



### **School Position on Bullying**

We in The community of St Catherine's NS believe 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 targeted pupil(s) and the perpetrator(s).

An 'Anti-Bullying Team,' made up of staff members, exists to cultivate an environment free from bullying.

The immediate priority, should a bullying incident occur, is to end the bullying, (thereby protecting the person(s) being targeted) and to resolve the issues and restore 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, in or outside the school, involving members of the school community they should notify a trusted responsible adult. Bullying behaviour is too serious not to report. St Catherine's is a 'Telling School'

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**

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 Catherine's 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* that were published in September 2013.

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
- 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

In St Catherine's we believe that our pupils have the right to learn in a supportive, caring and safe environment free from all kinds of intimidation and without fear of being bullied. Because our school is well disciplined and organised, this minimises the occurrence of bullying.

We promote good citizenship, where it is made clear that bullying is a form of anti-social behaviour. In dealing with bullying, we distinguish between the child and the behaviour. However, bullying is WRONG and will not be tolerated.

### **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 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.

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:

- During school time (including break times)
- Going to and from school
- School tours/trips
- Extra-curricular activities

St Catherine's NS reserves the right to take action against bullying perpetrated outside the school which spills over into the school

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

Additional information on different types of bullying is set out in Section 2 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

The "Relevant Teacher(s)" for investigating and dealing with bullying in this school is the class teacher.

## **Prevention Strategies**

The awareness raising 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.
- The Stay Safe programme
- Stop, Think and Do programme in 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> class
- Linking the school's 5 core values with behaviour in the area of bullying.
- Children recognized as vulnerable attend a "breakfast Club with the deputy principal once a week.
- Drama, circle Time and other such activities encourage the growth in children's empathy and understanding.
- 6<sup>th</sup> Class Yard Games
- Ensure the development of children's vocabulary in order that they be well equipped to articulate feelings and emotions around these type of issues
- The use of [www.pacer.org](http://www.pacer.org) materials for children and parents. Many of these are prominently displayed on school corridors.
- A mentoring system for EAL children – younger children have access to an older child who speaks the same language and newly arrived older children have an Irish mentor.
- Student Council are involved in raising awareness programmes by helping organize "Friendship Week" etc.
- The school's Behaviour Support Programme
- School Assemblies
- The Anti-Bullying team will organize awareness-raising exercises during the school year for each class group (e.g. from the "Awareness-Raising" strand of the Anti-Bullying Campaign, via its website), pro-actively explaining the nature and variety, causes, consequences and unacceptability of bullying.
- Pupils are helped to examine the issue of bullying in a calm rational way, outside of the tense context of particular bullying incidents. In the process they are made more aware of the nature of bullying and the various forms that it can take.
- Pupils are made aware that the consequences of bullying behaviour are always bad for those who are targeted, even if this is not always obvious at the time.
- Pupils are encouraged to recognise, reject and report bullying behaviour, either spontaneously or through questionnaires that are regularly used in the school.
- Through presentations or other exercises, the school staff and parents/guardians are made aware of the nature of bullying and the signs that might indicate that a pupil is being bullied. They are

encouraged to be vigilant in watching out for signs of bullying and to report any suspicion of bullying they may have to the “Relevant Teacher” (in the case of staff members) or any staff member (in the case of parents/guardians).

- Through regular reports in school newsletters and other communications as well as at meetings with parent/guardian groups parents/guardians are regularly informed of the activities of the school 'Anti-Bullying Team' and encouraged to support its work.
- Teachers encourage children to reflect through the use of diaries and journals
- An annual anti-bullying/friendship week
- Involve local groups – GAA, Soccer club. Partnerships will be determined and pursued by the Anti-Bullying team.
- Staff are expected to abide by the Dignity in the Workplace Charter and to show good example to the children in their dealings with all school personnel. In this way, we promote respectful relationships throughout the school community.

The following advice is given to children who are being bullied.

Remember! Tell! Silence is the bully’s greatest weapon.

- Tell yourself that you do not deserve to be bullied and that bullying is wrong.
- Tell others that you do not deserve to be bullied and that bullying is wrong.
- Be proud of who you are. It is good to be an individual. You are unique!
- Try not to show that you are upset. It is hard, but a bully enjoys someone’s fear.
- Stay with a group of friends/people. There is safety in numbers.
- Be assertive. Shout, “NO, GO AWAY”! Walk confidently away. Go straight to a teacher or member of staff.
- Fighting back may make things worse.
- Generally it is best to tell an adult you trust straight away. You will be listened to and will get immediate support.

Remember! Teachers will listen to you and will deal with bullies in a way that will end the bullying and will not make things worse for you.

The following advice is given to parents whose children are being bullied.

*How might you know when a child is being bullied?*

Look for unusual behaviour. For example a child may suddenly not wish to attend school, feel ill regularly, act out of character or not complete work to his/her usual standard. Be aware of any of the following:

- Requests for parents to take a child to school or to collect him/her,

even though they may have walked to school independently in the past.

- Unexplained changes of mood. This will often occur before he/she returns to school, e.g. at the end of the weekend or at the end of holidays.
- Frequent minor illnesses, especially headache, tummy aches and bed-wetting. These often accompany the mood changes mentioned above.
- Damage to personal property, (e.g. books, clothes) or loss of same.
- An increase in requests for money. If refused this may provoke angry outbursts.
- Unexplained cuts or bruises.

### Who investigates and deals with bullying?

A consistent and clear approach to investigating and dealing with bullying when it occurs is present in our school. A pupil or parent may bring a bullying concern to any teacher in the school. However, it is common practice that the relevant teacher for investigating and dealing with bullying is the class teacher who deals with bullying incidents which affect any child/children in his/her own class. The Principal and Deputy Principal are always on hand to assist or advise the teacher if needed.

It is recommended that a parent make an appointment to speak with the class teacher privately and not in full view of the class. The principal will arrange class cover for the class teacher to facilitate this. A parent should never approach a child in relation to bullying incidents.

All reported incidents - including anonymous reports of bullying - are investigated and dealt with promptly by the class teacher whose primary aim is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationship of the parties involved (rather than apportion blame).

In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved. In that way pupils gain confidence in "telling". It will be made clear, by all teachers and regularly at school assemblies, that when children report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly. Where necessary cover will be provided for the class teacher to allow for investigation.

Non-teaching staff, special needs assistants, secretaries or any other ancillary staff will report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them or mentioned to them to the relevant teacher.

Parents and pupils are required to co-operate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving any issues and restoring, as far as is possible, the relationship of the parties involved as quickly as possible. The support and co-operation of parents is paramount in dealing with and resolving bullying issues.

. This will be a standard procedure and does not imply that a pupil is guilty of misbehaviour. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this way.

Each member of the group will be supported through the possible pressures that may face them from the other members of the group after being interviewed by the teacher.

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 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. The School, through the 'Relevant Teacher', will ask any pupil to write an account of what happened, as part of an investigation

All interviews will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned.

When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the class teacher will seek answers of what, where, who and why?

This will be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with conflict in a non-aggressive manner.

If a group is involved, each member will be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved will be met as a group. At the group meeting each member will be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements.

In some cases it may also be appropriate and helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s).

In the event that they have been involved in bullying behaviour they are asked to sign a binding promise form that they will treat all pupils fairly, equally and respectfully including the targeted pupil(s). A red incident report form will be filled out by the child. In cases where it has been determined by the teacher that bullying has occurred, the parents of the parties involved will be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken, according to school policy. The school will give the parents an opportunity to discuss ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports for their pupils.

The pupil may be asked to write a letter of apology.

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).

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.

All documentation regarding bullying incidents and their resolution is retained securely in the Principal's office.

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;

Depending on the nature of the bullying sanctions from the school's Code of Behaviour may apply.

The case may be referred to the Board of Management and the pupil may be suspended or expelled from the school.

#### *Referral of serious cases to the HSE*

Where the Principal and Deputy Principal deem that the incident is serious and where the behaviour is regarded as potentially abusive, the school will consult with the HSE Children and Family Social Services and/or the Gardaí as appropriate (in accordance with the Children First and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools).

Where teachers have concerns about a child but are not sure whether to report the matter to the HSE, the Designated Liaison Person must seek advice from the HSE Children and Family Social Services.

Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures through the Principal and the Board of Management.

In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

#### *Support for Pupils Affected by Bullying*

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

Bullied pupils:

- Ending the bullying behaviour,
- Changing the school culture to foster more respect for bullied pupils and all pupils,

- Changing the school culture to foster greater empathy towards and support for bullied pupils,
- 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,
- After resolution, enabling bullied pupils to complete a victim-impact statement,
- A list of agencies who provide counselling services will be made available to parents,
- Helping bullied pupils raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that help 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).
- Tell! Silence is the bully's greatest weapon.
- Tell yourself that you do not deserve to be bullied and that bullying is wrong.
- Tell others that you do not deserve to be bullied and that bullying is wrong.
- Be proud of who you are. It is good to be an individual. You are unique!
- Try not to show that you are upset. It is hard, but a bully enjoys someone's fear.
- Stay with a group of friends/people. There is safety in numbers.
- Be assertive. Shout, "NO, GO AWAY"! Walk confidently away. Go straight to a teacher or member of staff.
- Fighting back may make things worse.
- Generally it is best to tell an adult you trust straight away. You will be listened to and will get immediate support.

N.B. Teachers will listen to you, and will deal with bullies in a way that will end the bullying and will not make things worse for you.

- Implementing a "buddy/ mentor system" in the school

*The following advice is given to parents whose children are being bullied.*

How might you know when a child is being bullied?

- Look for unusual behaviour. For example a child may suddenly not wish to attend school, feel ill regularly, act out of character or not complete work to his/her usual standard. Be aware of any of the following:
- Requests for parents to take a child to school or to collect him/her, even though they may have walked to school independently in the past.

- Unexplained changes of mood. This will often occur before he/she returns to school, e.g. at the end of the weekend or at the end of holidays.
- Frequent minor illnesses, especially headache, tummy aches and bed-wetting. These often accompany the mood changes mentioned above.
- Damage to personal property, (e.g. books, clothes) or loss of same.
- An increase in requests for money. If refused this may provoke angry outbursts.
- Unexplained cuts or bruises.

N.B. A parent should never approach a child in relation to bullying incidents.

#### *Bullying pupils:*

- 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,
- A list of agencies who provide counselling services will be made available to parents,
- 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.

#### **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.

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.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on **March 11 2014**

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website (or where none exists, is otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parents' Association (where one exists). A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department of Education and Skills and to the patron if requested.

12. 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 (or where none exists, be otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parents' Association (where one exists). 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.

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal)

Date: **March 11 2014** \_\_\_\_\_

Date of next review: **February 2015**

## Appendix 1

Bullying can take a number of forms. These may include any of the following (this list is not exhaustive):

Repeated aggressive behaviour/attitude/body language, for example:

Shouting and uncontrolled anger,

Personal insults,

Verbal abuse,

Offensive language directed at an individual,

Continually shouting or dismissing others,

Public verbal attacks/criticism,

Domineering behaviour,

Open aggression,

Offensive gestures and unwanted physical contact.

Intimidation, either physical, psychological or emotional, for example:

Treating in a dictatorial manner,

Ridicule,

Persistent slagging,

Deliberate staring with the intent to discomfort.

Persistent rudeness in behaviour and attitude toward a particular individual.

Asking inappropriate questions/making inappropriate comments re. personal life/family

Asking inappropriate questions/making inappropriate comments re. social life or schoolwork.

Interference with property, for example:

Stealing/damaging books or equipment

Stealing/damaging clothing or other property

Demanding money with menaces

Persistently moving, hiding or interfering with property

Marking/defacing property

Undermining/Public or Private Humiliation, for example:

Condescending tone,

Deliberately withholding significant information and resources,

Writing of anonymous notes,

Malicious, disparaging or demeaning comments,

Malicious tricks/derogatory jokes,

Knowingly spreading rumours,

Belittling others' efforts, their enthusiasm or their new ideas,

Derogatory or offensive nicknames (name-calling),

Using electronic or other media for any of the above (cyber bullying),

Disrespectfully mimicking a particular individual in his/her absence,

Deliberately refusing to address issues focusing instead on the person.

Ostracising or isolating, for example:

Deliberately marginalising an individual

Deliberately preventing a person from joining a group,

Deliberately preventing from joining in an activity, schoolwork-related or recreational

Blaming a pupil for things s/he did not do.