

# St. Michael's School

## ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

### Introduction:

The School believes that its pupils have the right to learn in a supportive, caring and safe environment without the fear of being bullied. In this Special School we are aware that bullying might not be reported so staff need to be especially alert and aware of policy guidelines.

All institutions, both large and small, contain some number of pupils with the potential for bullying behaviour. If a school is well disciplined and organised, it can minimise the occurrence of bullying. The School also have a clear policy on the promotion of good citizenship, where it is made clear that bullying is a form of anti-social behaviour.

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 St. Michael's 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 were published in September 2013.

### Commitment to Key Principles of Best Practice:

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:

1. 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;

2. Effective leadership;

3. A school-wide approach;

4. A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact;

5. Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that

- build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and
- explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.

6. Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils;

7. Supports for staff;

8. Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies); and

9. On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

## **Definition:**

In accordance with the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools Bullying is defined as the following:

***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.***

It includes behaviour such as teasing, taunting, name calling, threatening, hitting, deliberate exclusion or extortion by one or more pupils against a victim.

Isolated or once-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour, do not fall within the definition of bullying and should be dealt with, as appropriate, in accordance with the school's code of 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 *DES circular 45/2013 Anti Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

## **Roles and Responsibilities:**

- All class teachers are responsible for investigating and dealing with bullying involving students in their class or participating in shared-class activities. Teachers must advise the principal of all recorded instances of bullying and/or alleged bullying.
- Special Needs Assistants, Bus Escorts and all other school staff report any alleged bullying incidents to the class teacher or the school Principal.
- The principal, deputy principal and/or teacher(s) holding posts of responsibilities (i.e. the In-school Management Team - ISM) are available to assist with enquiry, recording and resolution.
- The principal will keep the Board advised of any instances of bullying.
- Parents/guardians are strongly encouraged to contact the school if they have concerns regarding the possibility of bullying in school.

## **Education and Prevention strategies:**

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

St. Michael's School will:

- (a) Promote a positive school culture and climate that is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity and respect in accordance with Section 6 Table A of the Anti-Bullying Procedure for Primary or post primary schools.

- (b) Create a school wide approach (involving school management, staff, school community, parents and pupils) to dealing with the problem of bullying behaviour;
- (c) Provide through both their curricular and extra-curricular programmes, pupils with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth, empathy and respect to prevent bullying;
- (d) Monitor pupils' access to technology within the school especially relating to on-line activity;
- (e) Take particular account of the needs of pupils with disabilities or with SEN;
- (f) Also, as part of the S.P.H.E. programme and whenever opportunities arise informally, students should be taught to :
  - A. Say "No" or "STOP"
  - B. Tell a staff member
  - C. 'Stay away' ie. avoid people/situations if possible.

In addition, the following strategies will be implemented:

- Cross curricular work on theme Wellbeing/Be Safe.
- Stay Safe Programme.
- RSE Programme
- Development of social skills through PE, Music, Drama, Language and Communication and Visual Arts.
- Formulation and communication of school wide rules concerning Positive Behaviour expectations:
  - classroom charters
  - posters
  - displays
  - incentives
  - pupil awards
  - school assembly
  - Circle Time
- School wide supervision and effective, consistent behaviour management by all staff.
- Creating safe areas for vulnerable pupils
  - seating arrangements in class
  - movement around school
  - buddy system
  - other peer support systems
- Opportunities for developing positive peer relationships

Education about bullying may need to be included as part of the IERP process for specific pupils.

## **Investigation, Follow-Up and Recording**

The school's procedures for investigation, follow-up and recording of bullying behaviour are as follows:

- (a) St. Michael's will raise awareness of bullying so that all members of the school staff understand what bullying is and how the school deals with bullying behaviour;
- (b) In St. Michael's good supervisory and monitoring measures are in place to prevent and deal with bullying behaviour;
- (c) All reports of bullying must be investigated, dealt with and recorded by the relevant teacher and the principal will be informed;
- (d) Responses will be determined in accordance with the ability of the student(s) concerned and advice may be sought from other relevant parties; Board of Management; Multi - Disciplinary professionals.
- (e) Recording templates will be completed as appropriate (Appendix 3 Circular 45/13 and stored in a confidential file in the Principal's office. Report will be notified to the Board of Management.

## **Programme of Support**

The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows (see Section 6.8 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary School's):

- (a) The priority of the support is to re-establish good relationships.
- (b) In St. Michael's we support the **victims** in the following ways:
  - By offering them an immediate opportunity to talk about the experiences with their class teacher, or another teacher they choose.
  - Informing the victim's parent/guardians if appropriate.
  - By offering continuing support when they feel they need it.

We also discipline, yet try to help the **bullies** in the following ways:

- By talking about what happened, to discover why they became involved.
- Informing the bullies' parent/guardians if appropriate.
- By continuing to work with the bullies and limiting opportunities for them to bully.

## **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 or the harassment of pupils 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.

This policy was originally ratified by the Board of Management on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2013

Reviewed: November 2017.

Updated: January 2022

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and is readily accessible to parents on request and provided to the Parents' Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

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, and parents via the school website. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_