Anti-Bullying Policy

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 **Scoil Mhuire, Trim** 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.
   - Promote 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);

   - 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
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   - 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.

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.

Additional information on different types of bullying is set out in Section 2 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

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

- **Teacher who received report from student(s)**

- **Relevant Form Teacher**

- **Relevant Year Head**

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:**

- School Code of Behaviour is called "Code of Excellence" to promote positive behaviour. Students are consistently challenged to be the best person that they can be. "It is not about being the best but doing ones best" at all times. Structure of the school journal promotes positive behaviour as opposed to negative behaviour.

- Active Care Team in the school

- The uniqueness of each student is acknowledged and emphasised to the whole school community.

- Student work is displayed in classrooms and on corridors throughout the school

- Key words such as "Respect", "Imagine", "Explore", "Aim High", "Create" and "Design" are located in large wooden letters in strategic areas of the school

- Respectful behaviour is modelled to all members of the school community at all times. Members of the school community are consistently reminded of the expectation of respectful behaviour at all times. Disrespectful behaviour is challenged and constructive feedback given to the relevant persons.

- The SPHE, RE curricula make specific provision for exploring bullying as well as the inter-related areas of belonging and integrating, communication, conflict, friendship, personal safety and relationships.

- Permanent Anti-Bullying posters displayed throughout the school. In addition, Anti – Bullying poster campaigns run by SPHE, RE and CSPE class groups throughout the school year.

- Intercom and Assembles are used throughout the year to create awareness of the appropriate use of Social Media. Inappropriate use of Technology is subject to sanction as stated in the "Code of Excellence"

- Internet use in the school is monitored as much as possible

  "Positive Mental Health" week is part of the school calendar. Activities during the week include: Guest speakers on "Self Esteem", "Mental Health" issues and "Internet Safety".   Poetry and Art competitions, Music and Dance at lunchtimes are also part of the week`s programme.

- The school has a very active and prominent Student Council

- Mentoring system in place for 1st Year students by 5th Year students (Athru)

- Senior Prefects from 6th Year work with all class groups with the exception of 1st Years

- Senior Prefects and Mentors are encouraged to report any incidences of harassment that they observe

- Students are encouraged to report any inappropriate behaviour and/or bullying issues (including cyber-bullying). It is made clear that reporting such behaviour is not telling tales but behaving responsibly.

- Students are encouraged to participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities.

- "Before school" and "Break times" supervision rosters in place to monitor student behaviour.

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 :**

   Investigating and dealing with bullying

   - All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying are investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher

   - The primary aim of 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 apportion blame)

     Those involved will be asked to write down their account of the incident(s)

   - 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. Parents and students 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

- If a group is involved, each member will be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved will be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member will be asked for her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other`s statements.

In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved will be contacted to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken. The school will 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 the students.

- Where the relevant teacher has determined that a student has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it will be made clear to her how she is in breach of the school`s anti-bullying policy and efforts will be made to get her to see the situation from the perspective of the student being bullied

- It will be made clear to all involved (each set of parents and students) that in any situation where sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the student being disciplined, her parents and the school.

- Follow–up meetings with the relevant parties involved will be arranged separately with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date if the student being bullied is ready and agreeable.

- 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 has occurred, it will be recorded by the relevant teacher in the recording form and given to the Deputy Principal and/or Principal who will investigate the matter further and take appropriate actions using their professional judgement

Recording Bullying Behaviour

- While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying are investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the relevant teacher will exercise 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

- If it is established by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher will keep appropriate written records to assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved

- The relevant teacher will use the recording form to record 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 or Deputy Principal as applicable.

In each of the circumstances at (a) and (b) above, the recording form will be completed in full and retained by the teacher in question and a copy provided to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable. It should also be noted that the timeline for recording bullying behaviour in the recording form does not in any way preclude the relevant teacher from consulting the Principal or Deputy Principal at an earlier stage in relation to a case.

7. **The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows:**
    - Counselling from the school counsellor

    - Encouragement to participate in activities to raise self-esteem, self-worth and develop friendships and social skills

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.

10. 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.

11. 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.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 31st March, 2014.

Review Date: Academic Year 2017-2018