Stepping Stones
Educating children with autism

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 Stepping Stones Special 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.

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:**

Builds empathy, respect and resilience in pupils

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)**

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☐ **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 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 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.

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

All class teachers in the school have this responsibility for investigating and dealing with bullying.

5.**The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber- bullying, 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):**

Prevention and awareness through SPHE, RSE programmes, as well as, the use of social stories helping to promote and build resilience and empathy.

As well being andself-esteem is a major factor through both, curricular and extra-curricular activities, we can provide pupils with opportunities to develop a sense of self-worth.

Some curricular programmes will be done through SPHE like: growing and changing, Stay safe, So Safe and tailor made individual social stories.
Extracurricular programmes/activities: Yoga, Music etc.

When the need arises, initiatives and programmes specific with dealing with homophobic and transphobic bullying should be available.

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) :
A pupil or parent may bring a bullying concern to any teacher in the school. The relevant teacher (the class teacher) must take appropriate measures regarding reports of bullying behaviour in accordance with the school's anti-bulling policy.

Considerations must be taken to the individual needs and abilities of our pupils as all present with a diagnosis of autism and complex needs. Therefore, all the procedures listed below may need to be adapted to the level of understanding on a case by case basis.
The school's procedures must be consistent with the following approach:
=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 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:

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□ 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 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.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) :

=Consistent investigation, follow up and recording of bullying behaviour.

=To establish intervention strategies, taking into consideration the individuality of each case, as no one intervention works in all situations. Waiting for the national anti-bullying website as recommended in the Action Plan on Bullying.

=To follow the procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying as per procedures.

=To record bullying behaviour

=Considering bullying as part of a continuum of behaviour

=To refer serious cases to the HSE

=To seek supports for pupils affected by bullying

=On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

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.
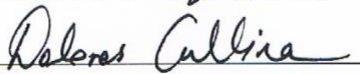
9.Prevention of Harassment
The Board of Management confirms that the school will, in accordance with its obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the sexual harassment of pupils or staff or the harassment of

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.

10. This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website (or where none exists, is otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parents' 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.

Signed: _____ Date: 4/11/21
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: _____ Date: 4/11/21
(Principal)

Date of next review: _November 2022_

Roll No: 20379Q

Appendix 1. – Record of bullying behaviour

Name of pupil being bullied and class group.

Name: _____ Class: _____

Name(s) and class(es) of pupil(s) engaged in bullying behaviour:

Source of bullying concern/report Tick relevant boxes		Location of incidents (tick relevant boxes)	
Pupil concerned		Playground	
Other pupil		Bus	
Parent		Classroom	
Teacher		Other	
Sna			
Behaviour team			
Other			

Name of person(s) who reported the bullying concern:

Type of bullying behaviour (tick relevant box(es))			
Physical aggression		Cyber bullying	
Damage to property		Intimidation	
Isolation/exclusion		Malicious gossip	
Name calling		Other (specify)	

When a behaviour is regarded as identity-based bullying, indicate the relevant category:			
Homophobic	Disability/SEN related	Membership of the travelling	Other (specify)

		community	

Brief description of bullying behaviour and its impact.

Details of actions taken:

Signed: _____ (relevant teacher)

Date: _____

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal: _____

Roll No: 20379Q

Appendix 2

Checklist for annual review of the anti-bullying policy and its implementation

The Board of Management (the Board) must undertake an annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation. The following checklist must be used for this purpose. The checklist is an aid to conducting this review and is not intended as an exhaustive list. In order to complete the checklist, an examination and review involving both quantitative and qualitative analysis, as appropriate across the various elements of the implementation of the school's anti-bullying policy will be required.

	Yes/No
Has the Board formally adopted an anti-bullying policy that fully complies with the requirements of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools?	YES
Has the Board published the policy on the school website and provided a copy to the parents' association?	YES
Has the Board ensured that the policy has been made available to school staff (including new staff)?	YES
Is the Board satisfied that school staff are sufficiently familiar with the policy and procedures to enable them to effectively and consistently apply the policy and procedures in their day to day work?	YES
Has the Board ensured that the policy has been adequately communicated to all pupils?	YES
Has the policy documented the prevention and education strategies that the school applies?	YES
Have all of the prevention and education strategies been implemented?	YES
Has the effectiveness of the prevention and education strategies that have been implemented been examined?	YES
Is the Board satisfied that all teachers are recording and dealing with incidents in accordance with the policy?	YES
Has the Board received and minuted the periodic summary reports of the Principal?	N/A
Has the Board discussed how well the school is handling all reports of bullying including those addressed at an early stage and not therefore included in the Principal's periodic report to the Board?	N/A
Has the Board received any complaints from parents regarding the school's handling of bullying incidents?	NO
Have any parents withdrawn their child from the school citing dissatisfaction	NO

with the school's handling of a bullying situation?	
Have any Ombudsman for Children investigations into the school's handling of a bullying case been initiated or completed?	NO
Has the data available from cases reported to the Principal (by the bullying recording template) been analysed to identify any issues, trends or patterns in bullying behaviour?	N/A
Has the Board identified any aspects of the school's policy and/or its implementation that require further improvement?	NO
Has the Board put in place an action plan to address any areas for improvement?	NO

Signed: _____ Date: 05/11/21
Alan Doyle Chairperson Board of Management

Signed: _Dolores Cullinane_ Date: 4/11/21
Dolores Cullinane Principal/Secretary Board of Management