ANTI-BULLYING PROCEDURES

FOR

PRIMARY AND POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS

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1. INTRODUCTION AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1   The role of the school is to provide an appropriate education for all its pupils. A stable, secure learning environment is an essential requirement to achieve this goal. Bullying behaviour, by its very nature, undermines and dilutes the quality of education. Research shows that bullying can have short and long-term effects on the physical and mental well-being of pupils, on engagement with school, on self-confidence and on the ability to pursue ambitions and interests.

1.1.2   School-based bullying can be positively and firmly addressed through a range of school-based measures and strategies through which all members of the school community are enabled to act effectively in dealing with this behaviour. While it is recognised that home and societal factors play a substantial role both in the cause and in the prevention of bullying, the role of the school in preventative work is also crucial and should not be underestimated. School-based initiatives can either reinforce positive efforts or help counteract unsuccessful attempts of parents to change unacceptable behaviour. Parents and pupils have a particularly important role and responsibility in helping the school to prevent and address school-based bullying behaviour and to deal with any negative impact within school of bullying behaviour that occurs elsewhere.   In this document, any reference(s) to parent(s) can be taken to refer also to guardian(s) where applicable.

1.1.3   International research clearly indicates the crucial importance of the existence of and implementation of a school policy setting out the school's approach to preventing and tackling bullying. An anti-bullying policy, when developed and implemented across the school community can be the cornerstone in countering bullying behaviour in schools.

1.2 Requirement on all schools to have an anti-bullying policy within the framework of their overall code of behaviour

1.2.1   Under the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 all schools are required to have in place a code of behaviour. The Act requires that this code must be prepared in accordance with guidelines issued by the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB). The NEWB's

publication *Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools* was issued to schools in 2008.

1.2.2   In accordance with the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 and the guidelines issued by the NEWB, all schools are required to have an anti-bullying policy within the framework of their overall code of behaviour.

1.3 Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools

1.3.1   These *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* (hereinafter referred to as "these procedures") have been developed following consultation with the relevant education partners and replace the 1993 *Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post-Primary Schools*. These procedures have resulted from a review of the 1993 guidelines and the implementation of the *Action Plan on Bullying – Report of the Anti-Bullying Working Group to the Minister for Education and Skills* which was published in January 2013.

1.3.2   The purpose of these procedures is to give direction and guidance to school authorities and school personnel in preventing and tackling school-based bullying behaviour amongst its pupils and in dealing with any negative impact within school of bullying behaviour that occurs elsewhere.   These procedures apply to all recognised primary and post-primary schools and to centres for education (as defined in the Education Act 1998) which are attended by pupils under the age of 18 years.   Where a school caters for vulnerable adults these procedures also apply to those adult learners. School authorities and school personnel are required to adhere to these procedures in dealing with allegations and incidents of bullying.

1.3.3   All Boards of Management must formally adopt and implement an anti-bullying policy that fully complies with the requirements of these procedures. The school's anti-bullying policy must 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 copy of the school's anti-bullying policy must be provided to the Department of Education and Skills (hereinafter referred to as "the Department") and the patron if requested.

1.4 Summary of Main Elements

1.4.1   The following is a summary of the main elements of these procedures:

   ▪ All Boards of Management are required to formally adopt and implement an anti-bullying policy that fully complies with the requirements of these procedures. A template anti-bullying policy which must be used by all schools for this purpose is provided in **Appendix 1** of these procedures.

   ▪ The school's anti-bullying policy must 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 copy of the school's anti-bullying policy must be provided to the Department and the patron if requested.

   ▪ Bullying is defined as unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time. These procedures make clear that this definition includes cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying (such as homophobic bullying and racist bullying).

   ▪ These procedures outline key principles of best practice for both preventing and tackling bullying and require all schools to commit to these principles in their anti-bullying policy. The key principles are:

   - o A positive school culture and climate;
   - o Effective leadership;
   - o A school-wide approach;
   - o A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact;
   - o Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures);
   - o Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils;
   - o Supports for staff;
   - o Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies);

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

 These procedures recognise that a cornerstone in the prevention of bullying is a positive school culture and climate that is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity and respect. These procedures outline key elements of a positive school culture and climate and also provide schools with some practical tips for building a positive school culture and climate.

These procedures highlight the importance of a school-wide (management, staff, pupils and parents) approach. In addition to the role of management and staff, parents and pupils have a role and responsibility in helping the school to prevent and address school-based bullying behaviour and to deal with any negative impact within school of bullying behaviour that occurs elsewhere.

 These procedures require that the prevention of bullying must be an integral part of a school's anti-bullying policy. The education and prevention strategies that the school will implement must be documented in the anti-bullying policy and must explicitly deal with the issue of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.

 A school's anti-bullying policy must also set out the school's procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying and the school's procedures for the formal noting and recording of bullying behaviour. The school's procedures must be consistent with the guidance and direction set out in this document.

These procedures emphasise that the primary aim in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and restore as far as is practicable the relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame).

In any case where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred-

- o 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); and
- o the relevant teacher must keep appropriate written records which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.

The relevant teacher must record the bullying behaviour in the standardised recording template at **Appendix 3** (and a copy must be provided to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable) in the following circumstances:

- o 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
- o 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.

The procedures include oversight arrangements which require that, at least once in every school term, the Principal will provide a report to the Board of Management setting out:

- o the overall number of bullying cases reported (by means of the bullying recording template in **Appendix 3**) to the Principal or Deputy Principal since the previous report to the Board and
- o confirmation that all of these cases have been, or are being, dealt with in accordance with the school's anti-bullying policy and these procedures.

As part of the oversight arrangements, the Board of Management must undertake an annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation by the school. Written notification that the review has been completed must 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 standardised notification which must be used for this purpose is included at **Appendix 4**. A record of the review and its outcome must be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

1.4.2   The above is a summary of the main elements of these procedures and should therefore be read within the overall context of this document.

2. DEFINITION AND TYPES OF BULLYING

2.1 Definition of bullying

2.1.1   In the context of these procedures, bullying is defined as unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time.

2.1.2   The following types of bullying behaviour are included in this non-exhaustive definition:

(i)   deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying;

(ii)   cyber-bullying; and

(iii)   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.

2.1.3   In addition, in the context of these procedures 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.

2.1.4   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 this definition of bullying and should be dealt with, as appropriate, in accordance with the school's code of behaviour. A single incident can have a serious effect on a pupil and may also constitute harassment which is legally prohibited in schools under equality legislation. Harassment is any form of unwanted conduct related to any of the nine discriminatory grounds (gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community).

Information on the impact, indicators and other characteristics of bullying behaviour is set out in Sections 3 and 4 of these Procedures.

2.2 Types of bullying

The following are some of the types of bullying behaviour that can occur amongst pupils:

o **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.

o **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.

o **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

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person (girl or boy); non-verbal gesturing; malicious gossip; spreading rumours about a person or giving them the "silent treatment".

o **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.

o **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**.**

3. IMPACT AND INDICATORS OF BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

3.1 Impacts of bullying behaviour

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.

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.

4.3.3   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.

5 A SCHOOL'S ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

5.1 Requirement to have an anti-bullying policy and to use the policy template

5.1.1   As set out in Section 1.2 of these procedures, in accordance with the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 and the code of behaviour guidelines issued by the NEWB, all schools are required to have an anti-bullying policy within the framework of their overall code of behaviour.

5.1.2   An anti-bullying policy template which must be used by all schools is set out in **Appendix 1.**

5.1.3   Certain elements of the policy template are standardised across all schools. Other aspects of the template provide flexibility to enable the policy to be tailored to meet the particular needs and circumstances of the pupils and school in question. However, the development of the school's policy, the policy itself, its implementation and review must be fully consistent with the guidance and directions set out in these procedures.   All parts of the policy template must be completed by a school.

5.1.4   The anti-bullying policy must be formally adopted by the Board of Management.

5.2 Development of the policy

5.2.1   The Board of Management of each school in developing its anti-bullying policy must formulate the policy in co-operation with both teaching and non-teaching school staff under the leadership of the Principal and in consultation with parents and pupils. In this way, the development of school-wide strategies for dealing with bullying is shared by all concerned.

5.2.2   It is essential that all concerned have a clear understanding of the policy aims and content if the policy is to form the basis for developing effective strategies for dealing with the problem.   The main aims of an anti-bullying policy are as follows:

   (i)   To create a positive school culture and climate that is inclusive and welcoming of difference;

(ii)   To create a school climate which is open, supportive and encourages pupils to disclose and discuss bullying behaviour;

(iii)   To raise awareness amongst the entire school community (including school management, teachers, pupils, parents, volunteers etc.) that bullying is unacceptable behaviour;

(iv)   To ensure comprehensive supervision and monitoring through which all aspects of school activity are kept under observation;

(v)   To provide procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying behaviour;

(vi)   To provide procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour;

(vii)   To develop a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and for those involved in bullying behaviour;

(viii)   To work with and through the various local agencies in countering all forms of bullying and anti-social behaviour; and

(ix)   To facilitate ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the school's anti-bullying policy.

5.3   Commitment to key principles of best practice

5.3.1   Every school must explicitly state in its anti-bullying policy that the school recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on pupils and that the school is therefore fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour:

(i)   A positive school culture and climate which-

- o is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity;
- o encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment; and
- o promotes respectful relationships across the school community;

(ii)   Effective leadership;

(iii)   A school-wide approach;

(iv)   A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact;

(v)   Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that-

- o   build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and
- o   explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying;

(vi)   Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils;

(vii)   Supports for staff;

(viii)   Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies); and

(ix)   On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

5.3.2   More detail in relation to each of the above principles is set out in Section 6 of these procedures.

5.4 Communication of the policy

5.4.1   As stated in Section 1.3.3, the school's anti-bullying policy must 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 copy of the school's anti-bullying policy must be provided to the Department and the patron if requested.

5.4.2   The Board of Management must ensure that the policy is regularly highlighted and promoted on a school-wide basis with particular attention being given to incoming pupils and their parents. School management must ensure that pupils, parents and staff members are made aware of the relevant teachers responsible for dealing with bullying concerns. School rules and other information on bullying should be provided in pupil friendly, age appropriate formats and should be displayed around the school building.

5.5 Prevention of harassment

5.5.1   Schools have an obligation under equality legislation to take such steps as are reasonably practicable to prevent harassment and sexual harassment. Equality legislation prohibits harassment on any of the nine grounds: gender including transgender, civil status,

family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.   Under equality legislation, sexual harassment is also prohibited. These prohibitions apply to all aspects of school life, for example classrooms, sport fields or school tours.

5.5.2   Schools may not permit pupils to harass other pupils. This prohibition also applies to staff or anyone who visits the school including parents, visiting sports teams etc. Under equality legislation, schools may be liable for harassment committed by an employee in the course of their work, whether or not it was done with the school's knowledge or approval. Schools may also be liable for harassment committed by people acting on their behalf who are not employees.

5.5.3   All schools are required to confirm in their anti-bullying policy 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 i.e. gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.

6 KEY PRINCIPLES OF BEST PRACTICE

6.1 Positive school culture and climate

6.1.1   A cornerstone in the prevention of bullying is a positive school culture and climate that is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity and respect. A school policy on bullying is most effective when supported by a positive school climate which encourages respect, trust, care, consideration and support for others.

6.1.2   Central to a positive school culture is respectful relationships across the entire school community. This encompasses relationships amongst peers (e.g. pupil to pupil, teacher to teacher) and relationships between groups (e.g. teachers and pupils, parents and teachers etc.).

6.1.3   The misconception that bullying is a normal phase of development and that it teaches pupils to toughen up needs to be challenged. The school must endeavour to create an environment where pupils feel comfortable and free to discuss and disclose incidents of bullying. This may also require challenging prevailing attitudes so that pupils realise that they also have a responsibility for the safety and welfare of fellow pupils.

6.1.4   Schools should therefore encourage and strengthen open dialogue between all school staff and pupils. Schools should ensure that they provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to raise their concerns in an environment that is comfortable for the pupil. This dialogue should encompass issues that happen outside school, including cyber-bullying. In order to accomplish this, schools may also need to consider how best to address topics that are masked by prejudice and silence such as homophobic bullying.

6.1.5   Key elements of a positive school culture and climate are outlined in Table A. Some practical tips for building a positive school culture and climate are also set out in **Appendix 2**. Other useful resources for schools include the *Well-Being Guidelines for Post Primary Schools* (published in January 2013) and the National Educational Psychological Service's (NEPS) *Continuum of Support* documents for primary and post-primary schools.

Table A: Key elements of a positive school culture and climate

- 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.

6.2 Effective leadership

6.2.1   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.

6.2.2   The Principal in particular has a key role in dealing with bullying behaviour in school because he/she is in a strong position to influence attitudes and set standards in dealing with such behaviour. Principals and other leaders in the school, including all teachers, should strive to engender an ethos under which bullying is unacceptable. All who are identified as leaders within the school community can ensure that practical steps are taken to challenge and respond to bullying. School leaders should also involve both staff and pupils in developing and implementing a vision of the school where diversity is accepted and celebrated.

6.2.3   As pupils model their behaviour on that of adults, Principals and teachers have to be careful to act as good role-models and not misuse their authority. Moreover, they should be fair, firm, clear and consistent in their disciplinary measures.

6.2.4   The *Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers* published by the Teaching Council makes explicit the values and standards expected of teachers in their daily work with pupils.

6.2.5   The NEWB publication *Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools* recognises the role of all adults, including parents, in modelling good behaviour and states "The adults in the school have a responsibility to model the school's standards of behaviour, in their dealings both with pupils and with each other, since their example is a powerful source of learning for pupils. Parents should be expected to model the standards that pupils are asked to respect. In order to do this, they need to be familiar with the standards and to understand the importance of expecting pupils to behave according to these standards. The ways in which parents and teachers interact will provide pupils with a model of good working relationships".

6.3 A school-wide approach

6.3.1   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.

6.3.2   A positive school-wide attitude and involvement can assist considerably in countering bullying behaviour in schools.   In addition to the role of management and staff, parents and pupils have a role and responsibility in helping the school to prevent and address school-based bullying behaviour and to deal with any negative impact within school of bullying behaviour that occurs elsewhere.   Parents should also recognise that a school that openly discusses bullying is acting positively and that they need to work with their school to ensure there is a coherent, school-wide approach to tackling the issue.

6.3.3   Bullying behaviour thrives in an atmosphere of uncertainty and secrecy in which the pupil often feels a sense of hopelessness and futility against the power being exercised by the person engaged in bullying behaviour. A high degree of school-wide vigilance and openness is important in ensuring that bullying behaviour can be adequately tackled.

6.3.4   The promotion of relevant home/school/community links is important for all schools in regard to countering bullying behaviour and should be encouraged as a normal part of the school's effective operation. For example, bullying behaviour can often occur on the journey to and/or from school. An anti-bullying school policy should embrace, as appropriate, those members of the wider community who come directly in daily contact with school pupils. School bus drivers, school traffic wardens and local shopkeepers could be encouraged to play a positive role in assisting schools to counter bullying behaviour by reporting such behaviour to parents and/or to the school as appropriate. Through such approaches, a network is formed.

6.3.5   In certain cases, however, it may be necessary for the school to seek the assistance of other local persons and formal agencies such as NEPS, HSE social workers, community workers, Gardaí etc.

6.4 Shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact

6.4.1   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 Section 2.1 of 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.

6.4.2   The definition of bullying, the various types of bullying behaviour and the impacts of bullying as set out in Sections 2 and 3 of these procedures must be communicated and explained to the school community.

6.5 Implementation of education and prevention strategies including awareness raising

6.5.1   The prevention of bullying must be an integral part of the written anti-bullying policy of all primary and post-primary schools. Every school must document in its anti-bullying policy the specific education and prevention strategies that the school will implement. This must include documenting the measures being taken by the school to explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.

6.5.2   Effective practice includes prevention and awareness raising measures across all aspects of bullying and involves strategies to engage pupils in addressing problems when they arise. In particular, such strategies need to build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils.

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

6.5.4   Initiatives and programmes focused on developing pupils' awareness and understanding of bullying, including its causes and effects, should deal explicitly with the issue of identity-based bullying and in particular homophobic and transphobic bullying. For example, the inclusion of LGBT posters on notice boards, discussions with parents about specific statements of welcome and respect for LGBT members of the school

community, teaching the Social, Personal, Health Education (SPHE) resource, *Growing Up LGBT* and participating in LGBT awareness events are just some of the ways in which a school can address homophobic and transphobic bullying.

6.5.5   Prevention and awareness raising measures must also deal explicitly with cyber-bullying. The best way to address cyber-bullying is to prevent it happening in the first place. Prevention and any awareness raising measures should focus on educating 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. The school-wide approach and the role of parents as outlined in Section 6.3 is of importance in this regard. The prevention and awareness raising measures should also take into account the scope for cyber-bullying to occur as a result of access to technology from within the school.

6.5.6   A school's approach to tackling and preventing bullying should take particular account of the needs of pupils with disabilities or with SEN, should join up with other relevant school policies and supports and should ensure that all the services that provide for such pupils work together. 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 and cultivating a good school culture which has respect for all and helping one another as central.

6.5.7   A school's prevention and awareness raising measures need to be appropriate to the type of bullying and take into account the age and gender of the pupils involved. Each school must work to raise the awareness of bullying so that all members of the school community understand what bullying is and how the school deals with bullying behaviour.

6.5.8   Schools could for example choose to have a staff day on the subject of bullying complemented by an awareness day for pupils and parents. An awareness day can help give the parents of a pupil who is being bullied the confidence to approach the school and also helps to send a clear message to the parents of a pupil who is engaged in bullying behaviour that they have a major responsibility in addressing their child's behaviour.

6.5.9   Teachers can influence attitudes to bullying behaviour in a positive manner through a range of curricular initiatives. There are a number of curriculum components and

programmes which are particularly relevant to the prevention of bullying and the promotion of respect for diversity and inclusiveness. 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 Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) programme at post-primary provides opportunities to explore and discuss areas such as human sexuality and relationships, which has particular relevance to identity-based bullying. Various other social, health and media education programmes can further help to address the problem of bullying behaviour. For example, the *Schools for Health in Ireland* framework provides guidance on developing a health promoting school.

6.5.10   There is space within the teaching of all 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. In English, there is a wide range of literature available which could be used to stimulate discussion. In Civil, Social and Political Education (CSPE), the interdependence of people in communities at local, national and international levels is stressed. In Geography and History references to colonisation, exploitation and dictatorships could be used to illustrate the negative aspect of power. The work could be extended into many other areas such as Art, Drama, Religious Education, and Physical Education. Co-operation and group enterprise can be promoted through team sports, school clubs and societies as well as through practical subjects. Sporting activities in particular can provide excellent opportunities for channelling and learning how to control aggression.

6.6 Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils

6.6.1   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 might include appropriate supervision of school activities on a rota basis. The identification of "hot-spots" and "hot-times" can be 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.

Student councils, where applicable, and other school clubs and societies can also be very important in this regard. Non-teaching staff should also contribute and be part of the process to counter bullying behaviour in schools. In addition, strategies and measures need to be developed to involve all parents.

6.6.2   The school's anti-bullying policy must confirm that appropriate supervision and monitoring policies and practices are in place to both prevent and deal with bullying behaviour.

6.7 Supports for staff

6.7.1   The Board of Management must ensure that members of school staff have sufficient familiarity with the school's anti bullying policy to enable them to effectively and consistently apply the policy when required. Supports for staff should be appropriate to the individual's role and should enable staff to recognise bullying, implement effective strategies for preventing bullying and where appropriate, intervene effectively in bullying cases.

6.7.2   The Board of Management must also make appropriate arrangements to ensure that temporary and substitute staff have sufficient awareness of the school's code of behaviour and its anti-bullying policy.

6.8 Consistent investigation, follow up and recording of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies)

6.8.1   A consistent and clear approach to dealing with bullying when it occurs is essential to effective practice. This section provides guidance and direction for schools in relation to the need to use established intervention strategies and ensuring consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour.

6.8.2   A pupil or parent may bring a bullying concern to any teacher in the school. Individual teachers must take appropriate measures regarding reports of bullying behaviour in accordance with the school's anti-bullying policy.

6.8.3   In these procedures, the member of teaching staff who has responsibility for investigating and dealing with bullying is referred to as the "relevant teacher". At primary

level, the relevant teacher will normally be the class teacher. At post-primary level, the school will determine, having regard to its own circumstances, which members of teaching staff have this responsibility.

6.8.4   The school's anti-bullying policy must clearly indicate the relevant teachers in its school. It is not necessary to specify the relevant teacher(s) by name in the policy so long as it is made sufficiently clear to all which teachers in the school have this responsibility.

Established intervention strategies

6.8.5   The *Action Plan on Bullying* published on the Department's website in January 2013 highlighted the importance of schools identifying and consistently implementing established evidence-based intervention strategies for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour and preventing its continuation.

6.8.6   There are various approaches and intervention strategies that might be used by schools. Given the complexity of bullying behaviour it is generally acknowledged that that no one intervention works in all situations. International and national research also continues to evolve in this area and the effectiveness of particular approaches continues to be reviewed.

6.8.7   Each school must therefore decide on the intervention method(s) that are best suited to its own circumstances.   In identifying the most suitable intervention method(s) for a particular school, it is important to research and understand both the techniques of intervention involved and the assumptions and rationale of particular methods.   One of the recommendations in the *Action Plan on Bullying* is that a new national anti-bullying website will be set up and this will be a useful and ongoing resource for schools.

6.8.8   To ensure clarity among the entire school community about how bullying cases will be dealt with, the method(s) of intervention that will be used by the school must be specified in the school's anti-bullying policy.

Procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying

6.8.9   School authorities must ensure that the school has clear procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying and that these are set out in the school's anti-bullying policy.   The school's procedures must be consistent with the following:

(i)   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);

(ii)   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;

(iii)   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;

(iv)   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;

(v)   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;

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

(vii)   Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents;

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

(ix)   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;

(x)   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;

(xi)   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;

(xii)   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;

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

(xiv)   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;

(xv)   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;

(xvi)   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;

(xvii)   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;

(xviii) 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 3** (See Section 6.8.10 (iii));

(xix)   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;

(xx)   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;

(xxi)   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.

Procedures for recording bullying behaviour

6.8.10   The Board of Management must ensure that the school has clear procedures for the formal noting and reporting of bullying behaviour and these must be documented in the school's anti-bullying policy. All records must be maintained in accordance with relevant data protection legislation. The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour must adhere to the following:

(i)   While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the relevant teacher will use 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;

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

(iii)   The relevant teacher must use the recording template at **Appendix 3** to record the 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 template at **Appendix 3** must 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 template at **Appendix 3** 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.

Bullying as part of a continuum of behaviour

6.8.11   It is also important to note that bullying behaviour can be part of a continuum of behaviour rather than a stand-alone issue and in some cases behaviour may escalate beyond that which can be described as bullying to serious physical or sexual assault or harassment. To ensure that any such cases are dealt with appropriately, the school's anti-bullying policy must provide for appropriate linkages with the overall code of behaviour and provide for referral to be made to relevant external agencies and authorities where appropriate. In cases where a school has serious concerns in relation to managing the behaviour of a pupil, the advice of the National Education Psychological Service (NEPS) should be sought.

Referral of serious cases to the HSE

6.8.12   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".

6.8.13   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.

6.8.14   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.

Supports for pupils affected by bullying

6.8.15   A programme of support for pupils who have been bullied must be in place. Such pupils may need counselling and/or opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop their friendship and social skills and thereby build resilience whenever this is needed.

6.8.16   A programme of support for those pupils involved in bullying behaviour must also be part of the school's intervention process. Pupils involved in bullying behaviour need assistance on an ongoing basis. For those with low self-esteem, opportunities should be developed to increase feelings of self-worth. It is, therefore, important that the learning strategies applied within the school allow for the enhancement of the pupil's self-worth. Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour may need counselling to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others.

6.8.17   Pupils who observe incidents of bullying behaviour should be encouraged to discuss them with teachers.

6.8.18   Details of the school's programme for working with pupils affected by bullying must be set out in the school's anti-bullying policy.

6.9 Ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti- bullying policy

6.9.1   The effectiveness of the school's anti-bullying policy should be subject to continuous review in the light of incidents of bullying behaviour encountered. The school should make provision for periodic examination of the prevention and intervention strategies in place. Surveys of pupils, staff and parents can, if properly conducted, provide important information about the effectiveness of the anti-bullying measures in place and identify any significant behavioural trends that may benefit from early intervention.

6.9.2   The template in **Appendix 3** for recording and reporting bullying to the school Principal or Deputy Principal will be a valuable and readily accessible source of data in relation to bullying behaviour in the school. Data gathered from these reports must be regularly (at least once in every school year) collated and analysed with a view to monitoring levels of bullying behaviour and identifying any particular issues that require attention or any significant trends in behaviour. A record of this analysis must be retained and be made available to the Board of Management. Appropriate responses to any issues identified should be drawn up and implemented.

6.9.3   It is recommended that the implementation and effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy be included as an agenda item for staff meetings so as to ensure that concerns about the policy or the welfare of individual pupils can be shared and effectively addressed.

7. OVERSIGHT

7.1 Periodic summary reports to the Board of Management

7.1.1   At least once in every school term, the Principal must provide a report to the Board of Management setting out:

(i)   the overall number of bullying cases reported (by means of the bullying recording template at **Appendix 3**) since the previous report to the Board and

(ii)   confirmation that all cases referred to at (i) above have been or are being, dealt with in accordance with the school's anti-bullying policy and the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary schools*.

7.1.2   The minutes of the Board of Management meeting must record the above but in doing so must not include any identifying details of the pupils involved.

7.2 Annual Review by the Board of Management

7.2.1   The Board of Management must undertake an annual review of the school's anti- bullying policy and its implementation by the school**.**

7.2.2   A standardised checklist to be used in undertaking the review is included in **Appendix 4** to these procedures. It should be noted that 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.

7.2.3   The school must put in place an action plan to address any areas for improvement identified by the review.

7.2.4   Written notification that the review has been completed must 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 standardised notification which must be used for this purpose is

included at **Appendix 4**. A record of the review and its outcome must be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

7.3 Department Inspectorate

7.3.1   The Department's Inspectorate conducts a programme of school evaluations in primary and post-primary schools. Inspectors evaluate aspects of the school's work, including policies and procedures to support pupils' well-being. Arising from commitments made in the *Action Plan on Bullying*, the Inspectorate will be placing a stronger focus on the actions schools take to create a positive school culture and to prevent and tackle bullying. This will take effect in the 2013-14 school year and it will apply to whole-school and other evaluations.

Appendix 1: Template anti-bullying policy

All sections of this template must be completed

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 _____ 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-

    o is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity;

    o encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment; and

    o 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-

    o build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and

    o 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.

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*.

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4. The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying is (are) as follows: (see Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):

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 (see Section 6.5 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):

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 (see Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*) :

7. 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*) :

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

11. 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.

12. 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.

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

Date: _____   Date: _____

Date of next review: _____

Appendix 2 Practical tips for building a positive school culture and climate

The following are some practical tips for immediate actions that can be taken to help build a positive school culture and climate and to help prevent and tackle bullying behaviour.

- Model respectful behaviour to all members of the school community at all times.
- Explicitly teach pupils what respectful language and respectful behaviour looks like, acts like, sounds like and feels like in class and around the school.
- Display key respect messages in classrooms, in assembly areas and around the school. Involve pupils in the development of these messages.
- Catch them being good - notice and acknowledge desired respectful behaviour by providing positive attention.
- Consistently tackle the use of discriminatory and derogatory language in the school – this includes homophobic and racist language and language that is belittling of pupils with a disability or SEN.
- Give constructive feedback to pupils when respectful behaviour and respectful language are absent.
- Have a system of encouragement and rewards to promote desired behaviour and compliance with the school rules and routines.
- Explicitly teach pupils about the appropriate use of social media.
- Positively encourage pupils to comply with the school rules on mobile phone and internet use. Follow up and follow through with pupils who ignore the rules.
- Actively involve parents and/or the Parents' Association in awareness raising campaigns around social media.
- Actively promote the right of every member of the school community to be safe and secure in school.
- Highlight and explicitly teach school rules in pupil friendly language in the classroom and in common areas.
- All staff can actively watch out for signs of bullying behaviour.
- Ensure there is adequate playground/school yard/outdoor supervision.
- School staff can get pupils to help them to identify bullying "hot spots" and "hot times" for bullying in the school.
    - Hot spots tend to be in the playground/school yard/outdoor areas, changing rooms, corridors and other areas of unstructured supervision.
    - Hot times again tend to be times where there is less structured supervision such as when pupils are in the playground/school yard or moving classrooms.
- Support the establishment and work of student councils.

Appendix 3 Template for recording bullying behaviour

1. Name of pupil being bullied and class group

Name _____ Class _____

2. Name(s) and class(es) of pupil(s) engaged in bullying behaviour

3. Source of bullying concern/report (tick relevant box(es))*		**4. Location** of incidents (tick relevant box(es))*	
Pupil concerned		Playground	
Other Pupil		Classroom	
Parent		Corridor	
Teacher		Toilets	
Other		School Bus	
		Other	

5. Name of person(s) who reported the bullying concern

6. Type of Bullying Behaviour (tick relevant box(es)) *

Physical Aggression		Cyber-bullying	
Damage to Property		Intimidation	
Isolation/Exclusion		Malicious Gossip	
Name Calling		Other (specify)	

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

Homophobic	Disability/SEN related	Racist	Membership of Traveller community	Other (specify)

8. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact

9. Details of actions taken

Signed _____ (Relevant Teacher)   Date _____

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal _____

* Note: The categories listed in the tables 3, 4 & 6 are suggested and schools may add to or amend these to suit their own circumstances.

Appendix 4 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.

	Yes /No
Has the Board formally adopted an anti-bullying policy that fully complies with the requirements of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary 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 _____ Date _____
Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed _____ Date _____
Principal

Notification regarding the Board of Management's annual review of the anti-bullying policy

To: _____

The Board of Management of _____ wishes to inform you that:

o   The Board of Management's annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation was completed at the Board meeting of _____ [date].

o   This review was conducted in accordance with the checklist set out in **Appendix 4** of the Department's *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.*

Signed _____   Date _____
Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed _____   Date _____
Principal