



Addressing Bullying in Schools Policy

September 2025

Date to be reviewed: September 2028

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Introduction and Statement

St. Mary's on the Hill primary school is committed to creating a safe and secure environment for all our pupils. Bullying is an unacceptable form of behaviour, which can cause profound emotional and physical harm. St. Mary's on the Hill actively promotes positive interpersonal relationships between all members of the school community.

All those in our school community share the responsibility of promoting an anti-bullying culture and in dealing effectively with bullying behaviour when it does occur.

The incidence of bullying will be much less likely where all members of the school community; pupils, staff, parents and governors, co-operate in promoting an atmosphere in which all forms of bullying behaviour are rejected.

The primary aim of this policy is to;

1. Protect the pupil experiencing bullying behaviour
2. Change the conduct of the person displaying bullying behaviour.

Context

St. Mary's on the Hill policy has been developed including the legislative and framework applicable. This includes;

The Legislative Context:

- The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016
- The Education and Libraries Order (Northern Ireland) 2003 (A17-19)
- The Education (School Development Plans) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010
- The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Health and Safety at Work Order (Northern Ireland) 1978

The Policy & Guidance Context:

- The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 Statutory Guidance for Schools and Boards of Governors (DE, 2019)
- Pastoral Care in School: Promoting Positive Behaviour (DE, 2001)
- Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools: A Guide for Schools (DE, 2017)
- Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (Dept. of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, 2016)
- Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland Policies and Procedures (SBNI, 2017)

The International Context

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

Key Points

The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016:

- Provides a legal definition of bullying.
- Places a duty on the Board of Governors to put in place measures to prevent bullying behaviour, in consultation with pupils and parents.
- Requires schools to record all incidents of bullying behaviour and alleged bullying incidents.
- Sets out under which circumstances this policy should be applied, namely:
 - In school, during the school day
 - While travelling to and from school
 - When under control of school staff, but away from school (e.g. school trip)
 - When receiving education organised by school but happening elsewhere (eg. in another school in the ALC)
 - Requires that the policy be updated at least every four years.

The Education and Libraries Order (NI) 2003, requires the Board of Governors to: ‘Safeguard and promote the welfare of registered pupils’ (A.17)

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) sets out every child’s right to:

- Be protected from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, maltreatment or exploitation (A.19)
 - Be protected from discrimination (A.2)
 - Express their views, in a supported and accessible way, on issues that affect them, and to have their opinions taken seriously (A.12)
 - Education (A.28)
-

Ethos & Principles

At St. Mary’s on the Hill, we:

- are committed to a society where children and young people can live free and safe from bullying
- believe in a society where bullying is unacceptable and where every child and young person is safe and feels safe from bullying
- believe that every child and young person should be celebrated in their diversity
- are committed to a preventative, responsive and restorative anti-bullying ethos across the whole school.
- value the views and contributions of children and young people, we will actively seek these views and we will respect and take them into account.
- understand that everyone in our school community has a role to play in taking a stand against bullying and creating a safe and welcoming environment for all.

Consultation and Participation

This policy has been developed in consultation with registered pupils and their parents/carers, in compliance with the *Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016*.

Consultation with Pupils:

- Class-based activities
- Consultative workshops with members of the School Council
- Whole school questionnaires distributed to all pupils

Consultation with Parents:

- Questionnaires distributed to all parents/carers
- Engagement with parent groups: PTA
- Parent/ Carer consultation of draft policy

Consultation with Staff:

- Staff survey for all staff, teaching and non-teaching
- Engagement activity for all staff, teaching and non-teaching
- Engagement with EA

What is Bullying?

The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016 provides schools with a legal definition of bullying:

1.—(1) In this Act “bullying” includes (but is not limited to) the repeated use of:

(a) any verbal, written or electronic communication,

(b) any other act, or

(c) any combination of those, by a pupil or a group of pupils against another pupil or group of pupils, with the intention of causing physical or emotional harm to that pupil or group of pupils.

(2) For the purposes of subsection (1), “act” includes omission.

Bullying is behaviour that is usually repeated, which is carried out intentionally to cause hurt, harm or to adversely affect the rights and needs of another or others.

Whilst bullying is **usually** repeated behaviour, there are instances of one-off incidents that St. Mary's on the Hill will consider as bullying.

When assessing a one-off incident, to make a decision on whether to classify it as bullying, the school shall consider the following criteria:

- severity and significance of the incident
- evidence of pre-meditation
- impact of the incident on individuals (physical/emotional)
- impact of the incidents on wider school community
- previous relationships between those involved
- any previous incidents involving the individuals

Any incidents which are not considered bullying behaviour will be addressed under the Positive Behaviour Policy.

The following unacceptable behaviours, when repeated, targeted and intentionally hurtful, may be considered a bullying behaviour:

Verbal or Written Acts

- saying mean and hurtful things to, or about, others
- making fun of others
- calling another pupil mean and hurtful names
- telling lies or spread false rumours about others
- try to make other pupils dislike another pupil/s

Physical Acts

- Hitting
- kicking
- pushing
- shoving
- material harm, such as taking/stealing money or possessions or causing damage to possessions

Omission (Exclusion)

- Leaving someone out
- Refusing to include someone in a group activity

Electronic Acts

- Using online platforms or other electronic communication to carry out many of the written acts noted above
- Impersonating someone online to cause hurt
- Sharing images (e.g. photographs or videos) online to embarrass someone

This is not an exhaustive list. Other behaviours which fit with the definition may be considered bullying behaviour.

Motivations behind bullying, including those named in the Act are listed below. These include, but are not limited to:

- Age
- Appearance
- Breakdown in peer relationships
- Community background
- Political affiliation
- Gender identity
- Sexual orientation
- Pregnancy
- Marital status
- Race
- Religion
- Disability / SEN
- Ability
- Child Looked After status
- Young Carer status

Bullying is an emotive issue, therefore it is essential that we ensure we use supportive, understanding language when discussing these matters. For that reason, St. Mary's on the Hill will not refer to a child as 'a bully', nor will we refer to a child as 'a victim'. Instead, we will use the following language:

- A child **displaying** bullying behaviours.
- A child **experiencing** bullying behaviours.

We encourage all members of the school community to use this language when discussing bullying incidents.

In determining 'harm' we define:

- Emotional or psychological harm as intentionally causing distress or anxiety by scaring, humiliating or affecting adversely a pupil's self-esteem.
- Physical harm as intentionally hurting a pupil by causing injuries such as bruises, broken bones, burns or cuts.

Preventative Measures

To prevent bullying behaviour, the school will implement the following measures, with the aim of promoting a strong anti-bullying ethos within the school and the wider school community. Under the legislation, the focus for all anti-bullying work should be on **prevention**.

Our preventative work includes;

- Promotion of a positive ethos through delivery of the *Grow in Love* programme
- Raising awareness and understanding of the positive behaviour expectations, as set out in the Positive Behaviour Policy
- Promotion of anti-bullying messages through the curriculum e.g. inclusion of age-appropriate material specific to individual subject areas related to bullying, positive behaviour and inclusion
- Addressing issues such as the various forms of bullying, including the how and why it can happen, through PDMU
- Involvement in education projects that support pupils to explore, understand and respond to differences and diversity
- Promotion of shared responsibility through our peer-led House Points on the Hill system
- Active promotion of positive emotional health and wellbeing through preventative curriculum work
- Participation in the NIABF annual Anti-Bullying Week activities
- Engagement in key national and regional campaigns, e.g. Safer Internet Day
- Development of peer-led systems (e.g. School Council) to support the delivery and promotion of key anti-bullying messaging within the school
- Development of effective strategies for playground management, e.g. training for supervisors, zoning of playgrounds, inclusion of specific resources (buddy benches) and provision of a variety of play options to meet the needs of all pupils
- Focused assemblies to raise awareness and promote understanding of key issues related to bullying and acceptable behaviour
- Development of effective strategies for the management of unstructured times (e.g. break time, lunch)
- Provision and promotion of extra- and co-curricular activities, aimed at supporting the development of effective peer support relationships and networks. For example, sporting activity, creative arts, leisure and games, etc.

Under the new legislation, St. Mary's on the Hill will include preventative measures to support the prevention of bullying behaviours on the way to and from school. This includes:

- Development of a culture where pupils take pride in their school and are viewed as ambassadors for their school within the community. This includes regular reminders of the positive behaviour expectations of pupils whilst travelling to and from school.
- Measures to empower pupils to challenge inappropriate and unacceptable behaviour of their peers during the journey to and from school.

- Where possible, promotion of key anti-bullying messages and awareness of behaviour expectations of pupils amongst the local community (e.g. local shops, service providers, residents, etc).

The new legislation also gives schools the authority to take steps to prevent bullying through the use of electronic communication amongst pupils at any time during the term, where that behaviour is likely to have a detrimental effect on the pupil's education at school.

In St. Mary's on the Hill, we will raise awareness of the nature of the impact of online bullying. We will support our pupils to make use of the internet in a safe, responsible and respectful way. We will;

- Address key themes of online behaviour and risk through PDMU, including understanding how to respond to harm and the consequences of inappropriate use.
- Participate in Anti-Bullying Week activities.
- Engage with key statutory and voluntary sector agencies (eg. C2k, PSNI, Public Health Agency, Safeguarding Board for NI e-Safety Forum) to support the promotion of key messages.
- Participate in annual Safer Internet Day and promote key messages throughout the year.
- Develop and implement appropriate policies in related areas (e.g. Acceptable Usage Policy, including Mobile Phone Policy and Use of Connected devices)

Responsibility

In St. Mary's on the Hill, everyone has responsibility for creating a safe and supportive learning environment for all members of the school communities.

Everyone in the school community, including pupils, their parents/carers and the staff of the school are expected to respect the rights of others to be safe.

Everyone has the responsibility to work together to:

- foster positive self-esteem
- behave towards others in a mutually respectful way
- model high standards of personal pro-social behaviour
- be alert to signs of distress* and other possible indications of bullying behaviour
- inform the school of any concerns relating to bullying behaviour
- refrain from becoming involved in any kind of bullying behaviour, even at the risk of incurring temporary unpopularity.
- refrain from retaliating to any form of bullying behaviour
- intervene to support any person who is being bullied, unless it is unsafe to do so.
- report any concerns or instances of bullying behaviour witnessed or suspected, to a member of staff.
- emphasise the importance of seeking help from a trusted adult about bullying behaviour when it happens or is observed
- explain the implications of allowing the bullying behaviour to continue unchecked, for themselves and/or others.

- listen sensitively to anyone who has been bullied, take what is said seriously, and provide reassurance that appropriate action will be taken
- know how to seek support – internal and external
- resolve difficulties in restorative ways to prevent recurring bullying behaviour and meet the needs of all parties

Reporting a Bullying Concern

Pupils

Pupils can report a concern;

- Verbally- talking to a member of staff
- By writing a note to a member of staff (eg. in a homework diary) **or**
- By posting a comment in a ‘worry box’

ANY pupil can raise a concern about bullying behaviour, not just the pupil who is experiencing this behaviour.

Through the preventative work taken forward under section 6, the pupils are encouraged to ‘get help’ if they have a concern about bullying that they experience or is experienced by another.

Parents/Carers

Parents and carers should raise concerns about alleged bullying behaviour with the school at the earliest opportunity. We would remind parents and carers of the need to encourage their children to react appropriately to bullying behaviour and to not do anything to retaliate or to ‘hit back’.

- In the first instance, all bullying concerns should be reported to the Class Teacher
- Where the parent is not satisfied that appropriate action has been taken to prevent further incidents, or where further incidents have taken place, the concern should be reported to the Designated Teacher for Child Protection or the Vice-Principal.
- Where the parent is not satisfied that appropriate action has been taken by the Designated Teacher for Child Protection or the Vice-Principal to prevent further incidents, or where further incidents have taken place, the concern should be reported to Principal.

Where the parent/carers remains unsatisfied that the concern has not been appropriately responded to, the school’s complaints procedure should be followed.

While the majority of reports of bullying concerns will come from pupils and their parents/carers, St. Mary’s on the Hill are open to receiving such reports from anyone.

All reports of bullying concerns received from pupils and/or parents/carers will be responded to in line with this policy. Feedback will be made to the person who made the report.

However, it must be noted that no information about action taken in relation to a pupil can be disclosed to anyone other than the pupil and his/her parents/carers.

Responding to a Bullying Concern

The processes outlined below provide a framework for how St. Mary's on the Hill will respond to any bullying concerns identified.

Using the NIABF Effective Responses to Bullying Behaviour resource, the member of staff responsible shall:

- Clarify facts and perceptions
- Check records (SIMS/BMM)
- Assess the incident against the criteria for bullying behaviour
- Identify any themes or motivating factors
- Identify the type of bullying behaviour being displayed
- Identify intervention level
- Select and implement appropriate interventions for all pupils involved, including appropriate interventions, consequences and sanctions not listed in the Effective Responses to Bullying Behaviour resource
- Track, monitor and record effectiveness of interventions
- Review outcome of interventions
- Select and implement further interventions as necessary

When responding to a bullying concern, St. Mary's on the Hill staff shall implement interventions as suggested by NIABF. These interventions are aimed at responding to the behaviour, resolving the concern and restoring the wellbeing of those involved.

Where appropriate, school staff may implement sanctions for those displaying bullying behaviour, as per our Positive Behaviour policy.

Recording

St. Mary's on the Hill will centrally record all relevant information related to reports of bullying concerns, including:

- how the bullying behaviour was displayed (the method)
- the motivation for the behaviour
- how each incident was addressed by the school
- the outcome of the interventions employed.

All records will be maintained in line with relevant data protection legislation and guidance and will be disposed of in line with the school's Retention and Disposal of Documents Policy. Collated information regarding incidents of bullying and alleged bullying behaviour will be used to inform the future development of anti-bullying policy and practice within the school.

Professional Development of Staff

At St. Mary's on the Hill, we recognise the need for appropriate and adequate training for staff, including teaching and non-teaching school staff. This may include:

- ensuring that staff are provided with appropriate opportunities for professional development as part of the school's ongoing CPD/PRSD provisions
- noting the impact of the training given on both the policy and its procedures - e.g. any amendments made, inclusions added etc.
- ensuring that opportunities for safeguarding training are afforded to Governors and all staff – teaching and non-teaching
- stating that CPD records will be kept and updated regularly

Monitoring and Review of Policy

To appropriately monitor the effectiveness of the Anti-Bullying Policy, the Board of Governors shall:

- maintain a standing item on the agenda of each meeting of the Board where a report on recorded incidents of bullying will be noted
- identify trends and priorities for action
- assess the effectiveness of strategies aimed at preventing bullying behaviour
- assess the effectiveness of strategies aimed at responding to bullying behaviour

This policy will be reviewed following any incident which highlights the need for such a review. It will be reviewed as directed by the Department of Education and in light of new guidance.

This Anti-Bullying Policy shall be reviewed as required, in consultation with pupils and their parents/carers, on or before the September 2028.

Links to Other Policies

In the development and implementation of this Anti-Bullying Policy, the Board of Governors has been mindful of related policies, including:

- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Pastoral Care Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Special Educational Needs Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Relationships and Sexuality Education
- E-Safety Policy & Acceptable Use of Internet Policy
- Mobile Phone Policy
- Educational Visits



Part One – Assessment of Concern

The definition of Bullying is:

1.—(1) In this Act “bullying” includes (but is not limited to) the repeated use of:

(a) any verbal, written or electronic communication,

(b) any other act, or

(c) any combination of those, by a pupil or a group of pupils against another pupil or group of pupils, with the intention of causing physical or emotional harm to that pupil or group of pupils.

(2) For the purposes of subsection (1), “act” includes omission.

Name of person(s) reporting		
Name/s of child/ren experiencing bullying behaviour		Class and Teacher
Name/s of child/ren displaying bullying behaviour		Class and Teacher
Date on which initial concern was reported		
Type of Incident and Theme (If applicable)	☐ Physical bullying (includes jostling, physical intimidation, interfering with personal property, punching/kicking, any other physical contact which may include use of weapons) ☐ Verbal bullying (includes name calling, insults, jokes, threats, spreading rumours) ☐ Omission (includes isolation, refusal to work with/talk to/play with help others) THEME (Please highlight) Age Appearance Breakdown in peer relationships Community background Political affiliation Gender identity Sexual orientation Pregnancy Marital status Race Religion Disability / SEN Ability Child Looked After status Young Carer status Other: (Please state) _____	

Teacher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

DT/ VP Signature: _____ Date: _____



Part Two - Details of Interventions to be Implemented in Response

2.1 Pupil/s who have experienced bullying behavior

Refer to Level 1-4 Interventions in NIABF document.

Outline action/ support to be implemented:

The intervention is for:

☐ Peer group

☐ Whole class

Have parents been informed?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Involvement of other agencies (please specify):

Any further details:



2.2 Pupil/s who have displayed bullying behaviour

Refer to Level 1-4 Interventions in NIABF document.

Outline action/ support to be implemented:

The intervention is for:

☐ Peer group

☐ Whole class

Have parents been informed?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Involvement of other agencies (please specify):

Any further details:



Part Three - Ongoing Record of Support and Interventions

Refer to Level 1-4 Interventions

Date	Details of Intervention	Action Required / Taken (Dated and signed)



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Part Four – Status of Concern

- ☐ This concern is now resolved.
- ☐ Records are with DT/VP (Interventions complete, issue resolved, record maintained)

When concern is not resolved: Further intervention is required

1. Review information and action to date.
2. Refer to DT/ VP/Principal
3. Re-assess level of Intervention; Implement other strategies from appropriate level (NIABF Document)
4. Assign tasks, record and monitor as in Part Two and Three

Name of teacher completing this form: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Signature of DT/ VP/ Principal: _____