

Sandford Park School

Anti-Bullying Policy



1. Rationale:

Sandford Park School ("the School") is a community of teachers, students, parents, and non-teaching staff that aims to provide the highest possible standard of education for all its students in a stable, non-threatening environment. As bullying is known to cause physical and/or psychological damage and to negatively affect the quality of the teaching and learning provided, all members of the School are united in recognising their role in supporting an anti-bullying ethos and a whole school anti-bullying environment.

It is the responsibility of every member of the School community to respect the right of others to learn in an atmosphere free from threats towards themselves or their belongings and to assist in the prevention of bullying.

The malicious sharing of intimate images online can take the form of cyberbullying and more seriously, can be a child protection issue and all cases involving the creation, distribution or possession of explicit images of children are potentially criminal and will be reported to An Garda Síochána.

The Covid-19 crisis has heightened anxiety levels for many students and their families. It has also led to an increase in the use of technology with students using the office365 platform for learning, as well keeping in touch through social media sites. To this end it is imperative that every member of the School community recognises that bullying or harassing behaviour will not be tolerated as it can cause untold damage.

2. Scope:

The School Anti-Bullying Policy ("the Policy") applies in the following contexts:

- a. The relationships between students and other students.
- b. The relationships between students and school staff.

The Policy does not apply to the bullying of staff by other members of staff or by parents or students. This issue is dealt with in a separate policy *Dignity in the Workplace*.

3. Application:

The Policy applies to the following:

- 3.1. When students are on the School grounds.
 - 3.2. When students are travelling to and from School.
 - 3.3. When students are on School tours and trips.
 - 3.4. When students are engaged in extracurricular activities organised by the School.
 - 3.5. The School reserves the right, in exceptional circumstances, to apply the Policy in respect of bullying or harassment that occurs at any other time when, in the opinion of the Principal and/or the Board of Governors of Sandford Park School ("the Board"), there is a clear connection with the School, and the alleged behaviour is likely to have a significant impact on the work of the School. This could include (but is not limited to), for example, the bullying of a student using social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter or other such sites.
4. In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the code of behaviour

Policy fully complies with the requirements of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* which were published in September 2013.

5. The Board 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:

5.1. A positive school culture and climate which

5.1.1. is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity.

5.1.2. encourages students to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment; and

5.1.3. promotes respectful relationships across the school community.

5.2. Effective leadership.

5.3. A school-wide approach.

5.4. A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact.

5.5. Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness- raising measures) that

5.5.1. build empathy, respect, and resilience in students; and

- 5.5.2. address explicitly the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic, and transphobic bullying.
- 5.6. Effective supervision and monitoring of students.
- 5.7. Support for staff.
- 5.8. Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies); and
- 5.9. On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the Policy.

- 6. 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, but do not limit, the definition of bullying:

- 6.1. deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip, and other forms of relational bullying,
- 6.2. cyber-bullying and sharing explicit images of pupils without their permission.
- 6.3. 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.
- 6.4. In addition, 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.

Isolated or once-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour, including (but not limited to) 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.

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 the School Diary and is detailed in Section 2 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

- 7. The "Relevant Teachers" for investigating and dealing with bullying are the Class Teachers, the Co-ordinators, the Form Teachers, the Guidance Counsellor, Deputy Principal and Principal.
- 8. **The Anti-Bullying Programme: "Prevention is better than cure".**

The Anti-Bullying Programme ("the Programme") contains the education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic, and transphobic bullying) that are used by the School. The Programme aims to raise awareness about bullying, to make it acceptable to talk about bullying and to take action to prevent such behaviour. In particular, the Social Personal Health Education ("SPHE") and Civic, Social and Political Education ("CSPE") syllabuses are designed to raise self-esteem and to help students deal with the inevitable conflict that one encounters in everyday life in a positive and proactive manner. The Programme comprises the following elements:

- 8.1. The Policy is a function of the School's Code of Behaviour ("the Code"). Copies of the Code are given to all students and parents/ guardians and they enter into a contract to abide by the Code when they join the School.
- 8.2. At the start of each school year, the Policy and the information on bullying in the School Diary is read and discussed by each Form teacher with the students in his/her Form at an extended registration.
- 8.3. The "Pastoral Care Team" (Class Teachers, Form Teachers, Junior, Transition Year and Senior years' Form Co-ordinator's, the Guidance Counsellor, SPHE/CSPE teachers, Deputy Principal and Principal) assist in the implementation of the Policy.
- 8.4. All junior year groups are timetabled for SPHE. This syllabus incorporates many issues related to bullying. Relationships and Sexuality Education ("RSE") is taught in senior cycle.
- 8.5. All form one students are timetabled for E-Safety classes to raise awareness of how students can protect themselves from on-line abuse and cyber-bullying.
- 8.6. Selected senior cycle students may be invited to act as mentors to junior cycle students. They offer friendship, support and advice to younger students and encourage the disclosure of bullying incidents. Training is provided as needed for these mentors.
- 8.7. The non-consensual sharing of intimate images or 'sexting' content of children under the age of 17 always warrants a report to the school and it will be reported to An Garda Síochána and Tusla.
- 8.8. The Student Council is composed of an elected representative from each form group. One of its functions is the task of ensuring that no student is made unhappy by the deliberate or thoughtless actions of others.
- 8.9. The School displays the Anti-Bullying Charter ("the Charter") (see Appendix 2) in the School Diary and on notice boards around the School.
- 8.10. All staff, students, parents and teachers have the right to access the Policy and the Charter.
- 8.11. New students and those who join the School mid-year are allocated a "buddy" who is in the same form to ease their transition to a new school.
- 8.12. *Friendship Week* is an annual event which incorporates a series of challenges designed to promote an environment of collegiality, friendship and tolerance amongst all students.
- 8.13. A wide range of co-curricular options (e.g. Sport, Drama and Music) are available to students which have an undoubted effect in promoting positive relations between students.
- 8.14. The supervision of students for 30 minutes before, during and for 30 minutes after school by staff is also important in deterring inappropriate behaviour.
- 8.15. The use of CCTV may also be appropriate in helping to deter and monitor student behaviour.
- 8.16. The Policy is an agenda item at a Staff Meeting at least once in an academic year. It is also discussed annually at a Parent Teacher Association ("PTA") meeting. As part of the ongoing programme of School Self-Evaluation, the School surveys students (e.g. in SPHE class), on matters of importance to student welfare.

- 8.17. Parents are expected to take a proactive role in promoting an anti-bullying message consistent with the Policy.
- 8.18. At the Information Evening for all incoming Form 1 students and their parents/guardians, attention is drawn to the School's Child Protection Policy, the SPHE Programme and the Policy.
- 8.19. Students are asked and encouraged to tell if they or somebody else is being bullied by telling a teacher, parent/ guardian. If students find it difficult to tell, they can write their concerns on a note and hand it up with homework or get a friend to tell on their behalf.
- 8.20. Guest speakers from the IT industry, or An Garda Siochana or other organisations may be invited to deliver an anti-bullying presentation or programme to students and/or parents from time to time.

9. Signs and Symptoms of Bullying:

As bullying is not always easy to spot, teachers and parents/guardians should be vigilant in keeping an eye out for signs and symptoms that may indicate that a student is being bullied or is engaging in bullying. Signs and symptoms may include, but are not limited to:

- Deterioration in academic performance.
- Possessions missing or damaged.
- Refusal to talk to a parent/ guardian about what is troubling him/her.
- Reluctance to go to school.
- Generalised anxiety/ difficulties sleeping/ loss of appetite.

10. Procedures for dealing with incidents of alleged or actual bullying

10.1. Reporting, Investigation and Recording

- 10.1.1. All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying, must be investigated and dealt with by the Relevant Teacher. Non-teaching staff, such as ancillary staff, Special Needs Assistants (SNAs), grounds staff etc must report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to a Relevant Teacher.
- 10.1.2. 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 relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame); in the first instance therefore, the Relevant Teacher will at his/her discretion, encourage the respective students to reach a satisfactory conclusion without the need for a fully formal investigation of events to take place. The Relevant Teacher is required to keep a written record of this process and to give a copy to the relevant Form Teacher/s.
- 10.1.3. Whether the parents of those involved are informed of the matter at this point will depend on the judgment of the Relevant Teacher as to the level of seriousness of the alleged or actual bullying.
- 10.1.4. If these actions are not deemed appropriate, or not found to be effective, then the following procedures will be followed:
- 10.1.5. All incidents of alleged bullying should be reported to the Form Teacher (or a Relevant Teacher). As parents/ guardians are likely to be the first to become aware of a potential problem, it is their responsibility to report any concerns they may have to a Relevant Teacher immediately even if no allegation has been made.
- 10.1.6. The alleged victim should be listened to and asked to write an account of the incident. The incident is best investigated outside the classroom in a calm manner and with appropriate privacy.

- 10.1.7. The Relevant Teacher should obtain written accounts of the incident from the alleged bully/bullies and from any witnesses noting important facts (who, what, where, when, why, names of witnesses etc). These records should be signed and dated by the student and Relevant Teacher. These records should be kept in a safe place.
- 10.1.8. Any accusations against a member of the School community found to be false will be taken very seriously and dealt with appropriately.

10.2. Post Investigation Outcomes

If an investigation uncovers no evidence of actual bullying then the issue may be dealt with in the context of promoting better behavioural awareness/standards. Consideration should also be given to offering support (as outlined below in this section) to the student alleged to have been the recipient of the unsubstantiated bullying and the student alleged to have been responsible for the bullying.

10.3. Post Investigation Sanctions for Dealing with Students found to have been involved in Bullying:

(Stages may be skipped depending on the seriousness of the incident as deemed appropriate by the relevant teacher)

Stage 1:

The Form Teacher discusses the reported incident with the student and a clear warning is given. The student will be told that his/her behaviour is unacceptable and that it must stop.

Stage 2:

The Relevant Teacher interviews the student accused of bullying. The Relevant Teacher informs the student's parents/guardians of the incident and seeks a change in the student's behaviour. Appropriate sanctions may be imposed in accordance with the Code and the parents / guardians will be advised of the possible consequences of a continuation of the unacceptable behaviour.

Stage 3:

In cases where the Relevant Teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately resolved within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, it must be recorded by the Relevant Teacher in the recording template at Appendix 1 which must be retained by the Relevant Teacher and copied to the Principal or Deputy Principal as appropriate.

- 10.3.1.1. 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:
- 10.3.1.2. Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased.
- 10.3.1.3. Whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable.
- 10.3.1.4. Whether the relationships between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable; and
- 10.3.1.5. Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the School Principal or Deputy Principal.
- 10.3.2. The student accused of bullying comes before the School's Disciplinary Committee and appropriate sanctions are decided upon in accordance with the Code .

- 10.3.3. The student's parents/guardians are informed of the outcome. The Guidance Counsellor is also informed and may discuss the situation further with the parents/guardians.

Stage 4:

The student is referred to the Principal and sanctions up to and including suspension may ensue. In extreme circumstances the student's case may be referred to the Board. (See Disciplinary Procedures involving Suspension or Expulsion.)

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

11. Records and Reports

Formal records of all stages of investigations should be kept by the relevant teacher including, but not limited to:

- Notes of all interviews held
- The decision-making process
- The decision and the rationale for the decision
- The sanctions applied including any conditions attached thereto.

The Template for recording bullying behaviour (Appendix 1) will be completed by the Relevant Teacher and copied to the Principal or Deputy Principal.

12. The School's programme of support for working with students affected by bullying is as follows:

- 12.1. The student who has been bullied will be offered support. This may involve sympathetic listening, the support of a senior cycle mentor, helpful advice, referral to the Guidance Counsellor or a discussion with another member of staff.
- 12.2. The Relevant Teacher may consider it appropriate to remind all class members of their responsibility in upholding the Policy.
- 12.3. The student responsible for bullying should be informed of the possible impact of his/her behaviour on the person the subject of the bullying and the possible consequences for himself/herself if it were to continue. He/she should receive clear direction in how to change his/her behaviour. He/she may also be referred to the Guidance Counsellor.
- 12.4. Parents / guardians of the students involved will be informed of the issue and the actions taken.

13. Supervision and Monitoring of Students

The Board 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.

14. Prevention of Harassment

The Board 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 students or staff or the harassment of students or staff on any of the nine statutory grounds specified i.e. gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.

15. The Policy has been made available to all School personnel, published on the School website and provided to the PTA and to the Sandford Park Holding Company ("the Holding Company"). A copy of the Policy will be made available to the Department of Education ("the Department") if requested.
16. This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board 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 and provided to the PTA and to the Holding Company. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available to the Department if requested.

17. This policy was adopted by the Board of Governors on _____ [date]

Signed: _____
(Chairperson of Board of Governors)

Signed: Edith Byrne
(Principal)

Date: 27/8/20

Date: 27/8/2020

Date of next review: August 2021

Reviewed August 2020.