

*Reaching New Heights!*

**Anti-Bullying Policy**

**St. John’s Primary School, Coleraine**

Principal: Mrs H. McDonnell

Designated Teacher for Child Protection: Miss A.McNicholl

Chairman of the Board of Governors: Mr L. McQuillan

Child Protection Governor: Mr H. McGill

*September 2022*

1. **INTRODUCTION**

In St. John’s Primary School, we do not tolerate bullying behaviour of any kind. We have a pivotal role to play in the emotional and personal development of all our children. There is a shared responsibility to ensure St. John’s is free from bullying behaviours. We live through the positive ethos outlined in our mission statement and create a positive culture consistently focussed on prevention, response and restoration. The purpose of this Anti-Bullying Policy is to ensure that the basic rights of each child are protected so that everyone can fulfil his/her potential in a safe and secure environment.

This policy has been drawn up in consultation with all members of St. John’s school, i.e. pupils via school council meetings, parents/carers through questionnaires and consultation, school staff through training and feedback and governors through consultation.

This policy is part of the suite of Safeguarding Policies in place as listed in “Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools”, DE April 2017 10.1 and adheres to The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI 2016).

This policy will apply:

* On school premises, during the school day
* While travelling to and from school, including the school bus
* When pupils are under the lawful control of staff (e.g. during a school event/visit/trip)
* When pupils are receiving education, arranged by the school, but delivered away from the school premises (e.g. at another venue or school premises)

1. **CONTEXT**

Our Anti-Bullying Policy has been informed and guided by:

Legislation

* [The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2016/25/contents)
* [The Education and Libraries Order (Northern Ireland) 2003](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/2003/424/contents/made) (A17-19)
* [The Education (School Development Plans) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010](https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/de/annex-a-school-development-plans-regulations-2010.pdf)
* [The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1995/755/contents/made)
* [The Human Rights Act 1998](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/42/contents)
* [The Health and Safety at Work Order (Northern Ireland) 1978](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1978/1039)

DE Guidance

* The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 Statutory Guidance for Schools and Boards of Governors (DE, 2019)
* [Pastoral Care in School: Promoting Positive Behaviour (DE, 2001)](https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/de/pastoral%20care%20in%20schools.pdf)
* [Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools: A Guide for Schools (DE, 2017)](https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/education/Safeguarding-and-Child-Protection-in-Schools-A-Guide-for-Schools.pdf)
* [Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (Dept. of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, 2016)](https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/co-operating-safeguard-children-and-young-people-northern-ireland)
* [Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland Policies and Procedures (SBNI, 2017)](https://www.proceduresonline.com/sbni/)

1. **PRINCIPLES**

At St. John’s Primary School we believe that:

* Pupils have a right to learn in a safe and supportive environment, free from bullying.
* Every child and young person should be celebrated in their diversity.
* The welfare/well-being needs of all children and young people are paramount and pupils’ needs (whether person displaying bullying behaviour or person experiencing bullying behaviour) need to be separated from their behaviour.
* Our school community is committed to a preventative, responsive and restorative anti-bullying ethos across the whole school.
* When bullying concerns are identified our school will act promptly and work in a restorative and solution focussed way to achieve the necessary change.
* Pupils who are targeted will be listened to and supported.
* Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour will be listened to and encouraged to accept responsibility and change their behaviour.

1. **LANGUAGE/ DEFINITIONS**

Bullying is an emotive issue, therefore it is essential that we ensure we use supportive, understanding language when discussing these matters. For that reason we will not refer to a child as ‘a bully’, nor will we refer to a child as ‘a victim’. Instead, we will refer to the child describing the situation surrounding that child, for example:

* A child displaying bullying behaviours
* A child experiencing bullying behaviours

We encourage all members of the school community to use this language when discussing bullying incidents.

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.

1. **WHAT IS BULLYING?**
   1. **Primary Definition**

St. John’s notes and follows the legislative primary definition below as according to the ‘Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI 2016)’.

**Definition of “bullying”**

**1.**—(1) In this Act “bullying” includes (but is 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 purposes of subsection (1), “act” includes omission.

*Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI 2016)*

Bullying is described as behaviour that is usually repeated (but not always), which is carried out intentionally to cause hurt, harm or to adversely affect the rights and needs of another or others.

While an ‘imbalance of power’ has not been included in the 2016 definition, consideration of its role in determining if bullying has occurred, along with the target’s lack of resilience, will be given due regard when deciding if bullying has taken place.

**5.2 Forms of Bullying**

The following unacceptable behaviours, when (usually) repeated, targeted and intentionally hurtful, may be considered a bullying behaviour:

**Verbal or Written -** Saying mean and hurtful things to or about others, making fun of others, calling another pupil mean and hurtful names, telling lies or spreading false rumours about others or trying to make other pupils dislike another pupil/s.

**Physical –** Hitting, pushing, punching, shoving, kicking, physical contact which may include use of weapons, scratching, biting, tripping, spitting and material harm such as taking/stealing money or possessions or causing damage to possessions.

**Omission (Exclusion) -** Leaving someone out of a game or refusing to include someone in group work.

**Cyber/Electronic-**Using online platforms or other electronic communication to carry out many of the written acts noted above (unwanted and inappropriate comments or images) which harass or humiliate another person. Other examples may include impersonating someone online to cause hurt or sharing images (eg. photographs or videos) online to embarrass someone.

**Racist *–*** Racial taunts.

**Sectarian –**Unwanted religious, political differences.

**Homophobic –**Because of, or focusing on the issue of sexuality.

**Xenophobic –**Taunting of foreigners.

The above list is not exhaustive and other behaviours which fit with the definition may be considered as bullying behaviour.

**5.3 Pupil Views of What is Considered to be Bullying Behaviour**

The school council representatives contributed their views on behalf of their class. When asked what is bullying and how it makes one feel, the children offered the following responses:

**What is bullying? –** *It’s something bad that happens to you over and over again, it’s constant picking and annoying someone everyday, it’s insulting someone and picking up on weaknesses and using these weaknesses to attack, it can be a physical attack, ganging up, cyber-bulling and making fun of someone emotionally’.*

**How does bullying make the person feel? –** ‘*Upset, the person loses their sense of purpose, scared, useless, not wanted, anxious, low self-esteem, lonely, uncomfortable and not strong enough to deal with ordinary things’.*

**5.4 Motivations Behind Bullying**

These include, but are not limited to:

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 and/or Young Carer status.

**5.5 Criteria to assess one-off Incidents**

Whilst bullying is usually repeated behaviour, there are instances of one-off incidents that the school will consider as bullying.

When assessing a one-off incident, to make a decision on whether to classify it as bullying, the school shall consider the following criteria:

* severity and significance of the incident
* evidence of pre-meditation
* impact of the incident on individuals (physical/emotional)
* impact of the incidents on 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. Not all unacceptable behaviour is bullying behaviour. Behaviours such as name-calling, being hit and being excluded are unacceptable and, when not assessed as bullying behaviour are addressed through the school’s Positive Behaviour Policy.

1. **PREVENTATIVE STRATEGIES**

At St. John’s we aim to promote a strong anti-bullying ethos and as such our preventative strategies are the key lynchpin of our Anti-Bullying Policy. They include:

* Promoting the positive school ethos at all times.
* Raising awareness and understanding of the positive behaviour expectations, as set out in the Positive Behaviour Policy.
* Promotion of anti-bullying messages through the curriculum eg. inclusion of age-appropriate material specific to individual subject areas related to bullying, positive behaviour and inclusion.
* Addressing issues such as the various forms of bullying, including the how and why it can happen, through PDMU (e.g. sectarian, racist, homophobic, transphobic, disablist, etc.)
* Involvement in meaningful and supportive Shared Education projects with Killowen P.S., supporting and encouraging pupils to explore, understand and respond to difference and diversity (Pupil Pathways).
* Actively promoting positive emotional health and wellbeing.
* Participation in the NIABF annual Anti-Bullying Week activities.
* Engagement in key national and regional campaigns such as Safer Internet Day, Catholic Schools Week and Good Relations Week.
* Development of peer-led buddy systems such as the Year 1 and Year 7 link, to support the delivery and promotion of key anti-bullying messages within the school.
* Development of effective strategies for playground management, eg. training for supervisors, zoning of playgrounds, inclusion of specific resources (friendship bench) and provision of a variety of play options to meet the needs of all pupils.
* Focused assemblies to raise awareness and promote understanding of key issues related to bullying.
* Development of effective strategies for the management of unstructured times (eg. break time, lunch) and aspects of the school day that have been identified by pupils as hotspots such as pupils being able to say negative comments to each other in the playground out of earshot of adults. The canteen can be another hotspot as it is noisy and when classes are transitioning from one area to another within school.
* Provision and promotion of extra- and co-curricular activities, aimed at supporting the development of effective peer support relationships and networks. For example sporting activity, creative arts, leisure and games, etc.
* All staff are vigilant for early signs of distress in pupils while in the playground or the general school environment.
* We are a listening school with a preventative, responsive and restorative ethos. Children’s safety is paramount at all times.
* Consultation with our School Council who represent the pupil body. Pupil questionnaires and regular discussions with coordinators.
* Safeguarding and Child Protection Notice Board containing details of how to seek help and contact numbers of relevant outside agencies.
* PDMU/Circle time is used effectively to reinforce positive friendship and dealing with problems that arise. Anti-Bullying lessons take place throughout the school year in all classes.
* Outside agency support is utilised -NSPCC, Childline, PSNI, Behaviour Support Team, Family Support Hub etc.
* Worry Boxes within each class.
* Posters in school displaying positive messages.
* Anti-Bullying Week is highlighted annually in our school and pupils are encouraged to gain a deeper understanding of how to be a better friend and member of our school community.
* Awareness raising is in place for the whole school community through Weekly SWAY, class teacher communication with parents, our school website, twitter and Facebook.
* All staff are available for any child should they wish to speak to them. The Principal and Senior Management (Mr. Burns and Miss McNicholl) are available during break, lunch, before and after school. Pupils feel that staff make them feel safe in school by caring for them, following up on incidents promptly and thoroughly and school contacting parents to make them aware if something has happened.
* Staff receive awareness-raising training regarding bullying prevention including effective, appropriate strategies for intervention.
* Development of a culture where pupils take pride in their school and are viewed as ambassadors for their school within the community. This includes regular reminders of the positive behaviour expectations of pupils whilst travelling to and from school.
* Raising awareness of the nature and impact of online bullying and support pupils to make use of the internet in a safe, responsible and respectful way through teaching of E-Safety Scheme, engagement with key statutory and voluntary sector agencies (e.g. C2k, PSNI, Safeguarding Board for NI e-Safety Forum, NSPCC) to support the promotion of key messages and participation in annual Safer Internet Day.
* Regular engagement with transport providers relevant EA Transport) to ensure effective communication and the early identification of any concerns.
* Promotion of key anti-bullying messages and awareness of behaviour expectations of pupils amongst the local community (eg. local shops, cafes, service providers, residents, etc), including information on how to raise any concerns with the school.
* Developing Good Relations through creating community based projects with Shared Education partner school Killowen P.S. with the purpose of promoting strong messages against anti-social behaviour including bullying.
* Teachers revisit ‘Class Plans for Learning’ on a regular basis to encourage a positive culture of good relations among the pupils.

1. **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN RELATION TO BULLYING CONCERNS**

All members of the school community have a key role and responsibility in promoting, implementing and supporting our Anti-Bulling Policy. Everyone has the responsibility to work collaboratively to prevent and respond to bullying behaviour being displayed.

All reports of bullying concerns received from pupils and/or parents/carers will be responded to in line with this policy and feedback will be made to the person who made the report. However, it must be noted that no information about action taken in relation to a pupil who has displayed bullying behaviour can be disclosed to anyone other than the pupil and his/her parents/carers. While the majority of reports of bullying concerns will come from pupils and their parents/carers, the school is open to receiving such reports from anyone within the school community.

It must be also noted that should a bullying concern be reported which has taken place outside of the school, and travelling to and from school, the school is not required within law to take action, however should there be an impact on the pupil’s education, this will be responded to.

**7.1 Responsibility of pupils**

* Behave towards others in a mutually respectful way.
* Model high standards of personal pro-social behaviour (behaviour through which people benefit others).
* Avoid inappropriate behaviour that could be viewed as bullying behaviour.
* Refrain from becoming involved in any kind of bullying behaviour, even at the risk of incurring temporary unpopularity.
* Refrain from retaliating to any form of bullying behaviour.
* Intervene to support any person who is being bullied, unless it is unsafe to do so.
* Report any instances of bullying behaviour to a member of staff.
* Know how to seek support.

PUPILS REPORTING A CONCERN

* Tell the adult in charge at the time of the incident.
* The adult will pass on the concern to the class teacher. The class teacher will deal with the situation in line with the pastoral care practice. See procedure contained within ‘7.2 Responsibility of Staff’
* Tell the teacher, if the teacher wasn’t the adult in charge at the time of the incident.
* Mrs McDonnell, Mr. Burns and Miss McNicholl are available, key adults within school, to share a concern with.
* Other options for how best to share a concern are to write a note to a member of staff or post a note into the class worry box.
* All adults within school will work together to address any concerns brought to their attention.

**7.2 Responsibility of Staff**

* Foster positive self-esteem.
* Behave towards others in a mutually respectful way.
* Model high standards of personal pro-social behaviour.
* Emphasise the importance of seeking help from a trusted adult about bullying behaviour
* Explain the implications of allowing the bullying behaviour to continue unchecked, for themselves and/or others.
* Listen sensitively to anyone who have experienced bullying behaviour, take what is said seriously, and provide reassurance that appropriate action will be taken.
* Be alert to signs of distress\* and other possible indications of bullying behaviour.
* Intervene to support any child who is being bullied.
* Resolve difficulties in restorative ways to prevent recurring bullying behaviour and meet the needs of all parties.
* When bullying concerns are raised by children or parents, take action to resolve the issues in line with the school’s pastoral care procedure.
* Know how to seek support for the children involved.

\*See Appendix 1 for ‘Possible Signs and Symptoms’ associated with bullying.

STAFF PASTORAL CARE PROCEDURE

* Bullying concern is either witnessed by a member of staff or brought to the staff member’s attention by the pupil experiencing bullying behaviour or another member of the school community.
* The staff member intervenes immediately to reassure the child and ensure safety and wellbeing are paramount.
* The staff member informs the class teacher at the earliest opportunity.
* The class teacher investigates the issues raised with the relevant children.
* A pastoral care form is completed and passed to Mrs McDonnell.
* Parents of the child experiencing bullying behaviour and the parents of children displaying bullying behaviour are informed either in person on collection, by telephone or via Seesaw.
* Close monitoring will take place following any incident.
* Sanctions may be implemented as a consequence for undesirable behaviour being displayed.
* Strategies will be reviewed and, where necessary, current practice may be modified to ensure future incidents are prevented.

RESPONDING TO BULLYING CONCERNS

1. Gather and clarify facts/ perceptions.
2. Check previous records.
3. Assess the incident against the criteria for bullying behaviour.
4. Identify any themes or motivating factors.
5. Identify the type of bullying behaviour being displayed.
6. Identify NIABF intervention level.
7. \* Select and implement appropriate interventions for all pupils involved (NIABF Resource may be used).
8. Track, monitor and record effectiveness of interventions.
9. Consideration will be made for the need of: parental involvement, SENC0 involvement, Risk Assessment and External Agency involvement e.g. Child Protection service, Education Welfare Officer, Behaviour Support Team or PSNI.
10. Record actions taken and outcomes achieved using the school recording system.
11. Review outcome of interventions to determine if further action is required and progress accordingly
12. Implementing this process will provide opportunities for self-reflection, development and learning, resulting in more positive behaviour and effective management of bullying incidents.

In general, when dealing with bullying behaviour the school will aim to; Stop the bullying behaviour, protect and support the pupil experiencing bullying behaviour and change the attitude and behaviour of the person displaying bullying behaviour. The school adopts a restorative approach to responding to bullying behaviour. Interventions suggested in the Effective Responses to Bullying Behaviour resource focus on responding to the behaviour, resolving the concern and restoring the wellbeing of those involved.Where appropriate, school staff may implement sanctions for those displaying bullying behaviour.

It is important to consider the views of pupils when thinking about how to respond to bullying behaviours and restore relations following incidents. The school council reported that pupils would like to know that Bullying Behaviour is being dealt with effectively and that consequences are in place for children displaying bullying behaviours with the aim of minimising the opportunity for such behaviour to occur again. Consequences may include missing play time, having privileges removed or not being allowed to join in the activity where the bullying behaviour is being displayed, such as football. On occasion, parents may be called into school immediately to remove their child from school if other children’s safety and/or wellbeing are at risk.

The school reiterates that information regarding any action taken regarding a pupil displaying bullying behaviour cannot be disclosed to anyone other than that pupil and his/her parents/carers.

**7.3 Responsibility of Parents**

* Model high standards of personal pro-social behaviour.
* Be alert to signs of distress\* and other possible indications of bullying behaviour.
* Inform the school of any concerns relating to bullying behaviour.
* Refrain from retaliating to any form of bullying behaviour with the child or the family of the child perceived to be displaying bullying behaviour.
* Emphasise the importance of the need for your child to speak with trusted adults within school when a bullying concern is raised.
* Explain the implications of allowing the bullying behaviour to continue unchecked, for the child and/or others.
* Work in partnership with school when a bullying concern is raised.
* Be aware of the school Anti-Bullying Policy and assist their children in understanding bullying behaviour.
* Be sympathetic and supportive towards their children and reassure them that appropriate action will be taken.
* Co-operate with the school if their children are accused of bullying behaviour, try to ascertain the truth and point out the implications of bullying both for the children who are experiencing bullying behaviours and for the children displaying bullying behaviour.
* Parents/ Carers should be sympathetic and supportive towards their children and reassure them that appropriate action will be taken.
* Know how to seek support.

PARENTS REPORTING A CONCERN

* In the first instance report all bullying concerns to the class teacher in person or via Seesaw.
* The class teacher will investigate and respond to the parent in relation to their own child.
* Mrs McDonnell will be made aware of any concerns brought to the class teacher.
* The teacher will relay the strategies to be implemented to prevent further incidents occurring.
* If a situation is not resolved, then Mrs McDonnell, Mr. Burns and Miss McNicholl are available to share a concern with.
* The ‘Staff Pastoral Care Procedure’ contained within 7.2 will be followed in response to all concerns reported.

1. **RECORDING**

In line with the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016 and Department of Education, the school maintains a record of all incidents of bullying and alleged bullying behaviour.

The school will centrally record all relevant information related to reports of bullying concerns, including:

* how the bullying behaviour was displayed (the method);
* the motivation for the behaviour;
* how each incident was addressed by the school; and
* the outcome of the interventions employed.

These records are kept in the school’s secure C2k computer system. Access to these records will be restricted and only provided to those members of school staff with a legitimate need to have access.

Collated information regarding incidents of bullying and alleged bullying behaviour will be used to inform the future development of anti-bullying policy and practice within the school***.***

All records will be maintained in line with relevant data protection legislation and guidance and will be disposed of in line with the school’s Retention and Disposal of Documents Policy.

1. **POLICY TRAINING AND RESOURCES**

**9.1 Professional Development of Staff**

All teaching and non-teaching staff are expected to acquaint themselves fully with the Anti-Bullying Policy. The school is committed to the professional development of staff providing regular opportunities for appropriate CPD. New staff appointed are trained promptly and our whole school staff (teaching and non-teaching) receive annual training in delivery of this policy along with Safeguarding. Governors also receive appropriate training. Any outcomes from training may impact amendments to the policy.

**9.2 Resources**

This policy is based on advice and strategies from ‘Effective Responses to Bullying Behaviour’ by NIABF.

1. **LINKED POLICIES**

In the development and implementation of this Anti-Bullying Policy, the Board of Governors has been mindful of related policies, including:

* Positive Behaviour Policy
* Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
* Special Educational Needs Policy
* Health and Safety Policy
* Relationships and Sexuality Education
* E-Safety related policies
* Educational Visits – DE Guidance
* Staff Code of Conduct

**11. MONITORING AND REVIEW**

It is the responsibility of the Board of Governors, in liaison with the Principal, to monitor the effectiveness of the Anti-Bullying Policy. To appropriately monitor the effectiveness of the Anti-Bullying Policy, the Board of Governors shall:

* maintain a standing item on the agenda of each meeting of the Board where a report on recorded incidents of bullying will be noted;
* identify trends and priorities for action; and
* assess the effectiveness of strategies aimed at preventing bullying behaviour.

The school notes the legal requirement that the Anti-Bullying Policy be reviewed at intervals of no more than four years. However, the policy will be reviewed following any incident which highlights the need for such a review. It will also be reviewed when directed by the Department of Education and in light of new guidance.

This Anti-Bullying Policy shall be reviewed as required, in consultation with pupils and their parents/carers, on or before September 2026.

**APPENDIX 1 . POSSIBLE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS**

* Early signs of distress – mainly changes in behaviour and classroom performance – unable to concentrate when normally could, seeking adult company during break or trying to avoid it altogether.
* Nail biting, flinching, forgetfulness and distractibility.
* Wetting (particularly with younger children).
* Underachievement.
* Personality change – snappy, withdrawn, tired, weepiness, loss of appetite.
* Refusal to go to school.
* Hesitant to walk home.
* Wish to change routine – route, school bus.
* Lack of confidence.
* Temper flare-ups, abusive language, impulsive hitting out.
* Late for school, hanging back after school.
* Deterioration of work, mislaid books, equipment and belongings.
* Bruises and cuts.
* Avoidance of specific lessons or days e.g. swimming.
* Psychosomatic illness – non-specific pains, headaches, tummy upsets.