



# Anti-Bullying Policy

Sep 22

Review date :Sep 2025

## **Section 1 – Introduction and Statement**

It is the aim of St Mary's Primary School to provide a safe, secure and supportive environment so that the academic, personal and social development of all our pupils is realised. We believe that appropriate pupil behaviour is essential in the creation of such an environment and regard all forms of bullying behaviour as unacceptable.

## **Section 2 – Context**

At St Mary's Primary School we have based our Anti-Bullying Policy on the following legislative and policy guidance:

### **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](#)

### **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 \(Dept. of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, 2016\)](#)
  - [Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland Policies and Procedures \(SBNI, 2017\)](#)

### **The International Context**

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

At St Mary's Primary we take the legal definition of bullying from "The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016":

This act places a duty on the Board of Governors to put in place measures to prevent bullying behaviour, in consultation with pupils and parents.

The Education and Libraries Order (NI) 2003, requires the Board of Governors to:

- 'Safeguard and promote the welfare of registered pupils'

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) sets out every child's right to:

- Be protected from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, maltreatment or exploitation
- Be protected from discrimination
- Express their views, in a supported and accessible way, on issues that affect them, and to have their opinions taken seriously
- Education

The Board of Governors will follow the guidelines from the "The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016":

(1) The Board of Governors must:

(a) ensure that policies designed to prevent bullying involving a registered pupil at the school are pursued at the school;

(b) determine the measures to be taken at the school (whether by the Board of Governors, the staff of the school or other persons) with a view to preventing bullying involving a registered pupil at the school

(i) on the premises of the school during the school day;

(ii) while travelling to or from the school during the school term;

(iii) while the pupil is in the lawful control or charge of a member of the staff of the school eg. school trip; or

(iv) while the pupil is receiving educational provision arranged on behalf of the

school and provided elsewhere than on the premises of the school;

(c) review those measures at intervals of no more than 4 years;

(d) before determining or revising those measures, consult (in such manner as appears to it to be appropriate) the Principal and the registered pupils at the school and the parents of those pupils;

(e) in determining or reviewing those measures, have due regard to any guidance given by the Department;

### **Section 3 – Ethos & Principles**

At St Mary's Primary School, we have based our Anti-Bullying Policy on our school ethos and principles which underpin everything we do:

- We are committed to a society where children and young people can live free and safe from bullying.
- We believe in a society where bullying is unacceptable and where every child and young person is safe and feels safe from bullying.
- We believe that every child and young person should be celebrated in their diversity.
- We are committed to a preventative, responsive and restorative anti-bullying ethos across the whole school.
- We value the views and contributions of children and young people, we will actively seek these views and we will respect and take them into account.
- We understand that everyone in our school community has a role to play in taking a stand against bullying and creating a safe and welcoming environment for all

### **Section 4 – Consultation and Participation**

At St Mary's Primary School, we have based our Anti-Bullying Policy on consultation with registered pupils and their parents/carers, in compliance with the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016.

- We worked with pupils through the following consultation processes:
  - Class-based activities
  - Questionnaires distributed to pupils
- We consulted with parents through a questionnaire and asked for feedback on the draft policy.

- We worked with staff members through the following consultation processes:
  - Engagement activity for all staff, teaching and non-teaching

## Section 5 – What is Bullying?

At St Mary's Primary School, we take the legal definition of bullying from "The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016":

Addressing Bullying in Schools Definition of "bullying":

(1) In this Act "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.

(2) For the purposes of subsection (1), "act" includes omission.

In St Mary's P.S we believe that

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

There are 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.

At St Mary's Primary 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
  - making threats to others
  - calling another pupil mean and hurtful names
  - telling lies or spreading false rumours about others
  - trying 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, deliberately and repeatedly,
  - Refusing to include someone in group work, deliberately and repeatedly,
- 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

Whilst these lists are not exhaustive, behaviours which fit with the definition may be considered bullying behaviour.

At St Mary's Primary School, we acknowledge the various motivations behind bullying, including those named in the Act. These include, but are not limited to:

- Age
- Appearance
- Breakdown in peer relationships
- Social and economic status
- Community background
- Race
- Religion
- Disability / SEN
- Ability
- Looked After Child status
- Young Carer status

Bullying is an emotive issue, therefore it is essential that we ensure we use supportive, understanding language when discussing 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 use language such as:

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

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

At St Mary's Primary School in determining 'harm' we define:

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

We define 'repeated' as:

- 3 or more repetitious incidents involving the same target/s within a school year

We define omission as:

- Intentionally choosing not to mention or failure to act i.e. wilful omission arising from a desire to cause hurt



## **Section 6 – Preventative Measures**

At St Mary's Primary School, we aim to promote a strong anti-bullying ethos within the school and the wider school community. We aim to prevent bullying and create a safe learning environment.

Examples of these strategies 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
- Counselling Service
- Involvement in meaningful and supportive Shared Education Projects with our partner schools in the Claddagh Glen area, supporting pupils to explore, understand and respond to difference and diversity.
- Through the preventative curriculum actively promote positive emotional health and wellbeing (e.g. NSPCC "Speak Out Stay Safe" programme, PATHS, Neuronimo)
- Participation in the NIABF annual Anti-Bullying Week activities
- Engagement in key national and regional campaigns (e.g. Safer Internet Day)
- 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 and provision of a variety of play options 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)
- Playground buddies, friendship benches etc
- Provision and promotion of extra- curricular activities, aimed at supporting the development of effective peer support relationships and networks. For example, sporting activity, creative arts, leisure and games, etc.

## **Travelling directly to and from at the start and end of the school day while wearing school uniform**

Ultimately parents are responsible in ensuring their children behave appropriately on the way to and from school. In conjunction with this we at St Mary's Primary School take preventative measures to educate against inappropriate behaviour on the way to and from school. While many of the measures outlined above will support the development of an anti-bullying culture, there are a number of ways we further build upon this including:

- 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.
- Promotion of key anti-bullying messages and awareness of behaviour expectations of pupils amongst the local community 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 on duty at school gate where appropriate)

## **Online Safety**

St Mary's Primary School raises awareness of the nature and impact of online bullying and supports our pupils to make use of the internet in a safe, responsible and respectful way by:

- Addressing key themes of online behaviour and risk through PDMU, 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)

It is important to remember that our Anti-Bullying Policy is one of a number of policies in the wider Pastoral Care and Safeguarding suite of policies.

## **Section 7 – Responsibility**

Everyone in the St Mary's Primary School family, including pupils, their parents/carers 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 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
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## **Section 8 – Reporting a Bullying Concern**

At St Mary's Primary School, we aim to promote a strong anti-bullying ethos within the school and the wider school community. In this climate we ensure pupils, parents and anyone else with concerns can make these known to the school. It is essential that pupils are encouraged to raise concerns with any member of staff, including teaching and Non-Teaching staff.

Pupils can raise concerns by either:

- Verbally- talking to a member of staff
- By writing a note to a member of staff (e.g. in a homework diary)

- By posting a comment in a 'worry box'

Any pupil can raise a concern about bullying behaviour, not just the pupil who is experiencing this behaviour. Through the preventative work taken forward under Section 6, this message should focus on 'getting help' rather than 'telling'. As such, all pupils should be encouraged to 'get help' if they have a concern about bullying that they experience or is experienced by another.

### **Parents/Carers Reporting a Concern**

Parents and carers have a responsibility to raise concerns about alleged bullying behaviour with the school at the earliest opportunity. Parents/carers are reminded of the need to encourage their children to react appropriately to bullying behaviour and to not do anything to retaliate or to 'hit back'.

Parents are reminded that whilst on school premises they should ensure they follow school protocol and NEVER address issues with a child or parent. Please follow the school procedures described below.

The process of parents/carers raising/reporting bullying concerns:

- In the first instance, all bullying concerns should be reported to the Class Teacher
- Where the parent 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 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.

While the majority of reports of bullying concerns will come from pupils and their parents/carers, St Mary's Primary is open to receiving such reports from anyone.

**All reports of bullying concerns received from pupils and/or parents/carers 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 actions taken in relation to a pupil can be disclosed to anyone other than the pupil and his/her parents/carers.**

## **Section 9 – Responding to a Bullying Concern**

The processes outlined below provide a framework for how St Mary's Primary School will respond to any bullying concerns identified.

Using the NIABF Effective Responses to Bullying Behaviour resource, the member of staff responsible will use some /all of the following strategies:

- Clarify facts and perceptions – from those involved and key bystanders
- Check records
- Assess the incident against the criteria for bullying behaviour
- Identify any themes or motivating factors
- Identify the type of bullying behaviour being displayed
- Select and implement appropriate interventions for all pupils involved
- Identify support provided for all pupils involved
- Track, monitor and record effectiveness of interventions – ongoing dialogue to ensure that the strategies identified and agreed have positive results
- Review outcome of interventions
- Select and implement further interventions as necessary
- Opportunities to acknowledge, affirm and celebrate success

Staff and pupils together involved in tracking and monitoring progress to ensure the efficacy of the intervention is maintained and kept under review.

***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. Where appropriate, school staff may implement sanctions for those displaying bullying behaviour. Appropriate consequences and sanctions are reflected within the Positive Behaviour Policy.***

**It must be noted that information regarding any action taken regarding a pupil cannot be disclosed to anyone other than that pupil and his/her parents/carers**

## **Section 10 – Recording**

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

- how the bullying behaviour was 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 SIMS Behaviour Management Module, which is part of the C2K system in schools. Access to these records is restricted 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 the Anti-Bullying Policy and practice within the school.

## **Section 11 – Professional Development of Staff**

At St Mary's Primary School, we recognise the need for appropriate and adequate training for staff, including teaching and Non-Teaching school staff. This includes:

- staff are provided with appropriate opportunities for professional development, through training on both the policy and its procedures - any amendments made, inclusions added etc. will be added to this Anti-Bullying Policy and any correlated policies
- Safeguarding training is afforded to Governors and all staff - teaching and Non-Teaching

## **Section 12 – Links to Other Policies**

In the development and implementation of this Anti-Bullying Policy, the Board of Governors of St Mary's Primary has been mindful of related policies, including:

- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Pastoral Care Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Special Educational Needs Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- E-Safety Policy & Acceptable Use of Internet Policy
- Educational Visits
- Staff Code of Conduct

### **Section 13-Monitoring and Review of Policy**

At St Mary's Primary School to ensure we 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

This Anti-Bullying Policy shall be reviewed as required, in consultation with pupils and their parents/carers, on or before September 2025.



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