Aughacasla National School Position on Bullying

The Aughacasla National School community believes that each pupil has a right to an education free from fear and intimidation.
The school regards bullying as a serious infringement of individual rights and a serious threat to the self-esteem and self-confidence of the targeted pupil(s). Therefore it does not tolerate bullying of any kind.
Every report of bullying is treated seriously and dealt with, having due regard for the well being of the targeted pupil(s) and the perpetrator(s).
An 'Anti-Bullying Team' made up of staff members, exists to cultivate an environment free from bullying.
The immediate priority, should a bullying incident occur, is ending the bullying, (thereby protecting the person(s) being targeted) and resolving the issues and restoring the relationships involved insofar as is practicable using a "Reform, not blame" approach.
All pupils are expected to contribute to the creation and maintenance of a safe environment in the school. On becoming aware of any bullying situation, in or outside the school, involving members of the school community they should notify a trusted responsible adult. Bullying behaviour is too serious not to report.
Pupil's participation in school life in general is encouraged through existing school structures. Awareness of bullying, and willingness to take action to prevent or stop it, is part of this participation.

Anti-Bullying Policy

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 Aughacasla N.S. 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 bulling 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 issue 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.

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 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.

This definition includes a wide range of behaviour, whether verbal or written, whether physical or social, whether targeting person or property, whether carried out directly or indirectly or through any electronic or other medium, which could harm a pupil or undermine her/his self-esteem or self-confidence.

Appendix 1 gives a list of specific examples of bullying behaviour. This list is not exhaustive.

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 in this school are as follows:
- Áine Galvin (Junior and Senior Infants)
- Christina O'Shea (1st and 2nd Class)
- David Doyle (3rd and 4th Class)
- Denise Hennessy (5th and 6th Class)

("At Primary Level, the relevant teacher will normally be the class teacher." Procedures 6.8.3).

5. The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber-bullying and identity based bullying) used by the school are as follows:

- The anti-bullying module of the SPHE programme as it applies during each school year.

- On-going awareness-raising exercises during the school year for each class group (e.g. from the "Awareness Raising" strand of the Anti-Bullying Campaign, via its website) pro-actively explaining the nature and variety, causes, consequences and unacceptability of bullying.
  - Pupils are helped to examine the issue of bullying in a calm ,rational way, outside of the tense context of particular bullying incidents. In the process they are made more aware of the nature of bullying and the various forms that it can take.
  - Pupils are made aware that the consequences of bullying behaviour are always bad for those who are targeted, even is this is not always obvious at the time.
  - Pupils are encouraged to recognise, reject and report bullying behaviour, either spontaneously or through questionnaires that are regularly used in school.
- Professional development with specific focus on the training of the relevant teacher(s).
- Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extra-curricular activities. Non-teaching and ancillary staff will be encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers. Supervision will also apply to monitoring student use of communication technology within the school.
- The school's anti-bullying policy is discussed with pupils and all parents/guardians are given a copy as part of the code of Behaviour of the school (every year).
- Encourages a culture of telling, with particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders. 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.
- Ensuring pupils know who to tell and how to tell, e.g.:
  - Direct approach to teacher at an appropriate time, for example after class.
  - Get a parent/guardian or friend to tell on your behalf.
  - Administer a confidential questionnaire once a term to all pupils.
  - Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place.
- Identify clear protocols to encourage parents/guardians to approach the school if they suspect that their child is being bullied. The protocol should be developed in consultation with parents.
- Through presentations or other exercises, the school staff and parents/guardians are made aware of the nature of bullying and the signs that might indicate that a pupil is being bullied. They are encouraged to be vigilant in watching out for signs of bullying and to report any suspicion of bullying they may have to the "relevant Teacher" (in case of staff members) or any staff members (in the case of parents/guardians).

Implementation of curricula

- The full implementation of the R.S.E. and Stay Safe Programmes.

Links to other policies

- Code of Behaviour, Child Protection policy, Internet Use policy, R.S.E. policy, S.P.H.E. policy.

6. 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:

- The 'Relevant Teacher' investigates all instances or reported or suspected bullying behaviour, whether these take place within the school or outside it, with a view to establishing the facts and bringing any such behaviour to an end.

- The school, through the 'Relevant Teacher' reserves the right to ask any pupil to write an account of what happened as part of an investigation. This will be a standard procedure and does not necessarily imply that a pupil is guilty of misbehaviour.

- Pupils who are alleged to have been involved in bullying behaviour are interviewed individually by the 'Relevant Teacher' to establish the nature and extent of the behaviour and any reasons for it. In the event that bullying has occurred the parents are informed. The pupil(s) are asked to promise that they will treat others fairly, equally, and respectfully, including the targeted pupil(s).

- The 'Relevant Teacher' does not apportion blame, but rather treats bullying behaviour as a 'mistake' that can and must be remedied. S/he emphasises that the intention is not to punish perpetrators but to talk to them, to explain how harmful and hurtful bullying is and to seek a promise it will stop. If that promise is forthcoming and is honoured there will be no penalty and that will be the end of the matter. Pupils who report bullying therefore are not getting others "in trouble" so much as enabling them to get out of the trouble into which they may ultimately get if the bullying continued.

- When an investigation is completed and/or a bullying situation is resolved the "Relevant Teacher" will complete a report, to include the findings of the investigation, the strategy adopted and the outcome of the intervention, as well as any other information.

- If a pupil made such a promise but then chooses to break that promise and continue the bullying behaviour, this can then no longer be considered a "mistake". In this event parent(s)/guardian(s) will be informed and requested to countersign their daughter/son's promise. Breach of this additional promise by further bullying behaviour is regarded as a very grave matter and a serious sanction may be imposed by the school authorities. (See sanctions below).

- The relevant teacher must use the recording template at **Appendix 3**.
  - in cases where s/he considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after s/he has determined that bullying behaviour occurred.

- When the recording template is used, it must be retained by the relevant teacher in question and a copy maintained by the principal.

- All documentation regarding bullying incidents and their resolution is retained securely in the school.

- Sanctions:
  - Where a pupil has been found to be engaged in bullying behaviour, has formally promised to stop and has broken that promise, any of the following sanctions may be imposed:
    - S/he may be required to sign another promise, this time countersigned by a parent/guardian;

- Parent(s)/guardian(s) may be contacted by the "Relevant Teacher" and informed of the nature and extent of the bullying behaviour with a view to agreeing a strategy whereby a promise to end the bullying behaviour would be honoured;
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) may be invited to a meeting with "Relevant Teacher" and the Principal and the pupil may be suspended from school.
- The case may be referred to the Board of Management, and will be dealt with in accordance with the Code of Behaviour, which may ultimately result in suspension or expulsion.

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

- Bullied pupils:
- Ending the bullying behaviour,
- Changing the school culture to foster more respect for bullied pupils and all pupils,
- Changing the school culture to foster greater empathy towards and support for bullied pupils,
- Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through the awareness-raising programme.
- Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the bullied pupil through the speedy identification of those responsible and speedy resolution of bullying situations.
- After resolution, enabling bullied pupils to complete a victim-impact statement.
- Helping bullied pupils raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that help develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school).

- Bullying pupils
  - Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are not blamed or punished and get a "clean sheet",
  - Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are ing the right and honourable thing and giving them praise for this.
  - Making adequate counselling facilities available to help those who need it learn other ways of meeting their needs besides violating the rights of others,
  - Helping those who need to raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school),
  - Using learning strategies throughout the school and the curriculum to help enhance pupils' feelings of self-worth,
  - In dealing with negative behaviour in general, encouraging teachers and parents to focus on, challenge and correct the behaviour while supporting the child,
  - Ind ealing with bullying behaviour seeking resolution and offering a fresh start with a "clean sheet" and no blame in return for keeping a promise to reform.

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 anf to facilitate intervention where possible.

9. The Board of Management confirms that the school will, in accordance with it obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps as are reasonably practicable to prevent the sexual harassment of pupils or staff or the harassment of pupils or staff on any the 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 is also available to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parents' Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department of Education and Skills and to 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, and provided to the Parents' Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available to the Department of Education and Skills and to the patron if requested.

Signed: _____ (Chairperson of Board of Management) Date: /   /

Signed: _____(Principal) Date: /   /