**St. Mary’s N.S.**



**Anti-Bullying Policy**

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1. In accordance with the requirements of the *Education (Welfare) Act 2000* and the code of behaviour guidelines issued by the National Education Welfare Board, the NEWB, the Board of Management of St. Mary’s National 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:
3. **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;

1. **Effective leadership**
2. **A school-wide approach:** Lessons are addressed in each class and incidental circle time done on issues. School displays and posters are used. SPHE lessons using the Walk Tall and Stay Safe programmes.
3. **A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact**
4. **Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that –**

* Build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils
* Explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying, including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying
* Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils

1. **Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils:** Supervision rotas are drawn up for morning and break time supervision
2. **Supports for staff:** School policies and whole school behaviour system (Discipline for Learning – DFL - programme), PDST – Professional Development Services for Teachers
3. **Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies);** and
4. **On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy**
5. 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, 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.*

**Examples of bullying behaviour**

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| **General behaviours which apply to all types of bullying** | * Harassment based on any of the nine grounds in the equality legislation e.g. sexual harassment, homophobic bullying, racist bullying etc. * Physical aggression * Damage to property * Name calling * Slagging * The production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other materials aimed at intimidating another person * Offensive graffiti * Extortion * Intimidation * Insulting or offensive gestures * The “look” * Invasion of personal space * A combination of any of the types listed. |
| **Cyber** | * **Denigration**: Spreading rumors, lies or gossip to hurt a person’s reputation * **Harassment**: Continually sending vicious, mean or disturbing messages to an individual * **Impersonation**: Posting offensive or aggressive messages under another person’s name * **Flaming**: Using inflammatory or vulgar words to provoke an online fight * **Trickery**: Fooling someone into sharing personal information which you then post online * **Outing**: Posting or sharing confidential or compromising information or images * **Exclusion**: Purposefully excluding someone from an online group * **Cyber stalking**: Ongoing harassment and denigration that causes a person considerable fear for his/her safety * Silent telephone/mobile phone call * Abusive telephone/mobile phone calls * Abusive text messages * Abusive email * Abusive communication on social networks e.g. Facebook/Ask.fm/ Twitter/You Tube or on games consoles * Abusive website comments/Blogs/Pictures * Abusive posts on any form of communication technology |
| **Identity Based Behaviours**  **Including any of the nine discriminatory grounds mentioned in Equality Legislation**  (gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community). | |
| **Homophobic and Transgender** | * Spreading rumours about a person’s sexual orientation * Taunting a person of a different sexual orientation * Name calling e.g. Gay, queer, lesbian...used in a derogatory manner * Physical intimidation or attacks * Threats |
| **Race, nationality, ethnic background and membership of the Traveller community** | * Discrimination, prejudice, comments or insults about colour, nationality, culture, social class, religious beliefs, ethnic or traveller background * Exclusion on the basis of any of the above |
| **Relational** | This involves manipulating relationships as a means of bullying. Behaviours include:   * Malicious gossip * Isolation & exclusion * Ignoring * Excluding from the group * Taking someone’s friends away * “Bitching” * Spreading rumours * Breaking confidence * Talking loud enough so that the victim can hear * The “look” * Use or terminology such as ‘nerd’ in a derogatory way |
| **Sexual** | * Unwelcome or inappropriate sexual comments or touching * Harassment |
| **Special Educational Needs,**  **Disability** | * Name calling * Taunting others because of their disability or learning needs * Taking advantage of some pupils’ vulnerabilities and limited capacity to recognise and defend themselves against bullying * Taking advantage of some pupils’ vulnerabilities and limited capacity to understand social situations and social cues. * Mimicking a person’s disability * Setting others up for ridicule |

1. **The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying is (are) as follows:**

* Principal: Jane Kirwan
* Deputy Principal: Aedín Flynn
* Assistant Principal: Jennifer Comer
* All class teachers

***\*Any teacher may act as a relevant teacher if circumstances warrant it.***

**5. Education and prevention strategies**

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| **School wide approach** | * St. Mary’s N.S. adopts a school-wide approach to the **fostering of respect** for all members of the school community. The promotion of the value of diversity to address issues of prejudice and stereotyping, and highlighting the unacceptability of bullying behaviour. * Teachers should repeatedly reinforce the message that if anyone is the victim of bullying behaviour, they should not retaliate in any way, but they should **tell an adult.** Victims should be reassured that if they tell, something will be done about the bullying in a safe manner and all reported incidents will be dealt with * Class lessons to be provided to enable pupils **“how to tell”** ( telling protocol)   - Direct approach to teacher at an appropriate time, for example after class.  - Hand note up with homework.  - Ask a parent(s)/guardian(s) to tell on your behalf.  - Ask a friend/peer to tell on your behalf. –  - Administer a confidential questionnaire. –  - Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place. This is not telling tales but a means of protecting victims.   * **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 school’s **anti-bullying policy** is discussed with pupils and is available for all parent(s)/guardian(s) on the school website, along with the Code of Behaviour. * **Professional Development:** 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. * The implementation of whole school awareness measures e.g. a dedicated notice board in the classrooms on the promotion of friendship, kindness, and bullying prevention; annual **Friendship Week**. * 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 pupils’ use of mobile phones. Promoting **‘Internet Safety Day’** annually and activities to celebrate this awareness. Teaching of lessons to deal with the issues of **cyber bullying** and internet safety. * Our school’s approach to tackling and preventing bullying takes particular account of the needs of **pupils with SEN,** and joins up with other relevant school policies and supports and will ensure that all services and supports and will ensure that all the services that provide for such pupils work together. Approaches to decreasing the likelihood of bullying for pupils for pupils with SEN include improving inclusion, focusing on developing social skills, paying attention to key moments such as transitioning from primary to post-primary and cultivating a good school culture which has respect for all. |
| **Implementation of curricula** | * Teachers influence attitudes to bullying behaviour in a positive manner through a range of curricular initiatives. There are a number of curriculum components and programmes which are particularly relevant to the prevention of bullying and the promotion of respect for diversity and inclusiveness. * **SPHE curriculum** makes specific provision for exploring bullying as well as the interrelated areas of belonging and integrating, communication, conflict, friendship, personal safety and relationships. * **The Stay Safe programme** is a personal safety skills programme which seeks to enhance children’s self-protection skills including their ability to recognise and cope with bullying. * **RSE (Relationship and Sexual Health Education)** aims to provide opportunities for children to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way. * **Other resources** and programmes include: PDST Anti-Bullying Support Material, Webwise Cyber Bullying Pack, Webwise My Selfie Lessons, Fun Friends, Walk Tall. |
| **Other strategies** | * Positive reinforcement by teachers in classroom setting (Special awards stickers, Golden time, class certificates etc.) * Rewarding incidents of good and improved behaviour and showing acts of kindness at class level and whole-school through Star Pupil. * Encouraging students to look out for each other and to be responsible for their own behavior. * Modeling of respectful behaviour and language by teachers and staff. * All teachers and SNA’s are required to be vigilant on yard duty- record all incidences- monitor repeat offenders. * Immediate affirmation of children who report incidents of bullying which they have witnessed. * Circle-time sessions, stories, videos, role-play and use of puppets are methodologies which may be used to discuss and explore issues of bullying. * Promotion of extra-curricular activities which encourage co-operation among pupils. * Display signs around the school and in classrooms. * Practise Mindfulness and promote wellbeing in all classes to develop self-awareness, calmness and how to use breathing to self soothe. |
| **Links to other policies** | * The school policies which support the Anti-Bullying policy are: * Code of Behaviour * Child Protection Policy * Supervision of pupils * Acceptable Use policy * RSE Policy * SPHE Policy |

**6. Procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying**

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| ***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.***  The school’s procedures must be consistent with the following approach. Every effort will be made to ensure that all involved (including pupils, parent(s)/guardians) 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. * 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** | * In investigating and dealing with incidents of alleged 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. |
| **Recording of bullying behavior** | 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. Consideration needs to be given to where the records will be made e.g. incident book. All incidents must be reported to the relevant teacher * While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the relevant teacher must keep a written record of the reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same * The relevant teacher must inform the 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. * The school in consultation with the relevant teacher/s should develop a protocol for the storage of all records retained by the relevant teacher.   **Formal Stage 2-Appendix 3**  The relevant teacher must use the recording template at **Appendix 3** to record the bullying behaviour in the following circumstances:  **a)** 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  When the recording template is used, it must be retained by the relevant teacher in question and a copy retained by the Principal.  Records will be retained by the Principal at the end of the year and stored until the pupil is leaving 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)s or the school Principal or Deputy Principal   * 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 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. |
| **Established intervention strategies** | * Teacher interviews with all pupils * Negotiating agreements between pupils and following these up by monitoring progress. This can be on an informal basis or implemented through a more structured mediation process * Working with parent(s)/guardian(s)s to support school interventions * No Blame Approach * Circle Time * Restorative interviews * Restorative conferencing |

**7. 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. school based activities as part of the SPHE programme to build self esteem and to develop coping strategies for those affected by bullying behaviour.

* 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.

**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 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.

**11.** 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.

This policy was reviewed on 23rd November 2022.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

(Chairperson of Board of Management) (Principal)

Date of next review: March 2022