

Anti-bullying policy for Gorey Community School

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 Gorey 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.

Definition of Bullying

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:

1. deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying,
2. cyber-bullying and
3. 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.
4. For other types of bullying that may occur see **appendix 1**.

Isolated or once-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour, including a once-off offensive or hurtful text message or other private messaging, do not fall within the definition of bullying and should be dealt with, as appropriate, in accordance with the school's code of behaviour. However, in the context of this policy, placing a once-off offensive or hurtful public message, image or statement on a social network site or other public forum where that message, image or statement can be viewed and/or repeated by other people will be regarded as bullying behaviour. Negative behaviour that does not meet this definition of bullying will be dealt with in accordance with the school's code of behaviour.

The 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:

- 1. 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; **see table A attached**

2. Effective leadership;

Effective leadership, supporting a school culture and climate that celebrates difference, is key to good practice. The role of all those in leadership roles within the school is of great importance in stimulating a school-wide approach to preventing and tackling bullying.

3. A school-wide approach;

A school-wide approach (involving school management, staff, parents and pupils) to dealing with the problem of bullying behaviour is a key element of effective practice. Bullying behaviour affects not only those immediately involved. It can affect everyone in the classroom, in the school and, ultimately, in the wider community.

4. A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact;

The school must put in place appropriate systems to ensure that all relevant members of the school community have a shared understanding of what constitutes bullying behaviour as defined in these procedures. The manner in which a school will develop and communicate this shared understanding amongst its pupils will depend on factors such as the age and maturity of the pupils concerned. The definition of bullying and the possible impacts of bullying must be communicated and explained to the school community. **(See appendix 3)**

5. 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.

6. Effective 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. It is the responsibility of school management in conjunction with staff and pupils to develop a system under which good supervisory and monitoring measures are in place both to prevent and deal with bullying behaviour. Good supervision and monitoring systems also facilitate early intervention. Such measures include appropriate supervision of school activities on a rota basis. The identification of “hot-spots” and “hot-times” is very beneficial in preventing and dealing with bullying in school. All pupils and in particular senior pupils can be seen as a resource to assist in countering bullying.

7. Supports for staff;

Regular Staff in-service on the Anti-Bullying policy and on how to deal with reported incidents of Bullying.

8. Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour

The following are the agreed 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.

1. 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);
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 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;
4. 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;
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. Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents;
8. Incidents are generally best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved;

9. 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; 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;
10. 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;
11. Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that they may face them from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher;
12. It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s);
13. 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;
14. 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;
15. 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;
16. 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;
17. All cases of bullying must be reported to the Principal or the Deputy Principals. (This is optional for each school...ie as to whether each incident MUST be reported to the Principal/ Deputy Principal)

18. 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 2**
19. 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;
20. 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;
21. 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

9. On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

At each meeting of the Board of Management the Principal will provide a report to the Board of Management setting out the overall number of bullying cases reported and confirmation that all cases have been, or are being, dealt with in accordance with this anti-bullying policy.

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

In the first instance it is the responsibility of the person who notices the bullying or to whom the bullying is reported to record the bullying behavior in the bullying behavior form. The person may investigate the alleged bullying or may hand over the investigation of the behavior to the relevant year head, the Deputy Principals or the Principal.

Gorey Community School Cyber bullying policy.

1. Social Media provide a dynamic and rapidly evolving means of communication. Mobile phones, chat rooms, websites and social networks, such as Facebook, play a significant role in many young people's lives as they interact with their peers and search for a social identity.
2. Inappropriate use of social media may lead to what is commonly known as Cyber Bullying.
3. Cyber Bullying, like any other form of bullying, is the abuse of one person or group of people by another person or group of people. It is an affront to human dignity and will be treated in accordance with the principles and procedures of this Cyber Bullying Policy, the school's Code of Behaviour, the Anti-Bullying Policy, the Child Protection Policy, the Internet Acceptable Usage Policy, the Health and Safety Statement and the Policies on dignity in the Workplace, Harassment, Sexual Harassment and other relevant policies.
4. Due to the instant, public, open and potentially permanent nature of access to material posted on social media and its capacity to multiply exponentially, a single inappropriate and offensive posting may constitute Cyber Bullying.
5. The school has a duty of care toward its pupils and its staff. A safe and respectful environment in school is necessary so that teaching and learning can take place.
6. The school, together with other relevant parties (parents and/or guardians, social media providers, Gardai etc) has a responsibility (though not the sole one) for the promotion of the responsible use of social media and the prevention of their misuse, with special reference to Cyber Bullying.
7. This Cyber Bullying Policy applies even when a student engages in inappropriate use of social media, when not under the direct supervision of the school; when there is a clear connection with the school and/or a demonstrable impact on its aims, work reputation and/or personnel.

Definitions:

Social Media Technologies are defined as information and communication technologies (ICT), such as the internet, digital media or the mobile phone (e.g. text messages, group messaging services, instant messaging, personal websites, online personal polling websites, social media networks etc).

Cyber Bullying means any usage of Social Media Technologies that seeks to undermine or humiliate a member, or members, of the school community. This includes circulating or publishing through ICT, material recorded without consent for the purpose of undermining, or causing damage to, the professional or personal reputation of another person, whether considered a “joke” or not.

Policy

Cyber Bullying will be deemed a serious breach of the school’s Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policies, as well as other relevant policies, and will attract serious sanction, up to and including suspension and expulsion. Allegations of Cyber Bullying may also be reported to the Gardai or other outside agencies as appropriate.

Any misbehaviour, including inappropriate use of social media, impacting on the health and safety of any member of the school community, will be treated with the utmost seriousness by the Principal and the Board of Management.

Reporting procedure and investigation

1. Any student or staff member who believes she/he has, or is being, subjected to Cyber-Bullying, as well as any person who has reason to believe a student or staff member is being subjected to (or has been subjected to Cyber-Bullying) shall immediately report the matter to the Principal, Deputy Principal or Year Head.
2. The Principal/Deputy Principal or Year Head shall investigate all reports of such conduct in line with agreed school procedures. Cyber Bullying will be subject to appropriate discipline and sanctions, to be decided by the Board of Management. The seriousness of the violation will determine the sanction to be applied. This may include suspension or expulsion.
3. All involved parties will be informed of the results of investigations into Cyber Bullying.

Consequences for false accusation

1. The consequences and appropriate remedial action for a student found to have falsely accused another member of the school community of an act of Cyber-Bullying range from positive behavioural interventions up to and including suspension or expulsion.
2. The consequences and appropriate remedial action for a school employee found to have maliciously accused another employee of an act of Cyber-Bullying is that she/he may be disciplined. Such discipline will be in accordance with relevant legislation and the school’s Dignity at Work Policy.
3. In circumstances where an investigation of Cyber-Bullying is not proven, but the Board is satisfied that a genuine and reasonable complaint is made, no action will be taken against the complainant.

Discipline and Consequences

1. Some acts of Cyber-Bullying may be isolated incidents requiring the School Authorities to respond appropriately to the individual committing the acts. Other acts may be so serious, or part of a larger pattern of Cyber-Bullying, that they will require a response from outside agencies such as the Gardai.
2. Sanctions will be decided by the Board of Management and the seriousness of the violation will determine the sanction to be applied. This may range from positive behavioural interventions, up to and including suspension or expulsion. It should be further noted that Cyber-Bullying using school technologies, is in violation of the school's Acceptable Internet Use Policy.
3. Intervention techniques to prevent Cyber-Bullying and to support and protect victims may include appropriate strategies and activities, as determined from time to time by the Board of Management and Principal.

Appeals

Section 20 of the Education Act 1998 gives parents and students (aged 18 and over) the right to appeal certain decisions made by the Board of Management or by a person acting on behalf of the Board (expulsion; cumulative suspension of 20 days; refusal to enrol). In general, appeals must be made within 42 calendar days from the date that the parents/guardians were notified of the decision.

Reprisal or retaliation prohibited

The Board of Management will not tolerate reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an act of Cyber-Bullying. The consequence and appropriate remedial action for a person who engages in reprisal or retaliation shall be determined by the Board or Principal after consideration of the nature and circumstances of the act, in accordance with the principles of natural justice and Department of Education and Skills regulations and procedures.

The Board of Management and the Principal wish to encourage active reporting of all cases of Cyber-Bullying and will support aggrieved persons throughout the process.

September 2013.

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:

Induction week:

Mentoring week:

Anti-bullying day/week.

Awareness raising through posters etc.

CSPE curriculum

Personal Development curriculum.

Gorey Youth Needs LGBT

Friends for Life

Friendship week

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

Referral for counseling:

Involvement of the Year head and Class tutor:

Referral to the Behavioural Support Unit if relevant.

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.

Availability of the policy

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

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 must 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 should, 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 must seek advice from the HSE Children and Family Social Services.

Annual review by the Board of Management

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. A check list for the Annual review is available. **(See Appendix 5)**

Adoption of the policy

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on _____ [date].

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

Date: _____ Date: _____

Date of next review: _____

Table A: Key elements of a positive school culture:

- The school acknowledges the right of each member of the school community to enjoy school in a secure environment.
- The school acknowledges the uniqueness of each individual and his/her worth as a human being.
- The school promotes positive habits of self-respect, self-discipline and responsibility among all its members.
- The school prohibits vulgar, offensive, sectarian or other aggressive behaviour or language by any of its members.
- The school has a clear commitment to promoting equity in general and gender equity in particular in all aspects of its functioning.
- The school has the capacity to change in response to pupils' needs.
- The school identifies aspects of curriculum through which positive and lasting influences can be exerted towards forming pupils' attitudes and values.
- The school takes particular care of "at risk" pupils and uses its monitoring systems to facilitate early intervention where necessary and it responds to the needs, fears or anxieties of individual members in a sensitive manner.
- The school recognises the need to work in partnership with and keep parents informed on procedures to improve relationships on a school-wide basis.
- The school recognises the role of parents in equipping the pupil with a range of life-skills.
- The school recognises the role of other community agencies in preventing and dealing with bullying.
- The school promotes habits of mutual respect, courtesy and an awareness of the interdependence of people in groups and communities.
- The school promotes qualities of social responsibility, tolerance and understanding among all its members both in school and out of school.
- Staff members share a collegiate responsibility, under the direction of the Principal, to act in preventing bullying/aggressive behaviour by any member of the school community.

Appendix 1

Types of bullying

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 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 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.

o **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.

o **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.

Appendix 2. Template for recording Bullying behavior.

1. Name of the pupil being bullied and class group.

Name Class group

2. Name(s) and Class(es) of other pupil(s) engaged in the bullying behavior

3. Source of bullying report: tick boxes

4. Location of incidents:

Pupil concerned	<input type="checkbox"/>	Classroom	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other pupil	<input type="checkbox"/>	Corridors	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parent	<input type="checkbox"/>	Recreational area	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	Toilets	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	School Bus	<input type="checkbox"/>
Specify	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Name of the person who reported the bullying concern.

--

6. Type of bullying behavior Tick relevant boxes:

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	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

Homophobic	SEN Related	Racist	Travelling community	Other (specify)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. Brief description of bullying behavior and its impact.

--

9. Details of action taken:

--

Signed: _____ (relevant teacher)

Date: _____

Name and Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal

Appendix 3 Impact and indicators of bullying behavior

3.1.1 Pupils who are being bullied may develop feelings of insecurity, humiliation and extreme anxiety and thus may become more vulnerable. Self-confidence may be damaged with a consequent lowering of self-esteem. While they may not talk about what is happening to them, their suffering is indicated through changes in mood and behaviour. Extreme cases of bullying may result in suicide. It is, therefore, essential to be alert to changes in behaviour as early intervention can be very effective.

3.1.2 Pupils who witness bullying may also be affected and may suffer in similar ways to those who are bullied. For example, pupils who witness identity-based bullying and share that identity can experience anxiety and feel under threat themselves. Pupils can also feel guilt or distress at not being able to help the person being bullied.

3.1.3 There are also consequences for individuals who engage in bullying behaviour. Pupils who become involved in such behaviour can be at higher risk of depression. Other possible long-term consequences may include an increased risk of developing an anti-social personality, anxiety disorders, a likelihood of substance abuse and law-breaking behaviour in adulthood and decreased educational and occupational attainment.

3.2 Indicators of bullying behaviour

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

- (i) Anxiety about travelling to and from school e.g. requesting parents to drive or collect him/her, changing travel routes, avoiding regular times for travelling to and from school;
- (ii) Unwillingness to go to school, refusal to attend, truancy;
- (iii) Deterioration in educational performance, loss of concentration and loss of enthusiasm and interest in school;
- (iv) Pattern of physical illnesses e.g. headaches, stomach aches;
- (v) 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;
- (vi) Visible signs of anxiety or distress e.g. stammering, withdrawing, nightmares, difficulty in sleeping, crying, not eating, vomiting, bedwetting;
- (vii) Spontaneous out-of-character comments about either pupils or teachers;
- (viii) Possessions missing or damaged;
- (ix) Increased requests for money or stealing money;
- (x) Unexplained bruising or cuts or damaged clothing; and
- (xi) Reluctance and/or refusal to say what is troubling him/her.

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

Appendix 4

Characteristics associated with bullying:

It is important to recognise that any pupil can be bullied or can engage in bullying behaviour.

4.1 The pupil who engages in bullying behaviour

4.1.1 A significant proportion of bullying is not merely behavioural but is rooted in a lack of respect for diversity and in social inequalities. “Prejudice-based” or “identity-based” bullying can be a significant factor in bullying behaviour.

4.1.2 Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour tend to display aggressive attitudes combined with a low level of self-discipline. They may lack any sense of remorse convincing themselves that the other person deserves the treatment they are receiving.

4.1.3 Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour can be attention seeking: setting out to impress bystanders and responding to the reaction their behaviour provokes. They can lack the ability to empathise. They can appear unaware or indifferent to the other person’s feelings. It is of note that pupils who exhibit bullying behaviour often suffer from a lack of confidence and have low self-esteem.

4.1.4 However, it must also be recognised that pupils who engage in bullying behaviour do not always intend to bully or may not recognise the potential negative impact of their words and actions on others.

4.1.5 It is not uncommon to find that pupils who engage in bullying behaviour may also have been bullied themselves.

4.2 The pupil who is bullied

4.2.1 Any pupil through no fault of their own may be a target of bullying. It is common in the course of normal interaction for pupils to tease or taunt each other. However, at a certain point, teasing and taunting may become forms of bullying behaviour. As pupils can be particularly quick to notice differences in others, pupils who are perceived as different in some way can be more prone to encounter such behaviour. However, the pupils who are most at risk of being bullied are those who react in a vulnerable and distressed manner. The seriousness and duration of the bullying behaviour can be related to the pupil’s continuing response to the verbal, physical or psychological aggression.

4.2.2 Pupils who are bullied often experience difficulties in speaking up about bullying. The difficulties include:

- (i) Fear of reprisals;
- (ii) Concerns about being perceived as a “tell-tale” for reporting bullying;
- (iii) Concerns about “getting into trouble” with the principal or teacher for reporting bullying;
- (iv) Not having evidence to back up a bullying allegation;
- (v) Not knowing how the matter will be dealt with by the school; and
- (vi) Not feeling fully confident of being believed.

4.3 More vulnerable pupils

4.3.1 While bullying can happen to any pupil, it is known that some may be more vulnerable to or at risk of experiencing bullying. Such vulnerable groups include pupils with disabilities or special educational needs, those from ethnic minority and migrant groups, pupils from the Traveller community, lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) pupils and those perceived to be LGBT and pupils of minority religious faiths.

4.3.2 There can be an increased vulnerability to bullying amongst pupils with special educational needs and particularly those who do not understand social cues and/or have difficulty communicating. Some pupils with complex needs may lack understanding of social situations and therefore trust everyone implicitly. Such pupils may be more vulnerable because they do not have the same social skills or capacity as others to recognise and defend themselves against bullying behaviour. Research suggests that children with disabilities and with special educational needs (SEN) are more likely to be bullied than others. Bullying can also have a more severe impact on such children. For example, some studies which compare the impact of bullying on children with and without certain disabilities, such as a speech and language difficulty, show that bullying has a greater impact on self-esteem for those with a disability.

Homophobic and transphobic bullying (bullying targeted at those who are or who are perceived to be LGBT) has also been found to be prevalent with evidence that such pupils have particular difficulty in speaking up or reporting the bullying behaviour.

4.4 Where does bullying happen?

Bullying can happen anywhere at any time but there are certain times and places which particularly facilitate bullying.

4.4.1 Cyber-bullying: Access to technology means that cyber-bullying can happen around the clock and the pupil's home may not even be a safe haven from such bullying. Pupils are increasingly communicating in ways that are often unknown to adults and free from supervision. The nature of these technologies means digital content can be shared and seen by a very wide audience almost instantly and is almost impossible to delete permanently. While cyber bullying often takes place at home and at night, the impact can also be felt in school.

4.4.2 Areas of unstructured activity: Bullying in schools frequently takes place in the playground/schoolyard. School grounds with hidden or obscured parts may provide an environment conducive to bullying. Many common playground/schoolyard games present opportunities for bullying because of their physical nature. It is relatively easy to single out and bully another pupil. The noise level masks much of what is going on. The playground/schoolyard provides the opportunity for older pupils to pick on younger pupils. It can also be the setting for bullying by groups. Continuing provocation may eventually lead to a physical fight and ironically in some cases the person being bullied may appear to be the aggressor because he/she finally gives vent to his/her frustration.

Toilets, corridors, cloakrooms, locker areas, changing rooms, showers, the gym and assembly hall may be the scene of verbal, psychological and physical bullying. The behaviour of pupils in those areas needs careful monitoring.

4.4.3 Bullying in the classroom: Bullying may also take place in class. It may occur subtly through glances, looks and sniggers but may take the more overt form of physical intimidation. It may also be exacerbated if a classroom atmosphere prevails whereby pupils are allowed to make derogatory comments about their classmates or other teachers. However, teachers need to be alert to the underlying reasons for such comments in case pupils are trying to disclose something which is disturbing them and thus needs further investigation. Bullying may also occur between class periods irrespective of whether the class or the teacher moves.

4.4.4 Coming to and from school: The area immediately outside the school, the local shops and local neighbourhood are often the scenes of bullying. Bullying can also take place at the bus-stop or on the journey to and from school whether the individuals are walking, cycling or on school buses.

Appendix 5 Checklist for annual review of the anti-bullying policy and its implementation

The Board of Management (the Board) must undertake an annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation. The following checklist must be used for this purpose. The checklist is an aid to conducting this review and is not intended as an exhaustive list. 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.

Has the Board formally adopted an anti-bullying policy that fully complies with the requirements of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and PostPrimary Schools*?

Has the Board published the policy on the school website and provided a copy to the parents' association?

Has the Board ensured that the policy has been made available to school staff (including new staff)?

Is the Board satisfied that school staff are sufficiently familiar with the policy and procedures to enable them to effectively and consistently apply the policy and procedures in their day to day work?

Has the Board ensured that the policy has been adequately communicated to all pupils?

Has the policy documented the prevention and education strategies that the school applies?

Have all of the prevention and education strategies been implemented?

Has the effectiveness of the prevention and education strategies that have been implemented been examined?

Is the Board satisfied that all teachers are recording and dealing with incidents in accordance with the policy?

Has the Board received and minuted the periodic summary reports of the Principal?

Has the Board discussed how well the school is handling all reports of bullying including those addressed at an early stage and not therefore included in the Principal's periodic report to the Board?

Has the Board received any complaints from parents regarding the school's handling of bullying incidents?

Have any parents withdrawn their child from the school citing dissatisfaction with the school's handling of a bullying situation?

Have any Ombudsman for Children investigations into the school's handling of a bullying case been initiated or completed?

Has the data available from cases reported to the Principal (by the bullying recording template) been analysed to identify any issues, trends or patterns in bullying behaviour?

Has the Board identified any aspects of the school's policy and/or its implementation that require further improvement?

Has the Board put in place an action plan to address any areas for improvement?

Signed..... Chairperson BOM DATE

Signed Principal DATE

