Anti-Bullying Policy St Vincent’s Girls’ School

St Vincent’s GNS is a Catholic Girls National School under the trusteeship of the Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul. This Catholic school has at its heart the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ. This policy is written in accordance with the vision for Catholic education outlined in the Catholic Primary Schools Management Handbook (CPSMA) {pp. 5-69}, which includes:

* *Vision 08: A Vision for Catholic Education in Ireland*
* *Share the Good News*
* *Catholic Schools Partnership (CSP) Schools Pamphlet*
* *The Agreed Schedule for a Catholic Primary School in the Republic of Ireland*

**Policies of the Catholic School**

The policies of the Catholic school are rooted in Catholic Social Teaching namely:

* Dignity of the Human Person
* Option for the Poor
* Solidarity of the Human Family
* The Common Good
* Participation and partnership between home, school and parish
* The Dignity of Work
* The Universal Purpose of Material Things
* Social Nature of the Human Person
* Care of the earth

**Our Mission Statement:**

**To support the learning and development of each person in a happy, caring and respectful environment**

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 St Vincent’s GNS School has adopted the following anti-bullying policy within the framework of the school’s overall code of behaviour. This policy fully complies with the requirements of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* which were published in September 2013.
2. The Board of Management recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of pupils and is therefore fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour:

* **A positive school culture and climate which**-
  + is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity;
  + encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment; 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 including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.
* **Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils;**
* **Supports for staff;**
* **Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour** (including use of established intervention strategies);
* **On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.**

1. 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 or Roma 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.

In keeping with our Mission Statement and with the ethos of our school which is to care for those who are most marginalised, the following bullying behaviours will not be tolerated under any circumstances

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Physical** | Punching Hair-pulling  Shoving Throwing items at  Kicking Spitting at  Pinching  Hitting Damaging property of someone  Any behaviour that seeks to injure |
| **Verbal** | Jeering Slagging of parents/family  Slagging Verbal nastiness  Threatening Humiliating  Name-calling Making someone feel ‘small’ |
| **Psychological** | Intimidation Spreading stories/rumours  Aggressive body-language Telling lies about someone  Roaring into ears/face Excluding someone  Coming up to someone’s face Isolation  ‘Looks’ Bullying by text  ‘Ganging up’  Social networking sites Cyber-bullying  Racism |

1. 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*):

**The Relevant Teachers in this school are:**

The Principal

Deputy Principal and all Support Teachers

All class based teachers.

Any teacher may act as the relevant teachers if circumstances warrant it.

1. 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*):

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Programmes**   * Circle Time * Stay Safe-Jan/feb * SPHE * Walk Tall * RSE * *Grow in Love* – respect and dignity for all * Prayer Services * Educating pupils and parents to the challenges of using the Internet/Social Networking, during February of each year * Weaving Wellbeing * Incredible Years * Fun Friends/Friends For Life * Restorative Practice | **Building Community**   * Breakfast Club * Prizegiving Assemblies * Concerts and celebrating significant school days * 6th Class lunch time responsibilities * Parent’s in classrooms working with teachers * Parents invited to celebrations * Friendship week * Green School Project * Open Day * Skipathon * Retreat for Sacramental Classes * Attendance Awards * Class Attendance Prize |
| **Activities**   * Yard Activities * Golden Time * Gaelic Games * Athletics * Swimming |
| **School Structures**   * Cookery * After School Activities * Assemblies * Principal’s Special Awards * School Tours and Trips * The Sacraments * Bible Stories * Reconciliation Rituals in *Grow in Love* * Mindfulness * Self-assessment-taking responsibility | * Supervision at breaks * Corridor duty * Early morning duty * Supervision at dismissal * Care team * Home visits * Partnership with parents * Support teacher * Home School Teacher |

1. 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*) :

**The primary aim in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore as far as practible, the relationship of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame);**

**The school’s procedures must be consistent with the following approach.**

Every effort must be made to ensure that all involved (including pupils, parent(s)) understand this approach from the outset.

**Reporting bullying behaviour**

Any pupil or parent(s)/guardian may bring a bullying incident which happened in school to any teacher in the school.

All reports including anonymous reports of bullying will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher

Teaching and non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants, taxi escorts, caretakers, cleaners must report any bullying incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher.

**Investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying**

* In investigating and dealing with bullying, the (relevant)teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved;(some situations may require extra help. Colleagues may need to liaise)
* Parent(s)/guardian(s) 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;
* Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach.
* Where possible incidents should be 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 may face them from the other members of the group after the interview by the teacher;

It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s) who what where when why

* In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parent(s)/guardian(s) 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 parent(s)/guardian(s) an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports provided to the 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 parent(s)/guardian(s)) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school;

**Follow up and recording**

* 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;

-Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parent(s)/guardian(s)s or the school Principal or Deputy Principal

* 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.
* Where a parent(s)/guardian(s) is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parent(s)/guardian(s) must be referred, as appropriate, to the school’s complaints procedures.
* In the event that a parent(s)/guardian(s) has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parent(s)/guardian(s) of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

**Recording of bullying behaviour**

It is imperative that all recording of bullying incidents must be done in an objective and factual manner.

The school’s procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour are as follows:

**Informal- pre-determination that bullying has occurred**

* All staff must keep a written record of any incidents witnessed by them or notified to them. All incidents must be reported to the relevant teacher
* While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the relevant teacher must keep a written record of the reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same
* The relevant teacher must inform the principal of all incidents being investigated.

**Formal Stage 1-determination that bullying has occurred**

* 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.
* All records of investigated incidents of bullying will be kept in the principal’s office in a locked filing cabinet.

**Formal Stage 2-Appendix 3 (From DES Procedures)**

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) The school has decided as part of its anti-bullying policy that in the following circumstances bullying behaviour must be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Physical | Punching, Kicking, Hitting, Spitting  Any behaviour that seeks to injure |
| Verbal | Threatening, Humiliating  Any comments of a sexual nature |
| Psychological | Intimidation  Bullying by text  Cyber-bullying  Racism |

When the recording template is used, it must be retained by the relevant teacher in question and a copy maintained by the principal. The records will be stored in the office in a locked cabinet. Records which may be deemed serious will be retained for an unlimited period.

**Sanctions**

Pupils name their behaviour

She apologises to the pupil she has bullied and undertakes not to engage in the behaviour discussed

For repeated incidents or if the incident in question is be considered serious, the pupil(s) involved may be excluded from an activity they enjoy such as Golden Time. Instead work will be set in another /junior class.

For a serious assault on another child, or for persistent bullying behaviour, a pupil may be suspended or expelled by the Board of Management (see Code of Behaviour)

On return, the behaviour of the suspended pupil will be closely monitored as part of sanctions imposed.

**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*) :

All in-school supports and opportunities will be provided for the pupils affected by bullying to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem,to develop friendships and social skills and build resilience

(These are outlined in **Section 5 under the programmes and strategies used to prevent bullying.)**

Pupils should understand that there are no innocent bystanders and that all incidents of bullying behaviour must be reported to a teacher.

1. **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.**

The school structures which are in place to both prevent and deal with bullying and to facilitate early intervention where possible in St Vincent’s GNS are:

* Early morning Duty
* Supervision at breaks
* Corridor Duty
* Yard Duty
* Care Team
* Home visits
* Partnership with parents
* Open-door policy for parent

**Cyber-bullying**

The Board of Management of St Vincent’s GNS will treat with the utmost seriousness incidents of Cyber-bullying involving any member of the school community. Sanctions up to and including expulsion from the school may be imposed on any pupil found to be involved in Cyber-bullying.

***Cyber-bullying includes the use of e-mail, text message or Social Media to bully, harass, threaten or intimidate another person in the school community*. Any behaviour which intrudes on the privacy and dignity of pupils, staff, or their families is deemed a serious breach of the School Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy and will be dealt with accordingly.**

At the same time, the Board of Management recognizes that Cyber-bullying is an issue for families, the school community and society in general. St Vincent’s GNS wants to make a meaningful contribution but parents must assume responsibility for the actions of their children since most incidents of Cyber-bullying take place in unsupervised spaces (i.e. laptops/mobile phones) outside of school premises.

The following preventative strategies operate in the school:

* As part of the SPHE Policy, teaching the children about Internet Safety will be a priority throughout the year. A whole-school community approach to it will be taken during the month of February each year.
* Trained speakers will be engaged to work with parents around Internet Safety and Cyber-bullying during the same period
* Parents will be reminded that no pupil under 14 years is permitted to register with ‘Facebook’
* Use of the Internet in the school will be supervised by the class teacher at all times
* School computers are protected by suitable software that prohibits the use of e-mail and Social Networking sites
* As outlined in our Mobile Phone and Internet Technology Policy: pupils must have their phones switched off while in school

1. **Prevention of Harassment**

**St Vincent’s is an inclusive school and the whole school community values everyone who learns, teaches, works in, entrusts their children to, or visits the school, equally.**

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.

1. This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on April 3rd 2019
2. This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on theschool website. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the Patron if requested.
3. 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. 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: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_