



St. Matthew's National School

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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. Matthew's N.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 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
 - 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
 - explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based 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)
 - On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy
3. 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. Investigating and dealing with Bullying

All alleged incidents of bullying behaviour will be investigated by the class teacher.

- a. It should be recognised that there can be considerable peer pressure against reporting bullying. Hence, all incidents of bullying behaviour should be investigated in a manner which will, as far as is practically possible, respect the privacy, anonymity, sensitivities and dignities of the child or children involved (as either target(s) or perpetrator(s)).
- b. In many cases, it will also be helpful to talk to the parents of the parties involved and witnesses to the bullying behaviour.
- c. In the investigation of incidents of bullying behaviour, investigators should communicate acceptance of what the person says, and listen actively, recording specific grievances (esp. re: concrete events)
- d. A standardised reporting form may be used in the recording and investigation of incidents of bullying behaviour (see Appendix 3)

The Principal/Deputy Principal may participate in any investigation or dealings with alleged incidents of bullying behaviour.

5. Education and Prevention Strategies

Once off incidences of bad behaviour should be reported to the class teacher by pupil or parent (Appendix 3 – Anti-Bullying Awareness – Incident Report Form). The purpose of this is to create an awareness of the impact of pupils behaviour on others thereby creating an understanding of the feelings of others and to nip bad behaviour in the bud.

- a. Parents are requested and actively encouraged to make their children aware of the unacceptability of bullying behaviour, and encourage them to report such behaviour to their teachers in school, or the staff of organisations to which they belong, whenever they witness it.
- b. In our school, children and their parents will be made aware of the unacceptability of bullying behaviour, and are encouraged by the staff to report such behaviour to staff whenever they witness it. Reporting bullying behaviour is not telling tales (which is motivated by the wish to get someone in trouble), but is acting responsibly (as it is motivated by the wish to help someone who is being physically or emotionally hurt).
- c. The Board of Management and staff are fully committed to the implementation of this anti-bullying policy and its attendant strategies. They will, when appropriate, take the opportunity to promote our motto (Kind hands, kind feet, kind words) and have specific lessons re bullying behaviour.
- d. The Stay Safe Programme is taught to all classes annually.
- e. Further education is provided as part of the Social, Personal and Health Education Programme, e.g. Walk Tall.

- f. This school restricts the use of mobile phones and internet access. These actions in themselves constitute a preventative measure against cyber-bullying in our school.
- g. This school strongly encourages parents to make sure that they and their children are aware of the risks of technology use, and that they know what to do if their child is cyber bullied. This school also advises that parental control software for their children's mobile phones and home computers should be considered.
- h. Teachers are required to teach the Webwise programme each September to inform/remind the pupils about cyber safety.
- i. Every year, the school will arrange for an internet safety talk to the pupils in 5th & 6th Class.
- j. Should such cases occur, this school will work with the Gardaí and other support agencies in dealing with serious incidents of cyber bullying.

6. Procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying

Class teachers are responsible for investigation, follow up and recording of bully behaviour as outlined in Section 4. The Principal/Deputy Principal may be involved at any/all stages.

- a. 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 relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame).
- b. 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.
- c. All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the class teacher. In that way pupils will gain confidence in 'telling.' This confidence factor is of vital importance. It should be made clear to all pupils that when they report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.
- d. Non-teaching staff (e.g. secretaries, SNAs, caretaker etc) are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the class teacher
- e. 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 practicable, the relationships of the parties involved as quickly as possible
- f. It is very important that all involved (including each set of pupils and parents) understand the above approach from the outset
- g. Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents.
- h. Incidents are generally best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.
- i. All interviews should be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this way.
- j. When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the class teacher should seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This should be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner.
- k. When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the class teacher should seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This should be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner

- l. If a group is involved, each member should be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved should be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member should be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements.
- m. Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that may face them from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher
- n. It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s)
- o. In cases where it has been determined by the class teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved should be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken (by reference to the school policy. The school should give parents an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports for their pupils)
- p. Where the class teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts should be made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied
- q. It must also be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parents) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parents and the school
- r. Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved should be arranged separately with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date if the pupil who has been bullied is ready and agreeable. This can have a therapeutic effect
- s. In cases where the relevant teacher 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, it must be recorded by the relevant teacher in the recording template at Appendix 3.
- t. In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed, the class teacher must, as part of his/her professional judgement, take the following factors into account:
 - Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased
 - Whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable
 - Whether the relationships between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable
 - Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the school Principal or Deputy Principal
 - 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
 - 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 have a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

Procedures for recording bullying behaviour :

The Board of Management will ensure that the school has clear procedures for the formal noting and reporting of bullying behaviour and are documented in the school's anti-bullying policy. All records will be maintained in accordance with relevant data protection legislation. The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour will adhere to the following:

(i) While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the teacher, the teacher will use his/her professional judgement in relation to the records to be kept of these reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same

(ii) If it is established by the teacher that bullying has occurred, the teacher must keep appropriate written records which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved

(iii) The teacher must use the recording template at **Appendix 4** to record the bullying behaviour in the following circumstances:

a) 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 occurred; and

b) where the school has decided as part of its anti-bullying policy that in certain circumstances bullying behaviour must be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable.

In each of the circumstances at (a) and (b) above, the recording template at **Appendix 4** must be completed in full and retained by the teacher in question and a copy provided to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable. It should also be noted that the timeline for recording bullying behaviour in the recording template at **Appendix 4** does not in any way preclude the teacher from consulting the Principal or Deputy Principal at an earlier stage in relation to a case.

7. **The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows:**
- a. If it is, following the procedures outlined in section 4, above, concluded that a pupil has been involved as a perpetrator of bullying behaviour, the perpetrator of the bullying behaviour should be encouraged to understand the impact that his/her behaviour has had on the target, and to try and see the situation from his/her point of view.
 - b. In cases where bullying behaviour has occurred, teachers will meet with the parents of the parties involved as appropriate, and will explain the actions being taken and the reasons for them. Ways in which they can reinforce or support these actions will be discussed.
 - c. Where deemed appropriate, sanctions against those who have perpetrated bullying behaviour will be made.
 - d. Follow-up interviews may be conducted with the parties involved, in order to review and evaluate progress.

Restorative justice

- Prepare for interview with the pupils concerned
- Perpetrator/Victim interviewed separately.
- Children brought together for approx half an hour.
- Imbalance of power removed- Facilitator and pupils in room.
- Each side listened to- emphasis on empathy for both parties.
- Perpetrator discusses behaviour and reasons for behaviour.
- Victim has chance to express feelings.

Restorative Questions

- What happened?
- What were you thinking of at the time?
- What have you thought about it since?
- Who has been affected and in what way?
- How could things have been done differently?
- What do you think needs to happen next?

The class teacher and a learning support/resource teacher will provide a programme of support for pupils who have been bullied. This programme of support is also part of the school's intervention process. Pupils involved in bullying behaviour need assistance on an ongoing basis. For those with low self-esteem, opportunities will be developed to increase feelings of self-worth. The learning strategies applied within the school allow for the enhancement of the pupil's self-worth. Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour may need counselling to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others. Pupils who observe incidents of bullying behaviour should be encouraged to discuss them with teachers.

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. This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 6/5/14. Reviewed yearly.

11. This policy is available on the school's website. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department of Education and Skills and the patron if requested.

12. This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management annually and the website updated to confirm the review. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department of Education and Skills.

Date of next review: May 2020

Passed by Board of Management:	May 2014
Reviewed	May 2017
Reviewed	May 2018
Reviewed	May 2019
Reviewed	June 2020
Reviewed	June 2021