St Patrick's Primary School and Nursery Unit

Loughguile

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY
September 2023

including Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016

Reviewed and updated	November 2023
Ratified by governors	
Chair of Governors	
Review date	November 2027

INTRODUCTION

At St. Patrick's Primary School and Nursery Unit Loughguile we have a pastoral responsibility towards the children in our charge and so we take all reasonable steps to ensure that their welfare is safeguarded and their safety is preserved. We acknowledge that bullying type behaviour can exist in all school communities and the wider society. At St Patrick's Primary School and Nursery Unit, we fully agree that Bullying is unacceptable behaviour that has no place in our school community as it is in contradiction with our aims and ethos. Our aim is to embed and develop a culture where bullying type behaviour is not tolerated.

The purpose of this policy is to:
- share the rationale,
- define bullying type behaviour,
- outline roles and responsibilities,
- clarify the preventative curriculum,
- highlight processes for reporting,
- explain recording formats and
- outline how the school takes action in response to any bullying type of behaviour or allegation of bullying.

RATIONALE

At the centre of our whole school approach to promoting an anti-bullying culture is the creation of a positive school culture which encourages respect, trust, consideration, tolerance and sensitivity towards others. The process of establishing this culture will be facilitated through attitudes, reactions, support and an overall teaching and learning environment in which pupils feel secure, are free from emotional and physical harm, have their opinions valued and their concerns dealt with sympathetically and appropriately.

Pupils should be able to enjoy their time in school and have educational experiences that are academically and socially fulfilling. Bullying behaviour affects not only those closely involved but also everyone in the classroom and in the school community. All members of the school community have a right to work in a secure and caring environment. They also have a responsibility to contribute in whatever way they can, to ensure the protection and maintenance of such a secure and caring environment.

It is for this reason, therefore, that a whole school Anti-Bullying Policy has been formulated in line with the requirements of the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (2016) and in co-operation with the school staff, both teaching and non-teaching under the leadership of the Principal and in consultation with parents, pupils and governors – who have a key role in the development, implementation, and review of the policy. This policy will form the basis for developing effective school-based strategies for dealing with the issue of bullying.

WHAT IS BULLYING?

Definition

The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016 provides schools with a legal definition which must be used to assess all allegations and incidents reported.

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.

The Legislation acknowledges that occasionally a *One-off Incident* will be considered as bullying type behaviour, pending the severity and significance of the incident, evidence of pre-meditation, significant level of physical/emotional impact on individual/s and the wider community. A one-off electronic communications, can constitute bullying type behaviour through repeated viewing and sharing of a post.

Omission must also be considered when addressing all bullying type concerns. This is where a pupil/s is or are deliberately left out, and where there is a wilful failure to include a pupil/s in a game or activity. Pupils don't have to be friends, but friendly.

Imbalance of power is not included within the legal definition (Act 2016) However, when someone seen with lesser power, is identified as an object of attention, attack or is targeted, this factor must be considered to determine whether bullying type behaviour has occurred.

Challenging the language of bullying:
In order to avoid labelling individual pupils and instead to describe the pupil's behaviours, instead of the term 'bully' the term 'pupil displaying bullying behaviour' will be used and instead of the term 'victim' the term 'pupil experiencing bullying behaviour' will be used.

St. Patrick's will respond to socially unacceptable behaviour which does not fall within the category of bullying behaviour through the appropriate policy e.g. Positive Behaviour Policy, Safeguarding Policy or Suspensions and Expulsions Policy. All appropriate education and interventions will be applied thus discouraging unacceptable behaviours escalating to bullying behaviours. We understand that if unchecked, bullying can be profoundly damaging to the pupil experiencing it, in both the short and the longer term, emotionally or physically or both and can seriously disrupt or 'impair the capacity to learn and develop'.

The following are examples of socially unacceptable behaviours, which, when repeated, targeted, intentional and harm causing, may be considered as bullying type 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 spreading 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)	- Leaving someone out of a game or activity - Refusing to include someone in group work
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

(The list is not exhaustive and there are other behaviours which may be considered socially unacceptable/bullying type behaviour)

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.

(Guidance from DE).

The 2016 Act requires schools to consider the following when assessing whether an incident/s meet the legal definition of bullying type behaviour:

- pupil/s capacity to understand the impact of their behaviour.
- developmental age
- Additional needs, SEN, behaviours displayed (diagnosed or undiagnosed e.g. SBEW, ASD, FASD, MLD etc.)
- Individual challenges E.g. family circumstances, trauma etc
- Levels of resilience.

All behaviour is communication to be addressed through a child/young person lens. For both those displaying and experiencing socially unacceptable/bullying type behaviour, no label or blame will be put on any individual. We will address all incidents in a relational, solution focused manner aligned to Safeguarding and SEND.

Methods & Motivations of Bullying Type Behaviour

Individuals who display bullying type behaviour may have various methods and motives. Some examples are, but not limited to:

Methods	Motivations
Methods: **Physical** (includes for example; jostling physical intimidation, interfering with personal property, punching/kicking) Any other physical contact (which may include use of weapons) **Verbal** (includes name calling, insults, jokes, threats, hurtful comments, spreading rumours) **Social** (includes group manipulation, individual manipulation, controlling behaviour) **Indirect** includes omission, isolation, refusal to work with/talk to/play with/help others) **Electronic** (through technology such as mobile phones and internet) **Written**	**Motivations:** • Ability • Age • Appearance • Child Looked After (CLA)/Care experienced • Community background • Cultural • Disability • SEN • Family circumstances (pregnancy, marital status, young carer status) • Economic Status/FSM • Gender/Gender identity/Perceived Gender • Newcomer/Migrant Status • Peer relationship breakdown • Political affiliation/sectarianism • Pregnancy • Race • Religion • Sexual orientation • Other_____

The Act places a responsibility on the school to prevent and respond to bullying type behaviour:

- on the school premises during the school day;
- while pupils are travelling to and from school during term time (students are expected to demonstrate behaviours reflecting the student code of conduct) ;
- while pupils are in the lawful charge of a member of school staff;
- while pupils are receiving education away from school.

Online Bullying

Whilst The Act does allow schools to respond to online bullying incidents, there is no duty placed on schools to take-action. The majority of online bullying/cyberbullying occur outside school meaning schools are not always able to take direct action. Pupils will be taught of the dangers of cyber bullying and responsible use of the internet as part of their PDMU programme and preventative curriculum. They also take part in specific workshops during Anti-Bullying Week and Safer Internet Day as well as through safeguarding assemblies throughout the year. Where online bullying is having a detrimental effect upon a registered pupil's ability to access a happy, school experience the school will, however, do its utmost to address concerns and support pupils involved. The school has launched the Safer Schools app to parents to provide further information relating to on line safety.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Board of Governors

The Act makes the Board of Governors in a school collectively responsible for the development and implementation of its Anti-Bullying Policy and practices.
The Act (2016) states that:
2.-(1) The Board of Governors of a grand aided school must-
(a) ensure that policies designed to prevent bullying involving a registered pupil at the school are followed at the school;

At St. Patrick's our governors play an important role in supporting the school to ensure that pupils have every opportunity to develop their full potential within a caring and stimulating environment. Our governors work in close partnership with the principal, staff, parents and pupils to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of their school in providing the best quality of education for all their pupils. Our governors have oversight of the Anti-Bullying Policy and ensure its effective implementation. They review anti-bullying measures at intervals of no more than 4 years/when necessary/at such times as the Department of Education may

direct. They are kept informed of the prevalence of bullying and alleged bullying incidents as well as the motivation behind these behaviours. Anti bullying will be a standing item of the Board of Governors agenda. Decisions taken regarding the validity of bullying type allegations are taken by the Safeguarding Team, which may include members of the Board of Governors. Any reports provided to Boards of Governors are suitably anonymised to ensure the identity of any child is protected.

Staff

Staff will respond restoratively to a bullying concern, staff will adopt a positive approach, focused on supporting resolution of the situation.
Staff will:
* Be calm. It is important to be clear thinking and emotionally in control.

* Be positive. Remembering the importance of maintaining a positive relationship with all the pupils involved. Pupils are much more likely to modify their behaviour if they perceive that the teacher cares and if their behaviour meets the approval of their peers.

* Be assertive. Staff should clearly and honestly express their thoughts, feelings and expectations concerning the need for the pupil to not only stop displaying the bullying behaviour, but also make amends with the child who has been experiencing bullying.

* Be confident. It is important to trust that you will be successful in implementing interventions that can have an impact on the pupil's future behaviour. It is always helpful to focus on the behaviour, not the pupil.

* Involve both the pupil experiencing and the pupil displaying the bullying behaviour in seeking an agreed way forward.

* Assess the situation and its severity level. Determine the appropriate level of response required to manage the situation effectively.

Preventative Measures:

We are committed to identifying Bullying pre-emptively when possible and to promoting and maintaining a Listening and Responding Culture.

In dealing with emotive issues such as bullying we are committed to a Child Centred approach to meeting the social and emotional needs of all of our pupils whether they are displaying positive or negative behaviours. Bullying is an emotive issue and an emotive word and its use is not always helpful in resolving what are often, ultimately, complex relationship issues between young children.

We will always do our best to resolve concerns and issues. We will always listen. We ask that, as adults concerned with the wellbeing of future generations, all parties be measured and considered in our responses to these issues and remember that all of our pupils are children.

Every member of the school community – pupils, parents, carers, staff (T/NT), Governors - may be expected to work collaboratively together to:

- Foster in our pupils; self-esteem, self-respect and respect for others.

- Demonstrate by example the high standards of personal and social behaviour we expect of our pupils.

- Discuss bullying with all classes, so that every pupil learns about the damage it causes to both the child who is experiencing bullying behaviour and to the child demonstrating bullying behaviour.

- Seek to create an environment where all pupils feel that they can speak to members of staff and express concerns, reinforcing to all pupils the importance of talking to a teacher or trusted adult about bullying when it happens.

- Aim to help pupils understand the difference between bullying and socially unacceptable behaviours.

- Be alert to signs of distress and other possible indications of bullying.

- Emphasise the importance of telling a trusted person 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 experienced bullying behaviour, 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

THE PREVENTATIVE CURRICULUM

Preventative measures at St Patrick's Primary School include:
- Promoting the school ethos at all times - with regard to bullying - be a **CARING, LISTENING, RESPONDING** school.
- Developing an awareness of bullying and implement rights and responsibilities at all levels.
- Recognising and affirming good behaviour.
- Promoting school assemblies and presentations with an anti-bullying theme.
- Encouraging vigilant supervision in the playground at break and lunch time and in the general school environment.
- Consulting with the School Council giving children a clear voice in the life of the school.
- Promoting PDMU lessons and Circle Time activities.
- Consulting with all of the children in the school through discussion, lessons and questionnaires – Foundation Stage, Key Stage One and Key Stage Two (Appendices 3 and 4)
- Encourage clear lines of communication with parents in the form of consultation/ questionnaires
- Participating in Anti-Bullying Week in November each year.
- Liaise with outside agencies and involve them in the life of the school where appropriate e.g. NSPCC, Child line, Behaviour Support Team, REACH, EA ABSIT
- Ensure anti-bullying has a high profile in the School Development Plan to ensure effective staff training and continued professional development and effective communication.
- Use creative, relevant and active learning methods to enhance social and emotional skills.
- For example, emotional mapping to identify hot spots

- Termly analysis of Part 2 BCAF boxes to note / respond to emerging patterns and trends;
- Review BMM Incident logs and records of interventions to evaluate effectiveness of responses
- Analysis of complaints received relating to bullying
- Pupil feedback from School Council on effectiveness of the preventative curriculum in delivering useful keep safe messages; the effectiveness of anti-bullying week messages and activities of PDMU materials, of supervision etc

When responding to bullying type behaviours staff will:
- Listen to children who have experienced bullying behaviour, take what they say seriously and act to support and protect them.
- Report suspected cases of bullying to Designated Teacher, Deputy Designated Teacher, Principal, class teacher or other responsible adult – staff will pass on any concerns to SLT.
- Record all allegations and any occurrences.

All staff should make a response to an allegation of bullying no matter what the situation. High-risk times such as lunchtime, moving from class etc., are well supervised.

Lunchtime supervisors will be made aware of the policy.

The Responsibilities of Parents
We ask our parents to support their children and the school by:
· watching for signs of distress or unusual behaviour in their child, which might be an indication that something is wrong;
· ensuring their child knows what bullying behaviour is and why it is wrong;
· advising their child to report any bullying behaviour to their class teacher or a trusted adult within the school, and explain the implications of allowing the bullying behaviour to continue unchecked, for themselves and for other pupils;
· advising their child not to retaliate violently to any form of bullying;
· being sympathetic and supportive towards their child, and reassuring them that appropriate action will be taken;
· talking to their child about information sharing through social media and let them know that they should refrain from uploading comments or images that could hurt someone else;
· informing the school of any suspected bullying, even if their children are not involved;

· co-operating with the school, if their child has allegedly displayed bullying behaviour, try to ascertain the truth, and point out the implications of bullying, both for the child experiencing bullying behaviour and the child displaying bullying behaviour.
. co-operating with the school and understanding that time is needed for staff to explore all aspects of a situation if they feel that their child has experienced bullying behaviour

The Responsibilities of Pupils

We expect our pupils to:

· refrain from becoming involved in any kind of bullying behaviour, even at the risk of incurring temporary unpopularity;

· report to a member of staff any witnessed or suspected instances of bullying behaviour, to dispel any climate of secrecy and help to prevent further instances.

Any pupil who is experiencing bullying behaviour should not suffer in silence, but have the courage to talk to a trusted adult to seek help in resolving their situation.

REPORTING, RECORDING AND RESPONDING TO BULLYING TYPE CONCERNS

Pupils can report any bullying type concerns by:

- Verbally- talking to a member of staff

- By writing a note to a member of staff

- By posting a comment in a 'worry box'/ " Things I need my teacher to know " box

Parents can report any bullying type concerns by:

- In the first instance, 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 member of staff on the school's Senior Leadership/ Safeguarding Team, as applicable.

- Where the parent is not satisfied that appropriate action has been taken by the Senior Team Member 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 been appropriately responded to, the school's complaints procedure should be followed.

The school will follow up any allegation by a parent about bullying, and report back when the situation has been thoroughly investigated. We ask for parents understanding that these issues can often be complex and the school may need time to explore all issues.
We will deal with observed instances of bullying type behaviour promptly and effectively, in accordance with agreed procedures.

Motivation:

- Understanding the motive behind bullying behaviour can be key to resolving it.

- Motivations can be complex and can relate to emotional issues within relationships, the impact of adverse childhood experiences and personality traits.

- In St Patricks we recognise, value and celebrate equality, diversity and difference. We acknowledge that bullying can be motivated by prejudice and may relate to race, faith, culture, gender, sexuality, age, political affiliation, personal attribute and disability. This list is not exhaustive and other prejudices or differences may motivate bullying.

- Bias and prejudice on the basis of difference occurs very easily in society and it is to be expected that we will encounter negative behaviour relating to any or all of these issues from time to time. Staff attempt to address through our proactive educational approach, explaining and appreciating diversity and difference through PDMU, assemblies, events, displays, R.E, current affairs discussions and through the ethos and practice of an anti-bias curriculum.

All incidents of bullying, their motivation and their outcome are recorded using the Bullying Concern Assessment Form (BCAF Appendix 2) and stored in line with Child Protection and Safeguarding procedures.

All reported incidents are taken forward in line with the school policy and legislative guidance.

Responding to a Bullying Concern

The focus of any intervention must be on responding to the bullying concern and restoring the wellbeing of those involved. As such, any strategy for responding to bullying concerns must concentrate on the prevention of any further incidents.

In the first instance, when responding to a concern raised about possible bullying a member of staff addressing it should:

- • Clarify facts and perceptions

- • Check records as stored on the SIMS Behaviour Monitoring Module or Pastoral Care / Behaviour Records)

- • Assess the incident against the criteria for bullying behaviour

The school records whether the safeguarding team, or a subsection of, have deemed that the alleged incident of bullying is confirmed and responded to through the Anti-Bullying Policy, or if the alleged incident is responded to under another policy e.g. Positive Behaviour Policy.

If an incident or issue is not deemed to be bullying, that will be explained to the complainant along with the reasons for that decision. The concern will be dealt with in line with the school's positive behaviour policy.

If an incident or issue is not deemed to be bullying the school may decide that a restorative intervention is required to support the repairing of relationships between pupils.

If an incident is deemed to be bullying, staff use the following further measures to work towards resolving the issue:

- Identify any themes or motivating factors

- Identify the type of bullying behaviour being displayed

- Identify intervention level

- Select and implement appropriate interventions for all pupils involved, including appropriate interventions, consequences and sanctions.

- Track, monitor and record effectiveness of interventions

- Review outcome of interventions

- Select and implement further interventions as necessary

In the first instance we will attempt to use a restorative approach to resolve bullying issues. If, through discussion, an agreement and acceptance of responsibility is reached, agreement of a resolution will be sought.

In the event of a situation where a satisfactory restorative resolution is not achieved, or in cases where the severity of behaviour is such that it is felt necessary to take a more consequential approach, interventions may include sanctions such as time out, temporary removal of privileges such as play times or participation in events and other sanctions in line with the school's Behaviour Policy.

Information regarding any action taken regarding a pupil cannot be disclosed to anyone other than that pupil and his/her parents/carers.

The Designated Teacher and Deputy Designated Teacher, in consultation with the Principal and class teacher, will monitor and evaluate the established support, interventions and procedures.

One Off Incidents:

In the case of **assessing** whether a single incident constitutes bullying behaviour rather than a one off incident, school staff will 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 incident on wider school community

- Previous relationship between those involved

- Previous incidents involving the individuals concerned

The detail in points above is not exhaustive and a more comprehensive analysis of what constitutes bullying behaviour, can be referenced in the 2011 DE report, 'The Nature and Extent of Bullying in Schools in the North of Ireland'

In determining the level of severity it is helpful to take account of the following to determine the level of intervention which would be most effective:
- The nature of the bullying behaviour for example deliberate teasing, excluding or hitting.
- The frequency of the bullying behaviour: daily, weekly or less often.
- The duration of the bullying behaviour: whether over a short or prolonged period of time
- The perceptions of the target – the degree of distress suffered by the person experiencing bullying behaviour.

Levels of intervention refer to low level, intermediate, complex and high-risk bullying behaviours. Determining the basic level of severity acts as a guide to which level of intervention and support may be most effective in the given circumstances.

The updated Effective Responses to Bullying Behaviour sets out a range of interventions which the school will make reference to (see tables pages 28-38 Appendix 3) when developing any support and intervention plans.

Decisions are taken based upon whether if all the information gathered enables each of the 4 key legal criteria listed in part 1 of the BCAF to be established are fully met. (Omission may not always be present)

The Principal/ Designated Teacher for Child Protection will be informed and notes will be recorded at all stages.

Working in Partnership with Parents/Carers
When a parent reports a bullying concern to the school, the report will be met openly and sympathetically. Effective communication between school and home is essential to ensure that any bullying concerns are resolved as quickly and effectively as possible.
The school will:

- Try to get clear facts from the parent/carer

- Tell the parent/carer that we will need time to gather information and that we will keep them informed.

- Make it clear that we care and will do what we can and will act in accordance with the school's Anti-Bullying Policy.

- When all available information is gathered, apply the full criteria to be clear whether the behaviour does or does not meet the legal definition of bullying (ref BCAF – Appendix 2)

- Ensure that the parents/carers understand how their child's behaviour does or does not conform to the legal definition of bullying.

- **Remind parents/carers that the only information that can be shared with them is information regarding their own child. No information regarding action taken in relation to another child can be shared with any other parent/carer.**

- Involve parents in any necessary support and intervention planning.

- Make to resolve the situation quickly.

- Develop plans to help ensure the child feels safe and secure.

- Monitor and review the concerns (See BCAF Part 4)

The Consultation Process

- The anti-bullying policy may be subject to interim review if required.

- Pupil Voice will feed into consultation and ongoing anti-bullying messaging through the involvement of the Pupil Council and through whole school pastoral provision.

- Draft copy of the policy will be published on the school website, school stakeholders will be furnished with a link by email and school platforms and invited to provide comment on the policy ahead of amendment and approval by the school's Board of Governors.

Appendixes

Procedures applied may include:

APPENDIX 1:

♣ An Overview Flowchart 'Dealing with a Bullying Concern'

APPENDIX 2:

♣ Recording a Bullying Concern template- updated Bullying Concern Assessment Form (BCAF)

APPENDIX 3:

♣ Interventions - EFFECTIVE RESPONSES TO BULLYING BEHAVIOUR (NIABF) pages 28-38

APPENDIX 4:

School based questionnaires for use with pupils

Policy Ratified _____

Date: _____

Signed _____ Chair of the Board of Governors

Signed _____ _____Principal

Date for next review: (not more than 4 years)