Anti-Bullying Policy
Our Lady of Lourdes N.S.

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 Our Lady of Lourdes N.S. 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 adopted in September 2013.

Bullying, as an aspect of children's behaviour, has received considerable attention in recent years. What had remained a largely hidden problem, has very much emerged into the public arena. What follows is a presentation of this school's policy document on Bullying Behaviour – Intervention and Management. The existence of such a policy, alongside an increased awareness of bullying behaviour in the school community as a whole, is considered, in research internationally, to be the best way to counteract bullying behaviour in schools.

Definition:
In the context of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools,* bullying is defined as unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against another person [or persons] and which is repeated over time.

In addition, in the context of these procedures, placing a once-off offensive or hurtful public message, image or statement on a social network site where that message , image or statement can be viewed and /or repeated by other people will be regarded as bullying behaviour.

Isolated or once-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour including a once-off offensive or hurtful personal text message to one person do not fall within this definition of bullying and should be dealt with, as appropriate, in accordance with the school's code of behaviour. A single incident can have a serious effect on a pupil and may also constitute harassment which is legally prohibited in schools under equality legislation. Harassment is any form of unwanted conduct related to any of the nine discriminatory grounds [gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community].

General Effects:
A stable, secure learning environment is an essential requirement of achieving the highest possible standard of education for children. This is as true at home as at school. Bullying behaviour, by its very nature, undermines and dilutes the quality of this environment and results in psychological damage, which can be lasting. Whatever the source [child, adult etc.], it is recognised as affecting, not only those immediately involved, but everyone in the classroom, in the home, in the school and in the wider community. It also needs to be recognised that bullying behaviour is not confined to pupils and schools alone but is prevalent in society, in the workplace and in the home.

Types of bullying:

The following are some of the types of bullying behaviour that can occur amongst pupils:

- **Physical aggression**: This behaviour includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping people. It may also take the form of severe physical assault. While pupils often engage in "mock fights", they can sometimes be used as a disguise for physical harassment or inflicting pain.

- **Intimidation**: Some bullying behaviour takes the form of intimidation: it may be based on the use of very aggressive body language with the voice being used as a weapon. Particularly upsetting can be a facial expression which conveys aggression and/or dislike.

- **Isolation/ exclusion and other relational bullying**: This occurs where a certain person is deliberately isolated/excluded or ignored by some or all of the class group. This practice is usually initiated by the person engaged in bullying behaviour and can be difficult to detect. It may be accompanied by writing insulting remarks about the pupil in public places, by passing around notes about, or drawings of, the pupil or by whispering insults about them loud enough to be heard. Relational bullying occurs when a person's attempts to socialise and form relationships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined. One of the most common forms includes control" Do this or I won't be your friend anymore" [implied or stated]; a group ganging up against one person; non-verbal gesturing; malicious gossip; spreading rumours about a person or giving them the " silent treatment".

- **Cyber-bullying**: This type of bullying, which is a phenomonen of the 21st century, is becoming increasingly common and is continuously evolving. It is bullying carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such a text, social networking sites, e-mail, instant messaging[IM], apps, gaming sites, chat-rooms and other online technologies. Being the target of inappropriate or hurtful messages is the most common form of online bullying. As cyber-bullying uses technology to perpetrate bullying behaviour and does not require face to face contact, cyber-bullying can occur at any time [day or night]. Many forms of bullying can be facilitated through cyber-bullying. For example, a target may be sent homophobic text messages or pictures may be posted with negative comments about a person's sexuality, appearance etc.

- **Name calling:** Persistent name calling directed at the same individual[s] which hurts, insults or humiliates should be regarded as a form of bullying behaviour. Often name-calling of this type refers to physical appearance e.g. size or clothes worn. Accent or distinctive characteristics may attract negative attention. Academic ability can also provoke name calling. This tends to operate at two extremes. There are those who are singled out for attention because they are perceived to be weak academically. At the other extreme there are those who, because they are perceived as high achievers, are also targeted.

- **Damage to property**: Personal property can be the focus of attention for bullying behaviour. This may result in damage to clothing, mobile phones or other devices, school books and other learning material. The contents of school bags and pencil cases may be scattered on the floor. Items of personal property may be defaced, broken, stolen or hidden.

- **Extortion**: Demands for money may be made, often accompanied by threats.

Impacts of bullying behaviour

- Pupils who are being bullied may develop feelings of insecurity, humiliation and extreme anxiety and thus may become more vulnerable. Self-confidence may be damaged with a consequent lowering of self-esteem. While they may not talk about what is happening to them, their suffering is indicated through changes in mood and behaviour. It is therefore essential to be alert to changes in behaviour as early intervention can be very effective.
- Pupils who witness bullying may also be affected and may suffer in similar ways to those who are bullied e.g. pupils who witness identity based bullying and share that identity can experience anxiety and feel under threat themselves. Pupils can also feel guilt or distress at not being able to help the person being bullied.
- There are also consequences for individuals who engage in bullying behaviour. Pupils who become involved in such behaviour can be at an increased risk of developing an anti-social personality, anxiety disorders, law-breaking behaviour in adulthood and decreased educational and occupational attainment.

Signs and Symptoms of bullying

- Anxiety about travelling to and from school
- Unwillingness or refusal to attend school
- Sudden deterioration in performance in school
- Pattern of physical illnesses- headaches, stomach pains etc.
- Unexplained changes in either mood or behaviour or both
- Visible signs of stress- stammering, withdrawal, nightmares, insomnia, crying, loss of appetite, bed wetting etc.
- Out of character comments about other children or teachers
- Possessions missing or damaged
- Increased requests for money- stealing
- Unexplained bruises or cuts or damage to clothing
- Reluctance to say what is wrong
- Bullying of other children
- Continuously making excuses to explain away any of the above

Note:
These signs do not necessarily mean that bullying is taking place but, when repeated or occurring regularly in combination, they should always be investigated.

Key Principles of Best Practice

- **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 –

➢ build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils
➢ 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**

- **On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy**

The **relevant teacher** for investigating and dealing with bullying is the **Class Teacher.**

Education and Prevention Strategies

- 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
- Whole staff 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
- Staff professional development
- School wide awareness and training in all aspects of bullying, to include pupils, parents/ guardians and the wider school community
- Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and other school related activities outside of the school premises. Non teaching and ancillary staff will be encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers.
- The school's Anti-bullying Policy is discussed with pupils and parents/guardians are made aware that the policy is on the school website and hard copies are available if they prefer.
- Encourage a culture of telling, with particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders. In that way pupils will gain confidence in "telling". 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.
- Ensure that pupils know who to tell and how to tell e.g.
  Direct approach to teacher at an appropriate time
  Get a parent or friend to tell on your behalf
  Administer a confidential questionnaire if appropriate
- As a staff we encourage parents to be vigilant in monitoring their child's online, mobile phone and digital media device activity. We also advise them to make their children aware of the dangers which can be associated with such activity. We invite parents to attend talks by guest speakers to the school on this topic.

- Encourage parents to approach the school if they suspect that their child is being bullied
- The full implementation of the SPHE, RSE and Stay Safe programmes.

Procedures for investigation, follow-up and recording of bullying behaviour

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

Reporting bullying behaviour:

- Any pupil or parent/guardian may bring a bullying incident 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, cleaners must report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher

Investigating and dealing with incidents:

- In investigating and dealing with bullying, the relevant teacher will exercise her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved
- Parents/guardians 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 the 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 of 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 a group meeting, each member should be asked for her account of what happened to ensure that everybody in the group is clear about each other's statements
- Each member of the 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 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 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. The school should

give parents/guardians an opportunity to discuss 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 her that she is in breach of the school's Anti-bullying Policy and efforts should be made to try to get her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied
- It must also 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, her parents/guardians 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 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 parents/guardians or the school 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/guardian is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parent/ guardian must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures.

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 had 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 also 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 her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable,the relationships of the parties involved.

Formal Stage 2 –Appendix for reporting incidents of bullying behaviour [From DES Procedures}

The relevant teacher must use the recording template at Appendix 3 to record the bullying behaviour in cases where she considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 days after she has determined that bullying behaviour has occurred.

When the recording template is used, it must be retained by the relevant teacher in question and a copy maintained by the principal.

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

- All in-school supports and opportunities will be provided for the pupils affected by bullying to participate in activities to raise their self-esteem, to develop friendships and social skills and build resilience e.g. Circle Time
- If pupils require counselling the school will endeavour to liaise with the appropriate agencies to organise same. This may be for the pupil affected by bullying or involved in the bullying behaviour.
- Pupils should understand that there are no innocent bystanders and that all incidents of bullying behaviour must be reported to a teacher.

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.

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.[Page 1]

Ongoing Evaluation
The effectiveness of the Anti-Bullying Policy will be subject to continuous review in the light of the incidents of bullying behaviour encountered. Data gathered from the templates for recording of bullying behaviour will be regularly collated and analysed with a view to monitoring levels of bullying behaviour and identifying any particular issues that require attention. A record of this analysis must be retained and be made available to the Board of Management.
The implementation and effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy will be included as an agenda item for staff meetings so as to ensure that concerns can be shared and addressed.

Bullying by Adults

In the case of **intra-staff bullying**, Our Lady of Lourdes N.S. will adopt the procedures outlined in Section C [c2] of the INTO booklet : "Working Together: Procedures and Policies for Positive Staff Relations". A copy of this document is available for free download on the INTO website.

In the case of **Teacher-Child bullying**, a complaint should in the first instance be raised with the teacher in question by the parent/ guardian of the child if possible and then if necessary referred to the Principal. Where it has not been possible to agree a framework for resolution, the matter should be referred in writing by both parties to the Board of Management for investigation.

In the case of **Parent-Teacher bullying,** the Principal should be informed in the first instance, and if deemed necessary the Board of Management should subsequently be informed in writing.

In the case of **Parent/Visitor to the school-Child bullying**, the complaint should be referred in the first instance to the child's class teacher and subsequently to the Principal if unresolved.

In the case of **Principal-Parent/Child bullying**, the matter should be raised with the Principal if possible, or referred to the Board of Management.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on _____

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Association.

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once a year.

Signed _____   _____

[Chairperson of the Board of Management]   [Principal]

_____   _____

Date _____   Date_____

Date of next review _____

Template for recording bullying behaviour

1.Name of pupil being bullied and class group

Name _____ **Class** _____

2.Name[s] and class[es] of pupil[s] engaged in bullying behaviour

3.Source of bullying concern/report
   [tick relevant box]

4. Location of incidents
   [tick relevant box]

Pupil concerned	
Other pupil	
Parent	
Teacher	
Other	

Playground	
Classroom	
Corridor	
Toilets	
Other	

5.Name of person[s] who reported the bullying concern

_____

6. Type of Bullying Behaviour [tick relevant box]

Physical Aggression		Cyber-bullying	
Damage to Property		Intimidation	
Isolation/Exclusion		Malicious Gossip	
Name Calling		Other (specify)	

7. Where behaviour is regarded as identity based bullying, indicate the relevant category:

Homophobic	Disability/SEN related	Racist	Membership of Traveller community	Other (specify)

8. Brief description of bullying behaviour and its impact

9. Details of actions taken

Signed _____[Relevant Teacher] **Date** _____

Date submitted to Principal _____