



St. Ursula's Primary School. Anti-Bullying Policy.

1.Introduction.

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. Ursula's Primary 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.Rationale.

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
 - 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 and in the context of these procedures, ***bullying is defined as 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 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.

In addition, in the context of these procedures 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.

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 this definition of bullying and will 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.

This definition includes a wide range of behaviour, whether verbal or written, whether physical or social, whether targeting person or property, whether carried out directly or indirectly or through any electronic medium, which could harm a child or undermine her self-esteem or confidence.

(Appendix 1 gives a list of specific examples of bullying behaviour. This list is not exhaustive)

4. The Relevant Teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying in the school are the Class teachers.

5. Promoting a Positive School Climate.

The following strategies are in place in the school to promote a positive school culture and climate and to help prevent and tackle bullying behaviour.

The staff is committed to

- modelling respectful behaviour to all members of the school community
- explicitly teaching pupils what respectful language and respectful behaviour looks like, acts like, sounds like and feels like in class and around the school.
- highlighting and explicitly teaching school rules in pupil friendly language in the classroom and in common areas.

- catching pupils being good - notice and acknowledge desired respectful behaviour by providing positive attention.
- consistently tackling the use of discriminatory and derogatory language in the school – this includes homophobic and racist language and language that is belittling of pupils with a disability or SEN.
- actively watching out for signs of bullying behaviour.
- getting pupils to identify bullying ‘hot spots’ and ‘hot times’ for bullying in the school (playground, school yard, outdoor areas, etc.),
- ensuring that there is adequate playground/school yard/outdoor supervision
- giving constructive feedback to pupils when respectful behaviour and respectful language are absent
- having a system of encouragement and rewards to promote desired behaviour and compliance with the school rules and routines.
- explicitly teaching pupils about the appropriate use of social media.
- positively encouraging pupils to comply with the school rules on mobile phone and internet use.
- following up and following through with pupils who ignore the rules.
- actively promoting the right of every member of the school community to be safe and secure in school.

6. Education and Prevention Strategies.

The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying) that may be used by the school are those included in the following:

- The anti-bullying module of the SPHE programme as it applies each year.
- Anti-Bullying website (set up by the DES in conjunction with this initiative)
- Anti-Bullying workshops for 4th, 5th and 6th Classes.
- S.A.L.T programme
- The Stay Safe Programme
- Walk Tall Programme
- Circle Time.
- Pupils are helped to examine the issue of bullying in a calm rational way, outside of the tense context of particular bullying incidents. In the process they are made more aware of the nature of bullying and the various forms that it can take.
- Pupils are made aware that the consequences of bullying behaviour are always bad for those who are targeted, even if this is not always obvious at the time.
- Pupils are encouraged to recognise, reject and report bullying behaviour, either spontaneously or through questionnaires that are regularly used in the school
- Through staff meetings and presentations the school staff is made aware of the nature of bullying and the signs that might indicate that a pupil is being bullied. They are encouraged to be vigilant in watching out for signs of bullying and to report any suspicion of bullying they may have to the “Relevant Teacher” (in the case of staff members) or any staff member (in the case of parents/guardians).

7. Investigating and Dealing with Bullying Behaviour.

The relevant personnel in the school who will deal with bullying behaviour are as follows:

- Class Teacher
- Teacher on Supervision

- Principal
- Board of Management

Procedures for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying.

- The school's procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying behaviour are as follows:
- The primary aim for the relevant teacher in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame);
- In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved.
- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. In that way pupils will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance.
- It is made clear to all pupils that when they report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.
- Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants, caretaker and cleaners are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher.
- Parents and pupils are required to co-operate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving any issues and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved as quickly as possible.
- The approach being taken by the school will be explained clearly to all parties from the outset. A calm, unemotional problem-solving approach will be taken when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents.
- Incidents are generally investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.
- Interviews are conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned.
- When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher will seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This is done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner;
- If a group is involved, each child will be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved will be met as a group. At the group meeting, each child will be asked for her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements. It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s).
- In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, 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 (by reference to the school policy). The school will give parents an opportunity to discuss ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports for their pupils;
- Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it will be made clear to her how she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts should be made to try to get her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied. It will also be made clear to all involved

(each set of pupils and parents) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, it is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, her parents and the school.

- The 'Relevant Teacher' does not apportion blame but rather treats bullying behaviour as an 'incident' that can and must be remedied. S/he emphasises that the intention is not to punish perpetrators but to talk to them, to explain how harmful and hurtful bullying is and to seek a promise that it will stop. If that promise is forthcoming and is honoured there will be no penalty and that will be the end of the matter.
- When an investigation is completed and/or a bullying situation is resolved the 'Relevant Teacher' will complete a report, to include the findings of the investigation, the strategy adopted and the outcome of the intervention, as well as any other relevant information.

8. Procedures for Recording Bullying Behaviour.

The school has clear procedures for the formal noting and reporting of bullying behaviour. These are as follows:

- All records are maintained in accordance with relevant data protection legislation.
- While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the relevant teacher will use his/her professional judgement in relation to the records to be kept of these reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same.

Sanctions

- Sanctions will be imposed in line with the school's behaviour policy but there may be some variation on the sanctions imposed depending on the severity of the incident and where the incident took place.

9. The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying.

The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows:

Bullied Pupils:

- Children are given opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to increase their sense of self-worth and to develop their friendship and social skills thereby building resilience whenever this is needed.
- Strategies include:
 - identifying personal strengths
 - celebrating achievements and accomplishments
 - using positive self-talk and avoiding negative self-talk
 - helping the child to bolster her friendships with other children so that she has a strong social network.
 - helping the child to understand what is fair and acceptable behaviour. This provides security. Once the child has a strong sense of right and wrong she will be able to speak up when treated unfairly.

Bullying Pupils:

- Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour are also given support to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others.
- Strategies include:
 - making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are not blamed or punished and get a “clean sheet,”
 - making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are doing the right and honourable thing and giving them praise for this,
 - helping those who need to raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school),
 - using learning strategies throughout the school and the curriculum to help enhance pupils’ feelings of self-worth,
 - in dealing with negative behaviour in general, encouraging teachers and parents to focus on, challenge and correct the behaviour while supporting the child,
 - In dealing with bullying behaviour seeking resolution and offering a fresh start with a “clean sheet” and no blame in return for keeping a promise to reform.

10. 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.
- The Board of Management confirms that the school will, in accordance with its obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps as 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.

11. Role of Parents.

- Parents and other adults who interact with children and young people, in formal and informal settings, have a huge role to play in preventing bullying and also in supporting children and young people who are: being bullied, have bullied someone else or have witnessed someone being bullied.
- Adults, and parents in particular, need to:
 - be good role models for children and young people;
 - teach young people to respect and value difference and diversity;
 - make it their business to know what bullying is and understand the different types and forms of bullying;
 - educate themselves in relation to social media and take an active interest in how children and young people are using the internet, social media and mobile phones;
 - know, and lookout for, the signs that a child or young person may be being bullied;
 - offer support and listen to what a child or young person wants you to do to help;
 - make it clear that bullying is not acceptable behaviour.

12. Implementation and Review.

- The Principal will provide a report to the Board of Management setting out: the overall number of bullying cases reported since the previous report to the
- Board meeting and confirmation that all cases have been or are being, dealt with in
- Accordance with the school's anti-bullying policy and the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary schools*.
- The minutes of the Board of Management meeting will not include any identifying details of the pupils involved.
- The policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year using the standardised checklist.
- Written notification that the review has been completed will be provided to the Parents' Association.

Ratification and Communication.

- This policy is reviewed annually and was ratified by the Board of Management at a meeting on the 22nd October 2018.
- The policy is available to all members of staff in hard copy and on education365
- It is available 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.

Fr. Gerard Chestnutt,
Chairperson,
BoM.

22nd October 2018.

Appendix 1.

Types of Bullying.

The following are some of the types of bullying behaviour that can occur amongst pupils:

Physical Aggression:

This behaviour includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping people which can be used as a disguise for physical harassment or inflicting pain.

Intimidation:

Some bullying behaviour takes the form of intimidation: it may be based on the use of very aggressive body language with the voice being used as a weapon. A facial expression which conveys aggression and/or dislike can be particularly upsetting.

Isolation/exclusion and other relational bullying:

This occurs where a certain person is deliberately isolated, excluded or ignored by some or all of the class group. This practice is usually initiated by the person engaged in bullying behaviour and can be difficult to detect. It may be accompanied by writing insulting remarks about the pupil in public places, by passing around notes about or drawings of the pupil or by whispering insults about them loud enough to be heard. Relational bullying occurs when a person's attempts to socialise and form relationships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined. One of the most common forms includes control: "Do this or I won't be your friend anymore" (implied or stated); a group ganging up against one person; non-verbal gesturing; malicious gossip; spreading rumours about a person or giving them the "silent treatment".

Cyber-bullying:

This type of bullying is increasingly common and is continuously evolving. It is bullying carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as text, social network sites, e-mail, instant messaging (IM), apps, gaming sites, chat-rooms and other online technologies. Being the target of inappropriate or hurtful messages is the most common form of online bullying. As cyber-bullying uses technology to perpetrate bullying behaviour and does not require face to face contact, cyber-bullying can occur at any time (day or night). Many forms of bullying can be facilitated through cyber-bullying. For example, a target may be sent homophobic text messages or pictures may be posted with negative comments about a person's sexuality, appearance etc.

Name calling:

Persistent name-calling directed at the same child which hurts, insults or humiliates is regarded as a form of bullying behaviour. Often name-calling of this type refers to physical appearance, e.g., size or clothes worn. Accent or distinctive voice characteristics may attract negative attention. Academic ability can also provoke name calling. This tends to operate at two extremes. There are those who are singled out for attention because they are perceived to be weak academically. At the other extreme there are those who, because they are perceived as high achievers, are also targeted.

Damage to property:

Personal property can be the focus of attention for bullying behaviour. The contents of school bags and pencil cases may be scattered on the floor. Items of personal property may be defaced, broken, stolen or hidden.

Extortion:

Demands for money may be made, often accompanied by threats (sometimes carried out in the event of the targeted pupil not delivering on the demand). A pupil may also be forced into theft of property for delivery to another who is engaged in bullying behaviour.

Impact and Indicators of Bullying Behaviour.**Impacts:**

- Pupils who are being bullied may develop feelings of insecurity, humiliation and extreme anxiety and thus may become more vulnerable. Self-confidence may be damaged with a consequent lowering of self-esteem. While they may not talk about what is happening to them, their suffering is indicated through changes in mood and behaviour. Extreme cases of bullying may result in suicide. It is, therefore, essential to be alert to changes in behaviour as early intervention can be very effective.
- Pupils who witness bullying may also be affected and may suffer in similar ways to those who are bullied. For example, pupils who witness identity-based bullying and share that identity can experience anxiety and feel under threat themselves. Pupils can also feel guilt or distress at not being able to help the person being bullied.
- There are also consequences for individuals who engage in bullying behaviour.
- Pupils who become involved in such behaviour can be at higher risk of depression. Other possible long-term consequences may include an increased risk of developing an anti-social personality, anxiety disorders, a likelihood of substance abuse and law-breaking behaviour in adulthood and decreased educational and occupational attainment.

Indicators.

The following signs and symptoms may suggest that a pupil is being bullied:

- Anxiety about travelling to and from school e.g. requesting parents to drive or collect him/her, changing travel routes, avoiding regular times for travelling to and from school;
- Unwillingness to go to school, refusal to attend, truancy;
- Deterioration in educational performance, loss of concentration and loss of enthusiasm and interest in school;
- Pattern of physical illnesses e.g. headaches, stomach aches;
- Unexplained changes either in mood or behaviour which may be particularly noticeable before returning to school after weekends or more especially after longer school holidays;

Characteristics Associated with Bullying.

The child who engages in bullying behaviour

- It is important to recognise that any pupil can be bullied or can engage in bullying behaviour.
- A significant proportion of bullying is not merely behavioural but is rooted in a lack of respect for diversity and in social inequalities. “Prejudice-based” or “identity-based” bullying can be a significant factor in bullying behaviour.
- Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour tend to display aggressive attitudes combined with a low level of self-discipline. They may lack any sense of remorse convincing themselves that the other person deserves the treatment they are receiving.
- Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour can be attention seeking: setting out to impress bystanders and responding to the reaction their behaviour provokes. They can lack the ability to empathise. They can appear unaware or indifferent to the other person’s feelings.
- Pupils who exhibit bullying behaviour often suffer from a lack of confidence and have low self-esteem.
- However, it must also be recognised that pupils who engage in bullying behaviour do not always intend to bully or may not recognise the potential negative impact of their words and actions on others.
- Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour may also have been bullied themselves.

The child who is bullied:

- As pupils can be particularly quick to notice differences in others, pupils who are perceived as different in some way can be more prone to encounter such behaviour. However, the pupils who are most at risk of being bullied are those who react in a vulnerable and distressed manner. The seriousness and duration of the bullying behaviour can be related to the pupil’s continuing response to the verbal, physical or psychological aggression.
- Pupils who are bullied often experience difficulties in speaking up about bullying. The difficulties include:
 - fear of reprisals;
 - concerns about being perceived as a “tell-tale” for reporting bullying;
 - concerns about “getting into trouble” with the principal or teacher for reporting bullying;
 - not having evidence to back up a bullying allegation;
 - not knowing how the matter will be dealt with by the school; and
 - not feeling fully confident of being believed.

More vulnerable pupils.

- While bullying can happen to any pupil, it is known that some may be more vulnerable to or at risk of experiencing bullying. Such vulnerable groups include pupils with disabilities or special educational needs, those from ethnic minority and migrant groups, pupils from the Traveller community, lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) pupils and those perceived to be LGBT and pupils of minority religious faiths.
- There can be an increased vulnerability to bullying amongst pupils with special needs.
- Some pupils with complex needs may lack understanding of social situations and therefore trust everyone implicitly. Such pupils may be more vulnerable because they

do not have the same social skills or capacity as others to recognise and defend themselves against bullying behaviour.

- Pupils who are perceived to be homophobic or transphobic have particular difficulty in speaking up or reporting the bullying behaviour.

Where does bullying happen?

- Bullying can happen anywhere at any time but there are certain times and places which particularly facilitate bullying.

Cyber-bullying:

- Access to technology means that cyber-bullying can happen around the clock and the pupil's home may not even be a safe haven from such bullying.
- Pupils are increasingly communicating in ways that are often unknown to adults and free from supervision. The nature of these technologies means digital content can be shared and seen by a very wide audience almost instantly and is almost impossible to delete permanently.
- While cyber bullying often takes place at home and at night, the impact can also be felt in school.

Areas of unstructured activity:

- Bullying in schools frequently takes place in the playground. School grounds with hidden or obscured parts may provide an environment conducive to bullying. Many common playground games present opportunities for bullying because of their physical nature. It is relatively easy to single out and bully another pupil. The noise level masks much of what is going on. The playground provides the opportunity for older pupils to pick on younger pupils. It can also be the setting for bullying by groups. Continuing provocation may eventually lead to a physical fight and ironically in some cases the person being bullied may appear to be the aggressor because she finally gives vent to her frustration.
- Toilets, corridors, cloakrooms, school hall and playground may be the scene of verbal, psychological and physical bullying. The behaviour of pupils in those areas needs careful monitoring.

Bullying in the classroom:

- Bullying may also take place in class. It may occur subtly through glances, looks and sniggers but may take the more overt form of physical intimidation. It may also be exacerbated if a classroom atmosphere prevails whereby pupils are allowed to make derogatory comments about their classmates or other teachers.
- Teachers need to be alert to the underlying reasons for such comments in case pupils are trying to disclose something which is disturbing them and thus needs further investigation. Bullying may also occur between class periods irrespective of whether the class or the teacher moves.

Coming to and from school:

- The area immediately outside the school, the local shops and local neighbourhood are often the scenes of bullying. Bullying can also take place at the bus-stop or on the journey to and from school whether the individuals are walking, cycling or on school buses.

The following signs and symptoms may suggest that a pupil is being bullied:

- Anxiety about travelling to and from school e.g. requesting parents to drive or collect her, changing travel routes, avoiding regular times for travelling to and from school;
- Unwillingness to go to school, refusal to attend, truancy;
- Deterioration in educational performance, loss of concentration and loss of enthusiasm and interest in school;
- Pattern of physical illnesses e.g. headaches, stomach aches;
- Unexplained changes either in mood or behaviour which may be particularly noticeable before returning to school after weekends or more especially after longer school holidays;
- Visible signs of anxiety or distress e.g. stammering, withdrawing,
- nightmares, difficulty in sleeping, crying, not eating, vomiting, bedwetting;
- Spontaneous out-of-character comments about either pupils or teachers;
- Possessions missing or damaged;
- Increased requests for money or stealing money;
- Unexplained bruising or cuts or damaged clothing; and
- Reluctance and/or refusal to say what is troubling her.

There may be other signs depending on the individual and her circumstances. The above signs do not necessarily mean that a pupil is being bullied but if repeated or occurring in combination, these signs do warrant investigation in order to establish what is affecting the pupil.