activities outside of the school.

Procedures employed by our school to reduce, prevent and deal with bullying related matters:

- As a small school of less than 150 students it is possible to speak on individual students and matters relating to them, including bullying at a whole staff meetings. Feedback can be given on individual cases and this is vital as we gather as much feedback and evidence as possible.
- Feedback is given verbally by staff at meeting but information is also gathered through our Anti-Bullying Questionnaire or Bullying sociogram.
- Teachers would record incidents if misbehaviour on the schools ' incident report sheet' and any bullying type behaviour would be recorded on a 'recording bullying sheet'. These documents are then put in a specific box and the class teacher, deputy principal or principal would investigate the matter, ring home and in certain cases the principal would bring parties together to resolve issues.All parties would be interviewed individually at first. These parties may include parents, students and in very serious cases members of the Board of Management. The aim would be to resolve any issues and restore, as far as possible the relationship of the parties involved. A 'circle of trust' has worked effectively in the past where all parties get to speak whilst sitting in a circle and the meeting would be chaired by the Principal or another trained professional.
- Very serious cases would be discussed at Board of Management level and guidance would be sought from qualified trained specialists.
- If a parent brings a bullying case to the attention of the school a meeting would be organised with the Principal and a full report would be taken. The matter would then be

investigated and dealt with appropriately. Parents and pupils are required to co-operate with any investigation to resolve issues as quickly as possible.

- Teachers will take a calm, unemotional problem solving approach when dealing with cases of alleged bullying. They will then record information on the 'recording bullying sheet'. The matter is then brought to the Principal and Deputy Principal before a full investigation into the matter occurs. Cases will be investigated outside the classroom to ensure privacy. For example, pupils who may not be directly involved may have useful information.
- A follow up meeting would generally occur with relevant parties after an appropriate amount of time and if agreeable the relevant parties would then meet each other again. This can often bring 'closure' and can be therapeutic.

If a subject teacher recognises a student who they feel may be a victim of bullying or if they are made aware of a student being bullied they will follow the following procedure:

- Speak to the class teacher of that student (Y1 – Sally Ann & Helen, Y2 – Fiona, Y3 – Jonathan, Y4 – John & Gemma, Y5 – George, Y6 – Karen).
- The class teacher and/or the subject teacher would them bring the matter to the attention of Aodán, Aoileann, Helen or Nóra who form the Pastoral Care Team. An anti-bullying teacher report form would be filled in at this stage if it has not already been done. This report form would outline clearly the details of the concern.
- An investigation into the matter would then be carried out by a member(s) of the pastoral care team. Teachers would be asked about the individuals behaviour recently, certain students may be questioned, a brother/sister/friend may be questioned, the individuals parent(s) may be questioned, a shop assistant, bus driver or any other party that we feel may have relevant information may be questioned. The questioning would be done discretely and privately until all the facts were clear.
- The pastoral care team would then discuss the findings of the investigation and use their professional judgement in order to ascertain if bullying occurred. The gathering of evidence is hugely important and students may be asked to show their social media pages or text messages (with parental consent if necessary). Failure to comply with our investigation would be deemed very serious.
- The follow-on from this would depend on the nature and severity of the bullying.

- The individual who we feel is the victim of bullying would be questioned by a member(s) of the pastoral care team and a scenario of solutions would be presented to the individual so that he/she would not be distressed. This discussion would then be presented to the parent/guardian of the individual.

- To resolve the issue a member of the Pastoral care team would speak to the student(s) involved in bullying type behaviour. Information would be gathered and a plan to resolve the issue would be agreed upon.

- If it was agreeable to both parties students would meet in the presence of at least 2 members of the pastoral care team in the principals where both parties would be given the opportunity to speak. This initial meeting may have to occur in the presence of parents in certain instances.

- Failing a resolution to the matter with both student and parental involvement the matter would then be presented at Board of Management level, with the support of an external agency i.e. N.E.P.S , H.S.E representative, Gardaí etc. Further investigations would be carried out and the final decision and action would be taken by the principal Aodán Mac Gearailt following careful consultation and deliberation with other relevant parties.

- All issues of bullying would be discussed at staff meetings and at board of management meetings and Aodán would seek advice, support and validation in certain instances on the sanctions that the school imposes on students involved in bullying type behaviour. The National education welfare board would be made aware of all suspensions of 5 days and over and all expulsions.

- A review date of any bullying incident would be agreed and set by Aodán, Iain, Edel and Nóra. This would involve meeting with the relevant students, contacting parent(s) and discussing the matter with staff members in order to ensure that the matter is resolved. The review date would be no later than 2 weeks of the issue being brought to our attention.

5. 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.

6. 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.

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

8. 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.

9. 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: _____