

St. Aidan's C.B.S. Anti-bullying Policy 2019/20

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. Aidan's C.B.S. 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.

1. 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. This can be seen through:
 - 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 cyberbullying (that is to say any derogatory content published and circulated through the medium of technology by a student about another student/students) and the nine identity-based forms of bullying as outlined by equality legislation.
 - Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils;
 - Supports for staff;
 - Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies);
 - On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

2. 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;
- cyberbullying;

- 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 circulated by other people will be regarded as bullying behaviour. Due to the particular and ubiquitous nature of this type of bullying, the school authorities will liaise with An Garda Síochána if deemed necessary.

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

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. The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows: (see Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):

The Year Heads, the Deputy Principal and the Principal

All staff, pupils, parents and teachers have a responsibility to alert the Year Head of suspicions of bullying.

4. The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyberbullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying) that will be used by the school are as follows (see Section 6.5 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):

Term Assemblies are used to promote positive self worth through reinforcement exercises, prize giving and emphasis on the school’s ethos of care and compassion. A culture of reporting bullying is fostered in the school through assemblies, visits by management to classes, SPHE lessons. Particular emphasis is placed on standing up for others and being forthcoming with information to help the school authorities in identifying and solving issues of bullying.

Initiatives which deal explicitly with identity based bullying include; LGBT posters on notice boards, SPHE (in Junior Cycle) and RSE modules (in Senior Cycle), Relationships Workshops by Accord in TY and 5th Year.

Prevention of cyberbullying is managed through the on-line safety poster in classrooms, the regular anti-bullying surveys conducted by the Deputy Principal and reviewed the Year Heads, and the presentation given by “Zeeko Education, Difficult Conversations” and other providers on internet safety and cyberbullying.

Our school’s SEN and Anti-bullying policy work hand in hand to prevent bullying of vulnerable children with special educational needs. Particular attention is paid to the key

period of transition to secondary school. Primary schools provide (formal and informal) information to the SEN team to ease transition. Parents of in-coming First Years are surveyed by the Guidance Counsellor (in May at the Parents' Evening) and this information is reviewed by the Care Team (which includes members of the SEN Team). SEN students are invited to lunch during the summer exams to allay fears and initiate early friendships. A social skills class is included in the resource classes provided to SEN students.

Mind Your Mental Health Week involves the promotion of positive mental attitudes and the importance of inclusion.

We encourage parents to approach the school authorities if they feel their child is being bullied. They can have confidence in the school's determination to help and support their child. Similarly, parents are reminded that if their child is involved in bullying behaviour they have a responsibility to support the school's anti-bullying policy and address their child's inappropriate behaviour, (the Promissory Note is part of that support).

All subject teachers strive to promote respect, harmony and tolerance in their class rooms. *"There is space within the teaching of 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 could be used to stimulate discussion. In Civil, Social and Political Education (CSPE), the interdependence of people in communities at local, national and international levels is stressed. In **Geography** and **History** references to colonisation, exploitation and dictatorships could be used to illustrate the negative aspect of power. The work could be extended into many other areas such as **Art, Drama, Religious Education, and Physical Education**. Co-operation and group enterprise can be promoted through team sports, school clubs and societies as well as through **practical subjects**. Sporting activities in particular can provide excellent opportunities for channelling and learning how to control aggression."* (6.5.10 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools):

Good supervision and monitoring systems also facilitate early intervention. Supervision of play times and lunch breaks is organised on a rota basis. Each teacher has a responsibility to actively supervise the yard/ halls in their allocated time slot. Senior pupils in their role as prefects can be very effective in identifying potential problem areas.

Each First Year class is allocated a team of prefects to visit their Tutor class once a week.

Non-teaching staff can also be instrumental in alerting management to possible problems.

“The Action Plan on Bullying published on the Department’s website in January 2013 highlighted the importance of schools identifying and consistently implementing established evidence-based intervention strategies for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour and preventing its continuation.”

A pupil or parent may bring a bullying concern to any teacher in the school.

Individual teachers must alert the relevant Year Head and a Deputy Principal/Principal

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 were adopted by the Year Head Team in Sept 2013 following a successful trial period in 2011 and 2012 The documents used are as follows;

(1) The Class Survey, The Incident Record on VS Ware, The Promissory Note and the new Student Reflection Document (2017)

These documents and other useful complementary documents are available on Staff Common in the Deputy Principal’s Folder. Every reported incident of bullying must be recorded by the Year Head and notified to the relevant Deputy Principal and Principal.

(2) The school’s programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows (see Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*) :

(i) The primary aim for the **relevant teacher** (Year Head) 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);

(ii) In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher will exercise his professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved;

(iii) All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. 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;

(iv) Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), caretakers, cleaners must be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher;

(v) Parents 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;

(vi) It is very important that all involved (including each set of pupils and parents) understand the above approach from the outset;

(vii) Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents;

(viii) Incidents are generally best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved;

(ix) 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;

(x) 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;

(xi) If a group is involved, each member should be interviewed individually. Those involved should write down their account of the incident(s);

(xii) Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that they may face from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher;

(xiii) In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents 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 parents an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports for their pupils;

(xiv) Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to him how he/she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts should be made to try to get him to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied;

(xv) It must also be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parents) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his parents and the school;

(xvi) Follow-up 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;

(xvii) 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 in the recording template at Appendix 3 (See Section 6.8.10 (iii));

(xviii) In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant teacher must, as part of his 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;

and

Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the school Principal or Deputy Principal;

(xix) Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures;

(xx) In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

5. 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.

6. 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.

7. This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 15 October 2019e].
8. This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website (or where none exists, is otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parents' Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.
9. 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 (or where none exists, be otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parents' Association (where one exists). A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Signed: Ms. Patricia Bourden
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: Mr. Thomas Shannon
(Principal)

Date: 15 October 2019

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