Anti-Bullying Policy of St. Lassara's N. S.

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. Lassara's N.S. has adopted the following anti-bullying policy within the framework of the school's overall code of behaviour. This policy complies fully 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 –

     o 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;

     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

     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)

- 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 unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical conducted, by an individual or group against another person (or persons) 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

   - 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 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 conduct.

   Additional information on different types of bullying is set out in

   - Section 2 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.*

   - Appendix A of this policy

4. The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows:

   - Principal

   - Deputy Principal

   - All class teachers

   - All support teachers

Any teacher may act as a relevant teacher if circumstances warrant it.

5. The following education and prevention strategies, at an appropriate and relevant level for each class, will be used by the school:

- Teachers can influence attitudes to bullying behaviour in a positive manner.

School-wide approach

- A school-wide approach to the fostering of respect for all members of the school community.

- The promotion of 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 develop 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

- Continuous Professional Development with specific focus on the needs identified in the above.

- 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.

- Involvement of the pupils in contributing to a safe school environment e.g. structured yard games, friendship squad and school bus prefects help to support pupils and encourage a culture of peer respect and support.

- The implementation of regular whole school awareness measures e.g. annual Friendship Week.

- The school implements the Stay Safe Programme in its entirety and teachers also use the Walk Tall Programme and other appropriate resources to support the S.P.H.E. curriculum.

- The school's anti-bullying policy is discussed with pupils and all parent(s)/guardian(s) are given a copy of this as part of the Code of Behaviour of the school.

- Encourage a culture of telling, with particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders, if they witness or know bullying is taking place. In this 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.

- Ensuring that pupils know who to tell and how to tell

    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.

- The development of an Acceptable Use Policy in the school to include the necessary steps to ensure that the access to technology within the school is strictly monitored.

- The school may also use other resources which are deemed suitable.

Implementation of curricula

- The full implementation of the SPHE curriculum and Stay Safe Programmes.

- Continuous Professional Development for staff in delivering these programmes.

- School wide delivery of lessons on bullying from evidence based programmes, e.g. Stay Safe Programme, Walk Tall Programme

- The school will specifically consider pupils with specific educational needs with regard to programme implementation and the development of skills and strategies to enable all pupils to respond appropriately. This may involve Special Education Teachers supporting the work of the classroom teacher in repeating/reinforcing the work done in the classroom, thus making it more accessible for children with additional needs.

- Organised visits by the local Gardaí.

Links to other policies

- List school policies, practices and activities that are particularly relevant to bullying, e.g. Code of Behaviour, Child Protection Policy, Supervision of pupils, Acceptable Use Policy, Attendance, Sporting activities, etc.

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)

- Provide pupils with an opportunity to develop a positive sense of self-worth.

- The primary aim in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties, rather than apportion blame.

- It is very important that all involved (including each set of pupils and parents) understand the school's approach from the outset.

- Prevention and awareness raising measures across all aspects of bullying and involves strategies to engage pupils in addressing problems when they arise, with a specific focus on building empathy, respect and resilience in pupils.

- Prevention and awareness raising measures focusing on cyber-bullying by educating pupils on appropriate online behaviour, how to stay safe while on line

In St. Lassara's N.S. our initial response and intervention for dealing with challenging behavior is Restorative Practice. Please see our Code of Behaviour for additional information.

In investigating and dealing with alleged bullying, the teacher(s) will exercise her/their professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred, what type if it has, and how best the situation may be resolved.

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

Initial investigations of alleged bullying may be done in class but incidents will 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 (bystanders) can also provide very useful information in this way.

In this school, we take a 7 step approach:

1. The class teacher interviews the alleged victim(s) and alleged perpetrator(s) individually to confirm that a bullying incident has occurred. The 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.

2. The class teacher convenes a meeting with all the pupils involved. At this group meeting, each member should be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about what each other's statements. Each member of the group should be supported through the possible pressures that may face them from other members of the group after interview with the teacher.

3. In cases where it has been established that a pupil has engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to him/her how the bullied pupil is feeling. It should also be made clear to him/her that he/she is in breach with the school's Anti-Bullying Policy.

4. The class teacher asks all the pupils involved for ideas on how to resolve this incident. (no blame approach) and an agreement is reached.

5. The class teacher will meet the pupils involved one week later to review the situation. If the matter remains unresolved, the class teacher will inform the Principal. The above procedure will be worked through again, this time with the class teacher and the Principal

6. After a period of 3 weeks, if the bullying behaviour has not stopped, the Principal and the class teacher will hold meetings with the pupils involved and their parents/guardians. Parents will be informed of the actions being taken and will be afforded the opportunity to discuss ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school, and the supports of their child/children. It should be made clear to all involved that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his/her parents and the school.

7. An additional follow-up meeting with parents of the pupils involved may take place after an appropriate time to ensure that the matter has been resolved satisfactorily, if this is deemed necessary. This follow-up may take the form of a phone call.

8. 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.

9. 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. 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 have developed a protocol for the storage of all records retained by the relevant teacher.

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) 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 recording template will be used. It must be retained by the relevant teacher in question and a copy maintained by the principal. These records will be kept on file in a locked filing cabinet in the Principal's office and in a similar safe location in the teacher's classroom.

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

- Working with parent(s)/guardian(s)s to support school interventions

- No Blame Approach

- Circle Time

7. The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying involves a whole school approach. Bullying behaviour is complex, no one intervention/support programme works in all situations. A variety of approaches and intervention strategies may be used eg. Circle time, friendship squad.

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

6. **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.

7. **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.

8. This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on _____.

9. 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.

10. 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 ratified at a meeting of the Board of Management.

Signed: _____

       Chairperson

Date: _____

<u>Note: This policy will be reviewed annually at a meeting of the Board of Management.</u>