St. Andrew's N.S.

Anti-Bullying Policy

This policy should be read in conjunction with all other school policies.

Policy Ratified and updated	March 2014 March 2019 20th October 2021

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1. Introduction

In accordance with the requirements of Section 23 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the Code of Behaviour Guidelines for schools issued by the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) (Now subsumed into The Child and Family Agency), the Board of Management of St Andrew'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 by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) in September 2013.

2. Ethos

St. Andrew's N.S. strives to equally value and include all pupils and their families in our school community, irrespective of their gender, social background, family unit, ethnicity, differing belief systems, physical/intellectual/emotional/cognitive ability and educational achievement.

3. Key Principles of 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 indeed their families. The Board is therefore fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour and allegation of same. We therefore strive to:

- Create a positive school culture and climate which is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity

- Encourage pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment

- Promote respectful relationships across the school community

- Provide effective leadership within and throughout the school

- Adopt a whole school approach amongst staff in addressing allegations of bullying

- Develop a shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact on victims and perpetrators

- Implement educational and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) which aim to build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils

- Explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying

- Create school supervisory and pupil monitoring structures

- Support staff in their care of our pupils and in dealing with other adults within the school context

- Promote structures to facilitate recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour including use of established intervention strategies, which are both fair and consistent

- Engage in on-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the Anti-Bullying Policy as part of the school's self evaluation process

4. Definition of Bullying

In accordance with the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* bullying is defined as follows:

Bullying is defined as being "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, transphobic bullying, racist bullying, based on a person's membership of the Traveller Community and bullying of those with additional 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 available on www.education.ie*

5. Relevant School Personnel

While all staff members (both ancillary and teaching) have a duty of care towards pupils, the key personnel involved include; the class teacher(s) of all pupils involved, and the principal/deputy principal. Support teachers may be involved if deemed appropriate and/or necessary.

6. Prevention Strategies

St. Andrew's N.S. will adopt the following prevention strategies:

- Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Curriculum: Within this curricular area the theme of bullying is explicitly taught under the following theme areas:

  1. Definition

2. Prevention

3. Reporting

Teachers may choose to use role play scenarios, stories, poems and other teaching methodologies to convey self care strategies. The Walk Tall and Stay Safe programme emphasises the promotion of pupil self esteem. A minimum of one lesson per term will be taught at each class level within this area with targeted classes engaging in more detailed coverage. Please refer to the school's SPHE policy available from the school office by request.

- Religious Education: Within the world religions strand of The Follow Me Programme the theme of diversity and mutual respect of diverse faiths and cultures is promoted.

- Hidden Curriculum/Incidental Learning: Situations involving conflict amongst pupils, which may arise in the classroom/playground etc. can be used as a teaching tool where appropriate.

- ICT: The Webwise Programme (2nd – 6th Classes) will be used to raise awareness of cyber-bullying and safety strategies for pupils when using IT.

- Cyber-bullying awareness workshops and information evenings are arranged in conjunction with our PTA for all members of the school community.

- Parents from other countries are welcomed into classrooms to share their language culture.

- Parents are informed of community based mental health awareness support services and information evenings. An ongoing school link is maintained with these services.

- Senior class visits from the community Garda regarding bullying/cyber-bullying.

7. School Procedures

The primary focus for the relevant 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).** St. Andrew's N.S. has clear procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying. The following procedures are adopted:

7.1 Investigation Procedures

- 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.

- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying are investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher to ensure pupils gain confidence in 'telling'. It is made clear to all pupils that when they report incidents of bullying **they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly** (Stay Safe Programme).

- All teaching (including ECA teachers and helpers) and ancillary staff should report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher and principal.

- 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.

- All individuals involved are made aware (including each set of pupils and parents) of the above approach from the outset.

7.2 Role of School Staff

- Teachers endeavour to adopt a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents.

- Where other staff members are available to supervise the class(es) concerned, incidents are, where possible, investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.

- Teachers endeavour to engage in interviews with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved may also be called upon to provide relevant information.

- When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher seeks answers using questions of what, where, when, who and why.

- If a group is allegedly involved in bullying incidents, each member is interviewed individually at the outset. Thereafter, all those involved may 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.

- Where necessary pupils may be asked to provide a written account/diary of the alleged incident(s) in a manner appropriate to their age and developmental stage.

- Teachers endeavour to support each member of a group through the possible pressures that they may face from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher. This support may take the form of close monitoring by staff members involved (both in class and at play time). Other staff members are made aware of potentially vulnerable children following the investigation. This is communicated to staff during staff meetings in memos or verbally.

7.3 When Bullying has Occurred

- In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved will be contacted following pupil interviews to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken where necessary. The school may invite parents for face-to-face meetings to provide them with an opportunity to discuss ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school. Parents will be informed of relevant supports available for the child, both in school and from outside agencies.

- Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has engaged in bullying behaviour, it is made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's Anti-

Bullying Policy. At this stage efforts will be made to enable the child to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied.

- It is 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. It therefore should not be a topic for discussion outside the school led process.

- Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved will 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/comfortable with this.

7.4 Unresolved Bullying

- In cases where the relevant teacher considers that the bullying behaviour is ongoing a copy of the bullying record template must be filled out and submitted to the principal *(see recording template at Appendix 1).* **All reports are retained in line with the General Data Protection Regulation Act 2016. (GDPR)**

- In cases where initial restorative practices are unsuccessful and where the bullying behaviour persists, school based sanctions, as set out in the school's code of behaviour, will be implemented. These sanctions may include suspension and/or expulsion from the school.

- 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/grievance procedures. (See school booklet at www.standrewsbray.ie)

- In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, they are advised of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

7.5 Serious Incidents of Bullying and Child Protection Issues

- In relation to bullying in schools, Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017 (Children First) and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2017) provide that in situations where "the incident is serious and where the behaviour is regarded as potentially abusive, the school DLP (Designated Liaison Person) must consult the Tusla - Child and Family Agency with a view to drawing up an appropriate response, such as a management plan".

- Serious instances of bullying behaviour will be handled in accordance with the Children First and The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, will be referred to Tusla- Child and Family Agency and/or Gardaí as appropriate.

- The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools also state that where school personnel have concerns about a child but are not sure whether to report the matter to Tusla-Child and Family Agency, the Designated Liaison Person must seek advice from Tusla regarding further procedures to be adopted by the school.

8. The Schools Programme of Support for Working with Pupils Affected by Bullying

A school based programme of support for pupils involved in bullying incidents include use of the following strategies and supports:

- Stay Safe Programme

- Relevant sections of the Walk Tall Programme

- Relevant sections of the RSE Programme

- Cyber bullying awareness talks

- Incidental class teaching/discussion

- Webwise Programme

- Explicit teaching in discussion groups for pupils with SEN

- Weaving Wellbeing (2nd to 6th)

9. 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. Please refer to policy on Supervision of Pupils.

10. Prevention of Harassment

The Board of Management confirms that the school will, in accordance with its ethos and 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.

11. Ratification and Review by Board of Management

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 27th March 2014 and was reviewed by the Board of Management on 20th October 2021.

This policy has been made available to school personnel/members of the school community and has been published on the school website, with hard copies available to

parents in the school foyer. Copies of this policy will be made available to the DES and the school's Patron if requested.

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year or when necessary. Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, published on the school website or in school newsletters. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the DES.

Signed: _Peter Mc Crodder_   Signed: _Stephen Wood_

(Chairperson of Board of Management)   (Principal)

Date: 20th October 2021   Date: 20th October 2021