



INTRODUCTION TO ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

St. Francis' National School has a central role in the pupils' social moral development just as it does in their academic development. In school we work towards standards of behaviour based on the principles of honesty, respect, consideration and responsibility.

It is clear that bullying is a form of anti-social behaviour and therefore the school has a clear policy in relation to an anti-bullying ethos.

1. ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

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 Francis' National 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. This policy document supersedes all previous Anti-Bullying policy documents published by the Board of Management.

2. 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 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.

3. 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 conduct, 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.

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place using electronic technology. Electronic technology includes devices and equipment such as mobile phones, computers, and tablets as well as communication tools including social media sites, text messages, chat and websites. Cyberbullying can take place at any time, including outside school. Where a student is alleged to have engaged in serious misbehaviour outside school, when not under the care or responsibility of the school, a judgement has to be made that there is a clear connection with the school and a demonstrative impact on its work, before the code of behaviour applies. *(NEWB Developing a Code of Behaviour Guidelines for Schools 2008)*

This policy recognises that 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.

EXAMPLES OF BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

<p>General behaviours which apply to all types of bullying</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harassment based on any of the nine grounds in the equality legislation (gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the travelling community) • Physical aggression • Damage to property • Name calling • Slagging • The production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other materials aimed at intimidating another person • Offensive graffiti • Extortion • Intimidation • Insulting or offensive gestures • The “look” • Invasion of personal space • A combination of any of the types listed.
<p>Cyber</p>	<p>Denigration: Spreading rumours, lies or gossip to hurt a person’s reputation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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: Ongoing 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/YouTube or games consoles • Abusive website comments/Blogs/Pictures • Abusive posts on any form of communication technology

EXAMPLES OF BULLYING BEHAVIOUR	
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 travelling community)
Homophobic and transgender	<p>Spreading rumours about a person's sexual orientation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<p>Discrimination, prejudice, comments or insults about colour, nationality, culture, social class, religious beliefs, ethnic or traveller background</p> <p>Exclusion on the basis of any of the above</p>
Relational	<p>This involves manipulating relationships as a means of bullying. Behaviours include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Malicious gossip • Isolation & exclusion • Ignoring • Excluding from the group • Taking someone's friends away • Spreading rumours • Breaking confidence • Talking loud enough so that the victim can hear • The "look" • Use of terminology such as 'nerd' in a derogatory way
Sexual	Unwelcome or inappropriate sexual comments or touching Harassment
Special Educational Needs, Disability	<p>Name calling</p> <p>Taunting others because of their disability or learning needs</p> <p>Taking advantage of a person's vulnerabilities and limited capacity to recognise and defend themselves against bullying</p> <p>Taking advantage of a person's vulnerabilities and limited capacity to understand social situations and social cues.</p> <p>Mimicking a person's disability</p> <p>Setting others up for ridicule</p>

4. RELEVANT SCHOOL PERSONNEL

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

- The class teacher in the first instance
- The Principal

5. EDUCATION AND PREVENTION STRATEGIES

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 (see Section 6.5 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools):

We aim to discourage bullying by:

- creating a school climate which encourages respect, trust, care and consideration for others
- providing pupils with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self esteem
- discussing bullying with pupils to help them understand what bullying is.
- encouraging pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.
- teaching children, through programmes like “Stay Safe”, that when they report incidents of bullying they are not telling tales, but are behaving responsibly
- raising awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour to school management, teachers, pupils, parents and guardians.
- Providing opportunities for parents to learn about bullying and how they can support the school in addressing it.
- dealing with incidents of bullying as they arise in a fair and appropriate manner for both the victim and the bully
- providing comprehensive supervision so that all areas of school activity are kept under observation.
- not allowing pupils to bring mobile phones to school
- monitoring the use of the Internet by pupils
- providing lessons on safe use of the Internet

ROLE OF PARENTS

Parents have a vital role to play in supporting the school in implementing its anti-bullying procedures. They are strongly encouraged to contact the school if they believe their child, or another child is being subjected to bullying behaviour and to keep a record of such incidents.

The following behaviour may suggest that a pupil is being bullied:

- loss interest or enthusiasm for school
- anxiety about travelling to or from school
- unexplained mood changes possibly before school restarts after holidays
- frequent minor illnesses
- disturbed sleep/bed wetting
- unexplained damage to property
- unexplained cuts and bruises

6. PROCEDURES

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):

- Usually the class teacher will deal with any reports of bullying behaviour in the classroom.
- The teacher on yard duty will initially deal with any incident occurring during break, and must then refer it to the class teacher. In this way the class teacher will be aware of a pattern of bullying incidents emerging.
- Serious cases of bullying behaviour by pupils will be referred immediately to the principal.
- All reports of bullying, no matter how trivial, will be noted, investigated and dealt with by teachers. In that way pupils will gain confidence in "telling".
- Written records will be maintained by the teacher involved using a standardised template. (see appendix 1)
- All incidents will be investigated calmly and sensitively to avoid the possible humiliation of the pupil(s) concerned.
- The teacher will speak separately to the pupils involved in an attempt to get both sides of the story. Pupils who are not directly involved may also provide very useful information.
- Parents of victims and of bullies will be informed by the class teacher and / or yard teacher or principal of incidents, earlier rather than later, so that they are given the opportunity to discuss the matter with their children. They will then be in a position to help and support them.
- In cases where it has been determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, sanctions will be applied according to the school's Code of Behaviour. The type and severity of the bullying will determine the sanctions imposed.
- Sanctions implemented will aim to encourage positive behaviour and relationships in the school.
- The esteem and encouragement of all children involved will be of paramount importance throughout the process.

If the bullying incidents continue to occur, the staff will proceed as follows:

- The Class Teacher and/or Principal will arrange to meet with the parents/guardians of the child who is seen to be bullying and separately with the parents of the victim of bullying, as deemed necessary. The children themselves may be asked to attend part or all of these meetings.
- Interventions to prevent a repeat of the bullying will be discussed and agreed.
- Follow up meetings may be arranged between parents, children and teachers if required.
- If the interventions fail and the incidents of bullying continue, the matter may be brought to the Board of Management of the School

In very serious cases advice may be sought from or referrals made to Tusla and/or the Garda Síochána.

RECORDING

All school records are maintained in accordance with relevant data protection legislation. The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour will adhere to the following:

While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the teacher will use their professional judgement in relation to the records to be kept of these reports, the actions taken and any decisions with those involved regarding same.

If it is established by the teacher that bullying has occurred the teacher must keep appropriate written records which will assist efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved. Noting and reporting of bullying behaviour is to be documented using the template for recording bullying behaviour (Appendix).

BULLYING BY ADULTS

INTRA-STAFF BULLYING

St. Francis' N.S will adopt the procedures outlined in Section C (2) of the INTO booklet (2000) "Working Together: Procedures and Policies for Positive Staff Relations". A copy of this document is available for download on the INTO website.

TEACHER - CHILD BULLYING

A complaint should in the first instance be raised with the teacher in question by the parent/guardian of the child if possible and then if necessary referred to the Principal. Where it has not been possible to agree a framework for resolution, both parties should refer the matter, in writing, to the Board of Management for investigation.

PARENT – TEACHER BULLYING

The Principal should be informed in the first instance, and if deemed necessary, the Board of Management should subsequently be informed in writing.

PARENT/VISITOR TO THE SCHOOL – CHILD BULLYING

The complaint should be referred in the first instance to the child's class teacher: if unresolved it should then be referred to the Principal.

PRINCIPAL - PARENT/CHILD BULLYING

The matter should be raised with the Principal if possible, or referred to the Chairperson of the Board of Management.

7. SUPPORT

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):

The schools programme of support for pupils affected by bullying involves a whole school approach. Given the complexity of bullying behaviour, no one intervention/support programme works in all situations. Therefore various approaches and intervention strategies may be used including that parents seek referrals to appropriate outside agencies in order to receive further support for the pupils and their families if needed.

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.

10. ADOPTION OF POLICY

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on September 2023

11. ACCESSIBILITY OF POLICY

This policy has been made available to school personnel, is accessible to parents and pupils on request and is provided to the Parents' Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the Patron if requested.

REVIEW

The implementation of these procedures will be monitored on an ongoing basis. If necessary, this policy and these procedures will be amended as a result of changed circumstances, and shall in any case undergo full review in September 2024

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(Principal)