

Student Anti-Bullying Policy

2014

St. Catherine's Special School

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. Catherine'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 pupils;
 - Supports for staff;
 - Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies); and

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- 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 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 2013'.

4. The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying are the class teachers, the Deputy Principal and the Principal.
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:
 - discrete teaching of the SPHE curriculum, in particular, the Stay Safe programme and RSE programme (as adapted for our school). Education, appropriate to students' age,

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maturity, physical, social and emotional development, around what bullying is and how the school deals with it, takes place. The unacceptability of bullying is addressed through the teaching of and development of: assertive communication skills, skills for building friendships, social skills, identification of feelings and ability to empathise, skills for building of resilience, self-management skills

- development of appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes through integration with other curricular areas
 - skills taught in context (as appropriate)
 - promotion of a positive whole school ethos
 - promotion of positive class atmospheres
 - promotion of a positive sense of self-worth in each student
 - promotion of the value of respect, the value of diversity and of issues of equality
 - the implementation of all relevant school policies: the Student Code of Behaviour, the Student Digital Acceptable Use Policy, the Child Protection Policy and Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools, the **Complaints Policy**
 - the implementation of all relevant staff practice procedures
 - effective **supervision and monitoring** of students
 - non-teaching staff must report observations to relevant class teachers
 - students are encouraged to report observations to relevant class teachers
 - parents/guardians are encouraged to inform the relevant class teacher of their concern
 - staff training on Child Protection, information / training on Child Abuse Prevention through Education and on Dealing with Bullying
 - temporary and substitute staff are made aware of the Student Code of Behaviour and the Anti-Bullying Policy
 - parent information on Child Protection and on the RSE and Stay Safe programmes is provided
 - raising awareness among teachers of appropriate educational materials, online supports and available resources
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:

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Procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying

- 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)
- 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
- all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying, must 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 should be made clear to all that when they report incidents of bullying they are behaving responsibly
- non-teaching staff must report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher
- 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
- it is very important that all involved (including each set of pupils and parents) understand the above approach from the outset
- teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by students, staff or parents
- incidents are generally best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved
- all interviews should be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all concerned. Students who are not directly involved may also provide useful information
- 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
- if a group is involved, each member should be interviewed individually at first. (If class teacher deems it necessary they may ask the Principal or Deputy Principal to be present). Thereafter, all those involved may be met as a group, if appropriate. At the group meeting, each member should be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements

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- each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that they may face them from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher
- it may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down / draw their account of the incident(s)
- 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 the students
- where the relevant teacher has determined that a student has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts should be made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the student being bullied
- a course of action is decided on. A no-blame approach is tried in the first instance. Interaction protocols and rules are re-iterated and supported appropriately, for example, social stories / visual supports may be devised. An apology may be sought / given. Educational strategies may include teaching of skills that were identified as lacking (on both sides). Environmental strategies such as changing of seating plan may be employed. Where necessary, alternate strategies may need to be considered / employed. Support from other departments may be sought
- bullying behaviour must be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal by the relevant teacher. The relevant teacher must use the 'Template for Recording Bullying Behaviour' (the original of which is to be found at Appendix 3 'Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools' 2013) to record the bullying behaviour. This record must be retained by the teacher in question and a copy provided to the Principal.
- the relevant teacher must provide the Principal with a weekly written progress record using the 'Template for Recording Bullying Behaviour' until it is determined that the bullying has ceased
- it must also be made clear to all involved (each set of students and parents) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the student being disciplined, his or her parents and the school
- 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 student who has been bullied is ready and agreeable. This can have a therapeutic effect

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- 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 the relevant teacher must, as part of his/her professional judgement, 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
 - 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 must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures
- 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

Procedures for recording bullying behaviour

All records must be maintained in accordance with relevant data protection legislation. The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour will adhere to the following:

- while all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the relevant teacher will use his/her professional judgement in relation to the records to be kept of these reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same
- 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

the relevant teacher must use the 'Template for Recording Bullying Behaviour' (the original of which is to be found at Appendix 3 'Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools' 2013) to record the bullying behaviour. Bullying behaviour must be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal

The 'Template for Recording Bullying Behaviour' (the original of which is to be found at Appendix 3 'Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools' 2013) must be completed in full and retained by the teacher in question and a copy provided to the Principal.

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Bullying as part of a continuum of behaviour

It is also important to note that 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. To ensure that any such cases are dealt with appropriately, the school's anti-bullying policy provides appropriate linkages with the overall code of behaviour and provide for referral to be made to relevant external agencies and authorities where appropriate. In cases where a school has serious concerns in relation to managing the behaviour of a pupil, the advice of the Behaviour Support team and / or the Psychology department may be sought.

Referral of serious cases to the HSE (CFA)

In relation to bullying in schools, Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011 and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2011 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* and / or the Gardaí (as appropriate) with a view to drawing up an appropriate response, such as a management plan”. (*as of 1-1-2014 Tusla: the Child and Family Agency (CFA)).

Serious cases of bullying will, in accordance with the Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011 and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2011, be referred to the CFA and / or An Garda Síochána, as appropriate.

The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2011 also provide that where school personnel have concerns about a child but are not sure whether to report the matter, the Designated Liaison Person must seek advice from the HSE Children and Family Social Services (as of 1-1-2014 Tusla: the Child and Family Agency (CFA)).

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

- identification of and naming how the student who was being bullied is feeling now and practise of what to do if bullying happens again is done using active learning methodologies incorporating, in particular, role-play, visual supports and social stories
- identification of ways of meeting the needs of the student who was doing the bullying and implementation of supports, for example, visual reminders and self-management strategies to help them meet their needs without violating the rights of others
- teaching of skills that are identified as lacking (both parties)
- class / group / individual discussion
- extra support from teacher / class team

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- extra support may be sought from the psychology department if deemed necessary
- co-operation between parent and teacher
- informal links with others involved with student, for example, the bus escort, to ensure they receive extra support from them as needed

Students should understand that there are no innocent bystanders and that all incidents of bullying behaviour must be reported to a teacher.

8. Supervision and Monitoring of Students

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. This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on _____ .

10. 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.

11. 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.

Signed: _____ Signed: _____

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(Chairperson of Board of Management)

(Principal)

Date: _____

Date: _____

Date of next review: _____

This Policy was ratified by the Board of Management on the 4th of December 2014.

The Policy will be reviewed every two years.