

St. Mary's S.N.S.



Anti-Bullying Policy

Reviewed September 2023

St. Marys SNS Anti-Bullying Policy

1. In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 ,the code of behaviour guidelines issued by the NEWB and the Children First Act 2015, Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017, the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017 and Tusla Guidance on the preparation of Child safeguarding Statements the Board of Management of St. Mary's Senior 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 following types of bullying behaviour are included in the definition of bullying:

- deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying,
- cyber-bullying and
- identity-based bullying such as homophobic bullying, transphobic 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.

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

The policy applies to the staff and the wider school community in terms of implementation. When dealing with staff to staff relation, other policies and legislation, such as Dignity in the Workplace and the Employment Equality Acts 1998 and 2004 apply.

4. 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*)

Roles and Responsibilities

- Maura Forde will co-ordinate and monitor the implementation of this policy.
 - Class teachers have first-line responsibility and will consult with the support teacher.
 - The Support Teacher / Principal will deal with repeated incidents of bullying behaviour.
 - The pupils have a responsibility to report incidents of bullying behaviour.
 - Parents should act as partners with the school in combating bullying behaviour.
5. The education and prevention strategies (including strategies particularly 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*):

Preventative measures

- The anti-bullying code is included as part of the written school discipline policy 'D.F.L'.
- All aspects of the discipline code, D.F.L are taught to all pupils and consistently referred to.
- The discipline code is displayed in classrooms and around the school.
- Parents are given a copy of the D.F.L code when enrolling new pupils. The code is explained and discussed at enrolment meetings.
- The focus at the start of each school year is to be on the school discipline code and on highlighting the anti-bullying policy. A resource pack will be circulated to all teachers.

Classroom activities may include:

- Discussion and teaching of all aspects of the discipline code.
 - Circle Time/ Role-play/ Drama
 - Cross-curricular approach e.g. co-operative games in PE, art work, writing themes, SPHE
- In SPHE, children will be explicitly taught what to do if they are being bullied, with specific reference to identity based bullying.
The Stay Safe programme will be taught in 3rd and 5th class.
There will be explicit lessons on safe practice when using the internet and how to respond to negative behaviours online.
 - Parents will be issued with information on "Internet Safety for your Child".

- Children are taught that this is a 'telling' school and that it is the responsibility of all to report incidents of bullying. The difference between telling tales of a minor nature and telling to 'stay safe' will be thoroughly explained. Children will be taught how to tell.

Stop, Stop, Tell will be taught to the children as a strategy to use.

- Anti-bullying posters are to be displayed permanently around the school.
 - Anti-bullying will be a regular focus of school assemblies.
 - Friendship week will highlight relevant issues.
 - Good role models from sixth will be paired with third class children at play time, who will encourage third class children to play together and encourage older children to be aware of bullying issues when it is needed in the school.
 - Supervision: A comprehensive supervision rota for breaks and dismissal will be drawn up by Ms. Doherty. Staff will be vigilant at all times to minimise opportunities where bullying can take place.
 - If a child is sanctioned on the yard, a circle will be drawn on the sanction sheet in order to monitor yard behaviour.
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*)

Procedures for Reporting an Incident of Bullying Behaviour.

When faced with an incident of bullying, all staff will refer to the **Anti-Bullying Pack** which is in each DFL folder. A copy is attached to this policy (Appendix 1)

- All reports of bullying, no matter how trivial, will be dealt with by class teachers. In that way pupils will gain confidence in "telling". This confidence factor is of vital importance.
- Pupils will be taught how to report incidents by seeking private time with the teacher.
- Pupils will be informed that when they report incidents of bullying, they are acting responsibly.
- Parents/guardians will be encouraged to report incidents of bullying behaviour to the school by phone/note or in person by appointment. Parents will be given guidelines on the signs of bullying to look out for in their children.
- Non-teaching staff are encouraged to report to the teaching staff, any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them.
- Pupils who are involved in incidents of Cyber-Bullying will go straight to stage 2.

Procedures for noting, investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying.

Incidents of bullying will initially be dealt with by the class teacher and Support teacher using the 'No Blame' approach. This is a NON-PUNITIVE approach to bullying.

Research has shown that punitive reaction does not have a long term affect in reducing bullying and could be argued to reinforce bullying behaviour in later life. The emphasis instead, should be placed on encouraging the children to want to co-operate and care for each other. 'Treat others as you would like to be treated yourself' (DFL)

If any pupils are placed on an 'Individual behaviour Contract' , a record will be made in the office and parents will be informed.

The No-Blame Approach

This procedure is outlined clearly in the Anti-Bullying Pack which is in every teacher's DFL folder.

On being informed of an incident of bullying the teacher/Support Teacher will:

Stage 1

- Interview the victim and record facts on the Bullying Incident Recording Form (in DFL folder) which will be retained in the school. Teacher and victim sign the form. It may also be appropriate to ask those involved to write down an account of what happened. Use discretion as to informing parents at this stage.
- Interview others involved, record using the Bullying Incident Recording Form. This is also signed by the bully(ies) and the teacher and kept in the DFL folder.
- Discuss the FEELINGS experienced by the victim because of the bullying behaviour. In this approach concentrate on the feelings.
- When the victim is ready and agreeable, a follow up meeting will take place with the bully(ies)/s and victim(s) together, to discuss the negative impact of bullying on both parties and to encourage pupils to name the problem, to identify solutions and to ensure the behaviour is not repeated.
- Follow-up meetings may take place to ensure that there is no repeat of bullying behaviour and in order to monitor the situation as deemed necessary. If this situation is not resolved, we move on to Stage 2.

Stage 2 - Individual Contract

- Draw up an **Individual Behaviour Contract** for the bully/ies (in folder). This contract will be signed by the child, their parents/guardians the class teacher and the Support Teacher/Principal. This will be returned and kept in the

folder, a copy of the contract will be sent home along with a letter detailing the steps if a child chooses to break the contract. A record of any pupils on a behaviour contract will be kept in the office. The details must be filled in and signed by the class teacher.

- Parents or guardians of victims and bullies will be informed by the Principal of incidents so that they are given the opportunity of discussing the matter. They are then in a position to help and support their children before a crisis occurs.
- If deemed necessary, support for the victim may be provided by the Support Teacher.
- If a pupil breaks the contract, the teacher will move onto Stage 3.

- Stage 3 - If Contract is Broken

- A breach of an **Individual Behaviour Contract** will result in the child being placed on **Step 6** of the DFL sanctions. Such cases will be referred immediately to the Principal. The bully will be excluded from class until a meeting can take place with his/her parents and the Principal. It will be emphasised at the meeting that further breaches of the contract will result in the child reaching step 7 of the DFL sanctions- Suspension from school. The meeting will be minuted and kept on file.
- Another breach of the contract will result in the pupil being placed on **Step 7**- Suspension from school. The Principal will inform the Chairperson of the Board of Management of any cases reaching this stage.

Where cases remain unresolved at school level, the matter should be referred to the school's Board of Management.

There will be no termly amnesty for bullying incidents.

Success Criteria

In evaluating the success of this school policy, feedback will be sought from children, parents and staff to ascertain if there has been a reduction in the incidence of bullying behaviour.

7. The schools 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*)
 - The victim is given the opportunity to off load what has happened to them and to discuss their feelings about the incident
 - The victim will meet with the bully in a safe and supported environment where the problem is discussed and an agreement is reached by both parties

- The situation is monitored and all teachers are made aware of the situation
- A follow up meeting will ensue to ensure all agreements have been adhered to and the victim is comfortable in the school environment
- If it is deemed necessary the victim and the bully will be given further support from the support 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.

10. This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on _____

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

Date: _____

Signed: _____
Principal

Date: _____

Date of next review: September 2024