

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

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. Mark's 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.

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:

1. A positive school culture and climate;
2. Effective leadership;
3. A school-wide approach;
4. A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact;
5. Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures);
6. Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies);
7. Supports for staff;
8. Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils;
9. Ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policies.

1. Positive School Culture and Climate

St. Mark's school promotes a positive culture and climate which

- Is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity
- Acknowledges the uniqueness of each individual and his / her worth as a human being.
- Acknowledges the right of each member of the school community to enjoy school in a secure environment.
- Encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment.
- Promotes qualities of social responsibility, tolerance and understanding among all its members both in school and out of school.
- Promotes respectful relationships across the school community.

2. Effective Leadership

The Board of Management, Principal and Staff of St. Mark's will strive to engender an ethos under which bullying is unacceptable. Principal and Staff will endeavour to act as good role-models and be fair, firm, clear and consistent in their disciplinary measures.

The adults in the school have a responsibility to model the school's standards of behaviour in their dealings with pupils and with each other, since their example is a powerful source of learning for pupils. Parents should be expected to model the standards that pupils are asked to respect. In order to do this, they need to be familiar with the standards and to understand the importance of

expecting pupils to behave according to these standards. The ways in which parents and teachers interact will provide pupils with a model of good working relationships, developing a code of behaviour – guidelines for schools.

3. A School Wide Approach

Management, Staff, Parents and Pupils have a role and responsibility in helping the school prevent and address school based bullying behaviour and to deal with any negative impact within school of bullying that occurs elsewhere.

Bullying thrives in an atmosphere of secrecy and therefore the whole school community needs a high degree of vigilance and openness in ensuring that bullying behaviour can be adequately tackled.

4. What is bullying? (Shared Understanding)

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 behaviour are included in the above 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.

Parents are reminded that it is a legal requirement for children to be 13 before using Facebook. Parental supervision to ensure each child is protected is vital.

Negative behaviour that does not meet this definition of bullying will be dealt with in accordance with the school's code of behaviour.

This definition includes a wide range of behaviour, whether verbal or written, whether physical or social, whether targeting person or property, whether carried out directly or indirectly or through any electronic medium, which could harm a pupil or undermine her / his self-esteem or self-confidence.

5. Raising Awareness – Education and Prevention Strategies

The education and prevention strategies including strategies aimed at cyber bullying and identity based bullying used by St. Mark's School are as follows:

- The anti-bullying module of the SPHE programme to be done in every class each year.
- Through our religious education programme enable the child develop moral values including tolerance and understanding of others.
- Developing the child's emotional and social competence through the use of the Incredible Years Programme which permeates our approach to good order in the school.
- Stay Safe Programme to be done in every class each year.
- Each class to have a bullying awareness day each term. Children will examine the issue of bullying and the consequences. They will be encouraged to recognise, reject and report bullying.
- Whole school approach to good manners and politeness.
- Notification / Suggestion box in school for children to make suggestions or reports.
- Anti-bullying procedures are re-inforced in our mobile phone policy and internet usage and our code of behaviour. Children are not permitted to have mobile phones in the whether switched on or not.
- HSCL Co-Coordinator to provide talks / upskilling for our parents on bullying and cyber bullying.
- SEN Staff be vigilant re: bullying of SEN students. They will have their own Notification Box and will explain its purpose and encourage and help pupils to use it.

6. Investigation, Follow Up and Recording

The school's procedure for investigation, follow-up and recording of bullying behaviour are as follows:

- The primary aim in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve, in as fair a manner, any issues between and restore as far as practical the relationships of the parties involved.
- The "Relevant Teacher" investigates all instances of reported or suspected bullying behaviour, whether these take place within the school or outside it, in so far as feasible, with a view to establishing the facts and bringing any such behaviour to an end.
- The Relevant Teacher will exercise his / her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved. The bullying pupil will be encouraged to act in a way that will repair the relationship with the other pupil e.g. inviting him to join a game, sharing, complimenting etc. This may provide an opportunity to catch the pupil being good and reinforce that behaviour.
- The school through the "Relevant Teacher" reserves the right to ask any pupil to write an account of what happened, as part of an investigation. This will be a standard procedure and does not necessarily imply that a pupil is guilty of misbehaviour.

- Pupils who are alleged to have been involved in bullying behaviour may be interviewed by the "Relevant Teacher" before parents are requested to be involved, to establish the nature and extent of the behaviour and any reasons for it. In the event that they have been involved in bullying behaviour they are asked to sign a binding promise that they will treat all pupils fairly, equally and respectfully including the targeted pupil(s).
- The "Relevant Teacher" does not apportion blame but rather treats bullying behaviour as a "mistake" that can and must be remedied. S/he emphasises that the intention is not to punish perpetrators but to talk to them, to explain how harmful and hurtful bullying is and to seek a promise that it will stop. If that promise is forthcoming and is honoured there will be no penalty and that will be the end of the matter. Pupils who report bullying therefore are not getting others "in trouble" so much as enabling them to get out of trouble into which they may ultimately get if the bullying continued.
- The class teacher will regularly check with the bullied child whether or not the bullying behaviour has ceased and also that the child feels safe and content.
- When an investigation is completed and / or a bullying situation is resolved the "Relevant Teacher" will complete a report, to include the findings of the investigation, the strategy adopted and the outcome of the intervention, as well as any other relevant information.
- If a pupil has signed such a promise but then chooses to break that promise and continues the bullying behaviour, this can no longer be considered a "mistake" but looked upon as Bullying Behaviour. In this event parent(s) /guardian(s) of the offending child will be informed and requested to countersign their daughter / son's promise. Breach of this additional promise by further bullying behaviour is regarded as a very grave matter and a serious sanction may be imposed by the school authorities (See sanctions below).
- All documentation regarding bullying incidents and their resolution is retained in the school. In cases where the "Relevant Teacher" 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, it must be recorded by the "Relevant Teacher" in a the recording template attached.
- 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 parents or the School Principal or Deputy Principal.
- 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.

- 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.

The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is intended to assist bullied pupils by::

- Ending the bullying behaviour.
- Ensuring the school culture fosters respect for bullied pupils and all pupils.
- Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through the awareness-raising programme.
- Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through the speedy identification of those responsible and a speedy resolution of bullying situations.
- Making adequate counselling facilities, where resources permit, available to pupils who need it in a timely manner.
- Helping bullied pupils raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school).

In so far as bullying pupils are concerned, the school will endeavour to:

- Make it clear that bullying pupils who reform are not blamed or punished and get a "clean sheet".
- Make it clear that bullying pupils who reform are doing the right and honourable thing and giving them praise for this.
- Make adequate counselling facilities and where possible, social stories SPHE lessons available to help those who need it to learn other ways of meeting their needs besides violating the rights of others.
- Helping those who need to raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school).
- Using learning strategies throughout the school and the curriculum to help enhance pupils' feelings of self-worth.
- Deal with negative behaviour in general, encouraging teachers and parents to focus on, challenge and correct the behaviour while supporting the child.
- Deal with bullying behaviour seeking resolution and offering a fresh start with a "clean sheet" and no blame in return for keeping a promise to reform.

7. Support for Staff

The Board of Management will ensure that members of the School Staff including temporary and substitute teachers have sufficient familiarity with the school anti bullying policy to enable them to consistently apply the policy when required. To this end:

- The anti bullying policy will be on display along with the child protection policy in each class.
- A staff member will be given responsibility to highlight the anti bullying policy to all new and substitute staff.
- Anti bullying policy and its effectiveness to be on the agenda for staff meeting once a term.

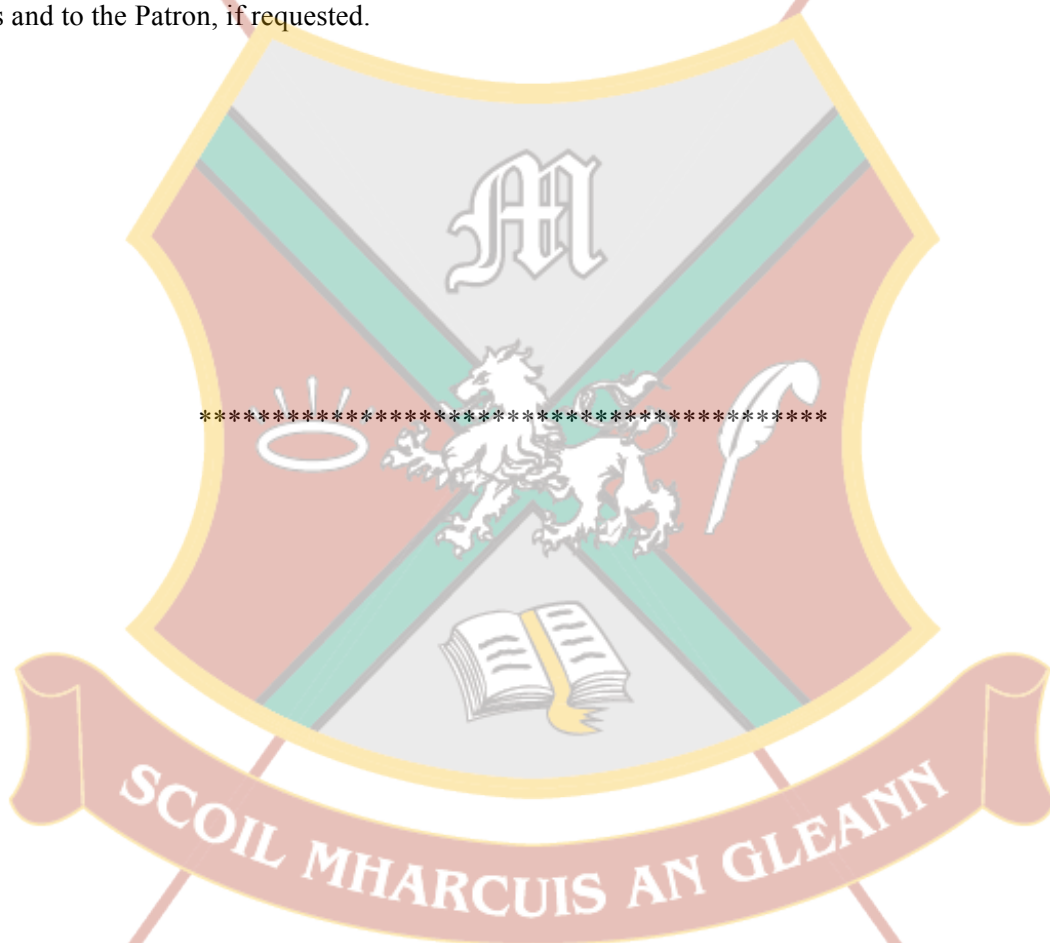
8. Supervision and Monitoring of Pupils

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.

The Board of Management confirms that the school will, in accordance with its obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps as are reasonably practicable to prevent the harassment of pupils or staff on any of the nine grounds specified i.e. gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.

9. Evaluation of Policy

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once 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 to the Department of Education and Skills and to the Patron, if requested.



This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on the ____ / ____ /2014.

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 of Education and Skills and to the Patron, if requested.

Signed: _____
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Date: ____ / ____ /2014

Signed: _____
(Principal)

Date: ____ / ____ /2014

Date of next review: ____ / ____ / ____

