

St Michael's House Special National School

**Ballymun Road
Dublin 9**

Anti-Bullying Policy 2019

MISSION STATEMENT

Our school is a stimulating centre of education where each person is cherished as an individual. Each student's abilities, potential and needs are recognised and nurtured. The teachers, staff and multidisciplinary clinical teams provide a challenging, sensitive and caring environment which fosters personal, social, academic development, independence and achievement.

Background and Rationale

St. Michael's House Ballymun Special National School is a special school operating under the Dept. of Education & Skills (DES) "Rules for National Schools" and relevant DES Circulars and Directives. The school is under the Patronage of St. Michael's House. The school is managed by a Board of Management (BoM) representative of the Patron, Parents/Guardians, School Staff and the Community. The school provides education for pupils who have an assessed Moderate, Severe/Profound General Learning Disability.

SMH Ballymun School is multi-denominational and coeducational, providing educational programmes for students up to the age of 18 years. There is currently capacity for ten classes in the school.

This Policy is informed by the following Policy documents:

- Education (Welfare) Act, 2000
- Dept. of Education & Skills Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary & Post Primary Schools (Circular 45/2013)
- Children First-National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2011).
- Department of Education & Skills Child Protection Procedures (2017)
- St. Michael's House Positive Behaviour Support Policy

Policies that relate to our school Code of Behaviour include:

- School Code of Behaviour
- Child & Vulnerable Persons Safeguarding (Child Protection) Policy
- School Attendance Statement and Strategy
- Supervision Policy
- Social, Personal & Health Education (SPHE) Policy
- Healthy Lifestyles & Wellbeing Policy
- Language, Communication & Literacy Policy

1.School Context

The Board of Management notes that, in the context of this particular school, "bullying" has not been, and is not currently, an issue. It could be argued that due to the high staff:pupil ratio and our pupil profile that pupils may be prone to bullying from without the school and/or through social media, rather than from within. However, should it arise, the Board 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 diversity and is based on inclusivity; encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment, insofar as they are able; and promotes respectful relationships across the school community;
- Effective leadership;
- A school-wide approach;
- A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact;
- Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that-
 - (1) build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and
 - (2) explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including homophobic and transphobic bullying, mindful of the abilities and needs of our students.
- 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.

2. 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 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 DES Circular 45/2013 *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, which is available online from www.education.ie/circulars

3. Roles and Responsibilities

All **class teachers** are responsible for investigating and dealing with bullying involving students in their class or participating in shared-class activities. Teachers must advise the Principal of all recorded instances of bullying and/or alleged bullying. **Special Needs Assistants, Bus Escorts** and all other school staff report any alleged bullying incidents to the Class Teacher.

The Principal, Deputy Principal and/or teacher(s) holding Posts of Responsibilities (i.e. the **In-school Management Team - ISM**) are available to assist with enquiry, recording and resolution.

Principal will keep the Board advised of any instances of bullying.

Parents/Guardians are strongly encouraged to contact the school if they have concerns regarding the possibility of bullying in school.

4. Education & Prevention Strategies

The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber- bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying) that will be used by the school continue to be being reviewed, trialled and differentiated by teachers. It is noted that few commercially available programmes are suitable for our students so teachers will customise any materials an age and ability-appropriate way. Preventing bullying by promoting positive relationships is inherent in the school Code of Behaviour. Teachers adopt a cross-curricular approach to education and prevention through subjects such as Social, Personal & Health Education (SPHE), RSE. The school has an annual "Friendship Week" in November each year during which classes do individualised projects throughout the week on the themes of combined anti-bullying and promoting positive relationships, culminating in a "Friendship Week" Assembly.

5. Investigation, follow-up and recording

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:

The following is the procedure for listening to and recording allegations of bullying:

- Remain calm.
- If the student has confided in non-teaching staff, or if non-teaching staff have concerns regarding possible bullying, the Class Teacher must be involved in subsequent investigation, recording and reporting.

- Listen to the students with sensitivity and openness.
- Do not stop a student recalling significant events
- If necessary, ask questions that help clarify
- Offer reassurance but do not make promises
- Do not over react
- Assure the student that s/he will be supported and that further investigations may take place to discover the full facts of the alleged situation, from the point of view of all parties concerned.
- Record the discussion accurately and retain the record of dates, times, names, locations, context and factual details of conversation.
- Class Teacher advises Principal or designate.

Because of the individual nature of each allegation or concern, there are a range of steps that may be taken next, including but not limited to:

- Interviews with all parties concerned
- Interviews with classmates
- Interviews with other school staff who may work with or supervise the students involved
- Consultation with parents/guardians, especially of the source of the alleged bullying is a setting outside of the school. In that instance, parents/guardians would be supported and encouraged to follow this up with the relevant people or agency.

All documentation will be considered confidential and securely stored in school.

6. Programme of Support

The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is to have in place a robust Supervision Policy and to ensure that it is upheld in school and on all school-related activities. In addition, acknowledging that students accused of bullying require as much support as students who may be the victims of bullying, the school will endeavour to work with all parties to restore relationships and access any supports necessary for either or both parties.

7. Supervision and Monitoring of Pupils

This is covered in the school's Supervision Policy. The key principle underpinning effective supervision is effective communication. Staff adhere to the policy and communicate any concerns regarding supervision levels to a teacher or the deputy principal or the principal, if necessary including when colleagues are unavailable to carry out their duties for any reason.

The Rules for National Schools 121(4) and 124(1) require teachers to take all reasonable precautions to ensure the safety of pupils and to participate in supervising pupils during school time and during all school related activities. In our school, this is extended to reflect the diverse composition of the staff and the shared 'duty of care' that all staff are obliged to demonstrate throughout the school day.

This policy was originally ratified by the Board of Management on 5th June 2011. Reviewed in 2013, 2016 and 2019. Date of next review: no later than 2021

Signed: _____ John Lawless
(Chairman of Board of Management)

Date: January 30th 2019

POLICY ENDS.