

# Scoil Bhríde Cailíní

## Anti-Bullying Policy

October 2024

### Section 1

#### Education Welfare Board

In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the code of behaviour guidelines issued by the EWB, the Board of Management of Scoil Bhríde Cailíní 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.

This policy has been assisted in its development by the staff of Scoil Bhríde Cailíní, the Parents' Association, Students' Council and the school Board of Management.

### Section 2

#### Key Principles of Best Practice

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:

1. **A positive school culture & climate which:**
  - is welcoming of difference & 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;
2. **Effective leadership at all levels;**
3. **A school-wide approach – recognition of, reporting of and the rejection of bullying behaviour;**
4. **A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact;**
5. **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.
6. **Effective supervision & monitoring of pupils;**
7. **Supports to staff to assist them in investigating and dealing with reports of bullying behaviour;**
8. **Consistent recording, investigation & follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies);**
9. **An annual review and evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy must take place.**

### Section 3

#### Types of Bullying Behaviour

In accordance with the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary & Post Primary Schools* bullying is defined as follows: Bullying behaviour 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 the 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 will 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.

#### Examples of types of bullying behaviour

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

**Physical aggression:** This behaviour includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking, head butting, tripping and spitting at people.

**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.

**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.

**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).

**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.

**Damage to property:** Personal property can be the focus of attention for bullying behaviour.



**Extortion:** Demands for personal items may be made, often accompanied by threats (sometimes carried out in the event of the targeted pupil not delivering on the demand).

## **Section 4**

### **Impact & Indicators of Bullying Behaviour**

Pupils who are being bullied may develop feelings of insecurity, humiliation and extreme anxiety and thus may become more vulnerable. Self-confidence may be damaged with a consequent lowering of self-esteem. While they may not talk about what is happening to them, their suffering is indicated through changes in mood and behaviour. Extreme cases of bullying may result in suicide. It is, therefore, essential to be alert to changes in behaviour as early intervention can be very effective.

Pupils who witness bullying may also be affected and may suffer in similar ways to those who are bullied. For example, pupils who witness identity-based bullying and share that identity can experience anxiety and feel under threat themselves. Pupils can also feel guilt or distress at not being able to help the person being bullied.

There are also consequences for individuals who engage in bullying behaviour. Pupils who become involved in such behaviour can be at higher risk of depression. Other possible long-term consequences may include an increased risk of developing an anti-social personality, anxiety disorders, a likelihood of substance abuse and law-breaking behaviour in adulthood and decreased educational and occupational attainment.

### **Characteristics Associated with Bullying**

It is important to recognise that any pupil can be bullied or can engage in bullying behaviour.

#### **The pupil who engages in bullying behaviour**

A significant proportion of bullying is not merely behavioural but is rooted in a lack of respect for diversity and in social inequalities. "Prejudice-based" or "identity-based" bullying can be a significant factor in bullying behaviour.

Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour tend to display aggressive attitudes combined with a low level of self-discipline. They may lack any sense of remorse convincing themselves that the other person deserves the treatment they are receiving.

Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour can be attention seeking: setting out to impress bystanders and responding to the reaction their behaviour provokes. They can lack the ability to empathise. They can appear unaware or indifferent to the other person's feelings. It is of note that pupils who exhibit bullying behaviour often suffer from a lack of confidence and have low self-esteem.

However, it must also be recognised that pupils who engage in bullying behaviour do not always intend to bully or may not recognise the potential negative impact of their words and actions on others. It is not uncommon to find that pupils who engage in bullying behaviour may also have been bullied themselves.

#### **The pupil who is bullied**

Any pupil through no fault of their own may be a target of bullying. It is common in the course of normal interaction for pupils to tease or taunt each other. However, at a certain point, teasing and taunting may become forms of bullying behaviour. As pupils can be particularly quick to notice differences in others, pupils who are perceived as different in some way can be more prone to encounter such behaviour. However, the pupils who are most at risk of being bullied are those who react in a vulnerable and distressed manner. The seriousness and duration of the

bullying behaviour can be related to the pupil's continuing response to the verbal, physical or psychological aggression.

Pupils who are bullied often experience difficulties in speaking up about bullying. The difficulties include:

- Fear of reprisals
- Concerns about being perceived as a "tell-tale" for reporting bullying
- Concerns about "getting into trouble" with the principal or teacher for reporting bullying
- Not having evidence to back up a bullying allegation
- Not knowing how the matter will be dealt with by the school and
- Not feeling fully confident of being believed.

### **More vulnerable pupils**

While bullying can happen to any pupil, it is known that some may be more vulnerable to or at risk of experiencing bullying. Such vulnerable groups include pupils with disabilities or special educational needs, those from ethnic minority and migrant groups, pupils from the Traveller community, lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) pupils and those perceived to be LGBT and pupils of minority religious faiths.

There can be an increased vulnerability to bullying amongst pupils with special educational needs and particularly those who do not understand social cues and/or have difficulty communicating. Some pupils with complex needs may lack understanding of social situations and therefore trust everyone implicitly. Such pupils may be more vulnerable because they do not have the same social skills or capacity as others to recognise and defend themselves against bullying behaviour. Research suggests that children with disabilities and with special educational needs (SEN) are more likely to be bullied than others. Bullying can also have a more severe impact on such children. For example, some studies which compare the impact of bullying on children with and without certain disabilities, such as a speech and language difficulty, show that bullying has a greater impact on self-esteem for those with a disability.

## **Section 5**

### **Relevant Teachers**

- Teacher who views the bullying incident or to whom the incident is reported
- Class teacher (if not the teacher who viewed the incident or to whom it was reported)
- School principal/deputy principal

**Important Note – Any teacher may act as the Relevant Teacher should circumstances warrant it.**

**Once the relevant teacher has decided that a bullying incident has occurred it should be immediately reported to the Principal/Deputy Principal.**

## **Section 6**

### **Where does bullying happen?**

Bullying can happen anywhere at any time but there are certain times and places which particularly facilitate bullying.

**Cyber-bullying:** Access to technology means that cyber-bullying can happen around the clock and the pupil's home may not even be a safe haven from such bullying. Pupils are increasingly communicating in ways that are often unknown to adults and free from supervision. The nature of these technologies means digital content can be shared



and seen by a very wide audience almost instantly and is almost impossible to delete permanently. While cyber bullying often takes place at home and at night, the impact can also be felt in school.

**Areas of unstructured activity:** Bullying in schools frequently takes place in the playground/schoolyard. The behaviour of pupils in all areas needs careful monitoring.

**Bullying in the classroom:** Bullying may also take place in class. It may occur subtly through glances, looks and sniggers but may take the more overt form of physical intimidation.

**Coming to and from school:** Bullying can also take place at the bus-stop or on the journey to and from school whether the individuals are walking, cycling or on school buses.

## **Section 7**

### **Education & Prevention Strategies**

The education & prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber bullying and identity-based bullying, in particular homophobic and transphobic bullying) that will be used by Scoil Bhríde Cailíni are as follows:

- Respectful behaviour is modelled to all members of the school community at all times.
- Pupils will be taught what respectful language and respectful behaviour looks like, acts like, sounds like and feels like in class and around the school.
- Anti-Bullying topics are covered in SPHE under Stay Safe and RSE programmes.
- Key respect messages will be displayed in classrooms, in assembly areas and around the school. Pupils will be involved in developing these messages.
- Respectful behaviour is noticed and acknowledged positively.
- The use of discriminatory and derogatory language in the school is consistently tackled – this includes homophobic and racist language and language that is belittling of pupils with a disability or SEN.
- Constructive feedback is given to pupils when respectful behaviour and respectful language are absent.
- A system of encouragement and rewards to promote desired behaviour and compliance with the school rules and routines is in place.
- Pupils are taught about the appropriate use of social media.
- Pupils are encouraged positively to comply with the school rules on mobile phone and internet use. There is follow up and follow through with pupils who ignore the rules.
- Pupils are not permitted a mobile phone or other IT smart devices in school. However, in some exceptional cases, which must be notified to and approved by the Principal, a mobile phone may be permitted. In such cases, the mobile must be handed up to the teacher and turned off while on the school premises.
- The school has an internet use policy which is strictly observed.
- The school will seek to engage Parents and/or the Parents' Association in awareness raising campaigns around social media.
- The right of every member of the school community to be safe and secure in school is actively promoted.
- School rules are highlighted and explicitly taught in pupil friendly language in the classroom and in common areas.
- All staff actively watch out for signs of bullying behaviour.
- There is adequate playground/school yard/outdoor supervision.



- The work of the student council is strongly supported.

## Section 8

### Procedures for Investigation, Follow-up & Recording Bullying Incidents:

#### *Procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying*

The Board of Management will ensure that the school has clear procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying and that these are set out in the school's anti-bullying policy. The school's procedures are consistent with the following:

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 bullying, the teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved. If the teacher determines that an incident(s) of bullying has occurred all matters relating to this incident(s) must be recorded on Aladdin, in the appropriate section (**as sanctioned by the BOM on 25.11.20**). All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. 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. Non-teaching staff such as secretary, special needs assistants (SNAs), bus escorts, caretaker, cleaners must be 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.

1. The incident is reported to the relevant teachers.
2. Teachers will take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents.
3. Where possible incidents are generally best investigated outside the classroom situation (with the door open) to ensure the privacy of all involved.
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. If a group is involved, each member will be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved will be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member will be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements.
7. Each member of a group will be supported through the possible pressures that they may face them from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher.
8. It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s).
9. (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.

10. 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.
11. It must 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 & Recording**

1. In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant teacher must, 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.
2. Follow-up and recording with the relevant parties involved will 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.
3. 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 relevant teacher in the recording template.
4. Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures.
5. 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.

#### **Procedures for recording bullying behaviour**

It is imperative that all recording of bullying incidents must be done in an objective and factual manner.

The school's procedures for noting and recording bullying behaviour are as follows:

##### **Informal (predetermination that bullying has occurred)**

1. While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, this teacher will use his/her professional judgement in relation to the records to be kept of these reports.
2. All records will be recorded on Aladdin under the pupil profile, notes and documents anti-bullying tag.
3. The relevant teacher must inform the principal of all incidents being investigated.

##### **Formal – Stage 1 (determination that bullying has occurred)**

1. If it is established by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher must keep appropriate records which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.
2. The school will use the Aladdin system to record all incidences of bullying.

##### **Formal – Stage 2 (Appendix 3 – from DES Procedures)**



The relevant teacher must use the recording template at Appendix 3 to record the bullying behaviour in the following circumstances:

- (a) In cases where he/she considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour occurred and,
- (b) Where the school has decided, as part of its anti-bullying policy, that in certain exceptional circumstances bullying behaviour must be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal, Deputy Principal, as applicable.

In each of the circumstances at (a) and (b) above, the recording template must be completed in full and retained by the teacher in question and a copy provided to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable. It should also be noted that the timeline for recording bullying behaviour in the recording template does not in any way preclude the relevant teacher from consulting the Principal or Deputy Principal at an earlier stage in relation to a case.

### **Bullying as part of a continuum of behaviour**

It is also important to note that bullying behaviour can be part of a continuum of behaviour rather than a stand-alone issue and in some cases behaviour may escalate beyond that which can be described as bullying to serious physical or sexual assault or harassment. To ensure that any such cases are dealt with appropriately, the school's anti-bullying policy will provide for appropriate linkages with the overall code of behaviour and provide for referral to be made to relevant external agencies and authorities where appropriate. In cases where the school has serious concerns in relation to managing the behaviour of a pupil, the advice of the National Education Psychological Service (NEPS) will be sought.

### **Referral of serious cases to the HSE**

In relation to bullying in schools, Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017 (Children First) and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2023 provide that in situations where "the incident is serious and where the behaviour is regarded as potentially abusive, the school must consult the HSE Children and Family Social Services with a view to drawing up an appropriate response, such as a management plan".

Serious instances of bullying behaviour should, in accordance with the Children First and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2023, be referred to the HSE Children and Family Services and/or Gardaí as appropriate.

The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2023 also provide that where school personnel have concerns about a child but are not sure whether to report the matter to the HSE, the Designated Liaison Person must seek advice from the HSE Children and Family Social Services.

## **Section 9**

### **School Programme of Support:**

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

- All staff are aware of the National Guidance for the Protection & Welfare of Children 2017 (Children First) and Child Protection Procedures for Primary & Post Primary Schools 2023.
- Stay Safe/RSE Programmes – taught alternate years
- Circle Time – promoted by many school staff.
- Walk Tall Programme (Self Esteem)



- The School Code of Behaviour – on school website.
- Internet safety policy.
- School mobile phone/smart device policy.
- National Educational Psychological Scheme (NEPS).
- Yard supervision policy & rota.
- School supervision guidelines.
- Substance use policy.
- Staff alert to vulnerable pupils.
- Staff training in Incredible Years

## **Section 10**

### **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 behaviour and to facilitate early intervention where possible.

## **Section 11**

### **Prevention of Harassment**

The Board of Management confirms that the school will, in accordance with its obligations under equality legislation, take all 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.

## **Section 12**

### **Reports to the Board of Management**

At least once in every school term the Principal will report to the Board of Management on:

- The overall number of bullying cases reported (by means of the bullying record template) since the previous report to the Board of Management; and
- Confirm that all cases referred to above have been or are being dealt with in accordance with the school's anti-bullying policy and the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary & Post Primary Schools*.

The minutes of the Board of Management meeting must record the above but no identifying details of the pupils involved will be given to the Board.

## **Section 13**

This policy was reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management on 3-10-2024.

## **Section 14**

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to parents. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department of Education & Skills and the patron if requested.

