

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY
OF



TARBERT COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

Ratified by the BOM initially on Thursday June 26th 2014 and reviewed annually each year thereafter.

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 **Tarbert Comprehensive 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.

The following are more detailed examples of types of bullying behaviour that can occur amongst pupils:

- **Physical aggression:** This behaviour includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping people etc. It may also take the form of severe physical assault. While pupils often engage in 'mess fights' or 'wedgies', they can sometimes be used as a disguise for humiliation, physical harassment or inflicting pain.
- **Intimidation:** Some bullying behaviour takes the form of intimidation: it may be based on the use of very aggressive body language with the voice being used as a weapon. Particularly upsetting can be a facial expression which conveys aggression and/or dislike.
- **Isolation/exclusion and other relational bullying:** This occurs where a certain person is deliberately isolated, excluded or ignored by some or all of the class group. 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 (girl or boy); non-verbal gesturing; malicious gossip; spreading rumours about a person or giving them the "silent treatment".
- ○ **Cyber-bullying:** This type of bullying is increasingly common and is continuously evolving. It is bullying carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as text, social network sites, e-mail, instant messaging (IM), apps, gaming sites, chat-rooms etc. 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.
- ○ **Name calling:** Persistent name-calling directed at the same individual(s) which hurts, insults or humiliates should be regarded as a form of bullying behaviour. 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.

- **Damage to property:** 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 pupil'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.
 - **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.
- **Sexting** is the sharing of sexual text, video and photographic content using mobile phones, apps, social networking services and other internet technologies. The sharing of explicit text, images and/or video, is an unacceptable and absolutely prohibited behaviour and will have serious consequences and sanctions for those involved in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour.

Please note that:

- All incidents involving creating, storing, or sharing of explicit text, images and/or video of children under the age of 17 years will be reported as an incident to the Gardaí and Túsla and the State Claims Agency (to the latter as there is the potential to cause injury/harm to the individual).
- Sharing of explicit text, images and/or videos of pupils in the school will incur serious sanctions including suspension and up to expulsion as determined by the Board of Management.
- 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 in the opinion of the Principal and/or the Board of Management the alleged bullying has created a hostile environment at school for the victim, has infringed on the rights of the victim at the School and/or has materially or substantially disrupted the education process or the orderly operation of the School

This list is not meant to be exhaustive and is used merely a guide as to the various types of bullying that can occur.

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. Equally the occasional disputes that can arise within particular classes or groups, and which can lead to hurtful personal exchanges, which are reciprocal, need to be managed in accordance with the Code of Behaviour and will not be treated under the Anti-Bullying Policy in the first instance.

In other words, negative behaviour that does not meet this definition of bullying will be dealt with 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.

It should also be noted that being related to an individual does not excuse any bullying behaviour and such persons are subject to the Anti-Bullying Policy and the school's normal disciplinary sanctions.

4. The **Relevant Teachers** for recording, investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows:
 (1) **The Year Head and/or** (2) **Deputy Principal and/or** (3) **Principal.**

All staff members have a responsibility to inform one of the above of any incidents of bullying that come to their attention.

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:

a. The School's Student Support Policy includes bullying prevention and awareness raising strategies to engage pupils in addressing problems when they arise. In particular, these strategies encourage the building of empathy, respect and resilience in pupils.

b. The school sees self-esteem as a major factor in determining overall student behavior – happy and content students create a happy school atmosphere. Tarbert Comprehensive School attempts to raise student self-esteem through both curricular and extra-curricular programmes thus equipping pupils with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth. The school motto 'Mens sans in Corpore Sano' embraces this philosophy.

c. The school runs numerous initiatives and programmes focused on developing pupils' awareness and understanding of bullying, including its causes and effects. It also addresses the issue of identity-based bullying and in particular homophobic bullying. These awareness programmes are run through

1. RE, RSE & SPHE Programmes
2. Pastoral Care & Guidance Programmes
3. Weekly assemblies
4. Whole School focus weeks
5. Student talks and guest speakers
6. Parent information talks
7. Newsletters
8. Student council initiatives
9. Mentoring programme
10. Student feedback and surveys
11. Student journal
12. Intercom announcements
13. Whole class projects etc.
14. Restorative justice techniques (where appropriate)
15. Wellbeing Programme

- d. Prevention and awareness raising measures also deal explicitly with cyber-bullying. Prevention and any awareness raising measures are conducted in the form of guest speakers addressing pupils and parents. They are designed to 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. A school-wide approach and the role of parents is acknowledged in these efforts. Others school policies such as the ICT Acceptable Use Policy takes account of bullying that may result from access to technology within the school.
- e. Tarbert Comprehensive School approach to tackling and preventing bullying also takes particular account of the needs of pupils with disabilities or with SEN. 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 (Mentoring Programme) and cultivating a good school culture which has respect for all and helping one another as central.
- f. Other education and prevention strategies adopted by the school include:

(i) The school makes it clear to all members of the school community on an ongoing basis that bullying of any kind is unacceptable, irrespective of whether it is a student, a staff member or any other person. This awareness of bullying is integral to this policy.

- (ii) Use of posters
- (iii) Discussions with parents specifically on Open Night where parents are asked to share information regarding previous incidents of bullying.
- (iv) Developing a culture of reporting any concerns
- (v) School wide cross curricular approach
- (vi) The Parents Association
- (vii) Where necessary the school will seek the assistance of NEPS, the HSE and the Gardaí.
- (viii) Staff CPD and training
- (ix) School journal
- (x) Student surveys and anonymous questionnaires
- (xi) Mentoring programme
- (xii) Fostering an openness and welcome to parental contact in raising concerns.

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:

- 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.
- A pupil(s) or parent may bring a bullying concern to any staff member in the school
- That staff member must immediately inform one of the Relevant Teachers of the allegation. The Relevant Teacher will note the details of the concern and will proceed to determine if bullying behaviour has occurred.
- The "Relevant Teacher" is the Year Head and he/she will liaise with the Deputy Principal and/or Principal prior to any investigation.
- 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)

- Investigation may take the form of interviews, requesting written, digital or electronic evidence, photographs, schools CCTV footage, parental contact.
- The Relevant Teacher should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents.
- In investigating and dealing with bullying, the Relevant Teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved.
- 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.
 - 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.
- 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
- 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
- Incidents of physical assault outside of school may be reported to An Garda Síochana.
- Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved should be arranged by the Relevant Teacher, in consultation with the Guidance Counsellor and/or Chaplain, 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.
- **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 on the Bullying Behaviour Reporting Page and formally notified to the Principal, who will then refer the case to the appropriate outside agencies (e.g. NEPS, the HSE, the Gardaí) and inform the Board of Management.**

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

- 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 their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children

A) The School's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows (See Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):

- The School Chaplain and Guidance Counsellor will advise on supports in cases involving bullying. Supports will be focused around the victim and the perpetrator. Subject teachers and the class teacher will liaise with the Chaplain and Guidance Counsellor on observing both victim and the perpetrator where necessary and possible.
- In cases of serious bullying, the victim's parents may be advised that the victim should receive counselling
- If the victim may have contributed to his/her victimization through problems of personal hygiene, age-inappropriate clothes, inappropriate behaviour, extreme fearfulness, the school will elicit the parents' help to address these issues in order to protect their child in the future
- Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour will be helped to confront and acknowledge their behaviour.
- Thus one to one work may also be conducted with both victim and the perpetrator where necessary and possible
- Factors that may have caused the behaviour in the first place are explored, for example, abuse, inability to cope, parental harshness, or being bullied by others.
- Any goods damaged or broken through an act of bullying must be repaired/replaced.
- Where bullying is very severe and dangerous and the parents' reaction is violent, abusive and bullying, the Gardaí may be informed.

B) 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.

C) 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.

D) This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on Thursday June 26th 2014 and reviewed annually (December 2015, 2016, 2017, April 2019, December 2019, 2020, 2021)

E) 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.

F) 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: _____
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

30/11/21

Date of next review: December 2022