Skibbereen Community School

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 Skibbereen Community school 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.

b) Effective leadership

c) A school-wide approach

d) shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact

e) 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.

f) Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils

g) Supports for staff

h) Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies); and

i) 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.

Examples of bullying behaviours

General behaviours which apply to all types of bullying	- Harassment based on any of the nine grounds in the equality legislation e.g. sexual harassment, homophobic bullying, racist bullying etc. - Physical aggression - Damage to property - Name calling - Slagging - The production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other materials aimed at intimidating another person - Offensive graffiti - Extortion - Intimidation - Insulting or offensive gestures - The "look" - Invasion of personal space - A combination of any of the types listed.
Cyber	Denigration: Spreading rumours, lies or gossip to hurt a person's reputation

	• Harassment: Continually sending vicious, mean or disturbing messages to an individual • Impersonation: Posting offensive or aggressive messages under another person's name • Flaming: Using inflammatory or vulgar words to provoke an online fight • Trickery: Fooling someone into sharing personal information which you then post online • Outing: Posting or sharing confidential or compromising information or images • Exclusion: Purposefully excluding someone from an online group • Cyber stalking: Ongoing harassment and denigration that causes a person considerable fear for his/her safety • Silent telephone/mobile phone call • Abusive telephone/mobile phone calls • Abusive text messages • Abusive email • Abusive communication on social networks e.g. Facebook/Ask.fm/ Twitter/You Tube or on games consoles • Abusive website comments/Blogs/Pictures • Abusive posts on any form of communication technology
Identity Based Behaviours **Including any of the nine discriminatory grounds mentioned in Equality Legislation** (gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community).	
Homophobic and Transgender	• Spreading rumours about a person's sexual orientation • Taunting a person of a different sexual orientation • Name calling e.g. Gay, queer, lesbian...used in a derogatory manner • Physical intimidation or attacks • Threats
Race, nationality, ethnic background and membership of the Traveller community	• Discrimination, prejudice, comments or insults about colour, nationality, culture, social class, religious beliefs, ethnic or traveller background • Exclusion on the basis of any of the above
Relational	This involves manipulating relationships as a means of bullying. Behaviours include: • Malicious gossip • Isolation & exclusion

	•Ignoring •Excluding from the group •Taking someone's friends away •"Bitching" •Spreading rumours •Breaking confidence •Talking loud enough so that the victim can hear •The "look" •Use or terminology such as 'nerd' in a derogatory way
Sexual	•Unwelcome or inappropriate sexual comments or touching •Harassment
Special Educational Needs	•Name calling •Taunting others because of their disability or learning needs •Taking advantage of some pupils' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to recognise and defend themselves against bullying •Taking advantage of some pupils' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to understand social situations and social cues. •Mimicking a person's disability •Setting others up for ridicule

4. The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying in this school are the Year Heads who in turn will be supported by the:
   - Principal
   - Deputy Principal
   - Guidance Counsellor
   - Care Team /Student Support Team personnel

5. The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber-bullying, homophobic and transphobic bullying) that will be used by the school are as follows:
   - The management and staff of Skibbereen Community School recognise that a cornerstone in the prevention of bullying is a positive school culture. Accordingly, the school is committed to creating a school culture that is welcoming of difference and is based on inclusivity and respect for all members of the school community.
   - The school's code of behaviour highlights this commitment. This code which is a central part of both staff and student diaries outlines both the roles and responsibilities of all members of the school community.

- This ant-bullying policy, is central to the school's approach to countering bullying behaviour and is complemented by other school policies and procedures such as child protection, acceptable use policy, pastoral care policy and CCTV policy.
- The fostering and enhancing of the self-esteem of all our students through both curricular and extracurricular activities. Students will be provided with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth through formal and informal interactions.
- Primary schools are contacted prior to students entering the school in order to ascertain if there are any students who are vulnerable or susceptible to bullying behaviour.
- All staff members are actively encouraged within their subjects, teaching methodologies and daily interactions with students and colleagues to foster an attitude of respect for all, to challenge prejudice and stereotyping and highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour.
- All staff are encouraged to attend CPD on bullying behaviour.
- All staff members, teachers, students and visiting speakers are expected to promote safe and responsible use of technology in the school, in particular, the safe use of the internet, social media and photographic and /or recording devices.
- 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.
- There are a number of curriculum components that are particularly relevant to educating awareness around bullying behaviour: SPHE and RSE both at Junior and Senior level provide opportunities to explore identity, relationships, sexuality and associated bullying behaviour. CSPE teaches students about their rights and responsibilities as individuals and as members of communities. The new junior cycle program incorporates many opportunities to discuss bullying behaviour.
- The Student Council (when established) will be encouraged to discuss and raise awareness of bullying behaviour as part of their responsibilities in promoting a positive school culture. As part of this responsibility the student council may be asked for assistance in highlighting 'hot spots' and 'hot times' where bullying behaviour may take place.
- The Parent's Association is encouraged to raise awareness of bullying behaviour.
- The school organises both induction and mentoring programs for first year students. As part of these programs the issues of friendships, relationships and appropriate behaviour is addressed.
- The school will implement regular whole school awareness measures to include: organising periodic anti-bullying and internet safety workshops for students and parents, noticeboard campaigns, the promotion of friendship weeks and clubs, regular student surveys, regularly addressing the topic of bullying behaviour at year group morning assemblies.
- The school will actively support national campaigns such as internet safety week and identity based bullying campaigns.
- The school encourages a culture of telling, with particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders. In that way students will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It will be made clear to all students that

when they report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.

- The school will specifically consider the additional needs of SEN pupils with regard to programme implementation and the development of skills and strategies to enable all pupils to respond appropriately.

6. Procedures for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying

The primary aim 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).

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:

A. Reporting bullying behaviour

- Any pupil or parent/guardian may bring a bullying incident to any teacher/member of staff in the school.
- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying, will be investigated and dealt with by the Relevant Teacher.
- Teaching and non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), bus escorts, caretakers, cleaners must report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them. On receipt of such a report the staff member in question will make a careful record of the report using the person's own words as much as possible.
- Students should understand that there are no innocent bystanders and that all incidents of bullying behaviour must be reported to a teacher.
- Once a staff member receives a concern regarding bullying behaviour, they will complete the school's 'Bullying Concern Form' and refer the matter to the appropriate Relevant Teacher.
- It may be the case that the Relevant Teacher receives the first such report. This being case, the 'Bullying Concern Form' will still be used to record the initial report and the Relevant Teacher will proceed in accordance with the steps outlined below.
- Staff members are advised to take a calm, unemotional approach to receiving such reports. The staff member will not question the person other than to seek clarification, make any judgemental statements, give any undertaking of secrecy or begin any investigation.

B. Investigating and dealing with incidents:

- The Relevant Teacher will proceed to investigate the matter and ascertain the facts in order to decide whether or not bullying behaviour has occurred.
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) 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;
- The purpose of these investigations will be to seek answers to the questions of what, where, when, who and why.

- In an attempt to hear all sides of the story, all involved may be interviewed separately at first. All interviews will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all students concerned.
- Students who are not directly involved may also be interviewed as they may also be able to provide very useful information.
- Where possible incidents will be investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.
- If a group is involved, each member may be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved may be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member may be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements;
- Each member of a group will be supported through the possible pressures that may face them from the other members of the group after the interview by the teacher. It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s).
- The school will give parent(s)/guardian(s) an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports provided to the pupil.

C. Dealing with Bullying Behaviour

- Having ascertained the facts, the Relevant Teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved.
- Where the Relevant Teacher has determined that bullying behaviour has indeed occurred, he/she will complete a 'Bullying Report Form' and furnish a copy to the appropriate Deputy Principal. He/she may seek advice from the Deputy Principal on how best to deal with the matter.
- At this stage the primary aim of the Relevant Teacher will be to resolve any issues and restore as far as practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.
- In cases where it has been determined by the Relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the parties involved will be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken.
- Parents/Guardians and students are required to assist the school in resolving the issues as quickly as possible.
- It will be made clear to the student(s) engaged in the bullying behaviour that they are in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and code of Behaviour. An attempt will be made to get them to see the situation from the perspective of the student being bullied.
- In so far as possible a no blame approach and restorative practices will be used where those involved will receive an explanation of the issues, be given the opportunity to share responsibility and be encouraged to identify solutions.
- If in the professional opinion of the Relevant Teacher the bullying behaviour is of a serious nature or persists after intervention has taken place, the parents of the parties involved will be contacted to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken. Sanctions in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour may be applied at this stage. If the bullying behaviour persists after

this step the Relevant Teacher will refer the matter to the appropriate Deputy Principal.

- It is important to note that:
  - In some cases, the behaviour concerned may be of such a serious nature as to be considered serious misbehaviour or gross misconduct in terms of the school's Code of Behaviour. In such cases, sanctions could include suspension or in very serious cases expulsion. Examples of such behaviour include: serious/protracted cyberbullying, physical, sexual assault or harassment.
  - In such cases the parents of the student being bullied may be encouraged to report the matter to the Gardaí. The school reserves the right to make referrals where appropriate to relevant external agencies at any point in the process. Examples of these agencies include: Gardaí, HSE. NEPS.
  - If it is the case the disciplinary sanctions are required, such sanctions will adhere to the guidelines set out in the school's code of behaviour and will be a private matter between the student(s) being disciplined, their parents and the school.

D. Follow up

- 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;
  - Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parent(s)/guardian(s) or the school Principal or Deputy Principal.
- The Relevant Teacher will arrange follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved in order to ascertain if the bullying behaviour has ceased. As part of this process the Relevant Teacher will use their professional judgement to decide if it is possible or would be beneficial to bring the parties together. Such meetings will only take place if the bullied student is agreeable.
- If some cases, Child Protection procedures may dictate that bullying behaviour is reported to TUSLA. Furthermore, where the school management has serious concerns in regarding to managing a bullying incident of a student or bullying behaviour of a student, the advice of the National Psychological Service (NEPS) will be sought.
- Where a parent(s)/guardian(s) is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parent(s)/guardian(s) will be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures.
- In the event that a parent(s)/guardian(s) has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school will advise the parent(s)/guardian(s) of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

E. Recording of 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 reporting bullying behaviour are as follows:

- All staff must keep a written record of any incidents witnessed by them or notified to them. All incidents must be reported to the Relevant Teacher.
- While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the Relevant Teacher, the Relevant Teacher must keep a written record of the reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same.
- The Relevant Teacher must inform the appropriate Deputy Principal of all incidents being investigated. The Deputy principal in turn will inform the Principal.
- If it is established by the Relevant Teacher that bullying has occurred, the Relevant Teacher must keep appropriate written records which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.
- The Relevant Teacher must use the school bullying report form 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.
  b) In some cases, where the behaviour concerned may be of such a serious nature as to be considered serious misbehaviour or gross misconduct in terms of the school's Code of Behaviour. The Examples of such behaviour include: serious/protracted cyberbullying, physical, sexual assault or harassment. Such behaviour must be recorded and reported immediately to the appropriate Deputy Principal who in turn will inform the Principal.

- These records will be stored and accessed in accordance with the school's Data Protection policy.
- The principal will periodically report to the Board of Management the number of cases reported by The Relevant Teacher using the school's bullying report form in a) and b) above.

7. Programme of Support

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

- The management and staff of Skibbereen Community School are very aware of the need to support both the students who have been bullied and those involved in bullying behaviour.
- At this stage in the process the Relevant Teacher may direct the parties involved towards the supports available in the school. These supports are comprised primarily of members of the school's care team, Year Heads, Guidance team,

Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator, Chaplain, Deputy Principal and Principal.

- Within the team, the Guidance Counselling staff play a vital role in supporting and guiding students who have been impacted by bullying behaviour either as a bully, the bullied or as a witness. Their services may be offered to all involved.
- Programs of support may be designed to:
  - Address any self-esteem issues and to develop friendships, social skills and build resilience and coping skills of those who have been bullied.
  - Address any self-esteem issues of the bully while also educating them in more appropriate ways of meeting their needs other than violating the rights of others.
  - Address any issues experienced by witnesses to bullying. In particular, any pressures they may experience as a result of being interviewed by the Relevant Teacher.
- If students require counselling or further supports the school will endeavour to liaise with the appropriate agencies to organise same. These agencies may include local counselling services, HSE, CAMHS, NEPS, NCSE, NBSS and the Gardaí.

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 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.

10. This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on the 13th of November 2017.

11. This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and is readily accessible to parents and pupils on request and provided to the Parents' Association.

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, 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 patron and the Department.

Signed: _____   Signed: _____

(Chairperson of Board of Management)   (Principal)

Date: _____   Date: _____