

St. Mary's N.S.
Church Street, Templemore, Co. Tipperary. E41 F596

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. Mary's National 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
 - 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
 - explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including homophobic and transphobic bullying.
- Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils
- Support 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 bullying 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 or other minority groups 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/image 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.

Additional information on different types of bullying is set out in Section 2 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

4. The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying is (are) as follows: (see Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):

- Class teacher (if incidents occurring in class)

The following groups should inform the school staff of instances of bullying they have heard or witnessed (Discretion is important): pupils/parents/guardians/teachers/non-teaching staff – caretaker/cleaner/SNA/school secretary, Board of Management.

Reports of bullying are noted on Aladdin, the principal will be informed and the report investigated and dealt with by teachers. **Please see appendix 3**

Class teachers will investigate instances of bullying by: investigating, speaking to the bully and victim separately, interviewing-calmly and sensitively. In unresolved cases, the Principal will be informed and if the issue remains unresolved, the Board of Management are informed. **Please see appendix 4**

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 outlined in Section 6.5 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* - 6.5 Implementation of education and prevention strategies including awareness raising

PREVENTION/EDUCATION

We have an "Acceptable Internet Use" School Policy which all parents sign.

- Learning strategies should be used to enhance the children's self-esteem e.g. Stay Safe Programme, RSE Programme, Circle Time etc.
- Staff will constantly be vigilant in supervision, while being aware of behaviours which may indicate bullying.
- Pupils must understand that reporting is not "telling tales". They should be taught to assess their reason for reporting and the importance of reporting and understand the difference between reporting and "telling tales."

6. The schools 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 (see Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary schools*)

Child to Child Bullying

Stage One

Unless the incident is of a very serious nature, it will be dealt with by the classroom teacher who will talk to the children involved. Teachers respect the need to support the esteem of each party involved in an incident. When a teacher becomes aware that a child is regularly reported to be involved in incidents the teacher will start a record of such incidents. The purpose of this record is:

- To gather facts pertaining to alleged incidents
- To aid memory by recording details of the incident
- For clarity in assessment of the situation
- For planning and intervention

Prior to a record of incidents being kept, parent(s) will be informed and updated when appropriate. Should the investigation conclude that bullying has taken place we proceed to stage two.

Stage Two

The Principal will meet with the parents of the child who is alleged to be bullying and separately with the parents of the alleged victim of bullying. The children themselves may be required to attend part or all of these meetings. At these meetings, corroborated facts (i.e. proved through evidence gathered and/or witnessed) are established. When/if facts are established and agreements reached, we proceed as below.

A 6 week programme following restorative practice guidelines will be set up with the help of the SET teacher for all the children involved to:

- a) Encourage dialogue
- b) Identify problematic behaviour
- c) Anger management skills
- d) Communication skills
- e) Empathy, impulse control and other skills to help them in this situation.

This programme is intended to promote positive behaviour, but does not exclude the appropriate sanctions as outlined in the Code of Behaviour and samples are:

Minor misdemeanours:

- Verbal reprimand
- Reasoning with pupils
- Noting instance of misbehaviour on Aladdin.

Regular occurrences of minor misdemeanours

- Write an account of what happened – to be signed by parents
- Write school rules - to be signed by parents
- Note in homework journal – to be signed by parents
- Temporary separation from peers
- Incident form filled in – signed by parents
- Sending to another teacher
- Denial of participation in some class activity
- Warning to pupils
- Note to parents concerning further misbehaviour

At the conclusion of the programme a short update will be provided for all parents involved emphasising positive behaviours and progress made. The monitoring record begun in Stage 1 will be maintained. Any punishments or discipline measures are a private matter for the family of the child punished.

Stage 3

It is the duty of the school to provide a safe environment for all the children. Should the above interventions fail and the bullying continues, a programme of appropriate sanctions may be implemented by the Principal in consultation with the parents and Board of Management. Sanctions implemented aim to encourage positive behaviour and support the esteem of the child. These sanctions may include a period of suspension during which there will be ongoing consultation with the parents to decide on appropriate action(s) to be taken in the best interests of all the children. Suspension for any period of time, will be reported in writing by the Principal to the Chair of the Board of Management.

Samples of sanctions for mis-behaviours as per our Code of Behaviour. These are separate from the Anti-Bullying procedures.

Extract from St Mary's Code of Behaviour

Examples of Serious Misdemeanours

- Constantly disruptive in class
- Telling lies
- Stealing
- Damaging other pupil's property
- Bullying
- Back answering a teacher
- Frequenting school premises after school hours without appropriate permission
- Leaving school premises during school day without appropriate permission
- Using unacceptable language
- Bringing weapons to school
- Deliberately injuring a fellow pupil

Examples of steps to be taken when dealing with serious misdemeanours

- Send to Principal
- Principal sends note in Journal to be signed by parent
- Principal meets with one/both parents
- Chairperson of Board of Management informed and parents requested to meet with Chairperson and principal

At the conclusion of the programme a short update will be provided for all parents involved emphasising positive behaviours and progress made. The monitoring record begun in Stage 1 will be maintained.

7. The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows (see Section 6.78. of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools):

- Our Stage 1 and 2 interventions include support for pupils affected by bullying. Our S.P.H.E. programme includes self-esteem and anti-bullying strategies.

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 practical 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

- This policy has been made available to school personnel, is readily accessible to parents and pupils on request and provided to the Parents' Association.
- A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

Monitoring and Review

Notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, be readily accessible to parents and pupils on request and provided to the Parents' Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Appendix 4 Checklist for Anti Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary schools for annual review of the anti-bullying policy and its implementation will be completed yearly by the Board of Management.

Review and Evaluation

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once every two years. Next review will be Summer term 2025.

Policy Ratified on: 16/05/23.

Signed: Gordon Bradish
(Chairperson)

Signed: Kathleen Bane
(Acting Principal)

