



St. Mary's Grammar School, Belfast

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

June 2016

(Reviewed June 2017)



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RATIONALE :

It is a basic right of each pupil in St Mary's to receive his education free from physical or emotional hurt.

We acknowledge that there is a potential for bullying to occur in school, as it will do in other institutions or places wherever people of any age meet or group together.

As a school community we need a set of procedures to deal with the problem in a consistent manner. This Anti-Bullying Policy provides guidelines for the prevention of bullying and for intervention if the problem occurs.

This policy has been developed consistent with the 2003 Statutory Requirements (Education and Libraries NI Order) which requires Boards of Governors and Principals to consult with all stakeholders regarding positive behaviour and bullying prevention measures which must be in place.

The policy takes account of guidance provided in

- DE Circular 2003/13
- Pastoral Care in Schools : Promoting Positive Behaviour 2001

The Policy should be read in conjunction with the Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy, Behaviour Management Policy, Safe Handling Policy and Acceptable Use of Internet Policy

AIMS OF THE SCHOOL'S ANTI-BULLYING POLICY:

1. To promote and develop the ideals, values and beliefs of the school as set out in the school mission statement.
2. To ensure pupils, staff and parents understand and accept a common definition of what constitutes bullying behaviour.
3. To develop a preventative and reactive approach to deal with bullying at management, class and individual level.
4. To raise an awareness and an understanding of bullying through the curriculum.

5. To create an atmosphere where students feel that if they report bullying, they will be listened to and swift, sensitive action will be taken.
6. To provide for all a safe and supportive learning and work environment free from any threat or fear.
7. To work towards an ethos in our community where all forms of bullying are unacceptable and where the reporting of bullying is encouraged and expected.
8. To ensure all partners in the education process are aware of this policy and that they fulfil their obligations to it.

Mrs Fiona Crookes, Pastoral Vice- Principal, is the teacher designated to have specific responsibility for Child Protection.

Mrs Amanda Barr, Senior Teacher, assumes the responsibility when the designated teacher is absent or unavailable.

Members of staff, both teaching and ancillary, are aware of the designations.

WHAT IS BULLYING? – working definitions

Bullying is the **repeated** use of power by one or more people **intentionally** to harm, hurt or adversely affect the rights and needs of another or others. (The Northern Ireland Anti Bullying Forum – NIABF)

There are many definitions of bullying but most have three things in common.

- It is deliberately hurtful behaviour
- It is repeated often over a period of time
- It is difficult for those being bullied to stop the process.

Bullying can take many forms including:

- **Physical:**
eg, pushing, kicking, hitting, pinching and any other forms of violence, threats or damage to property or theft.
- **Verbal:**
eg, name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, persistent teasing.
- **Emotional:**
eg, excluding, tormenting, ridicule, humiliation.
- **Cyber Bullying:**
eg, bullying that takes place through the use of technology such as mobile phones and the Internet. This could include posting hurtful, embarrassing or threatening material on social networking websites, sending nasty text messages or leaving rude voicemails on mobile phones, excluding someone from an on line game, showing or threatening to show inappropriate photos or videos of someone and setting up fake profiles on a social network to make fun of others.

All forms of bullying are unacceptable in St. Mary’:

Bullying on grounds of body image/size/obesity; homophobic bullying; racist bullying; faith-based bullying; ageist bullying; disability bullying; and sexist bullying.

Bullying is not the same as quarrelling – all children will fall out with each other from time to time. Not all aggression is bullying, nor all name calling.

Persistent bullying can result in:

- Absenteeism
- Depression
- Low self-esteem
- Shyness
- Poor Achievement
- Isolation
- Threatened or attempted suicide.

Unchecked bullying also damages the bully who learns that he can get away with violence, aggression and threats and that this sort of behaviour gets him what he wants.

Action Points:

1. What Pupils Can Do

When you are being bullied :

- Try to stay calm.
- Remind yourself that bullying is wrong. You do not deserve to be bullied.
- Don't ignore it but keep safe.
- Take firm and confident action – ask the bully to stop.
- Don't pretend to be friends with the bully.
- Let an adult know – somehow – as soon as possible.
- Remember it does not matter how you do this – just do it the best way for you.
- You can help yourself by:
 - staying with a group
 - avoiding areas where you feel unsafe.

When you see or know other people being bullied:

- Remind yourself it is right to let an adult know and that adults expect you to do this.
- Remember it is only the bullies and those who support them who say it is wrong to let an adult know.
- Remember, by doing nothing you may be allowing the bully to continue.
- Help and support the victim – but **keep safe**.

- Let an adult know as soon as possible.

Telephone Help Lines

Falls Community Counselling Services

275-277 Falls Road

Tel: 90 202030

YOUTHLINE

Telephone

0808 808 8000

(4-9 pm, Mon-Fri)

CHILDLINE

Telephone

0800 1111

(24 hour)

SAMARITANS

Telephone

08457 909090

(24 hour)

Family Works Counselling

02891821721

info@familyworksni.com

Northern Ireland Anti Bullying Forum

Tel 0289087 5006

www.info@niabf.org.uk

If you are worried that your son is being bullied, ask him directly about it.

Be aware of the **signs and symptoms** of bullying.

Children may:

- be frightened of getting to or from school
- change their usual route
- not want to go on the school bus
- beg you to drive them to school
- be unwilling to go to school (or be school phobic)
- feel ill in the mornings
- begin truanting
- begin doing poorly in their school work
- come home regularly with clothes or books damaged
- come home starving (bully has taken dinner money)
- become withdrawn, start stammering, lack confidence
- become distressed and anxious, stop eating

- attempt or threaten suicide
- cry themselves to sleep; have nightmares
- have their possessions 'go missing'
- ask for money or start stealing money (to pay the bully)
- continually 'lose' their pocket money
- refuse to say what's wrong (too frightened of the bully)
- have unexplained bruises, scratches, cuts
- begin to bully other children or siblings
- become aggressive and unreasonable
- give improbable excuses to explain any of the above.

If your child is being bullied:

- Stay calm – avoid over-reacting.
- Take it seriously and make the time to find out the facts.
- Talk calmly with your son. Let him know he is valued and important.
- Emphasise that you are going to support him.
- Don't agree to keep it a secret.
- Reinforce that it is right to let people know.
- Talk with the school. You can contact the Form Teacher, Year Head, Vice-Principal, Principal or any member of staff. Ask the school what it intends to do.
- Give your son a chance to talk about his feelings about being bullied.
- Help your son practise strategies such as being confident, walking away and keeping safe.
- Keep a written diary of all incidents.
- Check that your child is not inviting the bully by some unacceptable or unpleasant behaviour or attitude.

Stay in touch with school; let them know if things improve as well as if problems continue.

IF YOUR CHILD IS BULLYING

Children sometimes bully others for many reasons, including:

- they don't know it is wrong
- they are copying other people
- they have not thought through the reasons why bullying is not acceptable
- as a way of coping with a difficult situation
- as a means of getting their own way
- as a response to being bullied themselves.

IF YOU LEARN THAT YOUR SON IS BULLYING:

- try to stay calm
- talk calmly with your son. Let them know they are valued and important. Explain that what he is doing is unacceptable and makes other people unhappy
- ask if he has any ideas about why he is bullying and what he thinks might help him stop

- find out if there is something in particular which is troubling him and try to sort it out
- work out a way for him to make amends for the bullying
- set up some sort of reward for good behaviour
- help him find non-aggressive ways of reacting to situations
- if he bullies when faced with certain situations, help him work out and practise alternative ways of behaving
 - explain that getting away from a situation where he can feel himself losing his temper, or things getting out of hand, is not weakness. It is a sensible way of ensuring that the situation does not get worse
 - praise him when he does things well
 - talk with the school. Make sure the Form Teacher and Year Head know. Explain that your son is making an effort to change his behaviour. Ask what ideas they have to help. St Mary's staff are committed to helping
 - other children may deliberately provoke or bully, especially if they think the bully is trying to reform. Explain to your son that he may be taunted and provoked but that he should try not to respond aggressively. He should walk away quickly if he thinks someone is trying to pick a fight

Parents can help by controlling their own aggression and by making it clear that violence is always unacceptable.

WHAT THE SCHOOL CAN DO

St Mary's emphasises the importance of treating everyone with care, respect and courtesy.

St Mary's is committed to taking all reported instances of bullying seriously. Reported instances will be investigated sensitively.

St Mary's is committed to stopping bullying and will persistently strive to achieve this when incidents are reported.

St Mary's staff are given specific guidance on dealing with incidents of bullying:

INITIAL RESPONSE

Staff should:

- take all reported instances of bullying seriously and deal with the matter sensitively
- remain calm when dealing with an incident
- take appropriate action to defuse situations if necessary
- make an assessment of the situation ensuring that the personal safety of all parties is the first consideration
- offer reassurance to the victim(s)
- decide to either deal with the matter themselves or refer it on as appropriate to another member of staff in line with the school's discipline procedures.
- Record the incident and outcome.

INVESTIGATING INCIDENTS

Staff should investigate the reported incident sensitively and thoroughly bearing these principles in mind

- reassurance to the victim is vital
- confirm and reinforce with all parties the expectation that it is right that incidents must be reported
- reinforcement that bullying can be stopped.

DEALING WITH THE VICTIM

- Interview the victim and/or his parent/guardian first
- Offer reassurance that bullying can be stopped and that school will persist with intervention until it does
- reinforce that it is right to let people know about bullying
- offer concrete help, advice and support in relation to the specific problem
- enlist their co-operation and that of witnesses or friends. If it happens again it must be reported
- communicate with others as appropriate (eg Form Teacher, Year Head, Parents)
- check on progress directly with the victim at some time in the future.

DEALING WITH THE BULLY

- if the situation is judged to be urgent the first contact is with the alleged bully with parental involvement at a later stage
- remain calm
- listen to his version of events and arrive at an informed decision
- reinforce that bullying is not acceptable
- offer advice to the bully to try to see the victim's point of view
- reinforce that it is right for victims to let school and others know when they are bullied
- be clear that school expects the bullying to stop. Seek a commitment to this end from the bully
- advise the bully you will be checking to ensure the bullying stops
- if appropriate apply school sanctions explaining carefully what the sanction is and why it is being given
- arrange for restoration of any items damaged or taken
- place an expectation on the bully to acknowledge his bullying to the victim and encourage an apology
- communicate with other parties as appropriate (eg Parents, Form Teacher, Head of Year)
- make a written record – either a Referral Form or letter to parents
- check at sometime in the future that the bullying has stopped. Ensure the bully knows you have done this.

The appropriateness of counselling for both victim and bully can be decided by the significant staff members.

SUMMARY:

Our expected outcome in this policy is the development of caring relationships between all members of the school community, so that parents can send their children into a safe and secure environment in which to learn and to realise their full potential.

Approvals	
Signatures:	
Principal	_____
Chair of Governors	_____
Date of approval by Governors:	___ / ___ / _____
Date of next annual review:	___ / ___ / _____