



Anti-Bullying Policy

At St. Mary's Primary School, we aspire to provide a rich broad and balanced education in a safe, stimulating environment. Our success is driven by our desire to facilitate the best possible experience for our children in partnership with parents, governors and our local community.

This policy has been created in line with the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 (hereinafter referred to as The Act) for implementation of The Act on 1st September 2021.

Purpose:

This policy will inform staff, parents, pupils and the wider school community of what bullying is, the forms it may take and the procedure used in St. Mary's Primary School to resolve any issues or incidents involving bullying.

Aims and objectives:

Bullying is unacceptable behaviour. It can happen in any school and many young people can be involved at times. St. Mary's Primary School aims to be bullying free and is therefore committed to:

- ☐ Creating a safe environment where young people can learn and play safely, free from bullying;
- ☐ Creating an ethos in which our pupils can safely and openly talk about their worries free from recrimination;
- ☐ Establishing a confidence in our pupils that an adult will always listen to them and offer them help if they need it;
- ☐ Dealing quickly, fairly and consistently with any incidents of bullying and/or alleged bullying;
- ☐ Informing and involving parents/guardians in any incidents of bullying or alleged bullying;
- ☐ Using the 'no-blame' approach to try and permanently resolve any issues of bullying;
- ☐ Recording all information pertaining to incidents of bullying or alleged bullying;
- ☐ Keeping parents aware of training and information sessions available;
- ☐ Informing parents/guardians of this and other related school policies;
- ☐ Teaching our pupils about bullying and keeping safe and healthy.

We will make it clear to pupils, staff, parents and governors that when bullying happens we will work as a community in accordance with the policy set out in this document to help both the pupil displaying bullying behaviour and the pupil receiving bullying behaviours.

The section should set out context in which the policy has been developed, including the legislative and policy/guidance framework applicable. This includes:

The Legislative Context:

The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016
The Education and Libraries Order (Northern Ireland) 2003 (A17-19)
St. Mary's Primary School Anti-bullying Policy
The Education (School Development Plans) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010
The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995
The Human Rights Act 1998
The Health and Safety at Work Order (Northern Ireland) 1978

The Policy & Guidance Context:

The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 Statutory
Guidance for Schools and Boards of Governors (DE, 2019)
Pastoral Care in School: Promoting Positive Behaviour (DE, 2001)
Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools: A Guide for Schools (DE, 2017)
Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (Dept. of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, 2016)
Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland Policies and Procedures (SBNI, 2017)

The International Context:

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

The key points to note are:

The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016:

Provides a legal definition of bullying.
Places a duty on the Board of Governors to put in place measures to prevent bullying behaviour, in consultation with pupils and parents.
Requires schools to record all incidents of bullying behaviour and alleged bullying incidents.

Sets out under which circumstances this policy should be applied, namely:

In school, during the school day

While travelling to and from school
When under control of school staff, but away from school (eg. school trip)
When receiving education organised by school but happening elsewhere (eg. in another school in the ALC)
Requires that the policy be updated at least every four years.

The Education and Libraries Order (NI) 2003, requires the Board of Governors to:

‘Safeguard and promote the welfare of registered pupils’ (A.17)

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) sets out every child’s right to:

Be protected from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, maltreatment or exploitation. (A.19)
Be protected from discrimination. (A.2)
Express their views, in a supported and accessible way, on issues that affect them, and to have their opinions taken seriously. (A.12)
Education. (A.28)

Definition of bullying:

The Act defines bullying as:

Including, but not limited to, the repeated use of

- a) Any verbal, written or electronic communication
- b) Any other act, or
- c) Any combination of those,

By a pupil or a group of pupils against another pupil or group of pupils, with the intention of causing physical or emotional harm to that pupil or group of pupils.

In order to explain the legal definition of bullying in a clearer way, the Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forum has developed the following policy statement defining bullying as:

Usually repeated behaviour that intentionally hurts, harms or adversely affects the rights and needs of another or others.

In school, when teaching children about anti-bullying, we will use the NIABF’s definition as outlined above.

Methods of Bullying:

There is no exhaustive list but the following are examples of bullying:

- a) Any verbal, written or electronic communication

These methods can be described as, but are not limited to, saying, writing, or using online contact and platforms to:

- ☐ Say mean and hurtful things to, or about others
- ☐ Make fun of others
- ☐ Call another pupil mean and hurtful names
- ☐ Tell lies or spread false rumours about others
- ☐ Try to make other pupils dislike another pupil/s
- ☐ Extort from, blackmail or exploit another.

b) Any other act

Other methods of bullying behaviour commonly include physical bullying and can be described as, but are not limited to:

- ☐ Kicking
- ☐ Hitting
- ☐ Pushing
- ☐ Shoving around
- ☐ Locking a pupil/s inside a room etc
- ☐ Material harm such as taking / stealing money or possessions
- ☐ Other direct/indirect acts

c) Any combination of those

This policy and The Act acknowledges that various methods of bullying behaviour can occur separately or together.

This policy and The Act also includes the act of omission, including where a pupil is intentionally left out and where there is a wilful failure to include a pupil. While repetition is internationally recognised as an important element in establishing bullying behaviour, this policy and The Act does not require repetition for behaviours to be defined as bullying.

As a school, in certain circumstances, to be decided by the Principal, one-off incidents will be treated as such. The Act gives us, as a school, the power to take action to prevent cyber bullying which is taking place outside school, but which is likely to have an impact on the pupil's education in school. Although we do not have a duty to take action, each case of cyber bullying will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Assessing if the Anti-Bullying Policy should be enacted:

As a school, we will use the following criteria to assess whether incidents will be addressed through this policy or be addressed via the schools Positive Behaviour Policy:

- ☐ Severity and significance of the incident
- ☐ Evidence of pre-meditation
- ☐ Impact of the incidents on individuals (physical and emotional)
- ☐ Impact of the incidents on the wider school community
- ☐ Previous relationships between those involved
- ☐ And previous incidents involving the individuals.

If the alleged bullying incidents are assessed as meeting the criteria for bullying this policy will be enacted. When alleged incidents fail to meet the criteria for bullying behaviour, the school will use our Behaviour Policy to address any unacceptable behaviour.

Intention To Cause Harm:

The Act clearly states that, in order for bullying behaviours to be considered as bullying, intent must be clear. As a school, we define the intention to harm as the continuation of identified bullying behaviour after the school has implemented interventions to respond to the situation, resolve the concern and restore the relationship.

In the process of determining intent, the school will use discretion in assessing an individual pupil's capacity to understand the impact of their behaviours, eg due to developmental age, disability or delay.

As a school, we define harm in the following ways:

- ☐ Emotional or psychological harm as intentionally causing distress or anxiety by scaring, humiliating or affecting adversely a pupil's self-esteem.
- ☐ Physical harm as intentionally hurting a pupil by causing injuries such as bruises, broken bones, burns or cuts.

When Should the Policy Be Applied?

This policy will be applied:

- a) On the premises of the school during the school day. The premises of our school is defined as the space within the outer boundary fence.
- b) While travelling to or from the schools during the school term. Pupils are expected to follow the school's behaviour policy when travelling to and from school.
- c) While a pupil is in the lawful control or charge of a member of staff of the school. For example, school trips, external events.
- d) During educational provision arranged on behalf of the school and provided away from the school premises. For example, another school, a Further Education College, EOTAS, Home (Exceptional Teaching Arrangements)

The Responsibilities of Governors:

Governors have oversight of the Anti-bullying Policy and ensure its effective implementation.

At St. Mary's Primary School, Governors ensure this by:

- ☐ Ensuring that, at each Full Board Meeting, a report on bullying is presented as a standing item within the Principal's report.
- ☐ Ensuring minutes are kept including information on numbers of recorded incidents, method, motivation and how the incident was addressed.
- ☐ Recording how pupils, parents / carers, teachers and Governors are consulted if and when changes are made to the policy
- ☐ Identifying trends and patterns to inform further development of policy and practice.

The Responsibilities of Staff:

In line with this Policy document and our Child Protection/Safeguarding Policy, Pastoral Care Policy, Positive Behaviour Policy our staff will:

- ☐ Foster in our pupils self-esteem, self-respect and respect for others;
- ☐ Demonstrate by example the high standards of personal and social behaviour we expect of our pupils;
- ☐ Be familiar with school policy on and receive refresher training in Safeguarding/Child Protection, Anti-bullying and Behaviour and Citizenship.
- ☐ Teach e:Safety to their class each year and on additional necessary occasions;
- ☐ Teach PDMU in line with schemes;
- ☐ Discuss bullying with all classes, so that every pupil learns about the damage it causes to both the child who is displaying bullying behaviours and to the child receiving bullying behaviours, and the importance of telling a teacher/responsible adult 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;

Recording Incidents of Bullying:

As a school, we will ensure that all incidents that are reported as bullying are recorded. We will record whether the alleged incident of bullying is confirmed and responded to through the Anti-bullying Policy, or if the alleged incident is responded to under another policy.

The school will centrally record all relevant information related to reports of bullying concerns, including:

- how the bullying behaviour was displayed (the method)

- the motivation for the behaviour
- how each incident was addressed by the school
- the outcome of the interventions employed.
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Records will be kept. Access to these records will be restricted and only provided to those members of school staff with a legitimate need to have access.

All records will be maintained in line with relevant data protection legislation and guidance and will be disposed of in line with the school's Retention and Disposal of Documents Policy. Collated information regarding incidents of bullying and alleged bullying behaviour will be used to inform the future development of anti-bullying policy and practice within the school.

Motivations of Bullying Behaviour:

We will record the motivation behind the bullying behaviour.

Motivations behind bullying behaviour are wide ranging. Motivations include, but are not limited to:

- ☐ Age
- ☐ Appearance
- ☐ Breakdown in peer relationship
- ☐ Community background
- ☐ Political affiliation
- ☐ Gender identity
- ☐ Sexual orientation
- ☐ Pregnancy
- ☐ Marital status
- ☐ Race
- ☐ Religion
- ☐ Disability
- ☐ Ability
- ☐ Child Looked After
- ☐ Young Carer Status

We expect our pupils to:

Follow our school rules at all times;

- ☐ Be ready and safe at all times
- ☐ Be respectful

The Responsibilities of Parents:

We ask our parents to support their children and the school by:

- ☐ Watching for signs of distress or unusual behaviour in their children, which might be evidence of bullying;
- ☐ Advising their children to report any bullying to a teacher or classroom assistant;
- ☐ Explaining the implications of allowing the bullying to continue unchecked, for themselves and for other pupils;
- ☐ Advising their children not to retaliate violently to any form of bullying; Being sympathetic and supportive towards their children, and reassuring them that appropriate action will be taken;
- ☐ Keeping a written record of any reported instances of bullying;
- ☐ Informing the school of any suspected bullying, even if their children are not involved;
- ☐ Co-operating with the school, if their children are accused of bullying, try to ascertain the truth, and point out the implications of bullying, both for the children who are bullied and for the bullies themselves;
- ☐ Deal with observed instances of bullying promptly and effectively, in accordance with agreed procedures;
- ☐ Monitor the use of technology and the internet at home to ensure appropriate use;
- ☐ Attend any relevant information sessions in school;
- ☐ Read all relevant literature sent home from school.

Procedure:

The processes outlined below provide a framework for how the school will respond to any bullying concerns identified.

Using the NIABF Effective Responses to Bullying Behaviour resource, the member of staff responsible shall:

Clarify facts and perceptions

Check records

Assess the incident against the criteria for bullying behaviour

Identify any themes or motivating factors

Identify the type of bullying behaviour being displayed

Identify intervention level

Select and implement appropriate interventions for all pupils involved, including appropriate interventions, consequences and sanctions not listed in the Effective Responses to Bullying Behaviour resource

Track, monitor and record effectiveness of interventions

Review outcome of interventions

Select and implement further intentions as necessary

NIABF advocates a restorative approach to responding to bullying behaviour.

Interventions suggested in the Effective Responses to Bullying Behaviour resource focus on responding to the behaviour, resolving the concern and restoring the wellbeing of those involved. As a school we will endeavour to use this approach.

When responding to a bullying concern, school staff shall implement interventions aimed at responding to the behaviour, resolving the concern and restoring the wellbeing of those involved.

Where appropriate, school staff may implement sanctions for those displaying bullying behaviour.

Review Of This Policy:

The Act places a statutory requirement of Boards of Governors to review this policy every 4 years.

To aid the review of this policy, Governors will review the record of alleged bullying incidents, including:

- ☐ The number of bullying incidents and the number of alleged bullying incidents not progressed under the Anti-bullying Policy
- ☐ The type of bullying (method)
- ☐ The motivation behind the bullying incidents
- ☐ How long the bullying went on
- ☐ The responsive intervention(s) employed
- ☐ The effectiveness of the intervention(s)
- ☐ The proportion of bullying situation which were successfully resolved.

The Board of Governors will also review:

- ☐ The number and type of whole class / school preventative measures
- ☐ The impact of the policy and practice within the whole school
- ☐ The number of pupils, parents and school staff who feel the school is now a safer environment as a result of anti-bullying policy and practice.

In reviewing the policy, the school will circulate a survey each academic year with some questions focusing on behaviour and bullying. This survey will be completed by pupils, parents and staff. A random sample of parents / carers will also get a draft copy of the policy and will be asked for feedback.

In the development and implementation of this Anti-Bullying Policy, the Board of Governors has been mindful of related policies, including:

Intimate Care Policy
Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
Health and Safety Policy
E-Safety Policy & Acceptable Use of Internet Policy

Appendices to follow below:

Adopted on: November 2024

Next Review: January 2028

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'B. Day'.

Signed:

(Chair of Governors)

Appendix 1 - Bullying Concern Assessment Form

To be completed in accordance with the Bullying section of the Behaviour Policy

Reprint and complete each section as necessary.

This form should be completed **with proportionate detail that corresponds to the nature of the incident.**

Part 1 – Details of Incident/Allegations			
	Name(s)	Gender (M/F)	Year Group
Person(s) reporting concern			
Name of Targeted pupil(s)			
Name of pupil(s) involved			
State if the behaviour involves: a pupil or a group of pupils against another pupil or group of pupils.			
Have you checked the records for previous incidents? (This must be done).			Yes
Outline of Alleged/Witnessed Incident(s) (including dates/approx. times/location etc.): In addition you should attach all written accounts/drawings (if any) of the incident(s) completed by those involved.			

State what, from all of the circumstances, appears to be the motivation⁹ of the incident for example, differences of religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, sex, sexual orientation or marital status (of parents/carers) and/or differences between persons with a disability and persons without. Or other motivation not listed above.

Does the incident meet the definition of bullying in the Policy?		Yes/No
Name of the teacher:		Date

Taking account of the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act, motivation may also include: differences between persons based on gender reassignment; and/or differences between persons based on pregnancy; and/or differences between persons with dependants and persons without; however these are unlikely in primary school aged children

PART 2 - Details of interventions to be implemented in response and Referrals to Principal/Vice Principal, SENCO etc.

Outline Intervention/Action/Support/Sanctions to be Implemented of pupil(s) who has been displaying bullying behaviour (or were appropriate whole class exercise/response).

Outline Action/Support for pupil(s) who has been subject to the incident (or were appropriate whole class exercise/response).

Any other details (including referral to Principal, SENCO or Designated Teacher for Child Protection):

Name of the teacher
completing this form:

Date:

PART 3 - On-Going Record of Support, Interventions and Monitoring (complete a separate sheet for each record/intervention)¹⁰

Details of Support/Intervention/Monitoring			
Action Taken/ Follow up Action Required (including follow-up date)			
Name of teacher		Date	

¹⁰ If a new significant incident occurs, the nature or motivation of the incident changes or new pupils or parties become involved you should complete new copies of the the relevant sections of Part 1 and/or 2 to capture the relevant information.

PART 4 – Contact with Parents/Carers or Other Relevant Parties

This part is to be completed at any stage when parents/carers or other parties are contacted.

Record of contact with Parents/Carers or other Relevant Party:

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Name of the teacher:

Date

Part 5 – Incident Resolved - Closing Record**Record of teachers decision to close the incident**

Name of the teacher
completing this form:

Date

Principal Notes (if required)

When closed this record must be retain for future record in accordance with the Data Protection Policy.