

St John's School

Anti-Bullying Policy

## ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

### *To Whom the Policy shall apply*

#### **Introductory statement**

This policy shall apply to the students, teachers, all school staff, parents, users of the school building and visitors.

It shall operate during all times that the school is open and on all school related activities. The policy was drafted by the members of the school management team. The draft was then brought to all staff and a final draft prepared. This took place during March and April 2010.

#### **Relationship to the characteristic spirit of the school**

St. John's Special School will endeavour to enhance the self esteem of everyone in the school community, to imbue in the pupils respect for people and property and to encourage in them the idea of being responsible.

#### **Aims**

- To promote the safety and happiness of all pupils in the school
- To raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour
- To create a school environment which encourages children to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To outline procedures for noting, investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To implement age appropriate programmes of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and for those involved in bullying behaviour.

#### **Definition**

Dept of Education and Science guidelines define bullying as ... *repeated aggression, verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against others. Isolated incidents of aggressive behaviour, which should not be condoned, can scarcely be described as bullying. However, when the behaviour is systematic and ongoing it is bullying.* (Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post-Primary Schools, 1993)

Types of bullying behaviour: behaviour which is intentionally aggravating and intimidating. It includes behaviour such as teasing, taunting, threatening, name calling, slugging, hitting, exclusion, abusive telephone/text messages/web messages or extortion by one or more pupils against a victim. Isolated incidents of aggressive behaviour, while not to be condoned, cannot be described as bullying.

Our school policy is based on mutual respect for all pupils and staff so bullying is forbidden in our code of discipline.

Parents are given a copy of the anti-bullying policy on enrolment and pupils and staff are made aware of this definition and the types of bullying through regular school assemblies.

### **Indications of bullying**

Staff have been trained on how to identify symptoms of bullying:-

- a. Anxiety about attending school
- b. Deterioration in educational performance
- c. Pattern of physical illness
- d. Unexplained changes in mood or behaviour
- e. Visible signs of anxiety or distress
- f. Possessions missing
- g. Increased requests for money
- h. Unexplained bruising
- i. Reluctance to say what is troubling him/her

These can be signs of a variety of problems and may suggest that bullying is taking place.

### **Strategies for the prevention of bullying**

*'At the centre of a whole school response to bullying is the creation of a positive school climate which focuses on respect for the individual...'* (Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post-Primary Schools, 1993)

The school fosters a positive school ethos among pupils, staff and parents:

- *Through a programme of positive action, the school promotes an atmosphere of friendship, respect and tolerance.*
- *The SPHE curriculum, including the Walk Tall, RSE, Religion programme and Stay Safe programmes, is used throughout the school to support the anti bullying policy.*
- *Positive self-esteem is fostered among the pupils by celebrating individual differences/achievements, by acknowledging and rewarding good behaviour and by providing opportunities for success.*
- *Pupils are helped to develop empathy by discussing feelings and by trying to put themselves in the place of others.*
- *Teachers respond sensitively to pupils who disclose incidents of bullying.*
- *The school's anti-bullying policy is discussed regularly with the pupils.*
- *Staff are particularly vigilant in monitoring pupils who are considered at risk of bullying/ being bullied.*
- *All disclosed incidents of bullying are investigated.*
- *Members of the BOM are familiar with the school's policy on bullying*
- *Parents contribute to and support the school's policy on bullying by encouraging positive behaviour both at home and at school, by being vigilant for signs and symptoms that their child is being bullied or is bullying others, by communicating concerns to the school.*

Pupils understanding varies with age and intellectual ability some pupils may confuse bullying with fighting and nasty experiences generally making it difficult to identify actual bullying.

The school maintains awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour by:

- *Facilitate a common understanding among staff, pupils and parents on what bullying behaviour is.*
- *Assemblies to remind pupils of the school's anti bullying policy*
- *Use of both the formal and informal curriculum to emphasise that bullying is unacceptable – e.g. visual arts activities, posters, drama, role play, SPHE, cooperative games, circle time, during supervision duties, when devising class rules.*

The school's supervision practices act as a strategy for prevention of bullying behaviour. As a staff we endeavour to monitor behaviour and pupils at risk of bullying or being bullied. Shadowing is used as a strategy for monitoring behaviour. Regular communication takes place between staff in relation to behaviour. During lunch break designated lunch breaks are assigned to different age groupings.

### **Procedures for dealing with incidents of bullying**

1. Teachers and staff should be continually vigilant and aware of situations of bullying.
2. If parents have concerns about their child being bullied they should inform the class teacher or the Principal.
3. Children are constantly encouraged to inform their class teacher or any member of staff if an incident of bullying has occurred.
4. Reports of bullying are recorded. The teacher will investigate and act appropriately. If the teacher suspects that bullying occurred the Principal will be informed.
5. The Principal may decide to notify the parents/guardians and give them the opportunity to discuss the matter.
6. Serious or repeated instances of bullying will be reported by the Principal to the B.O.M. who will decide on a course of action.
7. A record will be kept on how the matter was handled and the outcome.

### *Procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying*

- a. Calm, unemotional, problem solving approach
- b. Incidents are best investigated outside of the classroom.
- c. Staff will speak separately to the children involved
- d. Individuals will be met separately and then as a group if necessary.
- e. Parents will be informed where it has been determined that bullying has occurred
- f. When an incident of bullying has occurred the parents involved and the situation will be kept under review.

## Board of Management

The Board of Management were consulted throughout the process. They reviewed and approved drafts of the policy before final ratification.

‘The Board of Management has a role to play in the maintenance of desirable standards of behaviour in a school. It should be supportive of the principal teacher in the application of a fair code of behaviour and discipline within the school’ (Circular 20/90)

As written in the statement above the BOM will deal with all serious incidents of bullying in accordance with the school’s Code of Behaviour.

## Reference to other Policies

For a successful anti-bullying culture to develop within our school environment this policy will be implemented and supported by such policies as the Code of Behaviour, SPHE and Health and Safety Policies.

## Success Criteria

We as a school community believe that where bullying is challenged effectively pupils will feel safe and happy thus demonstrating a school that cares. Feedback from teachers, parents and pupils is welcomed and will support observations made in class, corridors and yard etc.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Pupils**

Each term or when incidents occur, class teachers will discuss bullying and reinforce the following strategies:

- a) Remember that your silence is the bully’s greatest weapon.
- b) Tell yourself that you do not deserve to be bullied and that it is wrong.
- c) Be assertive – shout “No!”. Walk confidently away. Go straight to a teacher or member of staff.
- d) Fighting back may make things worse.
- e) Generally it is best to tell an adult you trust straight away. You will get immediate support.

## **Parents.**

Parental support is one of the keys to the success of our anti-bullying policy. We ask parents to:

- a) Look out for unusual behaviour in your children – for example, they may suddenly not wish to attend school, feel ill regularly, or not complete work to their usual standard.
- b) Always take an active role in your child’s education. Enquire how their day has gone, who they have spent their time with, etc.
- c) If you feel your child may be a victim of bullying behaviour, inform school immediately. Your complaint will be taken seriously and appropriate action will follow.
- d) Reinforce the school’s policy concerning bullying and make sure your child is not afraid to ask for help.

## **Teacher**

The teacher will follow the SPHE curriculum on bullying and implement steps outlined in this policy. Teachers will support the principal in implementing this policy.

## **Principal**

The following is a list of actions available to staff depending on the perceived seriousness of the situation. The emphasis is always on a caring, listening approach as bullies are often victims too – that is why they bully.

If bullying is suspected we will:

- a) Talk to the suspected victim, and any witnesses.
- b) Identify the bully and talk about what has happened, to discover why they became involved. Make it clear that bullying is not tolerated.
- c) Procedures outlined in the Code of Behaviour will be followed.
- d) Continue monitoring of the situation to ensure no repetition.

## **Implementation Date**

## **Review**

## **Ratification and Communication**

