



Bullying policy

Introduction

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 Vincent's Special 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 . and is available to download in www.education.ie

This Anti-Bullying Policy was drafted in collaboration with the Teachers, Parents and The Board of Management. The policy was reviewed in November 2021.

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 (see Appendix 1) which

- Encourages pupils to be honest and truthful at all times;
- Encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment;
- 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;
- Explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based 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);
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

Definition of Bullying

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:

- Causing physical harm to other.
- 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 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.

Types of Bullying

- General behaviours which apply to all types of bullying.
- Harassment based on any of the nine grounds in the equality legislation e.g. sexual harassment, homophobic bullying, racist bullying.
- Physical Aggression.
- Damage to property
- Name calling.
- Jeering.
- The production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other materials aimed at intimidating another person.
- Offensive graffiti.
- Extortion.
- Insulting or offensive gestures.
- The "Look"
- Invasion of personal space.
- A combination of any of the types listed.

Cyberbullying.

- Denigration: Spreading rumors, lies or gossip to hurt a person's reputation.
- Harassment: Continually sending vicious, mean or disturbing messages to an individual.
- Impersonation: Posting offensive or aggressive messages under another person's name.
- Flaming: Using inflammatory or vulgar words to provoke an online fight.
- Trickery: Fooling someone into sharing personal information which you then post online.
- Outing: Posting or sharing confidential or compromising information or images.
- Exclusion: Purposefully excluding someone from an online group.
- Cyber stalking: Ongoing harassment and denigration that causes a person considerable fear for his/her safety.
- Silent or abusive phone calls.
- Abusive texts or emails.
- Abusive communication on social networks or on online multiplayer games.
- Abusive website comments/Blogs/Pictures
- Abusive posts on any form of communication technology.

Identity Based Behaviours.

- Including any of the nine discriminatory grounds mentioned in Equality Legislation (gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community).



Homophobic and Transgender.

- Spreading rumours about a person's sexual orientation.
- Taunting a person of a different sexual orientation.
- Name calling.
- Physical intimidation or attacks.
- Threats

Race, nationality, ethnic background and membership of the Traveller community.

- Discrimination, prejudice, comments or insults about colour, nationality, culture, social class, religious beliefs, ethnic or traveller background.
- Exclusion on the basis of any of the above.

Relational bullying.

- This involves manipulating relationships as a means of bullying
- Malicious Gossip.
- Isolation and exclusion.
- Ignoring.
- Excluding from the group.
- Bitching.
- Spreading Rumours.
- Talking loud enough so that the victim can hear.
- The "Look"
- Use of terminology such as 'nerd' in a derogatory way

Sexual.

- Unwelcome or inappropriate sexual comments or touching.
- Harassment

Special Educational Needs/ Disability

- Name Calling.
- Taunting others because of their disability or learning needs.
- Taking advantage of some pupils' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to recognise and defend themselves against bullying.
- Taking advantage of some pupils' vulnerabilities and capacity to understand social situations and social cues.
- Mimicking a person's disability.
- Setting others up for ridicule.

Relevant Teachers

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 relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying in St Vincent's Special Primary School are:

- Class teachers
- The Deputy Principal
- The Principal
- Any teacher may act as a relevant teacher if circumstances warrant it
- The Principal must be informed of all incidents of bullying



Strategies for Prevention of Bullying Behaviour

The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber-bullying 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*)

- A school-wide approach to the fostering of respect for all members of the school community; adults should model the type of behaviours they promote to pupils.
- Model respectful behaviour to all members of the school community at all times
- The promotion of the value of diversity to address issues of prejudice and stereotyping, and highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour.
- The fostering and enhancing of the self-esteem of all our pupils through both curricular and extracurricular activities. Pupils are provided with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth through formal and informal interactions.
- School wide awareness raising and training on all aspects of bullying, including pupils, parent(s)/guardian(s) and the wider school community.
- Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extra-curricular activities. Non-teaching and ancillary staff are encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers. Supervision also applies to monitoring pupils' use of communication technology within the school.
- Development and promotion of our school rules displayed publicly in common areas of the school.
- The school's Anti-Bullying Policy is discussed with pupils and all parent(s)/guardian(s) are given a copy as part of the Code of Behaviour of the school upon entry. It is also available on the school website.
- Encourage a culture of telling, with particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders.
- Identify clear protocols to encourage parent(s)/guardian(s) to approach the school if they suspect that their child is being bullied.
- Implementation of SPHE curriculum, including RSE/Stay Safe programme.

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*)

In relation to bullying in schools, Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011 (Children First) and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools provide that in situations where "the incident is serious and where the behaviour is regarded as potentially abusive, the school must consult the HSE Children and Family Social Services with a view to drawing up an appropriate response, such as a management plan". Serious instances of bullying behaviour should, in accordance with the Children First and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, be referred to the HSE Children and Family Services and/or Gardaí as appropriate. The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools also provide that where school personnel have concerns about a child but are not sure whether to report the



matter to the HSE, the Designated Liaison Person must seek advice from the HSE Children and Family Social Services.

Reporting Bullying Behaviour

Pupils are encouraged to report bullying behaviour as soon as possible.

Any pupil or parent(s)/guardian(s) may bring a bullying incident to the attention of any teacher in the school

All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying, will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher.

Teaching and non-teaching staff such as the Secretary, Special Needs Assistants (SNAs), Caretaker, Cleaners must report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher.

Investigating and Dealing With Incidents

- In investigating and dealing with bullying, the (relevant) teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved.
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) 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
- Where possible incidents should be investigated outside the classroom to ensure the privacy of all involved.
- All interviews should be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this way.
- 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 conflict in a non-aggressive manner. Teachers who are investigating bullying behaviour should keep a written record of their discussions with those involved.
- If a group is involved, each member should be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved should be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member should be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements.
- Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's Anti-Bullying Policy and efforts should be made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied.
- In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the parties involved will 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 will give parent(s)/guardian(s) an opportunity to discuss ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports provided to the pupils.

Follow Up and Recording

In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant teacher must, as part of his/her 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;
- Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parent(s)/guardian(s) or the school Principal.
- Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved should 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
- Where a parent(s)/guardian(s) is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parent(s)/guardian(s) will be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures.
- In the event that a parent(s)/guardian(s) has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school will advise the parent(s)/guardian(s) of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

Recording of Bullying Behaviour

It is important that all recording of bullying incidents is done in an objective and factual manner. This school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour are as follows:

Informal- pre-determination that bullying has occurred

- All staff keep a written record of any incidents witnessed by them or notified to them. We use an incident book to report behaviours that challenge. All incidents should be reported to the relevant teacher.
- While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the relevant teacher must keep a written record of the reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same.
- The relevant teacher must inform the Principal of all incidents being investigated.

Formal Stage 1-determination that bullying has occurred

- If it is established by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher must keep appropriate written records which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.
- Any written records pertaining to a class or pupil will kept in the pupil's file in the office.

Formal Stage 2-known as Appendix 3 (From DES Procedures)

The relevant teacher must use the recording template known **Appendix 3** to record the bullying behaviour. This is available on the school administration system- Aladdin and from the Office. It will be used only in the following circumstances:

- In cases where he/she considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour occurred; and



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- Where the school has decided as part of its anti-bullying policy that in certain circumstances bullying behaviour must be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable.
- Here in St Vincent's we will inform the Gardai in cases where we are made aware of Cyber Bullying.
- When the recording template is completed, it will be retained in the Principal's office.

The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows:

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 and build resilience e.g. Pastoral care system, Group work, focus groups, social skills groups.

If pupils require counselling or further supports the school will endeavour to liaise with the appropriate agencies to organise same. This may be either for the pupil affected by bullying or involved in the bullying behaviour.

Everyone should understand that there are no innocent bystanders and that all incidents of bullying behaviour must be reported to a teacher.

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. 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.

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.

Ratification & Communication:

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 11th November 2021 and communicated to the school community thereafter. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

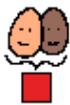
Review Timetable:

This policy will be reviewed annually and amended as necessary by means of a whole school collaborative process. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.



Appendix 1

Our School Rules



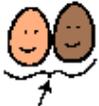
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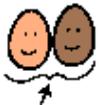
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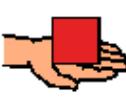
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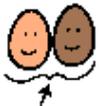
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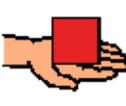
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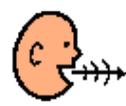
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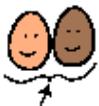
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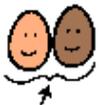


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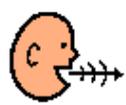


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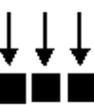


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Appendix 2 Practical tips for building a positive school culture and climate

The following are some practical tips for immediate actions that can be taken to help build a positive school culture and climate and to help prevent and tackle bullying behaviour.

- Model respectful behaviour to all members of the school community at all times.
- Explicitly teach pupils what respectful language and respectful behaviour looks like, acts like, sounds like and feels like in class and around the school.
- Display key respect messages in classrooms, in assembly areas and around the school. Involve pupils in the development of these messages.
- Catch them being good - notice and acknowledge desired respectful behaviour by providing positive attention.
- Consistently tackle the use of discriminatory and derogatory language in the school – this includes homophobic and racist language and language that is belittling of pupils with a disability or SEN.
- Give constructive feedback to pupils when respectful behaviour and respectful language are absent.
- Have a system of encouragement and rewards to promote desired behaviour and compliance with the school rules and routines.
- Explicitly teach pupils about the appropriate use of social media.
- Positively encourage pupils to comply with the school rules on mobile phone and internet use.
- Follow up and follow through with pupils who ignore the rules.
- Actively involve parents and/or the Parents' Association in awareness raising campaigns around social media.
- Actively promote the right of every member of the school community to be safe and secure in school.
- Highlight and explicitly teach school rules in pupil friendly language in the classroom and in common areas.
- All staff can actively watch out for signs of bullying behaviour.
- Ensure there is adequate playground/school yard/outdoor supervision.
- School staff can get pupils to help them to identify bullying “hot spots” and “hot times” for bullying in the school.
- Hot spots tend to be in the playground/school yard/outdoor areas, changing rooms, corridors and other areas of unstructured supervision.
- Hot times again tend to be times where there is less structured supervision such as when pupils are in the playground/school yard or moving classrooms



Appendix 3. Template for recording bullying behaviour (taken from *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary*)

Name of pupil being bullied and class group

Name _____ Class _____

2. Name(s) and class(es) of pupil(s) engaged in bullying behaviour

3. Source of bullying concern/report (tick relevant box(es))*

Pupil concerned	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Pupil	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parent	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Location of incidents (tick relevant box(es))*

Playground	<input type="checkbox"/>
Classroom	<input type="checkbox"/>
Corridor	<input type="checkbox"/>
Toilets	<input type="checkbox"/>
School Bus	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Name of person(s) who reported the bullying concern

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6. Type of Bullying Behaviour (tick relevant box(es)) *

Physical Aggression	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cyber-bullying	<input type="checkbox"/>
Damage to Property	<input type="checkbox"/>	Intimidation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Isolation/Exclusion	<input type="checkbox"/>	Malicious Gossip	<input type="checkbox"/>
Name Calling	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Where behaviour is regarded as identity-based bullying, indicate the relevant category:

Homophobic	Disability/SEN related	Racist	Membership of Traveller community	Other (specify)

8. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact

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9. Details of actions taken

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Signed _____ (Relevant Teacher) Date _____

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal _____

*** Note:** The categories listed in the tables 3, 4 & 6 are suggested and schools may add to or amend these to suit their own circumstances.



Notification regarding the Board of Management's annual review of the anti-bullying policy

To: Parents, guardians and school personnel,
The Board of Management of St Vincent's School wishes to inform you that:

- The Board of Management's annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation was completed at the Board meeting of 11th November 2021.
- This review was conducted in accordance with the checklist set out in **Appendix 4** of the Department's *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

Signed Brendan Hillery
Chairperson, Board of Management

Date: 11/11/21

Signed Cathy Cawley

Date 11/11/21