

Anti-Bullying Policy: Star of the Sea N.S.

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 Star of the Sea National School** 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,

(<http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/Anti-Bullying-Procedures-for-Primary-and-Post-Primary-Schools.pdf>).

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) 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;

(b) Effective leadership

(c) A school-wide approach

(d) A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact

(e) 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 trans-phobic bullying;

(f) Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils

(g) Supports for staff

(h) Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies); and

(i) 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 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*. 2

4. The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows: (see Section 6.8 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools): The Relevant Teachers in this school are:

1. All Class teachers
2. Special Duties Teacher & Principal (shared caseload)

Any teacher may act as a relevant teacher if circumstances warrant it.

5. 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 are as follows (see Section 6.5 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):

- A school-wide approach to the fostering of respect for all members of the school community.
- The promotion of the value of diversity to address issues of prejudice and stereotyping, and highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour
- Pupils are provided with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth through formal and informal interactions. Extra-curricular activities such as sport, gymnastics, art and computers are carried out to give pupils opportunities to enhance self-esteem.
- Pupils are supervised during the school day, while on school tours and while partaking in school organised extra-curricular activities. Non-teaching and ancillary staff are encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers.
- Children are supervised when given access to the internet in line with our Acceptable Use Policy.
- The strategy of “Say no, Get away and Tell” is taught through the Stay Safe Programme as a way to deal with bullying behaviour.
- The school’s anti-bullying policy is available to all members of the school community.
- Pupils are encouraged to report incidents of bullying. It is made clear to pupils that when they report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but behaving responsibly.
- Parents/guardians who suspect that their child is being bullied are encouraged to make an appointment with the relevant teacher through the school office.
- The SPHE Curriculum including Walk Tall, RSE and Stay Safe Programmes are fully implemented in the school.
- The community Gardai deliver the Garda SPHE Programmes in this school from time to time. These lessons, delivered by Community Gardai, cover issues around personal safety and cyber-bullying.
- The school specifically considers the additional needs of SEN pupils with regard to programme implementation and the development of skills and strategies to enable all pupils to respond appropriately.

6. 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*):

- In investigating and dealing with bullying, the (relevant) teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) 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
- Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach
- Where possible incidents should be investigated in a manner which ensures the privacy of all involved
- 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

- All reports should be investigated by the relevant teacher in a calm manner- Who? What? Where? Why? When?
- 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;
- Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that may face them from the other members of the group after the interview by the teacher;
- It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s)

In cases where the relevant teacher establishes that bullying has occurred, it is reported to the Principal/Deputy Principal.

- The person alleged of engaging in bullying behaviour will be asked to reflect on his/her behaviour and its consequences for himself/herself and others.
- Parents will be made aware of this behaviour and requested to come and discuss it with teacher/principal, with a view to solving the problem.
- Sanctions (if applicable) will be invoked in line with the School Code of Behaviour.
- Any disciplinary sanctions are a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his/her parents/guardians and the school.

Monitoring and Follow Up

- The situation will continue to be monitored to ensure that the problem has been resolved. This monitoring will include teacher observation and discussion with pupil(s) and parent(s)/guardian(s) involved.
- Where a parent(s)/guardian(s) is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parent will be referred 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 will advise parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.
- Serious instances of bullying behaviour will, in accordance with the Children First and Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools be referred to the HSE Children and Family Services and /or Gardaí as appropriate.
- In line with the Child Protection Policy of this school, where school personnel have concerns about a child but are unsure whether to report the matter to the HSE, the Designated Liaison Person must seek advice from the HSE.

Recording Incidents

- All staff must keep a written record of any incidents witnessed by them or notified to them. All incidents must be reported to the relevant teacher.
- While all reports must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the relevant teacher must keep a written record of the reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same.
- The relevant teacher must inform the Principal of all incidents being investigated.

Formal Stage 1- Determination that bullying has occurred

- If it is established by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher must keep appropriate written records which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.
- All records kept by the relevant teacher will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the classroom and a copy given to the Principal.

Stage 2 –Appendix 3 (From DES Procedures)

- The relevant teacher must use the recording template at Appendix 3 to record bullying behaviour 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 has occurred.
- This Appendix 3 record will be filed in the principal's office and a copy will be retained by the relevant teacher.
- The Principal will provide a report to the Board of Management, once a term outlining the number of Appendix 3 template reports received since the previous report to the Board and also confirmation that all of these cases have been, or are being dealt with in accordance with the school's anti-bullying policy and Department procedures.

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*):

- RSE programmes and Stay Safe are taught at all class levels.
- Pupils are given opportunities to become involved in extra-curricular activities to develop positive self-worth.
- If pupils require counselling or further supports, the school will endeavour to liaise with the appropriate agencies to organise same. This may be for the pupil affected by bullying or involved in the bullying behaviour.
- Friends for Life is available in Star of the Sea NS.
- Friendship Week throughout the school year to promote positive relationships.

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 _____ [date].

11. 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.

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, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Signed: _____ Signed: _____

(Chairperson of Board of Management) (Principal)

Date: _____ Date: _____

Date of next review: _____