



Holy Family School

Anti-Bullying Policy

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 Holy Family 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. Last updated on 5 December 2022.

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.

Aims

- To foster a school ethos of mutual and self-respect.
- To raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour.
- To outline, promote and raise awareness of preventative approaches that can be used in response to reported incidences of bullying.
- To develop a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and for those involved in bullying behaviour.
- To outline procedures for noting and reporting instances of bullying behaviour.
- To have on-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the Anti-Bullying Policy.

Definition

In accordance with the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* bullying is defined 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:

- 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.



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These definitions of bullying behavior may not apply to the pupils in Holy Family School.

However, as the anti-bullying policy will also apply to all staff employed by the Board of Management, these types of bullying are listed as part of this policy and will be investigated as per any allegation of bullying.

For our pupils, bullying is an abstract concept that is difficult to understand as it involves both flexibility of imagination and an understanding of Theory of Mind. These areas pose significant difficulty for children with special educational needs.

Therefore, our definition of what is perceived as bullying behavior in Holy Family School will consider the following observable behavior:

- A pupil **persistently** seeking to negatively influence the behavior of another child, deliberately triggering behaviors to annoy a peer or seeking to get another pupil into trouble by provoking a negative response.
- A pupil **persistently** targeting another pupil as a focus for negative behaviour during their own behavioral outburst.
- A pupil **repeatedly** removing preferential reinforcers or chosen objects from another child on a routine basis to deliberately provoke or annoy them.

As all our pupils have diagnosed intellectual disabilities, we will promote acceptance of everyone within the school and use all opportunities to promote a tolerant school culture. Some of our pupils have issues with certain peers due to sensitivity to loud noise that may emit or their unpredictable behavior.

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 the definition of bullying and should 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.

Additional information on different types of bullying is set out in Section 2 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

In accordance with Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, the relevant teacher for investigating and dealing with bullying is the class teacher. In the event that the complaint is regarding a class teacher, the principal or deputy principal will investigate the complaint.



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Implementation of Education & prevention strategies.

- SPHE lessons on friendship, conflict resolution, personal safety, relationships & belonging.
- SPHE lessons on valuing difference.
- PSHE Programme - Fiona Speirs.
- Level 2 & Level 2 JCT programmes PLU Living in a Community.
- Stay Safe Programme.
- Fostering acceptance & tolerance of other pupils' behaviours. Reinforcement of positive behaviour throughout the school.
- Positive visual campaign to be run throughout the school.

Prevention Strategies:

- Vigilance on the part of the staff in supervising pupils at all times but especially when mixed with other classes where they may come into contact with pupils who may exacerbate them unintentionally.
- Identification of **"Hot Spots"** and **"Hot Times"** in the school and putting in place a plan to alleviate any issues that might arise there. Teachers of those pupils involved will liaise to reduce risks.
- Monitored access to Internet to prevent cyber-bullying. Confidentiality agreements signed by all staff that precludes any discussion of school activities outside the school community.
- Code of conduct for staff to be adhered to by all personnel in the school community.
- SPHE programmes to develop self-esteem and respect for diversity
- Implementation of Stay Safe programme and Relationships and Sexuality Education programme (RSE)
- Social Skills programme developed with multi-disciplinary team to address particular behavioral issues
- Use of social stories methodology and role play to assist generalization of taught content into situations outside of the school context.

Effective supervision & monitoring of pupils.

The Board of Management confirms that appropriate supervision & monitoring policies and practices are in place to both prevent and deal with bullying behavior and to facilitate early intervention where possible.

As per section Section 6.8 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools, the school's procedures for investigation, follow-up and recording of bullying behaviour and the established intervention strategies used by the school for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour are as follows:



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- 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 must 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 should be 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 (SNAs), bus escorts, caretakers, cleaners must be 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;
- It is very important that all involved (including each set of pupils and parents) understand the above approach from the outset;
- Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents;
- Incidents are generally best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved;
- All interviews should be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this way;
- When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher should seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This should be 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 member should be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved should be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member should be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements;
- Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that they may face them from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher;
- 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 should 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 should give parents an opportunity of discussing 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 should be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts should be made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied;



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- It must also be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parents) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parents and the school;
- Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved should be arranged separately with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date if the pupil who has been bullied is ready and agreeable.
- In cases where the relevant teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, it must be recorded by the relevant teacher in the recording template at **Appendix 3** (See Section 6.8.10 (iii));
- In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant teacher must, as part of his/her professional judgement, take the following factors into account:
 - Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased;
 - Whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable;
 - Whether the relationships between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable;
 - and any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the school Principal or Deputy Principal;
- Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures;
- In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

Procedures for recording bullying behaviour.

The Board of Management must ensure that the school has clear procedures for the formal noting and reporting of bullying behaviour and these must be documented in the school's anti-bullying policy. All records must be maintained in accordance with relevant data protection legislation. The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour must adhere to the following:

- 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;
- If it is established by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher must keep appropriate written records which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.
- The relevant teacher must use the recording template at **Appendix 3** to record the bullying behaviour in the following circumstances:
 - a) in cases where he/she considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour occurred; and
 - b) where the school has decided as part of its anti-bullying policy that in



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certain circumstances bullying behaviour must be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable.

In each of the circumstances at (a) and (b) above, the recording template at Appendix 3 must be completed in full and retained by the teacher in question and a copy provided to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable. It should also be noted that the timeline for recording bullying behaviour in the recording template at **Appendix 3** does not in any way preclude the relevant teacher from consulting the Principal or Deputy Principal at an earlier stage in relation to a case.

Staff bullying in the workplace.

The Health & Safety Authority defines bullying as follows:

“Bullying in the workplace is repeated aggression, verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against another person or persons. Only aggressive behavior which is systematic and on -going should be regarded as bullying.

In summary, adult bullying can take many different forms, which usually include:

- Intimidation or harassment
- Aggression
- Verbal abuse
- Humiliation
- Undermining
- Dominance or abuse of power
- Different or unfavourable treatment
- Exclusion or isolation.

Key factors of Adult bullying are that the behavior is generally

- Persistent
- Unwanted
- Subtle
- Non-physical.

In the case of **intra-staff bullying**, Holy Family School will investigate and deal with allegations of bullying or harassment and intervene with one of the accepted Management /INTO / appropriate union procedures.

In the case of **Staff – Child bullying**, a complaint should in the first instance be raised with the teacher in question by the parent/guardian of the child if possible and then if necessary referred to the Principal. Where it has not been possible to agree a framework for resolution, the matter should be referred in writing by both parties to the Board of Management for investigation.

In the case of **Parent – Teacher** bullying, the Principal should be informed in the first instance, and if deemed necessary the Board of Management should subsequently be informed in writing.

In the case of **Parent/Visitor to the school – Child** bullying, the complaint should be referred in the first instance to the child’s class teacher and subsequently to the Principal if unresolved.



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In the case of **Principal – Parent/ Child** bullying, the matter should be raised with the Principal if possible, or referred to the Chairperson of the Board of Management.

Making a complaint of sexual harassment:

Any employee who feels he or she has been or is being sexually harassed or bullied should ask the perpetrator to stop immediately. Where this form of action is unsuccessful, the employee may report the matter to any of the following – the Principal, Union Staff Representative, or member of the Board of Management of Holy Family School.

Staff should be informed by the school's Code of Conduct which is available in the Principal's office. Attempts will be made to resolve the matter informally, on a local event, if appropriate. If it is not possible to resolve the matter informally, a formal complaints procedure shall be applied incorporating the following steps:

- A written report to the Board of Management should be made by the complainants or an authorized person to whom the complaint is being made and signed by the complainant
- The complainant will be investigated with minimum delay, as confidentially as possible, by two individuals named by the Board of Management, one of whom shall be the same sex as the complainant and the alleged perpetrator.
- Both parties may be accompanied/represented at all interviews/meetings held and these shall be recorded.
- Where complaint is found to be substantiated, the extent and the nature of the harassment will determine the form of action to be taken. These actions may include a verbal warning, a written warning, and suspension from some duties with or without pay or suspension from full duties with or without pay or dismissal.
- Where employee is victimized as a result of invoking or participating in any aspect of the complaints procedure, including acting as witness for another employee, such behaviour will also be subject to disciplinary action.
- No record of any complaint will be registered on an employee's file unless the formal procedure outlined above has been invoked. It is the policy of the school that issues of sexual harassment are best dealt with within the school. However, no aspect of this policy affects any employee's individual legal rights to take their complaint outside of the school.

Prevention of Harassment

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



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Communication, Monitoring and Review

This policy has been reviewed in March 2024 & communicated to staff and the school community as appropriate. It will be subjected to regular review in accordance with the systematic cycle of review of policies adopted in Holy Family School.

Signed: _____

(Chairperson, Board of Management)

Date: _____