Cara Community Special School
Enfield, Co. Meath

Anti Bullying Policy

School Position on Bullying

The Cara Community Special School community believe that each pupil has a right to an education free from fear and intimidation. The school regards bullying as a serious infringement of individual rights and a serious threat to the self esteem and self-confidence of targeted pupil(s). Therefore it does not tolerate bullying of any kind.

Every report of bullying is treated seriously and dealt with, having due regard for the wellbeing of the targeted pupil(s) and the perpetrator(s).

An 'Anti-Bullying Team,' made up of staff members, exists to cultivate an environment free from bullying. The immediate priority, should a bullying incident occur, is ending the bullying, (*thereby protecting the person(s) being targeted*) and resolving the issues and restoring the relationships involved insofar as is practicable using a 'Reform, not Blame' approach.

All pupils are expected to contribute to the creation and maintenance a safe environment in the school. On becoming aware of any bullying situation, in or outside the school, involving members of the school community they should notify a trusted responsible adult. Bullying behaviour is too serious not to report.

Pupils' participation in school life in general is encouraged through existing school structures. Awareness of bullying, and willingness to take action to prevent or stop it, is part of this participation.

Anti-Bullying Policy

1. In accordance with the requirements of the *Education (Welfare) Act 2000* and the code of behaviour guidelines issued by the NEWB, the Board of Management of Cara CSS has adopted the following anti-bullying policy within the framework of the school's overall code of behaviour. This policy fully complies with the requirements of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* which were published in September 2013.

2. The Board of Management recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of pupils and is therefore fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour:

   - A positive school culture and climate which
     - is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity;
     - encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment; and
     - 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
     - Build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and
     - Explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based 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 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.

This definition includes a wide range of behaviour, whether verbal or written, whether physical or social, whether targeting person or property, whether carried out directly or indirectly or through any electronic or other medium, which could harm a pupil or undermine her/his self esteem or self-confidence.

Appendix 1 gives a list of specific examples of bullying behaviour. This list is not exhaustive.

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

4. The 'Relevant Teacher(s)' for investigating and dealing with bullying in this school is/are as follows:
    Ruairí Mc Gorman, Deputy Principal

5. The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber-bullying and identity based bullying) used by the school are as follows:
    -   The anti-bullying module of the SPHE programme as it applies during each school year,
    -   At least five awareness-raising exercises per school year for each class group (*e.g. from the 'Awareness-Raising' strand of the Anti-Bullying Campaign, via its website www.antibullyingcampaign.ie*), pro-actively explaining the nature and variety, causes, consequences and unacceptability of bullying.

- Pupils are helped to examine the issue of bullying in a calm rational way, outside of the tense context of particular bullying incidents. In the process they are made more aware of the nature of bullying and the various forms that it can take.

- Pupils are made aware that the consequences of bullying behaviour are always bad for those who are targeted, even if this is not always obvious at the time.

- Pupils are encouraged to recognise, reject and report bullying behaviour, either spontaneously or through questionnaires that are regularly used in the school.

Through presentations or other exercises, the school staff and parents/guardians are made aware of the nature of bullying and the signs that might indicate that a pupil is being bullied. They are encouraged to be vigilant in watching out for signs of bullying and to report any suspicion of bullying they may have to the 'Relevant Teacher' (in the case of staff members) or any staff member (in the case of parents/guardians).

Through regular reports in school newsletters and other communications, as well as at meetings with parent/guardian groups, parents/guardians are regularly informed of the activities of the school 'Anti-Bullying Team' and encouraged to support its work.

- An annual anti-bullying/friendship day/week

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,

   (*e.g. the six step approach available from the 'Dealing with Incidents' section of the Anti-Bullying Campaign website*) are as follows:

   - The 'Relevant Teacher' investigates all instances of reported or suspected bullying behaviour, whether these take place within the school or outside it, with a view to establishing the facts and bringing any such behaviour to an end.

   - The School, through the 'Relevant Teacher' reserves the right to ask any pupil to write an account of what happened, as part of an investigation. This will be a standard procedure and does not necessarily imply that a pupil is guilty of misbehaviour.

   - Pupils who are alleged to have been involved in bullying behaviour are interviewed by the 'Relevant Teacher' to establish the nature and extent of the behaviour and any reasons for it. In the event that they have been involved in bullying behaviour they are asked to sign a binding promise that they will treat all pupils fairly, equally and respectfully including the targeted pupil(s).

- The 'Relevant Teacher' does not apportion blame but rather treats bullying behaviour as a 'mistake' that can and must be remedied. S/he emphasises that the intention is not to punish perpetrators but to talk to them, to explain how harmful and hurtful bullying is and to seek a promise that it will stop. If that promise is forthcoming and is honoured there will be no penalty and that will be the end of the matter. Pupils who report bullying therefore are not getting others 'in trouble' so much as enabling them to get out of trouble into which they may ultimately get if the bullying continued.

- When an investigation is completed and/or a bullying situation is resolved the 'Relevant Teacher' will complete a report, to include the findings of the investigation, the strategy adopted and the outcome of the intervention, as well as any other relevant information.

- If a pupil has signed such a promise but then chooses to break that promise and continue the bullying behaviour, this can then no longer be considered a 'mistake.' In this event parent(s)/guardian(s) will be informed and requested to countersign their daughter/son's promise. Breach of this additional promise by further bullying behaviour is regarded as a very grave matter and a serious sanction may be imposed by the school authorities (See sanctions below).

- All documentation regarding bullying incidents and their resolution is retained securely in the school.

- Sanctions:

  Where a pupil has been found to be engaged in bullying behaviour, has formally promised to stop and has broken that promise, any of the following sanctions may be imposed:

  - S/he may be required to sign another promise, this time countersigned by a parent/guardian;
  - Parent(s)/guardian(s) may be contacted by the 'Relevant Teacher' and informed of the nature and extent of the bullying behaviour with a view to agreeing a strategy whereby a promise to end the bullying behaviour would be honoured;
  - Parent(s)/guardian(s) may be invited to a meeting with the 'Relevant Teacher' and the Principal and the pupil may be suspended from school.
  - The case may be referred to the Board of Management and the pupil may be expelled from the school.

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

- **Bullied pupils:**
  - Ending the bullying behaviour,
  - Changing the school culture to foster more respect for bullied pupils and all pupils,
  - Changing the school culture to foster greater empathy towards and support for bullied pupils,

- Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through the awareness raising programme,
- Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through the speedy identification of those responsible and speedy resolution of bullying situations,
- After resolution, enabling bullied pupils to complete a victim-impact statement,
- Making adequate counselling facilities available to pupils who need it in a timely manner,
- Helping bullied pupils raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that help develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school).
- Implementing a 'buddy system' in the school (*if applicable*),

Bullying pupils:

- Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are not blamed or punished and get a 'clean sheet,'
- Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are doing the right and honourable thing and giving them praise for this,
- Making adequate counselling facilities available to help those who need it learn other ways of meeting their needs besides violating the rights of others,
- Helping those who need to raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school),
- Using learning strategies throughout the school and the curriculum to help enhance pupils' feelings of self-worth,
- In dealing with negative behaviour in general, encouraging teachers and parents to focus on, challenge and correct the behaviour while supporting the child,
- In dealing with bullying behaviour seeking resolution and offering a fresh start with a 'clean sheet' and no blame in return for keeping a promise to reform.

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. The Board of Management confirms that the school will, in accordance with its obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps as are reasonably practicable to prevent the sexual harassment of pupils or staff or the harassment of pupils or staff on any of the nine grounds specified i.e. gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.

10. This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department of Education and to 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 and provided to the Parents' Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available to the Department of Education and Skills and to the patron if requested.

This policy has been ratified by the Single Manager of Cara CSS on 9 January 2024

Signed: _Fiera Mellor_ **Single Manager**   Date: _9/1/24_

Signed: _Katie Callaghan_ **Principal / Secretary to the Board of Management**

Appendix 1

Bullying can take a number of forms. These may include any of the following (this list is not exhaustive):

- **Repeated aggressive behaviour/attitude/body language, for example:**
  Shouting and uncontrolled anger
  Personal insults
  Verbal abuse
  Offensive language directed at an individual,
  Continually shouting or dismissing others
  Public verbal attacks/criticism
  Domineering behaviour
  Open aggression
  Offensive gestures and unwanted physical contact

- **Intimidation, either physical, psychological or emotional, for example:**
  Treating in a dictatorial manner
  Ridicule
  Persistent slagging
  Deliberate staring with the intent to discomfort
  Persistent rudeness in behaviour and attitude toward a particular individual
  Asking inappropriate questions/making inappropriate comments re. personal life/family
  Asking inappropriate questions/making inappropriate comments re. social life or schoolwork

- **Interference with property, for example:**
  Stealing/damaging books or equipment
  Stealing/damaging clothing or other property
  Demanding money with menaces

Persistently moving, hiding or interfering with property

Marking/defacing property

- **Undermining/Public or Private Humiliation, for example:**

  Condescending tone

  Deliberately withholding significant information and resources

  Writing of anonymous notes

  Malicious, disparaging or demeaning comments

  Malicious tricks/derogatory joke,

  Knowingly spreading rumours

  Belittling others' efforts, their enthusiasm or their new idea,

  Derogatory or offensive nicknames (name-calling)

  Using electronic or other media for any of the above (cyber bullying,

  Disrespectfully mimicking a particular individual in his/her absence

  Deliberately refusing to address issues focusing instead on the person

- **Ostracising or isolating, for example:**

  Deliberately marginalising an individual

  Deliberately preventing a person from joining a group

  Deliberately preventing from joining in an activity, schoolwork-related or recreational

  Blaming a pupil for things s/he did not do