Gaelscoil Eois's Anti-Bullying Policy

1.   The Policy

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 Gaelscoil Eois 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.   Key Principles of Best Practice

The Board of Management of Gaelscoil Eois 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); and
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

3.   **Definition of Bullying**

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:

Examples of bullying behaviours

General behaviours which apply to all types of bullying	- Harassment based on any of the nine grounds in the equality legislation e.g. sexual harassment, homophobic bullying, racist bullying etc. - Physical aggression - Damage to property - Name calling - Slagging - The production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other materials aimed at intimidating another person - Offensive graffiti - Extortion - Intimidation - Insulting or offensive gestures - The "look" - Invasion of personal space - A combination of any of the types listed.
Cyber	**Denigration**: Spreading rumors, lies or gossip to hurt a person's reputation **Harassment**: Continually sending vicious, mean or disturbing messages to an individual **Impersonation**: Posting offensive or aggressive messages under another person's name **Flaming**: Using inflammatory or vulgar words to provoke an online fight **Trickery**: Fooling someone into sharing personal information which you then post online **Outing**: Posting or sharing confidential or compromising information or images **Exclusion**: Purposefully excluding someone from an online group **Cyber stalking**: Ongoing harassment and denigration that causes a person considerable fear for his/her safety - Silent telephone/mobile phone call

	• Abusive telephone/mobile phone calls • Abusive text messages • Abusive email • Abusive communication on social networks e.g. Facebook/Ask.fm/ Twitter/You Tube or on games consoles • Abusive website comments/Blogs/Pictures • Abusive posts on any form of communication technology
Identity Based Behaviours **Including any of the nine discriminatory grounds mentioned in Equality Legislation** (gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community).	
Homophobic and Transgender	• Spreading rumours about a person's sexual orientation • Taunting a person of a different sexual orientation • Name calling e.g. Gay, queer, lesbian…used in a derogatory manner • Physical intimidation or attacks • Threats
Race, nationality, ethnic background and membership of the Traveller community	• Discrimination, prejudice, comments or insults about colour, nationality, culture, social class, religious beliefs, ethnic or traveller background • Exclusion on the basis of any of the above
Relational	This involves manipulating relationships as a means of bullying. Behaviours include: • Malicious gossip • Isolation & exclusion • Ignoring • Excluding from the group • Taking someone's friends away • "Bitching" • Spreading rumours • Breaking confidence • Talking loud enough so that the victim can hear • The "look" • Use or terminology such as 'nerd' in a derogatory way
Sexual	• Unwelcome or inappropriate sexual comments or touching • Harassment

Special Educational Needs, Disability	• Name calling • Taunting others because of their disability or learning needs • Taking advantage of some pupils' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to recognise and defend themselves against bullying • Taking advantage of some pupils' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to understand social situations and social cues. • Mimicking a person's disability • Setting others up for ridicule

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.

4.   Relevant Teachers

The relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying are, the Principal and the Deputy Principal.

5.   Education and prevention strategies

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 Gaelscoil Eois are as follows:

- A school-wide approach to the fostering of respect for all members of the school community.
- We promote the value of diversity to address issues of prejudice and stereotyping, and highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour.

- The fostering and enhancing of the self-esteem of all our pupils through both curricular and extracurricular activities. Pupils will be provided with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth through formal and informal interactions.
- Whole staff professional development on bullying to ensure that all staff develops an awareness of what bullying is, how it impacts on pupils' lives and the need to respond to it-prevention and intervention.
- An annual audit of professional development needs with a view to assessing staff requirements through internal staff knowledge/expertise and external sources
- Professional development with specific focus on the training of the relevant teacher(s)
- School wide awareness raising and training on all aspects of bullying, to include pupils, parent(s)/guardian(s) and the wider school community.
- Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extra- curricular activities. Non-teaching and ancillary staff will be encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers. Supervision will also apply to monitoring student use of communication technology within the school.
- We document the specific education and prevention strategies that the school will implement and especially to address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying.

- 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.

- We provide students with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth through both their curricular and extra-curricular programmes because we recognise that self-esteem is a major factor in determining behaviour. Our initiatives and programmes focus on developing pupils' awareness and understanding of bullying, including its causes and effects and we deal explicitly with the issue of identity-based bullying and in particular homophobic and transphobic bullying.

- The best way to address cyber-bullying is to prevent it happening in the first place. Our prevention and awareness raising measures focus on educating pupils in the senior classes 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 is of importance in this regard. Our prevention and awareness raising measures also takes into

account the scope for cyber-bullying to occur as a result of access to technology from within the school.

- Our approach to tackling and preventing bullying takes particular account of the needs of pupils with disabilities or with SEN, and joins up with other relevant school policies and supports and ensures 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.

- We 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. We organise a Friendship Awareness Week, bullying is discussed and presentations are made to the Parents' Association, there are information sessions for teachers, the subject is spoken about at assemblies and many aspects of bullying are interwoven into the school's Code of Conduct. We ensure that there is adequate supervision before, during and after school. We understand that a Friendship Awareness Week 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.

- 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 Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) programme provides opportunities to explore and discuss areas such as human sexuality and relationships, which has particular relevance to identity-based bullying. We recognise that continuous professional development for teachers is required in this area of work.

- We encourage a culture of telling, with particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders. 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.

- We ensure that pupils know who to tell and how to tell, e.g.:
  - o Direct approach to teacher at an appropriate time, for example after class.
  - o Hand note up with homework.
  - o Make a phone call to the school or to a trusted teacher in the school.
  - o Get a parent(s)/guardian(s) or friend to tell on your behalf.
  - o Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place.

- We identify clear protocols to encourage parent(s)/guardian(s) to approach the school if they suspect that their child is being bullied.
- The development of an Acceptable Use Policy in the school includes the necessary steps to ensure that the access to technology within the school is strictly monitored, as is the pupils' use of mobile phones.
- 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, we use literature to stimulate discussion. We extend the work into many other areas such as Art, Drama, Religious Education, and Physical Education. We promote co-operation and group enterprise 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.   Procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying

Gaelscoil Eois'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:

- 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.

- 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 is 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 are 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. Teachers 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 are conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved also provide very useful information in this way. When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher seeks answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This is 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 is interviewed individually at first and thereafter, all those involved are met as a group. At the group meeting, each member is asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statement. Each member of a group is supported through the possible pressures that may face them from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher. It may also be appropriate or helpful sometimes to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident.

- In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved are contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and to explain the actions being taken (by reference to the school policy). The school gives 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 is made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and

efforts are made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied.

- It is 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 are 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 on the 'Form for recording bullying behaviour'. 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 has any feedback been 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.

7.   Procedures for recording bullying behaviour

The Board of Management of Gaelscoil Eois has ensured 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:

- 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.

Informal- pre-determination that bullying has occurred
- All staff must keep a written record of any incidents witnessed by them or notified to them. Consideration needs to be given to where the records will be made e.g. incident book. 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.
- The school in consultation with the relevant teacher/s should develop a protocol for the storage of all records retained by the relevant teacher.

Formal Stage 2-
The relevant teacher must use the **recording template** 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.
The school should list behaviours that must be recorded and reported immediately to the principal. These should be in line with the school's code of behaviour.

Established intervention strategies
- Teacher interviews with all pupils
- Negotiating agreements between pupils and following these up by monitoring progress. This can be on an informal basis or implemented through a more structured mediation process
- Working with parent(s)/guardian(s)s to support school interventions
- No Blame Approach

- Circle Time
- Restorative interviews
- Restorative conferencing
- Implementing sociogram questionnaires
- Peer mediation where suitable training has been given

8.   Supports for pupils affected by bullying

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

- A programme of support for pupils who have been bullied is in place in Gaelscoil Eois. 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 e.g.
    - Pastoral care system
    - Buddy / Peer mentoring system
    - Tutor
        - Care team / Student Support Team
        - Group work such as circle time
- We adopt a method of shared concern. We use restorative practice, mediation or reconciliation where appropriate. We maintain open communications between school, parents and outside agencies. We work together to resolve the situation and protect the victim.

- A programme of support for those pupils involved in bullying behaviour is also 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 are developed to increase feelings of self-worth. Therefore we recognise that it is 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.

9.   Referral of serious cases to the HSE

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".

Serious instances of bullying behaviour are, in accordance with the *Children First and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, referred to the HSE Children and Family Services and/or *Gardaí* as appropriate.

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.

10. Bullying as part of a continuum of behaviour

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 provides for appropriate linkages with the overall code of behaviour and referrals will be made to relevant external agencies and authorities where appropriate. In cases where we have serious concerns in relation to managing the behaviour of a pupil, the advice of the National Education Psychological Service (NEPS) should be sought.

11. 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.
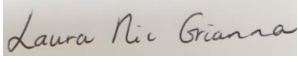
12. Prevention of Harassment

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.

13. 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 and the patron if requested.

14.   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, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

This policy was adopted by the Gaelscoil Eois Board of Management on

Signed: **B. O Dufaigh**   **Date:** 31/3/22
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: *Laura Nic Grianna*   **Date:** 31.3.22
(Principal)

Date of next review: annually