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# 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. John’s 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.
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 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

**We believe in the following principles:**

* Every pupil in St. John’s National School has the right to enjoy learning and leisure free from intimidation, both in the school and in the surrounding community.
* Our school community will not tolerate any unkind actions or remarks, even if these were not intended to hurt.
* Bullying will be dealt with seriously.
* We are a ‘telling’ school – bullying is too important not to report.

1. 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
* 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*.

4. The relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows:

* The class teacher(s) initially
* The principal thereafter if necessary

5. The following education and prevention strategies, at the appropriate and relevant level for each class, will be used by the school: (reference to Section 6.5 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools)*

Lessons around the whole area of Bullying – cyber bullying, internet safety, personal safety, self-esteem, friendship, myself and others, relationships etc are taught as part of SPHE. Teachers will ensure through the Stay Safe Programme that there is a clear understanding among pupils of the types of behaviour likely to constitute bullying. Interactive Webwise lessons will be used for internet safety and cyber bullying lessons.

Lessons should aim to raise awareness of how and when bullying can happen and give children skills to keep themselves safe when on-line or when facing a threatening or intimidating situation.

A school culture will be developed through these lessons that we are a ‘telling school’ and that everyone in the school community has a responsibility to ‘tell’ an adult if they are subject to bullying or if they are aware of bullying taking place.

6. 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 follow the six step approach available from the “Dealing with Incidents” section of the Anti-Bullying Campaign. (See documents – **6 Quick steps for dealing with possible bullying situations in your classroom** *Appendix 1* and **Tools for dealing with possible bullying incidents/ situations** *Appendix 2)*

**Procedures for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying:**

* The ‘Relevant 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.
* The school, through the ‘Relevant 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 ‘Relevant 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 they are asked to sign a binding promise that they will treat all pupils fairly, equally and respectfully including the targeted pupil(s).
* The ‘Relevant 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 the 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 ‘Relevant Teacher’ will complete a report, to include the findings of the investigation, the strategy adopted and the outcome of the intervention, as well as any other relevant information.
* 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 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. The parent(s)/ guardian(s) will also be requested to countersign their daughter/son’s written promise. Any breach of this additional promise by further bullying is regarded as a very grave matter and a serious sanction may be imposed by the school authorities. (See sanctions below)

**Procedures for Noting and Reporting an incident of Bullying Behaviour:**

* All documentation regarding bullying incidents and their resolution is retained securely in the school.
* The ‘Relevant Teacher’ must record the bullying behaviour in the standardised recording template (Appendix 3) where he/she considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days of it first occurring. A copy must be provided to the principal.
* The Principal will provide a report to the BOM at each BOM meeting setting out the overall number of bullying cases reported by means of the bullying record template (Appendix 3)

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

* Parent(s)/guardian(s) may be invited to a meeting with the ‘Relevant Teacher’ and the Principal. Following this meeting 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.

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*) :

* Awareness raising strand of “The Anti-Bullying Campaign”
* R.S.E. and Stay-Safe Programmers’ for whole class teaching
* SPHE lessons around friendships, relationships, myself and others
* Internet Safety training programmes relevant to the needs of the child – e.g.Webwise
* Lessons to enhance self-esteem, develop friendships and social skills, build resilience
* Literature for staff, parents and pupils around the area of bullying, self-esteem etc.
* Professional help and advice for pupils affected by bullying, in consultation with parents
* Poetry and stories relevant to the pupils needs

1. **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.

1. **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.

1. This policy is reviewed annually and it was most recently reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management on the 15th June 2023.
2. This policy has been made available to school personnel and will be published on the school website. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.
3. This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year. (Checklist for annual review of the anti-bullying policy and its implementation is included in Appendix 4) Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel and parents. A standardised notification must be used for this purpose. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

**Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**(Chairperson of Board of Management) (Principal)**

**Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**