

Anti-Bullying POLICY

St. Anne's Special School
Ballymany Cross
The Curragh
Co Kildare
School Roll No. 19277B

St Annes Board of Management
Ratified 30th September 2024

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St. Anne`s School Anti Bullying Procedures

1 Rational

In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the code of behaviour guidelines issued by the NEWB Board of Management of St. Anne`s 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 Aim

The Board of Management recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of pupils. In formulating this policy the Board and the staff of St. Anne`s were considerate of the assessed needs of the pupils in the school and how these advise our educational programmes and all supports required. Some of those needs may be defined as challenging and may put the individual themselves or those around him/her at risk.

The school commits to making every effort, in conjunction with the relevant agencies, to support our pupils whose needs may be defined as challenging. This will include such strategies as those described in Behaviour Support Plans, clinical recommendations and approaches and controls as outlined in St. Anne`s Code of Behaviour and risk assessments. It is important therefore, to consider how those needs may ultimately impact on others and the well-being of everyone in our school community.

St. Anne`s Board of Management 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;
 - 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;
 - 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);
- 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 conducted, by an individual or group, against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time.

In the special school context unwanted negative behaviour may not be intentional, however whether there is intention or not is not contained in the above definition. In St. Anne's School any behaviour that gives one pupil control over another (i.e. physical aggression against the child or his/her environment or constant disruption to the school day) or instils fear (the memory of, or anticipation of, any form of aggression) cannot be ignored. It is important that there is appropriate intervention regardless of intent.

After other forms of positive interventions have failed to reduce the unwanted negative behaviour, it will eventually be considered within this policy.

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, racist bullying, bullying based on a person's membership of the Traveller community and bullying of those with disabilities or special educational needs.
- prolonged, sustained negative behaviour by one pupil towards another whether intentional or not, may cause the pupil who experiences the behaviour to display any of the signs below. In situations like this the teacher should be alert to the possibility that this may constitute bullying and act accordingly within the terms of this policy.

4 Signs of bullying

One of the notable effects of bullying is that the victim will very often deny that it's happening.

It's important that staff don't put even more pressure on a child who may be bullied. **But there are certain signs to look out for if staff have suspicions.** As many of our children are non-verbal and do not have effective communication systems, a greater responsibility lies with the staff to be vigilant in their observations should suspicions arise. It is important that staff are aware of the fact that just because a child displays the following signs, they are not necessarily being bullied. Observations should fall equally on the dynamics of relationships with other children the child may come in contact with throughout the day.

Signs can include:

- A change in behaviour, such as suffering a lack of concentration and/or becoming withdrawn, excessively clingy, depressed, fearful, emotionally up and down
- Afraid and anxious when going to or coming from school
- Happy at the weekend but not during the week.
- A drop in performance in school.
- Physical illness: stomach aches, headaches, bruising.
- Visible signs of anxiety or distress e.g. stammering, withdrawing, nightmares, difficulty in sleeping, crying, not eating, vomiting, bedwetting.
- Bingeing on food
- Unexplained bruises
- School performance steadily getting worse
- Being generally nervous, tense, unhappy
- Not explaining suspicious incidents
- Signs of being isolated from others of the same age
- Signs of regular interference with personal property, books, etc.
- Frequently asking for (or perhaps stealing) money.

Although these can also indicate problems other than bullying, it's important that staff don't ignore them. Try to encourage the child to talk about what's going on, either to the teacher or to another trusted adult.

Isolated or once-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour, 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 shared 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*.

5 Relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying

As per the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* Section 6.8.3 the member of teaching staff who has responsibility for investigating and dealing with bullying is referred to as the "relevant teacher". For the purpose of this policy the relevant teacher will be the class teacher. Individual class teachers should advise the Principal, or in his /her absence, the Deputy-Principal of their investigation.

Serious cases of bullying behaviour by pupils should be referred immediately to the Principal, or in his/her absence, to the Deputy- Principal. It is the responsibility of either the Principal or Deputy-Principal to investigate such reported incidents.

6 Education and prevention strategies

(including strategies specifically aimed at cyberbullying 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*):

- The school ethos promotes habits of mutual respect, courtesy, resilience and an awareness of the interdependence of people/ children in group and community.
- The Code of Behaviour further promotes “respect, tolerance and consideration for others”.
- The school has identified aspects of the curriculum through which positive and lasting influences can be exerted towards forming pupils’ attitudes and values while allowing for individual levels of performance and functioning. Such identified programmes include the following:
 - Stay Safe programme.
 - Relationship and Sexuality Education programme.
 - SPHE.
 - Drama.

As well as this all staff have responsibility for the following:-

- Model respectful behaviour to all members of the school community at all times.
- Explicitly teach pupils what respectful language and respectful behaviour looks like, acts like, sounds like and feels like in class and around the school. .
- Notice and acknowledge desired respectful behaviour by providing positive attention.
- Consistently tackle the use of discriminatory and derogatory language in the school – this includes homophobic and racist language and language that is belittling of pupils with a disability or SEN.
- Give constructive feedback to pupils when respectful behaviour and respectful language are absent.
- Have a system of encouragement and rewards to promote desired behaviour and compliance with the school rules and routines.
- Highlight and explicitly teach school rules in pupil friendly way in the classroom and in common areas.
- Explicitly teach pupils about the appropriate use of social media.
- Follow up and follow through with pupils who ignore the rules.
- Actively involve parents in awareness raising campaigns around social media.
- Actively promote the right of every member of the school community to be safe and secure in school.
- All staff can actively watch out for signs of bullying behaviour.
- Ensure there is adequate playground/school yard/outdoor supervision.

Refer to St. Anne’s Code of Behaviour Section 1

7 Procedures for Investigating Incidents of Bullying

Incidents of bullying behaviour will be formally noted, reported and investigated in association with the implementation of the school's Code of Behaviour policy document. This provision is to allow for early detection of signs of indiscipline and/or significant change in mood or behaviour of pupils.

- In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved.
- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. In that way pupils will gain confidence in "telling". This confidence factor is of vital importance.
It should be made clear to all pupils that when they report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.
- The BOM will actively encourage non-teaching staff such as special needs assistants, secretary, caretaker and bus escorts to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant class teacher.
- Parents and pupils, where appropriate, will be required to co-operate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving any issues and restoring, as far as practicable, the relationships of the parties involved as quickly as possible.
- Incidents are best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.
- All interviews will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned.
- When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher should ask answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This should be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner.
- If a group is involved, each member will be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved will meet as a group. At the group meeting, each member will be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements.
- Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that they may face from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher.
- In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved should be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken (by reference to the school policy). The school will give parents an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports for their pupils.
- Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts will be made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied.

- It will also be made clear to all involved that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parents and the school.
- Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved will be arranged separately with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date if the pupil who has been bullied is ready and agreeable. This can have a therapeutic effect.
- In cases where the relevant teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he /she has determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, it must be recorded in the standardised recording template (**Appendix 3**)
- In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant teacher must, as part of his /her professional judgement, take the following factors into account:
 - a. Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased;
 - b. Whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable;
 - c. Whether the relationships between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable;
 - d. Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the school Principal or Deputy Principal.
- Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents will be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures.
- In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school will advise the parents of their rights to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

8 Procedures for recording bullying behaviour:

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 by the relevant teacher, the relevant teacher will use his /her professional judgement in relation to the records to be kept of these reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same.
- If it is established by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher must keep appropriate written records which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.
- The relevant teacher must use the recording template at **Appendix 3** to record the bullying behaviour in the following circumstances:
 1. in cases where he/she considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour occurred; and
 2. in serious cases of bullying behaviour being referred to the Principal or Deputy Principal.

In each of these circumstances the recording template must be recorded in full and retained by the teacher in question and a copy provided to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable. It should be noted that the timeline for recording bullying behaviour does not in any way preclude the relevant teacher from consulting the Principal or Deputy Principal at an earlier stage in relation to a case.

It is important to note in some cases behaviour may escalate beyond that which can be described as bullying to serious physical or sexual assault or harassment. In such circumstances referral may be made to relevant external agencies (HSE Children and Family Social Services) and authorities (Gardaí) where appropriate by the Designated Liaison Person. Additionally, advice may be sought from the National Psychological Services.

9 Programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying

A whole school approach to the problem of bullying behaviour will be nurtured in the school. Learning strategies applied will allow for the enhancement of each pupil's self-worth, self-esteem and seek to foster the development of friendship and social skills and thereby build resilience whenever this is needed.

Pupils involved in bullying behaviour need assistance on an ongoing basis. Learning strategies applied within the school will allow for the enhancement of the pupil's self-worth. Additionally, such pupils may require counselling to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others.

It is important to note that pupils who observe incidents of bullying behaviour should be encouraged to discuss them with teachers.

10 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.

11 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.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on: 30th September 2024

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website (or where none exists, is otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parents' Association (where one exists). A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management 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 (or where none exists, be otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parents' Association (where one exists). A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Signed: Catherine Moyah Signed: Adela Wallace
(Chairperson of Board of Management) (Principal)

Date 30.09.2024 Date 30/9/2024

Date of next review September 2025

12 Directory of Support Services

Anti-Bullying Centre	(01) 700 9139
CAB – Campaign Against Bullying	(01) 2887976
Childline Freephone	1800 666666
Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy	(01) 2303536
ISPCC	(01) 6767960
The National Association for Parents Support (NAPS)	(057) 8661666
Parentline (Parents under Stress)	(01) 8733500
Samaritans (Callsave)	1850 609090
Sticks and Stones Theatre Company	(01) 4099954
Trinity College Dublin – Anti-Bullying Research Centre	(01) 8963879
Victim Support	116 006

Some Useful Websites

Tackle Bullying – www.tacklebullying.ie

What to do if you feel you are being bullied - www.hsa.ie

Webwise – www.webwise.ie

Citizens Information - www.citizensinformation.ie

Child and Family agency - www.tusla.ie

Appendix

National Anti-Bullying Advocacy Group
Trinity College, Dublin

DCU Anti-Bullying Centre

You Can Beat Bullying - A Guide for Young People, Kidscape

The abc of Bullying Marie Murray & Colm Keane, 1998 – Mercier Press

What do You know about Bullying, Pete Sanders, 2000 – Aladdin Books Ltd.

Bullying and Harassment in the Workplace, Lucy Costigan, 1998 – Columba Press

Bullying – don's let them suffer in silence, Save the Children (Resource Pack)

Review History

Date Reviewed	Review No.	Effective From	Ratified	Status
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