

St Laurence O' Toole's Special School

Anti- Bullying Policy

Rationale

It is one of the most significant aims of this school to create a happy, safe and caring environment so that our students may be encouraged to develop their confidence and self- esteem, thus enabling them to reach their full potential. This can only be achieved in a harmonious environment that is free from bullying. The co-operation of management, staff, students and parents is vital to the successful instilling of these values.

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. Laurence O' Toole's Special 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 pupil.;**

- **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.

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 this definition of bullying and should be dealt with, as appropriate, in accordance with the school's code of behaviour.

However, in the context of these procedures 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.

A single incident can have a serious effect on a pupil and may also constitute harassment which is legally prohibited in schools under equality legislation. Harassment is any form of unwanted conduct related to any of the nine discriminatory grounds (gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community).

Negative behaviour that does not meet this definition of bullying will be dealt with in accordance with the school's code of behaviour.

Types of Bullying

The following are some of the types of bullying behaviour that can occur amongst students:

- **Physical aggression: This behaviour includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping people. It may also take the form of severe physical assault.**

- **Intimidation:** Some bullying behaviour takes the form of intimidation: it may be based on the use of very aggressive body language with the voice being used as a weapon. Particularly upsetting can be a facial expression which conveys aggression and/or dislike.
- **Isolation/exclusion and other relational bullying:** This occurs where a certain person is deliberately isolated, excluded or ignored by some or all of the class group. This practice is usually initiated by the person engaged in bullying behaviour and can be difficult to detect. It may be accompanied by writing insulting remarks about the pupil in public places, by passing around notes about or drawings of the pupil or by whispering insults about them loud enough to be heard. Relational bullying occurs when a person's attempts to socialise and form relationships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined. One of the most common forms includes control: "Do this or I won't be your friend anymore"(implied or stated); a group ganging up against one person; non-verbal gesturing; malicious gossip; spreading rumours about a person or giving them the "silent treatment".
- **Cyber-bullying:** This type of bullying is increasingly common and is continuously evolving. It is bullying carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as text, social network sites, e-mail, instant messaging (IM), apps, gaming sites, chat-rooms and other online technologies. Being the target of inappropriate or hurtful messages is the most common form of online bullying. As cyber-bullying uses technology to perpetrate bullying behaviour and does not require face to face contact, cyber-bullying can occur at any time (day or night). Many forms of bullying can be facilitated through cyber-bullying. For example, a target may be sent homophobic text messages or pictures may be posted with negative comments about a person's sexuality, appearance etc.
 - **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. Often name-calling of this type refers to physical appearance, e.g., 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. There are those who are singled out for attention because they are perceived to be weak academically. At the other extreme there are those who, because they are perceived as high achievers, are also targeted.
- **Damage to property:** Personal property can be the focus of attention for bullying behaviour. This may result in damage to clothing, mobile phone or other devices, school books and other learning material or interference with a student's locker or bicycle. 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.

- **Extortion: Demands for money may be made, often accompanied by threats (sometimes carried out in the event of the targeted pupil not delivering on the demand). A student may also be forced into theft of property for delivery to another who is engaged in bullying behaviour.**

The above list is not an exhaustive list of bullying behaviours.

4. The relevant teacher/ staff for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows:

All members of the school community have an obligation to report incidents of bullying. Students may report an incident of bullying in the following ways:

- **Direct approach to a Teacher, SNA, Youth worker, Bean an Ti, Deputy Principal, Principal**
- **A note from a student or parent/guardian handed to a teacher.**
- **A phone call by a parent/guardian or student to the Teacher or Principal in the school**

Incidents of bullying behaviour, no matter how trivial, which are drawn to the attention of a teacher, will be dealt with by the relevant member of staff e.g.: Principal, Deputy Principal, Teacher.

Non-teaching staff e.g. SNA, Caretaker, Bean an Ti, are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, to the appropriate member of staff.

5. 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:

- **Promoting the Anti-Bullying Policy**

Staff

- **All staff share a collegiate responsibility, under the direction of the Principal to act in preventing bullying and harassment by any member of the school community. Teachers will regularly emphasise the importance of raising issues of concern with their Teacher or Principal.**
- **Provision of guidelines for staff in dealing with reports of bullying.**
- **Student Support is in place in the school. It includes:**
 - **development of strategies that will help prevent bullying.**
 - **monitoring of the issue of bullying**

- awareness-raising around the issue of bullying amongst students, staff and parents . organisation of training of staff in the area of anti-bullying . ongoing monitoring, evaluation and review of the anti-bullying policy
- Teachers encourage students to be inclusive in their activities.
- Staff, students and parents are made aware of expectations around conduct and respect through regular conversations on this topic.
- The Anti-Bullying Policy is available in each classroom in the school.
- Regular reminders of the Anti-Bullying Policy are given to students in SPHE class.

Students

- Prominent presence of materials throughout the school highlighting the importance of fostering a warm, inclusive and bullying-free school environment.
- Students are familiar with the school's Code of Conduct which promotes respect for self, others and other people's property.
- Staff, students and parents are made aware of expectations around conduct and respect through regular conversations on this topic.
- The Anti-Bullying Policy is available in each classroom in the school. ● Regular reminders of the Anti-Bullying Policy are given in the SPHE class ● Provision of support for students by Teachers, Youth Worker and Principal

Parents/Guardians

- Provision of information about bullying at initial interview meetings with incoming students' Parents and other suitable opportunities during the school year
- Staff, students and parents are made aware of expectations around conduct and respect through regular conversations.
- The Anti-Bullying Policy is available to all parents.
- Parents/guardians and the wider community are invited to assist in promoting a consistent message against bullying across home, school and community.

Inclusion of Anti-Bullying Education in the Curriculum

- **Social Personal and Health Education class is timetabled as part of the Junior Cycle core curriculum. SPHE provides students with opportunities to develop the skills and competencies to care for themselves and others and to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives and social development. The issue of bullying is dealt each year in each class.**
- **Opportunities are taken to educate students on bullying when they arise in other subjects and activities.**
- **The informal curriculum also provides opportunities to promote awareness of the unacceptable nature of bullying and they have at their core the aim of encouraging the development of responsible and caring attitudes in students.**

Fostering a Positive School Culture and Climate:

- **Modelling 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.**
- **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.**
- **Having a system of encouragement to promote desired behaviour and compliance with the school rules and routines.**
- **Promoting the appropriate use of social media.**
- **Mobile phone use is prohibited during the school day and at school events. Internet use is limited to class time and is authorised under direction from teachers. There is follow up and follow through with pupils who ignore these rules.**
- **Actively promoting the right of every member of the school community to be safe and secure in school.**

- **Highlighting and explicitly teaching school rules in student friendly language in the classroom and around the school building.**
- **All staff actively watching out for signs of bullying behaviour.**
- **Ensuring there is adequate supervision at all times.**

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 are as follows:

(a) The primary aim for the relevant teacher 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);

(b) In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher will exercise his/her professional judgment to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved.

(c) All reports will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. In that way students will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It is made clear to all pupils that when they report incidents of bullying, they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.

(d) Parents and students 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.

(e) It is very important that all involved (including each set of students and parents) understand the above approach from the outset.

(f) Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by students, staff or parents.

(g) Incidents are generally best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.

(h) All interviews should be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all students concerned. Students who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this way.

(i) 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.

(j) Where a group of students is affected by a bullying incident, 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.

(k) 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 should 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 students.

(l) Where the relevant teacher has determined that a student has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to him/her how she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts should be made to try to get her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied.

(m) Where the relevant teacher has determined that bullying has taken place, a verbal warning will be given to the perpetrator to stop the inappropriate behaviour, pointing out how she is in breach of the Code of Behaviour and helping her to see the situation from the victim's point of view. This may involve a meeting between both or all parties if they are willing.

(n) It must also be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parents) 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.

(o) 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. This can have a therapeutic effect.

(p) 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 by the relevant teacher in the recording template at Appendix 1 and appropriate sanctions will be imposed.

(q) Sanctions may include:

- An agreement of good behaviour**
- Withdrawal of privileges e.g. participation in school trips, events**
- Other sanctions as may be deemed appropriate:**
- Suspension**
- Expulsion**

(r) In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant teacher must, as part of his/her professional judgment, 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; and

. Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the school Principal or Deputy Principal.

(s) Those affected by bullying may be referred to the youth worker for support / intervention.

(t) Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures.

(u) In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

(v) In the case of a complaint regarding a staff member, this should be referred immediately to the Principal.

Procedures for recording bullying behaviour

The Board of Management ensures that the school has clear procedures for the formal noting and reporting of bullying behaviour and these must be documented in the school's anti-bullying policy. All records must be maintained in accordance with relevant data protection legislation. The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour must adhere to the following:

(i) While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying are investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the relevant teacher will use his/her professional judgment in relation to the records to be kept of these reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same.

(ii) 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.

(iii) The relevant teacher must use the recording template at Appendix 1 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; and

b) where the relevant member of staff deems a particular incident or repetition of an incident(s) to be of such a serious nature that it merits the immediate completion of a recording template (Appendix 1) and reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable.

In each of the circumstances at (a) and (b) above, the recording template at Appendix 1 must be completed in full and retained by the teacher in question and a copy provided to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable. It should also be noted that the timeline for recording bullying behaviour in the recording template at Appendix 1 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.

Referral of serious cases to the HSE

In relation to bullying in schools, Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011 (Children First) and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools provide that in situations where "the incident is serious and where the behaviour is regarded as potentially abusive, the school must consult the HSE Children and Family Social Services with a view to drawing up an appropriate response, such as a management plan".

Serious instances of bullying behaviour should, in accordance with the Children First and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, be referred to the HSE Children and Family Services and/or Gardai as appropriate.

The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools also provide that where school personnel have concerns about a child but are not sure whether to report the matter to the HSE, the Designated Liaison Person must seek advice from the HSE Children and Family Social Services.

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

The Principal and Youth Worker are available to support all parties affected by bullying. During this/these session(s), the situation is monitored, and students may access support in rebuilding relationships, developing self-esteem, resilience and implementing positive coping strategies.

In cases where the school has serious concerns in relation to managing the behaviour of a pupil, the advice of the National Education Psychological Service (NEPS) will be sought.

Throughout the academic year, opportunities are provided in which students may develop self-esteem, resilience, and positive relationships in both the informal and formal curriculum. (see section 5)

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 was adopted by the Board of Management on _____ [date].

11. This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the parents on request. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

12. This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Chairperson of Board of Management

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Principal

Date of next review: _____