



ST. MARY'S N.S.

Mountbellew, Co. Galway

Tel: 090 9679396 Fax: 090 9679767
e-mail: mountbellewns.ias@eircom

Anti-Bullying Policy

Introduction

This Policy was reviewed by the staff of St. Mary's N.S. at a Staff meeting on Monday 19th October 2015 and circulated to the Board of Management and Parents Association for observations and feedback

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

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 St. Mary's NS 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; and
 - 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); and
 - 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 school reserves the right to apply its anti-bullying policy in respect of bullying that occurs at a location, activity, function or program that is not school related if in the opinion of the Principal/Deputy Principal and/or the Board of Management the alleged bullying has created a hostile environment at school for the pupil experiencing the bullying behaviour, has infringed on the rights of that pupil at school and/or has materially or substantially disrupted the education process or the orderly operation of the school.

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 – the use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behaviour by an individual or group that is intended to harm others.
- Cyber bullying is a criminal offence.
1. *Section 10 of the Non-Fatal Offences Against the Persons Act 1997* prohibits harassment of a person
“by any means” by “persistently following, watching, pestering, besetting or communicating with him or her”
 2. *Section 13(1) of the Post Office (Amendment) Act 1951* makes it an offence if a person
 - (a) sends by telephone any message that is grossly offensive or is indecent, obscene or menacing or
 - (b) for the purpose of causing annoyance, inconvenience, or needless anxiety to another person
 - i. Sends by telephone any message that the sender knows to be false, or
 - ii. Persistently makes telephone calls to another person without reasonable cause.
 - 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 Discipline.

The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying is (are) as follows: (see Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):

- Principal
- Deputy Principal
- Any other teaching member of staff designated by the principal.

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*):

PDST Anti-Bullying Support Material

Prime Ed – Cyber Bullying Packs

Webwise - Cyber Bullying Pack

Stay Safe Programme (Bullying Modules)

SPHE

The children are taught specific lessons on bullying, awareness of the various forms of behaviour, skills to deal with bullying behaviour. This is also covered under the SPHE modules on 'Citizenship'

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*):

Procedures for Dealing with an Incident of Bullying Behaviour- Also see PDST Support Materials.

NOTE: Bullying by its very nature is secretive and not therefore easily observed by the teacher/members of the school community. Support is required from all members of the school community to help combat bullying behaviour in our school.

- a. If parents have concerns that their child is being bullied they should inform the class teacher. Reports may also come from the pupil/s who are experiencing the bullying behaviours themselves and/or another pupil in the school.

- b. All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying should be immediately recorded by the teacher. The teacher should investigate and act appropriately. If the teacher suspects that bullying occurred the teacher should complete the school's standard 'Bullying Report Form' and this should be passed to the Principal. Where reports are of a serious nature and/or involve pupils from other classes, the Principal should be informed immediately using the school's 'Bullying Report Form'.
 - c. In such a case the incident's will be investigated by the Principal or another teacher appointed by the Principal, in conjunction with the class teacher.
 - d. Pupils who report bullying should be told that they acted responsibly. It should be made clear to all pupils that when they report bullying incidents that they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.
 - e. The first step of any investigation will involve the Principal and class teacher discussing the issue with the pupils who are experiencing the bullying behavior, establishing the exact nature of the behaviour and the feelings of the pupil's who are experiencing the bullying behaviour/s. Where practicable, incidents should be investigated outside the classroom.
- NOTE** It is the school's policy to interview pupils with a calm, unemotional and problem solving approach outside of the classroom. All pupils may be interviewed individually and/or as a group.
- f. The Principal or teacher appointed by the Principal and class teacher will then interview the pupils involved in the alleged bullying behaviour. These pupils will be reminded of the schools expectation to speak truthfully. They will be assured that it is their behaviour that is being put under the spotlight and not their whole character. They will also be reminded that the purpose of the interview is to find out what happened. **The primary aim for the relevant teacher in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame)**
 - g. All interviews will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned pupils not directly involved may also be interviewed as they can provide useful information in this way.
 - h. When analyzing 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 conflict in a non-aggressive manner.
 - i. If a group is involved, each member should normally be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved should normally 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.
 - j. Each member of the group should be supported through the possible pressures that may face them from the other members of the group after interview by teacher.
 - k. It may also be helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s).
 - l. 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. Where the Principal/Deputy Principal or ISMT member with responsibility for bullying or other teacher designated by the principal have determined that bullying behaviour did take place, communication will be made with the parents/guardians of the children involved in the bullying behaviour to explain the situation to them. Parental support in recognising bullying behaviour by their child is expected and vital to a successful end in this type of behaviour. The schools role is to present the facts to the parent/s guardian/s and propose ways of helping after this type of behaviour in their lives. Again, parents will be made aware that the issue is not the pupil themselves but their behaviour, and that an acceptance of this behaviour as bullying behaviour, by the parents and pupil is paramount towards the pupil's development and will affect who he/she will become in later life.
 - m. The teacher or principal and teacher will then meet with the parents/ guardians of the child / children who experience the bullying behaviour. The school will outline the development to date. Where bullying behaviour is evident, the school should clearly state that following the investigation, the school is aware that bullying behaviour did take place. The school will inform the parents / guardians on the steps that will be taken.
 - n. The teacher or principal and teacher will meet with the child / children who experienced the bullying behaviour and assure him/her/them that they are aware and that he/she/they was/were being bullied. It should be also emphasised to the children who experience the bullying behaviour that they are not to blame for this behaviour against them.

- o. The pupil(s) engaged in bullying behaviour will also be met to inform them that the school is aware of their behaviour and that this behaviour is not condoned. They should be affirmed if they cooperated with the teacher or Principal and teacher during the investigation. As is commonplace in St. Mary's NS with all incidents of wrongdoing, the children will be asked to apologise to the pupil/s who are experiencing the bullying behaviour/s. It should be made clear to them how their behaviour is categorised as bullying in nature, and efforts should be made to try get them to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied.

Sanctions may be imposed as outlined in the school's 'Code of Behaviour & Discipline'. The sanctions will be appropriate to the school's view of the level of seriousness of the behaviour.

However, as stated in this document earlier, the primary aim for the relevant teacher in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame)

- It must 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 experienced the bullying behaviour is ready and agreeable.
- In cases where the relevant teacher considers that bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, it must be recorded by the relevant teacher in the School Bullying Report Form.
- The principal will report to the Board of Management at each meeting on the number of reports made since the last meeting.
- Where a parent/guardian is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents will be referred to the school's 'Queries, Complaints and Commendations Policy' and following this will be referred to the Ombudsman for Children to make a complaint.

Recording of Bullying Behaviour

- All initial incidents will be noted by the teacher.
- If determined that bullying behaviour may have taken place, the teacher will report this on the school 'Bullying Report Form' and will send this to the Principal/Deputy Principal with any personal notes.
- The principal will record bullying incidents and details of investigations on the pupil's file.
- The reporting teacher should complete the 'Bullying Report Form' again if after 20 days have elapsed and bullying behaviour still exists.
- The principal will report to the Board of Management at each meeting on Bullying Reports.
- The Board of Management will report a review on the Anti-Bullying policy on an annual basis.

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 was adopted by the Board of Management on 13th January 2016

11. 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 (where one exists). A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.
12. 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: _____
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: _____
(Principal)

Date: _____

Date: _____

Date of next review:

Advice for Parents

Effects of Bullying

Bullying can affect pupils in many different ways. When pupils are bullied their lives may be made miserable. They may suffer injury. They may be unhappy about coming to school. They may lose self-confidence and self esteem, blaming themselves for the bullying. Some children may experience stressful symptoms such as stomach aches and headaches, nightmares or panic attacks. (This form of unhappiness is likely to affect their concentration and learning). If unchallenged other pupils can learn that bullying is a quick and effective way of getting what they want.

Indications of Bullying Behaviour – Signs and Symptoms

The following signs/symptoms may suggest that a pupil is being bullied:

- Anxiety about travelling to and from school - requesting parents to drive or collect them, changing route of travel, avoiding regular times for travelling to and from school.
- Unwillingness to go to school, refusal to attend, mitching.
- Deterioration in educational performance, loss of concentration and loss of enthusiasm and interest in school.
- Pattern of physical illnesses (e.g. headaches, stomach aches).
- Unexplained changes either in mood or behaviour. It may be particularly noticeable before returning to school after weekends or more especially after longer school holidays.
- Visible signs of anxiety or distress - stammering, withdrawing, nightmares, difficulty in sleeping, crying, not eating, vomiting, bedwetting.
- Spontaneous out-of -character comments about either pupils or teachers.
- Possessions missing or damaged.
- Increased requests for money or stealing money.
- Unexplained bruising or cuts or damaged clothing.
- Reluctance and/or refusal to say what is troubling her/him.

Those signs do not necessarily mean that a pupil is being bullied. If repeated or occurring in combination, these signs warrant investigation in order to establish what is affecting the child.

What to do if your child is being bullied

- Discuss the experience with your child to find out the precise details of what has happened.
- Reassure her/him that you and the school will help her/him.
- Discuss with her/him what to do next - he may be able to suggest strategies for dealing with it.
- Encourage her/him to tell his teacher.
- Contact the school as soon as possible.
- Follow-up to ensure that the matter is dealt with and resolved.

What to tell your child to do if someone they know is being bullied

- Tell a teacher (privately if necessary)
- Tell his/her parents - they will contact the school.
- Talk to the person who is being bullied - you may be able to help her/him.
- Reject bullying behaviour among your friends - tell them that it is wrong to bully.
- Help the bullied person to get away from the situation.
- Know and follow the school code of discipline.

What to tell your child to do if he/she is being bullied

- Tell the teacher immediately.
- Tell your parents when you get home.
- Help the teacher to investigate it.
- Tell a friend about what is happening.
- Tell the bully to stop.

