# St. Michael's National School

# Anti-Bullying Policy

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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 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 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 transphobic 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.

3. 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
- Intimidation
- Isolation/exclusion and other relational bullying
- Name calling
- Extortion
- Deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying
- Cyber-bullying
- 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 will 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.

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

4. **The relevant teachers 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 primary aim for the relevant teacher 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.

The 'relevant teachers' in St Michael's are the following, depending upon the situation:

- Class Teacher
- Teacher who witnesses the incident
- The class teacher; in consultation with the Principal or Deputy Principal.

5. **The education and prevention strategies 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_).**

- St. Michael's adopts a school-wide approach to the fostering of respect for all members of the school community. At the beginning of every school year all classes draw up their own class rules. Parents/Guardians are aware of the school Code of Behaviour, Anti-Bullying Policy and Acceptable Use Policy.
- Anti-Bullying slogans displayed throughout the school.
- An Anti-Bullying week is organized during the month of February each year.
- St. Michael's has a fair and firm discipline structure.
- Junior and Senior Social Skills groups.
- The fostering and enhancing of the self – esteem of all 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. Our students learn to perform an Irish Traditional music repertoire on the tin-whistle. Our award-winning choir perform to a very high standard at all liturgical celebrations and other important events during the school year. We celebrate pupil achievement at our weekly school assemblies which alternate between awards and performances assemblies. Our "Good Work Wall" also affirms pupils' efforts. We encourage our pupils to participate in the wide variety of sporting activities offered at St. Michael's. We are currently engaged in renewing our Active Schools Flag and were awarded our third Green Flag in October 2021. Many students are involved in these initiatives. Most recently pupils have become involved in our quest for a Positive Primaries Flag. The aim of this programme is to boost wellbeing through the use of photographs. Work for this initiative complements ongoing work on our Wellbeing Programme which continues to be the area of focus for S.S.E.

- Whole staff professional development to ensure that all staff develop an awareness of what bullying is, how it impacts on pupils' lives and the need to respond to it, prevention and intervention. Professional development includes workshops on Cyberbullying and Bullying for teachers. (Part of our Anti-Bullying Week).
- "Don't Be Mean Behind Your Screen" workshop for 5th and 6th class pupils in February of each school year (Anti-Bullying Week).
- Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extra-curricular activities. All staff are encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers. Supervision will also apply to monitoring student use of communication technology within the school.
- Good communication with Parents/Guardians via newsletters, information meetings, Individual Education Planning meetings, invitations to school events, Parent/Teacher meetings and Parents' Association activities.
- The school's Anti-Bullying Policy is adequately communicated to pupils, parents and guardians.
- Encourage a culture of trust, by rewarding pupils for being honest and for 'telling', with particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders. In that way pupils will gain confidence in 'telling '. This confidence factor is of vital importance. Pupils are consistently reminded 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.
  - Get a parent/ guardian to tell on your behalf.
  - Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place.
- Cyberbullying:
  - Promoting awareness of St. Michael's Acceptable Use Policy and ensuring that the access to technology within the school is strictly monitored.
  - Communicating the message that unlike other forms of bullying, a once-off posting can constitute cyberbullying.
  - Advice will be communicated to help students protect themselves from being involved in cyberbullying and to advise them on reporting any incidents.
  - "Don't Be Mean Behind Your Screen" workshop for 5th and 6th class pupils in February of each school year (Anti-Bullying Week).
  - Publicising ways of dealing with cyber bullying in the school.
    - Don't reply.
    - Keep the message.
    - Block the sender.
    - Tell someone you trust.

- <u>Implementation of Curricula</u>

  - The full implementation of the SPHE curriculum and the Stay Safe Programmes. Resources include RSE, Walk Tall, Stay Safe, Fun Friends and Friends for Life programmes.
  - Continuous Professional Development for staff in delivering these programmes.
  - School wide delivery of lessons on Cyber Bullying, Be Safe-Be Web wise, Web wise Primary teachers' resources.
  - Delivery of the Garda SPHE Programmes. These lessons delivered by Community Gardai cover issues around personal safety and Cyber Bullying.
  - The school will specifically consider the additional needs of SEN pupils with regard to programme implementation and the development of skills and strategies to enable all pupils to respond appropriately.

**Links with other Policies**

Our Anti-Bullying Policy is linked to other relevant policies in the school.

**These policies include:**

| Code of Behaviour | The Anti-Bullying Policy of St. Michael's forms part of the overall school Code of Behaviour (in line with NEWB Guidelines, 2008) and the standards of behaviour that are outlined in the Code of Behaviour apply to the Anti-Bullying Policy. |
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| **Child Safeguarding Statement**<br><br>**Child Safeguarding Risk Assessment** | In accordance with the DES Child Protection Procedures 2011:<br><br>"In situations where the (bullying) incident is serious and when the behaviour is regarded as potentially abusive, the school should consult with Tusla with a view to drawing up an appropriate response, such as a management plan".<br><br>(DES Child Protection Procedures, 2011, 6.3.5)<br><br>In addition, serious instances of bullying behaviour should he referred to the HSE Children and Family Services. (DES Child Protection Procedures, 2011, 6.3.5) |

| Acceptable Use Policy | The practices outlined in the Acceptable Use Policy for safe use of the Internet reflect the requirements of the anti-bullying procedures and will be adhered to at all times. This also applies to the use of other technological devices, including mobile phones, digital cameras and other devices. |
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| Health and Safety Statement | The Anti-Bullying policy is explicitly referenced in the Board of Management's Health, Safety and Welfare Statement. |

6. **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*):**

It is important that all involved (including each set of pupils and parents/guardians) understand the outlined approach from the outset.

**Step 1a.**

When an incident of alleged bullying is reported or observed the situation will be investigated by the relevant teacher. The relevant teacher will talk to the children and witnesses separately, in private, in a calm manner using questions of what, where, when, who and why. e.g.

- What happened?
- What were you thinking at the time?
- Who has been affected?
- In What way?
- What needs to be done to make things right?

All interviews will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned. Where possible incidents will be investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.

**Step 1b.**

When a large number of children are involved, each member of the group will be interviewed individually at first and each member will get the opportunity to discuss with the relevant teacher what has occurred. The relevant teacher will record all details. The school through the 'Relevant Teacher' reserves the right to ask any pupil to write an account of what happened as part of an investigation. This will be standard procedure and does not necessarily imply that a pupil is guilty of misbehaviour.

**Step 1c.**

Thereafter all those involved will be encouraged to meet as a group if appropriate. At the group meeting, each member will be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements. The relevant teacher will record all details.

**Step 2.**

Having completed the investigation, the relevant teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement, using the definitions of bullying from the Anti-bullying guidelines, to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved.

**Step 3.**

Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has engaged in bullying behaviour, it will be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's Anti-Bullying Policy and efforts will be made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied.

**Step 4.**

In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents/guardians of the parties involved will be contacted to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken. Discipline sanctions used will be in line with the schools Code of Behaviour. The school will give parents an opportunity to discuss ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports for their pupils.

**Step 5.**

It will be made clear to all involved that in any situation where disciplinary sanction is required, that this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his/her parents/guardians and the school.

**Step 6.**

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 was bullied is ready and agreeable.

**Step 7.**

An additional follow up meeting with parents/guardians of the children involved may take place after an appropriate time to ensure that the matter has been resolved satisfactorily.

**Step 8.**

Where a parent/guardian is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, they will be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaint procedures.

In the event that a parent/guardian has exhausted the complaints procedure and is still not satisfied, they will be advised of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

**6.2. The Recording, noting and reporting of bullying behaviour is to be documented using the template for recording bullying behaviour (Appendix 3). All records must be maintained in accordance with relevant data protection legislation. The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour will adhere to the following:**

- 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 his/her/their professional judgement in relation to the records, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same.

- If it is established by the relevant teacher(s) that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher(s) must keep appropriate written records which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.
- The relevant teacher(s) must use the recording template at Appendix 3 to record the bullying behaviour in cases where he/she considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addresses within 20 school days after he/she has determined that the bullying behaviour occurred. The recording template will be completed in full and retained by the teacher in question and a copy provided to the Principal or Deputy Principal .

7. **All in-school supports and opportunities will be provided for the pupils affected by bullying to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem to develop friendships and social skills. (see Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):**

   - The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying involves a whole school approach and will be based on our prevention strategies.  Given the complexity of bullying behaviour, no one intervention/support programme works in all situations. Therefore, various approaches and intervention strategies may be used including suggesting that parents seek referrals to appropriate outside agencies in order to receive further support for the pupils and their families if needed. Some 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.

   - A programme of support for those pupils involved in bullying behaviour will be part of our school's intervention process. Pupils involved in bullying behaviour need assistance on an ongoing basis. For those with low self-esteem opportunities will be developed to increase feelings of self-worth. Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour may need counselling to help learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others.

   - Our "Friends First" and "Friends for Life "programmes will be very beneficial to those who are anxious in school or who are affected by bullying.

8. **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.

9. **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.

10. This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on ___19/10/2021___.

11. This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

12. This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management as necessary. Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Signed: _Mary Hilliard_

(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: _Berid Gorey_

(Principal)

Date: 20.10.2021

Date: 20/10/2021

Date of next review: _Oct '2022_