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Anti – Bullying Policy

This policy was formulated by St. Mary's National School and is guided by the relevant legislation in the Education Welfare Act 2000, the code of behaviour guidelines issued by TUSLA and the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2013 to inform staff and parents of St. Mary's of our Anti-Bullying Policy.

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1. Introduction and Rationale

In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the code of behaviour guidelines issued by Tusla Child and Family Agency, the Board of Management of St Mary's NS 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. Best Practice

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.

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”.

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.

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. Investigation and Reporting of Bullying

The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying is (are) as follows:

The class teacher will, in most cases, investigate and deal with an accusation or report of bullying. They may involve the Principal in the process as they deem appropriate.

When a report is made to the teacher on supervision duty they will discuss the report with the relevant class teacher/s and may also investigate themselves.

The class teacher has responsibility for completing the “Template for recording bullying behaviour.” [Appendix B]

The Principal will be sent a copy of the record.

5. Strategies to prevent Bullying

The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber- bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying) that will be used by the school include the following: (see Section 6.5 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):

The Stay Safe programme

SPHE

RSE

Weaving Wellbeing

Friends For Life

Zippy Friends

Cyber bullying and staying safe online talks will be given by the Community Garda and/or external Internet Safety groups such as Zeeko, to senior classes.

The Board of Management recognises that it has no control over children’s access to communications technology while they are not in school. Parents must take primary responsibility for their children’s behaviour and use of such technology. The school is required to deal with incidents which impact upon it’s pupils through the use of such technology.

6. Investigation, Follow-up and Recording

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 are as follows (see Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*) :

When an accusation/report/complaint of bullying is made:

The children involved will be asked for their version of events. In senior classes, 3rd 4th 5th 6th the children may be asked to write an account of the alleged incident or incidents. This may be written either in school or at home, as time allows. Parents will be asked to sign that they have seen the written account.

The investigating teacher/s and or principal, having conducted all reasonable enquiries into the accusation/complaint/report will use their professional judgement to decide if bullying has occurred.

If it is decided that bullying has occurred the incident will be recorded as in Appendix B and the parents of all children involved will be notified.

Depending on the nature and seriousness of the bullying behaviour it will be dealt with under the school's Code of Behaviour Policy.

If there is a recurrence of the bullying behaviour by the same child/children they and their parents will be informed that this constitutes repeated serious misbehaviour and will be dealt with under the school's Code of Behaviour Policy.

The class teacher will implement, in as far as is practicable, strategies to prevent the behaviour recurring and to assist in the building respectful of relationships between all involved.

7. Programme of Support

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*) :

It is expected that the programmes named in section 4 above will be the primary programmes used to build self esteem and respectful relationships in our school.

If it is considered by the class teacher or requested by parents/guardians, that further supports are needed, advice will be sought from NEPS [the school psychological service] to recommend appropriate interventions and programmes.

8. 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.

9. 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.

10. Communication

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 and the patron if requested.

11. Ratification and Review

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year. It was reviewed on February 28th 2019. 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, if requested, to the patron and the Department. This policy is due for review no later than 28th February 2023.

Pat O'Connor

Chairperson

Date: 08th March 2021

Paul O'Connor

Principal

Appendix : 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 relevant box(es))*

Playground	
Classroom	
Corridor	
Toilets	
School Bus	
Other	

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

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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

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9. Details of actions taken

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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.

Date of next review: _____