

SHS Anti-bullying Policy



Foreword

The Sacred Heart School has a long and proud tradition in being proactive with bullying issues and promoting fair treatment in a transparent manner. The SHS Code of Discipline was one of the first Codes to be established in voluntary secondary schools and has been updated in accordance with the changing teenage environment each year.

This most recent review of our policy on bullying was prompted by the Department of Education and Science who asked all schools to replace the 1993 Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in primary and Post-Primary Schools.

The Sacred Heart School is the birthplace of Teen Aware, YSI (Young Social Innovators) anti-bullying initiatives, **Random Acts of Kindness Week** and the BOB (Block Out Bullying) Project. The attached proposed policy deals with all aspects of bullying. It outlines one of the most important aspects of our ethos; the importance of giving everyone a second chance and recognising that young people sometimes make mistakes.

Our school does not tolerate bullying in any form and treats all complaints of bullying very seriously. We place a strong emphasis on supporting victims of bullying behaviour. We recognise the importance of enabling those who have been responsible for bullying to change their behaviour as part of their education. We support parents and our teachers in enhancing the culture of our school that is strongly opposed to bullying in any form. The document sets out what we mean by bullying in terms of everyday incidents including the recent phenomenon of what has become known as cyber bullying.

This policy document contains advice on the steps to follow if your daughter is being bullied, how to respond if your daughter may be involved in bullying and details the procedures employed by school management in dealing with bullying issues.

We recognise that bullying is a societal issue and that the patterns of bullying, while laid down in environments other than school, may be demonstrated in the school with very damaging consequences. With this in mind we have worked with our partners in education to shape and formulate the attached policy. We have had input from students, staff and Board members and would appreciate further input from parents.

Bullying in any form or in any setting is simply not acceptable and we look forward to working with our students, their parents and our staff to ensure that your daughter develops holistically to her full potential in a safe environment.

SHS Anti Bullying Policy 2015

1. Background

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 **Sacred Heart School Tullamore** 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. Key Principles and Practice in Preventing Bullying

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 positive school culture and climate which-
 - Is welcoming of difference and is based on inclusivity Build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and
- Explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including (but not limited to) in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying
- Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils;
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; which supports/endorse
- 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-
- Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils;
- Support for staff and students; dealing with bullying
- 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

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 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 (snap chat etc), 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 **and may result in suspension.**

When dealing with incidents of bullying it is important to focus on both the impact and the intention.

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

The school reserves the right to apply the policy in respect of bullying that occurs outside of school but creates a hostile environment for student/or infringed upon rights of student in school.

Types/Examples

General

- Harassment
- Physical Aggression
- Damage to property
- Name-calling
- Slagging
- Taunting
- Verbal abuse
- Offensive joke
- Victimisation
- Intimidation
- The "look"
- Exclusion
- Extortion
- Graffiti
- Threats
- Intrusion through interfering with personal belongings
- An attack by rumour, gossip, innuendo or ridicule on any individual's reputation

Cyber(1)

- Silent phone calls
- Abusive phone calls
- Abusive text messages
- Abusive e-mail
- Abusive website comments/blogs/MSN/pictures/Facebook/Twitter
- Online polls/fake pages/camera phone abuse

Homophobic

- Taunting
- Name calling
- Spreading rumours

Racial

- Discrimination, prejudice, comments or insults about colour, nationality, social class, religious beliefs, ethnic background

Relational

- This involves manipulating relationships as a means of bullying.

Behaviours include:

- Ignoring and isolation
- Exclusion from a group
- Taking someone's friends away
- Spreading Rumours
- Talking loudly enough so the intended victim can hear
- The 'look'

Sexual

- Unwelcome sexual comments or contact

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

Relevant Teachers for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying

All teachers in this school have a responsibility to deal with bullying issues as they arise. Therefore the relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying are in the following escalation sequence.

Class teacher and/or

Form Teacher and/or

Year Head

Pastoral Care Committee

Deputy Principal

Principal

General School Approach to Bullying

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

- Give constructive feedback to pupils when respectful behaviour and respectful language are absent.
- Encourage students to Take Action and report any incidents
- Provide supportive and caring environment
- A student's sexual orientation cannot be used as a means of mockery or intimidating behaviour
- Display anti-bullying charters at various locations around the school
- Organise the school community in order to minimise opportunities for bullying
- Provide information on the topic in SPHE class and any class which provides such an opportunity
- YSI (Young Social Innovators) annual strategies and "Foster Friendship" programmes
- 1st/2nd yr Leadership Programme to promote and highlight positive friendship values
- Provision of talks on prevention strategies re Cyber bullying for both parents and students
- Encourage students, if they feel they cannot get involved, to tell an adult immediately. Teachers have ways of dealing with the bully without getting you into trouble.
- Do not be, or pretend to be, friends with a bully. Do not support a bully.
- "DO NOT SUPPORT A BULLY"

- Provide annual workshop for each class on reviewing Anti-bullying Policy
- 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.
- 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 are 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, changing rooms, 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.

We encourage and may expect parents to-

- If you feel that your daughter may be a victim of bullying behaviour inform the school immediately. Your complaint will be taken seriously and appropriate action will follow.
- Always take an active role in your child's education. Enquire how your day has gone, who they have spent their time with, how lunchtime was spent etc.
- Look for unusual behaviour in your children. For example, they may suddenly not wish to attend school, feel ill regularly, or not complete work to their usual standard
- It is important that you advise your child not to fight back. It can make matters worse.
- Tell your own daughter that there is nothing wrong with her. It is not her fault that she is being bullied. Encourage her to understand that she will be able to deal with this issue.
- Make sure that your child is aware of this policy concerning bullying, and that they will not be afraid to ask for help
- Co-operate with structures in place
- We reserve the right to ask the student to provide a written account of the incident

General Responsibility of Parent in Promoting Positive Behaviour

If you know or suspect that your child is a bully, you must investigate it thoroughly and act immediately. Like all behavioural patterns, bullying is learned and practiced repeatedly. Early intervention is vital if the destructive pattern is to be broken. Explaining it away or refusing to believe it is happening simply allows the behaviour to become more ingrained.

Your child must accept responsibility for her behaviour. If you can get the child to admit to the bullying behaviour and agree to stop it, all is well. Then if apologies are necessary, you can help your child to make them and start afresh. If you get a report from the school that your child is bullying, a few points are worth noting:

- Remember that teachers are not happy to tell you that your child is a bully.
- Question your child as soon as possible and try to establish the facts
- Visit the school with the information on the incident
- If the situation is clear cut, sort it out quickly and amicably
- At all times indicate that you want your child to accept responsibility for their own behaviour. Work with the school to resolve the matter and make it clear to the school that you do not want nor will you accept your child's misbehaviour. Talk with your child and listen. Keep the lines of communication open. Try to get them to understand the point of view of their victim. It can help to bring up a situation where they were made to feel bad by someone else.
- School and parent working together can, and do, sort out the majority of these problems. However, please bear in mind that solving these types of problems often takes time.

School Procedures for Dealing with Bullying Incident

The school's procedure 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:

If bullying is suspected we talk to the alleged victim, alleged perpetrators and any witnesses, and they will be encouraged to solve the problem. All interviews will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of those involved. There should also be an opportunity made available to speak to the Pastoral Care Committee. We will keep a written record of all interviews. If any degree of bullying is identified, help and support will be given to both the victims and the alleged perpetrators.

The following are the steps taken to validate the allegation of bullying:

- Investigate
- Clarify
- Sanctions/referrals/ appropriate actions

Parents 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 when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents;

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;

If a group is involved, each member should be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved should be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member should 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 a group should be supported through the possible pressures that they 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);

In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents 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 parents an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports for their pupils;

Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts should be made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied;

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, his or her parents and the school;

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. This can have a therapeutic effect.

Offering them an immediate opportunity to talk about the experience with their preferred teacher/class teacher.

Informing the victims' parents/guardians. In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents 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).

By offering continuing support when they feel they need it

Assuring them of the steps that will be put in place to deal with the bullying

Referral to Pastoral Care Committee

Referral to counselling services

Advising teachers of same

Completing and filing Record Sheet

Inform teachers to make them aware of incident

Bullying incidents/investigations must not be discussed with friends

Involving external mediator if Board of Management deems necessary

Restorative Justice practice and procedures

By taking one or more of the five steps of *Programme of Support* described below to prevent bullying:

We aim to support students in the following way:

- **By talking about what happened, to discover why they became involved.**
- **Informing the parents/guardians of the bully if deemed appropriate.**
- **By continuing to work with the bullies in order to get rid of their prejudiced attitudes as far as possible.**
- **By taking one or more of the Programme of Support described below to prevent more bullying.**
- **Separate behaviour from the person.**
- **Meeting with Pastoral Care Committee.**

Programme of Support

- **Bullies will be warned officially to stop offending. If the incident is minor no further action may be necessary.**
- **If the behaviour persists or is more serious, the parents/guardians of the bully will be informed and invited to come to the school to assist with a resolution of the matter. Appropriate sanctions will be imposed which may include one of the following:**
 - **A contract for good behaviour**
 - **Withdrawal of privileges**
 - **Student placed on report**
 - **Student placed on community service**
- **If they do not stop bullying, bullies will be reported to the Board of Management.**
- **The Board of Management will take appropriate action up to and including suspension and expulsion. All incidents of bullying are viewed as serious.**
- **Bullies may also be excluded from the school yard at break and/or lunch time.**
- **Offenders and victims of bullying may also be referred for counselling**
- **Where cases relating to either student or teacher remain unresolved at school level, the matter should be referred to the Board of Management.**
- **In order to appeal a decision, a parent/student may request a review by writing to the principal.**

The schools programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows:

(compiled from general and specific information in Code)

Meeting with student (DP and/or P)

Meeting with parent /guardian (DP and/or

Placed on Green/Red list in staff room

Referral to Pastoral Care Committee

Referral to counselling services in school and /or outside school

Referral to Board of Management for further advice and support

8. Supervising 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.

In certain cases, however, it may be necessary for the school to seek the assistance of other local persons and formal agencies such as NEPS, HSE social workers, community workers, Gardaí etc.

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.

Adoption of Policy

10. This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on _____ (date)

Publishing of Policy

11. This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website (or where none exists, is otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) 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.

Review of Policy

12. 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 (or where none exists, be otherwise readily available to parents and pupils on request) 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 of Board of Management)

Date: _____

Date of next review: _____

Signed: _____

(Principal)

Date: _____

Reviewing Procedures

The Board of Management (the Board) must undertake an annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation. The following checklist must be used for this purpose. The checklist is an aid to conducting this review and is not intended as an exhaustive list. In order to complete the checklist, an examination and review involving both quantitative and qualitative analysis, as appropriate across the various elements of the implementation of the school's anti-bullying policy will be required.

Yes /No Has the Board formally adopted an anti-bullying policy that fully complies with the requirements of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*?

Has the Board published the policy on the school website and provided a copy to the parents' association?

Has the Board ensured that the policy has been made available to school staff (including new staff)?

Is the Board satisfied that school staff are sufficiently familiar with the policy and procedures to enable them to effectively and consistently apply the policy and procedures in their day to day work?

Has the Board ensured that the policy has been adequately communicated to all pupils?

Has the policy documented the prevention and education strategies that the school applies?

Have all of the prevention and education strategies been implemented?

Has the effectiveness of the prevention and education strategies that have been implemented been examined?

Is the Board satisfied that all teachers are recording and dealing with incidents in accordance with the policy?

Has the Board received and minuted the periodic summary reports of the Principal?

Has the Board discussed how well the school is handling all reports of bullying including those addressed at an early stage and not therefore included in the Principal's periodic report to the Board?

Has the Board received any complaints from parents regarding the school's handling of bullying incidents?

Have any parents withdrawn their child from the school citing dissatisfaction with the school's handling of a bullying situation?

Have any Ombudsman for Children investigations into the school's handling of a bullying case been initiated or completed?

Has the data available from cases reported to the Principal (by the bullying recording template) been analysed to identify any issues, trends or patterns in bullying behaviour?

Has the Board identified any aspects of the school's policy and/or its implementation that require further improvement?

Has the Board put in place an action plan to address any areas for improvement?

Record Sheet

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 and location of bullying concern/report
(tick relevant box(es))***

Pupil concerned	
Other pupil	
Parent	
Teacher	
Other	
Yard	
Classroom	
Corridor	
School Bus	
Other	

4. Name of person who reported the bullying concern

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

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

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

Homophobic	Disability/SEN related	Racist	Membership of Travelling Community	Other (specify)

7. Brief description of bullying behaviour and its impact

8. Details of action taken

Signed _____ (relevant teacher)

Date _____

Date submitted to Pastoral Care Committee (included) _____

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal _____

*May amend