Coláiste Pobail Bheanntraí

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Coláiste Pobail Bheanntraí - Anti Bullying Policy

1. In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the Code of Behaviour guidelines issued by the *National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB -* now 'The Child and Family Agency', which is known as *TUSLA)*, the Board of Management of *Coláiste Pobail Bheanntraí* 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 students 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-
        o   is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity;
        o   encourages students to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment; and
        o   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-
        o   build empathy, respect and resilience in students; and
        o   explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.
    - Effective supervision and monitoring of students;
    - 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 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'.

The school reserves the right to apply its anti-bullying policy in respect of bullying that occurs at a location, activity, function, or program that is not school related if it is in the opinion of the Principal, and/or Board of Management (BOM) that the alleged bullying has created a hostile environment at school for the person being bullied, has infringed on the rights of the person being bullied at the school and/or has materially or substantially disrupted the education process or the orderly operation of the school

Additional information on different types of bullying is set out in Appendix 1

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4. The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying in *Coláiste Pobail Bheanntraí* is/are as follows:

In accordance with the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, a student or parent/guardian may bring a bullying concern to <u>any</u> member of staff working in the school who will then inform the 'relevant teacher' with responsibility for investigating and dealing with the bullying concern – namely, the Class Tutor(s) of the student(s) being bullied. In this regard, depending on the particular circumstances of the alleged bullying incident, it may be necessary to involve several Class Tutors and, indeed, the relevant Year Heads

5. 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:

The management and staff of *Coláiste Pobail Bheanntraí* recognise that a cornerstone in the prevention of bullying is a positive school culture and, in this regard, are committed to creating such a positive school culture and climate that is welcoming of difference and diversity and that is based on inclusivity and respect.

This Anti-bullying policy, formulated within the framework of the school's 'Code of Behaviour', is central to the school's approach to countering bullying behaviour and is complemented by other policies relevant to this area such as the school's 'Pastoral Care Policy', its 'Mobile Phone Policy', its 'Acceptable Usage Policy' or 'AUP', governing computer and internet usage and its 'Child Protection Policy'. The school is in the process of developing its 'Guidance Plan' as a means of supporting the needs of its diverse student body and is also seeking to implement the *Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools: Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (2013)*. It has also enlisted the services of the 'Health Service Executive' (*HSE)* under the *Schools for Health in Ireland* framework so as to attain the status of a 'Health Promoting School'. In addition, the school has adopted the 'National Educational Psychological Service' (*NEPS)* 'Continuum of Support' approach which makes provision for student support structures for those students eg. those with Special Educational Needs (SEN), with significant needs related to bullying behaviour.

In relation to the school curriculum, all teachers are actively encouraged, within the teaching of their subjects, to foster an attitude of respect for all, to address prejudice and stereotyping and to highlight the unacceptability of bullying. There are a number of curriculum components and programmes which are particularly relevant in terms of educating students and raising awareness with regards to bullying. *SPHE*, which is a mandatory component of the junior cycle curriculum in the school, makes specific provision for exploring bullying, as well as the inter-related areas of belonging and integrating, conflict, personal safety and relationships. The 'Relationships and Sexuality Education' (*RSE*) programme in the school, at both junior and senior cycle, provides opportunities to explore areas such as relationships and sexuality, which has particular relevance to identity-based bullying. In *CSPE*, a junior cycle subject, there is provision for exploring rights and responsibilities, stereotyping and prejudice. Both *CSPE* and *SPHE* at junior cycle provide opportunities to deal with online privacy and thereby educate students about appropriate online behaviour, including, specifically, dealing with cyberbullying.

Meetings of the Student Council will be encouraged and supported to regularly to discuss bullying as an issue of concern for students, and to promote a positive school culture of diversity, inclusivity and respect

Consideration to be given to implementing a school-wide 'Friendship Week' and/or 'Safer Internet Day (SID)' in order to raise awareness of the issue of bullying and cyberbullying

The Parents Association will be encouraged and supported to invite guest speakers and provide resources relating to bullying for the benefit of the parent body

All students to receive presentation from *An Garda Síochána* on the topic of cyberbullying and for additional supporting material from the *Office for Internet Safety* (OIS), an Executive Office of the *Department of Justice and Equality,* to be disseminated to students and their parents.

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 management of *Coláiste Pobail Bheanntraí* recognise that a consistent and clear approach to dealing with bullying when it occurs is essential to effective practice. The main aim for the Class Tutor in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame).

Reports of bullying

Any member of staff, including non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), 'School Completion Programme' (SCP) staff, bus drivers/escorts, caretakers, cleaners (the list is not exhaustive) are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to any teacher. Similarly, a student and/or a parent/guardian may bring a bullying concern to any teacher. Such reports are then conveyed to the relevant Class Tutor. All reports of bullying, including anonymous reports, will be treated seriously and investigated and dealt with by the relevant Class Tutor. Anonymous reports of alleged bullying may be submitted to the school by way of the *ISPCC* 'Blue Shield' reporting tool accessible on the school website. In this way, students will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance. While all reports of bullying, including anonymous reports, will be investigated and dealt with the Class Tutor, the Tutor will use their discretion in relation to the records to be kept of these reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same. Records maintained by the Class Tutor will be in accordance with school policy in this area and the relevant Data Protection legislation

Procedures for investigating bullying

In investigating and dealing with bullying, the Class Tutor will exercise professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved. The Class Tutor will take a calm, problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour

When investigating and analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the Class Tutor will seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why and record the responses

Incidents will be investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all concerned

All interviews will be conducted with sensitivity and due regard to the rights of all students concerned

In attempting to get both sides of the story, the Class Tutor will take a non-judgemental approach when dealing with reported incidents of bullying behaviour.

If a group is involved in the alleged bullying, 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 their account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements

On Completion of Investigation

In cases where it has been determined by the Class Tutor that bullying behaviour has occurred, the Class Tutor will record the details in the 'Recording Template' which is kept in individual student files.

The student(s) engaged in the bullying will have it made clear to them by the Class Tutor that they are in breach of the school's 'Anti-Bullying Policy' and an effort will be made to try to get the student(s) to see the situation from the perspective of the student(s) being bullied.

The parents/guardians of the parties involved will be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken at school level. The parents/guardians and students involved will be encouraged to support the actions being taken at school level and to help restore, as far as is practicable, and as quickly as possible, the relationships of the parties involved

In situations where the Class Tutor determines that the bullying behaviour requires the imposition of disciplinary sanctions, the Tutor will clarify to all the parties that this is a private matter between the student being disciplined, his/her parents/guardians and the school authorities. In certain circumstances, the level of bullying behaviour may warrant immediate reporting to the Principal or Deputy Principal for further disciplinary action

The Class Tutor will direct those students involved in the bullying towards the supports available within the school. The Class Tutor will also arrange follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved with a view to possibly bringing them together at some point if the student(s) who has/have been bullied are ready and agreeable to this

In cases where the Class Tutor 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, he/she, in conjunction with the relevant Year Head, will decide what further action needs to be taken and this will be recorded by the Class Tutor in the 'Recording Template'

In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed, the Class Tutor will, 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/guardians and/or the school Principal/Deputy Principal

Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents will be referred, as appropriate, to the school's 'Complaints Procedures'

In the event that a parent/guardian has exhausted the school's 'Complaints Procedures' and is still not satisfied, the school will advise the parents/guardians of their right to make a complaint to the *Ombudsman for Children.*

In relation to bullying in schools, *Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011 (Children First)* and the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* provide that in situations where "the incident is serious and where the behaviour is regarded as potentially abusive, the school will consult the *HSE* Children and Family Social Services with a view to drawing up an appropriate response, such as a management plan". It is therefore the intention of management in *Coláiste Pobail Bheanntraí* to refer serious instances of bullying behaviour to the *HSE Children and Family Services* and/or the *Gardaí* as appropriate. In cases where the school management has serious concerns in relation to managing the bullying behaviour of a student, the advice of the *National Education Psychological Service* (*NEPS*) will be sought.

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

Staff support

The management and staff in *Coláiste Pobail Bheanntraí* are very aware of the importance of catering for the needs and welfare of its student body. A programme of support for students who have been bullied is in place in the school so as to raise their self-esteem, develop their friendship and social skills and thereby develop their resilience and coping mechanism. A programme of support for those students involved in bullying behaviour is also part of the school's intervention process as those involved in bullying may need assistance on an ongoing basis to increase their self-esteem. It is recognised that students who engage in bullying behaviour may need counselling and other supports to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others. There are also opportunities for those who have observed bullying to discuss the situation with teachers.

There is a formal 'Pastoral Care' referral system in place in the school comprising of a Class Tutor for each class group, two Year Heads for each year group and then the Deputy Principal and Principal as part of the Senior Management structure in the school. There are additional support personnel in the school, namely, the two Guidance Counsellors and the School Chaplain, who can provide further support, advice and guidance to any student experiencing troubling or difficult times.

Concerns about the welfare of students may arise at any time and in the course of the teaching of any subject but issues generally regarded as being sensitive for students are specifically addressed at the weekly meeting of the 'Student Support Team'. This comprises the Principal, Deputy Principal, Guidance Counsellor, Chaplain, Year Head/Attendance Officer, SEN personnel and Co-Ordinator/Project Worker of 'School Completion Programme' (SCP). There is also a weekly meeting of the 'Care Team', comprising of the Principal, Deputy Principal, Guidance Counsellors and Chaplain, which deals with the care needs of students that are of a more highly confidential nature

Peer Support

(a) The school also operates a peer mentoring system through the 'Meitheal' group in the school – this group is selected from third year students in the school and they attend a leadership training course in the *Scala* offices in Blackrock in Cork. This group of students also attend on the day when the incoming 1st year students are in the school for the first day in August and they provide ongoing support and advice so as to assist the incoming 1st year students make the transition from primary to post-primary school throughout their 1st year.

(b) The school also has a 'Student Council' comprising students, elected by their peers, from each of the year groups and this body meets on a regular basis to discuss issues of particular relevance to the lives of students in the school.

External Support

The school also avails of the services of external agencies such as *Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)*, the *HSE*, *TUSLA*, *National Council for Special Education (NCSE)*, *National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS)*, *NEPS* and *An Gárda Síochána* in order to provide additional support services for students involved in bullying incidents

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 and to facilitate early intervention where possible.

9. **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 students or the harassment of students 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.

10. This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on _____

11. This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the Trustees if requested.

12. At least once in every school term, the Principal will provide a report to the Board of Management setting out the overall number of bullying cases reported (by means of the 'Recording Template') since the previous report to the Board. As part of this report, the Principal will provide confirmation that all cases referred to in the report have been or are being dealt with in accordance with the school's 'Anti-Bullying Policy'

13. This policy and its implementation will be subject to continuous review in the light of incidents of bullying encountered. In the first instance, any concerns regarding bullying will be discussed at the weekly meeting of the 'Student Support Team'. The implementation of the policy will also be included on the agenda of each staff meeting. Consideration will be given to conducting an annual survey of students to ascertain information regarding the occurrence of bullying and the effectiveness of the 'Anti-Bullying Policy'. Data gathered from the 'Recording Templates' will be regularly (at least once in every school year) collated and analysed with a view to monitoring levels of bullying behaviour and identifying any particular issues that require attention or any significant trends in behaviour. A record of this analysis will be retained and made available to the Board of Management. Appropriate responses to any issues identified will be drawn up and implemented. The policy 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 and provided to the Parents' Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the Trustees and the Department of Education.

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

Date: _____   Date: _____

Date of next review: _____

Appendix 1: Types of bullying

The following are some of the types of bullying behaviour that can occur amongst students (the list is not exhaustive):

<u>Physical aggression</u>: This behaviour includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and ripping people. It may also take the form of severe physical assault. While students often engage in 'mess fights', they can sometimes be used as a disguise for physical harassment or inflicting pain.

<u>Intimidation</u>: 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.

<u>Isolation/exclusion and other relational bullying</u>: This occurs where a certain person is deliberately isolated, excluded or ignored by some or all of the class group. This practice is usually initiated by the person engaged in bullying behaviour and can be difficult to detect. It may be accompanied by writing insulting remarks about the student in public places, by passing around notes about or drawings of the student or by whispering insults about them loud enough to be heard. Relational bullying occurs when a person's attempts to socialise and form relationships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined. One of the most common forms includes control: "Do this or I won't be your friend anymore"(implied or stated); a group ganging up against one person (girl or boy); non-verbal gesturing; malicious gossip; spreading rumours about a person or giving them the "silent treatment".

<u>Cyber-bullying</u>: 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). Many forms of bullying can be facilitated through cyber-bullying. For example, a target may be sent homophobic text messages or pictures may be posted with negative comments about a person's sexuality, appearance etc.

<u>Name calling</u>: Persistent name-calling directed at the same individual(s) which hurts, insults or humiliates should be regarded as a form of bullying behaviour. Often name-calling of this type refers to physical appearance, e.g., size or clothes worn. accent or distinctive voice characteristics may attract negative attention. Academic ability can also provoke name calling. This tends to operate at two extremes. There are those who are singled out for attention because they are perceived to be weak academically. At the other extreme there are those who, because they are perceived as high achievers, are also targeted.

<u>Damage to property</u>: Personal property can be the focus of attention for bullying behaviour. This may result in damage to clothing, mobile phone or other devices, school books and other learning material or interference with a student's locker or bicycle. The contents of school bags and pencil cases may be scattered on the floor. Items of personal property may be defaced, broken, stolen or hidden.

<u>Extortion</u>: Demands for money may be made, often accompanied by threats (sometimes carried out in the event of the targeted pupil not delivering on the demand). A student may also be forced into theft of property for delivery to another who is engaged in bullying behaviour.