



St. Michael's House Special National School

Raheny

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

1. In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the code of behaviour guidelines issued by the National Education Welfare Board (NEWB) , the Board of Management of St. Michael's House Special National School (SMH SNS) 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. This policy focuses solely on bullying that involves pupils who attend SMH SNS.
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:
 - provides a caring, friendly and safe environment for all of our students so they can learn in a relaxed and secure atmosphere
 - 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 in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying, when appropriate

- 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.

This anti-bullying policy operates in conjunction with the SMH SNS Code of Behaviour and together these policies recognise the individuality of each child's needs to be accommodated while at the same time acknowledging the right of every child to education in a disruption free environment.

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*.

Bullying can be:

Emotional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being unfriendly, name calling, excluding • Tormenting e.g. hiding books, threatening gestures • Passing on malicious gossip • Excluding another child from play, social activities or class work
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Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence
Verbal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing, taunting, 'slagging'
Cyber	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All areas of internet, such as email and internet chat room misuse • Mobile threats by text messaging and calls, social networking • Misuse of associated technology, i.e. camera and video facilities
Identity Based Behaviours Including any of the nine discriminatory grounds mentioned in Equality Legislation (gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community).	
Homophobic and Transgender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spreading rumours about a person's sexual orientation • Taunting a person of a different sexual orientation • Name calling e.g. Gay, queer, lesbian...used in a derogatory manner • Physical intimidation or attacks • Threats
Race, nationality, ethnic background and membership of the Traveller community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discrimination, prejudice, comments or insults about colour, nationality, culture, social class, religious beliefs, ethnic or traveller background • Exclusion on the basis of any of the above
Sexual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unwelcome or inappropriate sexual comments or touching • Harassment

Bullying is usually distinguished from friendly teasing or conflict situations. SMH SNS differentiates between these two as outlined by the following:

- Typical peer conflict situations involve:

Equal power between students
 Students involved may be friends
 Negative actions don't follow a pattern
 Conflict not premeditated and no real intention to cause harm
 Followed by sincere remorse
 Interest in repairing relationship
 Both students play active role
 Students may be supported by other peers
 There is an intention to resolve a situation.

- Bullying involves:

Imbalance of power between students
 No real friendship between students
 Negative actions are repeated

Actions are purposeful and possibly premeditated
 Bully shifts blame, no sincere remorse
 No interest in repairing relationship
 Incident is one-sided
 Target is alone without peer support
 Intention is to gain power, control, or items.

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

- All class teachers
- Principal (Deputy Principal, in his/her absence)
- Progressing Disabilities Service (PDS) clinicians will be called upon when dealing with bullying, if required.

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

5. The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and trans phobic 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*):

School – wide approach

- A school wide approach that fosters respect, trust, care, consideration and support for all members of the school community. Creating a positive school culture and climate.
- Promoting tolerance, understanding, respecting and accommodating people's differences.
- Planned transition times between different activities, lessons, etc.
- Explicit teaching of what behaviours and actions that constitute being a good friend.
- Choosing groups and teams in lessons to prevent pupils being left out or bullied.
- Examining good dynamics.
- Providing positive role models and celebrating positive behaviour.
- Monitoring the use of communication technology within the school.
- Awareness of cyber bullying and tackling same when appropriate. Parental permission required for use of their child's photographs and/or video footage on school's social media, website or other outside organisation's websites etc deemed appropriate by the school.
- Structure yard times so that particular pupils can be given their own space if required, using their classroom or other school facilities i.e library, hall etc if available.
- Explicit teaching of acceptable and unacceptable ways of expressing feelings, how the behaviour can affect others, calming down as an alternative to expressing their anger and frustration inappropriately.

- Recognising pupil's individual achievements in the area of social interactions and reinforce them through the use of praise and rewards, Junior and Senior Pupil of the month.
- Because of the difficulties with 'reading' social situations, students with a moderate general learning disability need to be taught how to distinguish between bullying and accidents or misunderstandings e.g. using Social Stories.
- Where appropriate, the inclusion of SPHE targets in the pupil's Individual Education Plan, aimed at establishing and maintaining positive peer relationships.
- Identifying of risk times and places and adequate supervision and monitoring at this time. Places include classrooms, corridors, stairwells, school grounds, school tours, school buses and areas of unstructured activities. Non-teaching and ancillary staff will be encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers.
- Distributing the school's anti-bullying policy to all new parents/ guardians when their child is enrolling into the school.
- Implementing regular whole school measures e.g. encouragement of peer to peer relationships, friendship week, planned group activities to foster friendship for instance, girls/boys club etc. Class rules will be established in September. Rules will be few, simple and easy to understand.
- Encouraging a culture of telling or reporting incidents of bullying. Pupils should know that when they report incidents of bullying they are behaving responsibly.
- Ensuring that all pupils know who to tell and how to tell, e.g. teacher, SNA, parent/guardian, and witnesses. Non-verbal pupils will be facilitated by using visual supports and Lamh.

Implementation of Curricula

- The full implementation of the SPHE curriculum and the RSE and Stay Safe Programmes.
- Extended SPHE/Personal Care and Wellbeing/ social skills curriculum e.g. pupils learn about their own strengths and areas where they need support, writing stories/ poems or drawing pictures about bullying, reading stories about bullying, making up role plays, having discussions about bullying and why it matters, discussing scenarios 'What if...'
- Development of social skills through PE, Music, Drama, Language and Communication and Visual Arts.

Links to other Policies

- The following policies are relevant to bullying: Code of Behaviour, Child Protection Policy, Bus Supervision and Yard Supervision, Internet Safety/ Acceptable Use Policy, RSE Policy, Pupil Wellbeing Policy, Data Protection Policy, Parent – School Communication Policy.

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*):

The primary aim in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationship of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame).

Stage One

PARENTAL CONCERN

Any pupil or parent/ guardian may bring an alleged bullying incident to a teacher in the school. Should a parent/guardian have any concerns, which need to be discussed with the relevant teacher, all staff members are more than willing to facilitate such a meeting. Parents can liaise with the relevant teacher using the agreed communication method for example email or Seesaw or make a call to the school office to arrange a convenient time for all parties involved. This arrangement ensures that all concerns are dealt with in a dignified, meaningful manner, without infringing on valuable teaching time.

As it is a serious accusation to make against a child, the school requires a signed 'statement' from a parent/ guardian who believes their child is being bullied. This statement should include as much detail as possible relating to who, when, where, and what happened over a period of time. Parents will be advised in writing that the alleged perpetrators' parents need to be told and may be given a copy of the statement. A copy of this statement may then be presented to the parent(s) of the alleged perpetrator.

All reports will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. Teaching and non-teaching staff such as SNA's, secretary, bus escorts, kitchen staff and cleaners must report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher.

PARENT AND/OR SCHOOL STAFF CONCERN

Teachers respect the need to support the esteem of each party involved in an incident. When the relevant teacher becomes aware that a child is regularly involved in incidents he/she will start a record of such incidents/ reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding it. These will be recorded in the Green class folder or in a class notebook for confidential information.

The purpose of this record is:

- To aid memory by recording details of the incident
- For clarity in assessment of the situation
- To identify behaviour and assess frequency and seriousness of the situation
- For planning and intervention
- To support both the perpetrator and victim

- To use as the basis for future discussions with the parents of both children

The teacher will investigate and act appropriately as per procedures. If the relevant teacher suspects that bullying occurred, the Principal/Deputy Principal should be informed.

Parents of those involved should be notified and given an opportunity to discuss the matter with the relevant teacher.

If not too serious, the situation could be monitored for a while.

Victim and alleged perpetrator to be treated seriously and with fairness.

If the situation is serious and is continued for a time, then the Principal will send a Communication Form to the Children's Disability Network Team in the Progressing Disability Services (PDS).

Direct contact between parents of both children will be encouraged and facilitated by the school. However it must be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parents/guardians) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parents/ guardians and the school.

The relevant teacher will continue to monitor the situation and talk to victim and perpetrator(s) periodically and speak to parents.

The relevant teacher will repeat the discussion with class (es) about rights, responsibilities, by using role-play, etc.

A record should be kept of how the matter was handled and the outcome. When the class moves on, the succeeding teacher should be informed of any problems.

INVESTIGATING A REPORT OF BULLYING

Stage One

Staff investigating a report of bullying will adopt the following:

- A calm, unemotional, problem solving approach
- Incidents are best investigated outside of the classroom situation
- Teachers will speak separately to the children involved
- Parents will be informed where it has been determined that bullying has occurred
- Once the bullying of the child has ceased, the teacher will check with the child on a regular basis that no further difficulties have arisen.

Should the action taken at this stage prove not to have resolved the issue, the staff will proceed to stage two.

Stage Two

The Principal will arrange to meet with the parents of the child who is seen to be bullying and separately with the parents of the victim of bullying. In the event that a Communication Form has been sent to PDS then an appropriate clinician will be invited to attend the meeting. The co-operation of parents is essential.

The children themselves may be required to attend part or this entire meeting. The child who is bullying will be placed on report. This means that school staff monitors the child's behaviour in all areas during the day.

The child has on-going meetings with his/her teacher and together they agree a review for that day. All positive behaviour, progress on work etc. will be noted. At the end of the day, the teacher writes his/her own comment. The purpose of this report is to focus as much as possible on the positive qualities and efforts of the child, and to motivate the child to move away from negative behaviour.

Initially a review of the reports will be carried out on a weekly basis, in a meeting with the Principal, teacher, parents and child. If progress is being made, longer intervals between meetings may be decided upon. The co-operation of parents is essential.

The child who is the victim of bullying will also meet with the Principal and his/her parents. The aim of such a meeting(s) will be to address the child's emotional needs and devise strategies for the child to deal with the bullying. This may involve reinforcing the programme being covered in class, or other strategies.

If the situation is not resolved, the Principal will inform the Board of Management.

Stage Three

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 3.

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:

- Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased,

- Whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable,
- Whether the relationship between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable,
- Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents/guardians or the school Principal or Deputy Principal.
- Where a parent/ guardian is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parent/guardian must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures.
- In the event that a parent/guardian has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parent/ guardian of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

The relevant teacher must use the recording template at **Appendix 3** 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 school has decided as part of its anti-bullying policy that in certain circumstances, i.e. cyber bullying, bullying behaviour must be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable.
- When the recording template is used, it must be retained by the relevant teacher in question in the classroom green folder and a copy maintained by the principal. At the end of the year, this is then placed in the pupil's file in the secretary's office.
 - All serious instances of bullying behaviour should be reported to the HSE or the Designated Liaison Person may consult with the HSE if unsure whether to make a report or not.

When a case of bullying has been brought to the attention of the Board of Management, any resolution or final actions will also be reported to them.

Established Intervention Strategies

- Teacher interviews with all pupils
- Negotiating agreements between pupils and following these up by monitoring progress. This can be on an informal basis or implemented through a more structured mediation process
- Working with parents/ guardians to support school interventions
- No Blame Approach
- Circle Time

7. 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*):

Help, support and counselling will be given as is appropriate to both victims and the bullies.

We will support the **victim** in the following ways:

- By offering them an immediate opportunity to talk about experience with their class teacher, or another teacher if they choose.
- By informing the victim's parents/ guardians.
- By offering continuing support when they feel they need it.
- By offering opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem.
- By providing learning strategies that allow for the enhancement of the pupil's self worth.
- By consulting with the PDS team to discuss coping strategies.
- By taking one or more of the disciplinary steps described below to prevent further bullying.

We will also discipline, yet try to help and support the **bully** in the following ways:

- By talking about what happened to discover why they became involved
- Informing their parents/ guardians
- By continuing to work with them in order to get rid of prejudiced attitudes as far as possible.
- Consult with the PDS team to discuss strategies to modify behaviour.
- Establishing the function of the behaviour (i.e. attention, escape, intrinsic reinforcement or access to a tangible object) in order to put in place appropriate consequences on the child's Behaviour Plan.
- Support the individual pupil by teaching the child new ways to express themselves.
- Parents/ guardians will be informed to ensure the consistency of the Behaviour Plan between home and school to promote a generalised approach.

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. The following areas have been identified as hot spots for bullying in our school:

- Playground
- Blind spot at side of school
- Stairs
- Corridors
- Buses

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 15th December 2021.
11. This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and is readily accessible to parents 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.
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 when ready and will be accessible to parents 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.

Signed: 
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: 
(Principal)

Date: 5/12/23

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Date of next review: **December 2024**