

## **Anti-Bullying Policy of St. Mary's Secondary School as incorporated into the Code of Behaviour**

### **Rationale**

This policy is rooted in the School's commitment as stated in its Mission Statement to develop the whole person within a Christian atmosphere of honesty, sincerity, justice, mutual respect and tolerance in partnership with the Board of Management, staff, parents and the wider community by providing a balance of educational activities, we foster growth in self-esteem and respect for others.

Bullying clearly runs counter to the school philosophy of promoting the ideals of care and respect. The School acknowledges the right of each member of the school community to enjoy school in a secure environment.

### **Scope of Policy**

**This policy applies to the whole school community in their relationships with students – students, teachers, management, council, parents, office, residence and all support staff.**

#### **Definition of Bullying**

**Bullying is defined as unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time. These procedures make clear that this definition includes cyber-bullying and identity based bullying (such as homophobic bullying and racist bullying).**

**Department of Education & Skills 'Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools September 2013)**

Isolated incidents of aggressive behaviour, although condemned by the School and subject to the procedures contained in the school Discipline Policy, should not be described as bullying.

#### **Examples of bullying may be the following :**

- ❖ Cyber bullying including a once-off offensive or hurtful public message, image or statement on a social network site or other public forum
- ❖ Physical aggression/abuse or threatened abuse
- ❖ Interference with or vandalism of personal and school property,
- ❖ Extortion,
- ❖ Intimidation and victimisation
- ❖ Abusive telephone calls and text messages,
- ❖ Deliberate Isolation or exclusion,
- ❖ Name calling/Slagging
- ❖ Malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying
- ❖ Bullying of school personnel,
- ❖ Verbal abuse,
- ❖ Implied or explicit threats,

- ❖ Inappropriate jokes, offensive language, unwelcome comments, gossip, slander, offensive songs, posters, photocopied cartoons, graffiti and obscene gestures,
- ❖ Coercion in any form,
- ❖ Intrusion by pestering and stalking.
- ❖ Identity based bullying such as homophobic bullying, racism, etc

## **Goals**

1. To identify clearly the nature of bullying behaviour
2. To develop a school climate which is open, supportive and encourages students to disclose and discuss bullying behaviour
3. To ensure consistent approaches to dealing with bullying behaviour.
4. To set out procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying behaviour.
5. To develop a programme of support, counselling and rehabilitation for those who have been the victims of bullying and for those involved in bullying behaviour
6. To state what sanctions may be taken against those found to be in breach of this Anti-Bullying Policy within the framework of the school's Code of Behaviour
7. To develop an awareness of and a whole School approach to Anti-Bullying
8. To evaluate on an annual basis the effectiveness of the school's anti-bullying policy

## **Policy Content**

### **A. School Policy for countering bullying**

1. Staff members share a collegiate responsibility, under the direction of the Principal to act in preventing bullying behaviour by any member of the School Community
2. The School promotes qualities of social responsibility, tolerance and understanding among all its members, both in school and out of school.
3. The School acknowledges the uniqueness of each individual and his/her positive self-worth as a human being.
4. The School promotes habits of mutual respect, courtesy and an awareness of the interdependence of people in groups and community.
5. The School recognises the right of parents to share in the task of equipping the pupil with a range of life skills.

6. The School recognises the need to co-operate with and keep parents informed on procedures to improve relationships within the School Community
7. The School identifies aspects of curriculum through which positive and lasting influences can be nurtured towards forming pupils attitudes and values with a view to preventing bullying by facilitating early intervention
8. The School has the capacity to change in response to the needs of the whole school community and recognises the role of community agencies in preventing bullying
9. The School has a clear commitment to promoting equality and fairness in all aspects of its functioning.
10. The School acknowledges the right of each member of the School community to enjoy school in a secure environment.

## **B. Procedures for reporting Bullying**

The following procedures for reporting of bullying will apply :

### **1. Students**

Students may report incidents of alleged bullying to a teacher of their choice or to one of their leaders. Students are encouraged to report all incidents which may involve bullying. (*See Appendix 2*) The teacher to whom a report is made will inform the Class Tutor and Year Head of the alleged victim. The Class Tutor of the alleged victim will inform the Pastoral Care team and Year Head of the alleged victim. The Year Head of the alleged victim will inform the Principal and Deputy Principal.

### **2. Parents/Guardians**

Parents/guardians may report any matter causing concern to a member of teaching staff of their choice or directly to the Principal/Deputy Principal. The role of parents/guardians in this regard is vital, since statistics indicate that most students will initially prefer to tell parents/guardians that they are being bullied.

### **3. By School Staff**

Staff will report any matter causing concern to the appropriate Year Head, to the Pastoral Care team, or directly to the Principal/Deputy Principal. The Year Head of the alleged victim will proceed to inform the Principal/Deputy Principal.

### **C. Procedure for dealing with bullying by students**

1. All reports of bullying no matter how trivial are to be reported, investigated and dealt with appropriately. In this way students will gain confidence in 'telling' thus encouraging/ reinforcing the culture of "*We are a telling school*" (*Appendix 2*)
2. When an incident of bullying is alleged to have taken place and reported as described above the Pastoral Care team and Year Heads of all students involved will investigate the matter and report to the Principal/Deputy Principal. Once students are identified as victims they are encouraged to keep a record of the time, the place, the frequency and the names of those involved in the alleged bullying incident.
3. If there are reasonable grounds for believing that bullying has taken place the Principal/Deputy Principal will inform the parents/guardians of the alleged victim and the alleged bully of the allegations. Parents/guardians will be requested to come to the School to meet with the Year Head of the student(s) concerned, the Principal/Deputy Principal and any other relevant member of school staff.
4. The Pastoral Care Team will liaise as required with subject teachers of students experiencing difficulty as regards bullying.
5. Disciplinary measures will be taken in accordance with the Code of Behaviour.

### **D. Procedure for dealing with bullying by staff members**

1. Incidents of suspected bullying behaviour by staff members towards pupils should be reported directly to the Principal/Deputy Principal who will investigate the matter.
2. The Principal/Deputy Principal, if unable to resolve the matter, will refer the matter to the Board of Management.
3. The Board of Management may refer the matter to the Department of Education & Science and the Garda Síochána.

### **E. Roles and Responsibilities**

#### **Class Teacher**

1. To implement the Policy.

2. To record incidents of bullying behaviour reported to them and refer to the appropriate Class Tutor/Year Head or Pastoral Care Team at the earliest possible stage.

**Pastoral Care Team (Student Council Liaison Teacher, S.E.N. Co-Ordinator, School Chaplain and Guidance Counsellor)**

1. To monitor the effects of the Policy and to identify students experiencing difficulty at the earliest possible stage.
2. To provide support and guidance especially to those experiencing difficulty.
3. To liaise with subject teachers of those experiencing difficulty.
4. To refer incidents of bullying to the appropriate Class Tutor/Year Head/ or any member of the Pastoral Care Team

***Note:***

**Bullying as part of a continuum of behaviour**

Bullying behaviour can be part of a continuum of behaviour rather than a stand alone issue and may, in some cases, escalate beyond that which can be described as bullying to serious physical assault or harassment. In such cases the school may provide for referral to be made to relevant external agencies and authorities where appropriate e.g. National Education and Psychological Services (NEPS), HSE, Children & Family Social Services, Child and Adult Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and/or Gardaí

**Principal/Deputy Principal/Year Head**

1. To implement the Policy.
2. To investigate incidents of bullying and keep records of same.
3. To monitor the implementation of the Policy
4. To provide a report to the BOM at least once every school term on the overall number of bullying cases reported since the previous report and confirmation that all these have been dealt with or are being dealt with in accordance with St. Mary's Anti-Bullying Policy

**Board of Management**

1. To ensure that the Policy is developed and evaluated from time to time.
2. To approve the Policy and subsequent amendments.
3. To consider reports on the implementation of the Policy
4. To send notification of regular Annual Review Anti-Bullying Policy as per requirement of the Department of Education & Skills

***(Appendix 3)***

**Parents/Guardians**

1. To be aware of our whole school policy on Anti-Bullying.
2. To speak to their children in relation to bullying and this Policy on a regular basis.
3. Parents are encouraged to support school policy to co-operate with the school in reporting bullying behaviour.
4. To deal with bullying behaviour in conjunction with the school authorities in circumstances involving their own child.

## **Students**

1. To be aware of this Anti-Bullying Policy.
2. Not to engage in bullying behaviour.
3. To report incidents of bullying behaviour to the School authorities.
4. To co-operate with the School in dealing with bullying behaviour.

## **F. Success Criteria**

1. Incidents of bullying are kept to a minimum.
2. Incidents of bullying are dealt with systematically and effectively.
3. The goals are being attained.

## **G. Monitoring Procedures**

1. Class Tutors and Year Heads will conduct ongoing monitoring through informal discussion with students and subject teachers and through spot checks. They will obtain information from students, teachers and parents.
2. The Principal/Deputy Principal will meet with Year Heads if required.
3. The Principal will report to the Board of Management if required.

## **H. Review Procedure**

1. This Policy will be reviewed after three years.
2. The views and experience of teachers, students and parents will be sought in relation to the success criteria.
3. School records will be analysed to assess impact on students' progress.

## **PROCEDURE FOR INVESTIGATING & DEALING WITH ALLEGED BULLYING BEHAVIOUR IN ST. MARY'S SECONDARY SCHOOL**

1. The aim is to investigate and deal with alleged bullying in a sensitive and professional manner
2. When an incident of bullying behaviour is alleged to have taken place and is reported, as outlined in the procedure for reporting to the relevant teacher(s), the named relevant teacher will record the alleged incident in the standardised recording template Appendix 1 of the School's Anti-Bullying Policy. In doing so the relevant teacher should seek answers of what, when, where, who and why
3. The relevant teacher will give this record to the appropriate Year Head who should then meet with the victim and investigate the matter further with the primary aim to resolve any issues and restore, as far as practicable the relationships of the parties involved. This may require consultation with the Pastoral Care Team.
4. After meeting the victim, the Year Head should inform the Principal/Deputy Principal and Parents/Guardians of the students if they are satisfied that bullying has occurred
5. The Year Head/Principal/Deputy Principal should meet with the bully, the victim and their parents/guardians. Parents/Guardians are required to co-operate with any investigation and should be made aware if there is a breach of St. Mary's Anti-Bullying Policy
6. Where disciplinary sanctions are required it should be made clear that this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, her parents and the school
7. Careful notes should be kept of every meeting
8. The Principal should provide a report to the Board of Management
9. If parents are not satisfied they may refer to the schools complaints procedure and/or the Ombudsman for children.

### ***Note 1:***

- In cases where the relevant teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after the date on which the relevant teacher has

determined that bullying behaviour has occurred the teacher may once again refer Appendix 2 back to the Principal/Deputy Principal

***Note 2:***

The Principal will provide a report to the Board of Management at least once in every school term, setting out:

(a) The overall number of bullying cases reported to the Principal/Deputy Principal since the previous report to that Board

**and**

(b) Confirmation that all of those cases have been, or are being, dealt with in accordance with the schools anti-bullying policy and procedures