Anti-Bullying Policy

Rationale:

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 Castletown Girls' School has adopted the following anti-bullying policy within the framework of the school's 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.

Key Principals:

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 base 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 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);
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

Definition:

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.

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 our 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.

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 and tripping people. It may also take the form of severe physical assault. While pupils often engage in 'mess fights' they can sometimes be used as a disguise for physical harassment or inflicting pain.
- Intimidation: Some bullying behaviour takes the form of intimation; it may be used on the use of very aggressive body language with the voice being used as a weapon. Particularly upsetting can be a facial expression with conveys aggression and/ or dislike.
- Isolation/exclusion and other relational bullying: This occurs where a certain person/ group 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 pupil in public places, by passing around notes about or drawings of the pupil 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; non verbal gesturing; malicious gossip; spreading rumours about a person or giving them the 'silent treatment'.

- Cyber-bullying: It is bullying carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as text, social network sites, e-mail, instant messaging, 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.
- Name calling: Persistent name – calling directed at the same individuals 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 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.
- Damage to property: Personal property can be the focus of attention for bullying behaviour. This may result in damage to clothing, mobile phones or other devices, school books and other learning materials or interference with a pupils' 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.
- Extortion: 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 pupil may also be forced into theft of property for delivery to another who is engaged in bullying behaviour.

The above types of bullying can also apply to adults in the following situations
1. Teacher/ Pupil, Pupil/ Teacher bullying
2. Teacher Parent, Parent/ Teacher bullying
3. Teacher/ Teacher

The same strategies for dealing with bullying incidents will apply where applicable.

Indicators of Bullying Behaviours

The following signs and symptoms may suggest that a pupil is being bullied:

- Anxiety about travelling to and from school e.g. requesting parents to drive or collect her, changing travel routes, avoiding regular times for travelling to and from school;
- Unwillingness to go to school, refusal to attend, truancy;
- Deterioration in educational performance, loss of concentration and loss of enthusiasm and interest in school;
- Pattern of physical illnesses, e.g. headaches, stomach aches;
- Unexplained changes either in mood or behaviour which may be particularly noticeable before returning to school after weekends or more especially after longer school holidays;
- Visible signs of anxiety or distress e.g. stammering, withdrawing, nightmares, difficulty in sleeping, crying, not eating, vomiting, bedwetting;
- Spontaneous out-of-character comments about either pupils or teachers;
- Possessions missing or damaged;
- Increased request for money or stealing money;
- Unexplained bruising or cuts or damaged clothing; and
- Reluctance and/or refusal to say what is troubling her.

There may be other signs depending on the individual and his circumstances. The above signs do not necessarily mean that a pupil is bullied but if repeated or occurring in combination, these signs do warrant investigation in order to establish what is affecting the pupil.

Roles and responsibilities

All members of staff have a responsibility in the successful implementation of this policy.

Class teachers have the initial responsibility for the investigation of and dealing with reports of bullying. If a pupil reports bullying to non class teaching staff member this information must be made known to the class teacher as soon as possible.

The Principal teacher may deal with the report of bullying if the class teacher, after fully investigating and attempting to deal with the issues, feels it appropriate to fill and submit an official bullying report form to the Principal where a successful outcome has not yet been reached.

In addition, the class teacher can, in accordance with our school's code of behaviour, automatically refer the report of bullying to the Principal or Deputy Principal if he/she deems that circumstances warrant such action and that the aforementioned procedure cannot be applied.

**Educational and Preventative Strategies**

We, at Castletown Girls' School, aim to use effective, age appropriate practices and awareness raising measures across all aspects of bullying and implement strategies to engage pupils in addressing problems when they arise. It is envisaged that such strategies will build empathy, respect and resilience among our pupils.

As self-esteem is a major factor in determining behaviour, our school, through both our curricular and extra-curricular programmes, will provide pupils with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth.

Our school's approach to tackling and preventing bullying will take particular account of the needs of our pupils with disabilities or special educational needs.

Teachers can influence attitudes to bullying behaviour in a positive manner through a range of curricular activities. 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 Stay Safe programme is formally taught all classes.

At Castletown Girls' School we recognise the opportunities within the teaching of all curricular 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.

We are a school where the Incredible Years (IY) behavioural management programme is implemented. The Incredible Years programme places emphasis upon positive and effective behavioural approaches and practices.

We, at Castletown Girls' School, recognise and acknowledge the prevalence of cyber bullying in society. As part of the curriculum we teach the children the importance of internet safety and highlight the issue of cyber bullying. In accordance with our Acceptable Use Policy we have put in place preventative measure to ensure that pupils have no access to any IT device or websites that could allow for cyber bullying to take place at school. The use of mobile phones or any multimedia devices are strictly prohibited. All pupil laptops and computers are filtered to ensure that pupils have no access to social networking sites. If an incident of cyber bullying, which takes place out of school hours, is reported to us we will inform the parents of the parties involved. Staff cannot investigate report of cyber bullying if they did not take place on the school premises and during the school day. The Board of Management cannot accept responsibility for cyber bullying which takes place outside of school hours.

Procedures for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying

Our school's procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows:

1) The primary aim for the class 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);

2) 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;

3) All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the class teacher/Principal. 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;

4) Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, caretakers, cleaners must be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the class teacher;

5) 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;

6) It is very important that all involved (including each set of pupils and parents) understand the above approach from the outset;

7) Incidents are generally best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved;

8) 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.

9) If a group is involved, each member should be interviewed individually at first, where possible. Thereafter all those involved should be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member should be asked for her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements;

10) It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s);

11) In cases where it has been determined by the class 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;

12) Where the class teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to her how she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy.

13) 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, her parents and the school;

14) In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the class teacher must, as part of his/her professional judgement, take the following factors into account;
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;
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;
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 the right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

All records must be maintained in accordance with class data protections legislation.

Programmes of Student Support

Following reports and investigations of bullying class teachers can seek feedback from pupils and parents in order to monitor and observe. The school has access to outside agencies to support our pupils with issues and difficulties. The following agencies and programmes offer support and advice:

- NEPS
- ISPCC
- SCP
- Rainbows

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.

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.

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 patron if requested.

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 Parent's Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Ratification and Implementation:

  The implementation of this 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 parent's association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

This policy will be reviewed in September 2022.

Anti – Bullying Policy

Ratified by the Board of Management on _____

Signed:_____

(Chairperson of Board of Management)