ADDRESSING BULLYING POLICY

Date Approved by Board of Governors: October 2020

Next Policy Review Date: October 2021

Chairperson BOG _____

Rationale

St Mary's Limavady is committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all our students so they can learn in a supportive, friendly and safe environment, free from bullying behaviours of any kind. We all have a responsibility to contribute, in whatever way we can, to the protection and maintenance of such an environment.

This Anti-Bullying Policy complements other policies in the pastoral portfolio including Pastoral Care, Safeguarding & Child Protection, Behaviour for Learning, Use of Reasonable Force and 'e-safety' and is designed to provide a secure and caring environment that promotes effective learning and teaching and ensures that everyone has the best opportunities to develop their full potential. Bullying of any kind is contrary to the ethos and values of the school and is unacceptable.

The aim of this policy is to help all members of the school community to reach a shared understanding of what constitutes bullying and to develop the skills and formulate strategies to help deal with issues. The strategies being developed in this policy are aimed at teaching all young people important lessons about empathy, assertiveness, rights and responsibilities, honesty, self-esteem and respect for others.

This policy has been drawn up, in consultation with all members of the school community, in order to meet the school's statutory duty under the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 2003 and recognising Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which states that "children have the right to be protected from all forms of physical and mental violence".

Other Relevant Documents

Relevant NI legislation:

- The Children's (NI) Order 1995
- The Education and Libraries (NI) Order 2003
- Addressing Bulling in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016

Relevant Department of Education Guidance:

- Pastoral Care in Schools: Child Protection 1999
- Measures to Prevent Bullying in DE Circular 2003/13
- Safeguarding and Child Protection: A guide for schools (2017) (2019)

Relevant International Conventions
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

The aims of this policy are to:

- Promote the importance of mutual respect and the development of positive relationships.

- Create and encourage a learning environment in which every student feels welcomed, safe and able to learn.

- Ensure that bullying behaviour is not acceptable within our school.

- Have a shared and clearly understood definition of bullying behaviour.

- Create an environment where students, staff and parents are encouraged to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.

- Ensure that mechanisms are in place to prevent and detect bullying behaviour.

- Outline roles and responsibilities of staff, students and parents in recognising, reporting, recording and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.

- Support students who are targeted by bullying behaviour and help to restore lost confidence and self-esteem.

- Detail the process for evaluating the effectiveness of the policy.

St. Mary's Limavady has adopted the Addressing Bulling in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 definition of bullying as:

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(1) "bullying includes, <u>but is not limited to</u>, the repeated use of:
   a) Any verbal, written or electronic communication
   b) Any other act
   c) Or combination of those,

   By a pupil or 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**"

Bullying breaches, the student's fundamental human right to be safe. (Article 19 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child).

> *'Children have the right to be protected from all forms of violence (physical and mental). They must be kept safe from harm and they must be given proper care by those looking after them.'*

Context

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. Students sometimes fall out or say things because they are upset. When occasional problems of this kind arise it is may not classed as bullying. It is an important part of students' development to learn how to deal with friendship breakdowns, the occasional name calling or childish prank. We all have to learn how to deal with these situations and develop social skills to repair relationships.

We will work very hard establishing with students, parents and staff the difference between bullying behaviour and 'harmless banter'. 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 student targeted is in distress or is hurt and the person responsible knows this and carries on, then the line between harmless teasing and bullying behaviour has been crossed.

Students are taught through LLW to recognise the difference between teasing and bullying behaviour. They are also taught to understand that what is meant as good natured teasing may not always be received in the same way and that bullying may be unintentional.

It is understood that children can both display bulling behaviour and be the target of bullying behaviour at the same time. Although some children are vulnerable to bullying behaviour because of physical or social characteristics, anyone can be bullied for any reason or difference or for no particular reason. Individuals may resort to bullying for a range of reasons and the school will seek to support those displaying the bullying behaviour as well as the target of bullying behaviour.

Types of Bullying

Emotional	Being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding books, threatening gestures, spreading rumours)
Physical	Pushing, kicking, hitting, punching, or any use of violence
Racist	Racial taunts, graffiti, gestures
Sexual	Unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments
Homophobic	Because of, or focussing on, the issue of sexuality
Verbal	Name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours

Cyberbullying	Cyberbullying occurs when the someone uses Information and Communications Technology (ICT), particularly mobile phones and the Internet, deliberately to upset someone else. Included are all areas of internet misuse e.g. e-mail and chat room; threats by text messaging and calls from mobile phones and other devices and misuse of associated technology e.g. camera and video facilities. Cyberbullying can take place at any time and can intrude into spaces that might previously have been regarded as safe or personal.

Socially Unacceptable Behaviour and Bullying Behaviour

When reports of potential bullying behaviour or inappropriate behaviour are made consideration needs to be given to whether the incident be classified as Socially Unacceptable Behaviour or Bullying Behaviour. If the incident does not constitute bullying behaviour, under the legal definition, the behaviour may then be considered as socially unacceptable and should be dealt with in relation to the Behaviour for Learning Policy. Decisions about designating behaviour as Socially Unacceptable Behaviour or Bullying Behaviours will be made by a number of staff usually the Principal, Vice Principal and/or Head of Year. See Appendix

One off Incidents

While the legal definition refers to bullying being 'repeated' behaviour, at times the school may need to use its discretion and a one off incident may need to be classified as bullying behaviour e.g. Cyber bullying. In this case the school by the Act is deemed as the 'decision maker'. Decisions about designating one off incidents as a bullying incident will be made by a number of staff usually the Principal, Vice Principal and Head of Year.

Cyberbullying

> ***While cyberbullying is referred to in this policy this form of bullying sometimes is beyond the control of the school and therefore falls in to the realm of parental action and possible PSNI action.***
>
> ***If acts of cyberbullying occur IN school the issue will be dealt with in line with this policy, Behaviour for Learning Policy and the Electronic Devices Policy.***

Cyberbullying can be defined as

"The use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), particularly mobile phones and the internet, deliberately to upset someone else."

DCSF "Cyberbullying – Safe to Learn"

Cyberbullying is a method of bullying which can be used to carry out all the different 'types' of bullying but instead of the bullying being carried out in person they use technology as a means of conducting the bullying. Cyberbullying can include a wide range of unacceptable behaviours, including harassment, threats and insults. Cyberbullying can be an extension of face-to-face bullying, with technology providing the bully with another route to harass their target. However, cyberbullying does differ in several significant ways to other kinds of bullying: for example, the invasion of home / personal space; the difficulty in controlling electronically circulated messages; and even in the profile of the bully and the target.

Strategies for dealing with Cyberbullying

Some cyberbullying is clearly deliberate and aggressive such as publicly posting, sending or forwarding personal or private images or information. Other instances of cyberbullying are known to be unintentional and the result of not thinking or of a lack of awareness of the consequences. Unlike other forms of bullying, many cyberbullying incidents can themselves act as evidence.

- The Internet and other technology-based tools are very powerful resources that can enhance and potentially transform teaching and learning when used effectively and appropriately. Such tools should be accessible and free from restrictions that constrain their worthwhile educational value.
- Safeguards are in place to ensure that the educational use made of such tools is safe and secure.
- All users are taught how to use these tools safely and sensibly to ensure a responsible approach to the use of technology in school.
- Deliberate abuse in school is subject to school rules, and sanctions.
- Deliberate abuse outside school which impinges upon or affects students or staff should be dealt with in a multi-disciplinary fashion through the appropriate channels such as the PSNI. The Principal will implement this procedure at their discretion.
- Mobile phones are banned in school
- Students are encouraged to keep evidence of messages posted on the web
- Should the message record a crime, this is passed to PSNI
- Should the material in question involve child abuse this is reported to the Designated Teacher

Bullying Behaviour and Staff

Staff must remain aware of the way their own behaviour is received and take care not to be accused of bullying behaviour towards students or other members of staff. Forms of bullying behaviour by staff may include:

- teasing students about physical features or characteristics that they have little or no control over;
- inappropriate displays of bad temper;
- ridiculing the work of a student in front of others;

- showing inconsistency in the way punishments or rewards are applied;
- physically intimidating students;
- insulting or swearing at other members of staff;
- belittling the actions or work of other members of staff;
- criticising colleagues in ways that are not constructive, or are unnecessarily personal.

Staff must always remember that an important part of education is to lead by example and reflect the core values of St. Mary's Limavady. Bullying behaviour by members of staff will be treated as a disciplinary matter. Any member of staff who feels he / she is being bullied should initially raise the matter with his / her line manager.

Where can bullying take place?

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

- on the way to or from school, including buses (while incidents of bullying behaviour can take place in this situation, at times it can prove difficult to establish the facts of such incidents. The school will endeavour to work with Translink, members of the public etc. if an issue/concern is brought to their attention, it may not always be possible to establish these facts. The school will, as always, be proactive in encouraging students to act responsibly and in a way that does not reflect negatively on the school.
- in corridors, classrooms, cloakrooms, changing rooms, toilets
- in the playground, particularly in isolated areas
- in the dinner queue and canteen

In light of new information given to staff by students, locations may be added to or amended.

Motivation for Bullying

The motivation behind the bullying behaviour must be recorded by the school. Motivations behind bullying behaviour are wide ranging. Motivations 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
- Ability
- Looked after child status
- Young carer status

Signs and Symptoms of Bullying

The initial impact of bullying behaviour on a member of the school community often goes unnoticed but may be apparent in mood changes and attitudes to work. Students who are being bullied often develop feelings of insecurity and anxiety which may become extreme. This leads to vulnerability, damage to self-confidence and, often, lowering of self-esteem. Frequently individuals do not talk about their problems through fear of possible consequences. The concealment of their problems and fears may lead to serious outcomes so it is vital that all members of the school community are alert to the situation. The following may be indicators that an individual is being bullied:

- anxiety about travelling to and from school – requesting parents to drive or collect them, changing route of travel, avoiding regular times for travelling to and from school;
- unwillingness to go to school, refusal to attend, unexplained absences;
- deterioration in educational performance, loss of concentration and loss of enthusiasm and interest in school;
- patterns of physical illnesses e.g. headaches, stomach aches;
- feigning illness; frequent visits to the medical room
- unexplained changes either in mood or behaviour; it may be particularly noticeable before returning to school after weekends or more especially after longer school holidays;
- visible signs of anxiety or distress – stammering, withdrawing, nightmares, difficulty in sleeping, crying, not eating, vomiting, bedwetting;
- spontaneous out-of-character comments about either students or teachers;
- possessions missing or damaged;
- stealing money or increased requests for money;
- unexplained bruising, cuts or damaged clothing; and
- reluctance and/or refusal to say what is troubling them.

These signs do not necessarily mean that a student is being bullied. If repeated or occurring in combination they warrant investigation in order to establish what is affecting the student.

Minimising Bullying Behaviour

Emphasis is placed on the quality of relationships between all members of staff and between staff and students to encourage an openness designed to allow students to speak out where potential problems are perceived.

Prevention is clearly the strategy of choice in stopping bullying behaviour from taking place at all.

The following examples show how this can be achieved.

<u>Whole school level</u>

- The Pastoral Programme provides opportunities for students to explore the issues surrounding bullying. The underpinning values of fairness, compassion, tolerance and forgiveness are encouraged in the Pastoral, Religious Education and Citizenship programmes.
- Through participation in the annual Anti-Bullying week organised by the Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forum (NIABF).
- Through whole school assemblies when students will be reminded of the school's zero tolerance policy towards bullying behaviour and to challenge the idea that there can be innocent, neutral bystanders with regards to the issue of bullying.
- Through the school policy on the use of mobile phones which states that inappropriate use may be reported to the PSNI
- Through consultation with the School Council as appropriate.
- Staff will supervise the main areas of the school before class, at break time and at lunch time and will be particularly vigilant during these times since some students are more vulnerable and bullying is less easily seen.
- All students carry school card in blazer pockets which outlines issues in regards to bullying

<u>At classroom level</u>

- At a practical level, classroom teachers strive to create a positive, well-ordered environment where each student feels valued and respected. It is important to create an atmosphere where students 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.
- Through Learning for Life and Work where the social skills of negotiation, arbitration and intervention are practiced and where students have opportunities to consider the issues of difference and diversity.
- Through e safety awareness where all students cover the topic of cyberbullying

Roles and Responsibilities

<u>STUDENTS</u>

We expect our students to:

- refrain from becoming involved in any kind of bullying behaviour, even at the risk of incurring temporary unpopularity;
- intervene to protect the student who is being bullied, unless it is unsafe to do so;

- report to a member of staff any witnessed or suspected instances of bullying behaviour, to dispel any climate of secrecy and help to prevent further instances.
- not to suffer in silence but to speak out.

We endeavour to create a supportive ethos and seek to break down the culture of secrecy by encouraging students to speak out. We encourage discussion to open up at all levels and hence to break the silence in which aggressive behaviours thrive. A student 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. We all need to work together to combat bullying behaviour as we strive to eradicate bullying.

PARENTS

We ask our parents to support their children and the school by:

- 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 students;
- 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;
- keeping a written record of any reported instances of bullying;
- inform the school promptly of any suspected bullying, even if their children are not involved;
- co-operating with the school, if their children are accused of bullying, trying to ascertain the truth, and point out the implications of bullying, both for the children who are bullied and for the bullies themselves.

Parents are encouraged to reassure their child that we will deal with all forms of bullying sensitively but firmly. If a child tells us, or we discover that he/she is being bullied, or they are bullying others, we will deal with the matter appropriately. All such disclosures will be acknowledged quickly and dealt with firmly but sensitively.

STAFF

Staff are required to adhere to the procedures outlined in the policy, which has been agreed by all Staff, and will

- foster in our students self-esteem, self-respect and respect for others;
- demonstrate by example the high standards of personal and social behaviour we expect of our students;

- discuss bullying with all classes, so that every student learns about the damage it causes to both the student who is bullied and to the student displaying the bullying behaviour, and the importance of telling a teacher about bullying when it happens;
- be alert to signs of distress and other possible inactions of bullying;
- listen to young people who have been bullied, take what they say seriously and act to support and protect them;
- report suspected cases of bullying to the appropriate Pastoral Leader
- 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.
- avoid the use of sarcasm or other demeaning forms of language when addressing students
- avoid the use racial, sectarian or homophobic language
- avoid the use of negative statements about a student's appearance, background or sexuality
- avoid humiliating directly or indirectly, a student who is academically weak, outstanding or vulnerable in other ways
- avoid using any gesture or expression of a threatening or intimidatory nature, or any form of derogatory physical contact.

VICE PRINCIPAL

- The Vice Principal will provide leadership in terms of developing both proactive and reactive strategies. The Vice Principal will also organise appropriate training required to prepare Staff to implement the policy.

PRINCIPAL

- The principal is responsible for promoting an active anti-bullying culture and ensuring incidents involving bullying are brought to an acceptable conclusion as possible.

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

- The Board of Governors have overall responsibility for ensuring a safe environment for all the School community. This includes taking all reasonable steps to ensure provision is made for students with a disability.

Consequences for Bullying Behaviour

If a student displays bullying behaviour in St Mary's, Limavady consequences may include:

- A student may be required to complete 'changing my behaviour' activities
- Official warning to stop bullying behaviour
- Parents/guardians contacted
- Detention
- Exclusion from certain areas of the school premises
- A student may be placed on Report
- A student and parents/guardians may appear before the School Disciplinary Committee.
- A student may be suspended for repeatedly causing hurt through words or actions.
- In extreme circumstances permanent exclusion from school

Monitoring and Evaluation

This effectiveness of this policy will be monitored annually using records of bullying incidents including the type and location of the incident in an attempt to identify any patterns i.e.

- recurring complaints of bullying against a particular student or group of students;
- evidence that a particular child is, for some reason, becoming a target for bullying behaviour;
- particular times of the school day / week when bullying is tending to occur; and
- particular situations where bullying may be occurring.
- The views of students, staff and parents will be sought and used to make changes and improvements to the policy on an ongoing basis.

Appendix 1 - Procedures for Reporting and Recording Bullying Behaviour

Our aim in the process outlined below is to support the individual suffering the bullying behaviour and to focus on changing the behaviour of those individuals displaying bullying behaviour.

Bullying is learned behaviour, children are not born bullies, so given the right attention and learning environment they can change their behaviour. Attempting to frighten, scare or intimidate bullies into stopping their behaviour by shouting at them, will only compound the problem. Treating a bully with respect and dignity, as well as trying to get them to understand that their behaviour has been hurtful, is very important and the best way forward.

The three steps to dealing with incidents of bullying are:

1. To interview the person who has been bullied and the person who has displayed bullying behaviour separately.
2. To provide support for those individuals
3. To monitor and review the situation

When a bullying incident is reported, remember:

- each case will be different and the solution must be tailored to suit the problem;
- to remain impartial – do not look to attribute blame;
- to aim is to restore the relationship and move the situation on and to help all individuals involved to gain insight into their behaviour;
- that both behaviours have been 'learned' from their life experience, so with appropriate support they can be challenged and replaced by acceptable behaviours

Appendix Two – Bullying Allegation Incident Form

PART 1

Name of person reporting Incident	
Position in school	
Young person who is alleged to be the target of the bullying behaviour	
Young person who is alleged to have displayed bullying behaviour	

Date of incident:		Individual to individual Individual to group Group to individual Group to group	Yes/No Yes/No Yes/No Yes/No
Time of Incident:			

Location of incident: (please delete/edit as required)	☐ Canteen ☐ Corridor ☐ Playground ☐ Other _____

Alleged Incident:

Does the incident meet the schools definition of 'bullying behaviour'	❑ Yes (Continue to Part 2) ❑ No (Complete Action Taken)

Action Taken:

Parents Informed (date)	

Signed:		Date:	
Passed to Vice Principal (date)			

PART 2

Type of Incident:	Circle as appropriate:	
❑ Physical bullying	• physical intimidation • interfering with personal property	• punching/kicking • any other physical contact
❑ Verbal Bullying	• name calling • insults • jokes	• threats • spreading rumours
❑ Indirect Bullying	• Isolation	

	• refusal to work with/talk to/play with/help others	
❑ Disability	• related to perceived or actual disability	
❑ Cyber	• through technology such as mobile phones and internet	
❑ Homophobic	• related to perceived or actual sexual orientation	
❑ Racist	• related to skin colour, culture and religion	
❑ Sectarian	• related to religious belief and/or political opinion	
Other (please explain)		

Is there persistence/recurrence of this behaviour?	Yes / No
Is it targeted behaviour?	Yes / No
Is there a power imbalance?	Yes / No
Is it intentionally hurtful behaviour?	Yes / No

Action taken:	
Pupil(s) who has been bullied:	**Pupil(s) who has been displaying bullying behaviour**
Parents/Guardians Contacted (date)	
Referral to outside agencies (circle)	

Yes -	**No**	Yes -	**No**

Monitoring, Review & Updates	
Daily Weekly Monthly	Daily Weekly Monthly
Has issue been resolved? Yes / No*	
*Further action needed	

Signed:		Date:	
Passed to Vice Principal (date)			