



St Catherine's National School
Donore Avenue
Dublin 8

Tel: 01 4542679
stcatherinesns@gmail.com
www.stcatherinesns.net

Anti-Bullying Policy

Introduction

In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act and the Code of Behaviour guidelines issued by the NEWB, the Board of Management of St Catherine's National School has adopted the following anti-bullying policy within the framework of the school's 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.

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 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.

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.

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*.

Procedures and Protocols

1. The relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with any allegation of bullying are as follows:
 - The class teacher(s) of any of the children involved,
 - The Principal or Deputy Principal.

The Learning Support / Resource Teacher of any children involved, if they attend Learning Support / Resource, will be consulted and informed of any allegations. All staff, both teachers and SNAs, will also be informed so that they can monitor the children in question in the playground, on corridors, etc., when on supervision duties.

2. 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:
 - An Anti-Bullying week once every academic year, covering all forms of bullying in an age-appropriate way;
 - An especial emphasis will be placed on training “bystander” children to intervene in bullying or potential bullying situations, in an appropriate way;
 - The Stay Safe programme will be taught every year to all classes;
 - A workshop for senior classes on cyber-bullying every year;
 - Regular circle time in all classes (at least once a month) to enable children to share worries, develop empathy and practise social skills;
 - Resources such as theatre group workshops (e.g. Sticks and Stones) will be used when appropriate;
 - Story-books encouraging respect for and acceptance of a variety of family structures and situations (e.g., same sex parents, single parents, shared custody, adopted / foster children, children in care, etc.) will be available in the class libraries and will be used by teachers when teaching on the theme of family;
 - Children’s use of ICT will be monitored very closely. No child will be permitted to access social media individually while at school;
 - Parents will be asked to sign a form when their children are enrolling to say that they are aware that children should not be accessing social media sites until they are at least thirteen years old;
 - Mobile phones may be brought to school, but must be switched off for the duration of the school day and on the school premises. The same rules apply to school tour and field trip situations.
 - A clear Tell-An-Adult policy regularly reinforced at school assemblies and in the classroom;
 - Anti-bullying posters will be permanently on display;
 - Children are organised into house-teams led by 6th class pupils, so all children have access to senior pupils who can act as “big brothers/sisters”;
 - A locked post-box will be provided for children to encouraged them to let staff know about any problems, anonymously or otherwise.

3. 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:
 - The relevant teachers referred to above will investigate any allegations of bullying behaviour. These allegations may come from parents, children, members of staff or anyone who witnesses behaviour they consider to be bullying on the school premises. Investigation will involve speaking to the child(ren) who is / are alleged to have been bullied, the child(ren) who is / are alleged to have engaged in bullying behaviour, and any potential witnesses. Such interviews will be held in a respectful manner, acknowledging the right of all involved to a fair hearing, while making it clear that the allegation is being treated as a serious matter.
 - If bullying is found to have taken place, the investigating teachers will fill out a standard Bullying Report form as provided in Appendix 3 of the Department of Education Guidelines. These reports will be kept in a confidential file in the school until all involved have reached the age of 21.
 - The parents of both the child(ren) who has / have been bullied and the child(ren) who has / have engaged in bullying behaviour will be informed about the results of the investigation, as will all members of staff.
 - The parents of children who have engaged in bullying behaviour will be invited to discuss the behaviour and consulted as to suitable consequences.
 - The relevant teachers will hold meetings separately with the child(ren) who has / have been bullied and the child(ren) who has / have engaged in bullying behaviour, with a view to repairing the relationship and enabling all children involved to continue happily in the school. The child who has engaged in bullying behaviour will be asked to apologise to the child who has been bullied and to think of ways in which s/he could make it up to the him / her. Any suggested "atonement" actions which have been agreed upon should be followed through, and the relevant teachers should check that they have been done.
 - The relevant teachers will use their judgement as to whether the children who have engaged in bullying behaviour should also receive a school sanction such as a white card or other consequence. This will depend on many factors including the ages of the children involved, the seriousness of the bullying behaviour, the previous behaviour record(s) of the child(ren) who has / have engaged in bullying behaviour, the sincerity of any remorse shown and expressed, and whether the issuing of a sanction would have a positive effect, in the considered opinion of the teachers involved.
 - The parents of both the child(ren) who has / have been bullied and the child(ren) who have engaged in bullying behaviour will be advised that counselling may be helpful to their children, and a list of counselling agencies and child psychologists / therapists will be provided.
 - In serious cases of bullying, and where school interventions have not proved effective, the HSE will be informed of the incidents and of the ongoing concerns of the school with regard to the child(ren) involved.
 - If the school authorities become aware of an incident of cyber-bullying which occurs outside school hours but involves the bullying of a child or children in our school by another or other pupils, this will be treated as though it had occurred in school-time. Parents will be informed and appropriate sanctions will be imposed if warranted. Children who persist in cyber-bullying, and whose parents do not take steps to deal with the issue, may be excluded from the school permanently as we regard this as very serious misbehaviour.

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

- Children will be offered the opportunity to talk through what happened with a staff member they trust. They will be told that at any time in the future they can ask to speak to this adult and s/he will make time for them.
- Children whose victimisation is perceived to have happened because their social skills are immature will be given the opportunity to develop those social skills in a small group. This will be facilitated by the SEN team in conjunction with the class teacher.
- The parents of children who have been bullied will be advised that counselling is sometimes necessary. They should monitor their children carefully for signs of anxiety, withdrawal, depression etc., and should seek professional help if necessary.
- The parents of children who have been found to have engaged in bullying should also be advised of the possible need for counselling, especially if the bullying was serious and if the child was the ring-leader, and / or the child is displaying other anti-social behaviours.
- A list of child psychologists and therapists will be maintained at the school for parents to consult.
- If necessary, the school will seek professional guidance and support from the NEPS psychologist assigned to the school and / or the Anti-Bullying Unit in TCD.

5. 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.

6. Prevention of Harassment

The Board of Management confirms that the school will, in accordance with its obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps as 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 in equality legislation, i.e., gender including transgender, civil status, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.

7. Review

An annual review of the anti-bullying policy and its implementation will be carried out by the Board of Management towards the end of each academic year.

8. Date of Adoption

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

9. Communication of the Policy

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and is otherwise easily accessible to parents and pupils 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)

Signed: _____ (Principal)

Date: _____

Date of next review: _____