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**Acting Chairperson of the Board: Audrey Pidgeon**  
**Acting Principal: Siobhán Butler**

Policy: **Anti-Bullying Policy for Pupils**

Date of Issue: **March 2023.**

Review Date: **Annually**

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 St Joseph's Special 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.
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 by promoting:
  - 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; 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. DEFINITION OF BULLYING

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, bullying based on a person's membership of the Traveller community and bullying of those with disabilities or special educational needs.

St. Joseph's recognises that an understanding of this concept may be difficult for some of our pupils, therefore, every effort is made to educate our cohort of pupils as to the nature of bullying and the detrimental effect it has on others.

Staff identified the **following pupil to pupil** behaviours which could fall within the definition of bullying within the context of our school.

- **Physical:** Pushing, pulling, kicking, spitting, pinching, hitting, squeezing, biting, choking, scratching, inappropriate touching.
- **Emotional:** Exclusion, name calling, teasing, ignoring, intimidation, body language, taking or breaking possessions, destroying work, invasion of privacy, telling lies, verbal intimidation, peer pressure, mimicking.

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 is as follows: (see Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*): Initially the class teacher with support and guidance from the acting Deputy Principal, Patrick Ruane.

### 5. EDUCATION AND PREVENTION:

The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying) that will be used by the school are as follows (see Section 6.5 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):

- Careful planning of class groups each year
- Focus on building positive self-esteem for all pupils and a culture of respect across the whole school for staff and pupils
- Recognition that some pupils do not interact well with others and the adoption of appropriate strategies to alleviate tensions.
- Identification and risk assessing of 'Hot Spots' – playground, toilets, corridors, transitions from one activity to another, visiting other classrooms, or areas of the school where the presence of another child causes anxiety, assembly times and home time
- Implementation of strategies to reduce identified risks such as delaying some pupils at home time, providing additional supervision in toilet areas, behaviour support plans, etc.
- Close liaison with bus escorts, drivers, parents, and school staff regarding behaviours on school transport
- Developing 'Pupil Profiles' at the end of each year for handover to next classroom
- Staff awareness of pupils who have a documented history of engaging in behaviours that challenge and support provided to them to manage incidents where necessary.
- Discussion at teacher's monthly meetings on strategies to support vulnerable pupils throughout the school day in all areas of the school.
- Awareness of staff on the importance of taking the time to listen to children and to give them time to process what is said to them.
- Teaching relevant SPHE and Stay Safe programmes, Circle Time, Growing up for Girls & Boys programme.
- Developing Social Stories on building respect, empathy and resilience.
- Teaching of the school rules in class and reinforcement at general assembly. The use of visual aids in 'hotspots.'
- Active communication and liaison with parents/carers, ancillary staff, bus escorts and drivers.
- Regular team meetings with parents of relevant pupils.
- Implementation of positive handling strategies such as diversion, diffusion, de-escalation, re-directing etc.
- Use of relevant educational materials to promote and foster respect for others.
- A strong and active culture of child protection.

**Staff will regularly review other Relevant Related Policies:**

- Child Protection Policy
- Intimate Care Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Policy on behaviours that challenge
- Health and Safety Policy
- Internet Acceptable Use Policy and photo/video policy
- Restrictive Practices Policy
- Confidentiality Policy
- Relationships and Sexuality Policy

**Diversity and Difference:**

- The school promotes a positive culture and climate which is welcoming of difference and diversity. We respect cultural traditions and religious beliefs, and lesson materials reflect the diversity in the world.

**Cyberbullying:**

- Pupils in St. Joseph's do not have unsupervised access to phones or the internet.
- Very few pupils in the school would be able to communicate with others without direct assistance.
- For those pupils who may understand staff will discuss with them the impact of:
  - Inappropriate comments/photos, etc. on Facebook or other social media
  - Inappropriate texts/messages/photos via pupils' phones
  - Inappropriate pictures/websites on iPads, laptops, etc.

- The importance of respecting sexual orientation of peers.

## **6. INVESTIGATION, FOLLOW UP AND RECORDING OF BULLYING BEHAVIOUR:**

St. Joseph's procedures for investigation and 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 (as per Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):

### **Investigation:**

- All reports even anonymous ones will be investigated by the relevant teacher. All staff, parents & bus escorts, must be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them.
- The relevant class teacher will investigate and try to resolve any issues and restore as far as practicable the relationships of the parties involved. Teachers will take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour by pupils. When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher should seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why? The Principal and /or Deputy Principal will be kept informed.
- Parents of pupils will need to co-operate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving any issues.
- Any interview conducted during the investigation should be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all the personnel/pupils involved.
- The teacher will fill in the template labelled Appendix 3 from the Department Guidelines. This will need to be done outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all concerned. S/he will exercise professional judgement to ascertain if bullying has occurred. If more than one person is involved, each person will be interviewed separately initially and then brought together as a group where each person's perspective will be shared.
- If it is determined that someone has engaged in bullying behaviour, then the school will endeavour to make it clear that this behaviour is unacceptable by whatever means of communication is most effective for that person. This may include visual supports/social stories/comic book conversations/role play/video clips etc. The assistance of the multi-disciplinary team may be requested to develop appropriate resources/programmes in this regard.
- In cases where the relevant teacher has decided that bullying has taken place, the parents of the parties involved will be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken. The school will give parents support in developing ways they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and support their own child.

### **Recording:**

- The teacher will fill in the template labelled Appendix 3, from the Department Guidelines.
- A copy of this Appendix will be given to the principal or deputy principal.
- Data gathered from these reports will provide information in relation to the presence of bullying behaviour in the school.
- This data will be collated at least once a term and analysed with a view to monitoring levels of bullying behaviour and identifying any particular issues that require attention or any trends in behaviour.
- A record of this analysis will be retained and made available to the Board of Management once each term.
- Appropriate responses to any issues identified will be drawn up and implemented.

### **Follow Up:**

- Where disciplinary sanctions may be required, it will be a private matter for the person being disciplined, his/her family and the school.
- Follow up meetings may be scheduled with the relevant parties, including CDN Teams, as required or social skills programmes set up to develop co-operation and mutual respect.
- 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 has occurred, it must be recorded by the teacher in the template at Appendix 3.

- In determining if it has been adequately addressed, the teacher will take into account the following factors:
  - Has the bullying behaviour ceased?
  - Have the issues between the parties been resolved as far as is practicable?
  - Has the relationship between parties been restored?
  - Has any feedback been received from their families or the Principal or Deputy Principal?
- Where a parent is not satisfied with how the school has dealt with the bullying case, the parents have the right to complain to the Board of Management. If they remain dissatisfied with local representations, they can decide to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.
- Serious incidents of bullying behaviour may be referred to the HSE Children and Family Services and/or the Gardai as appropriate.

7. 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 Schools*) :

Supports for pupils affected by bullying will include their engagement in programmes to raise their self-esteem, to develop their friendship and social skills and thereby promote their resilience to actions of a bullying nature.

The school recognises that our cohort of pupils may not be aware that actions they are engaging in are of a bullying nature. Social stories and visual signs/symbols will be used to help these pupils understand what bullying behaviour is and how it affects their peers. Visuals will also be used to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others.

Follow up meetings may be arranged to assess progress and/or restore relationships.

## 8. 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.

## 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 23.04.2023 [date].

11. This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website (or where none exists, is otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parents' Association (where one exists). A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

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 (or where none exists, be otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parents' Association (where one exists). A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Signed: Audrey Dillon  
(Acting Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: David Bull  
(Acting Principal)

Date: 25.04.2023

Date: 25/4/23

Date of next review: March 2024