



Anti-Bullying Policy of Sancta Maria College

- 1. In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the Code of Behaviour Guidelines issued by the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB), the Board of Management of Sancta Maria College 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; it 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.
 - Effective leadership
 - A school-wide approach
 - A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact
 - Implementation of educational and preventive 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. 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 one-off incidents of intentional, negative behaviour, including a once-only 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 one-off, offensive or hurtful public message, image or statement on a social networking 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*.

4. The relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows:

Tutor

Year Heads

Deputy Principal

Principal

Anti-Bullying Co-ordinator

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

5. The educational and preventive strategies (including strategies aimed at cyber-bullying, homophobic and transphobic bullying) that will be used by the school are as follows:

School-Wide Approach

- 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
- 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.
- Whole-staff, professional development 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 its prevention and intervention
- Professional development with specific focus on the training of the relevant teachers
- School-wide awareness-raising and training on all aspects of bullying, to include pupils, parent(s)/guardian(s) and the wider school community
- Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours, extracurricular activities, etc. – 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, e.g., Cara Buddy System, mentoring, Lunchtime Pals and other student-support activities that can help to support pupils and encourage a culture of peer respect and support
- Development and promotion of an Anti-Bullying Code for the school – to be included in Student Journals and displayed publicly in classrooms and in common areas of the school
- The school's Anti-Bullying Policy is discussed with pupils, and all parents/guardians are given a copy every year as part of the Code of Behaviour of the school.
- The implementation of regular (e.g., per year/per term/per month/per week), whole-school awareness-measures, e.g., a dedicated notice board in the school and classrooms on the promotion of friendship and bullying prevention; annual Friendship Week; parent/guardian seminars; annual or termly or monthly student surveys; and regular school or Year Group assemblies by Principal, Deputy Principal and Year Heads.
- Encouragement of 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 whom 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
 - Anti-Bully or Niggle Box?
 - Get a parent(s)/guardian(s) or friend to tell on your behalf
 - Administer a confidential questionnaire once a term to all pupils
 - Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness bullying or know that bullying is taking place
- Identification of clear protocols to encourage parents/guardians to approach the school if they suspect that their child is being bullied. The protocol should be developed in consultation with parents.
- The development of an Acceptable Use Policy in the school to include the necessary steps to ensure that access to technology within the school is strictly monitored, as is the case currently with the pupils' use of mobile phones
- The listing of supports currently being used in the school and the identification of other supports available to the school, e.g., GLEN www.glen.ie and BeLonGTo www.belongto.org

Implementation of Curricula

- The full implementation of the SPHE and CSPE Curricula and the RSE and RE Programmes
- Continuous Professional Development for staff in delivering these programmes
- School-wide delivery of lessons on bullying from evidence-based programmes, e.g., Cool School Lessons, #UP2US, The Walk Tall Programme and On My Own Two Feet.
- School-wide delivery of lessons on **Relational Aggression** (Cool School Programme: A Friend in Deed), **Cyber Bullying** (#UP2US, Be Safe-Be Webwise, Think Before you Click, Let's Fight it Together), **Homophobic and Transphobic Bullying** (Growing up LGBT, Stand Up Programme, The Trust pack) & **Diversity and Inter culturalism**. The school should list every resource related to the SPHE curriculum and make a list of supports.
- Delivery of the Garda SPHE Programmes at Primary and Post-Primary level. These lessons, delivered by Community Gardaí, cover issues around personal safety and cyber-bullying.
- The school will specifically consider 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.

Links to Other Policies

- Positive Behaviour Code
- Child Protection Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Attendance Policy
- SPHE Policy
- RSE Policy

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:

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.

Reporting Bullying Behaviour

- Any pupil or parent/guardian may bring a bullying incident to the attention of 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, etc., must report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher.

Investigating and Dealing with Incidents: Style of Approach

- In investigating and dealing with bullying, the (relevant) teacher will exercise their professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation may be resolved.
- Parents/Guardians 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 and non-aggressive manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict.
- 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 their 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 they may face 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 the 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 engaging in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to her how she is in breach of the school's Anti-Bullying Policy, and efforts should be made to try to get her 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, her parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school.

Follow-up and Recording

- In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed, the relevant teacher must, as part of their 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/guardian 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/guardian has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parent/guardian of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Pupils.

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 Predetermination that Bullying has Occurred

- 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 – 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.

Informal Determination that Bullying has Occurred

- If it has been established by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher must keep appropriate written records which will assist their efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.
- The school, in consultation with the relevant teacher/s, should develop a protocol for the storage of all records retained by the relevant teacher(s).

Formal – Appendix 3

To record the bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher must use the recording template at **Appendix 3** in the following circumstances:

a) In cases where he/she considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within twenty school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour occurred; and

b) Where the school has decided as part of its Anti-Bullying Policy that, in certain circumstances, bullying behaviour must be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable.

The school should list behaviours that must be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal. These should be in line with the school's Code of Behaviour.

When the recording template is used, it must be retained by the relevant teacher in question and a copy maintained by the Principal. Due consideration needs to be given to where these records are kept, who has access to them and how long they will be retained. Decisions around record-keeping should be noted in this policy.

Established Intervention Strategies

- Teacher interviews with all pupils

- Negotiating agreements among 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 parents/guardians to support school interventions
- No-Blame Approach
- Circle Time
- Restorative Interviews
- Restorative Conferencing
- Implementing Sociogram Questionnaires
- Peer mediation where suitable training has been given

The procedures mention the following intervention strategies and reference Ken Rigby:

[www.bullyingawarenessweek.org/pdf/BullyingPreventionStrategiesinSchools Ken Rigby.pdf](http://www.bullyingawarenessweek.org/pdf/BullyingPreventionStrategiesinSchools%20Ken%20Rigby.pdf)

- The Traditional Disciplinary Approach
- Strengthening the Victim
- Mediation
- Restorative Practice
- The Support Group Method
- The Method of Shared Concern

6. The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows:

- All in-school supports and opportunities will be provided for pupils affected by bullying to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop friendships and social skills and to build resilience, e.g.,
 - Pastoral Care System
 - Cara System/Peer Mentoring System
 - Tutor/Year Head System
 - Care Team/Student Support Team
 - 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. This may be for the pupil affected by bullying or involved in the bullying behaviour.
- Pupils should understand that there are no innocent bystanders, and that all incidents of bullying behaviour must be reported to a teacher.

7. 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. 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.

- 9. This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on Tuesday, June 3rd 2014.**
- 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 DES 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 DES.**

Signed: John Shortt

(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Date: June 3rd 2014

Date of Next Review: September 2015

Signed: Gerardine Kennedy

(Principal)

Date: June 3rd 2014