

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

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Introduction

Sandymount School Enable Ireland is a community of teachers, SNAs, students, parents and non-teaching staff that aims to provide the highest possible standard of education for all its students in a stable, non-threatening environment. As bullying is known to cause physical and/or psychological damage and to negatively affect the quality of the teaching and learning provided, all members of the School are united in recognising their role in supporting an anti-bullying ethos and a whole school anti-bullying environment.

The aim of this policy is to ensure that staff, parents and students have a shared understanding of what bullying is, its impact on others and to foster a culture where bullying is precluded.

This policy was devised by staff in consultation with parents and members of the Board of Management of Enable Ireland Sandymount School. Consideration has been given to the particular needs and circumstances of the individual students who attend this special school.

Scope

This Anti-Bullying Policy applies in the following contexts:

1. The relationships between students and other students.
2. The relationships between students and all members of staff.

The Policy does not apply to the bullying of staff by other members of staff or by parents or students. This issue is dealt with in our *Dignity and Respect in the Workplace Policy*.

Application

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 adopted the following anti-bullying policy within the framework of the School's overall Code of Positive 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.



Aims

A positive school culture and climate which is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity, encourages students to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment and promotes respectful relationships across the school community to create a safe place for students to learn.

Our aims are:

- to provide effective leadership;
- to adopt a school-wide approach;
- to have a shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact;
- to implement education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that build empathy, respect and resilience in students; and explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying
- to provide effective supervision and monitoring of students;
- to provide supports for staff, particularly in the teaching of nonverbal students with general learning disabilities and how they can communicate and report bullying;
- to consistently record, report and follow up on bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies);
- to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of this anti-bullying policy

Bullying Definition

The Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary schools defines bullying 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:

- Physical aggression; verbal aggression; damage to property etc; isolation and exclusion; gesture; intimidation; extortion
- Deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying
- Cyber-bullying
- 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 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.

Our student cohort

We recognise that for the vast majority of our students bullying is an abstract concept that is difficult to understand as it involves flexibility of imagination. Incidents of bullying behaviour are not usual in Enable Ireland Sandymount School.

We also acknowledge that some of our students may have issues with certain peers due to sensitivity to loud noises, unpredictable behaviour, and lack of cognitive understanding. The school will seek as far as possible to take these issues into consideration in the formation of class groups



with the known student cohort to avoid a situation where bullying may occur because of a clash of personality between two students. It may not be possible to predict these issues with new students transitioning into our school but staff will remain vigilant to the possibility of such behaviour occurring.

Examples of Bullying Behaviour

- a student persistently seeking to negatively influence the behaviour of another student – e.g. deliberately triggering behaviours to annoy a peer or seeking to get another students into trouble by provoking a negative response
- a student persistently targeting another student as a focus for negative behaviour during their own behavioural outburst
- a student repeatedly removing preferential reinforcers or chosen objects from another student on a routine basis to deliberately provoke or annoy them.
- Physical
- Verbal
- Emotional/psychological
- Hitting
- Punching
- Spitting
- Damaging
- Throwing Objects
- Pinching
- Name calling
- Taunting
- Teasing
- Making Offensive remarks
- Ignoring
- Alienating
- Embarrassing someone
- Making fun of someone
- Excluding from groups
- Using Threatening Gestures

Note: Isolated or once-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour, including aggression towards a peer do not fall within the definition of bullying and will be dealt with, as appropriate, in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour.

Cyber Bullying

Cyber bullying is the use of ICT (usually a mobile phone and or the internet) to abuse another person. It can take place anywhere and involve many people. Anybody can be targeted including pupils and school staff. It can include threats, intimidation, harassment, cyber-stalking, vilification, defamation, exclusion, peer rejection, impersonation, unauthorized publication of private information or images etc.

Procedures to Prevent Cyber bullying:

- Staff, pupils, parents and Board of Management (BoM) will be made aware of issues surrounding cyber bullying through the use of appropriate awareness-raising exercises



- Staff will familiarise themselves with the School's Social Media Policy.
- Pupils will learn about cyber bullying through Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and other curriculum projects
- Staff CPD (Continuous Professional Development) will assist in learning about current technologies
- Parents will be provided with information and advice on how to combat cyber bullying
- Staff, pupils and parents will be urged to report all incidents of cyber bullying to the school
- All reports of cyber bullying will be investigated
- The police will be contacted in cases of actual or suspected illegal content

Impact of Bullying Behaviour

We recognise that students who are being bullied may present with any of the following indicators:

- Anxiety about travelling to / from school
- Unwillingness to go to school
- Deterioration in educational performance
- Pattern of physical illnesses
- Unexplained changes in either mood / behaviour
- Visible signs of anxiety / distress
- Possessions missing
- Out of character comments
- Increased requests for money
- Unexplained bruising
- Reluctance and / or refusal to say what is troubling him / her

School-Wide Approach & Curricula

Sandymount Schools uses a root cause and effect and antecedent, behaviour, consequences (ABC) model when dealing with bullying incidents.

The school also works on the maxim that *that prevention is better than cure*. The various school programs contain education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber- bullying)

Given the various levels of ability and covering both primary and secondary curriculum, teaching methodologies are significantly differentiated to suit our student body.

Programmes aim to raise awareness about bullying, to make it acceptable to talk about bullying and harassment and to take action to prevent such behaviour. In particular, the Social Personal Health Education ("SPHE") syllabus programme is designed to raise self-esteem and to help students deal with the inevitable conflict that people encounter in everyday life in a positive and proactive manner.

The following are adopted in our school:

- The fostering and enhancing of the self-esteem of all our pupils through both curricular and external activities and outings. Pupils are provided with opportunities to develop a positive sense of worth through formal and informal interactions.



- Whole staff professional development on bullying to ensure that all staff develop an awareness of what bullying is, how it impacts on pupils' lives and the need to respond to it – prevention and intervention. This takes place at the start of the year and at staff meetings during the year.
- Professional development with specific focus on the training of students with physical and cognitive difficulties. Support is sought through the NCSE and local education centres.
- School-wide awareness raising and training on all aspects of bullying, to include pupils, parents guardians and the wider school community.
- Supervision and monitoring of corridors, assembly areas, classrooms, and toilets takes place daily and staff are on a rota at break and lunch times. Supervision also applies to monitoring the students' use of communication technology in the school. The use of mobile phones by students is not permitted on school grounds.
- Involvement of the student council in contributing to a safe environment. The student council is actively involved in Anti-Bullying week and Anti- Bullying awareness. One of its functions is the task of ensuring that no student is made unhappy by the deliberate or thoughtless actions of others.
- New students are assigned a peer buddy from the older classes.
- Kindness week is celebrated each year
- Students on the Level One and Level two Junior Cycle Programme cover 150 minute per week of wellbeing through their LPU's 9 learning profile units)
- SPHE lessons include friendship, conflict resolution, personal safety, relationships and belongings, valuing difference, cyber bullying, including phones.
- A number of classes follow *the Stay Safe Programme*, various social skills programs including elements of the Zippy Friends Programme and the Friends for Life.
- Staff and students use *the zones of regulation* to help our students express feelings and emotions.
- Focus and reinforcement of Positive Behaviour structures are used
- Fostering acceptance and tolerance of other pupil's behaviours.
- Positive visual campaign in all school areas focusing on being kind, helpful, respectful, honest, careful of others
- Social stories
- Staff recognition that some pupils do not get on well with others and implement strategies to keep them apart without penalty.
- Teachers encourage a culture of telling, with a particular emphasis on helping each other, knowing who to tell and how to tell.

The school consider the needs of our particular students with regard to programme implementation and adapts materials and teaching pedagogy accordingly.

Procedures for Reporting and Investigating Incidents:

Positive relationships are at the core of human interactions. People fall out, argue, disagree and these interactions are part of normal human life. The primary aim in investigating and dealing with bullying in our school is to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved rather than to apportion blame.

- Any pupil or parent/guardian may bring a bullying incident to any teacher in the school. Serious cases should be referred to the Principal and Deputy Principal.
- Parents should be informed of any incidents at the earliest opportunity if unaware.
- Students should be taught that reporting is not 'telling tales'.
- Individual teachers should record and take appropriate measures in accordance with this policy.
- SNAs and other staff are requested to report any incidents witnessed by them to class to teacher. Discretion in reporting is important.



- All reports verbal and written will be investigated. All staff and pupils will be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour.
- The class teacher will take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying. The teacher may wish to consult and get peer support from the Principal/Deputy Principal when dealing with an incident. The teacher will ascertain factual information using phrases such as what happened, where did it happen, when did it happen, who was involved, who witnessed, any other contextual information. The teacher will complete Template 3 of the Anti-Bullying procedures. Parents are asked to co-operate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving the issues.
- Any interviews should be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights and abilities of the pupils involved.
- If it is determined that someone has engaged in bullying behaviour then the Principal and Deputy Principal will be informed of the incident and they will work with the class teacher, support staff, parents, members of multidisciplinary team and pupils (if relevant) to determine what support is needed.
- The school will work with parents in developing ways they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school.
- The Principal/Deputy or relevant teacher will reflect on the process to determine if the issue has ceased, if relationships have been restored and if any feedback is required.

Programme of Support

The schools programme of support for working with students affected by bullying is as follows:

- The student will be offered support which may involve listening, helpful advice, or a word with another member of staff.
- The relevant teacher may consider it appropriate to remind all class members about their responsibility around bullying, how it feels and how to help.
- The student will be reminded that the bullying is not their fault and included throughout the reporting and investigating process.
- Students will be encouraged to become involved in activities that develop friendships and social skills
- A buddy system may be implemented if applicable

For Pupils who have been found to have bullied:

- They are reminded of the consequences of their behaviour and the impact their behaviour may have had on the person the subject of the bullying.
- Pupils are given opportunities to start again with a 'clean sheet'
- They should be given clear direction on understanding their behaviour and how to change it.
- Pupils may be given tasks to give them a sense of responsibility and enhance their self-esteem.

Links to other Policies

- Code of Behaviour Policy
- Wellbeing Policy
- Dignity and Respect Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Child Protection Policy



Review and Ratification

This policy was reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management.

Signed:



Sé Goulding, Chairperson of Board of Management



Jennifer Doyle, Principal

Date: 17 July 2024



Appendix 1 - Checklist for annual review of the anti-bullying policy and its implementation

The Board of Management (the Board) must undertake an annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation. The following checklist must be used for this purpose. The checklist is an aid to conducting this review and is not intended as an exhaustive list. In order to complete the checklist, an examination and review involving both quantitative and qualitative analysis, as appropriate across the various elements of the implementation of the school's anti-bullying policy will be required.

	Yes /No
Has the Board formally adopted an anti-bullying policy that fully complies with the requirements of the <i>Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools</i> ?	
Has the Board published the policy on the school website and provided a copy to the parents' association?	
Has the Board ensured that the policy has been made available to school staff (including new staff)?	
Is the Board satisfied that school staff are sufficiently familiar with the policy and procedures to enable them to effectively and consistently apply the policy and procedures in their day to day work?	
Has the Board ensured that the policy has been adequately communicated to all pupils?	
Has the policy documented the prevention and education strategies that the school applies?	
Have all of the prevention and education strategies been implemented?	
Has the effectiveness of the prevention and education strategies that have been implemented been examined?	
Is the Board satisfied that all teachers are recording and dealing with incidents in accordance with the policy?	
Has the Board received and minuted the periodic summary reports of the Principal?	
Has the Board discussed how well the school is handling all reports of bullying including those addressed at an early stage and not therefore included in the Principal's periodic report to the Board?	
Has the Board received any complaints from parents regarding the school's handling of bullying incidents?	
Have any parents withdrawn their child from the school citing dissatisfaction with the school's handling of a bullying situation?	
Have any Ombudsman for Children investigations into the school's handling of a bullying case been initiated or completed?	
Has the data available from cases reported to the Principal (by the bullying recording template) been analysed to identify any issues, trends or patterns in bullying behaviour?	
Has the Board identified any aspects of the school's policy and/or its implementation that require further improvement?	
Has the Board put in place an action plan to address any areas for improvement?	

Signed _____

Chairperson, Board of Management

Principal

Date _____



Appendix 2

Notification regarding the Board of Management's annual review of the anti-bullying policy

To: _____

The Board of Management of _____ wishes to inform you that:

The Board of Management's annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation was completed at the Board meeting of _____ [date].

This review was conducted in accordance with the checklist set out in Appendix 4 of the Department's *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

Signed _____

Chairperson, Board of Management

Principal

Date _____



Appendix 3 Template for recording bullying behaviour

1. Name of pupil being bullied and class group

Name _____ Class _____

2. Name(s) and class(es) of pupil(s) engaged in bullying behaviour

3. Source of bullying concern/report (tick relevant box(es))*

Pupil concerned	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Pupil	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parent	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Location of incidents (tick relevant box(es))*

Playground	<input type="checkbox"/>
Classroom	<input type="checkbox"/>
Corridor	<input type="checkbox"/>
Toilets	<input type="checkbox"/>
School Bus	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Name of person(s) who reported the bullying concern

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6. Type of Bullying Behaviour (tick relevant box(es)) *

Physical Aggression	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cyber-bullying	<input type="checkbox"/>
Damage to Property	<input type="checkbox"/>	Intimidation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Isolation/Exclusion	<input type="checkbox"/>	Malicious Gossip	<input type="checkbox"/>
Name Calling	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Where behaviour is regarded as identity-based bullying, indicate the relevant category:

Homophobic	Disability/SEN related	Racist	Membership of Traveller community	Other (specify)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact

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Details of actions taken

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Signed _____ (Relevant Teacher) Date _____

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal _____

** Note: The categories listed in the tables 3, 4 & 6 are suggested and schools may add to or amend these to suit their own circumstances.*

