

Anti-Bullying Policy - St. Comgall's N.S.

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 St. Comgall's N.S. 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;
- Effective leadership;
- A school-wide approach;
- A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact;
- Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that-
 - build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and
 - explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.
- Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils;
- Supports for staff;
- Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies); and
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

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.

Examples of Bullying behaviour

<p>General behaviours which apply to all types of bullying</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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 to intimidating another person - Offensive graffiti - Intimidation - Insulting or offensive gestures - The 'Look' - Invasion of personal space - A combination of any of the types listed
<p>Cyber</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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. - Exclusion: Purposefully excluding someone from an online group - Cyber stalking: Ongoing harassment and degeneration that causes a person considerable fear for his/her safety - Silent telephone/mobile phone call - Abusive telephone/mobile phone calls - Abusive text messages - Abusive emails

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Abusive communication on social network sites, e.g. Facebook, Twitter/Youtube etc
Identity Based Behaviours	
<p>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)</p>	
Homophobic and Transgender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Spreading rumours about a person's sexual orientation - Taunting a person of 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discrimination, prejudice, comments or insults about colour, nationality, culture, social class, religious beliefs, ethnic or traveler background - Exclusion on the basis of any of the above
Relational	<p>This involves manipulating relationships as means of bullying. Behaviours include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Malicious gossip - Isolation & exclusion - Ignoring - Excluding from group - Taking someones' friends away - 'Bitching' - Spreading rumours - Breaking confidence - Talking loudly enough so that the victim can hear - The 'Look' - Use terminology such as 'nerd' in a derogatory way
Sexual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unwelcome or inappropriate sexual comments or touching - Harassment
Special educational Needs, Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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

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.

4. The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying is (are) as follows:

Mrs. AM Pennell (Principal)

Mrs. E Hagan (in the absence of the Principal)

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

Engage pupils in addressing problems when they arise. This strategy will build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils.

Through curricular and cross curricular programmes, St. Comgall's N.S. will provide pupils with opportunities to develop a positive sense of worth.

To deal explicitly with the issue of identity-based bullying and in particular homophobic and transphobic bullying, St. Comgall's will include relevant LGBT posters on notice boards, discussions with parents about specific statements of welcome and respect for LGBT members of the school community, teaching the Social, Personal, Health education (SPHE) resource, Growing Up LGBT and participating in LGBT awareness events.

To address cyber-bullying we will educate pupils on appropriate online behaviour, how to stay safe while on-line and also on developing a culture of reporting any concerns about cyber-bullying. The school-wide approach and the role of parents is of importance in this regard. The prevention and awareness raising measures will also take into account the scope for cyber-bullying to occur as a result of access to technology from within the school.

The school's approach to tackling and preventing bullying will take particular account of the needs of pupils with disabilities or with SEN, and will join up with other relevant school policies and supports and will ensure that all the services that provide for such pupils work together. Approaches to decreasing the likelihood of bullying for pupils with SEN include improving inclusion, focusing on developing social skills, paying attention to key moments such as transitioning from primary to post-primary and cultivating a good school culture which has respect for all and helping one another as central.

Our school's prevention and awareness raising measures will be appropriate to the type of bullying and take into account the age and gender of the pupils involved. We will work to raise the awareness of bullying so that all members of the school community understand what bullying is and how the school deals with bullying behaviour.

The school may for example choose to have an awareness day for staff, pupils and parents. An awareness day can help give the parents of a pupil who is being bullied the confidence to approach the school and also helps to send a clear message to the parents of a pupil who is engaged in bullying behaviour that they have a major responsibility in addressing their child's behaviour.

Teachers will influence attitudes to bullying behaviour in a positive manner through a range of curricular initiatives. There are a number of curriculum components and programmes which are particularly relevant to the prevention of bullying and the promotion of respect for diversity and inclusiveness. The SPHE curriculum makes specific provision for exploring bullying as well as the inter-related areas of belonging and integrating, communication, conflict, friendship, personal safety and relationships. The Stay Safe programme at primary level, is

a personal safety skills programme which seeks to enhance children's self-protection skills including their ability to recognise and cope with bullying. The Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) programme at post-primary provides opportunities to explore and discuss areas such as human sexuality and relationships, which has particular relevance to identity-based bullying. Various other social, health and media education programmes can further help to address the problem of bullying behaviour. For example, the *Schools for Health in Ireland* framework provides guidance on developing a health promoting school. There is space within the teaching of all subjects to foster an attitude of respect for all: to promote the value of diversity; to address prejudice and stereotyping and to highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour. In English, there is a wide range of literature available which could be used to stimulate discussion. In Geography and History references to colonisation, exploitation and dictatorships could be used to illustrate the negative aspect of power. The work could be extended into many other areas such as Art, Drama, Religious Education, and Physical Education. Co-operation and group enterprise can be promoted through team sports, school clubs and societies as well as through practical subjects. Sporting activities in particular can provide excellent opportunities for channelling and learning how to control aggression.

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

A consistent and clear approach to dealing with bullying when it occurs is essential to effective practice.

A pupil or parent may bring a bullying concern to any teacher in the school. Individual teachers must take appropriate measures regarding reports of bullying behaviour in accordance with the school's anti-bullying policy.

In these procedures, the member of teaching staff who has responsibility for investigating and dealing with bullying is referred to as the "relevant teacher". At primary level, the relevant teacher will normally be the class teacher.

Established intervention strategies

The *Action Plan on Bullying* published on the Department's website in January 2013 highlighted the importance of schools identifying and consistently implementing established evidence-based intervention strategies for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour and preventing its continuation.

Procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying

St. Comgall's N.S. 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 will be consistent with the following:

- (i) 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);
- (ii) 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;
- (iii) All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must 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;
- (iv) Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), bus escorts, caretakers, cleaners must be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher;
- (v) 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;
- (vi) It is very important that all involved (including each set of pupils and parents) understand the above approach from the outset;
- (vii) Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents;
- (viii) Incidents are generally best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved;
- (ix) All interviews should 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;
- (x) When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher should seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This should be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner;
- (xi) If a group is involved, each member should be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved should be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member should be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements;
- (xii) Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that they may face from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher;
- (xiii) It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s);

(xiv) In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved should 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 should 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;

(xv) Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts should be made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied;

(xvi) 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;

(xvii) Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved should 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;

(xviii) 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 at **Appendix 3**

(xix) 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;

(xx) 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 Board of Management;

(xxi) In the event that a parent 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

The Board of Management will ensure that the school has clear procedures for the formal noting and reporting of bullying behaviour and these will be documented in the school's anti-bullying policy. All records will be maintained in accordance with relevant data protection legislation. The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour will adhere to the following:

(i) While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the relevant teacher will use

his/her professional judgement in relation to the records to be kept of these reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same;

(ii) 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.

(iii) 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 circumstances bullying behaviour must be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal.

In each of the circumstances at (a) and (b) above, the recording template at **Appendix 3** must be completed in full and retained by the teacher in question and a copy provided to the Principal. It should also be noted that the timeline for recording bullying behaviour in the recording template at **Appendix 3** does not in any way preclude the relevant teacher from consulting the 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 there are 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 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".

Serious instances of bullying behaviour will, in accordance with the *Children First and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, be referred to the HSE Children and Family Services and/or Gardaí as appropriate. The *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* 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 will seek advice from the HSE Children and Family Social Services.

Supports for pupils affected by bullying

A programme of support for pupils who have been bullied will be put in place. Such pupils may need counselling and/or opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop their friendship and social skills and thereby build resilience whenever this is needed.

A programme of support for those pupils involved in bullying behaviour will also be part of the school's intervention process. Pupils involved in bullying behaviour need assistance on an ongoing basis. For those with low self-esteem, opportunities will be developed to increase feelings of self-worth. It is, therefore, important that the learning strategies applied within the school allow for the enhancement of the pupil's self-worth. Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour may need counselling to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others.

Pupils who observe incidents of bullying behaviour should be encouraged to discuss them with their teachers.

7. The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying can be found in Appendix 5.

At least once in every school term, the Principal will provide a report to the Board of Management setting out:

- (i) the overall number of bullying cases reported (by means of the bullying recording template at Appendix 3) since the previous report to the Board and
- (ii) confirmation that all cases referred to at (i) above have been or are being, dealt with in accordance with the school's anti-bullying policy and the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary schools*.

The minutes of the Board of Management meeting will record the above but in doing so will not include any identifying details of the pupils involved.

Annual Review by the Board of Management

The Board of Management will undertake an annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation by the school.

A standardised checklist to be used in undertaking the review is included in Appendix 4 to these procedures. It should be noted that in order to complete the checklist, an examination and review involving both quantitative and

qualitative analysis as appropriate across the various elements of the implementation of the school's anti-bullying policy will be required.

The school will put in place an action plan to address any areas for improvement identified by the review.

Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, and will be readily accessible to parents and pupils on request and provided to the Parents' Association. A standardised notification which must be used for this purpose is included at **Appendix 4**. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Department Inspectorate

The Department's Inspectorate conducts a programme of school evaluations in primary and post-primary schools. Inspectors evaluate aspects of the school's work, including policies and procedures to support pupils' well-being. Arising from commitments made in the *Action Plan on Bullying*, the Board will work with the Inspectorate to create a positive school culture and to prevent and tackle bullying.

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.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 6th December 2023.

This policy has been made available to school personnel, and is readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parents' Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and 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, published on the school website (or where none exists, be otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parents' Association (where one exists). A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Signed: 
(Chairperson of Board of Management)
Date: 6th December 2023

Signed: 
(Principal)
Date: 6th December 2023

Date of next review: June 2024

Appendix 2

Practical tips for building a positive school culture and climate.

The following are some practical tips for immediate actions that can be taken to help build a positive school culture and climate and to help prevent and tackle bullying behaviour.

- Model respectful behaviour to all members of the school community at all times.
- Explicitly teach pupils what respectful language and respectful behaviour looks like, acts like, sounds like and feels like in class and around the school.
- Display key respect messages in classrooms, in assembly areas and around the school. Involve pupils in the development of these messages.
- Catch them being good - notice and acknowledge desired respectful behaviour by providing positive attention.
- Consistently tackle the use of discriminatory and derogatory language in the school - this includes homophobic and racist language and language that is belittling of pupils with a disability or SEN.
- Give constructive feedback to pupils when respectful behaviour and respectful language are absent.
- Have a system of encouragement and rewards to promote desired behaviour and compliance with the school rules and routines.
- Explicitly teach pupils about the appropriate use of social media.
- Positively encourage pupils to comply with the school rules on internet use.
- Follow up and follow through with pupils who ignore the rules.
- Actively involve parents and/or the Parents' Association in awareness raising campaigns around social media.
- Actively promote the right of every member of the school community to be safe and secure in school.
- Highlight and explicitly teach school rules in pupil friendly language in the classroom and in common areas.
- All staff can actively watch out for signs of bullying behaviour.
- Ensure there is adequate playground/school yard/outdoor supervision.
- School staff can get pupils to help them to identify bullying "hot spots" and "hot times" for bullying in the school.
- Hot spots tend to be in the playground/school yard/outdoor areas, changing rooms, corridors and other areas of unstructured supervision.
- Hot times again tend to be times where there is less structured supervision such as when pupils are in the playground/school yard or moving classrooms.
- Support the establishment and work of student councils.

Appendix 3

Template for recording bullying behavior

Name of pupil being bullied and class group

Name: _____ Class _____

Name(s) and class(es) of pupil(s) engaged in bullying behaviour

3. Source of bullying concern/report (tick relevant box(es))*

Pupil concerned	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other pupil	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parent	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Location of incidents (tick relevant box(es))*

Playground	<input type="checkbox"/>
Classroom	<input type="checkbox"/>
Corridor	<input type="checkbox"/>
Toilets	<input type="checkbox"/>
School Bus	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Name of person (s) who reported the bullying concern

6. Type of Bullying Behaviour (tick relevant box(es))

Physical Aggression	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cyber - bullying	<input type="checkbox"/>
Damage to Property	<input type="checkbox"/>	Intimidation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Isolation/Exclusion	<input type="checkbox"/>	Malicious Gossip	<input type="checkbox"/>
Name Calling	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Where behaviour is regarded as identity-based bullying, indicate the relevant category:

Homophobic	Disability/SEN related	Racist	Membership of Traveller Community	Other (specify)

8. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact

9. Details of actions taken:

Signed _____ (Relevant Teacher) Date _____

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal _____

* Note: The categories listed in the tables 3, 4 & 6 are suggested and schools may add to or amend these to suit their own circumstances.