



## ST MARY'S HIGH SCHOOL, NEWRY

### **Anti-Bullying Policy**

**Revised October 2021**

#### **Rationale:**

As a Rights Respecting School, respect for self and others are core values within St Mary's and reflect a range of articles within the United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child.

Bullying in any form is caused by a lack of respect for another person's dignity and rights. It can take the form of psychological pressure, verbal, non-verbal or physical aggression or seeking control over others in unacceptable ways. In St Mary's, we aim to provide a safe, inclusive and secure learning environment for everyone in the school community. We believe all forms of bullying behaviour to be unacceptable, all pupils have the right to learn in a safe and supportive environment.

*This policy is in line with the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016:*

*DENI Circular 2021/12 and the Statutory Guidance for Schools and Boards of Governors (DE, 2019)*

#### **Aims:**

As a Rights Respecting School we aim to:

- Encourage all pupils to exercise self-control, self-respect, respect for others, the environment and local community together with taking personal responsibility in line with Article 29 of UNCRC '*Education must encourage the child's respect for human rights as well as respect for others*'.
- Provide a systematic, consistent and appropriate response to addressing bullying concerns in school;
- Encourage pupils to fulfil their responsibility as outlined in the School Charter;
- Model mutual respect, empathy and kindness towards others;
- Support the health and safety of all pupils;
- Foster a learning culture that celebrates and rewards positive behaviour, achievement and success;
- Create a stimulating learning environment which encourages and rewards personal endeavour and achievement;
- Ensure pupils act in a socially acceptable manner at all times in school, travelling to or from school, during educational trips and while receiving educational provision arranged on behalf of the school and provided elsewhere than on the premises of the school;

## **Supportive and Caring Ethos:**

As a Rights Respecting School we:

- Believe bullying is unacceptable and every pupil has the right to be safe from any form of bullying;
- Are committed to having a preventative, responsive and restorative anti-bullying ethos;
- Celebrate pupil diversity where their views and contributions are actively sought and respected;
- Understand that everyone in the school community has a role to play in challenging bullying behaviour and in creating a safe and welcoming environment for all;
- Promote anti-bullying messages and implement preventative measures across the whole school community;

## **Structures and Procedures:**

- Staff lead by example in promoting respect for each other, forming positive relationships and developing resilience;
- Pupils learn in a Rights Respecting learning environment where they feel accepted and valued;
- Inclusive, child centred learning environment which promotes inclusion, where diversity is cherished and where the needs of all pupils are met;
- All staff receive Child Protection Training in line with EA guidelines and are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures. All staff are kept informed of new pastoral legislation and procedures;
- Emotional health and well-being is an integral part of the school curriculum and the Pastoral Programme;
- The school ethos is rooted in Christian values of respect and inclusion;
- The school works in partnership with a range of external agencies for support and guidance;
- Lunchtime supervision is provided by non-teaching members of staff who have completed Child Protection training and are fully vetted;
- Staff treat all incidents of socially unacceptable and alleged bullying behaviours seriously and investigate each incident impartially in a non-judgmental manner.
- Any pupil experiencing socially unacceptable or bullying behaviour is supported;
- Any pupil identified as displaying socially unacceptable or bullying behaviour is supported;
- Reward and promote socially acceptable behaviour
- The Anti-Bullying Policy is shared with parents/carers and is published on the School Website and App;
- A Counselling Service is provided one day per week.
- The Personal Development Programme encourages pupils to explore key issues such as self-respect, self-concept, acceptable behaviour and respect for others.

## Consultation:

This policy has been developed in consultation with pupils through the Rights Respecting School Council with Parents/Carers and staff through consultative workshops and questionnaires.

## Definition of Bullying:

### *Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016*

1- In this Act 'bullying includes (but not limited to) the repeated use of:

- (a) any verbal, written or electronic communication,
- (b) any other act, or
- (c) any combination of those,

by a pupil or a group of pupils against another pupil or group of pupils, with the intention of causing physical or emotional harm to that pupil or group of pupils.

2- For the purpose of subsection (1), 'act' includes omission

## Bullying Behaviours

Bullying is behaviour that is usually repeated, targeted and carried out intentionally to cause hurt, harm or to adversely affect the rights and needs of other pupils. The following unacceptable behaviours when repeated, targeted and intentionally hurtful, may be considered a bullying behaviour:

Verbal or Written acts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Saying mean and hurtful things to, or about, others;</li><li>• Making fun of others;</li><li>• Calling another pupil mean and hurtful names;</li><li>• Telling lies or spread false rumours about others;</li><li>• Trying to make other pupils dislike another pupil/s.</li></ul>
Physical acts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hitting;</li><li>• Kicking;</li><li>• Pushing;</li><li>• Shoving;</li><li>• Material harm, such as taking/stealing money or possessions or causing damage to possessions.</li></ul>
Omission (Exclusion)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Leaving someone out of a game;</li><li>• Refusing to include someone in group work.</li></ul>
Electronic acts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Using online platforms or other electronic communication to carry out many of the written acts noted above;</li><li>• Impersonating someone online to cause hurt;</li><li>• Sharing image (eg photographs or videos) online to embarrass someone.</li></ul>

This list is not exhaustive and other behaviours which fit in with the definition may be considered bullying behaviour.

The school understands that there are various motivations behind bullying behaviour, these may include (not exclusive);

- Age
- Appearance
- Breakdown in peer relationships
- Community background
- Political affiliation
- Gender identity
- Sexual orientation
- Pregnancy
- Marital status
- Race
- Religion
- Disability / SEN
- Ability
- Looked After Child status
- Young Carer status

### **Cyber Bullying:**

- If the alleged cyber bullying behaviour has an impact on relationships between pupils in school, staff will investigate the incident providing support to both the pupils involved.
- It is the Policy in St Mary's for staff not to look through a pupil's mobile phone or read information or look at photos on a pupil's social networking site.
- If a parent/carer discovers that their daughter is being bullied via the internet or mobile phone, the school advises that they should seek advice from the PSNI.

### **One-off Incidents**

While Bullying is usually repeated behaviour, there are examples of one off incidents that the school will classify as bullying, considering the following criteria:

- ❖ Severity and significance of the incident
- ❖ Evidence of pre-mediation
- ❖ Impact of the incident on individuals (physical or emotional)
- ❖ Impact of the incidence on the wider school community
- ❖ Previous relationships between those involved
- ❖ Any previous incidents involving the individuals

**Any incidents which are not considered bullying behaviour will be addressed under the Positive Behaviour Policy.**

Bullying is an emotive issue requiring understanding and support, for this reason this policy and the school will not refer to a child as 'a bully', nor will be refer to a child as 'a victim'. The school community will use the following language:

- A child displaying bullying behaviours
- A child experiencing bullying behaviours

In determining 'harm' we define:

- ❖ Emotional or psychological harm as intentionally causing distress or anxiety by scaring, humiliating or affecting adversely a pupil's self-esteem.
- ❖ Physical harm as intentionally hurting a pupil by causing injuries

## **Preventative Measures:**

The focus of all anti-bullying strategies is on prevention of bullying during school and to and from school, this includes:

- Consistent promotion of the whole school ethos of respect, tolerance and inclusion;
- Development of a culture where pupils take pride in their school and are viewed as ambassadors of their school;
- Raising awareness and understanding of the positive behaviour expectations of all pupils and staff;
- Promotion of anti-bullying messages, eg Personal Development lessons, whole school assemblies, school charter;
- Raising awareness of the various forms of bullying, including how and why it can happen through curriculum areas such as: Personal Development, LLW, RE
- Pupil awareness of the Pastoral Referral System
- Actively promoting positive emotional health and wellbeing of all pupils and staff;
- Participation in the NIABF annual Anti-Bullying Week activities;
- Engagement in national campaigns including Safer Internet Day to promote the importance of online safety and appropriate behaviour;
- Support from external organisations to promote anti-bullying messages for example PSNI – Acceptable Internet use;
- Lunchtime supervision by non-teaching members of staff who have completed Child Protection training and are fully vetted;
- Effective peer support and mentoring programmes;
- Pupil engagement in a wide range of student voice groups;
- Regular engagement with transport providers such as Translink to ensure early identification of any concerns and promote effective communication.

## **Responsibilities:**

**Everyone in the school community, including pupils, their parents/carers and the staff of the school are expected to respect the rights of others.**

## **Board of Governors:**

- Ensure that a safeguarding ethos is maintained within the school environment and arrangements are reviewed on an annual basis;
- Ensure that the school has an Anti-Bullying Policy which has been consulted with pupils, parents/carers and staff;
- Review the Anti Bullying Policy every 4 years or earlier if required;
- Ensure appropriate measure are taken to prevent and address bullying behaviour;
- Ensure that Governors undertake appropriate child protection training;
- The school records incidents of bullying or alleged bullying
- Ensure that the Board of Governors receive termly updates regarding the prevalence of bullying and alleged bullying incidents including identification of any trends and patterns to inform further development of policy and procedures.

**School:**

- To promote an ethos of respect for self, for others and the environment;
- To set the highest possible standards for positive relationships among staff, pupils and parents;
- To ensure a safe environment for staff and pupils;
- To encourage openness about any form of socially unacceptable and bullying behaviour;
- Listen sensitively to anyone who raises a bullying concern, take what is said seriously and provide reassurance that an appropriate investigation will take place;
- Investigate all bullying concerns, gather evidence which is then matched against bullying criteria to determine if the concern is (a) socially unacceptable or (b) bullying behaviour.
- If the concern is deemed to be socially unacceptable behaviour, the Positive Behaviour Policy will be implemented.
- If the concern is deemed to be bullying behaviour, the Anti-Bullying Policy will be implemented.
- To involve parents when necessary;
- To support and help the pupil experiencing bullying behaviour and the pupil displaying bullying behaviour;
- Resolve difficulties through restorative practices to meet the needs of all the parties involved and to prevent recurring behaviour.

**Parent Responsibilities:**

- To encourage their daughter to have self-confidence and to have confidence in talking to staff;
- To promote respect for self, others and property and support the school rules;
- To discuss with their daughters any fears or experiences of what appears to be and what is bullying behaviour;
- To help their daughter work out, non-aggressive, strategies for dealing with what appears to be worrying behaviour on the part of another person;
- To actively promote socially acceptable behaviour at all times;
- To inform the school of any concern regarding bullying behaviour and to encourage their daughter to react appropriately and refrain from retaliating;
- To co-operate with the school in resolving any concerns involving socially unacceptable and bullying behaviour;

**Pupil Responsibilities:**

- To respect herself, others and the school environment;
- To know her rights and responsibilities regarding personal safety;
- To behave towards others in a respectful manner;
- To report any concerns regarding socially unacceptable or bullying behaviour to a member of staff;
- To tell her parents/carers or a trusted adult if she is being bullied including through any electronic device eg their mobile phone;
- To avoid any behaviour which could be understood by others as bullying: (e.g. giving 'dirty looks', calling names, spreading rumours, teasing, threatening);
- Refrain from retaliating to any form of bullying behaviour.

## **Reporting concerns of Bullying:**

### **Pupils:**

- Pupils may report their concerns about potential bullying behaviour to any member of staff, teaching or non-teaching.
- Pupils need to be aware that this member of staff may not be involved in the investigation of the concern and subsequent follow up;

### **Parents/Carers:**

- Parents/Carers must report all bullying concerns to their daughter's Form Teacher;
- Where the Parent/Carer is not satisfied that appropriate action has been taken, their concern should be reported to their daughter's Year Head then the Vice Principal and finally the Principal;
- Where the Parent/Carer remains unsatisfied that the concern has not been appropriately responded to, the school's complaints procedure should be followed.

All reports of bullying concerns received from pupils and/or parents or carers will be responded to in line with this policy and feedback will be made to the person who made the report.

**Due to pupil confidentiality, no information about action taken in relation to a pupil can be disclosed to anyone other than the pupil and her parents/carers.**

## **St Mary's Response to Bullying:**

Bullying incidents will be dealt with firstly by the pupil's Form Teacher then Year Tutor, Vice Principal and finally Principal. Form Teachers may be involved at the initial stage and will continue to have a supportive role. If potential bullying behaviour is reported to another member of staff by a pupil or parent or a bullying concern is suspected by a member of staff, the concern will be referred to the pupil's Form Teacher.

The main aim of any intervention is to **RESPOND** to the bullying that is taking place and take action to **RESTORE** the well-being of all those involved.

### **Form Teacher/Year Tutor and or Vice Principal:**

When the Form Teacher/Year Tutor or Vice Principal receives details of the incident he or she is required to:

- Meet with the pupils separately (pupil who has allegedly experienced bullying behaviour, witnesses, pupil who is allegedly displaying bullying behaviour) connected with the incident;
- Record details in writing - dates, times, the type of bullying, the name of any pupil who witnessed what was happening, where the incidents occurred (in the classroom, on the corridor, outside);
- Collect other related information if necessary;
- When the investigation has been concluded there will be a 'Bullying Concern Assessment Meeting' to review the collected evidence by the Year Tutor, Behaviour Management Co-ordinator and Vice Principal - Part 1 of the Bullying Concern Assessment Form will be completed (BCAF).

- On the basis of the evidence gathered **all** of the following criteria must be met:
  - The behaviour is intentional?
  - The behaviour is targeted at a specific pupil or group of pupils?
  - The behaviour is repeated?
  - The behaviour is causing physical or emotional harm?
  - Behaviour that is deliberate omission?
- If the above criteria are met, Part 2 and 3 of the BCAF is completed;
- Parents/Carers maybe notified during the investigation stage;
- If the criteria has not been met, the behaviour will be deemed as socially unacceptable and will be managed through the Positive Behaviour Policy and Procedures. The Year Tutor and Behaviour Management Co-ordinator will continue to monitor and support the pupil/s involved as outlined in the Positive Behaviour Policy;
- When the investigation is complete, the Year Tutor or Vice Principal will formally advise the Principal and the Board of Governors at their next scheduled meeting;
- If bullying or serious socially unacceptable behaviour has occurred both sets of parents/carers will be contacted explaining what has been happening and how the incident will be resolved;
- Determine appropriate restorative measures and sanctions with a review date

It is the aim of the school to support the pupil experiencing bullying behaviour and the pupil who is displaying bullying behaviour.

**Serious Incidents:**

Bullying behaviours assessed as being complex or high risk will always involve the Vice Principal and/or Principal. There may be a significant threat to the safety and welfare of any or all the pupils involved. Incidents of this nature must be assessed in relation to the risk posed and the school’s Child Protection and Safeguarding procedures may need to be invoked.

The school will always take immediate action if a pupil’s personal safety is at threat.

**Outcome of the Bullying Investigation:**

Whenever the investigation has concluded and completion of Part 1 of the BCAF has established that bullying behaviour has taken place, the school will implement support and appropriate interventions for the pupil experiencing bullying behaviour and for the pupil displaying bullying behaviour. Part 3 of the BCAF (Record of Support and Interventions) will be completed by members of SLT together with the Year Tutor. The team will establish a timeframe for review and complete Part 4 of the BCAF (Review of Bullying Concern and Actions to Date).

When responding to a bullying concern, the school will implement interventions aimed at responding to the behaviour, resolving the concern and restoring the well-being of those involved. Strategies may include:

- Contacting parents/carers
- Restorative questioning and discussions;
- Completion of Think Time Discussion Sheet (Northern Ireland Anti Bulling Forum – NIABF);

- The pupil who is displaying bullying behaviour will be encouraged to apologise to the pupil who has been bullied;
- Ongoing parental involvement;
- Mentoring by Year Tutor and Form Teachers;
- Support from external agencies eg CAMHS, EA Behaviour Support, Social Services, NIABF, PSNI;
- Counselling.

Where appropriate, school staff may implement sanctions for those displaying bullying behaviour, this may include:

- Placed on detention after school or lunchtime;
- Placed on Behaviour Report;
- Remain in the care of their Form Teacher or Year Tutor for an agreed period of time and school work is provided;
- Moved to a different Form Class if the pupil who has been bullied is in the same class;
- Suspended from school for three days;

Recording:

- The school will centrally record all relevant information related to reports of bullying as recorded in the Bullying Concern Assessment Form.
- All records will be maintained in line with relevant data protection legislation and guidance.

### **Professional Development of Staff:**

Governors and all staff, both teaching and non-teaching, receive ongoing training in relation to the school's Safe Guarding and Anti Bullying policies and procedures.

### **Dissemination of the Policy:**

This Anti Bullying Policy along with all Pastoral Policies are shared annually with Year 8 parents/carers and are available on the school's website and on the school app. A Pastoral Policies overview is sent to all parents/carers at the start of each academic year. Key Pastoral Policies are available from the school website [www.stmarysnewry.com](http://www.stmarysnewry.com) and the School App.

### **Related Whole School Policies:**

This policy is set within the broader school context of Pastoral Care and as such should be implemented in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Pastoral Care Policy
- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Drugs Education Policy
- Personal Development Policy
- RSE Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- E Safety and Acceptable Use of Internet Policy

- SEN Policy
- Educational Visits Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- CRED Policy
- School Charter

**Monitoring, Evaluation and Review:**

Mr Fitzpatrick, the Vice Principal and Designated Teacher, is responsible for monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the implementation of the Anti-Bullying Policy. The policy will be revised every 4 years although it may be updated in light of any further guidance and legislation as necessary or following any incident which may highlight the need for review. This will be done in consultation with the Board of Governors, SLT, staff, students and parents. On-going evaluation will ensure the effectiveness of the Policy.

Signed by Chair of Governors: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Signed by Principal: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Date of Review: \_\_October 2025\_\_\_\_\_