

St. Vincent's Special School Anti-Bullying (Draft)



Revision: A	St. Vincent's Special School	No:
Prepared by:	Sharon Gorevan (Principal) and staff	Date: February, 2015; February 2016
Approved by:		Date:
Review Date:		

Anti-Bullying Policy

Introduction

We, the staff of St. Vincent's Special School continuously strive to provide a Quality Education in a happy, safe learning environment so that all pupils will reach their full potential. We aspire to do the above in partnership with parents, Board of Management and through involvement with the wider community. *Mission Statement*

The policy was drafted and redrafted in consultation with staff, Principal and a representative group of parents in 2015. It was then presented to the Board of Management for review and ratification.

Rationale

The Department of Education & Skills requires all schools to have a written policy on Anti-Bullying.

In accordance with the requirements of the Educational (Welfare) Act 2000 and the Code of Behaviour Guidelines issued by the National Educational Welfare Board, the Board of Management of St. Vincent'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.

Aims

The aims of this policy are to:

- Create a positive school atmosphere that ensures a safe and caring environment for all our pupils, staff and members of the school community.
- Build a sense of self-confidence, self-worth and self-esteem.
- Promote respectful relationships across the school community.
- Adopt a whole-school approach with effective leadership and a shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact.
- Encourage pupils to disclose incidents of bullying behaviour.
- Raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with school management, teaching and non-teaching staff, pupils and parents/guardians.
- Provide support for all members of staff.
- Ensure comprehensive supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of school activity are kept under observation.
- Devise consistent measures to prevent and deal with bullying behaviour.
- Develop procedures for investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.
- Develop procedures for consistent recording and reporting incidents of bullying behaviour.
- Create a situation whereby bullying behaviour is dealt with effectively, fairly and in a manner, which will benefit the victim through the acquisition of skills to counter bullying behaviour.

Guidelines

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.

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.

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.

It includes behaviour such as teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting, exclusion or extortion by one or more pupils against a victim. Bullying behaviour thrives in an atmosphere of uncertainty and secrecy in which the victim often feels a sense of hopelessness. 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.

We the staff in St Vincent's Special National School recognise that behaviour which can be interpreted as bullying must be commiserate with the ability of the pupil to have 'Theory of Mind'.

'Theory of Mind' is the ability to read the beliefs, desires, perceptions and intentions of others in order to understand and predict behaviour. Pupils with special educational needs, our pupils, therefore have less ability to 'mind read' (Ref: SESS, Dr Lori Ernsperger, Ph.D.,BCBA_D). It is understood that individuals who bully are better able to read the mental states and emotions of other children and can manipulate them more easily. In addition, it is acknowledged that many of our pupils present with challenging behaviour, which is addressed in line with our code of behaviour. The important concept of this anti bullying policy for our cohort of pupils is that we, as a school understand that this behaviour is generally not malicious in intent and that the school are most interested in supporting the pupil who has been affected and the pupil who has 'bullied'.

Indications of bullying

1. Anxiety about attending school.
 2. Deterioration in educational performance.
 3. Pattern of physical illness.
 4. Unexplained changes in mood or behaviour.
 5. Visible signs of anxiety or distress.
 6. Possessions missing.
 7. Increased requests for money.
 8. Unexplained bruising.
 9. Reluctance to say what is troubling him/her.
- These are all signs of a variety of problems as well as bullying.

Rights & Responsibilities

Investigating and Dealing with Bully

The fostering of quality interpersonal relationships among Teachers, SNAs, pupils, parents and ancillary staff is a responsibility shared by everyone.

The **Class Teacher** will endeavour to solve all alleged bullying incidents at class level. The primary aim for the Class Teacher in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationship of the parties involved (rather than apportion blame).

Relevant Teachers:

- Principal
- Deputy Principal
- Post Holders

- All Teachers. Any teacher may act as a relevant teacher for investigating and dealing with bullying if circumstances warrant it.

- ***Board of Management***

The Board of Management is responsible for ensuring that all members of the school community are enabled to deal effectively with bullying. The Board will ensure that proper supervisory and monitoring measures are in place to prevent bullying and to deal with incidents appropriately as they arise.

- ***School Staff***

The school staff will:

- Foster an atmosphere of friendship, respect and tolerance.
- Model respectful behaviour to all members of the school community at all times.
- Explicitly teach what respectful language and respectful behaviour looks like, acts like and feels like in the classroom and around the school.
- Display key respect messages in classrooms and involve pupils in developing these messages.
- Catch them being good-notice and acknowledge desired respectful behaviour by providing positive attention.
- Address the use of discriminatory and derogatory language.
- Help pupils develop self-esteem through celebrating individual differences, achievements, acknowledging and rewarding good behaviour and manners and providing opportunities for success throughout the curriculum and school.
- Actively promote the right of every member of the school community to be safe and secure in school.
- Explicitly teach school rules in pupil friendly language
- Educate and empower pupils to deal with conflict in constructive ways.
- Teach pupils to recognise bullying behaviour and encourage them to use their voice to say 'no' to that behaviour.
- Help pupils to develop empathy by discussing feelings and trying to put themselves in the place of others.
- Be vigilant, respond sensitively and caringly to pupils who disclose incidents of bullying.
- Investigate all disclosed incidents of bullying.
- Document bullying incidents
- Discuss the school's Anti-Bullying Policy with the pupils.
- Ensure there is adequate playground/school yard/outdoor supervision. Hot spots tend to be in the playground/school yard/outdoor areas, changing rooms, corridors and other areas of unstructured supervision. Hot times again tend to be times where there is less structured supervision such as when pupils are in the playground/school yard or moving classrooms.

As defined in the Child Protection Policy, confidentiality is of paramount importance in all dealings with pupils. Active listening and vigilant recording must be carried out by all staff.

- ***Pupils (depending upon age, level of disability and ability to communicate)***

Pupils are expected to:

- Have mutual respect for each other.

- Not bully others.
- Tell if they are being bullied or if they see someone else being bullied.
- Report incidents of bullying to school staff.

- **Parents**

Parents are obliged to:

- Support the school in its efforts to prevent and address incidents of bullying including cyber bullying and identity based bullying.
- Discuss the school's anti-bullying policy with their child.
- Watch out for signs and symptoms that their child is being bullied or is bullying others (Appendix 1).
- Follow their instincts if they suspect their child is being bullied.
- Instruct their children to tell if they are being bullied or if they have seen other pupils being bullied.
- Speak to the Class Teacher if their child is being bullied or they suspect that this is happening.
- Speak to the Class Teacher as soon as they are aware that issues are arising which are affecting their child.
- Communicate concerns to school staff, which may be required in writing.
- Encourage positive behaviour and discourage negative behaviour both at home and at school.
- Encourage their child to solve difficulties without resorting to aggression.
- Encourage their child to share, be kind, caring and understanding towards others.
- Never directly approach a pupil or the parent/guardian of a pupil at the school to intervene in behavioural issues.
- Be clear that in any situation where disciplinary sanctioned are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, her/his parents/guardians, and the school.
- Acknowledge that whilst the school will support parents/guardians and pupils in dealing with issues that arise outside of school, limitations exist to deal fully with issues that arise while the pupil is not under our care.

Education & Prevention Strategies

The education and prevention strategies that will be used in our school are as follows:

- A school wide approach to the fostering of respect for all members of the school community
- The promotion of the value of diversity to address issues of prejudice and stereotyping, and highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour.
- The fostering and enhancement of self-esteem of all our pupils through curricular activities. Pupils will be provided with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth through formal and informal interactions.
- Integration of anti-bullying issues into other curricular areas, age appropriate/developmentally appropriate.
- Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extra curricular activities. Non-teaching and ancillary staff will be encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers.
- A copy of the Anti- bullying Policy is available to all parents/guardians on request from the school office.

- Identify clear protocols to encourage parents/guardians to approach the school if they suspect that their child is being bullied.

- **Implementation of Curricula**

The formal curriculum of the school will be used to educate pupils against bullying behaviour.

- The full implementation of the SPHE and RSE curricula and Stay Safe and 'Spheres' Programmes.
- Circle time
- Drama / role play

Procedures for noting and reporting an incident of bullying behaviour

1. If parents have concerns about their child being bullied they should inform the class teacher.
2. Reports of bullying either from parents or staff members should be recorded. The teacher should investigate and act appropriately. If the teacher suspects that bullying occurred the Principal/Deputy Principal should be informed.
3. Parents of those involved should be notified and given an opportunity to discuss the matter by the Teacher.
4. It should be made clear that children reporting incidents of bullying are acting responsibly.
5. A record should be kept of how the matter was handled and the outcome. When the class moves on the succeeding teacher should be informed of any problems that existed.

Procedures for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying Behaviour

The primary aim in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame).

1. Calm, unemotional, problem solving approach.
2. Incidents are best investigated outside of the classroom situation.
3. Teachers should speak separately to the children involved.
4. Members of a gang should be met separately and as a group.
5. Parents should be informed where it has been determined that bullying has occurred.
6. Check with the child/parents of the child bullied later to check that no further difficulties have arisen.

Cyberbullying

As with all children, pupils with special needs are vulnerable to cyberbullying. As part of the school's SPHE programme children are encouraged to tell if something is upsetting or bothering them, however, school staff and parents must be particularly vigilant with regard to the possibility of our pupils receiving or sending unwanted or inappropriate texts or other messages via social networking sites. Parental monitoring of texts and messages is the only certain method of ensuring that our pupils are not the victims of any form of cyberbullying. The school will investigate each allegation or disclosure in consultation with parents taking into account the individual circumstances of the pupils involved and the context of the allegation or disclosure. Parents will be reminded from time to time that children under the age of 14 should

not have Facebook or similar accounts and that regular parental supervision is essential for those pupils that have such accounts.

In the case where a member of staff is alleged to have bullied a pupil, the Principal will investigate the matter and take appropriate action.

In the case where a pupil is alleged to have bullied a staff member, the Principal will investigate the matter and take appropriate action.

If the alleged incident involves the Principal or Deputy Principal, the Chairperson of the Board of Management will investigate the matter and take appropriate action.

Recording of Bullying Behaviour

All staff must keep a written record of any significant incident witnessed by them or notified to them. It is imperative that all recording of bullying incidents must be done in an objective and factual manner.

The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour are as follows:

- **Informal pre-determination that bullying has occurred**
 - All reports of bullying must be investigated.
 - The relevant teacher must keep a written factual record, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same. This will be kept in the pupil's blue folder in the classroom. If warranted an incident report should be completed and sent home.

- **Formal Stage 1 – determination that bullying has occurred**
 - If it is established by the Class 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.
 - These records will be kept in the *Anti-Bullying Record Book*, which is retained by each Class Teacher in a secure place – locked drawer of teacher's desk or in a locked press.
 - At the end of the school year all records will be collected and retained in the school office, accessed through the School Secretary.

- **Formal Stage 2 – Appendix 1 (DES Procedures)**

The relevant teacher must use the *recording template* at Appendix 1 to record the bullying behaviour in the following circumstances:

- 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 has occurred;
- Serious incidents or recurring incidents of bullying behaviour which have, in the opinion of a teacher, not been resolved within 20 school days will be recorded on the DES template and shall be reported to the Principal.
- The teacher will also use the DES recording template where he/she considers the bullying behaviour to constitute serious misconduct.
- Where cases of cyber bullying are reported, these will be recorded.

APPENDIX 1

Template for recording bullying behaviour

1. Name of pupil being bullied and class group

Name _____ Class _____

2. Name(s) and class(es) of pupil(s) engaged in bullying behaviour

3. Source of bullying concern/report (tick relevant box(es))*

Pupil Concerned	
Other Pupil	
Parent	
Teacher	
Other	

4. Location of incidents (tick (tick relevant box(es)

Playground	
Classroom	
Corridor	
Toilets	
School Bus	
Other	

5. Name of person(s) who reported the bullying concern: _____

6. Type of Bullying Behaviour (tick relevant box(es)) *

Physical Aggression		Cyber-bullying	
Damage to Property		Intimidation	
Isolation/Exclusion		Malicious Gossip	
Name Calling		Other (specify)	

7. Where behaviour is regarded as identity-based bullying, indicate the relevant category:

Homophobic	Disability/SEN related	Racist	Membership of Traveller community	Other (specify)

8. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact

--

9. Details of actions taken

--

Signed _____ (Relevant Teacher) Date: _____

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal _____

* Note: The categories listed in the tables 3, 4 & 6 are suggested and schools may add to or amend these to suit their own circumstances.

Appendix 4 Checklist for annual review of the anti-bullying policy and its implementation

The Board of Management (the Board) must undertake an annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation. The following checklist must be used for this purpose. The checklist is an aid to conducting this review and is not intended as an exhaustive list. In order to complete the checklist, an examination and review involving both quantitative and qualitative analysis, as appropriate across the various elements of the implementation of the school's anti-bullying policy will be required.

Yes /No

Has the Board formally adopted an anti-bullying policy that fully complies with the requirements of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools?	
Has the Board published the policy on the school website and provided a copy to the parents' association?	
Has the Board ensured that the policy has been made available to school staff (including new staff)?	
Is the Board satisfied that school staff are sufficiently familiar with the policy and procedures to enable them to effectively and consistently apply the policy and procedures in their day to day work?	
Has the Board ensured that the policy has been adequately communicated to all pupils?	
Has the policy documented the prevention and education strategies that the school applies?	
Have all of the prevention and education strategies been implemented?	
Has the effectiveness of the prevention and education strategies that have been implemented been examined?	
Is the Board satisfied that all teachers are recording and dealing with incidents in accordance with the policy?	
Has the Board received and minuted the periodic summary reports of the Principal?	
Has the Board discussed how well the school is handling all reports of bullying including those addressed at an early stage and not therefore included in the Principal's periodic report to the Board?	
Has the Board received any complaints from parents regarding the school's handling of bullying incidents?	
Have any parents withdrawn their child from the school citing dissatisfaction with the school's handling of a bullying situation?	
Have any Ombudsman for Children investigations into the school's handling of a bullying case been initiated or completed?	
Has the data available from cases reported to the Principal (by the bullying recording template) been analysed to identify any issues, trends or patterns in bullying behaviour?	
Has the Board identified any aspects of the school's policy and/or its implementation that require further improvement?	
Has the Board put in place an action plan to address any areas for improvement?	

Signed _____ Date _____
Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed _____ Date _____

Principal

Notification regarding the Board of Management's annual review of the anti-bullying policy

To: _____

The Board of Management of St. Vincent's Special School wishes to inform you that:

- The Board of Management's annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation was completed at the Board meeting of _____ [date].
- This review was conducted in accordance with the checklist set out in Appendix 4 of the Department's *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

Signed _____ Date _____ Chairperson,
Board of Management

Signed _____ Date _____ Principal