St Mary's Grammar School

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

August 2025

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 in a welcoming, safe and caring environment, free from physical or emotional hurt. We seek to uphold these right.

We acknowledge that there is a potential for bullying to occur in all communities including schools, wherever people of any age meet or group together. We believe that all forms of bullying are unacceptable and are contrary to the ethos and aims of St. Mary's.

As a school community we follow 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.

CONTEXT

This policy has been developed consistent with the legislative and policy/guidance framework including:

The Legislative Context:

- The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016
- The Education and Libraries Order (Northern Ireland) 2003 (A17-19)
- 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**T**

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)

Edmund Rice Schools Trust

- Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland Policies and Procedures (SBNI, 2017)

The International Context

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

The Policy should be read in conjunction with:

The Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
The Positive Behaviour Management Policy
The Safe Handling Policy
The Acceptable Use of Internet Policy
The Educational Visits 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 Amanda Barr, Pastoral Vice- Principal, is the teacher designated to have specific responsibility for Child Protection (DTCP).

Mr Paddy Linden, Senior Teacher (Deputy Designated Teacher Child Protection), assumes the responsibility when the designated teacher is absent or unavailable (DDTCP).

Mrs Michaela Lewis has a supporting role as Deputy Designated Teachers for Child Protection

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

Key points:

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 (e.g., school trip)
- When receiving education organised by school but happening elsewhere (e.g., in another school in the Area Learning Community)
- Requires that the policy be updated at least every four years.

Addressing Bullying:

- A new law commenced on 1st September 2021 in Northern Ireland - Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016. It provides schools with one legal definition to assess all reported alleged incidents of bullying type behaviour in schools.

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 BULLYING?

> ***Bullying is behaviour that is usually repeated, which is carried out intentionally to cause hurt, harm or to adversely affect the rights and needs of another or others.***

While bullying is usually repeated behaviour, there may be instances of one-off incidents that the school will consider as bullying.

When assessing a one-off incident, to make a decision on whether to classify it as bullying, the school shall consider the following criteria:

- severity and significance of the incident
- evidence of pre-meditation
- impact of the incident on individuals (physical/emotional)
- impact of the incidents on wider school community
- previous relationships between those involved.
- any previous incidents involving the individuals.

Any incidents which are not considered bullying behaviour will be addressed under the Positive Behaviour Policy.

The following unacceptable behaviours, when repeated, targeted and intentionally hurtful, may be considered a bullying behaviour:

- Verbal or written acts
  - saying mean and hurtful things to, or about, others
  - making fun of others
  - calling another pupil mean and hurtful names.
  - telling lies or spread false rumours about others.
  - try to make other pupils dislike another pupil/s.
- Physical acts
  - Hitting
  - kicking
  - pushing
  - shoving
  - material harm, such as taking/stealing money or possessions or causing damage to possessions.
- Omission (Exclusion)
  - Leaving someone out of a game
  - Refusing to include someone in group work.
- Electronic Acts
  - Using online platforms or other electronic communication to carry out many of the written acts noted above.
  - Impersonating someone online to cause hurt.

- Sharing images (e.g., photographs or videos) online to embarrass someone.

This list is not exhaustive and other behaviours which fit with the definition may be considered bullying behaviour.

Bullying is an emotive issue; therefore, it is essential that we ensure we use supportive, understanding language when discussion these matters. For that reason, we will not refer to a child as 'a bully', nor will we refer to a child as 'a victim'.
Instead, we will refer to the child describing the situation surrounding that child, for example:

- A child displaying bullying behaviours.
- A child experiencing bullying behaviours.

We encourage all members of the school community to use this language when discussion bullying incidents.

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.

Positive Behaviour Management Policy
Any incidents which are not considered bullying behaviour will be addressed under the school's Positive Behaviour Management Policy.

PREVENTATIVE MEASURES

At St. Mary's, we aim to create a safe working environment, prevent and challenge bullying behaviour. Examples of these preventative steps include:

- Raising awareness and understanding of the positive behaviour expectations, as set out in the Positive Behaviour Policy
- Promotion of anti-bullying messages through the curriculum e.g., inclusion of age-appropriate material specific to individual subject areas related to bullying, positive behaviour and inclusion.
- Addressing issues such as the various forms of bullying, including the how and why it can happen, through PDMU/PD/LLW (e.g., sectarian, racist, homophobic, transphobic, disablist, etc.)
- Involvement in meaningful and supportive shared education projects, supporting pupils to explore, understand and respond to difference and diversity.
- Through the preventative curriculum actively promote positive emotional health and wellbeing (e.g., mindfulness training)
- Participation in the NIABF annual Anti-Bullying Week activities
- Engagement in key national and regional campaigns, e.g., Safer Internet Day, Good Relations Week, etc.
- Development of peer-led systems (e.g., School Council) to support the delivery and promotion of key anti-bullying messaging within the school.
- Development of effective strategies for playground management, e.g., training for supervisors, zoning of playgrounds, inclusion of specific resources (buddy benches, play bus stops) and provision of a variety of play option to meet the needs of all pupils.
- Focused assemblies to raise awareness and promote understanding of key issues related to bullying.
- Development of effective strategies for the management of unstructured times (e.g., break time, lunch)
- Provision and promotion of extra- and co-curricular activities, aimed at supporting the development of effective peer support relationships and networks. For example, sporting activity, creative arts, leisure and games, etc.

While many of the measures outlined above will support the development of an anti-bullying culture, there are several ways schools can further build upon this related specifically on the journey to and from school:

- Development of a culture where pupils take pride in their school and are viewed as ambassadors for their school within the community. This includes regular reminders of the positive behaviour expectations of pupils whilst travelling to and from school.
- Measures to empower pupils to challenge inappropriate and unacceptable behaviour of their peers during the journey to and from school. This may

include the implementation of peer monitoring systems on buses, trains and ferries, and for those walking.

- Regular engagement with transport providers (e.g., Translink, EA Transport, etc.) to ensure effective communication and the early identification of any concerns.
- Promotion of key anti-bullying messages and awareness of behaviour expectations of pupils amongst the local community (e.g., local shops, cafes, service providers, residents, etc.), including information on how to raise any concerns with the school.
- Appropriate deployment of staff to support the transition from school day to journey home (e.g., staff duty at school gate/bus stops, where appropriate)

St. Mary's will raise awareness of the nature and impact of online bullying and support their pupils to make use of the internet in a safe, responsible and respectful way.
This may include:

- Addressing key themes of online behaviour and risk through PDMU/PD/LLW, including understanding how to respond to harm and the consequences of inappropriate use.
- Participation in Anti-Bullying Week activities.
- Engagement with key statutory and voluntary sector agencies (e.g., C2k, PSNI, Public Health Agency, Safeguarding Board for NI e-Safety Forum) to support the promotion of key messages.
- Participation in annual Safer Internet Day and promotion of key messages throughout the year.
- Development and implementation of robust and appropriate policies in related areas (e.g., Acceptable Use of the Internet Policy, Filtering and Blocking Policy, Mobile Phone Policy, Connected Devices Policy, etc.)

RESPONSIBILITY

Everyone has responsibility for creating a safe and supportive learning environment for all members of the school community.

Everyone in the school community, including pupils, their parents/guardians and the staff of the school are expected to respect the rights of others to be safe.

Everyone has the responsibility to work together to:

- foster positive self-esteem.
- behave towards others in a mutually respectful way.
- model high standards of personal pro-social behaviour
- be alert to signs of distress* and other possible indications of bullying behaviour.
- inform the school of any concerns relating to bullying behaviour.

- refrain from becoming involved in any kind of bullying behaviour, even at the risk of incurring temporary unpopularity.
- refrain from retaliating to any form of bullying behaviour.
- intervene to support any person who is being bullied unless it is unsafe to do so.
- report any concerns or instances of bullying behaviour witnessed or suspected, to a member of staff.
- emphasise the importance of seeking help from a trusted adult about bullying behaviour when it happens or is observed.
- explain the implications of allowing the bullying behaviour to continue unchecked, for themselves and/or others.
- listen sensitively to anyone who has been bullied, take what is said seriously, and provide reassurance that appropriate action will be taken.
- know how to seek support – internal and external.
- resolve difficulties in restorative ways to prevent recurring bullying behaviour and meet the needs of all parties.

REPORTING A BULLYING CONCERN

This section outlines the various ways in which pupils, parents and anyone else with concerns can make these known to the school.
While most reports of bullying concerns will come from the pupils and their parents/guardians, we are open to receiving such reports from anyone.

All reports of bullying concerns received from pupils and/or parents/ guardians will be responded to in line with this policy and that feedback will be made to the person who made the report.

However, it must be noted that no information about action taken in relation to a pupil can be disclosed to anyone other than the pupil and their parents/ guardians.

Whilst there are key pastoral staff in school with responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour, we encourage pupils to raise concerns with any member of staff, including teaching and non-teaching.

Here are some of the ways that pupils can report bullying concerns, including:

- Verbally – talking to a member of staff
- By writing a note to a member of staff
- By sending an email to a member of staff

ANY pupil can raise a concern about bullying behaviour, not just the pupil who is experiencing this behaviour. We encourage all members of our school community to ‘get help’ if they have a concern about bullying that they experience or is experienced by another.

PARENTS/GUARDIANS REPORTING A BULLYING CONCERN

Parents and Guardians should raise concerns about alleged bullying behaviour with the school at the earliest opportunity. We encourage parents/guardians of the need to encourage their child to react appropriately to bullying behaviour and to not do anything to retaliate or to ‘hit back’.

Parents can raise a concern about alleged bullying behaviour by:

- Contacting their son's Form Teacher
- Where the parent/guardian is not satisfied that appropriate action has been taken to prevent further incidents, or where further incidents have taken place, the concern should be reported to the Year Head/Head of School.
- Where the parent/guardian is not satisfied that appropriate action has been taken to prevent further incidents, or where further incidents have taken place, the concern should be reported to the Vice Principal responsible for Pastoral Care.
- If the parent/guardian remains unsatisfied with the actions already taken, the concern should be reported to the Principal.
- Where the parent/carer remains unsatisfied that the concern has not been appropriately responded to, the school's complaints procedure should be followed. This usually involves making a formal, written complaint, to the Chair of the Board of Governors (available on the school website or via the school office).

The Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forum (NIABF) have created a parent toolkit, which is a helpful resource for parents. It can be found here:
https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/education/NIABF-Parent-Carer-Toolkit.pdf

RESPONDING TO A BULLYING CONCERN

The processes outlined below provide a framework for how the school will respond to any bullying concerns identified.
Using the NI Anti-Bullying Forum's (NIABF) 'Effective Responses to Bullying Behaviour resource', the member of staff responsible shall:

- Clarify facts and perceptions.
- Check records (SIMS/BMM)
- 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.

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.

This includes implementing a restorative approach. Where appropriate, school staff may implement sanctions for this displaying bullying behaviour.

Any action taken regarding a pupil cannot be disclosed to anyone other than that pupil and his parents/guardians.

RECORDING

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

- how was the bullying behaviour displayed (the method)?
- the motivation for the behaviour
- how each incident was addressed by the school?
- the outcome of the interventions employed.

Records will be kept on the online SIMS Behaviour Management Module, which is part of the C2k system in schools. 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.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF STAFF

At St. Mary's we recognise the need for appropriate and adequate training for staff. This includes:

- ensuring all staff are provided with appropriate opportunities for professional development as part of the school's ongoing CPD/PRSD provisions.
- noting the impact of the training given on both then policy and its procedures – e.g., any amendments made, inclusions added etc.
- ensuring that opportunities for safeguarding training are afforded to Governors and all staff – teaching and non-teaching.
- CPD/PRSD records will be kept and undated regularly.

MONITORING AND REVIEW OF POLICY

It is the responsibility of the Board of Governors, in liaison with the Principal, to monitor the effectiveness of the Anti-Bullying Policy.

To appropriately monitor the effectiveness of the Anti-Bullying Policy, the Board of Governors shall:

- maintain a standing item on the agenda of each meeting of the Board where a report on recorded incidents of bullying will be noted.

- identify trends and priorities for action.
- assess the effectiveness of strategies aimed at preventing bullying behaviour.
- assess the effectiveness of strategies aimed at responding to bullying behaviour.

It is a legal requirement that the Anti-Bullying Policy be reviewed at intervals of no more than four years. However, the policy will be reviewed:

- following any incident which highlight the need for such a review.
- when directed to by the Department of Education and considering new guidance?

Telephone Help Lines

Falls Community Council
275-277 Falls Road
Telephone: 90 202030

Family Works Counselling
02891821721
info@familyworksni.com

Northern Ireland Anti Bullying Forum
Tel 0289087 5006
www.niabf.org.uk

Childline
0800 1111
www.childline.org.uk

Lifeline
0808 808 80000
www.contact.org

CEOP
The Centre for Exploitation and Online Protection
www.ceop.gov.uk

Parenting NI
0808 8010 722
www.parentingni.org

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