

# St. Dominic's National School

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## Anti-Bullying Policy

### 1. Introduction

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 Dominic's National School 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.

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 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 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 including in particular, homophobic and trans phobic 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
- ★ On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

## 2. Defining Bullying

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 and
- ★ 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 once-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour, including a once-off 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 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.

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

Examples of bullying behaviours are available at appendix 1.

Additional information on different types of bullying is set out in Section 2 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.

## 3. Relevant Teachers

In these procedures, the member of the teaching staff who has responsibility for investigating and dealing with bullying is referred to as the "relevant teacher". The relevant teacher for investigating and dealing with bullying is the class teacher. 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.

A relevant teacher dealing with bullying will firstly deal with concerns in class or refer to the support teacher to help. They will speak to the relevant parents (Bully & Victim), inform the Principal. The relevant teacher must keep appropriate written records which will assist to resolve the issues and restore the relationships of the parties involved. A relevant teacher may bring a concern directly to the Principal.

Our school's prevention and awareness raising measures are appropriate to the type of bullying and take into account the age and gender of the pupils involved. The school has partaken in a Self-Evaluation workshop (Shield Our School), and an action plan has been put in place.

#### **4. Education and Prevention Strategies**

Effective practice includes prevention and awareness raising measures across all aspects of bullying and involves strategies to engage pupils in addressing problems when they arise. In particular, such strategies need to build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils. As self-esteem is a major factor in determining behaviour, our school will endeavour to provide pupils with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth

St Dominic's National School adopts 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 highlighting the unacceptability of bullying behaviour. The education and prevention strategies that will be used by the school are as follows:

- ★ Creating a culture of telling:
  - The staff of St Dominic's National School repeatedly reinforces the message that all incidents of bullying behaviour must be reported. Reassurance is given that all incidents of bullying will be dealt with in a safe manner. Pupils will gain confidence in telling, which is of vital importance.
  - Bystanders can be the key to resolving bullying. 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 who to tell and how to tell, e.g.:
  - Direct approach to teacher at an appropriate time, for example after class.
  - Hand up a note to teacher
  - Use the postbox in the senior & junior blocks
  - Ask a parent(s)/guardian(s) to tell on your behalf.
  - Ask a friend to tell on your behalf
  - Administer a confidential questionnaire while investigating an incident
  - Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place.
- ★ Supervision and monitoring
  - Effective supervision and monitoring systems to facilitate early intervention.
  - Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, hall, playgrounds, school grounds, school tours and extra-curricular activities.
  - Non-teaching staff are encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers.
  - Supervision also applies to monitoring student use of communication technology within the school.

- ★ Professional Development:
  - Whole staff professional development on bullying to ensure that all staff develops an awareness of what bullying is, how it impacts on pupils' lives and the need to respond to it – prevention and intervention.
  - Training available for staff in the Incredible Years Programme, Friends Programme, Weaving Well-being and Internet Safety.
- ★ Raising the awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour by:
  - The development of dedicated display boards and posters in the school promoting friendship and bullying prevention.
  - Holding a competition in which students create an anti-bullying slogan for our school. This will be displayed around the school.
  - The anti-bullying policy is discussed with pupils and is also available on the school's website.
  - Friendship Fortnight held in St Dominic's National School
- ★ Promoting a positive sense of self-worth and building empathy and resilience in pupils:
  - Rewarding incidents of good and improved behaviour at a whole school level through the presentation of student of the week and Student of the month.
  - Extracurricular activities available for pupils.
  - Formal and informal interactions.
  - Celebration of Multicultural Day
  - Development of the use of a Buddy Bench.
- ★ Cyber bullying:
  - Promoting awareness of St. Dominic's Acceptable Use Policy and ensuring that the access to technology within the school is strictly monitored, as is the pupils' use of mobile phones.
  - Communicating the message that unlike other forms of bullying, a once-off posting can constitute bullying.
  - Advice will be communicated to help students protect themselves from being involved in bullying and to advise them on reporting any incidents. A telling atmosphere is created, so that pupils will report cyber bullying where they see it.
  - Publicising ways of dealing with cyber bullying in the school.
  - Promoting 'Internet Safety Day' annually and activities to celebrate this awareness.
  - Information talks for parent(s)/guardian(s).
  - Training available for staff based on Internet Safety.
  - Teaching of lessons to deal with the issues of cyberbullying and internet safety.
    - Don't reply.
    - Keep the message.
    - Block the sender.
    - Tell someone you trust.
  - Gardaí will visit the school to talk about cyber bullying.
  - Parent(s)/guardian(s) and students are advised that it is illegal for a child under 13 to register with and use many social media networks.
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- ★ Our school's approach to tackling and preventing bullying takes particular account of the needs of pupils with SEN, and joins up with other relevant school policies and supports. We will ensure that all services and supports that provide for such pupils work together. Approaches to decreasing the likelihood of bullying for pupils with SEN include improving inclusion, focusing on developing social skills, self-regulation and 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.
- ★ Initiatives and programmes focused on developing pupils' awareness and understanding, including its causes and effects, will deal explicitly with the issue of identity-based bullying. Where issues of identity-based bullying arise, the school will deal with them at an individual, group, class, or whole school context in consultation with the parents/guardians of the children involved. The ethos of the school and the age and stage of the children's development will be taken into consideration.
- ★ The development of an Acceptable Use Policy in the school to include the necessary steps to ensure that the access to technology within the school is strictly monitored.

### Implementation of the curriculum

- ★ Teachers influence attitudes to bullying behaviour in a positive manner through a range of curricular initiatives. There are a number of curriculum components and programmes which are particularly relevant to the prevention of bullying and the promotion of respect for diversity and inclusiveness.
- ★ The **SPHE curriculum** makes 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. Each teacher records in Cuntas Míosúil when Stay Safe is complete.
- ★ The **RSE programme** aims to provide opportunities for children to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.
- ★ Other resources and programmes include:
  - PDST Anti-Bullying Support Material
  - Webwise - Cyberbullying Pack
  - Webwise - My Selfie Lessons
  - Show Racism the Red Card
  - Class and School Rules
  - Walk Tall
  - Friendship Fortnight
  - Circle Time
  - Friends for Life
  - Fun Friends
  - Weaving Well-being
  - Discipline For Learning
  - E-Safety (Internet safety talk) – 4th, 5th & 6th class

- ★ Links to other policies. The school policies which support the Anti-Bullying policy are:
  - Code of Behaviour
  - Child Protection Policy
  - Supervision Policy
  - Acceptable Use policy
  - Mobile Phone Policy

## **5. Procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying**

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 (see Section 6.8 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools)

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, parent(s)/guardians) understand this approach from the outset.

Reporting bullying behaviour:

- Any pupil or parent(s)/guardian(s) may report 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
- Teaching and non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants, bus escorts, caretakers, cleaners must report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them by the relevant teacher.

Procedures for investigating, dealing with and recording incidents of Bullying are 3 staged:

### **Stage 1**

#### **Informal Investigation and Action**

- In investigating and dealing with incidents of alleged bullying, the relevant teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved.
- Teachers will take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach (modelling appropriate behaviour of how we act when dealing with unpleasant situations) when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents.

### **Informal Recording, pre determination that bullying has occurred**

- Staff must record a written record on Aladdin of any incidents (Classroom & Yard) 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 the same.
- Support teacher and principal to analyse repetitive incidents that constitute bullying.

## **Stage 2**

### **Formal Investigation and Action**

- 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.
- 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 support provided to the pupils.
- It must also be made clear to all involved that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school.
- Discipline sanctions used will be in line with the school code of behaviour, including the possibility of suspension/expulsion.
- 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.
- 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 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.
- 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.

- It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s).

### **Formal Recording**

- If it is established by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher must keep appropriate written records which will assist his/her efforts to resolve and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.
- These records will be kept in the principal's office

## **Stage 3**

### **Formal Investigation**

- In cases, where the relevant teacher considers that 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 in the recording template at appendix 3.
- In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant teacher must, 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 is practicable;
  - ➔ Whether the relationships between the parties have been restored as far is practicable;
  - ➔ Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parent(s)/guardian(s) or the Principal or Deputy Principal.

### **Formal Recording**

- The relevant teacher must use the recording template at appendix 3 to record the bullying behaviour in the following circumstances:
  - ➔ 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; and
  - ➔ where the school has decided as part of its anti-bullying policy that in certain circumstances bullying behaviour (for example, in the case of extreme physical bullying) must be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable.
- When the recording template is used, it must be retained by the principal

## **Follow up**

- 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(s)/guardian(s) is not satisfied that the school has not 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 procedure.
- 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 parent(s)/guardian(s) of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

## **Established intervention strategies**

- Negotiating agreements between 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 parent(s)/guardian(s) to support school interventions
- No Blame Approach
- Circle Time
- The school Code of Behaviour
- Strengthening the victim
- Support Teacher

## **6. Programme of support**

A programme of support for pupils who have been bullied is in place. Such pupils may need counselling and/or opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop their friendship and social skills and thereby build resilience whenever this is needed. (See outside agencies booklet).

A programme of support for those pupils involved in bullying behaviour is also part of the schools intervention process. Pupils involved in bullying behaviour may need assistance on an ongoing basis and are referred to the Support Teacher. For those with low self esteem, opportunities are developed to increase feelings of self-worth. It is, therefore, important that the learning strategies applied within the school allow for the enhancement of the pupil's self-worth.

Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour may need counselling to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others. (See outside agencies booklet) Pupils who observe incidents of bullying behaviour should be encouraged to discuss them with teachers or post them in the Incident Post Box located in each block

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

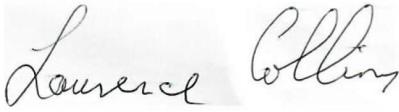
The Board of Management confirms that the school will, in accordance with its obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the sexual harassment of pupils or staff or the harassment of pupils or staff on any of the nine grounds specified i.e. gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller Community.

## 9. Board of Management

This policy will be made available to all school staff and published on the school website. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

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 staff and published on the school website. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 24th March 2021

Signed: 

(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: 

(Principal)

Date: 24/3/21