

# St. Oliver's Special School



## Anti-bullying Policy

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. Oliver's Special School has adopted the following anti-bullying policy within the framework of the school's overall code of behaviour. The policy fully complies with the requirements of the *Anti-bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* which was published in September 2013.

Bullying in this policy refers to bullying within the whole school community i.e. this includes and is not exhaustive of students, teachers, special needs assistants, parents, bus escorts, ancillary staff, and volunteers.

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 staff and is therefore fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour:

- A positive school culture and climate which -
  - Is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity;
  - Encourages pupils and adults 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, prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that-
  - Build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils and staff; and

- Explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying (currently this is not applicable to students in St. Oliver's Special School, however if the issue arises it will be addressed)
- Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils;
- Supports for staff;
- Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies); and
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

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 conduct, by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is intentionally 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 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 shall be dealt with, as appropriate, in accordance with the school's code of behaviour.

Given the cognitive level of functioning of the students in our school we do not foresee bullying taking place. What may be viewed in other educational settings as bullying may in fact be looked upon as a behaviour in our school.

However, in the context of this policy, placing a once-off offensive or hurtful message, image or statement that 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 Appendix 1 attached*

### **Investigating and Dealing with Bullying Behaviour**

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

\* Individual Class Teachers                      \* Deputy Principal                      \* Principal

Bullying incidents shall be reported to the class teacher and/or the supervising teacher for investigation. This reporting may be done by the pupil, parents, another pupil or another staff member. All reported incidents which are serious or are part of a pattern of behaviours will be noted, investigated and treated as circumstances require. All cases of bullying will be reported to the principal. Reports of bullying behaviour on the school bus will be investigated by the school principal.

Serious incidents of bullying behaviour will be reported to Túsla - Child and Family Agency

The education and prevention strategies that will be used by the school are outlined in Appendix 2.

### **St. Oliver's Special School aims to:**

- To have a consistent and clear approach to dealing with bullying when it occurs.
- Any pupil, parent/guardian or any staff member may bring a bullying concern to any teacher in the school.
- All reports including anonymous reports of bullying will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher.
- Parents, guardians and pupils are required to cooperate 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.

The school's procedures for investigating, follow-up and recording of bullying behaviour and the establishment intervention strategies used by the school for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour are outlined in Appendix 3 and 4.

The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows:

**Supports for pupils affected by bullying:**

All 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.

**Support for pupils who are engaging in bullying behaviour:**

A programme of support for those pupils involved in bullying behaviour must also be part of the school's intervention process. Pupils involved in bullying behaviour need assistance on an ongoing basis. For those with low self esteem, opportunities shall be developed to increase feelings of self-worth. It is, therefore, important that the learning strategies applied within the school allow for the enhancement of the pupil's self worth.

Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour may also need support to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others.

Therefore referral to Psychological support services may be required to assist the school in dealing with both sides. The school will seek the support of the Psychology Department on the Progressing Disabilities Services or HSE services at any stage of the above process to help the school deal actively and supportively with the issues at hand at any given time.

Pupils who observe incidents of bullying behaviour will be encouraged to discuss them with teachers and special needs assistants.

**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 adopted by the Board of Management of St. Oliver's Special School on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2015. This policy was reviewed and adopted by the Board of Management of St. Oliver's Special School on the 7<sup>th</sup> March 2018 and on the 9<sup>th</sup> March 2022.

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

This policy and its implications 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 and published on the school website. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson Board of Management Principal

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of next review: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 1:

The list of examples of bullying behaviours is non exhaustive, and the school may wish to add behaviours which may arise in the future.

<b>General behaviours which apply to all</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Harassment based on any of the nine grounds in the equality legislation e.g. sexual harassment, homophobic bullying, racist bullying etc.</li><li>• Physical aggression</li><li>• Damage to property</li><li>• Name calling</li><li>• Slagging</li><li>• The production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other materials aimed at intimidating another person</li><li>• Offensive graffiti</li><li>• Extortion</li><li>• Intimidation</li><li>• Insulting or offensive gestures</li><li>• The "look"</li><li>• Invasion of personal space</li><li>• A combination of any of the types listed</li></ul>
<b>Cyber</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Denigration:</b> Spreading rumours, lies or gossip to hurt a person's reputation</li><li>• <b>Harassment:</b> Continually sending vicious, mean or disturbing messages to an individual</li><li>• <b>Impersonation:</b> Posting offensive or aggressive messages under another person's name</li><li>• <b>Flaming:</b> Using inflammatory or vulgar words to provoke an online fight</li><li>• <b>Trickery:</b> Fooling someone into sharing confidential or compromising information or images</li><li>• <b>Exclusion:</b> Purposefully excluding someone from an online group</li><li>• <b>Cyber stalking:</b> Ongoing harassment and denigration that causes a person considerable fear for his/her safety</li><li>• Silent telephone/mobile phone calls</li><li>• Abusive telephone/mobile phone calls</li><li>• Abusive text messages</li><li>• Abusive email</li><li>• Abusive communication on social networks e.g. Facebook/Ask.fm/Twitter/You Tube or on games consoles</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abusive website comments/Blogs/Pictures</li> <li>• Abusive posts on any form of communication technology</li> </ul>
<p><b>Identity Based Behaviours</b>  <b>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).</b></p>	
<b>Homophobic and Transgender</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spreading rumours about a person's sexual orientation</li> <li>• Taunting a person of a different sexual orientation</li> <li>• Name calling e.g. Gay, queer, lesbian...used in a derogatory manner</li> <li>• Physical intimidation or attacks</li> <li>• Threats</li> </ul>
<b>Race, nationality, ethnic background and membership of the Traveller community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discrimination, prejudice, comments or insults about colour, nationality, culture, social class, religious beliefs, ethnic or traveller background</li> <li>• Exclusion on the basis of any of the above</li> </ul>
<b>Relational</b>	<p>This involves manipulation of relationships as a means of bullying. Behaviours include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Malicious gossip</li> <li>• Isolation and exclusion</li> <li>• Ignoring</li> <li>• Excluding from the group</li> <li>• Taking someone's friends away</li> <li>• "Bitching"</li> <li>• Spreading rumours</li> <li>• Breaking confidence</li> <li>• Talking loud enough so that the victim can hear</li> <li>• The "look"</li> </ul>
<b>Sexual</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unwelcome or inappropriate sexual comments or touching</li> <li>• Harassment</li> </ul>
<b>Special Educational Needs, Disability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Name calling</li> <li>• Taunting others because of their disability or learning needs</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Taking advantage of some pupils' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to recognise and defend themselves against bullying</li><li>• Taking advantage of some pupils' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to understand social situations and social cues</li><li>• Mimicking a person's disability</li><li>• Setting others up for ridicule</li></ul>
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## Appendix 2:

The education and prevention strategies that will be used by the school are as follows:

### School Staff:

- It is imperative that all staff are aware of the school's anti-bullying policy and it's guidelines for dealing with bullying.
- The school staff will foster an atmosphere of friendship, respect and tolerance.
- Bullying of staff by staff, will not be tolerated.
- Bullying of pupils by staff will not be tolerated.
- Pupil's self-esteem will be developed through celebrating individual differences, achievements, acknowledgements and rewarding good behaviour, manners and providing opportunities for success throughout the curriculum and school.
- Teachers will help pupils to develop empathy and understanding by discussing feelings and the use of social stories.
- Relationships with pupils will be based on mutual respect and trust so that pupils will have the confidence in the school staff.
- Teachers will be vigilant, respond sensitively and caringly to pupils who disclose incidents of bullying, and will investigate all such reports.
- Teachers will discuss the school's anti-bullying policy with pupils through the use of school rules and use behavioural management strategies.

- The formal curriculum of the school will be used to educate all pupils against bullying behaviour. Anti-bullying issues may be raised through the school SPHE programme, the Stay Safe programme, the arts subjects and/or circle time.
- Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school buses and extra-curricular activities will take place. Non-teaching and ancillary staff 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.

#### Pupils:

- Pupils are expected to be tolerant and to have mutual respect for each other.
- Pupils shall report incidents of bullying to their parents and teachers. In some cases adults will advocate for the pupils.
- Pupils will follow the school rules.

#### Parents:

- Encourage positive behaviours and discourage negative behaviours both at home and at school.
- Encourage pupils to solve difficult problems without resorting to aggression.
- Encourage children to share, to be kind and to be caring.
- Watch out for signs and symptoms that your child is being bullied or is bullying others.
- Don't dismiss your instincts as being wrong.
- Discuss the school's anti-bullying policy and/or the school rules with your child if appropriate.
- Support the school in its efforts to prevent and treat bullying.

## Appendix 3:

### **Investigating and Dealing with Incidents of Bullying Behaviour**

- The primary aim for the relevant teacher in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationship of the parties involved.
- In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved.
- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher.
- Non-teaching staff such as special needs assistants, school secretary, caretaker, cleaner and bus escorts must be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher.
- Parents 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. Parents will be informed of any incidents of bullying in which their child is involved.
- It is very important that all involved (including each set of pupils and parents) understand the above from the outset.

### **How reports will be dealt with by the school:**

- Teachers shall take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents.
- Incidents shall be investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.
- All interviews shall be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved, or staff may provide very useful information in this way.
- When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher shall seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This shall be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner.

- If a group is involved, each member shall be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved shall be met as a group to give their account of the situation if it is deemed appropriate.
- At the group meeting, each member shall be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements.
- Each member of the group shall be supported through the possible pressures that may face them from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher.
- It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s).

#### **What happens after the investigation:**

- In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved shall be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions begin taken as outlined in this policy. The school shall give parents an opportunity to discuss ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the support for their child.
- Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it shall be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy or school rules.
- It must also be made clear to all involved that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parents and the school.

#### **Follow Up:**

- Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved shall 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. This can have a therapeutic effect.
- In cases where the relevant teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, it must be recorded by the relevant teacher in the recording template (Appendix 5)

- 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 resolved in as far as is practicable, and
  - Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the school Principal or Deputy Principal

**What happens if parents are not satisfied with the outcome:**

- Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying behaviour case in accordance with these procedures, the parents must 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 rights to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

**Established Intervention Strategies**

- Teacher interviews with pupils
- Negotiating agreements with pupils and following these up by monitoring progress
- Working with parents/guardians to support school interventions
- Circle time
- No blame approach
- Restorative interviews

## Appendix 4:

### **Procedures for recording bullying behaviour:**

- The Board of Management has clear procedures for the formal noting and reporting of bullying behaviour and these are documented below. All records must be maintained in accordance with relevant data protection legislation.
- The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour will adhere to the following:
  - i. **Informal: Pre-determination that bullying has occurred:**
    - 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.
    - Written records will be kept in a separate incident file in the office.
    - The relevant teacher must inform the Principal of all incidents being investigated.
  - While all reports including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the teacher will use his/her professional judgement in relation to the records to be kept of these reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same.

### **ii. 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 written records shall be stored and filed in the separate Anti-Bullying Incident file in the office.

### **iii. Formal: Stage 2 - Use of Appendix 5**

The relevant teacher must use the recording template attached (Appendix 5) 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 has occurred; and

- b) Where the school has decided that in certain circumstances bullying behaviour must be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal

The following behaviours shall always be recorded on Appendix 5 and notified to the Principal:

- Physical Bullying where an injury occurs to either party
- Sexual Harassment
- All cyber bullying

In each of the circumstances at (a) and (b) above, the recording template attached must be completed in full and retained by the teacher in question and a copy provided to the Principal or Deputy Principal. It shall also be noted that the timeline for recording bullying behaviour in the recording template does not in any way preclude the relevant teacher from consulting the Principal or Deputy Principal at an earlier stage in relation to a case.

## Appendix 5 Template for recording 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	
SNA	
Bus Escort	
School Nurse	
Other	
Playground	
Classroom	
Corridor	
Toilets	
School Bus	
Other	

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

### 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 \_\_\_\_\_