



# **Anti-Bullying Policy**

## **Sligo School Project**

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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/Manager of Sligo School Project 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.

Sligo School Project acknowledges that bullying can be an issue for all schools and the wider community of which schools are a part and does not tolerate or condone bullying of any form or at any level of the school community. The Board of Management/Manager is committed to ensuring that all members of the school community, students, staff and parents are enabled to act effectively to deal with bullying. This policy guides action and organisation within the school and the school community for preventing and responding to bullying as well as raising awareness and understanding of bullying.

The Board of Management/Manager 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; 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 build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.
- Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils;
- Supports for staff;
- Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour and
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

**Our Aim is to Raise Awareness:**

Sligo School Project is committed to helping staff, students and their parents to understand their role in preventing bullying. This will be addressed at staff meetings, in whole school meetings and at class level and at parent meetings.

Bullying may be verbal or physical and may be inflicted by an individual or a group. It may also be done consciously or unconsciously. A bully/bullies may deliberately set out to isolate/exclude or victimise or may cause such hurt without doing so consciously or being aware of the pain/trauma they are inflicting.

Whether the bullying is conscious or not it needs to be brought to both parties attention. Sometimes children may misinterpret what is happening to them and may at times be unaware that what is happening to them is bullying.

Sligo School Project does not tolerate bullying in any of its manifestations from anyone in the school community - child or adult- towards anyone else- child or adult, including identity based bullying and cyber-bullying. When bullying occurs it will be dealt with by all the powers involved in the running of the school (Staff/Principal/Board of Management/Manager).

By fully implementing this policy, we in Sligo School Project aim to empower all students in our school to have the confidence to report bullying concerns, knowing they will be listened to and supported when they do so. All children's concerns will be taken seriously. Children will be told clearly by their teacher(s) when is a good time to talk about concerns of bullying so as to ensure the protection of the person raising the concern (whose name is noted as they sign to take responsibility, but not reported ).

### Definition of Bullying:

The Department of Education and Science guidelines define bullying as 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 or aggressive behaviour, whether personal, identity based or on-line, 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.

Bullying may take many different forms such as Physical Aggression, Damage to Property, Theft of Property, Extortion, Intimidation, Abusive Telephone Calls, Isolation, Name Calling, Writing Notes,

Emailing or Texting. As a form of aggressive behaviour it is hurtful and deliberate. It is persistent over time and makes it difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves. It is important not to confuse bullying with isolated incidents of aggressive or anti-social behaviour, which must not be condoned. However, when the behaviour is systematic and ongoing it becomes bullying. Support can be offered to all parties involved.

The relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying are:

- The Principal
- The Deputy Principal
- All other teachers employed in the school

### Roles and Responsibilities:

‘All members of the school community have a role to play in the prevention of bullying.’

The school’s anti-bullying policy will be regularly reinforced by the class teacher(s) through the Stay Safe programme, the S.P.H.E. programme and also through the Core Curriculum. However it is important that parents also regularly remind their children of what is appropriate behaviour and of their need to comply with the school's Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy.

### The Board of Management/Manager is responsible for:

- ensuring that all members of the school community are enabled and
- empowered to deal effectively with bullying
- providing time and resources for the implementation of the policy
- ensuring that adequate supervisory and monitoring measures are in place to prevent bullying and to deal with incidents appropriately as they arise

### School Staff will:

- foster an atmosphere of friendship, respect, understanding and tolerance where students’ self-esteem will be developed through:
  - celebrating individual differences, achievements
  - providing opportunities for success throughout the curriculum and school
- help students to develop empathy by discussing feelings and trying to put themselves in the place of others
- base relationships with students on mutual respect and trust to ensure students will have confidence in the school staff
- develop respectful relationships with parents
- be vigilant, respond sensitively and caringly to students who disclose incidents of bullying and investigate all disclosed incidents of bullying
- record and log all instances of bullying
- co-ordinate meetings for whole school community so as to empower all concerned
- discuss the school’s anti-bullying policy with the students and enable students to take an active role in finding a solution to problems.
- use the formal curriculum of the school to educate all students against bullying behaviour. Anti-bullying issues may be raised through the Core Curriculum Programme, the Social, Personal and Health Education Programme, the Stay Safe Programme, the Arts.

The Staff of our school, conscious of the need for a positive working environment, will encourage the involvement of the wider school community in the achievement of these ends through a ‘whole school’ approach whereby every individual is involved in the development of a school environment

where each person is respected and valued. By identifying and addressing the needs of each individual involved in each bullying situation, Sligo School Project, with the cooperation of the whole school community, will be proactive against all forms of bullying.

Adults will be fair, firm, clear and consistent in their disciplinary measures.

The Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers published by the Teaching Council, which makes explicit the values and standards expected of teachers in their daily work with pupils, will be followed at all times.

The principal teacher, Carmel, supports a school culture and climate that celebrates difference, as the key to good practice, and recognises the important role of all leaders within the school in stimulating a school-wide approach to preventing and tackling bullying. She undertakes along with other leaders in the school, including all teachers, to engender an ethos under which bullying is unacceptable and to ensure that practical steps are taken to challenge and respond to bullying. Carmel will also involve both staff and pupils in developing and implementing a vision of the school where diversity is accepted and celebrated.

## Strategies for the Prevention of Bullying:

Supervision:

The Board of Management/Manager confirms that appropriate supervision and monitoring practices are in place to both prevent and deal with bullying behaviour and to facilitate early intervention where possible.

School activities will be supervised and monitored at all times where practicable. Inclusivity is proactively encouraged at all times.

The following actions will be taken to help build a positive school culture and climate and to help prevent and tackle bullying behaviour

- Explicitly teach pupils non bullying behaviour.
- Positively encourage the school community to comply with non-bullying behaviour.
- Model respectful behaviour to all members of the school community at all times.
- Give constructive feedback to pupils.
- Explicitly teach pupils about the appropriate use of 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 agreements in pupil friendly language in the classroom and in common areas.
- All staff should actively watch out for signs of bullying behaviour.
- Ensure there is adequate playground/school yard /outdoor supervision
- Establish and support the work of weekly school meetings.

### Curriculum:

- The Stay Safe Programme will be taught.
- Time will be devoted to discussion on bullying at each class level, with particular emphasis being placed on re-affirming the children's sense of self-esteem. These lessons will be revised each year, and will be covered during SPHE whether or not there is evidence of instances of bullying
- Respect for all regardless of their racial, religious, sexual including LGBT, marital, socio-economical, special needs or minority grouping status will be taught and discussed with children at a level appropriate to their age
- Students will be encouraged and helped to say No to bullying behaviour and to report experiences of bullying
- Students will be taught that there is a difference between telling tales and asking for help

### Recording and Evaluation:

- All instances of bullying will be documented accurately and then evaluated by staff to establish the level, prevalence and type of bullying taking place and the effectiveness of response and actions taken. Such evaluation will inform thinking on our school's welcoming of diversity and openness to difference as well as to note the increase or decrease of episodes.

### Disclosure:

- To empower us to help, the student must tell someone (Parent(s), Teacher(s), Principal, other member of Staff, other student or member of the Board of Management/Manager. We aim to create a school ethos that makes this the norm and where reporting an incident is something a child will instinctively do. Also anyone aware of bullying should tell someone they feel comfortable telling. This will allow an investigation to take place by the Principal, a teacher or teachers. Any issue will be dealt with as quickly as possible. Students will be encouraged to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour. The difference between 'telling tales' about incidents of a minor nature and telling to 'stay safe' will be thoroughly explained.

### Procedures for the Reporting of Incidences of Bullying:

- Bullying incidents should initially be reported to the class teacher(s) and/or the supervising teacher for investigation
- This reporting may be done by the student, parent or another student
- All reported incidents which are serious or are part of a pattern of behaviour will be documented, investigated and be dealt with as per agreed procedures
- If unhappy with the response from class teacher(s), the matter should be brought to the attention of the principal
- If unhappy with the response from the principal, the matter should be brought to the attention of the Board of Management/Manager.

## Procedures for Dealing with Instances of Bullying:

- (a) All alleged incidents of bullying will be recorded in incident books which will be retained in the school.
- (b) Students will be informed that by reporting incidents of bullying they are acting responsibly.
- (c) A calm unemotional problem solving approach will be used to deal with bullying.
- (d) Alleged incidents of bullying will initially be dealt with by the class teacher(s). Answers should be sought to questions of What, Where, When, Who and Why.
- (e) On being informed of an alleged incident of bullying, the teacher(s) will first interview the victim/s and discuss the feelings which the victim/s experienced because of the alleged bullying behaviour. An interview will then take place with the alleged perpetrator(s). Members of a group should be met individually and as a group. Having discussed the negative impact which bullying has on both perpetrator/s and victim/s responsibility will be placed on all individuals within the group to resolve the difficulty and to take appropriate steps to ensure that it does not happen again.
- (f) The teacher(s) will inform the principal and contact the parents of the children involved.
- (g) When the teacher(s) has (have) formed the opinion that bullying has occurred, and by implication that the standards of behaviour required in our school have not been met, s/he will follow the Sligo School Project Code of Behaviour.
- (h) Any student who is involved in retaliation against a student who reports bullying will be subject to the Sligo School Project Code of Behaviour sanctions.
- (i) Any member of the school community who is unhappy with the process should refer to the Grievance Policy.
- (j) The needs of all concerned, the victim, the perpetrator and the bystander, will be addressed and individual support, training and education to help each of them understand our combined responsibility to be proactive against bullying will be initiated within the school, in consultation with their parents.
- (k) As self-esteem is a major factor in determining behaviour, Sligo School Project will provide pupils with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth. Raising of self-esteem and resilience in both the victim of bullying and the perpetrator as well as potential bystanders (all individuals in the school) will be supported through discussion, mediation, circle time and mentoring as appropriate with an emphasis on understanding the causes and effects of bullying, learning assertive problem solving skills and developing tolerance of different perspectives.

**Effective practice includes prevention and awareness raising measures across all aspects of bullying and involves strategies to engage pupils in addressing problems when they arise. In particular, such strategies need to build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils.**

Strategies specifically aimed at bullying of pupils with disabilities or with SEN are: Sligo School Project will support the needs of pupils with disabilities or with SEN, by ensuring all the services that provide for such pupils work together. A proactive approach will be undertaken to improve inclusion, focusing on developing social skills, paying attention to key moments in school days such as break and yard times as well as more major events such as transitioning from primary to post-primary. The raising of self-esteem and celebration of difference will be monitored carefully with all students. A good school culture which has respect for all and helping one another as central will be actively promoted.

### Strategies specifically aimed at cyber-bullying are:

To address cyber-bullying Sligo School Project will strive to prevent it happening in the first place. Prevention and any awareness raising measures will focus on educating pupils on appropriate online behaviour, how to stay safe while on-line and also on developing a culture of reporting any concerns about cyber-bullying. The importance of a school-wide approach and the role of parents will be highlighted.

### Strategies aimed at identity-based bullying:

Initiatives and programmes focused on developing pupils' awareness and understanding of LGBT and of bullying, including its causes and effects, dealing explicitly with the issue of identity-based bullying and in particular homophobic and transphobic bullying.

Sligo School Project's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows:

### Prevention of Harassment:

The Board of Management/Manager confirms that Sligo School Project 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.

### Effects / Indications of Bullying:

Children who are being bullied may develop feelings of insecurity and extreme anxiety resulting in greater vulnerability accompanied by a reluctance to talk about what is happening to them, leading to behavioural changes and lowering of academic performance.

### Advice for Parents

#### Effects of Bullying:

Bullying can affect students in many different ways. When students are bullied their lives may be made miserable. They may suffer physical injury. They may be unhappy about coming to school. They may lose self-confidence and self-esteem, and blame themselves for the bullying behaviour towards them. Some children may exhibit stressful symptoms such as stomach aches and headaches, nightmares or panic attacks.

What to do if your child is being bullied.

- Discuss the experience with your child to find out the precise details of what has happened.
- Reassure her/him what to do next – he may be able to suggest strategies for dealing with it.
- Encourage him/her to tell his teacher(s).
- Contact the school as soon as possible.
- Follow-up to ensure that the matter is dealt with and resolved.

What to tell your child to do if someone they know is being bullied.

- Tell the teacher(s) (privately if necessary).

- Tell his/her parents – they will contact the school.
- Talk to the person who is being bullied – you may be able to help him/her.
- Reject bullying behaviour among your friends – tell them that it is wrong to bully.
- Help the bullied person to get away from the situation.
- Know and follow the school code of discipline.

What to tell your child to do if he/she is being bullied.

- Tell the teacher(s) immediately.
- Help the teacher(s) to investigate it.
- Tell the bully to stop.
- Tell your parents when you get home.
- Tell a friend about what is happening.

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and will be provided to the Parents' Association when formed. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

**This policy will be reviewed annually by the Board of Management.** Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel and provided to the Parents' Association (when one exists). A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Any parent who would like, at any time, to propose amendments/addenda to this policy should send their suggestions, in writing, to the Board of Management/Manager for consideration.

Our Board of Management/Manager discussed the policy before ratifying it. Any contentious aspects of this policy will be addressed as they arise to ensure the anti-bullying policy for Sligo School Project is continuously supported and accepted by the whole school community.

A copy of the anti-bullying policy along with the school's code of behaviour policy are available from the school office and each teacher will have a copy of each in their classroom. This policy will also be available on our website [www.sligoschoolproject.ie](http://www.sligoschoolproject.ie)