

## St. Patrick's SNS Anti-bullying Policy

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. Patrick's 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, racist bullying, bullying based on a person's membership of the Traveller community and bullying of those with disabilities or special educational needs.

*Note:* 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.

#### 4. Types of Bullying (non-exhaustive list):

1. Extortion

Demands for money may be made, often accompanied by threats (sometimes carried out in the event of the victim not promptly "paying up"). Victims' lunches, or money may be taken. Victims may also be forced into theft of property for delivery to the bully. Sometimes this tactic is used with the sole purpose of incriminating the victim.

2. Intimidation

Some bullying behaviour takes the form of intimidation. It is based on the use of very aggressive body language with the voice being used as a weapon. Particularly upsetting for victims can be the so called "look" – a facial expression which conveys aggression, dislike or contempt.

### 3. Abusive Telephone Calls / Mobile Phone Calls / Texting / Photography

The abusive anonymous telephone call or text is a form of intimidation or bullying. Camera phones can also be used to bully others.

### 4. Isolation

This form of bullying behaviour seems to be more prevalent among girls. A certain person is deliberately isolated, excluded or ignored by some or all of the class or peer group.

### 5. Name Calling

Persistent name-calling directed at the same individual(s), which hurts, insults or humiliates should be regarded as a form of bullying behaviour. Most name-calling of this type refers to physical appearance, e.g. “big ears”, size or clothes worn. Accent or distinctive voice characteristics may attract negative attention.

Academic ability can also provoke name-calling. This tends to operate at two extremes. First, there are those who are singled out for attention because they are perceived to be slow, or weak, academically. These pupils are often referred to as “dummies”, “dopes”, or “spas”. At the other extreme are those who, because they are perceived as high achievers, are labelled “swots”, “brain boxes”, “licks”, “teacher’s pets, nerds, etc.

### 6. Slagging

This behaviour usually refers to the good-natured banter which goes on as part of the normal social interchange between people. However, when this slagging extends to very personal remarks aimed again and again at the one individual about appearance, clothing, and personal hygiene or involves references of an uncomplimentary nature to members of one’s family, and then it assumes the form of bullying. Suggestive remarks about a pupil’s sexual orientation can also be classified as bullying.

### 7. Racism

### 8. Malicious Rumours

Spreading malicious rumours about a person is also a form of bullying.

### 9. Physical Aggression

This behaviour is more common among boys than girls. It includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping people up. It may also take the form of severe physical assault. While boys commonly engage in “mess fights”, these can often be used as a disguise for physical harassment or inflicting pain.

### 10. Damage to Property

Personal property can be the focus of attention for the bully. This may result in damage to clothing, schoolbooks and other learning materials. The contents of school bags and

pencil cases may be scattered on the floor. Items of personal property may be defaced, broken, stolen or hidden.

## 11. Cyber Bullying

This usually consists of bullying on social networking sites, such as Facebook or Bebo, saying nasty things about others on sites, spreading rumours about others and making it public knowledge.

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

- Firstly the teacher
- Secondly the Deputy Principal / Principal

### **6. 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;

Fear of going out to yard;

Unwillingness to go to school, refusal to attend, particularly among older children;

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. These may be particularly noticed before returning to school after longer school holidays;

Visible signs of anxiety or distress – stammering, withdrawing, nightmares, difficulty, 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 to meet extortion demands;

Unexplained bruising or cuts or damaged clothing;

Reluctance and / or refusal to say what is troubling him / her;

Becoming isolated in the class;

Unexplained absences;

May begin to bully other smaller children;

These signs do not necessarily mean that a pupil is being bullied. They can also be indicative of other problems. If repeated or occurring in combination, those signs do warrant investigation in order to establish what is affecting the pupil.

**7. 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**

- Modeling respectful behaviour to all members of the school community at all times.
- Explicitly teaching pupils what respectful language and respectful behaviour looks like, acts like, sounds like and feels like in class and around the school.
- The fostering and enhancing of the self-esteem of all our pupils through both curricular and extracurricular activities. Pupils will be provided with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth through formal and informal interactions.
- Displaying key respect messages in classrooms, in assembly areas and around the school. Involve pupils in the development of these messages.
- Catching students being good - notice and acknowledge desired respectful behaviour by providing positive attention.
- Consistently tackling the use of discriminatory and derogatory language in the school – this includes homophobic and racist language and language that is belittling of pupils with a disability or SEN.
- Giving constructive feedback to pupils when respectful behaviour and respectful language are absent.
- Using our DFL (Discipline For Learning) system of encouragement and rewards to promote desired behaviour and compliance with the school rules and routines.
- Explicitly teaching pupils about the appropriate use of social media, especially Facebook
- Positively encouraging pupils to comply with the school rules on mobile phone and internet use.
- Following up and following through with pupils who ignore the rules.

- Actively involving parents in awareness raising campaigns around social media.
- The school’s anti-bullying policy is discussed with pupils and all parent(s)/guardian(s)s attention is drawn to it in the newsletter and on our website.
- Actively promoting the right of every member of the school community to be safe and secure in school.
- Encourage a culture of telling, with particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders. 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.
- Ensuring that pupils know who to tell and how to tell, e.g.:
  - Direct approach to teacher at an appropriate time, for example after class.
  - Hand note up with homework.
  - Make a phone call to the school or to a trusted teacher in the school.
  - Get a parent(s)/guardian(s) or friend to tell on your behalf.
  - Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place.
- Staff actively watching out for signs of bullying behaviour.
- Ensuring there is adequate playground/school yard/outdoor supervision – We have the big yard (4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> classes), a 3<sup>rd</sup> class yard and the all weather pitch for soccer. One teacher and and SNA supervises the 3<sup>rd</sup> class yard, a teacher and an SNA supervise the all weather pitch and a teacher and two SNAs supervise the big yard.
- Sport and Physical activity – We have many sporting teams in the school – hurling teams, gaelic teams, basketball teams, soccer teams etc.
- Anti-bullying Week – We plan to turn this into an annual event.
- Professional development for teachers . We plan to ensure professional development based on bullying for teachers occurs at least every three years.
- School wide delivery of lessons on bullying from evidence based programmes, e.g. Stay Safe Programme, The Walk Tall Programme.
- School staff can get pupils to help them to identify bullying “hot spots” and “hot times” for bullying in the school.
  - Hot spots tend to be in the playground/school yard/outdoor areas, changing rooms, corridors and other areas of unstructured supervision.
  - Hot times again tend to be times where there is less structured supervision such as when pupils are in the playground/school yard or moving classrooms.

**8. 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:**

## **PROCEDURES FOR NOTING AND REPORTING AN INCIDENT OF BULLYING BEHAVIOUR.**

It is imperative that all recording of bullying incidents must be done in an objective and factual manner.

1. **All reports** of bullying should be investigated and dealt with by the class teacher or teacher on yard duty. It should be **recorded** by the class teacher. In that way pupils will gain confidence in “telling”.
2. Teachers with major concerns should complete a “Record of Bullying Behaviour” sheet for the formal noting and reporting of an incident of bullying behaviour. This procedure should be seen to be an integral part of the Code of Behaviour and Discipline in the school.
3. Incidents of bullying behaviour by pupils should be referred immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal.
4. Parents or Guardians of victims and bullies should be informed of serious incidents by the Principal sooner rather than later, 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.
5. The class room teacher or the Principal/Deputy Principal is the appropriate person to whom parents/guardians can make their enquiries regarding incidents of bullying behaviour, which they might suspect or that have come to their attention through their children.
6. It should be made clear to all pupils that when they report incidents of bullying they are not telling tales, but are behaving responsibly.
7. Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, caretakers, SNAs, cleaners, Lollipop Lady should be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, to the appropriate member of staff.
8. In the case of a complaint regarding a staff member, this should in the first instance be raised with the staff member in question and if necessary, with the Principal.
9. Where cases, relating to either a pupil or a teacher remain unresolved at school level, the matter should be referred to the School’s Board of Management.

## **PROCEDURES FOR INVESTIGATING AND DEALING WITH BULLYING**

Teachers are best advised to take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents/guardians. In

any incident of bullying, the teacher should speak separately to the pupils involved, in an attempt to get both sides of the story. 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.

1. When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, 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.
2. If a gang is involved, each member should be interviewed individually and then the gang should be met as a group. Each member should be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone is clear about what everyone else has said.
3. If it is concluded that a pupil has engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made known to him/her how he/she is in breach of the code of Behaviour and Discipline and try to get him/her to see the situation from the victim's point of view.
4. Each member of the gang should be helped to handle the possible pressures that often face them from the other pupils after interview by the teacher.
5. Teachers who are investigating serious cases of bullying behaviour should keep a written record of their discussions with those involved. It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident. The Principal/Deputy Principal will record serious or repeated incidents in his/her Book.
6. In cases where it has been determined that serious bullying behaviour has occurred, the Principal/Deputy Principal will meet with the parents or guardians of two parties involved as appropriate. Explain the actions being taken (Suspension a possibility depending on the severity of the problem) and the reasons for them, referring them to the school policy. Discuss ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions taken by the school.

## **9. ROLE OF PARENTS**

What can be done?

- It is important to be realistic: it may not be possible for a single child to assert his/her rights if attacked by a gang. Children should be advised to get away and tell in situations such as this. Tell them that you would have done the same in such a



situation.

- Teaching your child to say “No” in a good assertive tone of voice will help your child to deal with many situations. A child’s self image and body language may send out messages to potential bullies.
- Children should be encouraged to talk about bullying and given an opportunity to express their concerns.
- Approach your child’s teacher if the bullying is school related. It is important for you to understand that bullying in school can be difficult for teachers to detect because of the large numbers of children involved. Teachers will appreciate bullying being brought to light. School bullying requires that parents and teachers work together for a resolution.
- Very often parental advice to a child is to “hit back” at the bully if the abuse is physical. This is not always realistic as it requires a huge amount of courage and indeed sometimes makes the situation worse. Children should not be encouraged to engage in violent behaviour. Teaching children to be more assertive and to tell is far more positive and effective.
- Keep an account of incidents to help you assess how serious the problem is. Many children, with a little help overcome this problem very quickly.

## **WHAT IF YOUR CHILD IS A BULLY?**

1. Don’t panic. This may be a temporary response to something else in the child’s life e.g. a new baby, a death in the family, a difficult home problem etc. Give your child an opportunity to talk about anything that could be upsetting him/her.
2. Don’t punish bullying by being a bully yourself. Hitting and verbal attack will make the situation worse. Talk to your child and try to find out if there is a problem. Explain how the victim felt. Try to get the child to understand the victim’s point of view. This would need to be done over time.
3. Bullies often suffer from poor self-esteem. Use every opportunity you can to praise and affirm your child. Don’t only look for negatives.
4. Talk to the child’s teacher and try to find out more about the child’s school behaviour. Enlist the teacher’s help in dealing with this. It is important that you both take the same approach.

5. If the situation is serious you may need to ask the school or your G.P to refer your child to the Child Guidance Clinic for help.

## **10. The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows**

A child who has been bullied is often referred to our school counsellor 'Gemma'.

The parents of children who have been discovered to have been bullied or bullying will always be contacted by the Principal/Deputy Principal.

The Principal/Deputy Principal will have a follow up consultation with the child in question and their family if necessary.

## **11. 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.

## **12. 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.

**This policy was adopted by the Board of Management.**

**This policy has been made available to school personnel, is readily accessible to parents and pupils on request. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department 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, 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.**