School Position on Bullying

The St Joseph's school community believes 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 all staff members, exists to cultivate an environment free from bullying. There is a Care Team in place to address the needs of children and put support structures in place.

The immediate priority, should a bullying incident occur, is ending the bullying, (*thereby protecting the person(s) being targeted*), resolving the issues and restoring the relationships involved insofar as is practicable using a "Reform, not Blame" approach.

All staff, pupils and the school community 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 pupils in St. Joseph's   they should notify the principal of the school. Bullying behaviour is too serious not to report.

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. Friendship Week and the SPHE programme help to raise awareness of friendships and teach strategies to maintain wellbeing and stay safe.

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 Joseph'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 and promotes respectful relationships across the school community. "Every child, every chance, every day".
   - 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. 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*. (See information inserted at the end of this policy.

4.   The relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows:
   - The class teacher
   - The principal teacher thereafter if necessary

5.   The following education and prevention strategies will be used at the appropriate and relevant level for each class:
   - St Joseph's N.S is a junior school and we pursue active strategies to ensure that children experience a school climate which encourages respect, trust, caring, consideration and support for others.   As pupils model their behaviour on the behaviour of adults, all staff members and volunteers must be careful to act as good role models and not misuse their authority.   Moreover they should be firm, clear and consistent in their disciplinary measures. Techniques based on positive motivation and recognition and reward have been shown to be more effective in promoting desired behaviour than methods which are based on threat and fear.   The positive discipline approach is adapted from the Incredible Years programme.   Some permanent staff members have been trained by NEPS as Incredible Years Teachers.
   - Each class is committed to providing opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth and to promote emotional intelligence and resilience. Friendship Weeks (September, January, May) Circle Time sessions, classroom displays and buddy sessions focus attention on building positive relationships and affirming good behaviours.   Key messages are displayed in classrooms and throughout the school.
   - Regular Whole staff professional development will take place on bullying to ensure that all staff members develop an awareness of what bullying is, how it impacts on pupils' lives and the need to respond to it   -   prevention and intervention.
   - Parents will be informed of the school policy on bullying and encouraged to look for signs of bullying. They are also informed how to contact the school if they have information or want to report bullying.
   - There will be supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors and school grounds. Non-teaching and ancillary staff will be encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers. Supervision will also apply to monitoring student use of communication technology within the school.
   - We have a number of initiatives to promote emotional well-being, social skills and positive mental health in the school. A reality therapist and a play therapist provide

support for individuals and small groups of children. A dedicated Care Team meet regularly to put support systems in place for children in need. The School Completion Programme provides funding to provide therapeutic activities such as pottery, dance or art classes. The Home School Community Liaison teacher provides a vital link between parents and school and ensures that there is a team approach to promoting positive behaviour and supporting children .

Curriculum/School Programmes

- A number of programmes taught in the school are particularly relevant to the prevention of bullying , building resilience, emotional well-being and the promotion of respect for diversity and inclusiveness. The SPHE curriculum strands have particular relevance.

- The Stay Safe programme and RSE programme is implemented at all levels and Walk Tall, Bí Folláin and other relevant resources are used to enhance children's self protection skills including their ability to recognize and cope with bullying

- Zippy's Friends is a school based social and emotional learning programme which was developed by Partnership for Children, academics and educational resources specialists.   Children are taught to problem solve and to develop their own positive strategies to deal with problems through activities, stories, discussion, games and role-play.   Children in first class are taught the Zippy's Friends programme.

- Fun Friends is an evidence based anxiety prevention and resilience building programame developed by Dr. Paula Barrett.   This programme helps pupils to develop resilience by teaching them effective strategies to copy with, problem solve and manage all kinds of emotional distress, including worry, stress, change and anxiety.   Children in second class are taught the Fun Friends programme.

   Links to Other School Policies
   Code of Behaviour, Child Protection Policy, Supervision of Pupils, Acceptable Use Policy (ICT), Attendance Policy

6. Procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying.

   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 those involved rather than to apportion blame. (***Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2013****)*

- All the staff working in St Joseph's N.S has a shared understanding of what bullying is and each member has a duty to report any incidents of bullying witnessed by them.
- All children are encouraged to tell an adult if they feel they are being bullied. Children are taught ways to tell their class teacher, learning support teacher, SNA, parents, family

member or another adult through role-play - Stay Safe, Section 4.   Children may speak to their teacher or may be encouraged to draw pictures, write a note or communicate in an alternative way.

- All reports of bullying, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. Serious incidents of bullying are reported to the principal.
- Early intervention is advised with a view to resolving matters and restoring relationships. Parents/guardians and pupils are required to co-operate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving any issues.

Staged interventions:

Stage 1.

Pupils who are alleged to have been involved in the bullying behaviour will be interviewed individually and children may be asked to write an account or draw pictures of what occurred. The children will be aware that the interview and request of written accounts is to help find out what happened and not a presumption of guilt. If pupils have been found to have been involved in bullying, they will be asked to sign an agreement that they will stop this behaviour immediately and treat all pupils with respect.   Age-appropriate templates will be used.

Parents will be notified of this agreement.

The first instances of bullying will be treated like this to enable the teacher to emphasise the policy of showing how damaging bullying is rather than moving to sanctions immediately. It may also facilitate the investigation if pupils are made aware when they are being interviewed that the policy is to **resolve** rather than punish.
The relevant teacher will complete a report at this first stage to indicate the findings of the investigation, the decision reached and the outcome of the teacher's intervention. A copy of the agreement with the pupils should be retained with this written report in the positive discipline file.

Stage 2:

 If the bullying behaviour continues and the pupils are found to have broken the agreement (or if the bullying behaviour is of a very serious nature initially) parents are invited to the school and informed of the investigations. Parents will be asked to countersign a new agreement. The pupils will be informed of the serious nature of their actions and that if this agreement is broken that sanctions may be imposed. The relevant teacher will keep a written record of this meeting with the parents and retain a copy of the new agreement.

Stage 3:

In the event of further bullying behaviour the parents will be invited to the school to meet with the principal and the relevant teacher with one of the following outcomes:

- A new strategy to end the bullying
- The Principal may impose a suspension on the pupil
- The matter may be referred to the BOM and the pupil may be expelled.

7.   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*):

- In-school supports will be provided for pupils affected by bullying. Activities and programmes designed to raise self-esteem, build emotional resilience and social skills will prioritise those children who are most at risk.
     Care Team- regular meetings
     Reality therapy. Buddy sessions . Individual therapy. Parental involvement.
     Social skills. Small group friendship games.
     Circle Time sessions.
- The Care Team may refer children to outside agencies such as Barnados for further support if appropriate.
- Pupils should understand that there are no innocent bystanders and that all incidents of bullying behaviour must be reported to a teacher.

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 Travelling community.

10.   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 and the patron if requested.

11.   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, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Ratification

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 17th May 2021

Next review date: May 2022

Bernie Mann, Chairperson, Board of Management   -   17/5/2021

Linda Dowling, Principal   -   17/5/2021

Appendix 2 Practical tips for building a positive school culture and climate

- Model respectful behaviour to all members of the school community at all times.

- Explicitly teach pupils what respectful language and respectful behaviour looks like, acts like, sounds like and feels like in class and around the school.

- Catch them being good - notice and acknowledge desired respectful behaviour by providing positive attention.

- Have a system of encouragement and rewards to promote desired behaviour and compliance with the school rules and routines.

- Display key respect messages in classrooms, in assembly areas and around the school. Involve pupils in the development of these messages.

- Consistently tackle the use of discriminatory and derogatory language in the school – this includes homophobic and racist language and language that is belittling of pupils with a disability or SEN.

- Give constructive feedback to pupils when respectful behaviour and respectful language are absent.

- Explicitly teach pupils about the appropriate use of social media.

- Actively promote the right of every member of the school community to be safe and secure in school.

- Highlight and explicitly teach school rules in pupil friendly language in the classroom and in common areas.

  All staff must actively watch out for signs of bullying behaviour.

- Ensure there is adequate playground/school yard/outdoor supervision.