Anti- Bullying Policy

Bellurgan National School acknowledges the right of each member of the school community to enjoy school in a secure environment. The school promotes positive habits of self-respect, self-discipline and responsibility among all its members. The school disapproves of any behaviour by an individual or group that is offensive, or causes individuals to feel insecure or unhappy in the school setting. The school also encourages habits of mutual respect and courtesy. These values are achieved through our Code of Behaviour, the S.P.H.E. Curriculum and the Alive O Religion Programme. The school acknowledges the uniqueness of each individual and his/her worth as a human being.

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 **Bellurgan National 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.

Aims and Objectives

Our 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;

- 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.

<ins>Definition</ins>

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. Bullying includes;

➢ deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying,

➢ cyber-bullying,

> ➤ identity-based bullying (such as homophobic bullying and 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 will 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 our school's code of behaviour.

Types of Bullying

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.

Damage to Property

Personal property can be the focus of attention for bullying behaviour. This may result in damage to clothing, mobile phone or other devices, school books and other learning material or interference with a pupil's locker or bicycle. The contents of school bags and pencil cases may be scattered on the floor. Items of personal property may be defaced, broken, stolen or hidden.

Extortion

Demands for money may be made, often accompanied by threats (sometimes carried out in the event of the targeted pupil not delivering on the demand). A pupil may also be forced into theft of property for delivery to another who is engaged in bullying behaviour.

Intimidation

Some bullying behaviour takes the form of intimidation: it may be based on the use of very aggressive body language with the voice being used as a weapon. Particularly upsetting can be a facial expression which conveys aggression and/or dislike.

Isolation

This occurs where a certain person is deliberately isolated, excluded or ignored by some or all of the class group. This practice is usually initiated by the person engaged in bullying behaviour and can be difficult to detect. It may be accompanied by writing insulting remarks about the pupil in public places, by passing around notes about or drawings of the pupil or by whispering insults about them loud enough to be heard. Relational bullying occurs when a person's attempts to socialise and form relationships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined. One of the most common forms includes control: "Do this or I won't be your friend anymore"(implied or stated); a group ganging up against one person (girl or boy); non-verbal gesturing; malicious gossip; spreading rumours about a person or giving them the "silent treatment".

Cyber-bullying

This type of bullying is increasingly common and is continuously evolving. It is bullying carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as text, social network sites, e-mail, instant messaging (IM), apps, gaming sites, chat-rooms and other online technologies. Being the target of inappropriate or hurtful messages is the most

common form of online bullying. As cyber-bullying uses technology to perpetrate bullying behaviour and does not require face to face contact, cyber-bullying can occur at any time (day or night). Many forms of bullying can be facilitated through cyber-bullying. For example, a target may be sent homophobic text messages or pictures may be posted with negative comments about a person's sexuality, appearance etc.

Name Calling/Labeling

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. Accents or distinctive voice characteristics may attract negative attention. Academics ability can also provoke name calling. This tends to operate on two extremes. There are those who are singled out for attention because they are perceived as weak academically. At the other extreme there are those who beacse they are perceived as high achievers, are also targeted.

Indications of Bullying/Behaviour

- ✓ Anxiety about travelling to/from school
- ✓ Unwillingness to go to school
- ✓ Deterioration in educational performance
- ✓ Pattern of physical illnesses
- ✓ Unexplained changes in either mood/behaviour
- ✓ Visible signs of anxiety/distress
- ✓ Possessions missing
- ✓ Unexplained bruising
- ✓ Reluctance and/or refusal to say what is troubling him/her.

Effects of Bullying

Pupils, who are being bullied, may develop feelings of insecurity and extreme anxiety. Self-confidence may be damaged, with a consequential lowering of their self-esteem. While they may not talk about what is happening to them, their suffering is indicated through changes in mood and behaviour. The consequences of bullying behaviour on the victim can also lead to self harm.

The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying are;

1. *The child(s) class teacher*
2. *Principal and Deputy Principal.*

✓ 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);

✓ 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;

Education and Prevention Strategies

- 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.

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

- Initiatives and programmes focused on developing pupils' awareness and understanding of bullying, including its causes and effects, will deal explicitly with the issue of identity-based bullying and in particular homophobic and transphobic bullying. All pupils will take part in the Stay Safe programme each school year with the consent of their parents.

- An awareness day may take place from time to time to 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.

- 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.

- 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.

Procedures for Investigation

- 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;

- 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;

- 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;

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

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

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

- All interviews should be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this way;

- When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher should seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This should be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner;

- 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;

- 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;

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

- 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;

- Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts should be made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied;

- It must also be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parents) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parents and the school;

- 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;

- 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 1;

- 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:

(i) Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased;

(ii) Whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable;

(iii) Whether the relationships between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable;

(iv) Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the school Principal or Deputy Principal;

- Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures;

- In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

Programme of Support For Affected Pupils

- A programme of support for pupils who have been bullied will 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.

- A programme of support for those pupils involved in bullying behaviour will 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 will 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.

- Pupils who observe incidents of bullying behaviour will be encouraged to discuss them with teachers.

Success Criteria

The success of an effective Anti-Bullying Policy will be evident in;

- Happy children who enjoy & look forward to coming to school.
- The success the schools feels it has in addressing and eliminating incidents of bullying.
- Parental satisfaction
- A positive whole school climate and atmosphere.
- A school community where everyone feels valued.

Review

The schools anti-bullying policy will be subject to continuous review. It will be included as an item on the agenda for school staff meetings. Outside facilitators, with expertise on child behaviour issues, and more, specifically in the area of bullying, will talk to school staff at staff meetings.

Ratification and Communication

- ✓ The Board of Management confirms that Bellurgan National 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.
- ✓ 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.
- ✓ This policy will be in operation from the first term of the school year 2016/2017, having been ratified by Staff and BOM. Every teacher will be provided with a copy of this policy for their files. This policy will be placed on our school website and a copy will also be given to

our Parent Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

✓ 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.

Date of next policy review: October 2023

Signed on Behalf of the Board of Management:

Chairperson: **Mr Jimmy Hughes**

Date: __25 / 10 / 22____

The Board of Management of Bellurgan N.S wishes to inform you that:

✓ The Board of Management's annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation was completed at the Board meeting of 25th October 2022.

✓ 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 **Mr Jimmy Hughes** Date 25/10/22

Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed **Mr Dermot McCoy** (Principal) Date 25/10/22