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Anti-Bullying Policy

Introduction

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 Paul's N.S. 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. It outlines how these guidelines should be implemented in St Paul's N.S. in order to ensure the protection and welfare of both the pupils and staff. It aims to produce a safe and caring environment in which all pupils can develop to their full potential.

Key Principles of Best Practice in Preventing and Tackling Bullying Behaviour

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 whole-school 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.
- ensure the SPHE programme, including Stay Safe, RSE and Webwise are implemented at all class levels.
- 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.

Aims

The aims of this Anti-Bullying Policy are:

- To foster a school ethos of mutual respect and self-respect.
- To create a school atmosphere which encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To raise awareness in the school community that bullying is unacceptable behaviour.
- To develop procedures for noting and reporting incidents of bullying.
- To develop procedures for investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To support all those affected by and involved in bullying behaviour.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the school policy on bullying.

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*.

Bullying may take many different forms such as physical aggression, damage to property, theft of property, extortion, intimidation, abusive telephone calls, isolation, name calling, threatening remarks, intimidating gestures, writing notes, emailing or texting. Bullying is persistent over time and it may be difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves.

It is important not to confuse bullying with isolated incidents of aggressive or anti-social behaviour, which must not be condoned. However, when the behaviour is systematic and ongoing it becomes bullying.

Signs which may suggest Bullying:

- Anxiety about school, refusal to attend.
- Unexplained changes in mood and behaviour.
- Deterioration in performance, concentration, effort and enthusiasm.
- Physical complaints – headaches, tummy aches.
- Visible signs of anxiety – stammering, not eating, nightmares, not sleeping.
- Out-of-Character comments about teachers or pupils.
- Missing/Damaged possessions.
- Stealing or requesting money.
- Unexplained cuts or bruises.

These signs do not necessarily mean that a person is being bullied, but if ongoing and occurring in combination, they do warrant investigation in order to establish what is affecting the person.

Roles and Responsibilities:

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 help prevent bullying and to deal with incidents appropriately as they arise.

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.

At each Board of Management meeting the Principal will provide a report to the Board of Management setting out:

- the overall number of bullying cases reported (by means of the bullying recording template at **Appendix 2**) since the previous report to the Board and
- confirmation that all cases have been or are being dealt with in accordance with the school's anti-bullying policy and the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary schools*.

The minutes of the Board of Management meeting must record the above but in doing so must not include any identifying details of the pupils involved.

School Staff

School staff will endeavour to implement preventative strategies through education and the promotion of positive behaviour.

The school staff will foster an atmosphere of friendship, respect and tolerance. Pupils' 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. 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 the pupils will have confidence in the school staff. Teachers will

be vigilant, respond sensitively and caringly to pupils who disclose incidents of bullying and investigate all disclosed incidents of bullying.

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 programme, the Stay Safe programme, the Webwise Programme, the Arts and 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 and teachers. As per the 'Mobile Phone Policy', pupils must have mobile phones switched off during the school day and may not be used for any purpose on school premises, grounds or during off-site school activities. Pupils are not permitted to access social networks in school.

Parents

Parents should encourage positive behaviour and discourage negative behaviour both at home and at school. Parents should encourage children to solve difficulties without resorting to aggression and encourage children to share, to be kind, to be caring, and to be understanding towards others. They should watch out for signs and symptoms of bullying. Parents should support the school in its efforts to prevent and deal with bullying. Parents have a major role to play in preventing cyber bullying.

Communication between home and school is very important. Ideally, parents, pupils and teachers should form a partnership that will continue to be mutually supportive throughout the pupil's school life.

Procedures for Reporting Bullying Incidents:

Bullying incidents should be reported to the class teacher and/or the supervising teacher for investigation. Any member of the school community may do this reporting. All reported incidents will be investigated and treated, as circumstances require. As a small school, it is essential that all teachers inform each other of any reports of bullying behaviour.

Investigating and Dealing with Bullying:

Teachers should take a calm, unemotional, problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of bullying reported by any member of the school community. Such incidents are generally best investigated outside the classroom to avoid public humiliation of the child being bullied or the child who bullies. All interviews should be conducted calmly and sensitively. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide useful information.

- The school staff will deal quickly, firmly and fairly with any complaints or reports of bullying, involving parents where necessary and will fill out 'The Report of Suggested Bullying Behaviour' (Appendix 1).
- In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher(s) will exercise his/her/their professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred, what type if it has and how best the situation might be resolved.

- In any incident of bullying, the teacher should speak separately to the pupils involved to attempt to get all sides of the story.
- Seek answers to the questions what, where, when, why and who.
- If a group is involved, each member should be interviewed individually and then together, if appropriate.
- Each member should be helped to cope with possible pressure from other members following the interview.
- Teachers investigating bullying should keep a written record of the discussions with these pupils involved.
- It may be helpful to ask pupils involved to write an account of the incident/s.
- Teachers may wish to have another member of staff present during interviews, especially if a very serious allegation has been made.
- If it is concluded that a pupil has been engaged in bullying, it must be made clear to him/her that he/she is in breach of the Code of Behaviour of the school.
- The teacher should attempt to get the child who bullies to empathize with the child who is being bullied.
- In cases where it has been established that bullying has occurred, a meeting may take place with the parents/guardians involved. If so, the action being taken by the school should be explained to them.
- Any pupil who is involved in retaliation against a pupil who reports bullying will be subject to the school's Code of Behaviour.
- Follow-up meetings may be arranged to assess progress and/or restore relationships.
- Written records should be kept of all meetings and all actions taken. These should be kept in the individual pupil files in the office.
- In cases where the Principal and teachers consider that the bullying behaviour has not ceased within 20 school days after it has been determined that bullying behaviour occurred, a Record of Bullying Behaviour (Appendix 2) must be filled in.

If any degree of bullying is identified, help and support will be given as appropriate to both the child being bullied and the child who bullies, and the following action will be taken:-

The child being bullied will be supported in the following ways:

- By offering them an opportunity to talk about the experience with their class teacher, or another teacher if they choose.
- By informing the parents/guardians of the child being bullied if necessary.
- By offering continuing support when they feel they need it.
- By taking one or more of the four disciplinary steps described below to prevent more bullying.
- Counselling may be recommended in some situations.

The child who bullies will be disciplined and helped in the following ways:

- By talking about what happened to discover why they became involved.
- By informing the parents/guardians of the child who bullies.
- By continuing to work with the child who bullies in order to get rid of prejudiced attitudes as far as possible.
- By taking one or more of the four disciplinary steps described below to prevent more bullying.
- Counselling may be recommended in some situations.

Disciplinary Steps:

- A child who bullies will be officially warned to stop offending.
- Parents/guardians of the child who bullies will be informed.
- Exclusion of a child who bullies from the school premises at break and/or lunch times may be necessary.
- If they do not end such behaviour, their case will be brought to the Board of Management, resulting in possible suspension or exemption.

Referral of serious cases to TULSA: Child and family Agency

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

Serious instances of bullying behaviour should, in accordance with the Children First and the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, be referred to the HSE Children and Family Services and/or Gardaí as appropriate.

The *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* also provide that where school personnel have concerns about a child but are not sure whether to report the matter to the HSE, the Designated Liaison Person must seek advice from the HSE Children and Family Social Services.

Availability

This policy has been made available to school personnel. A copy of this policy may be made available to the Department, the patron and any member of the school community if requested.

Monitoring and Review

This policy, in accordance with the Education Act 1998 and Circular 0045/2013 will be annually reviewed by representatives of the Patron, the Board of Management, parents and teachers. A standardised checklist is to be used in undertaking the review (**Appendix 3**). The school must put in place an action plan to address any areas for improvement identified by the review. Written notification that the review has been completed (**Appendix 4**) will be available in the school office.

This policy will be made available to school personnel and is part of the enrolment pack for new parents. It is also readily accessible to parents on request. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the Patron if requested.

Modification Clause

The Board of Management reserves the right to modify details of the Anti-Bullying Policy at short notice. Such modification may be needed in an ever-changing environment and social context.

Policy Ratified on: _____

Signed By: _____
Chairperson

Dated: _____

Appendix1: Report of Suggested Bullying Behaviour

Date: _____

Name of Person(s) making Report: _____

To _____ (Teacher)

Name of pupil who is reported to be bullied: _____

Class: _____

Name(s) and Class(es) of Pupil(s) reported to be engaged in bullying behaviour:

Brief Description of Bullying Behaviour Reported:

-This report will be investigated and the Principal will be informed of it.

Signed: _____ (Teacher)

Signed: _____ (Person making Report)

Date: _____

Appendix 2: Record of Bullying Behaviour

Appendix 3: Checklist for Board of Management Review

Appendix 4: Notification of Board of Management's Annual Review of the Anti-Bullying Policy and its Implementation