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Anti-Bullying Policy

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Anti-Bullying Policy

1. Introduction

In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the code of behaviour guidelines issued by the National Education Welfare Board, the Board of Management of St. Mary's BNS 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.

2. 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 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-
 - i. is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity;
 - ii. encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment; and
 - iii. 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-
 - i. build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and
 - ii. 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. The 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 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* and Appendix 1.

4. Roles and Responsibilities in Implementing our Policy

The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying is (are) as follows:

- Class teacher
- Special Education Teacher
- Deputy Principal
- Principal
- The Policy Co-ordinator (Organising friendship week, assemblies to raise awareness of the importance of good relationships, outside speakers
- SNAs (supervision of students, play an important role in reporting)

5. Our Education and Prevention Strategies

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*):

School-wide approach

- A school-wide approach to the fostering of respect for all members of the school community. The school's core values are kindness, honesty, respect and responsibility. The core values are set out in the school's Code of Behaviour. The values underpin expectations of behaviour and interactions between pupils, staff and members of the school community.
- Visually prominent child friendly posters and displays promoting positive relationships and diversity.
- Internet Safety Week and Wellbeing Week.
- Internet Safety Talk for parents by an outside agency such as Garda Síochána, external facilitators
- The promotion of the value of diversity to address issues of prejudice and stereotyping, and highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour.
- The fostering and enhancing of the self-esteem of all our pupils through both curricular and extracurricular activities. Pupils will be provided with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth through formal and informal interactions.
- Audits of professional development needs with a view to assessing staff requirements through internal staff knowledge/expertise and external sources
- Based on audits, whole staff professional development on bullying to ensure that all staff develops an awareness of what bullying is, how it impacts on pupils' lives and the need to respond to it-prevention and intervention.
- Professional development with specific focus on the training of the relevant teacher(s)
- School wide awareness raising and training on all aspects of bullying, to include pupils, parent(s)/guardian(s) and the wider school community (e.g. Ger Brick seminars for 5th Class pupils, parents and teachers)
- Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extra-curricular activities. 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
- Involvement of the student council in contributing to a safe school environment and encourage a culture of peer respect and support – particularly through inter-class buddy system.

- Development and promotion of an Anti-Bullying class level charter - to be displayed publicly in classrooms.
- The school's anti-bullying policy is discussed with pupils and all parent(s)/guardian(s) are directed to the policy on the school's website and given a copy of the school's Code of Behaviour of the school every year
- The implementation of regular whole school awareness measures e.g. class charters, Cyber Safety Week, annual Friendship Week and parent(s)/guardian(s) & teacher seminars; regular school or year group assemblies by principal, deputy principal and/or assistant principals.
- Encourage a culture of telling, with particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders. 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.
- Ensuring that pupils know who to tell and how to tell, e.g.:
 - Direct approach to teacher at an appropriate time, for example after class.
 - Hand note up with homework.
 - Make a phone call to the school or to a trusted teacher in the school.
 - Classroom message boxes/share boxes
 - Get a parent(s)/guardian(s) or friend to tell on your behalf.
 - Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place.
- Protocols for parent(s)/guardian(s) to approach teachers/the school if they suspect that their child is being bullied are clearly communicated at the beginning of the school year and are in the School Information Booklet.
- An Acceptable Use Policy in the school to include the necessary steps to ensure that the access to technology within the school is strictly monitored, as is the pupils' use of mobile phones.
- Supports used include: Amber Flag Programme
Supports available include: Childline

Implementation of curriculum

- The full implementation of the SPHE curriculum and the RSE and Stay Safe Programmes.
- Continuous Professional Development for staff in delivering these programmes.
- School wide delivery of lessons on bullying from evidence based programmes, e.g., Stay Safe Programme, The Walk Tall Programme, Friends for Life.
- School wide approach to on **Relational aggression** (Stay Safe, Walk Tall), **Cyber Bullying** (Web wise Primary teachers' resources), **Homophobic and Transphobic Bullying (school library books)** **also see** "Sexual Orientation advice for schools" (RSE Primary, PDST Information Booklet <https://pdst.ie/sites/default/files/Information%20Booklet%20for%20Schools%20Post%20Primary%20%281%29%20.pdf>). **Diversity and Interculturalism**, Diversity Week, Yellow Flag Programme application.
- Delivery of the Garda SPHE Programmes at primary. These lessons, delivered by Community Gardai, cover issues around personal safety and cyber-bullying
- For pupils with additional needs of the SPHE and Stay Safe programmes may occur via the class or support teacher. School may consult NEPS psychologist or online NEPS resources for support in certain circumstances
- The school will implement the advice in "Sexual Orientation advice for schools" (RSE Primary, see booklet).

Links to other policies and Activities

- Code of Behaviour, Child Safeguarding and Risk Assessment, supervision of pupils, Acceptable Use policy, Attendance Strategy, Well-being Policy, School Council, sporting activities.

6. Our Procedures for Reporting, Investigation, Resolution/Follow-up and Recording 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 the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame); The school's procedures must be consistent with the following approach. Every effort will be made to ensure that all involved (including pupils, parents/guardians) understand this approach from the outset.

6.1 Reporting bullying behaviour

- Any pupil or parent(s)/guardian(s) may bring a bullying incident to any teacher in the school.
- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying, will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher.
- Teaching and non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), bus escorts, caretakers, cleaners must report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher;

6.2 Investigating and dealing with incidents: (see section 6.8.9 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 outside the classroom situation to ensure 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;
- When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant 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;
- 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 it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parent(s)/guardian(s) 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 parent(s)/guardian(s) an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports provided to the pupils;

- Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to him how he is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts should be made to try to get him to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied;
- It must also be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parent(s)/guardian(s)) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school;

6.3 Resolution/ Follow up

- In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant 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 parent(s)/guardian(s) or the school Principal or Deputy Principal
- 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.
- 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(s)/guardian(s) must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures.
- In the event that a parent(s)/guardian(s) has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parent(s)/guardian(s) of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

6.4 Recording of Bullying Behaviour

It is imperative that all recording of bullying incidents must be done in an objective and factual manner.

The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour are as follows:

Informal- pre-determination that bullying has occurred

- All staff must keep a written record of any incidents witnessed by them or notified to them. – the Teachers' Yearly Planner is an appropriate location for informal records
- While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying 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 is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.
- Written records must to be provided to the principal and will be stored on the pupil file of both/all children involved. (Templates for recording bullying are available on the Aladdin homepage and staffroom). All incidents must be reported to the relevant teacher, including next year's class teacher.

Formal Stage 2

The relevant teacher must use the recording template attached to record the bullying behaviour in the following circumstances:

- a) in cases where he considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he has determined that bullying behaviour occurred; and
- b) All confirmed instances of bullying behaviour must be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable.

The recording template must be retained by the relevant teacher in question and a copy maintained by the principal.

Teachers records are retained in a secure space (locked filing cabinet) in the teacher's classroom. All report templates given to the Principal will be retained on pupil files and reported to the Board of Management.

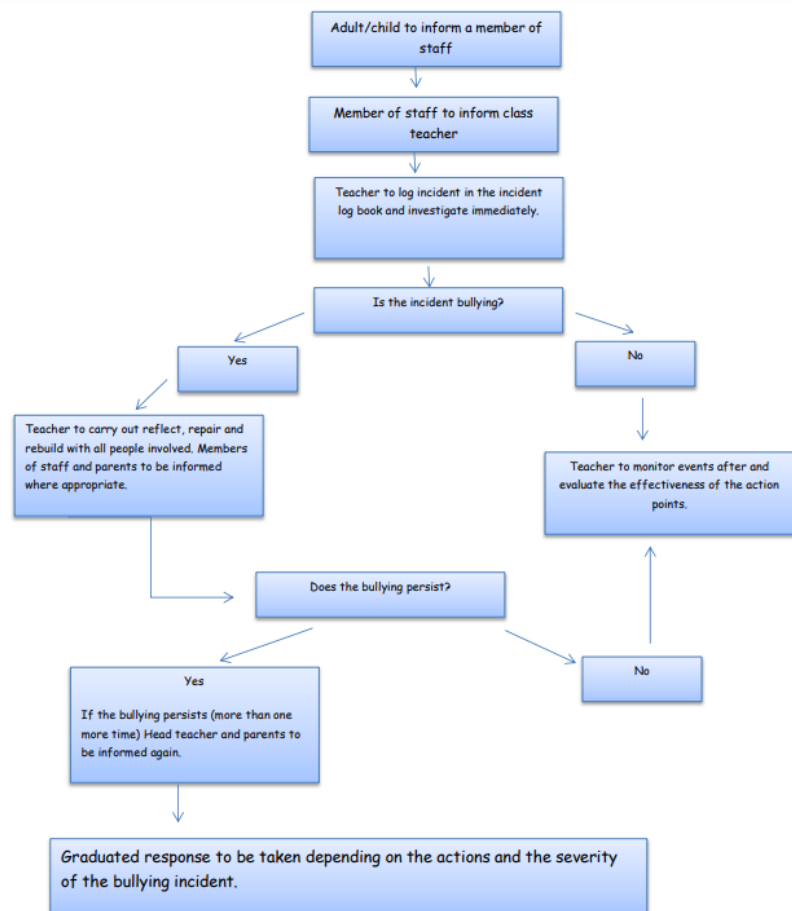
Established intervention strategies

- Teacher interviews with all pupils
- Negotiating agreements between pupils and following these up by monitoring progress. This can be on an informal basis or implemented through a more structured mediation process
- Working with parent/guardian to support school interventions
- No Blame Approach
- Circle Time
- Restorative interviews
- Restorative conferencing
- Implementing questionnaires

St. Mary's BNS is committed to exploring these interventions further:

- The traditional successful disciplinary approach
- Strengthening the victim
- Mediation
- Restorative Practice
- The Support Group Method (<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/bullystoppers/krsupportgroup.pdf>)
- The Method of Shared Concern (<https://www.kenrigby.net/11e-Shared-Concern-Method-How-it-Works>)

7. Summary of Process



8. Our Programme of Support

The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows (Ref 6:8:16 of Procedures):

- All in-school supports and opportunities will be provided for the pupils affected by bullying to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop friendships and social skills and build resilience e.g.
 - SPHE Lessons
 - Stay Safe Programme
 - Walk Tall
 - NEPS programmes on www.neps.ie (staff are trained in the delivery of Friends for Life)
 - Anti Bullying/Friendship Week
 - Buddy systems
 - Care Team Support (Well-being Policy) inc Social Skills Group (Special Education Policy)
 - Group work such as circle time
- If pupils require counselling or further supports the school will endeavour to liaise with the appropriate agencies to organise same. NEPS will also be contacted for advice
- Pupils should understand that there are no innocent bystanders and that all incidents of bullying behaviour must be reported to a teacher.

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.

In relation to Acceptable Use Policy in the school the following issues are addressed:

- All Internet sessions are supervised by a teacher
- The school regularly monitor pupils' Internet usage within school time.

(Note that the Schools Broadband Programme has blocked all social networking sites on the basis that they waste time and take up too much of the bandwidth which is been provided for educational purposes only).


10. 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.

11. This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 27th February 2023 [date].

12. 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.

13. 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, is accessible to parents and pupils on request and provided to the PTA. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Signed: 
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Date: 27/Feb/2023

Date of next review: February 2024

Signed: 
(Principal)

Date: 27/Feb/2023

Appendix 1 – Examples of Bullying Behaviour

General behaviours which apply to all types of bullying	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Harassment based on any of the nine grounds in the equality legislation e.g. sexual harassment, homophobic bullying, racist bullying etc.• Physical aggression• Damage to property• Name calling• Slagging• The production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other materials aimed at intimidating another person• Offensive graffiti• Extortion• Intimidation• Insulting or offensive gestures• The “look”• Invasion of personal space• A combination of any of the types listed.
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Cyber	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Denigration: Spreading rumours, lies or gossip to hurt a person's reputation • Harassment: Continually sending vicious, mean or disturbing messages to an individual • Impersonation: Posting offensive or aggressive messages under another person's name • Flaming: Using inflammatory or vulgar words to provoke an online fight • Trickery: Fooling someone into sharing personal information which you then post online • Outing: Posting or sharing confidential or compromising information or images • Exclusion: Purposefully excluding someone from an online group • Cyber stalking: Ongoing harassment and denigration that causes a person considerable fear for his/her safety <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Silent telephone/mobile phone call • Abusive telephone/mobile phone calls • Abusive text messages • Abusive email • Abusive communication on social networks e.g. Facebook/Ask.fm/ Twitter/You Tube or on games consoles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abusive website comments/Blogs/Pictures • Abusive posts on any form of communication technology
Identity Based Behaviours Including any of the nine discriminatory grounds mentioned in Equality Legislation (gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community).	
Homophobic and Transgender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spreading rumours about a person's sexual orientation • Taunting a person of a different sexual orientation • Name calling e.g. Gay, queer, lesbian....used in a derogatory manner • Physical intimidation or attacks • Threats
Race, nationality, ethnic background and membership of the Traveller community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discrimination, prejudice, comments or insults about colour, nationality, culture, social class, religious beliefs, ethnic or traveller background. • Exclusion on the basis of any of the above
Relational	<p>This involves manipulating relationships as a means of bullying. Behaviours include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Malicious gossip • Isolation & exclusion • Ignoring • Excluding from the group

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Taking someone's friends away• "Bitching"• Spreading rumours• Breaking confidence• Talking loud enough so that the victim can hear• The "look"• Use or terminology such as 'nerd' in a derogatory way
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Appendix 2 – Bullying Behaviour Record



1. Name of pupil being bullied: _____ Class: _____

2. Name(s) and class(es) of pupil(s) engaged in bullying behaviour

3. Source of bullying concern/report (tick)

Pupil concerned	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Pupil	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parent	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Location of incidents (tick)

Playground	<input type="checkbox"/>
Classroom	<input type="checkbox"/>
Corridor	<input type="checkbox"/>
Toilets	<input type="checkbox"/>
School Bus	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Name of person(s) who reported the bullying concern

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6. Type of Bullying Behaviour (tick relevant box(es)) *

Physical Aggression	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cyber-bullying	<input type="checkbox"/>
Damage to Property	<input type="checkbox"/>	Intimidation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Isolation/Exclusion	<input type="checkbox"/>	Malicious Gossip	<input type="checkbox"/>
Name Calling	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Where behaviour is regarded as identity-based bullying, indicate the relevant category:

Homophobic	Disability/SEN related	Racist	Other (specify)

8. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact

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9. Details of actions taken

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Signed _____ (Relevant Teacher) Date _____

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal _____