ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Old V.E.C Building, Slieverue
Kilkenny via Waterford
X91 D6DY

T: 051 – 833269
E: thejonahproject@hotmail.com
Website: www.jonahschool.ie

Roll Number – 20380B
RCN – 20204520
Principal – Caitríona Barry
Clinical Director – Niamh McEvoy

Anti – Bullying Policy Jonah Special School

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 Jonah Special School have 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.

It should be noted that as Jonah Special School is a school for children with Autism and Complex Needs, the staff, parents and Board of Management recognise that most of our students do not have the cognition or intent to bully. However, they may engage in behaviours which may be typical of bullying and the effects of these behaviours on other more vulnerable students should be addressed and protocols established to deal with same.

2. The Board of Management recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of students 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 –
    - o Is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity.
    - o Encourages students 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 students.
    - o Explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.
- Effective supervision and monitoring of students.
- 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 School* 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 policy.

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 Policy.

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

4. The relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying in accordance with the Anti–Bullying Procedures for Primary & Post Primary Schools (Section 6:7.6, 6:7.7) are as follows:
- Principal – Caitríona Barry
- Deputy Principal – Carol Deane
- Clinical Director – Niamh McEvoy
- Class Teachers – Claire Smith and Clare Kelly Duffy

5. 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):

- A school wide approach to the fostering of respect for all members of the school community.
- The fostering and enhancing of the self-esteem of all students through curricular activities.
- The promotion of the value of diversity to address issues of prejudice and stereotyping, and highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour.
- 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.
- The implementation of regular whole school awareness measures e.g. promotion of friendship, sharing etc.
- Encourage a culture of telling, with particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders. In that way students will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It should be made clear to all students that when they report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales are behaving responsibly.
- 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, as is the student's use of mobile phones.
- Development of school policies and practices that is relevant to bullying, including Code of Behaviour, Child Protection Policy, Supervision Policy, ICT Acceptable Use policy, Attendance policy etc.

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- Through everyday classes – Language, SPHE, History, Geography & P.E. etc.
- Co-operation and group work.
- Direct teaching of self-regulation skills.
- Stay Safe/SPHE programmes.
- Social/Life skills programmes.
- Social Stories.

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):

- **Reporting Bullying Behaviour**

  - ✓ Any student, staff member or parents(s)/guardian(s) 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 must report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher.

- **Investigating and Dealing with Bullying Incidents**

  - ✓ 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 taking a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach.
  - ✓ If it is established by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred, appropriate written records must be kept which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issue and restore, as far as is reasonably practicable, the relationships of the parties concerned. The records retained by the relevant teacher (**See Appendix 1**) should be stored in a separate file and locked into the cabinet in the office.
  - ✓ Where a parent/guardian is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, they should be referred as appropriate, to the school's complaints policy.
  - ✓ In the event that a parent/guardian has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise them of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for children.
  - ✓ Analysis of Incident forms by Principal/Deputy Principal to inform future development of school's approach.
  - ✓ Personalised and targeted education programmes for the child deemed to be perpetrating the bullying behaviours

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):

- Individualised and tailored programmes of support appropriate to the cognitive development of the child.
- Working with multi-disciplinary teams and parents in order to ensure the best outcomes for the child.
- Provision of reassurance and support to all parties.

8. Supervision and Monitoring of Students

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 students or staff or the harassment of students 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 was adopted by the Board of Management on **18ᵗʰ October 2024.** It has been made available to school personnel and parents. It can also be emailed on request. A copy of this policy will be also be made available to the Department and the patron if requested. It 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 all stakeholders. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Ratified by the Jonah Board of Management on: _____

Date

Signed: _____

Principal

Signed: _____

Chairperson, Board of Management

Next Review Period: September 2025

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Appendix 1

Bullying Behaviour Recording Sheet

1. Name of student being bullied and class group

Name _____Class_____

2. Name(s) and class (es) of student(s) engaged in bullying behaviour

| |
| |

3. Source of bullying concern/report (tick relevant box(es))*

Student concerned	
Other Student	
Parent	
Teacher /SNA	
Other	

4. Location of incidents (tick relevant box(es))*

Playground	
Classroom	
Corridor	
Toilets	
School Bus	
Other	

5. Name of person(s) who reported the bullying concern

| |
| |

6. Type of Bullying Behaviour (tick relevant box (es)) *

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/SNA)   Date _____

Date submitted to Principal/ Clinical Director _____

Appendix 2

Practical Tips for Building a Positive School Culture and Climate

The following are some practical tips for immediate actions that can be taken to help build a positive school culture and to help prevent and tackle bullying behaviour –

- Model respectful behaviour to all members of the school community at all times.
- Explicitly teach students what respectful language & respectful behaviour looks like, acts like, sounds like & feels like in class and around the school.
- Display key respect messages in classrooms, in assembly areas and around the school. Involve students in the development of these messages.
- Catch them being good – notice and acknowledge desired respectful behaviour by providing positive attention.
- Consistently tackle the use of discriminatory and derogatory language in the school – this includes homophobic and racist language and language that is belittling of students with a disability or SEN.
- Give constructive feedback to students when respectful behaviour and respectful language are ignored.
- Have a system of encouragement and rewards to promote desired behaviour and compliance with the school rules and routines.
- Explicitly teach students about the appropriate use of social media.
- Positively encourage students to comply with the school rules on mobile phone and internet use. Follow up and follow through with students who ignore the rules.
- Actively involve parents and/or the Parents' Association in awareness raising campaigns around social media.
- Actively promote the right of every member of the school community to be safe and secure in school.
- Highlight and explicitly teach school rules in student friendly language in the classroom and in common areas.
- All staff can actively watch out for signs of bullying behaviour.
- Ensure there are adequate playground/school yard/outdoor supervision.
- School staff can get students to help them to identify bullying "hot spots" and "hot times" for bullying in the school.
  - o Hot spots tend to be in the playground/school yard/outdoor areas, changing rooms, corridors and other areas of unstructured supervision.
  - o Hot times again ten to be times where there is less structured supervision such as when students are in the playground/school yard or moving classrooms.
- Supervision such as when students are in the playground/school yard or moving classrooms.

Appendix 3

Checklist for Annual Review of the Anti–Bullying Policy and its Implementation

The Board of Management of Jonah Special School 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 students?	**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?	**Yes**
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?	**Yes**
Has the Board received any complaints from parents regarding the school's handling of bullying incidents?	**Yes**

Have any parents withdrawn their child from the school citing dissatisfaction with the school's handling of a bullying situation?	**Yes**
Have any Ombudsman for Children investigations into the school's handling of a bullying case been initiated or completed?	**Yes**
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 – Satisfied**
Has the Board put in place an action plan to address any areas for improvement?	**No – Satisfied**

Signed _____   Date _____

Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed _____   Date _____

Principal

Notification regarding the Board of Management's annual review of the Anti-Bullying Policy

To: _____

The Board of Management of Jonah Special School wishes to inform you that:

o The Board of Management's annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation was completed at the Board meeting on 18ᵗʰ October 2024.

o This review was conducted in accordance with the checklist set out in **Appendix 3** of the Department's *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.*

Signed _____   Date _____

Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed _____   Date _____

Principal

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Appendix 4

Additional Background and Information on Bullying

Bullying is a serious, unacceptable and incapacitating experience for young people. It interrupts the normal adolescent process and is an experience that may linger and influence many later relationships, if both perpetrator and victim are not dealt with adequately.

There is a dangerous myth that bullying is just part of growing up, that it is just 'quarrelling amongst peers', that young people should 'sort it out amongst themselves', and that leaving them to do so will strengthen their ability to deal with problems later in life. It is this myth which leads fathers to be angry with their sons for being 'wimpish' and not 'standing their ground' or 'fighting back', or leads mothers to believe that their daughters are just involved in 'bitchiness'. To the contrary, bullying can involve physical assault, blackmail and extortion, systematic threat and intimidation, attack and theft, damage to possessions, assault on emotional and psychological well-being, and even the death of the victim who may be driven to suicide.

Bullying is also the problem that causes more agony in parents than any other school problem. Furthermore, being bullied rates amongst children's highest worries, and in one study of 4,000 children, 38% reported being bullied often enough or badly enough to be distressed. When the effects of bullying were traced into adulthood, in one Swedish study, statistics showed that bullying in various forms accounted for from 200-400 suicides a year.

There have been some excellent Irish studies of bullying, one of which found that over one-third of Irish Primary School children reported being bullied. Over 43% reported occasionally bullying other children, and as many as 50% said that they had occasionally been bullied. Over one-fifth of children reported fear in coming to school because of bullying.

Internationally, the figures for serious ongoing bullying range from 5-10%, and Irish figures are high on this scale. Our tackling of the problem, therefore, has been less than excellent, and many parents, teachers or young people may have personally experienced the depression, misery and humiliation that bullying has caused to them or to those they know.

Definitions of Bullying

The most used definition of bullying is the Scandinavian one that 'bullying is long-standing violence, mental or physical, conducted by an individual or a group and directed against an individual who is not able to defend himself/herself in the actual situation'.

Who are the Bullies?

Bullies are not always easy to detect, and because of the shame, secrecy and collusion that often surround bullying, many remain unidentified. Bullies may not always come to a teacher's attention because their class behaviour may be fine. The bully who is also disruptive, academically unable, emotionally disturbed, or challenging to a teacher is obviously more likely to be identified or observed.

Who are the Victims?

Victims may be intellectually more able or less able than peers. Victims may be tall or small, fat or slim, have wonderful or poor appearance, be materially advantaged or deprived. The sad reality of bullying is that almost anyone can be bullied.

Having said that, studies have attempted to look at the characteristics of victims in an effort to understand why one person, rather than another, becomes a victim. Two kinds of victims, 'passive' and 'provocative', have been identified.

The 'passive' victims are those who are unable to defend themselves, whereas the 'provocative' victims are those who irritate in some way, for example by 'clumsy', or 'gauche', or having unusual hobbies.

Victims may also be different in some physical way, for example being overweight, having big ears, a big nose, a lack of personal hygiene, or, indeed, having anything different that may provide an opportunity for ridicule.

How can the school deal with bullying?

- Investigate the problem, and take reports of bullying seriously.
- Respond to every instance of bullying, however minor, and react immediately. 'Zero tolerance' is one of the best ways to tackle school bullying.
- Monitor the high-risk times for bullying, such as break time, the beginning and end of the school day.
- Monitor the physical locations in which bullying is more likely to occur, such as dark corridors, cloakrooms, changing-rooms and school yards.
- Assign appropriate teachers to monitor bullying and to report on any observed incidents.
- Consciously comment on and reward kind, sensitive and non-bullying behaviour.
- Provide a presentation/lecture/video about bullying, which portrays the bully as a person with serious problems and inadequacies. This may help to dismantle any status the bully receives from his behaviour and to deter potential bullies.
- Provide a support system for staff, and remember that many teachers are also bullied and are too ashamed to admit it.
- Where bullying is proved, reassure the victims that they are believed, that they will be helped and that the bullying will be stopped.
- In cases of serious bullying, suggest to the victim's parents that the victim should receive counselling.
- If the victim may have contributed to his victimization through problems of personal hygiene, age-inappropriate clothes, annoying or disgusting behaviour, extreme fearfulness, elicit the parents' help to address these issues in order to protect their child in the future.
- Explore factors that may have caused the bully's behaviour in the first place, for example, abuse, inability to cope, parental harshness, or being bullied by others.
- Confront the behaviour of bullies, not the bullies themselves. Help them to discover other ways of coping with their problems.
- Where a group of bullies are involved, approach each one individually without any opportunity for them to meet with each other and devise a coherent excuse. Make sure that those who deny their participation know that you intend to pursue it until everyone involved has been identified.
- Bullying behaviour should be reacted to with clear, determined and unambiguous disdain.
- Insist that bullies repair or replace any damaged goods, and that they apologise to the victim and plan restitution.

- Inform parents of both bully and victim of the problem, and seek their co-operation and attention.
- In situations where parents deny irrefutable bullying by their adolescent, insist on objective outside professional investigation and intervention.
- Where bullying is very severe and dangerous and the parents' reaction is violent, abusive and bullying, the Gardaí should be informed.

Verbal psychological or physical bullying will not be tolerated

Bullying Charter

- We want Jonah Special School to be free from bullying.
- There should be no name calling.
- There should be no physical abuse.
- There should be no ganging up on people.
- Everyone should feel respected.
- When one of us does something wrong we should not be laughed at.
- Problems should be shared.
- We all share the responsibility to ensure that bullying is not tolerated.

Cyber-Bullying

Cyber-bullying is deliberately hurting someone's feelings using information and communication technology such as –

- Emails.
- Mobile phones.
- Instant messaging.
- Social networking sites.
- Chat rooms.
- Blogs.
- Online gaming sites.
- Online polling sites.

Protect yourself from Cyber–Bullying

- Hide your personal details.
- React appropriately to hurtful or nasty messages.
- Block the sender of hurtful or nasty messages.
- Set networking sites and profiles to "PRIVATE".
- Save nasty links, texts, messages and emails.
- Never open messages from someone you don't know.
- Always ask permission before revealing someone else's details.
- Only give details to trusted friends you know in real life.
- Do not give your password to anyone (with the exception of parents/guardians).
- Change your password often.
- Follow etiquette – communicate clearly, use emotions and be polite.

Always report Cyber-Bullying immediately to a trusted adult

Mobile Phone Policy

The use of personal "mobile phones" is not allowed during school hours except at lunch time and must be switched on silent and out of sight. **The camera and recording mode must not be used at any time within the school.**

The mobile phone, complete with the sim-card will be confiscated and kept in the office.

==Refusal to hand over a mobile phone will result in parents being contacted.==

All parents or guardians will be contacted. Similarly parents/guardians can contact the school in the case of an emergency. The thrust of this policy is to support teaching and learning and also to enhance our anti-bullying policy.

Rules for Students

- Respect for and co-operation with staff and students must be observed at all times.
- Lawful instructions must always be obeyed.
- Please refer to Behaviour Support Plan for further details.

Sanctions

- Sanctions should emphasize what is expected of students and should educate for responsibility.
- Sanctions must be fair and consistent.
- Please refer to Code of Behaviour and Behaviour Support Policy for further details.

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