

Title

Anti-Bullying Policy

Introductory Statement

The St. John's N.S. school community believes that each pupil has a right to an education free from fear and intimidation.

The school regards bullying as a serious infringement of individual rights and a serious threat to the self-esteem and self-confidence of targeted pupil(s). Therefore it does not tolerate bullying of any kind.

Every report of bullying is treated seriously and dealt with, having due regard for the well-being of the targeted pupil(s) and the perpetrator(s).

An Anti-Bullying Team, made up of the Principal, Deputy Principal and Class Teachers relevant to individual incidents of bullying, will be established to investigate and deal with such incidents.

The immediate priority, should a bullying incident occur, is ending the bullying, (*thereby protecting the person(s) being targeted*) and resolving the issues and restoring the relationships involved insofar as is practicable. We will use a "Reform, no Blame" approach whereby bullying pupils get a "clean sheet" upon satisfactory closure of an incident.

All pupils are expected to contribute to the creation and maintenance of a safe environment in the school. On becoming aware of any bullying situation in the school, involving members of the school community they should notify a trusted responsible adult. Bullying behaviour is too serious not to report.

Pupils' participation in school life in general is encouraged through existing school structures.

Awareness of bullying, and willingness to take action to prevent or stop it, is part of this participation.

Content of the Policy

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 (NEWB), the Board of Management of St. John's N.S. 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
 - Promotes respectful relationships across the school community
 - Effective leadership
 - A school-wide approach to prevention and effective interventions
 - 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
 - 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)
 - 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 behaviour are included in the definition of bullying:

- Deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying
- Cyber-bullying
- 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 do not fall within the definition of bullying and should be dealt with, as appropriate, in accordance with the school's code of behaviour.

Negative behaviour that does not meet this definition of bullying will be considered under the school's code of behaviour.

This definition includes a wide range of behaviour, whether verbal or written, whether physical or social, whether targeting person or property, whether carried out directly or indirectly or through any electronic or other medium, which could harm a pupil or undermine her/his self-esteem or self-confidence. Please note: the use of Mobile Phones in this school is not authorised (please see our Policy on the Usage of Mobile Phones in school) and internet usage is supervised; therefore bullying by these media should not happen during school hours.

Appendix 1 gives a list of specific examples of bullying behaviour. This list is not exhaustive.

4. Members of the Anti-Bullying Team will investigate and deal with bullying incidents in our school.
5. The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber-bullying and identity based bullying) used by the school are as follows:

- The anti-bullying module of the SPHE programme as it applies during each school year,
- At least five awareness-raising exercises per school year for each class group (e.g. from the “*Awareness-Raising*” strand of the *Anti-Bullying Campaign*, via its website) pro- actively explaining the nature and variety, causes, consequences and unacceptability of bullying.
 - Pupils are helped to examine the issue of bullying in calm rational way, outside of the tense context of particular bullying incidents. In the process they are made more aware of the nature of bullying and the various forms that it can take.
 - Pupils are made aware that the consequences of bullying behaviour are always bad for those who are targeted, even if this is not always obvious at the time.
 - Pupils are encouraged to recognise, reject and report bullying behaviour, either spontaneously or through questionnaires that are regularly used in the school.

Through curriculum work and/or newsletters the school staff and parents/guardians are made aware of the nature of bullying and the signs that might indicate that a pupil is being bullied. They are encouraged to be vigilant in watching out for signs of bullying and to report any suspicion of bullying they may have to the class teacher.

- The organisation of an annual Anti-bullying/Friendship Day.
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, (e.g. the six step approach available for the “Dealing with Incidents” section of the *Anti-Bullying Campaign* website) are as follows:
- The Class Teacher and/or Principal/member of the Anti-Bullying Team investigates all instances of reported or suspected bullying behaviour that take place within the school, with a view to establishing the facts and bringing any such behaviour to an end.

- The School, through the Class teacher/Principal/member of the Anti-Bullying Team reserves the right to ask any pupil to write an account of what happened, as part of an investigation. This will be a standard procedure and does not necessarily imply that a pupil is guilty of misbehaviour.
- Pupils who are alleged to have been involved in bullying behaviour are interviewed by the Class Teacher/Principal/member of the Anti-Bullying Team to establish the nature and extent of the behaviour and any reasons for it. In the event that they have been involved in bullying behaviour they are asked to sign a binding promise that they will treat all pupils fairly, equally and respectfully including the targeted pupil(s) in the presence/knowledge of their parents/guardians.
- The Class Teacher/Principal/member of the Anti-Bullying Team does not apportion blame but rather treats bullying behaviour as behaviour that can and must be remedied. She/he emphasises that the intention is not to punish perpetrators but to talk to them, to explain how harmful and hurtful bullying is and to seek a promise that it will stop. If that promise is forthcoming and is honoured there will be no penalty and that will be the end of the matter. Pupils report bullying therefore are not getting others “in trouble” so much as enabling them to get out of trouble into which they may ultimately get if the bullying continued.
- When an investigation is completed and/or a bullying situation is resolved the Class Teacher/Principal/member of the Anti-Bullying Team will complete a report, to include the findings of the investigation, the strategy adopted and the outcome of the intervention, as well as any other relevant information.
- If a pupil has signed such a promise but then chooses to break that promise and continue the bullying behaviour serious sanction may be imposed by the school authorities (See sanctions below).

Sanctions

Where a pupil has been found to be engaged in bullying behaviour, has formally promised to stop and has broken that promise, any of the following sanctions may be imposed:

- She/he may be required to sign another promise, this time countersigned by a parent/guardian;

- Parent(s)/guardian(s) will be contacted again by the Class Teacher/Principal/member of the Anti-Bullying Team and informed of the nature and extent of the bullying behaviour with a view to agreeing a strategy whereby a promise to end the bullying behaviour would be honoured;
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) will be invited to a meeting with the Class Teacher/Principal/member of the Anti-Bullying Team and the pupil may be suspended from school.
- The case will be referred to the Board of Management and the pupil may be expelled from the school.

The school is obliged to report all incident of bullying behaviour to the Board of Management. All documentation regarding bullying incidents and their resolution is retained securely in the school.

7. The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows:

- Bullied pupils:
 - Ending the bullying behaviour
 - Changing the school culture to foster more respect for bullied pupils and all pupils
 - Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through the awareness-raising programme
 - Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through the speedy identification of those responsible and speedy resolution of bullying situations
 - After resolution, enabling bullied pupils to complete a victim-impact statement
 - Where possible, making adequate counselling facilities available to pupils who need it in a timely manner
 - Helping bullied pupils raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that help develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school)
 - Implementing a "buddy system" in the school (if applicable),

- Bullying pupils:
 - Make it clear that bullying pupils who reform are not blamed or punished and get a “clean sheet”.
 - Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are doing the right and honourable thing and giving them praise for this,
 - Making adequate counselling facilities available, where possible, to help those who need it learn other ways of meeting their needs besides violating the rights of others,
 - Helping those who need to raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school),
 - Using learning strategies throughout the school and the curriculum to help enhance pupils’ feelings of self-worth,
 - In dealing with bullying behaviour seeking resolution and offering a fresh start with a “clean sheet” and no blame in return for keeping a promise to reform.

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. The Board of Management confirms that the school will, in accordance with its obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps as are reasonable and 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.

Communication and Ratification

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 16th June, 2014.

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 of Education and Skills and to 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 and provided to the Parents' Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available to the Department of Education and Skills and to the patron if requested.

Appendix 1

Bullying can take a number of forms. These may include any of the following (this list is not exhaustive):

- **Repeated aggressive behaviour/attitude/body language, for example:**
 - Shouting and uncontrolled anger,
 - Personal insults,
 - Verbal abuse,
 - Offensive language directed at an individual,
 - Continually shouting or dismissing others,
 - Public verbal attacks/criticism,
 - Domineering behaviour,
 - Open aggression,
 - Offensive gestures and unwanted physical contact.

- **Intimidation, either physical, psychological or emotional, for example:**
 - Treating in a dictatorial manner,
 - Ridicule,
 - Persistent slagging,
 - Deliberate staring with the intent to discomfort,
 - Persistent rudeness in behaviour and attitude toward a particular individual,
 - Asking inappropriate questions/making inappropriate comments re social life or school work

- **Interference with property, for example:**
 - Stealing/damaging books or equipment
 - Stealing/damaging clothing or other property
 - Demanding money with menaces
 - Persistently moving, hiding or interfering with property
 - Marking/defacing property

- **Undermining/Public or Private Humiliation, for example:**
 - Condescending tone

Deliberately withholding significant information and resources

Writing of anonymous notes

Malicious, disparaging or demeaning comments

Malicious tricks/derogatory jokes

Knowingly spreading rumours

Belittling others' efforts, their enthusiasm of their new ideas

Derogatory or offensive nicknames (name-calling)

Using electronic or other media for any of the above (cyber bullying)

Disrespectfully mimicking a particular individual in his/her absence

Deliberately refusing to address issues focusing instead on the person

- **Ostracising or isolating, for example:**

Deliberately marginalising an individual

Deliberately preventing a person from joining a group

Deliberately preventing from joining in an activity, schoolwork-related or recreational

Blaming a pupil for things she/he did not do.