

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Rationale

At St Patrick's Academy we acknowledge the existence of bullying in even the best regulated schools and recognise that it is neither age nor gender specific.

1. Mission Statement

In St Patrick's Academy we are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all of our pupils so that they can learn in a secure atmosphere. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable in our school. If bullying does occur all pupils should be able to tell and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly, effectively and confidentially. We are a telling school. This means that anyone who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell staff.

2. Aims & objectives

- As a school we take bullying seriously. Pupils and parents should be assured that they will be supported when bullying is reported.
- Bullying will not be tolerated.
- All governors, teaching and non teaching staff, pupils and parents should have an understanding of what bullying is.
- All governors, teaching and non teaching staff should know the school policy on bullying and follow it when bullying is reported.
- All pupils and parents should know the school policy on bullying, and what they should do if bullying arises.

3. Links with other school policies

This policy is set within the broader school context of Pastoral Care and, as such, should be read in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Pastoral Care Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Misuse of Drugs/Substances Policy
- Internet Policy
- Special Education Needs Policy
- Use of Reasonable Force and Safe Handling Policy
- Bring Your Own Device Policy
- Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education Policy
- Drugs Education Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- I.C.T. Policy
- E-safety Policy
- Mobile Phone Policy
- Positive Behaviour Policy (Code of Conduct)
- Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy
- School Trips Policy
- Special Educational Needs Policy
- Use of Reasonable Force & Safe Handling Policy

4. Definition of bullying behaviour

Bullying can be defined as deliberately hurtful behaviour where it is difficult for the victim to defend himself or herself. It can be planned and organised. It may be perpetrated by individuals or by groups of pupils. The main types are:

- physical e.g. hitting, kicking, spitting, theft or damage to belongings;
- verbal e.g. threats or name calling, including sectarian, homophobic or racist name calling;
- indirect e.g. spreading rumours or excluding someone from social groups;
- cyber bullying e.g. text messaging, insulting/embarrassing material/pictures via mobile phones camera [students and staff], silent or abusive messages, e mail bullying, chat room bullying and websites including Bebo, blogs and social networking sites. This includes any offensive material placed on a website, in digital form, outside of school hours, aimed at a member of the school community.

5. Preventive steps

All concerned parties have a role to play in creating and maintaining a safe learning environment for all those in our care. Our staff will:

- Foster 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;
- Maintain anti-bullying as high profile in classes, assemblies, posters, help lines, school counselling provision, school website, displays etc.
- Identify and supervise 'hotspots' such as toilets, buses, lunchtime, early morning, movement between classes, make available quiet areas etc.
- Provide meaningful support strategies for the victim;
- Learn from effective anti-bullying work elsewhere and work with the E.L.B. and relevant statutory/voluntary organisations when it is beneficial;
- Review the policy, with improvements linked to the school development plan;
- Make clear to pupils that serious sanctions, such as suspension, will be in place in the case of cyberbullying.

6. Guidance and procedures for staff dealing with incidents

We ask our staff to:

- Listen to the pupil and reassure him/her that the incident will be investigated;
- Remain calm, neutral and non judgemental;
- Deal with the incident as quickly as possible. The student being bullied may need reassurance and comfort;
- Record the details. The incident will be investigated and discussed by appropriate staff; form teacher, Head of Year and Vice Principal responsible for the Key Stage;
- Interview each named person separately, to point out the feelings of the victim and to ask for a full explanation. It is recognised that it is best to avoid a confrontational approach where blame is attributed before the complete facts have been examined;
- Discuss means by which the alleged culprit(s) can suggest ways in which s/he (they) can show his/her (their) remorse, particularly in relation to making the victim happier;
- Inform parents if the bullying incident is **serious**. The 'victim' may be suffering from insecurity and low self-esteem so that parents and school need to work together to restore self-confidence. In some cases, victims may need to be encouraged to examine their own behaviour in order to establish if this may, in any way, be contributing to bullying;
- Monitor the situation closely. The judgements of the form teacher, Head of Year and relevant Vice-Principal should be applied to each specific case;
- Report back to parents over their concerns about a bullying incident.

7. Guidance and Procedures for parents/guardians

Parents/guardians who suspect that their child is being bullied should contact the school immediately. The initial contact may be made to the Principal or relevant Vice Principal or Head of Year.

Parents who report an incident of bullying will be informed of the outcome of the investigations.

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

- Advising their children to report any bullying to their form teacher;
- Advising their children not to retaliate violently to any form of bullying;
- Informing the school of any suspected bullying, even if their children are not involved;
- Keeping a written record of any reported instances of bullying;
- Co-operating with the school.

8. Guidance and Procedures for pupils

We ask our pupils to:

- Refrain from becoming involved in any kind of bullying behaviour;
- Report any witnessed or suspected incidents of bullying;
- Intervene to protect the pupil who is being bullied, unless it is unsafe to do so;
- Not suffer in silence, but have the courage to speak out, to put an end to their suffering and that of other potential targets.

9. Procedures for monitoring & reviewing the policy

St Patrick's Academy recognizes, and accepts the importance of monitoring and evaluating all aspects of Pastoral Care at every level. To this end we follow the procedures for self evaluation as outlined in the Department of Education document 'Together Towards Improvement'.

Reviewed June 2016

To be reviewed June 2017