

## **Anti-Bullying policy - St.Thomas'J.N.S. – Jan 2014**

1. In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the code of behaviour guidelines issued by the NEWB ( National Education Welfare Board), the Board of Management of St.Thomas' J.N.S. 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*.
  
2. 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, which include:
  - **A positive school culture and climate which -**
    - o is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity;
    - o encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment; and
    - o promotes respectful relationships across the school community;
    - o is enshrined in the school rules (3,5 and 6) and the code of behaviour.  
(Appendix 1)
  - **Effective leadership:** Implementation of the procedures by the whole school staff will be supported and monitored by the Principal and Deputy Principal.
  - **A school-wide approach** to bullying emanating from a shared understanding of what bullying is, and its impact on the individuals involved, and on others.
  - **Implementation of agreed education and prevention strategies** (including awareness raising measures) that-
    - o **Focus on the promotion of positive behaviour and the cultivation of respectful relationships** across the school which build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and
    - o **Explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying** including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.
  - **Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils** both in class, on the yard and on school outings with appropriate recording of incidents in teacher notes, yard books and the serious incident folder, as well as the standard report folder as required.
  - **Staff access to relevant training** as identified to support the proactive implementation of this policy.

- **Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour** focusing on early intervention and support for the victim and the person(s) involved in the bullying behaviour.
- **On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy** including annual review.

3. **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**. (cf. full definition sheet attached – Appendix 2)

**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.

Additional information on different types of bullying is set out in Section 2 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

4. The relevant teacher for investigating and dealing with bullying in our school is **the class teacher**.

Individual teachers must take appropriate measures regarding reports of bullying behaviour in accordance with the school's anti-bullying policy.

In these procedures, the member of the teaching staff who has responsibility for investigating and dealing with bullying is referred to as the "**relevant teacher**".

In investigating and dealing with any concern the relevant teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved.

A pupil or parent or member of staff may bring a bullying concern to any teacher in the school, who will in turn inform the relevant teacher.

**5. The education and prevention strategies that will be used by the school are as follows:**

Effective practice includes prevention and awareness raising measures across all aspects of bullying and involves strategies to engage pupils in addressing problems when they arise. In particular, such strategies need to build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils.

As **self-esteem** is a major factor in determining behaviour, our school will provide pupils with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth, and enhance their awareness and understanding of bullying, including its causes and effects, through a number of curricular programmes ( Social Personal and Health Education, Stay Safe Programme, Circle Time, Intercultural Week etc) .

Initiatives and programmes focused on **developing pupils' awareness and understanding of bullying**, including its causes and effects, should include the issue of identity-based bullying and in particular homophobic and transphobic bullying with age appropriate consideration.

Prevention and awareness raising measures must also deal explicitly with **cyber-bullying**. The best way to address cyber-bullying is to prevent it happening in the first place. Prevention and any awareness raising measures should focus on educating pupils on appropriate online behaviour, how to stay safe while on-line and also on developing a culture of reporting any concerns about cyber-bullying. The school-wide approach and the role of parents as outlined in Section 6.3 is of importance in this regard.

The prevention and awareness raising measures also takes into account the scope for cyber-bullying to occur as a result of access to technology from within the school. Access to the internet in St.Thomas' is regulated through our **Internet Acceptable Usage Policy**. ( cf. IAUP document attached – Appendix 3)

Our school's approach to tackling and preventing bullying takes particular account of the **needs of pupils with disabilities** or with SEN (Special Educational Needs). We acknowledge their vulnerability to bullying , particularly those who do not understand social cues / have difficulty communicating / those pupils with obvious physical disability. This policy links with other relevant school policies and supports, and should ensure that all the services that provide for such pupils work together.

Approaches to decreasing the likelihood of bullying for pupils with SEN include improving inclusion, focusing on developing social skills, paying attention to key moments such as transitioning from junior to senior school and cultivating a good school culture which has respect for all and helping one another as central.

Our school's prevention and awareness raising measures are appropriate to the type of bullying and **take into account the age and gender** of the pupils involved. The school will work to raise the awareness of bullying so that all members of the school community understand what bullying is and how the school deals with bullying behaviour. Our school will have a nominated annual awareness day on the subject of bullying for staff, pupils and parents. This may help give the parents of a pupil who is being bullied the confidence to approach the school and also helps to send a clear message to the parents of a pupil who is engaged in bullying behaviour that they have a major responsibility in addressing their child's behaviour.

Our teachers can **influence attitudes to bullying behaviour in a positive manner** through a range of curricular initiatives. There are a number of curriculum programmes which are particularly relevant to the prevention of bullying and the promotion of respect for diversity and inclusiveness. The **SPHE curriculum** makes specific provision for exploring bullying as well as the inter-related areas of belonging and integrating, communication, conflict, friendship, personal safety and relationships. The **Stay Safe** programme at primary level, is a personal safety skills programme which seeks to enhance children's self-protection skills including their ability to recognise and cope with bullying. Various other social, health and media education programmes can further help to address the problem of bullying behaviour.

There is capacity within the teaching of all subjects to foster an attitude of respect for all: to promote the value of diversity; to address prejudice and stereotyping and to highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour. In English, there is a wide range of literature available to stimulate discussion. The work can be extended into many other areas such as Art, Drama, Religious Education, and Physical Education.

Co-operation and group enterprise can be promoted through team sports, school clubs and societies as well as through practical subjects. Sporting activities in particular can provide excellent opportunities for channelling and learning how to control aggression.

**6. 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:**

While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the **relevant** teacher, he/she will use their professional judgement in relation to the records to be kept of these reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same.

If it is established by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher **must keep appropriate written records** (teacher notes) which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved. The relevant teacher must use the **recording template** (Appendix 4) to record the bullying behaviour in the following circumstances:

A) Incidents of **bullying** behaviour must be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable.

B) In cases where the relevant teacher 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, the principal is notified.

In each of the circumstances at (a) and (b) above, the recording template must be completed in full and retained by the teacher in question and a copy provided to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable. It should also be noted that the timeline for recording bullying behaviour in the recording template does not in any way preclude the relevant teacher from consulting the Principal or Deputy Principal **at an earlier stage** in relation to a case.

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:

1. Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased
2. Whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable.
3. Where relationships between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable.
4. Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents, the Principal or Deputy Principal.

Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, they should refer the matter to the Board in writing. If a parents is still not satisfied they have a right to forward their complaint in writing to the Ombudsman for Children.

**7. The school will support pupils affected by bullying as follows:**

A number of strategies will be utilised to support the victims of bullying including whole class lessons , group discussion , circle time and individual support.

Pupils may need opportunities to participate in activities designed to offer reassurance, to raise their self-esteem, to develop their friendship and social skills and thereby build resilience whenever this is needed. Every individual has the right to feel safe and respected in school.

Supporting those pupils involved in bullying behaviour is also part of the school's intervention process. Pupils involved in bullying behaviour may need assistance on an ongoing basis. For those with low self-esteem, opportunities are developed to increase feelings of self-worth. It is, therefore, important that the learning strategies applied within the school allow for the enhancement of the pupil's self-worth. Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour may need external support to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others. In this regard the school will liaise with N.E.P.S. ( National Educational Psychological Service ) and C.A.M.H.S. ( Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) if and when required.

**In our school pupils who observe incidents of bullying behaviour are encouraged to tell their teacher or any other staff member .**

**8. Supervision and Monitoring of Pupils**

The Board of Management confirms that appropriate supervision and monitoring policies and practices are in place in St.Thomas'J.N.S. to both prevent and deal with bullying behaviour, and to facilitate early intervention where possible.

**9. 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.

10. This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on January 1<sup>st</sup> 2014.
11. This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Association . A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested, and is on display in the school .
12. This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year. Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, published on the school website , and provided to the Parents' Association . A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Signed: Barry Kennedy  
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: Michael Maher  
(Principal)

Date: January 1<sup>st</sup> 2014

Date of next review: January 2015