

ST MARY'S PRIMARY SCHOOL DERRYMORE



Anti-Bullying Policy

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Section 1 – Introduction

At St Mary's Primary School, we believe all forms of bullying behaviour are unacceptable. We believe that all pupils have the right to learn in a safe and supported environment.

Section 2 – Context

This policy has been developed, informed and guided by the following current legislation and DE guidance listed below:

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)

The guidance will be used in conjunction with the NIABF 'Effective Response to Bullying Behaviour' resource file which supports schools to respond to, resolve and restore relationships when bullying behaviour occurs.

In considering the above legislation and guidance,

The Governors will:

- Secure a preventative, responsive and anti-bullying ethos, in association with other relevant policies, to ensure a safe, inclusive, happy, organised and engaging school environment.
- Have overall responsibility for ensuring the Anti-Bullying Policy is in place and updated every four years or if necessary, updated as required.
- Support the principal in following the guidelines and practices agreed in the policy.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness and impact of strategies promoted in the policy.
- Consult with the school community on the general principles and practices reflected in the policy and consider the views/feedback in relation to anti bullying, to inform and guide whole school development planning with regards to targets, success criteria and outcomes.
- Ensure there is a record of how pupils, parents/carers, teachers and governors are consulted and if and when changes are made to the Anti-Bullying Policy.
- Ensure anti-bullying will be a standing item of each meeting of the Board of Governors.
- Keep a 'Record of Incidents' of all incidents of bullying or alleged bullying involving a registered pupil/s at the school including method, motivation, how long the bullying went on, how the incident was addressed and how effective the interventions were. Keep a record of bullying situations which were successfully resolved.

The Principal will:

- Ensure this policy and associated policies are implemented consistently throughout the school.
- Facilitate any necessary staff development in relation to behaviour management and antibullying

Section 3 – Ethos & Aims

Mission Statement

Here at St Mary's we work together to live like Jesus;

Our vision is to enrich the life of everyone that passes through our school;

Praising and celebrate effort and success;

Ensuring fairness where every child matters and fulfills their potential to become the best they can be;

Inviting our school, parish and locality friends to support us on our journey of faith;

Nurturing spiritual growth through our Catholic ethos;

Giving each other the opportunity for development in learning, worship and serving others;

Offering a safe and happy school where every person is valued;

Doing our best to see Jesus in one another.

- 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 free 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.

Aims

Providing an excellent education is our highest priority and by implementing the content and skills of the 'Northern Ireland Curriculum' we aim to:

1. Promote a safe, inclusive, happy and engaging environment conducive to all learning styles.
 2. Foster caring attitudes which promote and guide to independence, self-respect, self esteem, self-discipline, confidence, courtesy, good manners and respect for everyone.
 3. Provide high standards of pastoral care and child protection in every aspect of school life.
 4. Develop enquiring minds which have the ability to question and make informed decisions.
 5. Foster a desire to learn and achieve success.
 6. Provide our pupils with the essential life skills so they can become contributing members of society.
 7. Work in partnership with the parents, the parish and the local community.
 8. Develop an understanding of the world we live in, of the interdependence of people, and respect for other religious beliefs.
 9. Encourage the Catholic ethos of the school so that the moral and religious development of each child is fully realised.
 10. Provide equality of opportunity for all stake holders to participate in discussions and decision making in school life.
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Section 4 – Consultation and Participation

This policy has been developed in consultation with registered pupils and their parents/carers, in compliance with the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016.

Consultation took place:

- Discussion with anti bullying ambassadors
 - Class-based activities and participation in anti Bullying week
 - Discussion at whole school assemblies
 - Whole school questionnaires distributed to all pupils (paper)
 - Engagement with staff
 - Consultation with Governors
 - Information distributed to parents
 - Staff survey for all staff, teaching and non-teaching
 - Representative members of staff involved in writing anti-bullying policy
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Section 5 – What is Bullying? Bullying Behaviour Defined

Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016 Definition of “bullying”:

1.—(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 we recognise that there is a continuum of inappropriate/unacceptable behaviours which can impact on everyone’s right to be safe and happy. These inappropriate/unacceptable behaviours (which are not considered as bullying) will be dealt with in line with the school’s Positive Behaviour Policy’s procedures.

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

However, on occasions we will be challenged to differentiate between inappropriate/unacceptable behaviours and those which do constitute 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.

We will consider if the inappropriate/unacceptable behaviours BECOME BULLYING BEHAVIOURS when the information gathered from investigation clearly demonstrates that the inappropriate/unacceptable behaviours meet the criteria below:

- intentional
- targeted at a specific pupils or group of pupils
- repeated*
- causing physical or emotional harm
- omission

If alleged incidents fail to meet the criteria for bullying behaviour the school will use the Positive Behaviour Policy to address unacceptable behaviour.

Whilst the term “imbalance of power’ is not contained within the statutory definition in Northern Ireland, St Mary’s does consider the term when defining whether bullying behaviour has occurred. The imbalance of power can manifest itself in several ways:

- Physical
- Psychological
- Intellectual
- Group/more than one individual

While bullying is often recognised as a repeated behaviour, there are instances of one off incidents that we 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

Examples of bullying behaviour

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)

- Intentionally leaving someone out of an activity or game
- Refusing to include someone in group work, a game, an activity

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 (eg. 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.

Various methods can occur separately or together.

Definition of emotional and physical harm which are set out in the DE Guidance.

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, broken bones, burns or cuts.

Motivations behind bullying, including those named in the Act.

The various motivations include, but are not limited to:

- Age
- Appearance
- Breakdown in peer relationships
- Community background
- Political affiliation
- Gender identity
- Sexual orientation
- Pregnancy
- Marital status
- Race
- Religion
- Disability / SEN
- Ability
- Looked After Child status
- Young Carer status

School may also use this space to set out the language it will use when discussing bullying behaviour. For example, the use of the terms 'bully' and 'victim' should be avoided. Policy may include something to assert this, for example:

Challenging the language of bullying

Bullying is an emotive issue, therefore it is essential that we ensure we use supportive, understanding language when discussing these matters. For that reason, in St Mary's, 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 by 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 discussing bullying incidents.

Section 6 – Preventative Measures

In St Mary's PS, we are committed to providing a preventative, responsive and restorative ethos within our school community. We will work to implement measures with a view to preventing bullying involving a registered pupil at the school –

- on the premises of the school during the day (e.g. playgrounds, classrooms, toilets, computer suite etc.)
- while travelling to or from school during the school term, (while pupils are travelling to and from school they must follow the school's code of conduct)
- while the pupil is in lawful control or charge of a member of staff of the school; (e.g. school trips, external events etc.)
- while the pupil is receiving educational provision arranged on behalf of the school and provided elsewhere than on the premises of the school.

Preventative measures 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 eg. 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, RE and pastoral care
- 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 (eg. Relax Kids)
- Active participation in the NIABF annual Anti-Bullying Week activities
- Engagement in key national and regional campaigns, eg Safer Internet Day, Good Relations Week, etc.
- Development of peer-led systems (School Council) to support the delivery and promotion of key anti-bullying messaging within the school

- Development of effective strategies for playground management, eg. providing play equipment, zoning of playgrounds, inclusion of specific resources (buddy benches) 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 (break time, lunch: zoned areas and play equipment)
- 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.
- Ongoing monitoring of supervision arrangements in the playground, on corridors etc

Measures to prevent bullying behaviour on the way to and from school include:

- 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 and for those walking.
- Regular engagement with transport providers (eg. Translink,) 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 (eg. 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 (eg. staff duty on corridors, at front door and bus stop)

The **‘Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016’** gives the school the authority to take steps to prevent bullying through the use of electronic communication amongst pupils at any time during term, where that behaviour is likely to have a detrimental effect on the pupil’s education at school. The Act gives the school explicit power to take action to prevent cyber bullying which is taking place outside of school, but which is likely to have an impact on the pupils’ education in school. **While this gives the school option to take action, it does not place a duty on schools to do so.**

As a result, we will continue to raise awareness of the nature and impact of online bullying and support 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, including understanding how to respond to harm and the consequences of inappropriate use.
- Assemblies on online safety
- Specific lessons to deliver safety message.
- Participation in Anti-Bullying Week activities.
- Engagement with key statutory and voluntary sector agencies (e.g. C2k, PSNI, Public Health Agency) 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.

Please note that the measures above are not an exhaustive list.

Section 7 – Responsibility

Everyone in the school community, 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 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

Section 8 – Reporting a Bullying Concern

Pupils Reporting a Concern

In St Mary's through our pastoral/preventative work, we continually encourage pupils to raise concerns with any member of staff, including teaching and non-teaching staff. We also reinforce that ANY pupil can raise a concern about bullying behaviour, not just the pupil who is experiencing the behaviour. Through our preventative work the key message focuses on 'getting help' rather than 'telling'. We have posters of DT and DTT in each classroom.

- Verbally- talking to a member of staff
- By writing a note to a member of staff (eg. in a homework diary)
- By posting a comment in a 'worry box'

Parents/Carers Reporting a Concern

Parents and carers should raise concerns about alleged bullying behaviour with the school at the earliest opportunity. We stress the need for parents/carers of the need to encourage their children to react appropriately to bullying behaviour and to not do anything to retaliate or to 'hit back'.

The process for reporting a bullying concern are:

- 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. (See School's Complaints Procedure)

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

Please note:

We would like to emphasise that 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 action 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 the school will respond to any bullying concerns identified.

Using the NIABF Effective Responses to Bullying Behaviour resource, the member of staff responsible shall...

- Clarify facts and perceptions
- Check records for previous incidents
- Assess the incident against the criteria for bullying behaviour
- Use the information gathered to complete part 1 of the Bullying Concern Assessment Form

If on the basis of the information gathered the criteria for bullying behaviour has not been met the inappropriate behaviour will be dealt with under the schools 'Positive Behaviour Policy'

If on the basis of the information gathered the criteria for bullying behaviour has been met the following processes will be followed:

- Complete the rest of the BCAF form and implement
- Identify any themes or motivating factors
- Identify the type of bullying behaviour being displayed
- Identify intervention level – level 1-4
- Select and implement appropriate interventions (level 1-4) 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 interventions 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. Where appropriate, school staff may implement sanctions for those displaying bullying behaviour. (refer to Positive Behaviour Policy)

Parents/carers should understand that in St. Mary's 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 legal requirement, as set out in the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016, is for schools to maintain a record of all incidents of bullying and alleged bullying behaviour.

In St Mary's we will centrally 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.

Department of Education guidance to schools encourages the use of the SIMS Behaviour Management Module for record keeping. Training from C2k is available to all school on how to best use this system. Within the policy, the school should detail within the policy how these records will be kept, for example:

Records will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. We will move to the online SIMS Behaviour Management Module, which is part of the C2k system in schools from Oct 2021. 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.

Section 11 – Professional Development of Staff

In St Mary's, we recognise the need for appropriate and adequate training for staff, including teaching and non-teaching school staff. This may include:

- stating a commitment to ensuring that 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 the 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
 - stating that CPD records will be kept and updated regularly
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Section 12 – Monitoring and Review of 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

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

Section 13 – Links to Other Policies

In the development and implementation of this Anti-Bullying Policy, the Board of Governors 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
- Relationships and Sexuality Education
- E-Safety Policy & Acceptable Use of Internet Policy
- Mobile Phone Policy
- Educational Visits
- Staff Code of Conduct

Section 14: Promoting Awareness of the Anti-Bullying Policy

This policy is accessible to parents/carers and pupils via the school's website. Paper copies can be made available, free of charge, to parents/carers of registered pupils via a request through the school's office.