

## Anti-Bullying Policy

### 1. Introductory Statement

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. Mary's NS 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. Rationale

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 –
  - Build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and
  - 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

### Our School Philosophy

Our school motto; 'Mol an Óige agus tío-faidh sí' –'praise our youth and they will flourish' is the core of our school philosophy. We acknowledge the potential of each individual, spiritual, emotional, intellectual and physical, and strive to develop and nurture all aspects of the personality to complement the work which parents, as primary educators, are striving to

do. We feel that the child can best grow to be a responsible citizen in a warm, caring and just environment where every child is valued; such an environment we endeavour to create.

### Aims

1. To create a school ethos which encourages children to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.
2. To raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with school management, staff, pupils, parents/guardians.
3. To ensure comprehensive supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of school activity are kept under observation.
4. To develop procedures for noting and reporting incidents of bullying behaviour.
5. To develop procedures for investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.
6. To develop a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and for those involved in bullying behaviour.
7. To work with and through the various local agencies in countering all forms of bullying and anti-social behaviour.
8. To evaluate the effectiveness of school policy on anti-bullying behaviour.

### 3. Definition of Bullying

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 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.

This definition includes a wide range of behaviour, whether verbal or written, whether physical or social, whether targeting person or property, whether carried out directly or indirectly or through any electronic or other medium, which could harm a pupil or undermine her/his self-esteem or self-confidence.

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 Teacher

The "Relevant Teacher(s)" for investigating and dealing with bullying in this school is/are as follows i.e. Class Teacher:

#### 5. Education and Prevention Strategies

Children who attend St. Mary's NS will be encouraged to reach their full potential mentally, physically, spiritually, emotionally and socially, in an atmosphere and environment in which they feel safe, valued and secure, and in which respect for self and others is the norm.

The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber-bullying and identity based bullying) used by the school are as follows:

The school fosters a positive school ethos among pupils, staff and parents:

- Through a programme of positive action, the school promotes an atmosphere of friendship, respect and tolerance.
- Using both the formal and informal curriculum to emphasise that bullying is unacceptable... visual arts activities, RE lessons and Assemblies, posters, drama, role play, SPHE, cooperative games and evidence based programmes eg. Walk Tall, Stay Safe.

- Positive self-esteem is fostered among the pupils by celebrating individual differences/achievements, by acknowledging and rewarding good behaviour and by providing opportunities for success. eg. Congratulations Assembly
- Encourage a culture of telling, with particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders. 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.
- Teachers respond sensitively to pupils who disclose incidents of bullying.
- The school's anti-bullying policy is discussed regularly with the pupils.
- Staff members are particularly vigilant in monitoring pupils who are considered at risk of bullying/ being bullied.
- All disclosed incidents of bullying are investigated.
- Whole staff professional 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.
- Development and promotion of an anti-bullying code for the school to be displayed publicly.
- Whole school awareness measures to be implemented eg. friendship week
- Members of the BOM are familiar with the school's policy on bullying and actively promote it on a repeated basis among staff, parents and pupils.
- Parents contribute to and support the school's policy on bullying by encouraging positive behaviour both at home and at school, by being vigilant for signs and symptoms that their child is being bullied or is bullying others, by communicating concerns to the school.
- Use of outside agencies to support the school's anti-bullying programme eg Cork Diocesan Youth Council, Sticks & Stones Drama Group, Community Garda.

- 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 will specifically consider the additional needs of SEN pupils with regard to programme implementation and the development of skills and strategies to enable all pupils to respond appropriately.
- School policies, practices and activities that are particularly relevant to bullying are Code of Behaviour, Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment, Safety Statement, Supervision Practices, Acceptable Use Policy, and Attendance Policy.

#### St. Mary's NS Supervision Practices

School activities will be supervised and monitored at all times, with particular emphasis on those occasions when situations of bullying are more likely to occur, such as assembly time and play time.

St. Mary's NS has a clear set of playground rules, which emphasise positive behaviour and make it clear what activities are permitted.

- There are three teachers on playground duty for each break. All Special Needs Assistants are also in attendance in the playground.
- Zones have been created within the playground, providing sections for specific class groups.
- Non-teaching staff such as Special Needs Assistants, secretaries, caretakers, cleaners are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the appropriate teaching member of staff.

#### Responsibilities of School Staff

- To acknowledge that the prevention of bullying is a shared responsibility within the school

- To draw upon restorative practices, taking into account the age of the students
- To implement prevention and intervention strategies which build and maintain a safe learning environment for the whole school community
- To empower students to deal with conflict in constructive ways using restorative practices
- To take all reports of bullying behaviour seriously and to report them to the Principal if warranted
- To record all reported or suspected incidents of bullying behaviour
- To document any serious bullying incidents using the Bullying Incident Report Form in Appendix 3.

#### Responsibilities of Pupils

- To show consideration, respect and support towards others
- To be able to identify bullying behaviour
- To not bully others
- To tell if they are being bullied or if they see someone else being bullied
- To engage in responsible reporting when witnessing or experiencing bullying behaviour.
- To feel empathy for targeted members of the school community and, as a result, take safe and sensible action as a bystander.

#### Responsibilities of Parents

- To support the school in the implementation of the policy
- To accept the bona fides of the investigating teachers and principal
- To watch out for signs that their child may be being bullied
- To instruct their children to tell if they are bullied or if they have seen other students being bullied
- To tell the class teacher if their child is being bullied or they suspect that this is happening

- To tell the class teacher if another child is being bullied or they suspect that this is happening
- To notify the school if they think that their child is displaying bullying behaviour and to work with the school in addressing this problem
- To actively monitor pupils use of phones, other communication devices and social media
- To never directly approach a student or the parent of a student at the school to intervene in behavioural issues
- To complete the home-parent sections of the Anti Bullying programme

## 6. Procedures for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying

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 involved (rather than to apportion blame).

Every effort will be made to ensure that all involved understand this approach from the outset.

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:

### Reporting bullying behaviour

- Any pupil or parent(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 and reported to the Principal/Deputy Principal.
- Teaching and non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), bus escorts, caretakers, cleaners must report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher.

### Investigating and dealing with incidents: Style of approach

- 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.
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) 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 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 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 may face them from the other members of the group after the 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 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 (by reference to the school policy). The school should give parent(s)/guardian(s) an opportunity of discussing 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 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 parent(s)/guardian(s)) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school;

#### Follow up

- 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:
  - 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 parent(s)/guardian(s) or the school Principal or Deputy Principal
- Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved may 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(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.
- 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.
- The relevant teacher must inform the Principal/Deputy 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. These records will be stored securely in the school.

#### **Formal Stage 2 (Appendix 1, taken from *DES Procedures*)**

The relevant teacher must use the recording template at **Appendix 3** to record the bullying behaviour 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.

### **7. Programme of support**

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 designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop friendships and social skills and build resilience e.g.

- Pastoral care system

- Buddy / Peer mentoring system
  - Care team / Student Support Team
  
  - Group work such as circle time
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- If pupils require counselling of further supports 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.

#### **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.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 27 May 2019.

This policy has been made available to school personnel, is 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, be readily accessible to parents and pupils on request 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.

Signed:   
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Date: 27 May 2019

Signed:   
(Principal)

Date: 27/5/19

Date of next review: May 2020