



St Mary's Grammar School

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

June 2021

St Mary's Grammar School

Anti-Bullying Policy

RATIONALE:

It is a basic right of each pupil in St Mary's to receive his education free from physical or emotional hurt.

We acknowledge that there is a potential for bullying to occur in school, as it will do in other institutions or places wherever people of any age meet or group together.

As a school community we need a set of procedures to deal with the problem in a consistent manner. This Anti-Bullying Policy provides guidelines for the prevention of bullying and for intervention if the problem occurs.

The policy takes account of guidance provided in:

- DE Circular 2003/13 Education Regulations
- Pastoral Care in Schools: Promoting Positive Behaviour 2001
- Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016
- DE Circular 2017/04 Safeguarding and Child Protection, A Guide for Schools
- DE Circular 2017/04 - Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools - A Guide for Schools
- DE Circular 2021/12 - Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016: Responsibilities of Schools and Boards of Governors.

The Policy should be read in conjunction with the Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy, Behaviour Management Policy, Safe Handling Policy and Acceptable Use of Internet Policy

AIMS OF THE SCHOOL'S ANTI-BULLYING POLICY:

1. To promote and develop the ideals, values and beliefs of the school as set out in the school mission statement.
2. To ensure pupils, staff and parents understand and accept a common definition of what constitutes bullying behaviour.
3. To develop a preventative and reactive approach to deal with bullying at management, class and individual level.
4. To raise an awareness and an understanding of bullying through the curriculum.
5. To create an atmosphere where students feel that if they report bullying, they will be listened to and swift, sensitive action will be taken.
6. To provide for all a safe and supportive learning and work environment free from any threat or fear.
7. To work towards an ethos in our community where all forms of bullying are unacceptable and where the reporting of bullying is encouraged and expected.
8. To ensure all partners in the education process are aware of this policy and that they fulfil their obligations to it.

Mrs Fiona Crookes, Pastoral Vice- Principal, is the teacher designated to have specific responsibility for Child Protection.

Mrs Amanda Barr, Senior Teacher, assumes the responsibility when the designated teacher is absent or unavailable.

Members of staff, both teaching and ancillary, are aware of the designations.

DEFINITION OF BULLYING

The Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forum (NIABF) defines bullying as behaviour, that is usually repeated, by one or more persons intentionally to hurt, harm or adversely affect the rights and needs of another or others. This definition statement is based on the definition of bullying as laid out in the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 which states that,

“Bullying includes (but is 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 exceptional circumstances, a one-off incident may be considered as bullying if, in the view of the school, it is aggravated by the level of harm caused and /or the intention of the perpetrator. In any case, the school will decide if the behaviour meets the threshold to be defined as bullying.

What is harm?

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

BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

Bullying is a form of unacceptable behaviour, but not all unacceptable behaviour can be considered bullying. Bullying usually has three key elements:

- It is repeated behaviour that happens over a period of time;
- It involves an imbalance of power;
- It is intentionally hurtful behaviour.

Bullying behaviour can include:

Physical:

eg, pushing, kicking, hitting, pinching and any other forms of violence, threats or damage to property or theft.

Verbal:

eg, name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, persistent teasing.

Emotional:

eg, excluding, tormenting, ridicule, humiliation.

Cyber Bullying:

eg, bullying that takes place through the use of technology such as mobile phones and the Internet. This could include posting hurtful, embarrassing or threatening material on social networking websites, sending nasty text messages or leaving rude voicemails on mobile phones, excluding someone from an on line game, showing or threatening to show inappropriate photos or videos of someone and setting up fake profiles on a social network to make fun of others.

In addition:

Making a hurtful comment about someone's disability

Making racist, sectarian, homophobic or transphobic comments.

The above list is not intended to be a totally comprehensive list of the types of bullying which may occur but rather a list to illustrate the types of behaviour with which we are concerned.

Bullying is not the same as quarrelling – all children will fall out with each other from time to time. Not all aggression is bullying, nor all name calling.

Persistent bullying can result in:

- Absenteeism
- Depression
- Low self-esteem
- Shyness
- Poor Achievement
- Isolation
- Threatened or attempted suicide.

Unchecked bullying also damages the bully who learns that he can get away with violence, aggression and threats and that this sort of behaviour gets him what he wants.

Action Points:

1. What Pupils Can Do

When you are experiencing bullying behaviour

- Try to stay calm.
- Remind yourself that bullying is wrong. You do not deserve to be bullied.
- Don't ignore it but keep safe.
- Take firm and confident action – ask the bully to stop.
- Don't pretend to be friends with the bully.
- Let an adult know – somehow – as soon as possible.
- Remember it does not matter how you do this – just do it the best way for you.
- You can help yourself by staying with group and avoiding areas where you feel safe.

When you see or know other people experiencing bullying behaviour

- Remind yourself it is right to let an adult know and that adults expect you to do this.
- Remember it is only the bullies and those who support them who say it is wrong to let an adult know.
- Remember, by doing nothing you may be allowing the bully to continue.
- Help and support the victim – but **keep safe**.
- Let an adult know as soon as possible.

Telephone Help Lines

Falls Community Council

275-277 Falls Road

Telephone: 90 202030

CHILDLINE

Telephone:

0800 1111

(24 hour)

SAMARITANS

Telephone:

116 123

(24 hour)

Family Works Counselling

02891821721

info@familyworksni.com

Northern Ireland Anti Bullying Forum

Tel 0289087 5006

www.info@niabf.org.uk

If you are worried that your son is being bullied, ask him directly about it.

Be aware of the **signs and symptoms** of bullying.

Children may:

- be frightened of getting to or from school
- change their usual route
- not want to go on the school bus
- beg you to drive them to school
- be unwilling to go to school (or be school phobic)
- feel ill in the mornings
- begin truanting
- begin doing poorly in their school work
- come home regularly with clothes or books damaged
- come home starving (bully has taken dinner money)
- become withdrawn, start stammering, lack confidence
- become distressed and anxious, stop eating
- attempt or threaten suicide
- cry themselves to sleep; have nightmares
- have their possessions 'go missing'
- ask for money or start stealing money (to pay the bully)
- continually 'lose' their pocket money
- refuse to say what's wrong (too frightened of the bully)
- have unexplained bruises, scratches, cuts

- begin to bully other children or siblings
- become aggressive and unreasonable
- give improbable excuses to explain any of the above.

If your child is experiencing bullying behaviour

- Stay calm – avoid over-reacting.
- Take it seriously and make the time to find out the facts.
- Talk calmly with your son. Let him know he is valued and important.
- Emphasise that you are going to support him.
- Don't agree to keep it a secret.
- Reinforce that it is right to let people know.
- Talk with the school. You can contact the Form Teacher, Year Head, Vice-Principal, Principal or any member of staff. Ask the school what it intends to do.
- Give your son a chance to talk about his feelings about being bullied.
- Help your son practise strategies such as being confident, walking away and keeping safe.
- Keep a written diary of all incidents.
- Stay in touch with school; let them know if things improve as well as if problems continue.
- Check that your child is not inviting the bully by some unacceptable or unpleasant behaviour or attitude.

If your child is displaying bullying behaviour

Children sometimes bully others for many reasons, including:

- they are copying other people
- they have not thought through the reasons why bullying is not acceptable
- as a way of coping with a difficult situation
- as a means of getting their own way
- as a response to being bullied themselves.

If you learn that your son is displaying bullying behaviour

- try to stay calm
- talk calmly with your son. Let them know they are valued and important. Explain
- that what he is doing is unacceptable and makes other people unhappy
- ask if he has any ideas about why he is bullying and what he thinks might help him stop
- find out if there is something in particular which is troubling him and try to sort it out
- work out a way for him to make amends for the bullying
- set up some sort of reward for good behaviour
- help him find non-aggressive ways of reacting to situations
- if he bullies when faced with certain situations, help him work out and practise
- alternative ways of behaving
- explain that getting away from a situation where he can feel himself losing his temper, or things getting out of hand, is not weakness. It is a sensible way of ensuring that the situation does not get worse

- praise him when he does things well
- talk with the school. Make sure the Form Teacher and Year Head know. Explain that your son is making an effort to change his behaviour. Ask what ideas they have to help. St Mary's staff are committed to helping
- other children may deliberately provoke or bully, especially if they think the bully is trying to reform. Explain to your son that he may be taunted and provoked but that he should try not to respond aggressively. He should walk away quickly if he thinks someone is trying to pick a fight

Parents can help by controlling their own aggression and by making it clear that violence is always unacceptable.

WHAT THE SCHOOL CAN DO

- St Mary's emphasises the importance of treating everyone with care, respect and courtesy.
- St Mary's is committed to taking all reported instances of bullying seriously. Reported instances will be investigated sensitively.
- St Mary's is committed to stopping bullying and will persistently strive to achieve this when incidents are reported.

St Mary's staff are given specific guidance on dealing with incidents of bullying:

INITIAL RESPONSE

Staff should:

- take all reported instances of bullying seriously and deal with the matter sensitively
- remain calm when dealing with an incident
- take appropriate action to defuse situations if necessary
- make an assessment of the situation ensuring that the personal safety of all parties is the first consideration
- offer reassurance to the target(s)
- decide to either deal with the matter themselves or refer it on as appropriate to another member of staff in line with the school's discipline procedures.
- Record the incident and outcome.

INVESTIGATING INCIDENTS

Staff should investigate the reported incident sensitively and thoroughly bearing these principles in mind:

- reassurance to the target is vital
- confirm and reinforce with all parties the expectation that it is right that incidents must be reported
- reinforcement that bullying can be stopped.

DEALING WITH THE TARGET

- Interview the target and/or his parent/guardian first
- Offer reassurance that bullying can be stopped and that school will persist with intervention until it does
- reinforce that it is right to let people know about bullying
- offer concrete help, advice and support in relation to the specific problem
- enlist their co-operation and that of witnesses or friend. If it happens again it must be reported
- communicate with others as appropriate (eg Form Teacher, Year Head, Parents)
- check on progress directly with the target at some time in the future.

Dealing with the pupil displaying bullying behaviour

- if the situation is judged to be urgent the first contact is with the alleged pupil displaying bullying behaviour with parental involvement at a later stage
- remain calm
- listen to his version of events and arrive at an informed decision
- reinforce that bullying is not acceptable
- offer advice to the pupil displaying bullying behaviour to try to see the target's point of view
- reinforce that it is right for targets to let school and others know when they are bullied
- be clear that school expects the bullying to stop. Seek a commitment to this end from the pupil displaying bullying behaviour
- advise the pupil displaying bullying behaviour you will be checking to ensure the bullying stops
- if appropriate apply school sanctions explaining carefully what the sanction is and why being given
- arrange for restoration of any items damaged or taken
- place an expectation on the pupil displaying bullying behaviour to acknowledge his bullying behaviour to the target and encourage an apology
- communicate with other parties as appropriate (eg Parents, Form Teacher, Head of Year)
- make a written record – either a Referral Form or letter to parents
- check regularly that the bullying has stopped. Ensure the pupil displaying bullying behaviour knows you have done this.

The appropriateness of counselling for both target and pupil displaying bullying behaviour can be decided by the significant staff members.

SUMMARY:

Our expected outcome in this policy is the development of caring relationships between all members of the school community, so that parents can send their children into a safe and secure environment in which to learn and to realise their full potential.

APPROVALS

APPROVALS	
Principal:	
Chair of the Board of Governors:	
Date of Approval by Governors:	
Date of next annual review:	

