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## Anti-Bullying Policy February 2023

### 1. Introduction:

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 Fintan's NS 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

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 (See Appendix 1) 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; involves collaboration among and between staff & pupils and promotes respectful relationships across the school community; encourages the work of the student council in this area
- 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 ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

### 3. Definition

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

*'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.**

*(The following definition of bullying behaviour has also been established in relation to our school:*

*Bullying behaviour is deliberate and repeated aggression, verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against any person..*

*It is not bullying when:*

- *Students of about the same age and strength have the occasional quarrel or conflict.*
- *A member of staff offers constructive or fair criticism of a student's behaviour or work performance. )*

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 appears as Appendix 1 of this document.

### 4. The Relevant Teachers:

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

- The class teacher(s) initially
- The principal thereafter if necessary

## 5. 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:

- developing a sense of self worth in the pupils
- raising awareness amongst senior pupils, 3rd-6th class, about cyber-bully by organising presentations and talks (e.g. Sticks and Stones 2012, workshop with Zeeko 2017)
- raising awareness amongst parents about cyber-bullying (Cyberbullying Information Evening 2017, 2018)
- taking particular account of students with special educational needs
- taking age and gender of children into account
- organising a programme of professional development for school staff about bullying, perhaps as part of the Croke Park Agreement
- teaching the Stay Safe Programme to every second year in all classes as well as teaching the Walk Tall and RSE programmes to all classes. (The RSE programme is taught every year in every class. ) This arrangement can be altered according to how classes are split from one year to the next.
- raising awareness of bullying amongst non-teaching staff
- The strategies of restorative practice will be used in all classes to prevent escalation of bullying behaviour, to reward truthfulness and to build an atmosphere conducive to a 'telling school'. (When restorative practice strategies do not succeed the sanctions outlined in the school's Code of Behaviour will be applied.)
- [www.antibullyingcampaign.ie](http://www.antibullyingcampaign.ie) resources (or similar) will be used for monthly antibullying classes in all classrooms.
- An annual anti-bullying/friendship week will take place.

## 6. Investigation, follow-up and recording

**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). With this in mind the school's procedures are as follows:**

### **PROCEDURES FOR INVESTIGATING BULLYING:**

- (i) In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher(s) will exercise his/her/their professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred, what type if it has and how best the situation might be resolved
- (ii) All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher(s). 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
- (iii) Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), bus drivers, caretakers, cleaners must be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher
- (iv) 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 **In the event of any meetings addressing bullying, both parents (if feasible) will be involved in addressing the issue.**
- (v) **It is very important that all involved (including each set of pupils and parents) understand the above approach from the outset**
- (vi) Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents

(vii) Initial investigations of bullying will be done in class where possible but some incidents are usually best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved

(ix) 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

(x) When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher(s) 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

(xi) **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

(xii) Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that they may face from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher

(xiii) Where the relevant teacher(s) has/have 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

(xiv) It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s). With younger children, the use of art activities and a daily picture diary to describe incidences and feelings may also be used.

(xv) In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher(s) 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. 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**

(xvi) 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;

## **FOLLOW-UP PROCEDURES**

(i) Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved may 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

(ii) An additional follow-up meeting with parents of the children involved may take place after an appropriate time to ensure that the matter has been resolved satisfactorily

(iii) 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

(iv) 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 make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

**RECORDING:** Noting and reporting of bullying behaviour is to be documented using the *template for recording bullying behaviour* (Appendix 3). All records must 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 relevant teacher(s), the relevant teacher(s) will use his/her/their 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 relevant teacher(s) that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher(s) 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 relevant teacher(s) must use the recording template at Appendix 3 to record the bullying behaviour. Copies of this template will be provided to the teacher at the start of each year and will be stored in the Child Protection Folder.

The relevant teacher must use the recording template provided 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) that where the relevant teacher considers the bullying to be sufficiently serious it will be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal.

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

In cases where a school has serious concerns in relation to managing the behaviour of a pupil, the advice of the National Education Psychological Service (NEPS) will be sought. Serious instances of bullying behaviour will, in accordance with the Children First and *the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, be referred to the HSE Children and Family Services and/or Gardaí as appropriate.

## **7. Support for affected pupils**

The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying involves a whole school approach. Given the complexity of bullying behaviour, no one intervention/support programme works in all situations. Therefore various approaches and intervention strategies may be used including suggesting that parents seek referrals so that appropriate outside agencies in order to receive further support for the pupils and their families if needed.

## **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.

## **8. This policy was adopted by the Board of Management in September 2017 and was reviewed and updated in September 2019 and in January 2023**

**10.** This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Association. 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 and provided to the Parents' Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

## **APPENDIX 1: Practical tips for building a positive school culture and climate**

The following are some practical tips for immediate actions that can be taken to help build a positive school culture and climate and to help prevent and tackle bullying behaviour.

- 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
- Display key respect messages in classrooms, in assembly areas and around the school. Involve pupils in the development of these messages
- Catch them being good - notice and acknowledge desired respectful behaviour by providing positive attention
- 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
- Have a system of encouragement and rewards to promote desired behaviour and compliance with the school rules and routines
- Explicitly teach pupils about the appropriate use of social media
- Positively encourage pupils to comply with the school rules on mobile phone and internet use
- Follow-up and follow through with pupils who ignore the rules
- Actively involve parents and/or the Parents' Association in awareness raising campaigns around 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 can actively watch out for signs of bullying behaviour
- Ensure there is adequate playground/school yard/outdoor supervision
- School staff can get pupils to help them to identify bullying 'hot spots' and 'hot times' for bullying in the school
  - Hot spots tend to be in the playground/school yard/outdoor areas, changing rooms, corridors and other areas of unstructured supervision
  - Hot times again tend to be times where there is less structured supervision such as when pupils are in the playground/school yard or moving classrooms.
- Support the establishment and work of student councils

## **APPENDIX 2: Types of bullying**

The following are some of the types of bullying behaviour that can occur amongst pupils:

**Physical aggression:** This behaviour includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping people. It may also take the form of severe physical assault. While pupils often engage in 'mess fights', they can sometimes be used as a disguise for physical harassment or inflicting pain

**Intimidation:** Some bullying behaviour takes the form of intimidation. It may be based on the use of very aggressive body language with the voice being used as a weapon. Particularly upsetting can be a facial expression which conveys aggression and/or dislike.

**Isolation/exclusion and other relational bullying:** This occurs where a certain person is deliberately isolated, excluded or ignored by some or all of the class group. This practice is usually initiated by the person engaged in bullying behaviour and can be difficult to detect. It may be accompanied by writing insulting remarks about the pupil in public places, by passing around notes about or drawings of the pupil or by whispering insults about them loud enough to be heard. Relational bullying occurs when a person's attempts to socialise and form relationships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined. One of the most common forms includes control: 'Do this or I won't be your friend anymore'(implied or stated), a group ganging up against one person (girl or boy), non-verbal gesturing, malicious gossip, spreading rumours about a person or giving them the 'silent treatment'.

**Cyber-bullying:** This type of bullying is increasingly common and is continuously evolving. It is bullying carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as text, social network sites, email, instant messaging (IM), apps, gaming sites, chat rooms and other online technologies. Being the target of inappropriate or hurtful messages is the most common form of online bullying. As cyber-bullying uses technology to perpetrate bullying behaviour and does not require face-to-face contact, cyber-bullying can occur at any time (day or night). Many forms of bullying can be facilitated through cyber-bullying. For example, a target may be sent homophobic text messages or pictures may be posted with negative comments about a person's sexuality, appearance etc.

**Name calling:** Persistent name-calling directed at the same individual(s) that hurts, insults or humiliates should be regarded as a form of bullying behaviour. Often name calling of this type refers to physical appearance, e.g. size or clothes worn. Accent or distinctive voice characteristics may attract negative attention. Academic ability can also provoke name calling. This tends to operate at two extremes. There are those who are singled out for attention because they are perceived to be weak academically. At the other extreme there are those who, because they are perceived as high achievers are also targeted

**Damage to property:** Personal property can be the focus of attention for bullying behaviour. This may result in damage to clothing, mobile phone or other devices, school books and other learning material or interference with a pupil's locker or bicycle. The contents of school bags and pencil cases may be scattered on the floor. Items of personal property may be defaced, broken, stolen or hidden

**Extortion:** Demands for money may be made, often accompanied by threats (sometimes carried out in the event of the targeted pupil not delivering on the demand). A pupil may also be forced into theft of property for delivery to another who is engaged in bullying behaviour.

### Appendix 3: Template for recording bullying behaviour

#### 1. Name of pupil being bullied and class group

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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#### 3. Source of bullying concern/report -tick relevant box(es)

Pupil concerned	
Other pupil(s)	
Parent	
Teacher	
Other	

#### 4. Location of incidents -tick relevant box(es)

Playground	
Classroom	
Corridor	
Toilets	
Other	

#### 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		Cyber-bullying	
Damage to property		Intimidation	
Isolation/Exclusion		Malicious gossip	
Name calling			
Other (specify)			

#### 7. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact

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**8. Details of actions taken**

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Signed \_\_\_\_\_  
(Relevant Teacher 1)

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_  
(Relevant Teacher 1)

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal \_\_\_\_\_