



## **BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY**

**\*\*\*School currently in consultation with the Foyle Learning Community and will update for September 2019 (based on the new guidelines issued and required for action from this time)\*\*\***

## **BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY**

Bullying is an unacceptable form of behaviour in St Mary's College. It is destructive in that it interferes with the education of pupils and also affects parents and staff. As a school community we must ensure that our school is a safe and secure learning environment for every individual pupil.

### **(1) PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to raise awareness of the issue and strategies used to combat bullying within the school community and with parents.

The term bullying refers to a range of harmful behaviour, both physical and psychological. All bullying behaviour usually has the following four features:

- It is repetitive and persistent
- It is intentionally harmful
- It involves an imbalance of power, leaving someone feeling helpless to prevent it or put a stop to it.
- It causes distress.

**It can have a serious impact on the mental and physical well-being of those involved.**

### **DEFINITION**

Northern Ireland Anti Bullying Forum (NIABF) defines bullying as the repeated use of power by one or more persons intentionally to hurt, harm or adversely affect the rights and needs of another or others.

### **Working in Partnership with Parents**

We respect the right of parents/carers to speak with school staff if they believe their child is being bullied

School staff and parents/carers come together on bullying issues as a result of:

- Parents/carers participating in the development of the school's Bullying Prevention policy.
- Parents/carers expressing concern about their child's involvement in a bullying incident/situation, usually as the target.
- The school requesting a meeting with parent/carers regarding a bullying incident/situation.

### **(2) PROCESSES**

#### **Responding to a Bullying Concern**

Staff should adopt a positive mind set when responding to bullying concerns.

All staff should be prepared with options for how to respond to incidents of bullying in a planned, deliberate and positive way. Confronting pupils who have bullied requires a high

amount of self-control as well as preparation to know what to say and do. The following are important factors when managing a bullying situation.

- **Be Calm:** It is important to be clear thinking and emotionally in control.
- **Be Positive:** Have in mind the importance of maintaining a positive relationship with the pupil. A pupil is much more likely to modify her behaviour if she perceives that a teacher cares.
- **Be Assertive:** Staff should directly and clearly express their thoughts, feelings and expectations concerning the need for the pupil to not only stop bullying, but also make restitution with the child who has been bullied.
- **Be Confident:** It is important to trust that you will be successful in implementing practices that can have an impact on the pupil's future behaviour. It is always helpful to focus on the behaviour, not the pupil.
- Ensure that the specific behaviour is in fact bullying behaviour which conforms to the school's agreed definition of bullying as identified in the school's current anti-bullying policy.
- Assess the situation and its severity level. Determine the appropriate level of response required to manage the situation effectively.
- Once the Incident Level has been determined, select one or more responses from the appropriate column(s)

**To determine level of severity, staff should take account of the following:**

- The **nature** of the bullying behaviour – for example deliberate teasing, excluding or hitting. There is a tendency among those who have a duty of care to rate some bullying, particularly violence, as more serious than other subtle forms. This can be a dangerous mistake and leave us vulnerable to ignoring “teasing” or “exclusion”.
- The **frequency** of the bullying behaviour: daily, weekly or less often.
- The **duration** of the bullying behaviour: whether over a short or prolonged period of time.
- The perceptions of the target – The seriousness of bullying can only be measured by the degree of distress suffered by the target. **“It can be defined as bullying only by measuring the effects the acts have on the vulnerable child”**

### **(3) APPROPRIATE INTERVENTIONS**

When children and young people are involved in incidents of bullying, adults are required to intervene. In practice there is a wide range of possible interventions available and there are significant differences in these in terms of the purpose of the intervention and the needs being address.

In selecting an intervention we should take account of:

- The level of severity, using this as a guide to select appropriate intervention(s)
- The legal status of the act (e.g. assault)
- The age and ability of those involved.
- Whether an individual pupil or a group is involved.

- The level of staff agreement, confidence and competence in adopting a restorative, behaviour changing approach.
- The agreement and support of the parents/carers in adopting a restorative, behaviour changing approach.
- Whether the pupil(s) displaying bullying behaviour acknowledge(s) the unacceptable behaviour and can be enabled to feel empathy for the targeted pupil, and act appropriately.
- The willingness to engage in a group intervention such as the Support Group Method.
- Whether it is realistic to expect that the targeted pupil can be strengthened adequately to deal with the situation.
- Whether or not the target has acted provocatively.

#### **(4) UNDERSTANDING THE LEVELS OF INTERVENTION**

##### **Level 1 Intervention – Low Level Bullying Behaviour**

Interventions at Level 1 are to help individuals to recognise/reflect on their unacceptable behaviour and to “get them back on track” while listening to and supporting/strengthening the target pupil(s). **NEVER ignore low level bullying behaviour.**

##### **Staff Should:**

- Explain the inappropriateness of the behaviour in line with the school’s values.
- Identify possible consequences if the bullying behaviour continues.
- Point out the level of distress experienced by the targeted pupil
- Talk with the targeted pupil to explore whether she has in any way provoked the bullying behaviour.
- Help the targeted pupil to identify ways in which she may be strengthened and supported (e.g. peer support)
- Encourage reparation to be made, if appropriate
- Monitor the situation carefully
- Be prepared to intervene with a higher response level if the situation persists or deteriorates.

##### **Level 2 Interventions – Intermediate Level Bullying Behaviour**

While interventions at Level 2 involve continuing with the above, there is shift from individual support to group interventions. To be effective small group work needs:

- The consent and involvement of the targeted pupil.
- To be planned and timetabled, session length dependent on age and ability.
- Parental/carer consent and agreement from participating pupils.
- Carefully selected group membership.
- To take place in a suitable and comfortable environment.
- To be uninterrupted.
- To be facilitated in a positive manner, ideally by two adults whose roles may alternate allowing one to participate and one to observe.
- Structured and focused activities using active learning approaches to stimulate discussion and debate amongst members and develop group identity.
- Decision and outcomes to be agreed and recorded (e.g. on a flipchart)

- To facilitate the development of empathy amongst pupils.
- A solution focused approach to the situation.
- To provide opportunities for pupils to take responsibility
- Regular meetings of the group
- Regular meetings with the targeted pupil to assess ongoing effectiveness of agreed actions.
- To ensure regular feedback is given on agreed actions.

### **Level 3 Interventions – Complex Bullying Behaviour**

Interventions at Level 3 will often involve the Pastoral Coordinator, SENCO, and other senior managers, in collaboration with pupil(s) and parents to determine the way forward in affecting change. Schools may use their individual Risk Assessment procedures which will determine a plan of intervention and risk management that will be communicated to all.

This planning may occur through a multi-agency discussion, involving ELB/ESA service and other external support agencies. The manner in which teachers and others are involved in planning and how they are kept informed about the implementation of the plans will vary.

Bullying at this level often involves complex group dynamics, where a number of roles are evident, such as those displaying bullying behaviour, bystanders and targeted pupils. Consequently interventions may require one-to-one meetings, small group work and whole class involvement. These will often require group interventions as discussed in Level 2 and/or the PIKAS Method of Shared Concern, along with individual support and strength building programmes.

### **Level 4 Interventions – High Risk Bullying Behaviour**

Bullying behaviours assessed at Level 4 are severe and involve a significant threat to the safety and welfare of any or all of the pupils involved. Such severe bullying concerns may be new or may have proved resistant to earlier school interventions and have now been assessed as high risk. Incidents at this level must be assessed in relation to the risk posed to any/all of the pupils involved. As such, the school's Child Safeguarding Procedures will need to be invoked. Advice and support will be available to schools through the ELB/ESA Child Protection Support Services.

In addition to safeguarding procedures and practices including referral to external support services, the school's interventions at Level 4 should continue to implement interventions detailed in Level 3 as appropriate.

Pupils will be given opportunities through LLW to explore 'bullying'. The school will actively participate in anti bullying week following guidelines from the Northern Ireland Anti Bullying Forum (NIABF) and if possible have key note speakers to address year groups.

**BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY MONITORING AND REVIEW**

**This policy will be reviewed as part of the policy review cycle. Comments on the content or outworking of the Policy are always welcome. Please contact Mrs Marie Lindsay, Principal. To be reviewed term 3 of 2018/19 school year, in preparation for the new guidelines for 2019/20**