

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY STATEMENT

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1. **Rational:** 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. Anne's Special School has adopted the following anti-bullying policy within the framework of the school's overall code of behaviour. This policy complies with the requirements of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools which were published in September 2013.
2. **Aim:** 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:
 - Supporting a positive school culture and climate which –
 1. is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity.
 2. encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment.
 3. promotes respectful relationships across the school community.
 - Supporting the provision of effective leadership.
 - Supporting a school-wide approach.
 - Supporting a shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact.
 - Supporting the implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that-
 1. Build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and
 2. Explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity- based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.
 - Supporting the effective supervision and monitoring of pupils;
 - The provision of supports for staff;
 - Supporting the 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. 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 bullying behaviour are included in the definition of bullying:

- deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying,
- cyber- bullying (see Anti-Cyber Bullying Policy Statement)
- 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 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 in Section 2 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

4. Relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying:

- Serious cases of bullying behaviour by pupils should be referred immediately to the Principal, or in his/her absence, to the Deputy- Principal. It is the responsibility of either the Principal or Deputy - Principal to investigate such reported incidents.
- Trivial, once-off incidents of bullying should be noted, investigated and dealt with by relevant class teachers.
- Individual class teachers should advise the Principal, or in his /her absence, the Deputy-Principal of their investigation.

5. Education and prevention strategies:

- The school ethos promotes habits of mutual respect, courtesy, resilience and an awareness of the interdependence of people/ children in group and community.
- This includes strategies specifically aimed at cyberbullying 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*)
- The school has identified aspects of the curriculum through which positive and lasting influences can be exerted towards forming pupils' attitudes and values while allowing for individual levels of performance and functioning. Such identified programmes include the following:
 1. Religious Education.
 2. Stay Safe Programme.
 3. Relationship and Sexuality Education programme.
 4. SPHE.
 5. Drama.
- The school provide pupils with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth and self-esteem through both curricular and extra-curricular programmes.
- Staff personnel, under the direction of the principal teacher, implement comprehensive supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of school activity are kept under supervision.
- As well as this all staff have responsibility for the following
 - Model respectful behaviour to all members of the school community at all times.
 - Explicitly teach pupils what respectful language and respectful behaviour looks like, acts like, sounds like and feels like in class and around the school.
 - Notice and acknowledge desired respectful behaviour by providing positive attention.
 - Give constructive feedback to pupils when respectful behaviour and respectful language are absent.

- Have a system of encouragement and rewards to promote desired behaviour and compliance with the school rules and routines.
 - Highlight and explicitly teach school rules in pupil friendly way in the classroom and in common areas around school.
 - Explicitly teach pupils about the appropriate use of social media.
 - Follow up and follow through with pupils who ignore the rules.
 - Actively promote the right of every member of the school community to be safe and secure in school.
 - All staff can actively watch out for signs of bullying behaviour.
- The Board of Management in consultation with school personnel, members, parents and pupils, where appropriate, implement a Code of Discipline.
The Board of Management, staff and parents have a clear policy statement promoting equity in general and gender equity in particular.
 - The Board of Management in consultation with all partners in education implement an Anti-Cyber Bullying Policy Statement.

6.Procedures for investigation:

- Incidents of bullying behaviour will be formally noted, reported and investigated in association with the implementation of the school's Code of Behaviour policy document. This provision is to allow for early detection of signs of indiscipline and/or significant change in mood or behaviour of pupils.
- 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.
- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. 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.
- The BOM will actively encourage non-teaching staff such as secretary, caretaker and bus escorts to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant class teacher.
- Parents and pupils, where appropriate, will be required to co-operate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving any issues and restoring, as far as practicable, the relationships of the parties involved as quickly as possible.
- Incidents are best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.
- All interviews will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned.
- When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher should ask 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 will be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved will be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member will 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 they may face from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher.

- In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents 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 will give parents an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports for their pupils.
- Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has 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 will be made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied.
- It will also be made clear to all involved 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 will 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. This can have a therapeutic effect.
- In cases where the relevant teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he /she has determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, it must be recorded in the standardised recording template.
- 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:
 - a. Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased;
 - b. Whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable;
 - c. Whether the relationships between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable;
 - d. Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the school Principal or Deputy Principal.
- Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents will be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures.
- In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school will advise the parents of their rights to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

7. Procedures for recording bullying behaviour:

The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour will adhere to the following:

- While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated by the relevant teacher, the relevant teacher will use his /her professional judgement in relation to the records to be kept of these reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same.
- 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 practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.
- The relevant teacher must use the recording template at **Appendix 3 (Anti-bullying Policy Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2013)** to record the bullying behaviour in the following circumstances:

1. 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.
2. In serious cases of bullying behaviour being referred to the Principal or Deputy Principal.

In each of these circumstances the recording template must be recorded in full and retained by the teacher in question and a copy provided to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable. It should be noted that the timeline for recording bullying behaviour does not in any way preclude the relevant teacher from consulting the Principal or Deputy Principal at an earlier stage in relation to a case.

It is important to note in some cases behaviour may escalate beyond that which can be described as bullying to serious physical or sexual assault or harassment. In such circumstances referral may be made to relevant external agencies (HSE Children and Family Social Services) and authorities (Gardaí) where appropriate by the Designated Liaison Person. Additionally, advice may be sought from the National Psychological Services.

8. Programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying:

A whole school approach to the problem of bullying behaviour will be nurtured in the school. Learning strategies applied will allow for the enhancement of each pupil's self-worth, self-esteem and seek to foster the development of friendship and social skills and thereby build resilience whenever this is needed.

Pupils involved in bullying behaviour need assistance on an ongoing basis. Learning strategies applied within the school will allow for the enhancement of the pupil's self-worth. Additionally, such pupils may require counselling to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others.

It is important to note that pupils who observe incidents of bullying behaviour should be encouraged to discuss them with teachers.

9. Supervision and Monitoring of Pupils

The Board of Management confirms that appropriate supervision and monitoring policies and practices are in place in school to both prevent and deal with bullying behaviour and to facilitate early intervention where possible.

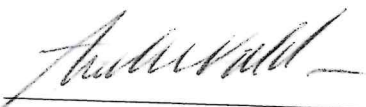
10. Prevention of Harassment

The Board of Management confirms that the school will, in accordance with its obligations under equality legislation, take all steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the sexual 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

This policy has been made available to school personnel within the School Plan and provided to the Parents Association. Additionally, a copy will be made available to the Department of Education and Skills 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 at staff meetings and to the Parent's Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department of Education and Skills.

Signed: 

Chairperson of Board of Management Mr. Andrew Walsh

Signed: 

Principal/Secretary to the Board of Management

Date: 29/1/2024

11. Some Useful Support Websites

- [DES Anti-Bullying advice for parents and pupils](#)
- [National Disability Council - Information on Preventing Bullying of Children with SEN](#)
- [Tackle Bullying](#)
- [Primary Wellbeing Online Resource Portal](#)
- [Internet Safety Advice: Top Tips for Parents](#)
- [Dealing with Cyberbullying in Schools](#)