St Michael's House Special School Foxfield

Anti-Bullying Policy

2023-2024

Anti-Bullying Policy

St. Michael's House Special School Foxfield is a Special School catering for students from (currently) aged 5-18 who have a dual diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder and a Moderate or Severe and Profound General Learning Difficulty. Our students have complex needs associated with this diagnosis such as communication difficulties and sensory processing difficulties. Foxfield is currently bi-located in both Kilbarrack, Dublin 5, and Swords, Co. Dublin. Both locations are under the same School Roll Number, have the same In-School Management, and are under the governance of the same Board of Management. This means that all school policies and procedures are the same across both locations unless otherwise specified.

1. In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the code of behaviour guidelines issued by the NEWB, the Board of Management of St. Michael's House Special School Foxfield 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.

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

    (a) A positive school culture and climate which*
     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 staff vigilance due to level of cognitive ability and difficulties with communication); and

     promotes respectful relationships across the school community

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See Table A (6.1.5.Procedures): Key elements of a positive school culture and climate, and also Appendix 2: Practical tips for building a school culture and climate.

(b) Effective leadership

(c) A school-wide approach

(d) A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact

(e) Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures)

that-

    build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and
    explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying;

effective supervision and monitoring of pupils;

(f) Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils

(g) Supports for staff

(h) Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies); and

(i) On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

3. 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 and
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, 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 behaviour.

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

Examples of bullying behaviours

General behaviours which apply to all types of bullying	Harassment based on any of the nine grounds in the equality legislation e.g. sexual harassment, homophobic bullying, racist bullying etc. Physical aggression Damage to property A combination of any of the types listed.

Cyber	Pupils in our school would not have the cognitive ability to be involved in cyber-bullying and therefore detail has not be included on this policy
Identity Based Behaviours **Including any of the nine discriminatory grounds mentioned in Equality Legislation** (gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community).	
Homophobic and Transgender	Pupils in our school would not have the cognitive ability to be involved in homophobic and transgender bullying and therefore detail has not be included on this policy
Race, nationality, ethnic background and membership of the Traveller community	Pupils in our school would not have the cognitive ability to be involved in identity based behaviours and therefore detail has not be included on this policy
Relational	Pupils in our school would not have the cognitive ability to be involved in relational bullying and therefore detail has not be included on this policy
Sexual	Pupils in our school would not have the cognitive ability to be involved in sexual bullying and therefore detail has not be included on this policy
Special Educational Needs, Disability	All Pupils in this school have Special Educational needs and do not have the cognitive ability to be involved in bullying others based on SEN - therefore detail has not be included on this policy

4. The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying is (are) as follows: (see Section 6.8 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools):

Refer to section 6.8.3. and 6.8.4 in the Procedures.

 The Relevant teachers in this school RE:
 Principal
 Deputy Principal
 All Class teachers: incidents occurring in class will be investigated by the class teacher, incidents occurring between classes will be investigated by both teachers; teacher on yard duty will report/discuss any concerns to class teacher; teachers must report incidents of bullying to the Principal

Any teacher may act as a relevant teacher if circumstances warrant it.

5. The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber-

bullying, homophobic and transphobic bullying) that will be used by the school are as follows (see Section 6.5 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):

Sample 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.
Whole staff professional development on bullying to ensure that all staff develops an awareness of what bullying is, how it impacts on pupils' lives and the need to respond to it-prevention and intervention.
An annual audit of professional development needs with a view to assessing staff requirements through internal staff knowledge/expertise and external sources

Implementation of curricula
The full implementation of the SPHE curriculum for pupils with Moderate General Learning Disabilities to ensure that pupils are given opportunities to develop self-awareness and awareness of others in their lives.
Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and Behaviour Support Plans (BSPs)
Continuous Professional Development for staff in delivering these programmes.

Links to other policies
Other existing school policies ensure that this school is a safe and secure learning environment for all pupils. These include - Code of Behaviour, Child Protection, Intimate Care, Supervision of Pupils, Attendance and Acceptable Use Policy , SMH Positive Behaviour Support Policy

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6. 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 (see Section 6.8 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools):

6.8.9.   Procedures for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying

The primary aim in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame);

The school's procedures must be consistent with the following approach.
Every effort will be made to ensure that all involved (including pupils, parent(s)/guardian(s)) understand this approach from the outset.

Reporting bullying behaviour

Any pupil or parent(s)/guardian(s) may bring a bullying incident to any teacher in the school although it would be unlikely that any pupil in this school would have the ability to bring an incident to the attention of a teacher.
All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying, will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher.

Teaching and non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), bus escorts, caretakers, cleaners must report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher;

Investigating and dealing with incidents: Style of approach (see section 6.8.9)

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;

Parent(s)/guardian(s) and pupils are required to co-operate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving any issues and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved as quickly as possible;

Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach.

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.

When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher should seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This should be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner;

In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the parties involved should be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken (by reference to the school policy). The school should give parent(s)/guardian(s) an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports provided to the pupils

It must also be made clear to all involved (pupils and parent(s)/guardian(s)) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school;

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;

- Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parent(s)/guardian(s)s or the school Principal or Deputy Principal

Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved should be arranged separately with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date if the pupil who has been bullied is ready and agreeable.

Where a parent(s)/guardian(s) is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parent(s)/guardian(s) must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures.

In the event that a parent(s)/guardian(s) has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parent(s)/guardian(s) of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

Recording of bullying behaviour

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:

Informal- pre-determination that bullying has occurred

All staff must keep a written record of any incidents witnessed by them or notified to them. This written record will be given directly to the relevant teacher. All incidents must be reported to the relevant teacher

While 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. Written reports should be kept in a secure file in the school office.

Formal Stage 1-determination that bullying has occurred

If it is established by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher must keep appropriate written records which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.

The school in consultation with the relevant teacher/s should develop a protocol for the storage of all records retained by the relevant teacher.

Formal Stage 2-Appendix 3 (From DES Procedures)

The relevant teacher must use the recording template at **Appendix 3** to record the bullying behaviour in the following circumstances:

(a) in cases where he/she considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour occurred; and

(b) In certain circumstances bullying behaviour must be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable i.e. if a pupil has been hurt by another pupil, an Accident Report Form/Challenging Behaviour Form must be filled in and this is automatically sent to the Principal

When the recording template is used, it must be retained by the relevant teacher in question and a copy maintained by the principal. These records will be kept in a confidential file in the school office and will be accessed only by the relevant teacher and the school principal (or in his/her absence, the Deputy Principal). They will be retained for the duration the child attends the school.

> **Established intervention strategies**
> > Liaison with the school psychologist to assess learning needs and interventions appropriate to the pupil's level of ability
> > Working with parent(s)/guardian(s)s to support school interventions
> > No Blame Approach
> > Circle Time
> > Positive Behaviour Approaches
> > CALM Techniques
> > Low arousal techniques

7. The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows (See Section 6.8.16 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools):

> 1) All in-school supports and opportunities will be provided for the pupils affected by bullying to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop friendships and social skills and build resilience and to protect them and keep them safe e.g. :
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> > Low arousal environments
> > SPHE curriculum
> > IEPs
> > Input from multi-disciplinary team
> > Group work such as circle time
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> 2) If pupils require counselling or further supports the school will endeavour to liaise with the appropriate agencies to organise same. This may be for the pupil affected by bullying or involved in the bullying behaviour.

8. 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.

> The school has a Supervision Policy in place to prevent any possible opportunities for a pupil to cause harm to another – in general this would be unintentional as pupils in the school would not have the cognitive ability to intentionally cause harm to others.
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> In relation to Acceptable Use Policy in the school, all Internet sessions supervised by a teacher or SNA.
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> (Note that the Schools Broadband Programme has blocked all social networking sites on the basis that they waste time and take up too much of the bandwidth which is been provided for educational purposes only).

9. 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.

Ratification and Review
This policy has been approved by the Patron Body and was ratified by the Board of Management on ………………….. The policy will be made available to all parents/guardians and educational professionals on our website and on request form the school. The policy will be reviewed annually to ensure compliance with statutory requirements.

Signed:…………………………………………..
Chairperson, BOM.