



# Anti-Bullying Policy



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## Anti-Bullying Policy

### SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT & GUIDING PRINCIPLES

***“We nurture, inspire and empower our students to strive for excellence in all that they do as responsible global citizens.”***

We are committed to:

- Fostering a sense of identity and self-worth in each of our students.
- Developing life-long learners with skills, attitudes, sensibilities and personal initiative that will allow each to grow into a well-rounded, confident adult.
- Promoting the well-being of the whole person in a caring, inclusive, innovative, safe and secure, multi-cultural environment.
- Striving for high academic standards and promoting rich co-curricular opportunities and in so doing we seek to support and challenge each of our students to recognise and maximise their full potential.
- Promoting respectful intercultural relations, increasing tolerance and acceptance of difference and fostering in our students the ability to perceive, welcome and respect diversity, while at the same time fostering an appreciation of Irish culture in which the school is rooted.
- Promoting awareness of and facilitating our students’ ability to participate in, and contribute to, contemporary issues at local, national and global levels as informed, engaged, responsible and responsive global citizens.
- Honouring our duty of care to and protective responsibility for all students in achieving the realisation of the rights of the child.

### INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT & RATIONALE

In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and ‘Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools’ issued by the NEWB in 2008, the Board of Management of Sutton Park School has adopted the following Anti-Bullying Policy within the framework of the school’s overall Code of Conduct. This policy fully complies with the requirements of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (DES, 2013).

Sutton Park School's ethos of nurturing its students is integral to the development of its Anti-Bullying Policy, and key to this is the creation of an environment in which positive communication and human connection are prioritised. A restorative approach to investigating and dealing with bullying is taken, the primary aim of which is to resolve any issues and restore as far as is practicable the relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame). Bullying behaviour, by its very nature, undermines and dilutes the quality of education and can have short and long-term effects on the physical and mental wellbeing of students, on engagement with school, on self-confidence and on ability to pursue ambitions and interests. A cornerstone in the prevention of bullying is a positive school ethos and climate that is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity and respect. Developing a stable, secure learning environment is an essential requirement to achieving this goal. Such an environment reduces peer to peer problems and when they do arise, facilitates intervention with positive conflict management and resolution skills.

## **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

The Board of Management recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of students and is therefore fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour:

- To create an environment which:
  - encourages students to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in keeping with a restorative school ethos
  - promotes respectful relationships across the school community
  - is inclusive and welcoming of difference and diversity.
- To create a shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact and to raise awareness of bullying as an unacceptable form of behaviour by any and all members of the school community.
- Implementation of education and prevention strategies through Wellbeing and SPHE programmes that:
  - Build empathy, respect and resilience in students
  - Explicitly address issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying (including homophobic bullying, transphobic bullying, racist bullying, bullying based on a person's membership of the Traveller Community and bullying of those with disabilities or special educational needs)
- To ensure comprehensive supervision and monitoring of students through which all aspects of school life are observed.
- To develop and implement consistent procedures for reporting, recording, investigating and managing incidents of bullying.
- To ensure the school's counselling service is available to those affected by bullying as well as to those involved in bullying behaviour.
- To ensure continuous professional development for staff as a support in tackling bullying

- To adopt a school-wide approach which provides effective leadership, support for staff and a commitment to ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of policy and procedures in the prevention and management of bullying in this school community.
- At the beginning of each school year anti-bullying guidelines and interventions will be delivered in the staff meeting for new and existing staff members.

## SCOPE

Bullying incidents dealt with by the school include those occurring:

- On the school campus
- On commutes to and from school
- On school trips
- During co-curricular activities
- On-line using personal and/or school-based devices (both on and off campus)
- Between a student(s) enrolled at Sutton Park School and a student(s) enrolled at another school(s)

Other incidents of bullying not specified above will be dealt with by the school depending on particular circumstances, in accordance with the key principles of this policy and at the discretion of the senior management.

## DEFINITIONS

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. 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 may be dealt with, as appropriate, in accordance with the school's Code of Conduct. 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 Conduct.

**A restorative approach** is an alternative way of addressing behavioural issues and offers a consistent framework for responding when issues arise. The focus is on responsibility and problem-solving, dialogue and negotiation, apology and reparation and interpersonal processes. Such an approach addresses the needs of those targeted and/or affected by negative behaviour (including bullying), as well as any unmet needs of those engaging in the negative behaviour. The approach focuses, as appropriate, on the restoration of relationships, rather than the apportionment of blame.

See **Appendix 1** for a full (non-exhaustive) list of **definitions**, as applicable to this policy.

## **RELEVANT PERSONNEL**

The relevant school personnel with specific responsibility for investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying are as follows:

- School counsellors
- Head of School
- Deputy Principal, Senior School
- Year Heads and Tutors (as appropriate)
- Members of Teaching Staff (as appropriate)
- Wellbeing Coordinator

All staff members have a duty and responsibility for identifying and reporting any bullying / negative behaviours which warrant concern.

## **PROCEDURES- Education and Prevention:**

The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying) that will be used by the school are as follows:

1. All students at Sutton Park participate in comprehensive curricular programmes and activities providing them with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth, awareness and understanding of bullying, its causes and effects and a greater knowledge and awareness of all forms of bullying (including cyber-bullying, homophobic/transphobic bullying and all forms of identity-based bullying).
2. Curricular Wellbeing and SPHE programmes also make specific provision for exploring inter-related areas of belonging and integrating, communication, conflict, friendship, personal safety and respect for diversity and inclusiveness.
3. The Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) module of the SPHE programme at post-primary provides opportunities to explore and discuss areas such as human sexuality and relationships, which have particular relevance to identity-based bullying.
4. The Guidance department facilitates workshops for 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> years focusing on connecting, communicating and shared problem solving with a focus on good relationships. These are done collaboratively with the full year group.
5. The Stay Safe programme at primary level is a personal safety skills programme which seeks to enhance children's self-protection skills, including their ability to recognise and cope with bullying.
6. All students are educated each year about appropriate behaviour online and how to stay safe online. The Wellbeing / SPHE curricula also focus on developing a culture of reporting any cyber-bullying concerns. Additionally, the school seeks the support of the parent body in this regard.
7. At the start of each academic year, all students review and subscribe to the Sutton Park School Code of Conduct, ICT Acceptable Usage policy and Anti-Bullying Code. Students are reminded regularly of the school's restorative approach to incidents of bullying.
8. The school holds a Bullying Awareness Week in the first half-term of each academic year, during which students and staff are reminded of the shared responsibility of all

members of the community to prevent and report/stop bullying and to treat one another with respect and dignity. This central message is echoed across all curricula and in all aspects of school life throughout the academic year.

9. A system is in place and available throughout the academic year, which facilitates reporting of any bullying incidents or concerns. Students are regularly reminded of this reporting system and relevant personnel will respond as soon as practically possible to any and all such reports received, in accordance with the procedures laid out herein. However, all members of the school community are frequently encouraged to act as responsible citizens, making reports of any bullying incidents or concerns to relevant personnel in an identifiable manner or in person, in keeping with a restorative climate which prioritises openness and positive communication.
10. At the start of each academic year, all new students are offered an introductory meeting with their relevant school counsellor, at which they are briefed about the various Wellbeing supports available to them in the school.
11. Peer System – a support structure is in place which affords all students the opportunity to connect and communicate with peers outside of their designated year groups. Peer Events are scheduled throughout the academic year to:
  - Enhance opportunity and skills for student leadership and support
  - Further strengthen student voice to motivate students and nurture community spirit
  - Create unity, respect and a sense of belonging among students
  - Develop friendship, teamwork and support between year groups

## **PROCEDURES - Investigation, follow-up and support**

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 reported incidents are set out herewith. All members of staff are mandated as per the Child Safeguarding Statement, to be mindful of potential bullying behaviour and to deal consistently with incidents as they arise, in line with the school's ethos, relevant policies and restorative practice. All incidents of alleged bullying will be clearly and consistently investigated and dealt with by relevant personnel. At the initial stage, the person(s) targeted will be provided with strategies to try to combat the bullying behaviour, with the focus on empowerment and assertiveness skills. However, if these skills are not appropriate or have been tried without success, the following procedures will apply:

- Reports of all incidents made by students, parents and/or members of staff to relevant personnel will be acted upon as soon as practically possible.
- Students, parents/guardians and members of staff are required to cooperate with any investigation and to assist relevant personnel in resolving any issues and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of parties involved as quickly as possible.
- All parties involved will be met with individually by relevant personnel, who will exercise professional judgment to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best an incident might be resolved.
- Where it is determined that bullying has occurred, details of an incident(s) will be noted and recorded by relevant personnel.

- The relevant Year Head/Tutor (if not directly involved) will be informed of all incidents.
- Where it is considered necessary, parents / guardians will be informed as soon as is practicable and/or appropriate.
- If necessary, student(s) will be removed from class to facilitate investigative meetings.
- Relevant personnel will adopt a calm and objective problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour and all meetings will be conducted with sensitivity and due regard to the rights of all concerned.
- Where it is determined that a student(s) has engaged in bullying behaviour, relevant personnel will make it clear to the student(s) how they are in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy. It will usually be appropriate to encourage student(s) engaging in bullying behaviour to look at a situation from a target's point of view and to offer an explanation for their negative behaviour in this context.
- The student(s) engaging in bullying behaviour will be supported in changing their behaviour by:
  - Talking about what happened, to discover any underlying reasons for such behaviour
  - Working with relevant personnel in order to eliminate, as far as possible, prejudiced attitudes (where they exist)
  - Taking disciplinary actions, if necessary and appropriate, to prevent further bullying behaviours
- All parties involved will be offered support from the school. This support will be in the form of internal counselling or referral to an external counselling agency as appropriate.
- Where a group of students is involved, each member may first be interviewed individually. Thereafter students involved may be met as a group. At a group meeting, each person may be asked to give their account to ensure that each member is clear about each other's statements. It may also be appropriate to ask those involved to give a written account of the incident(s), to ensure consistency and accuracy for the purposes of recording, decisions on suitable responses and incident management.
- Depending on the nature of an incident, a verbal Code of Conduct warning may be issued. In serious cases (where negative behaviour has escalated beyond that which can be described as bullying) or if negative behaviour persists, the school's Code of Conduct will apply. Where appropriate, referral may be made to external agencies and authorities. Appropriate sanctions may be imposed and this may result in a disciplinary meeting. Disciplinary sanctions may include:
  - ⇒ A contract of good behaviour
  - ⇒ School community service
  - ⇒ Withdrawal of privileges
  - ⇒ Suspension
- In any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the student(s) being disciplined, their parents/guardians and the school.
- Students involved in any and all incidents of negative behaviour will be monitored by relevant personnel.
- Follow-up meetings with relevant parties may be scheduled at a later date if appropriate and/or necessary, to ensure that matters have been resolved to the satisfaction of all concerned.

- Relevant personnel will exercise professional judgment in relation to the records to be kept of reports made, actions taken and any discussions with those involved. A written / typed record of all reported incidents will be centrally and securely stored. Such records may be kept for the duration of a student's enrolment at the school.
- Access to such records may, if necessary, be given to particular school personnel such as the Head of School, Deputy Principal, members of the Student Support Team, Year Heads and School Counsellors.
- Records of all incidents kept by the school will collated for the Board of Management at the end of each term, to facilitate oversight and to ensure that all cases have been dealt with in accordance with this policy and these procedures. Delivery of the Child Protection Oversight Report (which includes data on incidents of bullying) to the Board of Management is the responsibility of the Head of School.
- In cases where relevant personnel consider that bullying behaviour has not been adequately or appropriately addressed within 20 school days after bullying behaviour was determined to have occurred, a written record of same will be made and further steps will be taken to bring matters to a resolution.
- Where a parent/guardian is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parent/guardian will be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures as set out in the School Handbook.
- In the event that a parent/guardian has exhausted the school's complaint procedures and is still not satisfied, the parent/guardian has the right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

See **Appendix 2** for comprehensive details of **Best Practice and Advice** in relation to all aspects of bullying behaviour.

NOTE: This policy focuses primarily on student-to-student bullying, however it also applies to all other members of the school community. Reports of staff-to-student bullying will be referred directly to the Head of School and/or the BOM, in line with the Child Safeguarding Statement. Sutton Park School complies with the requirements of the Employment Equality Acts 1998 and 2004. Any incidents of staff-to-staff bullying will be dealt with in accordance with the procedures set out in the Staff Handbook and the Teaching Council's Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers.

## **SUPERVISION AND MONITORING OF STUDENTS**

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



harassment (including sexual harassment) of students and staff under 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.

## **LINKS TO OTHER DOCUMENTS**

Code of Conduct  
Acceptable Use Policy  
Child Safeguarding Statement  
Anti-Racism Policy  
Critical Incident Policy  
Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers  
SEN Policy  
Admissions Policy  
School Trips Policy  
Wellbeing Policy  
Counselling Policy  
Staff Handbook

**This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2022.**

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website (otherwise readily available to parents and students on request) and provided to the Parent Teacher 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 (otherwise readily available to parents and students on request) and provided to the Parent Teacher Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**(Chairperson of Board of Management)**  
**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**(Head of School)**  
**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date of next review:        September 2023**

# Anti-Bullying Policy: Appendix 1 – Definitions

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 this non-exhaustive definition:

- (i) deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying
- (ii) cyber-bullying and
- (iii) 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.

## **Physical Aggression:**

This bullying behaviour includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping people. It may also take the form of severe physical assault. While students often engage in 'mess fights', they can sometimes be used as a disguise for deliberate physical harassment or infliction of pain.

## **Intimidation and Extortion:**

This bullying behaviour may be based on the use of very aggressive body language with the voice being used as a weapon. It can be a facial expression which conveys aggression and/or dislike (a 'look') and can also include invasion of personal space, gestures and extortion. Extortion may involve demands for money, food or other possessions, often accompanied by threats (sometimes carried out in the event of the targeted student not delivering on the demand). A student may also be forced into theft of property for delivery to another who is engaged in bullying behaviour.

## **Isolation/Exclusion and other Relational Bullying:**

This occurs where a certain person is deliberately isolated, excluded or ignored by some or all of the peer group. This practice is usually initiated by the person engaged in bullying behaviour and can be difficult to detect. It may be accompanied by writing insulting remarks about a student(s) in public places, by passing around notes about or drawings of a student(s) or by whispering insults about them loud enough to be heard. Other forms of relational bullying occur when a person's attempts to socialise and form relationships with peers are repeatedly and deliberately rejected or undermined. Balance of power is therefore a key aspect of this type of bullying behaviour. Non-verbal gesturing, malicious gossip, spreading rumours about a person or giving them the "silent treatment" are also forms of relational bullying.

### **Cyber-bullying:**

This type of bullying is increasingly common and is continuously evolving. It is bullying carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as text, social network sites, e-mail, instant messaging (IM), apps, gaming sites, chat-rooms and other online technologies. Being the target of inappropriate or hurtful messages is the most common form of online bullying. As cyber-bullying uses technology to perpetrate bullying behaviour and does not require face to face contact, cyber-bullying can occur at any time of day or night. Many forms of bullying (including intimidation and humiliation) can be facilitated through cyber-bullying. \* For example, a target may be sent homophobic text messages or pictures may be posted with negative comments about a person's sexuality, appearance etc. Cyber-bullying also includes silent or abusive phone calls; online 'polls'; unsolicited and unwelcome requests for intimate images and the sharing of images without the consent of the subject of such images.

### **Name Calling:**

Persistent name-calling directed at the same individual(s) which hurts, insults or humiliates should be regarded as a form of bullying behaviour. Often name calling of this type refers to physical appearance, accent or distinctive voice characteristics, academic ability, sexual orientation and other aspects of identity.

### **Identity-Based Bullying:**

This form of bullying involves targeting a person(s) based on aspects of identity such as sexual orientation, gender, religion, ethnic or racial origins, culture, (dis)abilities and/or special educational needs.

### **Damage to Property:**

Personal property can be the focus of attention for bullying behaviour. This may result in damage to clothing, mobile phones or other devices, school books and other learning material or interference with a student's locker or other possessions. The contents of school bags and pencil cases may be scattered on the floor. Items of personal property may be defaced, broken, stolen or hidden.

### **Sexual Bullying / Harassment:**

This form of bullying behaviour includes unwelcome sexual comments and/or touching and unsolicited and unwelcome requests for intimate images.

# Anti-Bullying Policy: Appendix 2 – Best Practice & Advice

The commitment of the Board of Management to the key principles of best practice are set out in the aims and objectives of the main policy document.

All members of the school community (including students, staff and parents/guardians) share responsibility to create and maintain a positive school culture and climate. The following are some practical tips for actions to build a positive school culture and climate to help prevent and tackle bullying behaviour:

- Model respectful behaviour to all members of the school community at all times.
- Explicitly teach students 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 students in the development of these messages.
- Notice and acknowledge desired respectful behaviour by providing positive attention.
- Consistently tackle the use of discriminatory and derogatory language inside / outside the school – this includes homophobic and racist language and language that is belittling of students with a disability or SEN.
- Give constructive feedback to students 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 students about the appropriate use of social media.
- Positively encourage students to comply with the school rules on mobile phone and internet use.
- Follow up and follow through with students 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 student friendly language in the classroom and in common areas.
- All staff should actively watch out for signs of bullying behaviour.
- Ensure there is adequate outdoor supervision.
- School staff can ask students to help them to identify bullying “hot spots” and “hot times” for bullying in the school.
- Support the establishment and work of Student Council and committees.

## Advice For Students Who Are Being Bullied:

- Passive (head down, ignoring) or aggressive (fighting back) responses have been shown by research to be least effective in combatting bullying.
- Be proud of who you are and show the person targeting you that they do not have power over you or your feelings.
- Stay with a group of friends / peers. There is safety in numbers.

- Be assertive. Tell them to stop and walk confidently away. Go straight to a teacher if necessary or a member of staff. Teachers will take you seriously and will deal with the situation in a consistent way that will end the bullying and will not make things worse for you. All incidents of bullying will be reported to relevant personnel (see main policy for details). You will not be in trouble for telling about your situation.

### **Advice For Parents:**

- Look for unusual behaviour in your children. Signs that your child may be a target of bullying may include:
  - suddenly not wishing to attend school and/or truancy
  - feeling ill regularly (stomach ache, headaches etc.)
  - not completing work to their normal standard
  - anxiety about travelling to/from school (requesting lifts, changing routes, avoiding regular travel times)
  - unexplained changes in mood or behaviour which may be more noticeable before returning to school after a weekend or longer school holidays
  - visible signs of distress such as stammering, withdrawal, nightmares, changes in sleep patterns, unexplained crying or emotional outbursts, changes in eating habits
  - missing or damaged possessions
  - increased requests for money / stealing
  - unexplained or unusual reasons given for bruising, cuts or damaged clothing
  - reluctance or refusal to talk
- If you feel your child may be a target of bullying behaviour, inform the School immediately.
- Advise your child not to fight back. It can make matters worse.
- Assure your son or daughter that you believe them and it is not their fault that they are being bullied.
- Ask your child about their feelings about reporting the bullying to the school and communicate this to the school (via Year Head/Tutor or relevant personnel).
- If your child may be involved in cyber bullying, keep all online / phone information as a record & closely monitor online activity. We ask that you do not contact other parents about these matters, as this can only complicate situations. Rather contact the school directly and relevant personnel will deal with any concerns and reports according to best practice guidelines.

### **If You Know Someone Is Being Bullied:**

- Watching and doing nothing (being a bystander) is supporting and enabling the harmful behaviour and should not be an option.
- If you feel you cannot get involved directly, tell an adult immediately.
- Do not do things or say things because you are told to, if you know it is wrong and makes someone unhappy – do not do it.
- If you are not part of the solution – you are part of the problem.

## **If You Think You Are Bullying Someone:**

A significant portion of bullying behaviour is not merely behavioural, but is rooted in a lack of respect for diversity and in social inequalities. Students who engage in bullying behaviour often display aggressive attitudes combined with a low level of self-discipline / esteem. Students who engage in bullying behaviour may lack remorse and an ability to empathise, convincing themselves that the target deserves the treatment they are receiving. Students who engage in such behaviours may also be attention seeking – to impress bystanders and to evoke reactions in others. However, it is also recognised that students who engage in bullying behaviour do not always intend to bully, or may not recognise the potential negative impacts/consequences of their words and actions on/for others.

Think before you speak/act – ask yourself:

- Is what I'm going to do, say / type fair or kind?
- Does it need to be said/done?
- Would I like it if it was said/done to me?
- If your answer to any of these questions is no – do not do / say / type it.
- Resist, walk away, say / do nothing.