



ST. BRIGID'S GIRLS' SCHOOL **ANTI-BULLYING POLICY**

Introduction

In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the code of behaviour guidelines issued by the National Educational Welfare Board, the Board of Management of St. Brigid's Girls' 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.

Key Principles of Best Practice

St. Brigid's Girls' School and the Board of Management recognise the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact it can have on the lives of pupils. Therefore the school is fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour:

- A positive school culture and climate, which will be promoted by the whole school community, thus ensuring that St. Brigid's GNS
 - is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity
 - encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment and
 - promotes respectful relationships across the school community
- Effective leadership.
- A school-wide approach.
- A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact.
- Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that
 - build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils
 - explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including homophobic and transphobic bullying .
- Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils.
- Provision of support for staff.
- Consistent recording, investigation and follow-up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies).
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

Definition of Bullying

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.

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, a once-off offensive or hurtful **public** message will be regarded as bullying behaviour when that message/image or statement is placed on a social network site or other public forum where the message, image, or statement can be viewed and/or repeated by other people.

Negative behaviour that does not meet this definition of bullying will be considered/managed in accordance with the school's code of behaviour.

Definition of cyber-bullying

Cyber bullying is bullying as defined above, but which occurs over the internet or via mobile phone. Cyber bullying can take many forms which include:

- Text messages and instant messaging which are threatening or cause discomfort.
- "Bluejacking"- the sending of anonymous and upsetting text messages over short distances using Bluetooth wireless technology
- Picture/video-clips via mobile phone cameras which include images sent to others to make the victim feel threatened or embarrassed.
- Mobile phone calls, silent calls, abusive messages or the act of stealing the victim's phone and using it to harass others, to make them believe the owner of the phone is responsible.
- Emails which are threatening or bullying and which are often sent using a pseudonym or somebody else's name
- Chat room bullying: menacing or upsetting responses to children or young people when they are in a web-based chat room.
- Bullying via websites which allow opportunities to engage with others and which can be abused, such as blogs, personal websites and social media sites.
- Game consoles: bullying via game consoles with internet access.

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

Possible Indications of Bullying:

- Anxiety about travelling to/from school.
- Unwillingness to go to school/yard.
- Deterioration in educational performance.
- Pattern of physical illnesses.
- Unexplained changes in either mood/behaviour or becoming withdrawn.

- Visible signs of anxiety/distress.
- Reluctance and/or refusal to provide reasons for anxiety.
- Possessions missing.
- Increased requests for money.
- Unexplained bruising.

Impacts of bullying behaviours

- Pupils who are being bullied may develop feelings of insecurity, humiliation and extreme anxiety and thus become more vulnerable. Self-confidence may be damaged with a consequent lowering of self-esteem. While they may not talk about what is happening to them, their suffering is indicated through changes in mood and behaviour.
- Pupils who witness bullying may also be affected and may suffer in similar ways to those who are bullied. For example, pupils who witness identity-based bullying and share that identity can experience anxiety and feel under threat themselves. Pupils can also feel guilt or distress at not being able to help the person being bullied.
- There are also consequences for pupils who engage in bullying behaviour. Pupils who become involved in such behaviour can be at risk of depression. Other possible long-term consequences may include an increased risk of developing an antisocial personality and anxiety disorders, a likelihood of substance abuse and law-breaking behaviour in adulthood and decreased educational and occupational attainment.

The relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows:

The teacher of the class where an incident of bullying is alleged will typically investigate and deal with the incident. Other members of teaching staff, the deputy principal and principal may also be involved in this process as appropriate.

Education and Prevention Strategies:

School-wide approach

- A school-wide approach to the fostering of respect for all members of the school community.
- The promotion of the value of diversity to address issues of prejudice and stereotyping, and highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour.
- The fostering and enhancing of the self-esteem of all our pupils through both curricular and extracurricular activities. Pupils will be provided with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth through formal and informal interactions.
- Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extra-curricular activities. All staff members will be encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers. Supervision will also apply to monitoring student use of communication technology within the school.
- Use of Buddy Systems to encourage a culture of peer respect and support. Involvement of the student council in contributing to a safe school environment e.g. buddy system, mentoring, lunchtime pals and other student support activities that can help to support pupils and encourage a culture of peer respect and support.
- The school's anti-bullying policy is discussed with pupils and available for parents to view online on www.stbrigidgirlsschool.com.
- The implementation of regular whole school awareness measures e.g. annual Friendship Week and parent(s)/guardian(s) seminars; regular school assemblies by principal, deputy principal, class teachers etc.
- Encouragement of parent(s)/guardian(s) to approach the school if they suspect that their child is being bullied.

- The development of an Acceptable Use Policy in the school which will include the necessary steps to ensure that the access to technology within the school is strictly monitored. St. Brigid's Girls' School has a clear policy with regard to the use of mobile phones and web enabled devices on the school grounds which states that use of these devices are not allowed in school time or during any school related activities.
- The provision of the school of Anti-Cyber Bullying and Internet Safety Workshops for pupils and parents in senior classes. Each child will access this at least once in their senior cycle in St. Brigid's.
- Development and promotion of an Anti-Bullying code for the school-to be displayed in the schools homework journal and around the school.
- Appendix 1 outlines prevention strategies that the school can use as appropriate to help build a positive school culture and climate and to help prevent and tackle bullying behaviour.

Teachers have a central role and will:

- Encourage a culture of telling, with particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders. 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. Emphasising that our school is a telling school – that disclosure is proper, necessary and totally acceptable
- Ensure that pupils know who to tell and how to tell, e.g.:
 - Direct approach to teacher at an appropriate time, for example after class.
 - Hand note up with homework.
 - Get a parent(s)/guardian(s) or friend to tell on their behalf.
- Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place.
- Being willing to listen to pupils who ask for help in relation to problems that arise from bullying.
- Being observant to signs of distress and suspected incidents of bullying.
- Treating bullying as a serious offence and one that is totally unacceptable.
- Taking action to help victims of bullying.
- Keeping records of incidents of bullying.
- Ensuring that classroom management and organisation will foster an environment that is conducive to supporting this policy and all that it underpins.
- Taking a proactive approach in promoting the school code of behaviour.

Measures to prevent cyber-bullying

- The pupils in St. Brigid's Girls' School are not permitted to have a mobile phone switched on while on the school premises.
- Pupils from Junior Infants to 2nd class inclusive should not bring mobile phones to school. Pupils from 3rd – 6th classes may bring mobile phones to school, at their parents' request. These phones will be collected by the class teacher first thing in the morning and returned to pupils just before going home time.
- Mobile phones should be switched off at all times on school premises.
- Taking photos on the school grounds is strictly prohibited.
- St. Brigid's schools also have a No Smartphone Voluntary Code which encourages parents to avoid giving their children a smartphone or device until they have left the school at the end of 6th class.
- Kindle or e-reader devices are permitted only when they are not web enabled / loaded with apps. They may be used as a "book" only. The computers in the school

have a system which blocks all social media websites, thus limiting access or opportunities to engage in any inappropriate activity online.

These measures imply that cyber bullying, if it were to occur, would most likely occur outside of school. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that parents should seek to ensure the following:

- Children should not have access to the Internet on a phone, computer or any device which cannot be in full view in the home and, in particular, children should not have unsupervised access to these devices in their bedrooms.
- No primary school child should have access at any time to Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat or any such social media sites used by adults.
- Parents should be aware of and monitor all of their children's online activity.
- No child under 13 should have access to those social media platforms to which access for that age group is illegal.

Implementation of curricula

- The full implementation of the SPHE, the RSE and Stay Safe Programmes.
- Continuous Professional Development opportunities for staff in delivering these programmes.
- Delivery of the Garda SPHE Programmes at primary level. These lessons, delivered by Community Gardai, cover issues around personal safety and cyber-bullying
- The school will specifically consider the additional needs of SEN pupils with regard to programme implementation and the development of skills and strategies to enable all pupils to respond appropriately.
- The school will refer to the advice in "Sexual Orientation advice for schools" (RSE Primary).
- Key measures re cyber-bullying: Webwise, anti-cyber bullying primary pack, Internet Safety workshops

Links to other policies

Code of Behaviour, Child Protection policy, Supervision of pupils, Acceptable Use policy, Attendance, Extra-Curricular Activities policy, RSE policy.

Procedures for Investigation and Dealing with Bullying:

The primary aim of these procedures is to resolve any issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationship of the parties involved rather than apportion blame.

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:

Reporting bullying behaviour:

- A pupil, parent, guardian may bring a bullying concern/incident to the attention of any teacher in the school.
- All reports of bullying will be noted, investigated and resolved by the relevant teacher (i.e. the class teacher). When reports are thus managed, pupils will gain confidence in telling.
- Teaching and non-teaching staff such as secretaries, SNAs, caretakers etc. must report any incidents of bullying behavior witnessed by them or reported to them to the relevant teacher.

- Pupils must understand that *reporting* is not “telling tales”. The school will encourage open dialogue between staff members and pupils to create an environment where pupils feel comfortable and free to discuss and disclose incidents of bullying. Pupils will be encouraged to realise that they have a responsibility for the safety and welfare of fellow pupils.
- A complaint against a staff member should be raised with that staff member in the first instance. If the complaint has not been resolved satisfactorily, it should then be brought to the attention of the Principal.
- Pupils should understand that there are no innocent bystanders and that all incidents of bullying behaviour must be reported to a teacher.

Investigating and dealing with incidents:

- In investigating and dealing with bullying, the relevant teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved.
- Parents, guardians and pupils are required to cooperate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving any issues and restoring, as far as practicable, the relationships of the parties involved as quickly as possible.
- A calm, unemotional problem-solving approach is needed.
- Where possible, incidents should be 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 if treated with sensitivity.
- We are a Restorative School that aims to restore relationships through dialogue in order to address harm. The following restorative questions may be used in conversations with individual children. Group dialogue will be conducted with the consent of all parties involved. This should be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner.
- 6 Restorative questions:
 1. What happened?
 2. What were you thinking at the time?
 3. What have your thoughts been since?
 4. Who has been affected and in what way?
 5. How could things have been done differently?
 6. What do you think needs to happen next?
- If a group is involved, each member should be interviewed individually at first. It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s). Thereafter, all those involved may be met as a group with the consent of everyone involved. At the group meeting, each member should be asked for her account of what happened to ensure that everyone present at the meeting is clear about each other’s statements.
- Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that may face them from the other members of the group after the interview by the teacher. In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred the Principal will be informed (if not already aware of the investigation). The parents of the parties involved will be contacted to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken (by reference to the school policy). The school will give parents an opportunity to discuss ways in which they can, with the assistance of the school, support their children.
- Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has engaged in bullying behaviour, it will be made clear to her how she is in breach of the school’s anti-bullying

policy and efforts will be made to try to get her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied. This is in line with our Restorative Practice approach.

- 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, her parents and the school.
- Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved will be arranged if necessary.
- Incidents of cyber bullying against teachers or any member of staff by pupils or parents will be taken very seriously indeed, up to and including suspension and expulsion of pupils in extreme cases.
- In order to ascertain the veracity of an accusation the school principal may look at material on a child's phone, tablet or other such device with parent's consent.
- The Gardaí / Social Services will be contacted in cases of actual or suspected illegal content.
- It is important that the prevention, investigation and management of bullying be an ongoing process in the school. The school may use confidential questionnaires, bullying sociograms and class observations.
- The school will also refer to the [PDST Anti-Bullying Support Material](#) for further guidance. Useful guidance is provided on Interview techniques from p.52.

Follow up and recording:

- 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
 - If 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 will 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 behaviours:

It is imperative that all recording of bullying incidents must be done in an objective and factual manner.

The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour are as follows:

- All staff must keep a written record of any incidents witnessed by them or notified to them. All incidents must be reported to the relevant teacher.
All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. The relevant teacher must keep a written record of the reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same.
- The relevant teacher must inform the principal of all incidents being investigated.

- The standard template (see Appendix 2), issued by the Department of Education and Skills, will be used if (1) the teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately addressed and resolved within 20 days after he/she has determined that bullying behavior occurred or (2) if the matter is considered to be of such a serious nature that it should be directly referred to the principal.
- When the recording template is used, it should be retained by the class teacher in the pupils' class file and a copy stored in the principal's office. Records will be held until the pupil reaches the age of 25.
- It is never acceptable for a parent to approach any child other than their own in relation to reported or purported bullying.

Intervention Strategies

The following strategies will be used as necessary.

- Teacher interviews with all pupils
- Negotiating agreements between pupils and following these up by monitoring progress. This can be on an informal basis or implemented through a more structured mediation process with the consent of all involved.
- Working with parent(s)/guardian(s) to support school interventions
- No Blame Approach
- Circle Time
- Restorative interviews
- Restorative conferencing
- Implementing sociogram questionnaires
- Peer mediation where suitable training has been given

The school will also refer to the [PDST Anti-Bullying Support Material](#) for further guidance. Intervention approaches mentioned above are described in more detail from p.28 in this resource. Restorative Practice and Mediation are methods that the school has chosen as particularly suitable to the ethos and culture of our school.

Support for pupils affected by bullying:

- The school will endeavour to support all pupils affected by bullying through activities designed to raise their self esteem, develop friendships, social skills and build resilience. Circle time, friendship and buddy systems, social skills programmes may be used within the classroom or in small group settings.
- If pupils require counselling or further supports, the school will endeavour to liaise with or direct parents to the appropriate agencies to organise same. This may be for the pupil affected by bullying or for the pupil involved in the bullying behaviour.

Supervision and Monitoring of Pupils

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

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.

This policy was updated by the Board of Management on _____.

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year. Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Signed: _____
(Chairperson, Board of Management)

Signed _____
(Principal)

Date:

Date:

Date of next review: October 2022

Appendix 1 Prevention strategies for building a positive school culture and climate

The following are some practical tips for immediate actions that can be taken to help build a positive school culture and climate and to help prevent and tackle bullying behaviour.

- Model respectful behaviour to all members of the school community at all times.
- Explicitly teach pupils what respectful language and respectful behaviour looks like, acts like, sounds like and feels like in class and around the school.
- Display key respect messages in classrooms, in assembly areas and around the school. Involve pupils in the development of these messages.
- Catch them being good - notice and acknowledge desired respectful behaviour by providing positive attention.
- Consistently tackle the use of discriminatory and derogatory language in the school – this includes homophobic and racist language and language that is belittling of pupils with a disability or SEN.
- Give constructive feedback to pupils when respectful behaviour and respectful language are absent.
- Have a system of encouragement and rewards to promote desired behaviour and compliance with the school rules and routines.
- Explicitly teach pupils about the appropriate use of social media.
- Positively encourage pupils to comply with the school rules on mobile phone and internet use. Follow up and follow through with pupils who ignore the rules.
- Actively involve parents and/or the Parents' Association in awareness raising campaigns around social media.
- Actively promote the right of every member of the school community to be safe and secure in school.
- Highlight and explicitly teach school rules in pupil friendly language in the classroom and in common areas.
- All staff can actively watch out for signs of bullying behaviour.
- Ensure there is adequate playground/school yard/outdoor supervision.
- School staff can get pupils to help them to identify bullying “hot spots” and “hot times” for bullying in the school. Hot spots tend to be in the playground/school yard/outdoor areas, corridors and other areas of unstructured supervision. Hot times again tend to be times where there is less structured supervision such as when pupils are in the playground/school yard or moving classrooms.
- Support the establishment and work of student councils.

Appendix 2: Template for the recording of Bullying Behaviour

1. Name of pupil being bullied and class group

Name _____ Class _____

2. Name(s) and class(es) of pupil(s) engaged in bullying behaviour

3. Source of bullying concern/report (tick relevant box(es))*

Pupil concerned	
Other Pupil	
Parent	
Teacher	
Other	

4. Location of incidents (tick relevant box(es))*

Playground	
Classroom	
Corridor	
Toilets	
School Bus	
Other	

5. Name of person(s) who reported the bullying concern

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6. Type of Bullying Behaviour (tick relevant box(es)) *

Physical Aggression		Cyber-bullying	
Damage to Property		Intimidation	
Isolation/Exclusion		Malicious Gossip	
Name Calling		Other (specify)	

7. Where behaviour is regarded as identity-based bullying, indicate the relevant category:

Homophobic	Disability/SEN related	Racist	Membership of Traveller community	Other (specify)

8. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact

9. Details of actions taken

Signed: _____ (Relevant Teacher)

Date: _____

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal: _____