

Saint Helen's Junior School, Portmarnock, Co Dublin

Roll no. 19578P

Anti-Bullying Policy

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 Saint Helen's Junior 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 was published in September 2013.

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.
 - 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 addresses the issue 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)
- 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:

- deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying,
- cyber-bullying and
- 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.

The relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows (in no particular order):

- Principal: Lorna Lavin
- Deputy Principal: Andrea Smith
- All class teachers /SEN teachers depending on the pupils involved in the alleged bullying.
- Any teacher in St. Helen's JNS may act as a relevant teacher if circumstances warrant it.

Education and Prevention Strategies

The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber-bullying and identity-bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying) that will be used by the school are as follows:

General

- A whole-school approach to foster respect for all members of the school community.
- The implementation of regular whole school awareness measures: e.g. A dedicated notice board on the promotion of friendship, buddy bench and weekly assemblies etc.
- The implementation of the S.P.H.E policy, Stay Safe, RSE and Well-being programmes (Fun FRIENDS and Weaving Wellbeing) is an essential and highly effective part of the school's approach. These will be taught in every class level. Teaching the child that he/she has the right to say No and to carry him/herself in a confident way.
- The school has a Code of Positive Behaviour, which promotes fairness and respect to all, school management, teaching and non-teaching staff and parents/guardians. This is reinforced constantly at class level and at whole school level, e.g. yard times and Assembly etc.
- Constantly encouraging children, both victims and witnesses to report incidents of bullying. Central to the success of this strategy is the clear distinction between "telling tales" and reporting serious transgressions, as is the necessity to praise the child's exercise of responsibility and the requirement to ensure that retaliation on the part of the aggressor is never a consequence.
- Ensuring that parents/guardians are aware that the school has an Anti-Bullying Policy and that written records of incidents are kept securely on file.
- Ensure that the Anti-Bullying Policy is published on the school website.
- Ensuring that parents/guardians and other concerned adults are welcomed and encouraged to raise concerns with the school and that such concerns will be thoroughly investigated and responded to.
- The fostering and enhancing of the self-esteem of all our 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.
- The promotion of the value of diversity to address issues of prejudice and stereotyping, and highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour.

- Watching out for personality changes in the pupils e.g., a normally happy child losing interest and enthusiasm resulting in a deterioration in school achievement, or an unwillingness to come to school accompanied by increased anxiety, temper tantrums etc.
- Consistently tackle the use of discriminatory and derogatory language in the school- this includes homophobic, racist language or language that is belittling to pupils with a disability or SEN.
- Teach pupils about the appropriate use of social media in a manner which is relevant and appropriate to the age of the children in our junior school.
- Positively encourage pupils to comply with the school rules on no mobile phone/ smart watches, internet use etc.
- Encourage a culture of telling, with particular emphasis on the importance of other children who may witness incidents that warrant investigation by the school. In that way pupils will gain confidence in telling. This confidence factor is of vital importance. This should be made clear to all pupils that when they report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.
- Ensuring that Parents/Guardians and pupils know who to tell and how to tell eg.
 - ☐ Direct approach to the teacher in the yard who is on duty or directly to the class teacher immediately when the incident happens within the school day.
 - ☐ Parents/Guardians contact the teacher if they have concerns about their own child.
 - ☐ Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying or inappropriate/unsafe behaviour is taking place.
 - ☐ Implementation of school's ICT /AUP to include the necessary steps to ensure that the access to technology within the school is strictly monitored.
- Reviewing Anti-Bullying policy and procedures annually.

In the classroom

- Observation of the pupils to determine the nature of relationships in a group as well as on an individual basis.
- Arrangements of furniture and seating so as to facilitate interaction between individuals on as wide a basis as possible.
- Seating pupils with a view to complementing personal needs and counteracting the effect of dominant groupings or individuals.

- Availing of opportunities, as they arise, to reinforce the school's message on bullying.

During playtime

- All games, which could lead to a "gang" approach to play, are forbidden.
- Games involving fighting, either real or imagined are forbidden.
- All repeated incidents of a violent nature to be reported to the Principal.
- Children who are continually alone, aggressive, upset or withdrawn become the focus of general concern amongst the staff on yard duty.
- Involvement of all children where appropriate in contributing to a safe school environment, e.g. buddy system, lunch time pals and other student support activities that can help to support pupils and encourage a culture of peer respect and support.

Children with special educational needs

Such children who, for whatever reason, could be perceived as different may on occasion become victims of bullying. An awareness of this danger informs teachers' concern for the pupils in their care, at all times.

Out of school incidents

Whilst the school's responsibility for incidents of a bullying nature that occur while children are on their way to or from school but are not on school property, are not the business of the school, every effort will be made to respond to and act on reports of such incidents which impact on school life.

School's Procedures for Investigation, Follow-up and Recording of Bullying Behaviour

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:

The primary aim 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 (rather than to apportion blame).

Every effort will be made to ensure that all involved (including pupils, parent(s)/guardian(s)) understand this approach from the outset.

Reporting bullying behaviour

- Any pupil or Parent(s)/Guardian(s) may bring a bullying incident to 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 secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), bus escorts, caretakers, 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;
- Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach.
- Where possible incidents should be investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved;
- All interviews should be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils 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 a conflict in a non-aggressive manner;
- 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;
- Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that may face them from the other members of the group after the interview by the teacher; It

may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s)

- 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 should 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 should give parent(s)/guardian(s) an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports provided to the pupils;
- 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 St. Helen's J.N.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;
- It must also be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parent(s)/guardian(s)) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school.

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 or Deputy 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 St. Helen's J.N.S Complaints Procedures.

- In the event that a parent(s)/guardian(s) has exhausted the St. Helen's J.N.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

Any and all recording of bullying incidents will be done in an objective and factual manner.

The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour are as follows:

Informal- pre-determination that bullying has occurred

- All staff must keep a written record of any incidents witnessed by them or notified to them. For teachers this will be initially in their Anecdotal Records booklet. All incidents will be reported to the relevant teacher. Serious matters of concern which arise on yard will also be noted in the St. Helen's J.N.S (Break-times) Incident book stored in Principal's office.
- While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying will 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.
- All such records will be stored securely in the Principal's office.

Formal Stage 2-Appendix 3 (From DES Procedures)

The relevant teacher must use the recording template at **Appendix 1** to record the bullying behaviour in the following circumstances:

- a) 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
- b) Where teachers and staff have decided, in consultation with the principal that in certain circumstances bullying behaviour must be recorded immediately.

When the recording template is used, it will be retained for the duration of the process by the relevant teacher in question and a copy maintained by the Principal.

Established intervention strategies which may be used in St. Helen's JNS at discretion of relevant staff

- 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. - Buddy system, Group work such as circle time, SEN support around social skills in collaboration with class teacher
- Working with Parent(s)/Guardian(s)s to support school interventions
- If pupils require counselling or further supports the school will endeavour to liaise with the appropriate agencies to organise the same. This may be for the pupil affected by bullying or involved
- in the bullying behaviour.
- Pupils will be taught to understand that if and when witnessed that all incidents of bullying behaviour must be reported to a teacher.
- Circle Time could be used as a response, if deemed appropriate.
- Relevant Stay Safe and R.S.E. and Wellbeing lessons could be taught.
- The relevant Stop, Think and Do lessons could be taught
- In extreme cases a child could be referred to a counsellor through their GP.
- The children could be given the opportunity to participate in activities designed to raise their self- esteem and to develop their social skills and their friendships.
- The child/children could be withdrawn from class and referred to the resource teacher for short/long term behaviour support.

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.

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 Travelling community.

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

9. Details of actions taken

Short term: (contact with relevant parties, i.e. with parents of the bully and child being bullied, class teacher, sanctions imposed)

Long term: (drawing up and implementation of a behaviour support plan, delivery of appropriate programme to the whole class, sanctions imposed)

Signed

(Relevant Teacher): **Date:** NOVEMBER 2021.

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal Lorna M Lavin

Supervision and Monitoring of Pupils:

The Board of Management of St. Helen's NS 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.

Celie Vaneel
 Chairperson
 5/sept/2023.