

School Position on Bullying

The St. Joseph's National School community believes that each pupil has a right to an education free from fear and intimidation.

The school regards bullying as a serious infringement of individual rights and a serious threat to the self-esteem and self-confidence of targeted pupil(s). Therefore, it does not tolerate bullying of any kind.

Every report of bullying is treated seriously and dealt with, having due regard for the wellbeing of the targeted pupil(s) and the perpetrator(s).

It is vital that all staff endeavour to cultivate an environment free from bullying.

The immediate priority, should a bullying incident occur, is ending the bullying, (*thereby protecting the person(s) being targeted*) and resolving the issues and restoring the relationships involved insofar as is practicable using a "Reform, not Blame" approach.

All pupils are expected to contribute to the creation and maintenance a safe environment in the school. On becoming aware of any bullying situation, in or outside the school, involving members of the school community they should notify a trusted responsible adult. Bullying behaviour is too serious not to report.

Pupils' participation in school life in general is encouraged through existing school structures. Awareness of bullying, and willingness to take action to prevent or stop it, is part of this participation.

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 (BOM) of St. Joseph's National School has adopted the following **Anti-Bullying Policy** within the framework of the school's overall code of behaviour. The 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 BOM 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 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 whole 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, investigating and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies); and
- Ongoing 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 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, bullying based on a person's membership of the travelling 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 will be dealt with in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour Policy.

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 Policy.

4. The relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying are the relevant class teacher(s) and/or Principal/Deputy Principal (any teacher may act as a relevant teacher if circumstances warrant).

5. The education and prevention strategies used by the school are as follows:

Creation of a culture of “telling”.

- Teachers should repeatedly reinforce the message that if anyone is the victim of bullying behaviour that they should tell an adult. Children should be reassured that if they tell, they will be heard and that something will be done about the bullying in a safe manner and that all reported incidents will be dealt with.
- Bystanders can be the key to resolving bullying issues, and if anyone witnesses bullying behaviour, they should always tell a teacher. This is not “telling tales”, but a means of preventing bullying behaviour.

Raising awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour by:

- Displaying the school’s Anti-Bullying Statement outside the office and in other prominent places around the school environment.
- Remind the classes regularly of what to do when confronted with bullying.
- Engaging in formal teaching within the class through the anti-bullying module of SPHE and also the RE programme.
- Creating an annual awareness week i.e. “Friendship Week”. This will involve discussion, anti-bullying games, promoting positive behaviour and poster/slogan competitions: bullying surveys in 1st to 6th class etc. Formal programmes of work are a vital element in raising children’s self-esteem and equipping children to cope with bullying behaviour e.g. Walk Tall, RSE, Grow in Love, Webwise, Stay Safe, Anti-Bullying guidelines etc.
- Informal programmes are also vital such as positive reinforcement by teachers (Child of the Week, Golden Time, spot prizes, behaviour charts, class dojo etc.)

Other strategies

- Modeling of respectful behaviour and language by teachers and staff.
- Promotion of extra-curricular activities which encourage co-operation among pupils (to extend this beyond sport).
- Rewarding incidents of good and improved behaviour and showing acts of kindness at class level and whole-school through recognition and awards/Child of the Week at each assembly etc.
- Encouraging students to look out for each other and to be responsible for their own behaviour.
- All teachers are required to be vigilant on yard duty, record all incidences (see Incident Report Sheet) and monitor repetitive issues.
- Immediate verbal affirmation of children who report incidents of bullying they have witnessed.
- Each class to have a set of class rules which are compliment with the school's Code of Behaviour.

- Ensure supervision at all times when pupils can access the internet.
- Sanctions for unauthorised use of the internet/electronic devices will be imposed as per the Code of Behaviour and AUP.
- All teachers to do a lesson on internet safety.

6. The school's procedure for investigation, follow up and recording of bullying behaviour and the established intervention strategies used by the school for dealing with cases of bullying will be on a staged basis and are as follows:

Stage 1

All reports of bullying must be dealt with initially by the relevant teacher. If the incident occurs on yard the witnessing staff member writes an account of the incident in the Yard Book and brings the incident to the attention of the class teacher.

In the case of a child witness, the child completes the **Pupil Incident Observer Report Form** (*child witness will be supported in completing the form*) and the teacher on duty forwards the form to the relevant class teacher.

- When a pupil tells a teacher s/he is being bullied, it is important to gather all of the facts from both sides (What, where, when, who, why?).
- In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher will exercise his/her professional judgment to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best to resolve the situation.
- The aim for the class 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*).
- All sides are listened to separately, wherever possible, and notes may be taken.
- Any notes taken will be brief, factual and should be void of emotional, or judgmental language.
- Instances are investigated outside the classroom, where possible, to avoid public humiliation, apart from **Regular Class Surveys and Pupil Incident Observer Sheets** which are usually done in class.
- Following a **Regular Class Survey**, a teacher may feel the need to ask another member of staff to supervise the filling in of **Pupil Incident Observer Sheets** in another room, or may ask another teacher to supervise their class while they supervise the filling in of these forms (Senior classes).
- All interviews should be conducted with sensitivity and with due regards to the rights of all pupils concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this way. (See Anti- Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools p.6/8/9 and p's 30/31) for further suggestions.
- Where possible, a witness is present.
- It is explained to the alleged bully how hurtful their behaviour is and attempts are made to encourage them to empathise with the alleged victim.

Steps for Dealing with an Alleged Bullying Incident

- If an allegation of bullying has been made, or if a staff member feels that there may be an issue, a **Regular Class Form B1** for Senior Classes or **Form B1(a)** for Junior Classes should be administered.
- If an incident merits further investigation, a **Pupil Incident Observer Report, Form B2** may be used in Senior Classes.
- When the information is collated, it may be decided that either (a) it is an isolated incident or (b) Bullying may have occurred. If the case of (b), an **Alleged Bullying Interview Sheet B3** and a **Bullying Behaviour Checklist B3a** should be used.
- Should the teacher deem that bullying has occurred, the principal/deputy principal will be consulted.
- **At this stage a Bullying Behaviour Record Sheet must be filled in and submitted to the principal/Deputy Principal.**
- The relevant parents/guardians will be informed.
- The pupil will fill in a **Pupil Behaviour Promise Form *which must be signed by the pupil and teacher***

Stage2

If this child breaks promise and re-offends then the Deputy Principal or Principal with the class teacher will interview the child/children again. It is explained to them that this is their second time offending and that they have not committed to their promise. Again attempts will be made to resolve the situation. Once more students will sign a further "Pupil Behaviour Promise Form". This time this has to be signed by their parents. They are now advised that if they break this promise again, they will have a meeting with the Principal and their parents in the office and could face sanctions.

- Parents and pupils are required to co-operate with any investigations and assist the school in resolving any issues and restoring, as far is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved as quickly as possible.
- Information spoken about should not become available, so that the victim would be further tormented. (i.e. need to know basis)

Another Bullying Behaviour Record Sheet must also be submitted to the Principal/Deputy Principal.

Stage 3

If a child breaks their promise twice then the matter is referred to the Principal. The Principal meets with the child and the parents/guardians. Procedures in line with the school's Code of Behaviour will be invoked. Sanctions, up to and including Suspension or Expulsion may be invoked. The case may be referred to the board of management and the board will follow NEWB guidelines regarding expelling and/or expulsion.

Another Bullying Behaviour Record Sheet must also be submitted to the Principal/Deputy Principal.

Recording of incidents

All incidents will be logged by class teacher and incidents which have been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days will be recorded by the class teacher on the Bullying Behaviour Record Sheet (as in Appendix 3 of Anti-Bullying Policy taken from Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools). This template will be completed in full and a copy given to the Deputy Principal or Principal. At least once every school term the Principal will provide a report to the BOM setting out the overall number of bullying cases reported by means of this template and confirmation that all cases are being dealt with in accordance with procedure.

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

Incidents of bullying can extend beyond the school and the journey to and from school is one which can provide particular opportunities for bullying to occur. In certain cases, it may be necessary to invite assistance from formal agencies such as Gardaí (J.L.O.), Health Board, Local Youth Groups etc.

- The school will remind parents of the dangers of "cyber-bullying" as can happen with the use of social networking sites and mobile phones. We also direct their attention to the school's internet Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) (to be carried out as part of Stay Safe Week).
- The school cannot be responsible for disagreements between pupils that happen outside the school grounds but will make reasonable efforts to cooperate with parents in assisting them to resolve the issues.

8. Supervision and Monitoring of pupils

The BOM 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 BOM 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 Travelling community.

10. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the policy

The evaluation of the policy will happen on both an informal (through teacher

observation) and formal basis (use of surveys and questionnaires).

Success Criteria:

- Positive feedback from teachers, parents and pupils.
- Well-being and happiness of the whole school community in the light of incidents of bullying behaviour encountered and fewer problems in the yard.

11. This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parent's Association. A copy of the policy will be made available to the Department and patron if requested.

12. This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the BOM 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 and provided to the Parent's Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and to the Department.

Ratification

This Anti-Bullying Policy was adopted by the Board of Management on

_____.

Signed: _____
Chairperson of BoM

Signed: _____
Principal/Secretary to the BoM

Date: _____

Date: _____