



Anti-Bullying Policy

St. Michael's National School, Sneem

1. 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. Michael's National School, Sneem 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 and is therefore fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour:

(a) 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;
- promotes respectful relationships across the school community;
- promote a culture where children feel valued and respected for who they are;

- (b) Effective leadership**
- (c) A school-wide approach**
- (d) A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact**
- (e) 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.
- (f) Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils**
- (g) Supports for staff**
- (h) Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies);**
- (i) On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.**

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:

- **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 and voice noises being used as a weapon. Particularly upsetting can be a facial expression which conveys aggression and/or dislike.
- **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.
- **Isolation/deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip 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".
- **Name calling:** Persistent name-calling directed at the same individual(s) which 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, property, school books and other learning material or interference with e.g. a pupil's 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.
- **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, e-mail, 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.
- **Identity-based bullying** racist bullying, bullying based on a person's membership of the Traveller community , other nationalities and bullying of those with disabilities or special educational needs'.

Isolated or once-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour. 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.

In an effort to combat any form of bullying, via technological means, St. Michael's National School has imposed a ban on mobile phones at any time during the school day, i.e. the time during which the staff have direct responsibility for the welfare of the pupils.

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

Appendix 1 gives a list of specific examples of bullying behaviour. This list is not exhaustive.

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

A pupil or parent may bring a bullying concern to any teacher in the school. Individual teachers must take appropriate measures regarding reports of bullying behaviour in accordance with the school's anti-bullying policy. It is anticipated that in the majority of cases of alleged bullying the initial complaint is first brought to the attention of the class teacher.

The relevant teacher responsible for investigating and dealing with/resolving bullying incidents will be the class teacher or class teachers of the pupils involved and/or the teacher/teachers on supervision duty if an incident occurs during a school break time.

The relevant teacher or teachers should keep the principal teacher/deputy principal informed of incidents and of progress being made to resolve these.

Where the relevant teacher is concerned that the gravity of the situation warrants immediate action from the principal, he/she should initially consult with the principal/deputy principal.

If it is agreed that the seriousness of the bullying behaviour warrants it, the principal/deputy principal will immediately take a proactive part in investigating the bullying behaviour and the principal will then determine with the information before her a course of action that benefits all pupils in our care.

4. Education and Prevention Strategies

The school will utilise a range of education and prevention strategies to encourage good behaviour and discourage bullying. We will seek to develop a positive school culture in the following ways:

- 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.
- The school will promote engagement in co-operative yard games during break times to foster respect and co-operation between class groups.
- Display key respect messages in classrooms, in assembly areas and around the school and involve pupils in the development of these messages. .
- Explicitly teach children about the various forms of bullying through the SPHE Curriculum. Some children may not be aware of the impact that their behaviour is having on other children.
- The school will endeavour to enhance children's coping skills and resilience by addressing these issues through the curriculum, e.g. Weaving Wellbeing ,Forest Schools ,Friends for Life ,Zippys Friends,Model Me Kids.
- Children are reminded that St. Michael's National School is a "telling school". Children are encouraged to speak to their parents about school.
- The school will actively encourage children to say nice, positive things about each other.
- The school will endeavour to empower each child to tell another child if their behaviour towards them is impacting on them negatively.
- The school will also actively seek to encourage children to resolve their own differences in so far as possible. This will be done by teaching them about communicating respectfully and effectively with one another. The school will also seek to promote and enhance children's ability to resolve issues and conflict by themselves.
- We will 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 all pupils in our care.

- 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 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 will actively watch out for signs of bullying behaviour.
- As self-esteem is a major factor in determining behaviour, we will, through both our curricular and extra-curricular programmes, provide pupils with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth and build emotional resilience.
- Lessons concerning Internet Safety/Cyber Bullying and personal information protection will be taught to children during the course of the year.
- The school will provide children and parents with notifications of cyber-bullying workshop and internet safety programmes locally and if available for our parents and or pupils.
- Staff members will be made more aware of what cyber bullying is and how to identify it and will be kept informed of the latest digital social platforms.
- Parents will be provided with information and advice on bullying e.g. guest speakers.
- We will raise pupils' awareness and understanding of bullying, including its causes and effects, taking particular account of the needs of pupils with disabilities or with SEN. Approaches to decreasing the likelihood of bullying for pupils with SEN will include improving inclusion, focusing on developing social skills, paying attention to key moments such as transitioning from primary to post-primary and cultivating a good school culture which has respect for all and helping one another as central.
- We will use the elements of the SPHE curriculum which make specific provision for exploring bullying as well as the inter-related areas of

belonging and integrating, communication, conflict, friendship, personal safety and relationships. The Stay Safe programme is a personal safety skills programme which seeks to enhance children's self-protection skills including their ability to recognise and cope with bullying.

- We will use all subjects to foster an attitude of respect for all: to promote the value of diversity; to address prejudice and stereotyping and to highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour. In English, there is a wide range of literature available which will be used to stimulate discussion. Similarly, in Geography and History references to colonisation, exploitation and dictatorships could be used to illustrate the negative aspect of power. The work will be extended into many other areas such as Art, Drama, Religious Education, (Grow in Love Programme), Walk Tall , RSE, Weaving Wellbeing and Physical Education.
- Good supervisory and monitoring measures will be put in place both to prevent and deal with bullying behaviour.
- The Board of Management will make appropriate arrangements to ensure that temporary and substitute staff have sufficient awareness of the school's Code of Behaviour and its Anti-Bullying Policy.
- Consistent investigation, follow up and recording of bullying behaviour

The education and prevention strategies that will be used by the school are as follows:

- Praising appropriate behaviour
- Co-Operative Yard Games
- golden time
- class dojo
- group reward system
- Individual behaviour profiles
- Circle Time
- Friendship Week
- Class Rules
- Ensure Internet supervision
- Friends for Life
- Weaving Wellbeing
- Buddy system
- Forest School
- Summer Camp

School-wide approach:

- Stay Safe
 - Walk tall
 - Gardaí/Guest Speaker speaking on cyberbullying
 - Compliance with acceptable user policy (AUP)
 - Filtering of internet
 - Strict supervision of internet
 - Grow In Love Programme
 - RSE programme
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- 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.
 - School wide awareness raising and training on all aspects of bullying.
 - 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.
 - Encourage a culture of sharing information, with particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders. In that way pupils will gain confidence in 'informing'. Teachers will use their discretion if the information is of a bullying nature and will follow procedures accordingly.
 - Ensuring that pupils know who to tell and how to tell, e.g.
 - Direct approach to teacher at an appropriate time.
 - Hand note to the teacher.
 - Get a parent(s)/guardian(s) to tell on your behalf
 - Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking

Appendix 2 shows some advice regarding combatting bullying and actions towards prevention.

5. Procedures for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying

The primary aim in investigating, dealing with and recording 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

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(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.
- Teaching and non-teaching staff such as secretary, special needs assistants (SNAs), bus drivers, sports coaches must report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher(s);

Investigating and dealing with incidents:

- In investigating and dealing with bullying, the relevant teacher(s) 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;
- It is very important that all involved (including each set of pupils and parents) understand the above approach from the outset.
- Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach.

- Initial investigations of bullying will be done in class where possible but some incidents might 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; It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident.
- 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(s); 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/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;
- 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.

Follow Up:

- In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant teacher(s) will, 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 restorative practice 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. This can have a therapeutic effect.
- 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 a recording template (Appendix 3)
- An additional follow up meeting with parents of the children involved may take place, if necessary, after an appropriate time to ensure that the matter has been resolved satisfactorily.
- 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.

Procedures to be followed when investigating an Allegation of Bullying Behaviour

Stage One

Unless the incident is of a very serious nature (Refer Code of Behaviour), it will be dealt with by the classroom teacher who will talk to the children involved, using restorative practice (Appendix 4) in so far as possible. Teachers respect the need to support the esteem of each party involved in an incident. When a teacher becomes aware that a child is regularly involved in incidents, he/she will start a record of such incidents. The purpose of this record is:

- To aid memory by recording details of the incident
- For clarity in assessment of the situation
- For planning and intervention

If the class teacher feels that the behaviour has not altered satisfactorily after speaking with the child/children they will contact the parents of the child/children involved and inform them of the issue.

If the relevant class teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has still not ceased satisfactorily, he/she will monitor and record the behaviour of the child in question for 20 school days using the appropriate recording template (Appendix 3). The teacher will inform the parents of the child/children involved that they are moving to this stage of the process. The teacher will also inform the principal that they have moved to this stage of the process.

Should the action taken at this stage prove not to have resolved the issue, the staff will proceed to stage two.

Stage Two

The principal will arrange to meet with the parents of the child who is seen to be bullying and separately with the parents of the victim of bullying.

(a)Principal, Parents and child who is bullying

The child's behaviour in all areas is monitored during the day. All positive behaviour, progress on work etc will be noted. The purpose of this report is to focus as much as possible on the positive qualities and efforts of the child, and to motivate the child to move away from negative behaviour. Initially a review of the reports will be carried out on a weekly basis, in a meeting with the principal, teacher, parents and child.

If progress is being made, longer intervals between meetings may be decided upon.

(b) Principal, parents and victim of bullying.

Meetings will be organized to address the emotional needs of the child, to devise coping strategies and to reinforce programmes covered in class

(c) Restorative practice meetings with both parties, facilitated by the class teacher and/or the principal will take place at this point. They will be arranged separately at first, with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date if the pupil who has been bullied is ready and agreeable. It is hoped that this will have therapeutic effect on the relationship between both parties.

Stage 3

It is the duty of the school to provide a safe environment for all the children. Should the above interventions fail and the bullying continue, a programme of appropriate sanctions may be implemented by the principal in consultation with the parents and Board of Management. Sanctions implemented aim to encourage positive behaviour and support the esteem of the child. These sanctions may include a period of suspension during which there will be ongoing consultation with the parents to decide on appropriate action(s) to be taken in the best interests of the child. Suspension for any period of time will be reported in writing by the Principal to the Chair of the Board of Management.

Recording of bullying behaviour

All recording of bullying incidents will be done in an objective and factual manner.

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

- The class teacher will use his/her professional judgement in relation to the records to be kept of all reports of bullying, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same. If it is established by the class teacher that bullying has occurred, he/she will 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.

- 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 their professional judgement in relation to the records to be kept of these reports, the actions taken and discussions with those involved regarding same.
- The relevant teacher(s) will inform the principal of incidents being investigated at the appropriate stage (See Above).
- The relevant teacher will use the school's recording template (Appendix 3) to record the bullying behaviour at the appropriate stage of the investigation outlined above.

When the recording template is used, it will be retained by the relevant teacher(s) in question and a copy maintained by the principal. Due consideration will be given to where these records are kept, who has access to them, and how long they will be retained.

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

Bullied pupils:

- Ending the bullying behaviour,
- Changing the school culture to foster more respect for bullied pupils and all pupils,
- Changing the school culture to foster greater empathy towards and support for bullied 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 speedy resolution of bullying situations,
- After resolution, enabling bullied pupils to complete a victim-impact statement,
- Making adequate counselling facilities 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 help 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).

- Implementing a 'buddy system' in the school

Bullying pupils:

- Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are not blamed or punished and get a 'clean sheet,'
- Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are doing the right and honourable thing and giving them praise for this,
- Making parents aware of adequate counselling facilities available to help those who need it 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,
- In dealing with negative behaviour in general, encouraging teachers and parents to focus on, challenge and correct the behaviour while supporting the child,
- In dealing 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. 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. 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 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 revised by the Board of Management of our school on the 2nd of February, 2023.

10. This policy has been made available to school personnel and otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request. It will be published on our school website shortly. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department of Education and Skills and to 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 is readily accessible to parents and pupils on request. 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.

Signed: *Mary Mgt Casey.*

(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: _____

(Principal)

Date: _____

Date of next review: February 2024

Appendix 1

Bullying can take a number of forms. These may include any of the following (this list is not exhaustive):

- **Repeated aggressive behaviour/attitude/body language, for example:**

Shouting and uncontrolled anger

Personal insults

Verbal abuse

Offensive noises or gestures

Offensive language directed at an individual,

Continually shouting or dismissing others

Public verbal attacks/criticism

Domineering behaviour

Open aggression

Offensive gestures and unwanted physical contact

- **Intimidation, either physical, psychological or emotional, for example:**

Treating in a dictatorial manner

Ridicule

Persistent slagging

Deliberate staring with the intent to discomfort

Persistent rudeness in behaviour and attitude toward a particular individual

Asking inappropriate questions/making inappropriate comments re. personal life/family

Asking inappropriate questions/making inappropriate comments re. social life or schoolwork

- **Interference with property, for example:**

Stealing/damaging books or equipment

Stealing/damaging clothing or other property

Demanding money with menaces

Persistently moving, hiding or interfering with property

Marking/defacing property

- **Undermining/Public or Private Humiliation, for example:**

Condescending tone

