ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

ST MARY'S SPECIAL SCHOOL, DRUMCAR

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 of St Mary'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. Our school caters for children with significant learning difficulties. Our pupils have staff supervision at all times throughout the school day including transport to and from school. In general inclination to and incidents of bullying can therefore be minimized and/or monitored much more than in a mainstream school. However, notwithstanding this Anti Bullying policy is in place to address any possibility of bullying which might arise in school.

3. The Board of Management recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of these involved 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 -
        o is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity
        o encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment and
        o 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 –
        o build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils and
        o explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and trans-phobic 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.

4. 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.

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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.

TYPES OF BULLYING

The following are some of the types of bullying behaviour that can occur:

Physical Aggression:
This behaviour includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping people up. It may also take the form of severe physical assault. While some students may engage in 'mess fights', these can often be used as a disguise for physical harassment or inflicting pain.

Intimidation:
Some bullying behaviour takes the form of intimidation: it may be based on the use of very aggressive body language with the voice being used as a weapon. Particularly upsetting can be a facial expression which conveys aggression and/or dislike.

Isolation/exclusion and other relational bullying:
This occurs where a certain person is deliberately isolated, excluded or ignored by some or the entire class group. This practice is usually initiated by the person engaged in bullying behaviour and can be difficult to detect. It may be accompanied by writing insulting remarks about the pupil in public places, by passing around notes about or drawings of the pupil or by whispering insults about them loud enough to be heard. Relational bullying occurs when a person's attempts to socialise and form relationships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined. One of the most common forms includes control: "Do this or I won't be your friend anymore" (implied or stated); a group ganging up against one person (boy or girl); non-verbal gesturing; malicious gossip; spreading rumours about a person or giving them the silent treatment.

Name-Calling:
Persistent name-calling directed at the same individual(s) who hurts, insults or humiliates should be regarded as a form of bullying behaviour. Often name-calling of this type refers to physical appearance e.g. size or clothes worn. Accent or distinctive voice characteristics may attract negative attention. Academic ability can also provoke name-calling. This tends to operate at two extremes. There are those who are singled out for attention because they are perceived to be weak academically. At the other extreme there are those who, because they are perceived as high achievers, are also targeted.

Damage to property:
Personal property can be the focus of attention for bullying behaviour. This may result in damage to clothing, mobile phone or other devices, school books and other learning material or interference with a pupil's locker or bicycle. The contents of school bags and pencil cases may be scattered on the floor. Items of personal property may be defaced, broken, stolen or hidden.

Extortion:
Demands for money may be made, often accompanied by threats (sometimes carried out in the event of the targeted pupil not delivering on the demand). A pupil may also be forced into theft of property for delivery to another who is engaged in bullying behaviour.

Cyber-bullying:

As this is a special school the vast majority of our pupils present with significant learning difficulties and are unlikely to use social media or the internet independently. However, our pupils Parents have the extra responsibility of supervising their child's access to social media as well as being very careful with how they use social media themselves (see school parental behaviour).

This type of bullying is increasingly common and is continuously evolving. It is bullying carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as text, social network sites, e-mail, instant messaging (IM), apps, gaming sites, chat-rooms and other online technologies. Being the target of inappropriate or hurtful messages is the most common form of online bullying. As cyber-bullying uses technology to perpetrate bullying behaviour and does not require face-to-face contact, cyber-bullying can occur at any time (day or night). Many forms of bullying can be facilitated through cyber-bullying. For example, a target may be sent homophobic text messages or pictures may be posted with negative comments about a person's sexuality, appearance, etc.

Examples of Bullying Behaviour

Cyber	**Denigration**: Spreading rumours, lies or gossip to hurt a person's reputation
	• **Harassment**: Continually sending vicious, mean or disturbing messages to an individual
	• **Impersonation**: Posting offensive or aggressive messages under another person's name
	• **Flaming**: Using inflammatory or vulgar words to provoke an online fight
	• **Trickery**: Fooling someone into sharing personal information which you then post online
	• **Outing**: Posting or sharing confidential or compromising information or images
	• **Exclusion**: Purposefully excluding someone from an online group
	• **Cyber stalking**: On- going harassment and denigration that causes a person considerable fear for his/her safety
	• Silent telephone/mobile phone call
	• Abusive telephone/mobile phone calls
	• Abusive text messages
	• Abusive email
	• Abusive communication on social networks e.g. Facebook/ Ask.fm/ Twitter/You Tube or on games consoles
	• Abusive website comments/Blogs/Pictures
	• Abusive posts on any form of communication technology

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	• Spreading rumours about a person's sexual orientation • Taunting a person of a different sexual orientation • Name calling • Physical intimidation or attacks • Threats
Race, nationality, ethnic background and membership of the Traveller community	• 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.
Relational	• Malicious gossip • Isolation & exclusion • Ignoring • Excluding from the group • Taking someone's friends away • "Bitching" • Spreading rumours • Breaking confidence • Talking loud enough so that the victim can hear • The "look" • Use or terminology such as 'nerd' in a derogatory way
Sexual	• Unwelcome or inappropriate sexual comments or touching • Harassment
Special Educational Needs, Disability	• Name calling • Taunting others because of their disability or learning needs • Taking advantage of some students' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to recognise and defend themselves against bullying • Taking advantage of some students' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to understand social situations and social cues. • Mimicking a person's disability • Setting others up for ridicule

4.

> The relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying are
>
> **Kevin Toale**, School Principal and
>
> **Declan McCoy**, Deputy School Principal.

5.

EDUCATION AND PREVENTION STRATEGIES

ALL MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY IN THE PREVENTION OF BULLYING

Board of Management

The Board of Management is responsible for ensuring that all members of the school community are enabled to deal effectively with bullying. The Board is committed to providing time and resources for the implementation of the policy. The Board will ensure that proper supervisory and monitoring measures are in place to prevent bullying and to deal with incidents appropriately as they arise. The BOM undertakes to formally review the anti-bullying policy annually.

School Staff

The school staff will foster an atmosphere of friendship, respect and tolerance. Student's self-esteem will be developed through celebrating individual differences, achievements, acknowledging and rewarding good behaviour and manners and providing opportunities for success throughout the curriculum and school. A positive affirmation programme is in operation within St Mary's Special School, including Discipline for Learning (DFL), Special Merit Awards and Golden Time. Teachers will help pupils to develop empathy by discussing feelings and trying to put themselves in the place of others. Relationships with pupils will be based on mutual respect and trust so that pupils will have confidence in the school staff.

The formal curriculum of the school will also be used to educate all pupils against bullying behaviour. Anti-bullying issues may be raised through the school religion programme, the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Programme, the Stay Safe Programme, the Arts and / or Circle Time.

Pupils

Pupils are expected to be tolerant and to have mutual respect for each other. Pupils should report incidents of bullying to their Parents / Carers and teachers. Pupils involved in ongoing bullying behaviour will be referred to the Programme Support Team for support.

Parents / Carers

Encourage positive behaviour and discourage negative behaviour both at home and at school. Encourage children to solve difficulties without resorting to aggression. Encourage children to share, to be kind, to be caring and to be understanding towards others. Watch out for signs and symptoms that your child is being bullied or is bullying others. Don't dismiss your instincts as being wrong. Discuss the school's anti-bullying policy with your child. Support the school in its efforts to prevent and deal with bullying. Parent/Carers must never identify or name any other pupil or staff member of St Mary's Special School on any social media or public forum without their express permission.

> Read and discuss the 'Anti-Bullying Policy' Information for Parents / Carers / Guardians (enclosed leaflet) with your son / daughter.

INITIATIVES WITHIN THE SCHOOL TO ENCOURAGE AND FACILITATE THE REPORTING OF BULLYING INCIDENTS

- Display laminated guidelines on Bullying and Golden Rules in each classroom / area and discuss regularly with students where appropriate.
- Information sheet on cyber-bullying for Parents.

- Information pack on social networking for parents/carers.
- Staff will be vigilant and proactive in areas where bullying might take place.
- Staff will respond sensitively and caringly to students who disclose incidence of bullying.
- Anti-bullying issues may be raised through the School Religion Programme, the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Programme, the Stay Safe Programme and Circle Time.
- Friendship groups
- Speech and Language, Drama and Art Classes will be used to assist students to report bullying incidents against themselves or others where appropriate.

6.

PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING AND INVESTIGATING BULLYING INCIDENTS

Bullying incidents should be reported to the class teacher, supervising teacher, special needs assistant or any member of the programme staff for investigation. The reporting may be done by the pupil, parent or friend.

St Mary's Special School has a Code of Behaviour (separate policy) which states that every incident of bullying will be investigated and recorded. An Incident Sheet (Appendix 1) is to be filled out by a member of staff; the original Form will be kept in the Bullying / Serious Offence Folder, which is in every class and area. A copy of the Incident Sheet will be forwarded to the School Principal.

The School Principal investigates all Incident Sheets. If deemed necessary, Parents / Carers or guardians will be contacted by the principal and may be required to come in. The incident will be referred to the school BOM. A copy of the St Mary's Special School Code of Behaviour is published on the school website and available to Parents/Carers on request. St Mary's Special School will strive at all times to ensure that the ethos of the school is one of caring and listening.

GENERAL STAFF GUIDELINES FOR DEALING WITH REPORTS OF BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

Staff Member:
- Take all incidents seriously, no matter how trivial they may seem.
- Stay calm and listen. Avoid leading questions. Check that you have understood – repeat back to the pupil for clarification.
- Keep a record on *Record of Incident of Bullying Behaviour* at the time with the pupil's permission or privately afterwards.
- Do not promise confidentiality, but assure the pupil that only those who need to know will be told and forward incident sheet to school principal.

School Principal:

- Don't jump to conclusions. Investigate as widely as possible, especially among 'hangers-on' and observers. Be aware that an apparent 'hanger-on' can be a ring-leader.
- Ask the pupil if they have ideas as to how the bullying may be stopped.
- Often written accounts by the pupil can be helpful.
- Make a definite arrangement to speak again, even if nothing is to be done in the meantime.
- Talk about other topics also, if appropriate.
- Consult with other members of staff
- Avoid behaving in a bullying or aggressive fashion yourself.
- When dealing with the perpetrator, be non-judgemental, concentrate on the actions and not the person. Offer support but don't tolerate bullying.
- Reassure him or her, and yourself, that just because we can't do everything does not mean that we cannot do anything.
- There are varying methods of dealing with bullying situations featured in the literature in the Resource Room/Library. These include advice on, for example, how to skill the 'victim', assertiveness and role-play, how to boost self-esteem, the use of body language, eye contact and breathing.
- Report all bullying incidents to the School Board of Management.

7.

RESPONDING TO BULLYING

Support will be provided to anyone who is bullied by offering them an immediate opportunity to talk about their experience with their teacher or other staff member, along with continuing support when they feel they may need it. They will be assured that the school community will help them and put monitoring procedures in place to safeguard them.

Any pupil who is involved in retaliation against a pupil who reports bullying will be subject to the school Code of Discipline. Incidents of bullying will be used as opportunities for re-enforcing the anti-Bullying Policy of the school. Follow-up meetings may be arranged to assess progress and / or restore relationships.

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 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.

Incident Report

Date of Incident: **Time of Incident:**

Name of Child:

Adults Present:

Description of Incident: (include location of incident)

Action taken:

Any further preventative action needed:

Signed: _____   Date: _____

Signed: _____   Date: _____

Signed: _____   Date: _____

Signed: _____   Date: _____

Signed: _____   Date: _____

Kevin Toale

Kevin Toale

Conor Sparks

Conor Sparks

8/12/2022

Date

8/12/2022

Date