

Anti-Bullying Policy for St. Patrick's National School, Bruskey



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 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; 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.

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.

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*):

The relevant teachers will normally be the class teachers, but may also include the In-School Management team (Principal, Deputy Principal, Teachers with Special Duties).

Other teachers who may investigate and deal with bullying include any teacher who has witnessed an incident of concern – for example, while supervising the school yard or on the corridor.

Occasionally, substitute teachers and ancillary staff (eg SNAs and Secretary) may also be required to assist with investigations.

- 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 (see Section 6.5 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):**
1. A close eye should be kept on any signs of bullying at home or in school.
 2. A record should be kept on all types of bullying that occur.
 3. Pupils will be reminded regularly that bullying of any sort is never tolerated in school.
 4. Every effort should be made to create a positive atmosphere in the school, and to encourage cooperation.
 5. Constant monitoring will be kept in place.
 6. At home and in school, emphasis will be placed on activities to enhance the child's self-esteem and self-image through positive communication and praise where due.
 7. At school children will learn methods to avoid and resolve bullying e.g. It will be explained to children how to conduct themselves in different situations, and how to get support from others: e.g. learning appropriate social behaviour and manners; using "I" statements like "I want you to stop", and assertive, but not aggressive behaviour.
 8. Children will be encouraged to "Tell", ie to tell true friends, parents or adults they can trust and who can support them.
 9. Teachers can choose from a menu of bullying resolution methods that he/she finds suitable to the particular situation in his/her class.
 10. The school will provide numerous resources to help with the anti-bullying policy e.g. Religious Education, Assembly Reminders, S.P.H.E., Walk Tall, Parents, Code of Behaviour, Artwork, Websites(listed at end of policy) visiting speakers, Amnesty International Friendship-Promoting resources, etc.
 11. The school will organise an annual Anti Bullying Week / Friendship Week in order to promote awareness and to minimise bullying in our school and locality. Activities may include posters, art, slogans, poetry, pledge, worksheets, song, drama, questionnaires, DVDS
8th – 12th September 2014 will be the initial Anti-Bullying Week.
 12. Parents will have access to the School Anti Bullying policy, which will include advice on social media and useful relevant websites.
 13. Parents will be informed continually of the prevention strategies in use in the school; parents will also be provided regularly with information on counteracting Cyber-Bullying.
 14. The school will avail of the many resources and speakers available on the very pertinent issue of Cyber-Bullying – eg. liaison with Gardaí, etc.
Garda Cathal Buggy & Garda Una Comiskey visited the school on 19th March 2014. They offered follow-up support to parents if needed.
 15. Children will be taught that collusion in bullying is wrong, unacceptable and cowardly. Those who collude are partially culpable also. Bystanders will be encouraged to avoid collusion, support the victim and to prevent bullying, as peers have a major influence on each other.
 16. Learn the "BE SAFE BE SMART" rules for social media interaction.
 17. A culture of responsibility for each other will be promoted throughout all classes, particularly with senior pupils, who will be encouraged to look out for other pupils and to report any concerns to a responsible adult.
 18. A culture of inclusivity will be fostered in the school, to encourage acceptance and positive integration of those from all backgrounds, gender, race, orientation, religion, etc.
 19. To aid the prevention of bullying involving pupils with Special Educational Needs, focus will be placed on Social Skills and Effective Communication Strategies. Assistance will be sought, where necessary, from other educational personnel – eg Psychologists, Occupational Therapists, Speech & Language Therapists, etc.

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 (see Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):

Given the complexity of bullying behaviour it is generally acknowledged that no one intervention works in all situations. International and national research also continues to evolve in this area and the effectiveness of particular approaches continues to be reviewed.

Procedures for Noting & Reporting Incidents:

1. If anyone has concerns about a child being bullied, they should inform the class teacher as soon as possible.
2. The teacher should investigate the matter, giving the child/children an opportunity to discuss the matter, as appropriate.
3. Bullying reports from parents, children or teachers should be kept by the staff member(s) concerned.
4. It should be made clear to the child/children reporting the bullying that they are acting responsibly.
5. Parents will be informed as necessary – eg if incidents are deemed by school staff to be of a serious or continuous nature.
6. An incident sheet should be kept by the class teacher which states the date, time, place, pupils involved, details and action taken and this should be signed by the teacher and this sheet should be returned to the office if deemed necessary by the teacher.
7. When the class moves on, the next teacher should be discreetly informed of any problems that existed.
8. A confidential record of serious incidents will also be kept in the school files of the pupils involved for future reference.

7. Investigating & Dealing with bullying - guidelines for pupils & adults:

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. Such incidents are often best investigated outside the classroom situation to avoid the public humiliation of the victim or the pupil engaged in bullying behaviour.

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.

- 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.
- If a group is involved, each member should be interviewed individually and then the group should be met together. Each member should be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone is clear about what everyone else has said.
- If it is concluded that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to her/him how s/he is in breach of the Code of Behaviour and Discipline and try to get her/him to see the situation from the victim's point of view. This aims to help the alleged perpetrator to move on.
- Each member of the group should be helped to handle the possible pressures that often face them from other members after interview by the teacher.
- Teachers who are investigating 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.
- In cases where it has been determined that bullying behaviour has occurred; meet with the parents or guardians of the parties involved as deemed appropriate by the principal. Explain the actions being taken 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.
- Often a follow-up meeting will be arranged separately with each party involved, with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date if the victim is ready and agreeable. This can have a therapeutic effect.

Possible Steps to Follow if Being Bullied:

The most appropriate response will depend on the situation and on the individuals involved. Advice should always be sought from a responsible adult.

A) Act as confident as you can; Face him/her/them; Look at them eye to eye; tell them to stop; remain calm; move away.

B) Don't hit out. (You may get hit worse, get blamed or feel more embarrassed)

C) Fogging: If called names, teased, 'slagged', try laughing it off. Use a neutral phrase to show you're not bothered and you don't care e.g. Ye right.....So what?.... Who cares? etc Don't let them see you're hurt. Don't give bully ammunition that he's/she's succeeding in upsetting you. Pretend you don't care and that you're not hurt.

D) Tell your friends and people you trust about what's going on how you feel. Ask them to stand up for you against the bully. Ask them to come with you to the teacher/parent/responsible adult if you're afraid.

E) Be assertive (not aggressive); you have the right to stand up for yourself! I don't like you calling me a Stop it. I don't like when you take my stuff. Don't do it. Stop hitting, taking, pushing, or I'll tell the teacher/principal /mam etc.

F) Learn to say "No" if being pressurised into doing something you do not want to do. No, I don't want to go the field. No, I won't take it. No, I don't want to have a smoke.

G) Broken Record. Keep saying same thing to reinforce a point if put under pressure e.g. "No. I told you I don't want to go there. I'm not going".

J) Bystanders: This is the most successful way in the senior end of primary school to influence/prevent bullying. Children will be strongly encouraged to stand up and be counted and do the right thing.

K) Parents are requested to inform the school as soon as possible if they have been made aware of any information of concern.

Intervention Approaches for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying and Cyber bullying

We suggest the following strategies for use both at school and in the home, as bullying is not confined to one place. Intervention is critical. Depending on the particular situation, strategies may be chosen from the menu below. (Based on "Bullying Intervention in School" by Ken Rigby.) The examples below are in no particular order.

1. Traditional Approach – teacher intervention when bullying is brought to light
2. Mediation Approach – used when bully and victim agree to mediation
3. Restorative Practice Approach - used to restore damaged relationships between individuals/groups
4. Method of Shared Concern – used where bullies have been identified.

- See Appendix 8 for a detailed explanation of each intervention.

N.B. In extreme cases of bullying, a Disciplinary Approach will be required, possibly involving the Gardaí and/or the Social Services.*

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 11-06-2014.
11. This policy has been made available to school personnel, and provided to the Parents' Association. 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. Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, 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.