

**Anti-Bullying Policy****Rationale**

This policy outlines what bullying is and the procedures followed in St.Colman's National School to address incidents of bullying. In our school we are very fortunate to have minimal incidents of bullying. Bullying is neither an inevitable part of school life, nor a necessary part of growing up and it rarely sorts itself out without intervention. Bullying can affect everyone, not just the bullies and the victims. It can also affect those other children who watch; some pupils can be drawn-in by group pressure. Only when all issues of bullying are addressed, will a child best be able to benefit from the opportunities available in school.

Here at St.Colman's National School we believe that our pupils have the right to learn in a supportive, caring and safe environment. All institutions, whether large or small, contain some individuals who have the potential for bullying behaviour. If a school is well disciplined and organised, it can minimise the occurrences of bullying. St.Colman's has a clear ethos on the promotion of good citizenship and it is made clear that bullying is a form of anti-social behaviour. It is always wrong and will not be tolerated.

It is important therefore that the school has a clear written policy to promote this belief, where both pupils and parents/guardians are fully aware that any complaints of bullying will be dealt with firmly, fairly and promptly.

**What is bullying?**

Bullying is repeated deliberate aggression; verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against others (individuals or groups). Isolated incidents of aggressive behaviour, although not condoned, cannot be described as bullying. However, when the behaviour is systematic and ongoing, it is bullying.

Bullying can take different forms. It can be:

**Physical**

- A child can be physically hit, punched, kicked, spat at etc.

**Verbal**

- Verbal abuse can take the form of name calling. It may be directed towards gender, ethnic origin, religious belief, physical/social disability, attributes or personality etc.

**Exclusion**

- A child can be bullied by being deliberately excluded from discussions/activities, by classmates or those they believe to be their friends.

**Damage to property or theft**

- Children may have their property damaged or stolen. Physical threats may be used by the bully in order that the child hands over their property.

**What can you do if you are being bullied?**

- Remember that your silence is the bully's greatest weapon.
- Tell yourself that you do not deserve to be bullied and that it is wrong.
- Be proud of who you are. It is good to be an individual.
- Try not to show that you are upset; it is hard but a bully thrives on someone's fear.
- Stay with a group of friends/people (unless the bullying is happening in that group). There is normally safety in numbers.
- Be assertive and follow the Stay Safe rules: **Say No, get away and tell someone you trust.**
- Talk to a teacher for advice and help or if at home talk to your parents.
- Teachers will listen to you and in accordance with procedure, will endeavour to deal with the issue. Teachers will usually tell the Principal about the problem and together they will decide how to deal with it.

**If you know someone is being bullied**

- Take action. You might tell the bully to stop doing what they are doing; you might get some of your friends to help you with this. You could also make sure that the victim is not left alone until the problem is resolved. Watching and doing nothing looks as if you are on the side of the bully. It makes the victim feel more unhappy and on their own.

- If you feel you cannot get involved, tell an adult immediately. If you're at school tell a teacher so they can help, without getting you into trouble.
- Do not be, or pretend to be, friends with a bully.

### **As a parent**

- Be aware of unusual behaviour in your children. For example, they may suddenly not wish to attend school, feel ill regularly, or not complete work to their normal standard. They may not want to invite certain children to play or go to activities they used to enjoy.
- Always take an active role in your child's education. Enquire how their day went, who they spend their time with, how break time was spent etc.
- If you feel your child may be a victim of bullying behaviour, inform the school immediately. It is very helpful for the school if you can list the 'who, where, when and how' of the behaviours affecting your child.
- It is important that you advise your child not to fight back. It can make matters worse.
- Tell your child that there is nothing wrong with her/him; it is not her/his fault that they are being bullied.
- Make sure your child is fully aware of the school policy regarding bullying and that they should not be afraid to ask for help.

### **As a school**

- Organise the community in order to minimise opportunities for bullying; make sure that supervision is sufficient at all times.
- Use opportunities to discuss aspects of bullying and the appropriate way to behave towards each other. In this respect the SPHE (Social, Personal and Health Education) programme is very important and especially the Stay Safe lessons addressing bullying.
- Deal quickly, firmly and fairly with any complaints, involving parents where necessary.
- Regularly review the school policy and procedures and assess its success or otherwise.
- When buying teaching materials (books, posters, software etc) ensure that nothing gives a negative view of any group because of their ethnic origin, gender etc.
- Continue to have a firm and fair discipline structure.

- Encourage pupils to discuss how they get on with other people and to form positive attitudes towards other people. This includes work on friendship and what it really means.
- Encourage pupils to treat everyone with care and respect.
- Treat bullying as a serious matter and take every possible action to prevent it happening in our school.
- Use and continue to update a variety of materials and resources available to assist us in devising appropriate anti-bullying programmes. Include workshops on bullying issues from outside agencies.

### **Actions to be taken when bullying is alleged**

If bullying is alleged or suspected we talk to the alleged victim, the alleged bully (or bullies) and any witnesses. This will include the taking of a written record of what happened, clarifying the 'who, where, when and how' of the incidents.

Help and support will be given, as appropriate, to both the victims and the bully (bullies). Access to a counselling service may be offered, if deemed appropriate.

We support the victim in the following ways:

- By offering them an immediate opportunity to talk about the incidents with their class teacher, or another teacher if they choose.
- By informing the victim's parents/guardians.
- By offering continuing support when they feel they need it.
- By taking one or more of the disciplinary steps described below to prevent more bullying.

We also discipline, yet try to help, the bully (bullies) in the following ways:

- By talking about what happened to discover why they became involved, the extent of their involvement and their understanding of their own culpability.
- By informing the bully's (bullies') parents/guardians.
- By continuing to work with the bully (bullies) in order to challenge negative attitudes as far as possible.

- By taking one or more of the disciplinary steps described below to prevent more bullying.

### **Disciplinary steps**

- Pupils will be warned officially to stop their bullying behaviour.
- In cases where it has been determined that serious bullying behaviour has occurred, the teacher and Principal will request a meeting with the parents or guardians of the two parties involved (separately). The purpose of the meeting is (a) to inform parents/guardians of the problem (b) explain actions being taken and (c) the reasons for them. Their assistance will be sought in preventing a repeat of the behaviour.
- Separate follow-up meetings, with the two parties involved, may be arranged, with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date, if the victim is ready and agreeable. This can have a therapeutic effect.
- Loss of specific privileges as appropriate. These will be discussed with the parents/guardians before implementation and can include the following
  - Exclusion from break/lunch times for a specific number of days.
  - Parents may be requested to escort their child to and from school.
  - Repeated offending may result in suspension from school for a minor fixed period (one or two days).
  - Continuing to offend, following the above measures, will result in a recommendation to the Board of Management for suspension for a major fixed period (up to three days).
  - The school may seek assistance and advice from outside agencies if necessary, including National Educational Psychological Service, the National Educational Welfare Board, HSE (social services) and Juvenile Liaison Office.

A record is kept of all incidents of bullying and the subsequent investigation and disciplinary measures taken.

**Cyberbullying****Developing Skills**

**Netiquette** is the name given to the code of conduct which is associated with good practice when using the internet.

It is our intention to teach Netiquette skills from the beginning of their engagement with technology.

- ◆ Getting children to think before they send emails or messages
- ◆ Make sure that messages are sent to the right place, that it arrives and that the right person gets it.
- ◆ Care must be taken when sending messages to make them clear so that the receiver can clearly understand what we mean.
- ◆ Never say anything online that would be considered insulting or rude.
- ◆ Do not forward other people's messages without their permission.

**Tips for young people about Cyberbullying**

**Do** trust your instincts. If it doesn't look or 'feel right', it probably isn't. If you find something online or on your phone that you don't like or makes you feel uncomfortable, turn off the machine/device and tell an adult.

**Do** tell an adult you know and trust . You are not alone.

**Do** keep the messages that are sent from the cyberbully.

**Don't** send messages when you are angry. Wait until you have had time to calm down and think. You will regret sending a 'Flame' (angry message) to someone.

**Don't** open messages from people you don't know.

**Don't** reply to messages from cyberbullies. Even though you may really want to, this is exactly what cyberbullies want. They want to know that they've got you worried and upset.

The immediate strategy for dealing with bullies is Stop! Block! Tell!

**Stop!** Don't do anything. Take 5! to calm down

**Block!** Block the cyberbully or limit all communications

**Tell!** Tell a trusted adult. You don't have to face this alone

This policy was reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management of St Colman's NS on \_\_\_\_\_ 2021.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

(Chairperson)

\_\_\_\_\_

(Principal)

Scoil Naomh Colmáin