

Addressing Bullying In Schools Bill

Response by The Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS)

January 2016

- 1.0 The Council for Catholic Maintained Schools welcomes the introduction of this Bill, in its identification of bullying as a significant issue in the lives of young people, in providing a definition of bullying in its various forms and in the duties it places upon Governors to be pro-active in addressing it.
- 2.0 We would concur that a consistent approach by all schools in terms of developing appropriate policies and implementing them rigorously is essential to tackling an issue the gravity of which should not be underestimated.
- 3.0 The development of a system of record keeping to 'track' bullying is seen as a major step forward in terms of communication in a given school and between schools.
- 4.0 It is noted and warmly welcomed that the Bill recognises emotional as well as physical bullying, and the psychological damage, often long term, which can be inflicted by the former
- 5.0 In pursuing these aspirations CCMS would suggest that the following might inform elements of the process of implementing relevant strategies to support the Bill;
 - 5.1 Recognising that bullying is highly likely to be an issue for all schools and that complacency by any school would be unwise
 - 5.2 Awareness raising for pupils, be they a potential victim or perpetrator or neither, is central to the implementation of this Bill and that this can be best achieved through the curriculum, most notably through PDMU at Primary level and through the Personal Development strand of LLW at Post Primary age
 - 5.3 Pupils should be rigorously consulted by any school in their formulation of policies in this regard, and a move away from any 'tokenistic' consultation of young people should be emphasised given the gravity of this issue
 - 5.4 As with safeguarding, pupils should know how to report incidents of bullying and be made aware of the key members of staff to whom they can go in relation to the issue
 - 5.5 Policies in this regard should align with other key pastoral policies in the school and with other significant DE policies such as the Community Relations, Equality and Diversity (CRED) policy which gives due regard to the Section 75 Groups and promotes a respect for the rights of the individual
 - 5.6 Governor training in respect of this issue is essential and should become part of any Governor training programme at the earliest opportunity
 - 5.7 Awareness by all teaching and other school staff is equally an essential part of the process and should be realised through effective communication between Governors and school Senior Managers

