

Anti-bullying

Policy

1. 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 Saplings Special School Rathfarnham 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:

- A positive school culture and climate which: is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity; and, encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment; and promotes respectful relationships across the school community;

- Effective leadership;
- A school-wide approach;
- A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact;
- 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.
- Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils;
- Supports for staff;
- Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies); and
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

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.

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, based on membership of the Traveller Community and bullying of those with special needs.

For a more in depth understanding of bullying behaviour by children and adults in a school context please see the later sections of this document.

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 behaviour and will be dealt with within the context of our code of behaviour.

However, a once off offensive post placed on a social networking site or other public forum where the message, image or statement can be viewed will be regarded as bullying.

4. The Management team are responsible for the investigation of any allegation of bullying. These are the Principal, Deputy Principal and Assistant Principal. They will manage the situation and liaise appropriately.

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

- Pupils will be taught about bullying and how they can foster a supportive school environment.
- To understand and develop their own emotional literacy and awareness through the Zones of Regulation Programme.
- Through this to begin to understand the potential for their behaviour to impact on others.
- To foster and model a climate of positivity and support to encourage belonging and engagement so that incidents of negative behaviour are discouraged and minimised by both children and staff.
- To ensure that no direct communications from Saplings School exist without the prior agreement of the MTM and or the Behaviour Analyst. These are communications are agreed with the Principal before being issued.

6. The procedures we will use to investigate bullying are:

- To resolve a situation with the emphasis on restoring relationships rather than apportioning blame
- Two members of the team (one of which is the Principal) to determine the situation
- All reports will be followed up
- Ensure a whole school approach is taken and any source of complaint is respected and pursued.
- Everybody involved is expected to participate in this process.
- The approach to be taken will be made explicit from the outset to all parties.
- A calm problem -solving approach will be adopted.
- Privacy will be safeguarded and full compliance with GDPR ensured.
- Sensitivity will be central to the process.

7. The school offers the following support for working with people who have been affected by bullying:

- Ensure that all allegations are documented and followed up in accordance with the DES anti bullying procedures.
- If bullying has been found to have occurred the school will retain the documents for the duration of the child or adults attendance at Saplings.
- To ensure that the recording template issued by the DES is followed as appropriate.

8. The Board of Management (BOM) confirms that appropriate supervision and monitoring policies are in place to both prevent and deal with bullying behaviour and to facilitate early intervention where possible.

9. The BOM 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 and staff on any of the nine grounds determined by the DES.

10. This policy has been made available in the following ways:

- Sent to parents at the beginning of the school year
- Made available to staff through dissemination in a folder in the staff room
- Made available on request.

12 This policy will be reviewed by the BOM once in every school year. Written notification of the review will be made available to school personnel. The record of this review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the Patron and the Dept.

What is bullying?

Bullying can mean many different things. Bullying can take many forms, but its aim is always to make a person feel upset, intimidated, inferior or afraid and if this happens again and again it is bullying.

What does it feel like to be bullied?

Bullying hurts. It makes you scared and upset. It can make you feel embarrassed in front of others. It can make you feel that you are all alone and that you have no friends. It can make you so worried that you can't work well at school. Some children and members of school communities have skipped school to get away from it. It can make you feel that you are not good, that there is something wrong with you. People who bully you can make you feel that it's your fault but it is not your fault - it is their fault.

Why do some people bully?

There are a lot of reasons why some people bully. They may see it as a way of being popular or gaining status or having power over another.

Some bullies do it to get attention or to get something, or to make other people afraid of them. Others might be jealous of the person they are bullying. They may even be getting bullied themselves.

Some people who bully may not even understand how wrong their behaviour is or how it makes the person being bullied feel.

Why are some people bullied?

Some people are bullied for no particular reason, but sometimes it's because they are different in some way – perhaps it's the way they talk, their size, their looks, their name or just because they are very good at something.

Some research.....

Boys were found to engage in three times as much bullying as girls. Research found that the popular belief that children who bully feel insecure and anxious inside is NOT true. In fact, children who bully have a low level of anxiety.

If you're being bullied what can you do?

Always remember – It's not your fault! It's the bullying person who has the problem, not you. Don't put up with bullying. Ask for help.

- **Believe in yourself.** Don't believe what the bullying person says of you. You know that's not true.
- **Say 'no' emphatically,** then walk away
- **Check out your body language.** Practise walking with confidence, standing straight with head held high and taking deep breaths.
- **Don't suffer in silence** – talk to someone you trust. It always helps to share a problem and to know that you are not alone. In schools and clubs, adults in charge have to pay attention to any complaints you make about being bullied.
- **If an adult is bullying you, then look for help from another adult you can trust.** You have rights, and you must insist on them. There are rules and procedures to deal with adults who bully at home and at school.
- **Choose when to resist.** Sometimes the only sensible thing to do is to give in. Just get away and tell someone.
- **Try not to use violence.** It never solves anything, and usually just makes the situation worse.
- **Keep a diary.** Keep a record of details – who, where, when, how – as this will make it easier for you when you tell your story.
- **Have an answer ready.** Well chosen words can often make a bullying person look foolish, and that's the last thing they want!
- **Try not to show you are upset or angry** (even if you are). Reacting to the bullying person is only giving them what they want.

Can your behaviour be interpreted as bullying:

- Have you ever hurt someone on purpose?
- Have you ever used your size or strength to win against someone weaker?
- Do you repeat rumours, even if you're not sure they're true?
- Have you ever tried to turn your friends against someone?
- Have you ever watched others bullying someone without doing anything to stop it?
- Have you a disregard for people's privacy and do you use this information inappropriately.
- Have you ever used the excuse 'I was only messing' when you knew you weren't 'only messing'?

If answering these questions made you feel uneasy, maybe you should look at the way you treat other people.

Talking to someone always helps.

Choose a trusted friend or maybe one of the organisations listed in this booklet.

Remember that bullying is always wrong – feeling good shouldn't mean having to make someone else feel bad.

How to approach the subject

- Broach the subject obliquely, giving the victim the option to talk about it or not
- Let them know that you are willing to listen at any time
- When they start to talk, listen carefully to what they have to say
- Once they begin to discuss the bullying, it may seem to be all they can talk about. Be patient and let them go on – it's better for them to let it all out than to bottle it up.

What should I do if I, or my child experience bullying:

- Discuss bullying openly and regularly with your children – don't wait for them to raise the issue.
- Thank the child for disclosing the problem. Confidence is the first casualty of bullying, so let your child know you believe them and will support them. Tell them it's not their fault.
- Listen carefully. Don't rush the story. Show you are concerned and sympathetic.
- Get all the details – what, who, when, where, etc.
- Write down the details and check the information with your child. This will be important for any meetings which may come later.
- Take action. Don't wait to see if it all blows over.
- Make appropriate changes that may help prevent your child being singled out and to build their confidence at the same time (e.g. new clothes, different hairstyle, etc.)
- Seek professional help if necessary (e.g. speech therapy, dental work, etc.)
- Bring your information to the relevant authority and insist on getting an adequate response.

How do I approach the School?

- Make an appointment
- Speak to an appropriate teacher as soon as possible.
- Think about asking someone to accompany you for support.
- Don't exaggerate. Be honest and stick to the facts as you understand them.
- Use your notes to make sure you don't forget to mention any important points.
- Recognise that you may be upset when you speak to the teacher.
- Accept that your child may not have told you all the facts, and that there may be another side to the story.
- Ask for a copy of the school's policy on bullying.
- Find out what action the school intends to take.
- Arrange for a follow-up meeting with the teacher to measure any improvement in the situation.
- After the meeting, you may wish to make a note of what was agreed and send a copy to the teacher.

- If you are not happy with the teacher's response, make an appointment to see the principal.
- If you still feel dissatisfied having talked to the principal, contact members of the Board of Management who are there to represent your interests. Remember to keep copies of all letters you send and receive.
- If your child is happy to have you attend, you can request that all interviews with him or her on this issue are conducted in your presence.
- If the problem persists, then you should consider moving your child to another class or even another school if this is possible.
- You should consider carefully whether further aftercare is needed following a move to another class or school.

Directory of Support Services

Anti-Bullying Centre	(01) 6082573
CAB – Campaign Against Bullying	(01) 2887976
Childline Freephone	1800 666660
Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy	(01) 2300061
ISPCC	(01) 6794944
The National Association for Parents Support (NAPS)	(0502) 20598
Parentline (Parents under Stress)	(01) 8733500
Samaritans (Callsave)	1850 609090
Sticks and Stones Theatre Company	(01) 2807065
Trinity College Dublin – Anti-Bullying Research Centre	(01) 6601011
Victim Support	1800 661771

Some Useful Websites

- Bullying @ school information – www.scre.ac.uk/bully
- Bullying information on Bullying Child/Parents/Teachers www.lfcc.on.ca/bully
- Bullying in schools www.ericece.org/pubs/digests/1997/banks97
- What Parents should know about Bullying – www.accesseric.org/resources/parent/bully
- Anti-Bullying Campaign Tools for Teachers - www.antibullyingcampaign.ie

Signed: _____

Chairperson of Board of Management

Date: _____

Signed: _____

Principal

Date: _____