

St Mary's
Primary School

Anti-Bullying Policy.

April 2015



Rationale

St Mary's Primary School aims to provide a safe and secure and happy learning environment for every child in our care. We wish to promote values to enable our children to develop into caring and responsible adults. All members of our staff share and promote these values and work to ensure a child-centred approach.

We believe all pupils have the right to learn in an environment which is free from intimidation and fear. We work to create an environment within which positive relationships will be fostered and bullying behaviour will not be accepted.

This Ant-bullying Policy forms part of our overall Pastoral Care Policy.

Agreed Definition of Bullying.

Following consultation with our Board of Governors, teachers, pupils and parents and ancillary staff, the following definition of bullying behaviour has been agreed.

"Deliberately hurtful behaviour, repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for the victim to defend him/herself."

Pastoral Care in Schools: Child Protection (DE 1999)

Bullying can take a number of forms: physical, verbal, making gestures, extortion and exclusion. Bullying is an abuse of power, which can be planned and organised, or it may be unintentional. An individual or a group of pupils may carry it out.

However, we do not call it bullying when the teasing is made in a friendly and playful way. Also, it is not bullying when two pupils of about equal strength or power argue or fight.

Forms of Bullying.

- Physical violence - hitting, pushing, kicking, spitting etc.
- Interfering with another pupil's property, by stealing, hiding or damaging it
- Using offensive names to another pupil
- Teasing or spreading rumours about another pupil or his/her family
- Belittling another pupil's abilities and achievements
- Writing offensive notes or graffiti about another pupil
- Exclusion of a pupil
- Ridiculing a pupil's appearance, way of speaking or personal mannerisms
- Cyber bullying (mobile phones and internet - threats, harassment, embarrassment, humiliation, defamation or impersonation)

Mobile phones and/or devices which allow photographs and/or videos to be taken are not allowed to be brought into school from home.

The View of Bullying in St Mary's.

We in St Mary's firmly believe that all pupils have the right to be educated in a secure and caring environment, free from the threat of psychological and physical abuse. The staff in St Mary's is opposed to any form of bullying and we are all committed to creating an anti-bullying culture. Bullying is entirely contrary to our Christian values and principles.

We in St Mary's are proactive in seeking to establish an anti-bullying culture within our school community. In conjunction with the School of Psychology, University of Ulster, Magee College, Derry, we have conducted three questionnaires (in 2001 and again in 2002 and a further study with Trinity College, Dublin during 2008) within Key Stage 2, which addressed the issues of bullying and victimization, self-concept, self-esteem and general physical health. We have also used SETAQ in 2009 to seek views from pupils and parents on bullying issues. Again, we received very positive feedback.

Figures from 2012 show parents and pupils still feel confident in the anti-bullying policy within school. 100% of parents who responded to the 2012 survey indicated they felt their child was safe in school and 99% of children felt they were safe in school. 95% of parents felt any concerns their children had were acted upon appropriately and effectively. 95% of children felt the teacher would respond to their concerns about bullying and 99% of children knew what to do if they were being bullied.

A further survey was repeated in 2014. 100% of our pupils knew to tell if they had concerns about bullying. 95% of pupils felt safe in school. 4% of pupils surveyed said they had been bullied at some stage in school.

These figures indicate the ongoing work being done in St Mary's is an attempt to reduce bullying incidents. It is also a reflection of the importance we place on developing a safe and caring learning environment not only for all our children but for all staff as well.

We believe that a climate fostering effective learning is at the heart of children's education. Our Christian and Catholic ethos is therefore promoted through establishing and maintaining good relationships within the whole school and its community.

The Responsibilities of Staff in St Mary's.

Our staff will:

- ✓ Foster in our pupils self-esteem, self-respect and respect for others
- ✓ Demonstrate by example the high standards of personal and social behaviour we expect from our pupils
- ✓ Discuss bullying with all classes, so that every pupil learns about the damage it causes to both the child who is bullied and to the bully, and the importance of telling a member of staff about bullying when it happens

- ✓ Be alert to signs of distress and other possible indications of bullying
- ✓ Listen to children who have been bullied, take what they say seriously and act to support and protect them
- ✓ If necessary (a complaint from a parent) report cases of bullying to the designated teacher (Mrs J McKenna)
- ✓ Follow up any complaint by a parent about bullying and report back promptly and fully on the action taken
- ✓ Deal with observed incidents of bullying promptly and effectively, in accordance with the agreed procedures of our school
- ✓ Act according to the situation in hand, making 'value judgements' when appropriate.

The Responsibilities of Our Pupils.

All pupils have a responsibility to behave in a caring manner towards other members of the school community, to help create an environment where any form of bullying is unacceptable and to report any witnessed or suspected instance of bullying.

We expect our pupils to:

- ✓ Refrain from becoming involved in any kind of bullying, even at the risk of incurring unpopularity
- ✓ Intervene to protect the pupil who is being bullied, unless it is unsafe to do so
- ✓ Report to a member of staff any witnessed or suspected incidents of bullying.

We in St Mary's ask that anyone who becomes the target of bullies should not suffer in silence, but have the courage to speak out and tell a member of staff.

The Responsibilities of Parents.

We ask our parents to support their children and our school by

- ✓ Watching for signs of distress or unusual behaviour in their children
- ✓ Advising their children to report any incidents of bullying to their class teacher or our designated teacher
- ✓ Explain to their children the implications of allowing bullying to continue if not reported for themselves and for other pupils
- ✓ Advise their children not to retaliate to any form of bullying
- ✓ Being sympathetic and supportive towards their children and reassuring them that appropriate action will be taken
- ✓ Keeping a written record of any reported bullying instances
- ✓ Informing the school of any suspected bullying, even if it does not concern their children
- ✓ Co-operating with the school, if their children are accused of bullying, try to determine the truth and explain the implications of bullying for all parties involved.

We also ask parents to let us follow our agreed policy when dealing with bullying concerns. It is very difficult to intervene effectively and appropriately when parents ask for their children to remain anonymous during any investigations of bullying incidents. When this happens in our experience the intervention is less effective than we would otherwise wish.

If a parent/guardian acts independently of this agreed policy and either makes a direct approach to another family or involves another agency, then the school will not intervene.

The Responsibilities of the Board of Governors.

Our Board of Governors must:

- ✓ Ensure good behaviour and discipline policies are pursued in St Mary's
- ✓ Make and keep under review, a written statement of 'general principles' about pupil behaviour and discipline, which the Principal will regard to in determining school rules and behaviour policies
- ✓ Consult with the principal and parents considering any guidance from the Department, the NEELB and the CCMS

The Responsibilities of All in St Mary's.

Everyone in St Mary's should work together to reduce bullying incidents.

Responding to Bullying in St Mary's.

The main aim of any intervention is to respond to the bullying that is taking place, resolve the concern and restore the well-being of all those involved.

- ✓ We have clear and fair investigation, reporting and recording procedures. Our children are asked to report

any incidents of bullying to their class teacher, the designated teacher or the Principal or lunchtime supervisors. Each child will be listened to and procedures followed according to our Child Protection and Positive Behaviour Policies.

In St Mary's we seek to help both the victim and the bully. Our aim is to stop the bullying happening again by encouraging both the victim and the bully

- ✓ To think about their behaviour and the causes and effects of the bullying
- ✓ To find the solutions to the problems themselves.

We support the victim by

- ✓ making sure that he or she is being listened to
- ✓ Assuring the pupil that all incidents are taken seriously
- ✓ Reassuring the pupil by explaining how
 - he or she will be supported
 - the incident will be dealt with.

We will ensure the bully is dealt with fairly by

- ✓ Describing the reasons for meeting the pupil
- ✓ Staying calm and non-judgemental to make sure that the pupil feels that he or she is being listened to
- ✓ Assuring that pupil that all incidents of bullying are taken seriously and that we disapprove of all acts of bullying, regardless of the reason
- ✓ Explaining how
 - he or she will be supported

- the incident will be dealt with

Incidents are recorded by the class teacher or on an Incident Form (see Appendix).

This form helps the school to identify bullying as well as monitoring the progress of individual pupils.

The incident will be discussed with the pupils, individually and then together. This is to try to help both the bully and the victim

- ✓ see the situation from the other's point of view
- ✓ explore the causes and effects of the incident
- ✓ identify how the situation could have been avoided or can be resolved
- ✓ explore ways to resolve the current conflict.
- ✓ Discuss what will happen if the problems continue

At this stage it will be decided

- ✓ whether or not a punishment is appropriate
- ✓ whether letting parents/carers know about the incident is appropriate.

The 'Peer Group Support' (previously 'No Blame' approach) is one particular strategy we use to tackle bullying. This is a participative, non-punitive approach, which lets the bully know that he or she has been found out. It

- takes firm, clear, cohesive action
- does not allow the bullies off the hook
- supports the pupils who are being bullied
- makes it clear that all bullying behaviour has to stop immediately
- is a long-term approach

- involves the bullies' peer group
- focuses on changing the behaviour of the bully and those who collude with him/her

Interventions to Bullying Behaviour

Level 1

When the bullying behaviour has been assessed and is perceived to be minor or a first time occurrence.

Interventions at Level 1 are to help individuals to recognise/reflect on their unacceptable behaviour and to 'get them back on track' while listening to and supporting/strengthening the targeted pupil(s).

Level 2

While interventions at Level 2 involve continuing with those in Level 1, there is a shift from individual support to group interventions.

Following assessment if the bullying behaviour continues and/or is considered more severe, and Individual Behaviour Support Plan may be put in place in line with the Code of Practice.

Level 3

Following assessment, if the bullying behaviour is more complex and/or resistant to change.

Interventions at this level will involve Senior Managers/SENCo in collaboration with pupil(s) and parents to determine the way forward in affecting change.

Level 4

When the bullying behaviour presents with significant mental health, criminal and/or child protection 'safeguarding' concerns.

Rewards and Sanctions.

Rewards and sanctions are necessary to encourage and maintain the rules in class and in school.

In St Mary's we employ a range of rewards to recognise good behaviour and positive attitudes. These occur in everyday interactions e.g. smiling, thumbs up or a handshake.

Examples of verbal acknowledgements include words of commendation or praise from other pupils.

Written comments and reward systems such as stickers and certificates are also used.

Sanctions are in place to uphold our rules and procedures. These should be fully understood by parents and staff as well as pupils.

Sanctions that we use include:

- withdrawal of privileges
- completing additional work to complement or reinforce current learning (no lines will be given)
- carrying out a useful low-level task
- a reporting system which allows staff and parents to monitor behaviour, attitude and response (within each class and at a whole school level)
- the referral of a troublesome pupil to a senior member of staff
- the temporary removal of a pupil from his/her peers into another class
- suspension
- expulsion

Parents need to be involved, in partnership with the school, in securing and maintaining the good behaviour of their children. They will not, however, be informed about every trivial event.

Proactive Strategies to Create An Anti-Bullying School Ethos.

All our children will experience learning about bullying issues through the curriculum e.g. PDMU Curriculum, Drama and Role-Play, Art.

All classes use Circle Time to promote and develop awareness of bullying issues.

Circle of Friends is another approach sometimes used to combat bullying.

We also have a 'Buddy System' and a 'School Council' in place.

We participate in the Anti-bullying Week each November, with children leading assemblies and various activities happening in class and as part of homework.

Safe Internet Day (February) is also used to highlight safety issues.

During Term 2 2013-2014, staff received Awareness Training on the new levels of bullying produced by the NIABF (Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forum).

During Term 3 2013-2014, PSNI gave a talk to parents on Internet Safety. All parents were invited to attend.

During Term 3 of 2024-2015, NSPCC will present a special workshop to P6/7 children regarding personal safety.

Our teachers help to create a positive and caring ethos within their classrooms by:

- ❖ promoting good relationships with the pupils
- ❖ promoting their personal and social development
- ❖ planning and preparing effectively
- ❖ catering for the needs of learners
- ❖ providing feedback.
- ❖ developing the emotional literacy of each child

We strive to develop a culture where our pupils are confident to express their views and know that their views are listened to, respected and acted upon. However, sometimes children can be reluctant to approach a member of staff about their concerns. We therefore display information about organisations outside of school which pupils can contact to talk about bullying.

Dealing with Bullying as it Happens.

Strategies for dealing with on the spot instances of bullying witnessed by a member of staff are:

- diffusing the situation by separating the target from the bully or bullies
- dispersing any bystanders
- acting firmly in a measured manner, avoiding any sudden movements which might be construed as aggression. If physical restraint is necessary, it should be applied in accordance with the guidelines set out in Circular 1999/9
- indicating clearly to the bullies that the school does not tolerate bullying under any circumstances and that they will be dealt with later
- providing reassurance, support and protection for the pupil who was the target and set the soonest possible time, if not immediately, for the responsible teacher to discuss with him/her what happened, the background and what should happen to make things better.

We constantly monitor, evaluate and review our bullying policy.

School has responded to the Anti-bullying Consultation Document in February 2015.

Resources Used.

- **NSPCC Material**
- **Prim-Ed Workbooks and Posters**
- **Poetry**
- **Circle-Time Resources**
- **Kidscape Material**