

Anti Bullying Policy

1. Rationale

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 Mochta'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 the Primary and Post-Primary Schools which were published in September 2013.

2. Key Principles

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.
- 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. **Definition of Bullying**

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 (SEN).

Isolated or once-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour, including a once-off offensive or hurtful text message or private messaging, do not fall within the definition of bullying and should be dealt with, as appropriate, in accordance with the schools code of behaviour.

However, in the context of this policy, placing a once-off offensive or hurtful 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. **The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying is (are) as follows:-**

- 1. Class Teacher and/or All Learning Support/Resource Teachers**
- 2. Deputy Principal**
- 3. Principal**

Any teacher may act as a relevant teacher if circumstances warrant it.

5. 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):

The school will utilise a range of education and prevention strategies to encourage good behaviour and discourage bullying. We will seek to develop a positive school culture in the following ways:

- Model respectful behaviour to all members of the school community at all times.
- Explicitly teach pupils what respectful language and respectful behaviour looks like, acts like, sounds like and feels like in class and around the school.
- Display key respect messages in classrooms, in assembly areas and around the school and involve pupils in the development of these messages.
- ‘Catch them being good’ – notice and acknowledge desired respectful behaviour by providing positive attention.
- Consistently tackle 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.
- Give constructive feedback to pupils when respectful behaviour and respectful language are absent.
- Have a system of encouragement and/or rewards to promote desired behaviour and compliance with the school rules and routines.
- Teach pupils and/or parents about the appropriate use of social media.
- Positively encourage pupils to comply with the school rules on mobile phone and internet use.
- Actively involve parents and/or the Parents Association in awareness raising campaigns around social media.
- Actively promote the right of every member of the school community to be safe and secure in school.
- Highlight and explicitly teach school rules in pupil friendly language in the classroom, in common areas and at school assemblies.
- All staff will actively watch out for signs of bullying behaviour.
- As self-esteem is a major factor in determining behaviour, we will, through both our curricular and extra-curricular programmes, provide pupils with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth.
- We will raise pupils’ awareness and understanding of bullying, including its causes and effects, taking particular account of the needs of pupils with disabilities or with SEN. Approaches to decreasing the likelihood of bullying

for pupils with SEN will include improving inclusion, focusing on developing social skills, paying attention to key moments such as transitioning from primary to post-primary and cultivating a good school culture which has respect for all and helping one another as central.

- We will use the elements of the SPHE curriculum which make specific provision for exploring bullying as well as the inter-related areas of belonging and integrating, communication, conflict, friendship, personal safety and relationships. The Stay Safe programme is a personal safety skills programme which seeks to enhance children's self-protection skills including their ability to recognise and cope with bullying.
- We will use all subjects to foster an attitude of respect for all - to promote the value of diversity, to address prejudice and stereotyping and to highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour.
- Good supervisory and monitoring measures will be put in place both to prevent and deal with bullying behaviour.
- The Board of Management will make appropriate arrangements to ensure that temporary and substitute staff has sufficient awareness of the school's Code of Behaviour and its Anti-Bullying policy.
- Consistent investigation, follow up and recording of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies)
- School will look into sourcing age appropriate materials for each form of bullying.
- The school is currently following the Seán Fallon Anti-Bullying Programme for classes from 2nd to 6th Class.

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):

1. The class teacher will have primary responsibility for investigating alleged cases of bullying. However, dependent on the seriousness of the actions involved, the class teacher may decide to involve the Deputy Principal/ Principal in accordance with our Code of Behaviour.
2. Where an alleged incident of bullying involves students from a number of classes, the class teachers will liaise to carry out the investigation. The primary aim will be to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame).

3. All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying will be investigated and dealt with by the class teacher. In that way pupils will gain confidence in 'telling'. It will 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. In addition non-teaching staff must report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the class teacher. Where there has been a report of an incident during break time involving students in one class the class teacher will investigate.
4. In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved. When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the teacher will seek answers to questions of what, where, who and why. This will be done in a calm manner, setting an example of dealing effectively with conflict in a non-aggressive manner. Fair procedures will apply in all investigations.
5. Where deemed appropriate incidents will be investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure privacy of all involved. Some incidents may need to be investigated discretely in the classroom. 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.
6. Parents and pupils 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.
7. If a group is involved, each member will be interviewed individually at first to allow all parties to relay their "side of the story". Thereafter, all those involved will be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member may be asked his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements.
8. Where appropriate, those involved may be asked to write down their account of the incident(s).
9. In cases where it has been determined by the class teacher that bullying has occurred, the parents of parties involved will be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions taken (by reference to the school policy). The school will give the parents opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports for their pupils.

10. In cases where it has been determined by the class teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the Deputy Principal/Principal will be informed of the details of the investigation.
 11. It will 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 parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school.
 12. 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 will be recorded by the relevant teacher in the recording template. (Appendix 1)
 13. In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant teacher must as part of his/her professional judgement, take the following factors into account:
 - a. Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased
 - b. Whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable
 - c. Whether the relationships between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable and
 - d. Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the school Principal or Deputy Principal.
- Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents will be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures.
 - If having exhausted these procedures the parent is still not satisfied, the school will advise parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows (see section 6.8 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools):

All records must be maintained in accordance with relevant data protection legislation. The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour is as follows:

- (i) The class teacher will use his/her professional judgement in relation to the records to be kept of all reports of alleged bullying, the actions taken and

any discussions with those involved regarding same. He/she will 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.

- (ii) The relevant teacher will use appropriate template to record the bullying behaviour. This form will be passed to the Principal and stored in the Principals office. In cases where the bullying has been resolved the template form will serve as a summary of the investigation (see Appendix 1). However where appropriate additional notes and details will be attached to the form to retain on the pupils file in the front office, particularly in cases where the bullying was not resolved within 20 days of the initial investigation. It should also be noted that the timeline for recording bullying behaviour in this recording template 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.

Code of Behaviour/Referral to Outside Agencies

Bullying behaviour can be part of a continuum of behaviour rather than a stand-alone issue and in some cases behaviour may escalate beyond that which can be described as bullying to serious physical or sexual assault or harassment. Accordingly instances of bullying will be dealt with in tandem with the school's overall code of behaviour of a pupil and the advice of the National Education Psychological Service (NEPS) will be sought.

Serious incidents of bullying behaviour can be part of a continuum of behaviour will, in accordance with Children First and Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, be referred to the HSE Children and Family Services and/or Gardaí as appropriate.

Where school personnel have concerns about a child but are not sure whether to report the matter to the HSE, the Designated Liaison Person (School Principal) will seek advice from the HSE Children and family Social services. (*cf. Children First 'National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011)(cf. Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary School, DES)*

7. Support for Pupils:

The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying (both victims and those involved in the bullying behaviour) is as follows (see Section 6.8 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools):

- Provide opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop their friendship and social skills and thereby build resilience (as per SPHE programme).
- Encourage friendship and small- group team-building exercises focused on affected students.
- Close monitoring of pupils (those bullying and those being bullied) in class/ on yard in the weeks following an incident of bullying.
- Follow up meetings with students following any incident of bullying.
- Pupils who observe incidents of bullying behaviour will be encouraged to discuss them with teachers.
- Niggle Box
- Involvement of student council in contributing to a safe school environment e.g. Buddy system, mentoring, Lunchtime pals and other student support activities that can help to support pupils and encourage a culture of peer respect and support.
- 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.
 - Anti-bully or niggle box?
 - Get a parent(s)/guardian(s) or friend to tell on your behalf.
 - Administer a confidential questionnaire once a term to all pupils.
 - Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place.

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 steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the sexual 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 **8th April 2024**.
11. This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website (or where none exists, is otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parents' Association (where one exists). 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, 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.

This policy is open to review by the Board of Management.

Ratified and signed on behalf of the Board of Management of St. Mochta's National School.



Fiona Smyth
Chairperson



Maria Farrell
Principal

8th April 2024

Date