



## **Anti-Bullying Policy**

**“I am the way, the truth and the life.”**  
(John 14:6)

St Mary's is a Catholic Primary School.  
We place our children at the heart of all we do,  
inspired by the love, life and teachings  
of Jesus and the Catholic Christian Church.

### **Aims**

Everyone at St. Mary's School has the right to feel welcome, secure and happy. Only if this is the case will all members of the school community be able to achieve to their maximum potential. Bullying of any sort prevents this being able to happen and prevents equality of opportunity. It is everyone's responsibility to prevent this happening and this policy contains guidelines to support this ethos. Where bullying exists the victims must feel confident to activate the anti-bullying systems within the school to end the bullying.

It is our aim to challenge attitudes about bullying behaviour, increase understanding for bullied pupils and help build an anti-bullying ethos in the school.

We aim to provide a healthy social and learning environment in and around the school and to provide a clear message to children, staff and parents that bullying behaviour is unacceptable and will not be tolerated

This document outlines how we make this possible at St. Mary's School.

### **Definitions of Bullying**

Bullying is deliberately hurtful behaviour that is repeated over a period of time, making it difficult for the person concerned to defend themselves. This can take the form of name-calling, violence, threatened violence, isolation, ridicule or indirect action such as spreading unpleasant stories about someone.

The school works hard to ensure that all pupils know the difference between bullying and simply “falling out”, the use of “STOP” (several times on purpose) during Anti-Bullying weeks has helped.

Bullying can be:

- **Emotional:** Being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding books, threatening gestures)
- **Physical:** Pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence.
- **Racial:** Racial taunts, graffiti, gestures.
- **Sexual:** Unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments.
- **Homophobic:** Because of, or focussing on the issue of sexuality.
- **Direct or indirect Verbal:** Name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing.
- **Cyber bullying:** All areas of internet, such as email & internet chat-room misuse.

### **Why is it Important to Respond to Bullying?**

Bullying hurts. No one deserves to be a victim of bullying. Bullying has the potential to damage the mental health of a victim. Everybody has the right to be treated with respect. Pupils who are bullying need to learn different ways of behaving.

### **Signs and Symptoms**

A child may indicate by signs or behaviour that he or she is being bullied. Adults should be aware of these possible signs and that they should investigate if a child:

- is frightened of walking to or from school
- doesn't want to go on the school / public bus
- begs to be driven to school
- changes their usual routine
- is unwilling to go to school (school phobic)
- begins to truant
- becomes withdrawn anxious, or lacking in confidence
- starts stammering
- attempts or threatens suicide or runs away
- cries themselves to sleep at night or has nightmares
- feels ill in the morning
- begins to do poorly in school work
- comes home with clothes torn or books damaged
- has possessions which are damaged or "go missing"
- asks for money or starts stealing money (to pay bully)
- has dinner or other monies continually "lost"
- has unexplained cuts or bruises
- comes home starving (money / lunch has been stolen)
- becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- is bullying other children or siblings
- stops eating
- is frightened to say what's wrong
- gives improbable excuses for any of the above

- is afraid to use the internet or mobile phone
- is nervous and jumpy when an online message is received
- lack of eye contact
- becoming short tempered
- change in attitude to people at home.

These signs and behaviours could indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated

### **Actions to Tackle Bullying**

Prevention is better than cure so at St. Mary's we will be vigilant for signs of bullying and always take reports of incidents seriously. We will use the curriculum whenever possible to reinforce the ethos of the school, to teach and help pupils to develop strategies to combat bullying-type behaviour e.g. through our RE programme of study and during ICT lessons. Assemblies will also provide a vehicle to address and reinforce the zero tolerance to bullying behaviour. National Anti-Bullying Week in November also provides a vehicle to highlight issues relating to bullying.

Pupils are told that they must report any incidence of bullying to an adult within school, and that when another pupil tells them that they are being bullied or if they see bullying taking place it is their responsibility to report their knowledge to a member of staff. All incidents will be recorded on CPOMS electronically.

### **Procedure for dealing with incidents of bullying**

All reported incidents of bullying will be investigated and taken seriously by staff members. A record will be kept of incidents. The class teacher of the victim will be responsible for this and will be required to give a copy of the report and the action taken to the Headteacher. Older pupils may be asked to write a report themselves. In order to ensure effective monitoring of such occurrences, and to facilitate co-ordinated action, all proven incidences of bullying should be reported to the Headteacher.

Upon discovery of an incident of bullying, we will discuss with the children the issues appropriate to the incident and to their age and level of understanding. If the incident is not too serious, a problem-solving approach may help. The adult will try to remain neutral and deliberately avoid direct, closed questioning which may be interpreted as accusatory or interrogational in style. Each pupil must be given an opportunity to talk and the discussion should remain focused on finding a solution to the problem and stopping the bullying recurring.

There are various strategies that can be applied if more than one pupil is involved in bullying another. Role-play and other drama techniques can be used as well as Circle Time. If held regularly, this can be an effective way of sharing information and provide a forum for discussing important issues such as equal rights, relationships, justice and acceptable behaviour. It can also be used just within the affected group to confront bullying that already exists.

If a child feels that they are being bullied, then there are several procedures that they are encouraged to follow: (not hierarchical)

- Tell a friend.
- Tell your School Council rep or class “Buddies”.
- Tell a teacher or adult whom you feel you can trust.
- Go to the Friendship Stop in the playground.
- Tell a parent or adult at home whom you feel you can trust.
- Discuss it as part of circle time and RE lessons.
- Ring Child line and follow the advice given.
- Visit the school website for ideas of what to do next.

Victims who are worried about openly discussing an incident when the aggressors are present (e.g. taunting during a lesson) can be encouraged to go to the teacher with a piece of work, using this as a reason to speak to the teacher. Victims need to feel secure in the knowledge that assertive behavior and even walking away can be effective ways of dealing with bullying. Setting up a buddy system, or peer counseling possibly with pupils who already hold a position of responsibility, such as School Council members can also be beneficial.

### **Online Bullying**

Online bullying is the use of technology to deliberately intimidate, upset or offend others –it is often repeated over time. Examples include unkind texts, chat- room messages, nasty e-mails, posting pictures, spreading rumours/accusations, purposely excluding from a social network site. Within school, instances of online bullying are likely to be rare as mobile phones are not allowed in school and children do not have access to chat-rooms; it is more likely that online bullying will happen during outside of school hours. However, the school will do all that it can to support children and their families deal with incidents of online bullying.

### **What is different about Online Bullying?**

1. Online bullying can take place at any time and can invade home/personal space.
2. The audience can be very large and reached rapidly.
3. People who cyberbully may attempt to remain anonymous and may never be in the same physical space as their target.
4. Strangers can cyberbully.
5. Online bullying can take place both between peers and across generations – age or size are not important. Bystanders can also become accessories e.g. by passing on a humiliating message.
6. Some instances of online bullying are unintentional e.g. something sent as a joke with a lack of awareness of the consequences, may be deeply upsetting.

## **Preventing Online Bullying**

At St. Mary's School, as in all schools, there is no single solution to the problem of online bullying as it is the joint responsibility of the school, the pupil and their family.

The best way to deal with online bullying is to prevent it happening in the first place and in school we have identified 4 key ways in which we can do this.

1. Understanding and talking about online bullying.
2. The whole school community shares an understanding of what online bullying is, helped by this policy.
3. Children are specifically taught, at an age-appropriate level, how to recognise online bullying and about its impact.
4. Children are specifically taught how to use ICT responsibly and the importance of certain protocols.
5. E-Safety evenings are held annually for parents to be given up to date information, advice and strategies for dealing with online bullying and internet safety.

## **The Responsibilities of Staff**

Our staff will:

- Foster in our pupil's self-esteem, self-respect and respect for others.
- Demonstrate by example the high standards of personal and social behaviour we expect of our pupils.
- Discuss bullying with all classes, so that every pupil learns about the damage it causes to both the child who is bullied and to the bully and the importance of telling a teacher about bullying when it happens.
- Be alert to signs of distress and other possible indications of bullying.
- Listen to children, who have been bullied, take what they say seriously and act to support and protect them.
- Report suspected cases of bullying to the Headteacher.
- Follow up any complaint by a parent about bullying, and report back promptly and fully on the action which has been taken.
- Deal with observed instances of bullying promptly and effectively, in accordance with agreed procedures.

## **Parental Involvement**

The parents of bullies and their victims will be informed of an incident and the action that has taken place and asked to support strategies proposed to tackle the problem. The bully will also be reminded of the possible consequences of bullying and the sanctions for repeated incidents will be clearly explained to him/her. A monitoring tool may also be used, usually incorporating a reward for achieving desired behaviours.

Parents are reminded regularly through letters and newsletters to inform their children that they must tell someone should they ever be bullied. Keeping information from the school, or from their parents, will never help a problem to be solved, and will prolong the period a victim has to suffer.

Whilst there is little history of bullying at St Mary's, we believe that one case is one case too many and we believe it is essential to constantly review this policy to ensure we are in a position to strengthen our approach to this issue. Where necessary we have and will call on outside resources such as the Behaviour Support Service.

### **Advice to Parents**

As the parent of a child whom you suspect is being bullied:

1. Report bullying incidents to the class teacher.
2. In cases of serious bullying, the incidents will be recorded by staff and the Headteacher notified.
3. In serious cases parents should be informed and will be asked to come in to a meeting to discuss the problem.
4. If necessary and appropriate, police will be consulted.
5. The bullying behaviour or threats of bullying must be investigated and the bullying stopped quickly.
6. An attempt will be made to help the bully (bullies) change their behaviour.

#### **Do Not:**

1. Attempt to sort the problem out yourself by speaking to the child whom you think may be the bully or by speaking to their parent.
2. Encourage your child to be 'a bully' back.

Policy prepared by Mrs Jane Mills  
September 2018

Due to be reviewed: September 2019