



# **St. Colmcille's Primary School**

## **Anti-Bullying Policy**

Date Approved by the Board of Governors: 27<sup>th</sup> November 2018

Next Policy Review Date:

27<sup>th</sup> November 2019

## **DEFINITION**

Bullying may be defined as ‘the repeated and intentional use of physical, verbal, electronic, written or psychological acts or omissions, or any combination thereof, by one or more pupils against another or group of pupils with the intention of causing harm, hurt, fear, distress or adversely affecting the rights or needs of that pupil or group of pupils’ (Addressing Bullying in Schools Act 2016).

## **FORMS OF BULLYING**

- **Physical:** hitting, kicking, pushing, making gestures, punching or any use of violence.
- **Verbal:** name calling, teasing, insulting, sarcasm, racial taunts or gestures, sexual harassment, homophobic or sectarian remarks, writing unkind notes, spreading rumours, threats.
- **Emotional:** being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting, giving looks, pressurising anti-social behaviour, taking or hiding belongings/money.
- **Cyber:** all areas of internet, such as email, social network misuse, mobile phone threats by text messaging, and calls and misuse of associated technology i.e. camera and video facilities. This includes incidents that occur both in and outside school and is in line with the school’s e-safety policy.

Key advice relating to the Law in Northern Ireland on cyber-bullying and sexting can be found on the NIABF website.

## **WHAT IS BULLYING?**

The Department of Education has issued guidance to all schools on developing policies and procedures for dealing with bullying behaviour:

- (i) Pastoral Care in Schools: Child Protection (1999)
- (ii) Pastoral Care in Schools: Promoting Positive Behaviour (2001)
- (iii) Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (2016)
- (iv) Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools (2017)

Bullying is not the occasional, falling out with friends, name calling, arguments or when the occasional trick or joke is played on someone. It is bullying if it is done several times on purpose. Pupils sometimes fall out or say things because they are upset. When occasional problems of this kind arise it is not classed as bullying. It is an important part of a pupil’s development to learn how to deal with friendship breakdowns, the occasional name calling or childish prank. We all must learn to deal with these situations and develop social skills to repair relationships.

We acknowledge that people react differently to situations and it is not always possible to tell if someone is upset or hurt. However, when the pupil targeted is in distress or is hurt and the person responsible knows this and carries on, then the line between harmless teasing and bullying has been crossed.

### **Where does Bullying occur?**

Although bullying may occur almost anywhere, some situations are more common such as:

- on the way to or from school, including buses;
- in corridors, classrooms, cloakrooms, toilets and dining hall; and
- in the playground.

### **Minimising Bullying Behaviour**

Emphasis is placed on the quality of relationships between staff, pupils and parents to encourage an openness designed to allow pupils to speak out where potential problems are perceived. The school provides opportunities for pupils to explore the issues surrounding bullying. The underpinning values of fairness, compassion, tolerance and forgiveness are encouraged in the Pastoral, Religious Education and PDMU programmes.

At a practical level, classroom teachers strive to create a positive, well-ordered environment where each pupil feels valued and respected. It is important to create an atmosphere where pupils who are being bullied, or others who know about it, feel that they will be listened to and believed, and that action will be swift but sensitive to their concerns.

It is also important to involve all members of the school community in the identification and condemnation of bullying. The school has identified the 'hot spots' where bullying may potentially occur and as a result has ensured that supervision levels are adequate. Staff will supervise at break time and at lunch time and will be particularly vigilant during these times since some pupils are more vulnerable and bullying is less easily seen. (Appendix A)

### **THE SCHOOL'S VIEW**

St Colmcille's is completely opposed to bullying and will not tolerate it. It is entirely contrary to the values and principles we work and live by. All members of the school community have a right to work in a secure and caring environment. They also have a responsibility to contribute, in whatever way they can, to the protection and maintenance of such an environment.

### **THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF GOVERNORS**

The Board of Governors will:

- Ensure that the school's Anti-Bullying Policy is pursued;
- Ensure that the Principal acts in accordance with the scheme prepared by CCMS under Article 49 of the 1986 Order as amended by Article 39 of the 1993 Order;
- Monitor and review the effectiveness of the policy at least every four years.

## **THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF TEACHING STAFF**

Our staff will:

- Foster in our pupils self-esteem, self-respect and respect for others;
- Demonstrate by example the high standards of personal and social behaviour we expect of our pupils;
- Discuss bullying with all classes, so that every pupil learns about the damage it causes and the importance of telling a teacher about bullying when it happens;
- Be alert to signs of distress and other possible indications of bullying;
- Listen to children who have been bullied, take what they say seriously and act to support and protect them;
- Report suspected cases of bullying to a member of the Leadership Team;
- Follow up any complaint by a parent about bullying, and report back promptly and fully on the action which has been taken;
- Deal with observed instances of bullying promptly and effectively, in accordance with agreed procedures (Appendix B).

## **THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF ANCILLARY STAFF**

Our ancillary staff will:

- Foster in our pupils self-esteem, self-respect and respect for others;
- Demonstrate by example the high standards of personal and social behaviour we expect of our pupils;
- Be vigilant in looking for signs of bullying;
- Report any incidents of bullying, or suspected bullying, to the class teacher or the Leadership Team;

## **THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF PUPILS**

We expect our pupils to:

- Refrain from becoming involved in any kind of bullying, even at the risk of incurring temporary unpopularity;
- Intervene to protect the pupil who is being bullied, unless it is unsafe to do so;
- Report to a member of staff any witnessed or suspected instances of bullying, to dispel any climate of secrecy and help to prevent further instances.

Anyone who becomes the target of bullies should:

- Not suffer in silence, but have the courage to speak out, to put an end to their own suffering and that of other potential targets.

## **THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS**

- Watching for signs of distress or unusual behaviour in their children, which might be evidence of bullying;
- Advising their children to report any bullying to a member of staff and explain the implications of allowing the bullying to continue unchecked for themselves and for other pupils;
- Advising their children not to retaliate violently to any form of bullying;
- Being sympathetic and supportive towards their children, and reassuring them that appropriate action will be taken;
- Informing the school of any suspected bullying, even if their children are not involved;
- Co-operating with the school, if their children are accused of bullying, try to ascertain the truth, and point out the implications of bullying.

## **THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF ALL**

- Work together to combat and, hopefully in time, to eradicate bullying.

### **Strategies for the prevention and reduction of bullying**

Whole school initiatives and proactive teaching strategies can be used throughout the school to develop a positive learning environment with the aim of reducing the opportunities for bullying to occur.

These can include:

- Making national anti-bullying/ Pastoral Care week a high profile event each year;
- Awareness raising through assemblies;
- Prominently displaying anti-bullying posters around the school;
- Curriculum policies used to support this policy;
- Setting up of a circle of friends support network where a small group of pupils volunteer to help and support an individual experiencing difficulties;
- Using circle time and restorative dialogue;
- Using stories, drama activities and role-plays to help pupils be more assertive and teach them strategies to help them deal with bullying situations;
- Using praise and rewards to reinforce good behaviour;
- Encouraging the whole school community to model appropriate behaviour towards one another;
- Using teaching methods, which encourage co-operative work and a variety of groupings, so that pupils extend their relationships beyond a small group of friends;
- Dealing with the topic of bullying, in a way which explores why it happens and gives alternative ways of behaving, and dealing with difficulties;
- Availing of appropriate outside agencies e.g. Action for Children;
- A commitment to consult with and to inform pupils and parents fully about the policy and procedures in place to combat bullying; and
- Undertaking questionnaires and surveys to monitor the extent of bullying in the school and the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

**Procedures for dealing with incidents of bullying**

When an incident of bullying is reported, the class teacher talks to the pupils to clarify the situation. Details will be kept in the Behaviour Report Book. The class teacher will contact the parents of the pupils involved (including the victim) and inform them of the incident. A warning will be given to the pupil who is bullying. The victim and the victim's parents will be reassured that if there is a reoccurrence the following procedures will be followed:

- If there is a repeated occurrence of bullying brought to a teacher's attention, it is reported to Miss Cunningham, Leader of Pastoral Care or a member of the Leadership Team. This will either be:
  - (i) dealt with by the class teacher and senior teacher and the outcome reported to the parents;
  - (ii) forwarded to the Leadership Team as below:
    - (a) The reported occurrence will be fully investigated;
    - (b) Notes of meetings will be made;
    - (c) All parties will be made aware of the effect of bullying and will be reminded of the school policy on bullying;
    - (d) The victim will be reassured that the matter is being dealt with by school;
    - (e) An interview with parents of the pupils involved will be arranged. The pupil will also be present. Sanctions in line with the school discipline policy will be administered where appropriate.