



*St. Helen's S.N.S.
Portmarnock*

Anti-Bullying Policy

**Board of Management
2014**

Anti bullying Policy

Introduction

St Helen's SNS believes that each pupil has a right to an education free from fear and intimidation.

The school regards bullying as a serious infringement of individual rights and a serious threat to the self-esteem and self-confidence of targeted pupil(s). Therefore it does not tolerate bullying of any kind.

Every report of bullying is treated seriously and dealt with, having due regard for the well being of the child or children being bullied and those who are engaging in bullying behaviour.

Our school works in partnership with parents and together we create an atmosphere where bullying behavior is less likely to occur.

The culture of the school is that it is **a Telling School**. The pupils are frequently reminded to tell staff members when they witness misbehaviour. The children are made aware of the importance of telling. They are assured that this is not telling tales. They are reassured that this telling will help all the children who are involved.

Parents and all adults in the whole school community have a responsibility to uphold the ethos of an environment free from bullying. (See Appendix 1.)

The immediate priority, should a bullying incident occur, is ending the bullying - thereby protecting the person(s) being targeted, resolving the issues and restoring the relationships involved insofar as is practicable using a "Reform, not Blame" approach.

All pupils are expected to contribute to the creation and maintenance of a safe environment in the school. On becoming aware of any bullying situation involving members of the school community, pupils should notify a trusted responsible adult. Bullying behaviour is too serious not to report.

Pupils' participation in school life in general is encouraged through existing school structures. Awareness of bullying, and willingness to take action to prevent or stop it, is part of this participation.

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 Helens SNS 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. 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) 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;
 - promotion of respectful relationships across the school community;
(See Appendix 2).

 - (b) Effective leadership;

 - (c) A school-wide approach;

 - (d) A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact;

 - (e) 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 homophobic and transphobic bullying;

 - (f) Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils;

 - (g) Supports for staff;

 - (h) Effective and clear follow up of bullying behaviour including investigation, intervention strategies and consistent recording;

 - i) On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

3. In accordance with the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* bullying is defined as follows:

Bullying is unwanted verbal, psychological or physical behavior conducted by an individual or group against another person or persons and is repeated over time.

The following types of 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, bullying based on a person's religious beliefs 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.

This definition includes a wide range of behaviour, whether verbal or written, whether physical or social, whether targeting person or property, whether carried out directly or indirectly or through any electronic or other medium, which could harm a pupil or undermine her/his self-esteem or self-confidence.

Appendix 1 gives a list of specific examples of bullying behaviour. This list is not exhaustive.

Negative behaviour that does not meet this definition of bullying will be dealt with in accordance with the school's code of behaviour

4. The relevant teacher for investigating and dealing with bullying in this school is the class teacher.

Education and prevention strategies

5. The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber-bullying and identity based bullying) used by the school are as follows:
 - The anti-bullying module of the SPHE programme as it applies during each school year,
 - A monthly awareness-raising exercise for each class group from the "Anti Bullying Campaign, Tools for Teachers" explaining the nature and variety, causes, consequences and unacceptability of bullying.
 - The school's anti bullying policy is discussed with pupils and all new parents/guardians are given a copy as part of our enrolment procedure.
 - Encourage a culture of telling, with particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders. 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.

- An annual anti-bullying/friendship week
- Pupil of the Month Certificates - one of the criteria for which is a pupils kindness to others
- "Don't be Mean Behind your Screen" workshop for 6th class
- Involvement of the student council in raising awareness

6. **Reporting Bullying Behaviour**

- Any pupil or parent/guardian may bring a bullying incident to any teacher in the school.
- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher.
- Teaching and non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants, caretaker must report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher;

Investigating and dealing with incidents:

- The Class Teacher investigates all instances of reported or suspected bullying behaviour with a view to establishing the facts and bringing any such behaviour to an end.
- Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach.
- Where possible incidents should be investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved;
- All interviews should be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this way;
- When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher should seek 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 should be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved should be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member should 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 may face them from other members of the group after the interview by the teacher; it also may be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s).
- In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents/guardians 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 should give parents/guardians an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can

reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports provided to the pupils;

- It must also be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parents) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parents/guardians and the school.

Follow up and recording

- The School, through the Class Teacher reserves the right to ask any pupil to write an account of what happened, as part of an investigation. This will be a standard procedure and does not necessarily imply that a pupil is guilty of misbehaviour.
- Pupils who are alleged to have been involved in bullying behaviour are interviewed by the Class Teacher to establish the nature and extent of the behaviour and any reasons for it. In the event that they have been involved in bullying behaviour, their parents are informed and they are asked to sign a binding promise that they will treat all pupils fairly, equally and respectfully including the targeted pupil(s). They agree with the teacher an appropriate sanction from our Code of Behaviour
- The class teacher does not apportion blame but rather treats bullying behaviour as a "mistake" that can and must be remedied. S/he emphasises that the intention is not to punish perpetrators but to talk to them, to explain how harmful and hurtful bullying is and to seek a promise that it will stop. If that promise is forthcoming and is honoured there will be no penalty and that will be the end of the matter. Pupils who report bullying therefore are not getting others "in trouble" so much as enabling them to get out of trouble, into which, they may ultimately get, if the bullying continued.
- When an investigation is completed and/or a bullying situation is resolved the Class Teacher will complete a report in the standardised template (Appendix 3), to include the findings of the investigation, the strategy adopted and the outcome of the intervention, as well as any other relevant information. This report should be given to the Principal, who will store it in a secure location in the Principal's office. The Principal will provide a report to the Board of Management every term, setting out the overall number of bullying cases reported.
- If a pupil has signed such a promise but then chooses to break that promise and continue the bullying behaviour, this can then no longer be considered a "mistake." In this event parent(s)/guardian(s) will be informed and requested to countersign their daughter/son's promise. Breach of this additional promise by further bullying behaviour is regarded as a very grave matter and a serious sanction may be imposed by the school authorities. (See sanctions below).
- All documentation regarding bullying incidents and their resolution is retained securely in the school.
- Where a parent/guardian is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parent/guardian must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures.
- In the event that a parent/guardian has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the

parents/guardians of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for children.

Sanctions:

Where a pupil has been found to be engaged in bullying behaviour, has formally promised to stop and has broken that promise, any of the following sanctions may be imposed:

- S/he may be required to sign another promise, this time countersigned by a parent/guardian;
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) may be contacted by the Class Teacher and informed of the nature and extent of the bullying behaviour with a view to agreeing a strategy whereby a promise to end the bullying behaviour would be honoured;
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) may be invited to a meeting with the Class Teacher and the Principal and the pupil may be suspended from school.
- The case may be referred to the Board of Management and the pupil may be expelled from the school.

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

Pupils who have been bullied:

- Ending the bullying behaviour,
 - Reviewing the school culture to foster more respect for pupils who have been bullied and all pupils,
 - Changing the school culture to foster greater empathy towards and support for pupils who have been bullied
 - Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through the awareness-raising programme,
 - Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through the speedy identification of those responsible and speedy resolution of bullying situations,
 - Making adequate counselling facilities available to pupils who need it in a timely manner,
 - Helping pupils who have been bullied to raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that help develop friendships and social skills
 - Implementing a "buddy system" in the school
- **Pupils** who have been engaged in bullying behaviour
 - Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are not blamed or punished and get a "clean sheet,"
 - Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are doing the right and honorable thing and giving them praise for this,
 - Making adequate counselling facilities available, to help those who need it, learn other ways of meeting their needs, besides violating the rights of others,
 - Helping those who need to raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that develop friendships and social skills (e.g.

participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school),

- Using learning strategies throughout the school and the curriculum to help enhance pupils' feelings of self-worth,
 - In dealing with negative behaviour in general, encouraging teachers and parents to focus on, challenge and correct the behaviour while supporting the child,
 - In dealing with bullying behaviour seeking resolution and offering a fresh start with a "clean sheet" and no blame in return for keeping a promise to reform.
7. **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.
8. 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 i.e. gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.
9. This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 23/06/2014.
10. This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department of Education and Skills and to the patron if requested.
11. 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 and provided to the Parents' Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available to the Department of Education and Skills and to the patron if requested. (see Appendix 4).

Signed: *Bille Moran*
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Date: 23/06 2014

Signed: *Mary O'Leary*
(Principal)

Date: 23/06/2014