

ST OLIVER POST PRIMARY SCHOOL
OLDCASTLE, CO MEATH



ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

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1. Introduction

St Oliver Post Primary School's ethos and mission statement recognises the dignity and uniqueness of each member of its school community - student, teacher, parent and ancillary staff. It acknowledges the right of each member of the school community to enjoy school in a secure environment. In accordance with our ethos we will continue to promote responsibility, respect, tolerance, dignity and understanding.

2. Scope

The policy seeks to address bullying behaviour and harassment. The policy shall be applicable during:

- School time (including break and lunch times)
- Going to and from school
- School tours and trips
- Extra-curricular activities
- Examinations
- Any occasion when the student is in uniform
- The school may also apply the policy to student's online activity in cases of inappropriate use.

3. Rationale

It has been necessary to devise an anti-bullying policy to address incident(s) of bullying which may occur in the school context as cited under heading 2 (see appendix for definition, examples and signs of bullying). Staff, students and parents/guardians have identified this issue as a priority. This policy acknowledges the legal and regulatory context and aims to encompass the following legal documents:

- The Department of Education & Skills Guidelines of Countering Bullying Behaviour in the Post Primary Schools, 1993 and 2013
- Education Welfare Act 2000
- Equal Status Acts, 2000 to 2004
- Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures for Post-Primary Schools
- Other Relevant Resource Documents and legislation include:
- Circular M33/91
- Circular M44/05
- The Education Act, 1998
- St Oliver Post Primary School Code of Behaviour and related policies
- Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for schools (TUSLA).

4. Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of the School's Mission Statement

- St Oliver Post Primary School, Oldcastle seeks to enable each student to develop his / her full potential.
- Provides a safe and secure environment for learning
- Promotes respect for the diversity of values, beliefs, traditions, languages and ways of life in society.
- Promotes habits of mutual respect, courtesy and an awareness of the interdependence of people in groups and communities.
- Takes particular care of 'at risk students' and uses its monitoring systems to provide early intervention when/if necessary and responds to the needs, fears and anxieties of individual students in a sensitive manner.

5. Goals/Objectives

- To create a school ethos which encourages students to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To raise awareness of bullying as an unacceptable form of behaviour within the school community.
- To ensure that the school's S.P.H.E. Programme raises awareness of the factors associated with bullying behaviour and develops appropriate knowledge, skills and behaviours.
- To take action in an attempt to prevent incidents of bullying behaviour e.g. – to ensure comprehensive supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of school activity are kept under observation.
- To develop procedures for reporting and recording incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To develop procedures for investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviours.
- To develop a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and those involved in bullying behaviour.

6. Identifying Actions to Prevent Bullying Behaviour

General

- Peer Mentor System
- Prefects assigned to First Years
- Publishing and Publicising an Anti-Bullying Policy.
- The Anti-Bullying Policy will be included in the school journal and the School Plan and discussed as part of our Wellbeing Programme.

- Term Assemblies are used to promote our Anti-Bullying Policy and positive self-worth in accordance with our ethos (promote responsibility, respect, tolerance, dignity and understanding).

- Positive Discipline System
- Good supervision and monitoring systems also facilitate early intervention.
 - Students are supervised in the corridors and also at lunch times by staff. Supervision of play times and lunch breaks is organised on a rota basis. Each teacher has a responsibility to actively supervise the yard/ halls in their allocated time slot
 - The students' internet sessions are supervised by a teacher (Refer to I.T. Policy & Acceptable Use policy).
- Positive Mental Health Week.
- Friendship Week for First Years.
- First Year Induction
- Our school's SEN and Anti-bullying policy work hand in hand to prevent bullying of vulnerable children with special educational needs
- Guest Speakers
- Posters and displays in classrooms and around the school highlighting bullying / anti-bullying issues.
- Vigilance of non - teaching staff.

7. Parents/Guardians and the Wider Community

- The Anti-Bullying Policy will be available on the website, www.stoliverpps.ie, and student journals (for parental access).
- There is a Cyber-bullying section on the school website, www.stoliverpps.ie (for parental access).
- Parents of 1st years are also informed about school policies and procedures during our Induction Evening held in September of 1st year.
- At our Open Evening and Parents' Information Night a clear message is delivered to parents that they should approach the school authorities if they feel their child is being bullied and that they can have confidence in the school's determination to help and support their child. Similarly, parents are reminded that if their child is involved in bullying behaviour they have a responsibility to support the school's anti-bullying policy and address their child's inappropriate behaviour, (the Promissory Note is part of that support).

8. Inclusion in the Curriculum

- As part of our Wellbeing programme at Junior Cycle and SPHE/RSE at Senior Cycle students are provided with opportunities to discuss appropriate behaviour.
- All subject teachers should strive to promote respect, harmony and tolerance in their class rooms. *"There is space within the teaching of all subjects to foster an attitude of respect for all: to promote the value of diversity; to address prejudice and stereotyping and to highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour."*
- In **English**, there is a wide range of literature available which could be used to stimulate discussion.

- In Civil, Social and Political Education (**CSPE**), the interdependence of people in communities at local, national and international levels is stressed.
- In **Geography** and **History** references to colonisation, exploitation and dictatorships could be used to illustrate the negative aspect of power.
- The work could be extended into many other areas such as **Art, Drama, Religious Education, and Physical Education**. Co-operation and group enterprise can be promoted through team sports, school clubs and societies as well as through **practical subjects**. Sporting activities in particular can provide excellent opportunities for channelling and learning how to control aggression.” (6.5.10 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools):

9. Procedures for dealing with incidents of bullying

Reporting Bullying

1. All incidents of suspected bullying must be reported to the relevant Year head and/or Deputy Principal and/or Principal.
2. Students (both victims and witnesses) should discuss any incident of bullying with a teacher; this is responsible behaviour and promotes the “telling” culture within the school.
3. Parents/guardians should contact the Tutor / Year Head regarding suspected incidents of bullying behaviour that have come to their attention through their children, relatives, friends of their children or other parents.
4. All staff members must always be vigilant and report incidents of suspected bullying
5. School policies and procedures are designed to help promote an atmosphere of mutual respect and acceptance of others. The school’s code of behaviour and pastoral care structures in particular demonstrate this.

School Investigation

- It is important that schools identify and consistently implement established evidence-based intervention strategies for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour and preventing its continuation.
- The primary aim for the **relevant teacher** (usually the Year Head) 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).
- Therefore incidents of bullying behaviour, no matter how trivial, which are drawn to the attention of the school, needs to be dealt with in the manner described below. In this way pupils will gain confidence in ‘telling’. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It should be made clear to all pupils that when they report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly;
- Appropriate personnel will speak and listen to all of the students involved in a bullying incident. (Year head and/or deputy principal and/or principal)
- In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved;
 - All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher.

- 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;
- It is very important that all involved (including each set of pupils and parents) understand the above approach from the outset;
- Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents;
- Incidents are generally best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved;
- All interviews should be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information.
- 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. Those involved may be invited to write down their account of the incident(s);
- Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that they may face from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher;
- In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved may 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 can 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 (in the event that it is a minor first time offence parents might not be contacted).
- 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 may 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;
- Victims and perpetrators may also be encouraged to engage with the school councillor.
- In cases where the relevant teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, it must be reported to the Deputy Principal by the relevant teacher.

- 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:
 - Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased;
 - Whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable;
 - Whether the relationships between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable; and
 - Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the school Principal or Deputy Principal;
- Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures;
- In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

10. Sanctions / Support

- Where the incident is deemed to be minor, a verbal warning will be given to the bully to stop the inappropriate behaviour, pointing out how he/she is in breach of the Code of Behaviour and trying to get him/her to see the situation from the victim's point of view. If deemed appropriate, parents **may** be contacted.
- If the incident is deemed to be serious, appropriate sanctions **may** be imposed in accordance with the sanctions in the school's code of behaviour.
- If there is serious incident, perhaps repeated verbal assault or coercion, the matter should be reported to the Deputy or Principal, parents will be involved and appropriate investigations conducted.
- Incidents of cyberbullying: St. Oliver Post Primary School has a duty of care to all its pupils. As such if there are reported incidents of cyber bullying involving students of this school, School Management shall investigate the incident where possible and disciplinary sanctions may be taken.
- The school also reserves the right to report any such bullying activity to the proper authorities.
- Where the incident is deemed to be more serious (e.g. gross misbehaviour or physical assault), the Principal should be informed immediately and they will inform the Board of Management, if necessary.
- Offenders and victims of bullying may be referred to Counselling/Guidance.
- Where sanctions are deemed appropriate, they may include: (in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour)
 - A contract of good behaviour
 - School community service
 - Withdrawal of privileges
 - Other sanctions as may be deemed appropriate e.g. Detention
 - Suspension
 - Expulsion.

11. Board of Management

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 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 (including use of established intervention strategies); and
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

Supervision 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.

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.

12. Ratification of Anti-Bullying Policy

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on October 2010.

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

This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Signed: _____ Signed: _____

Chairperson of Board of Management Principal

Date: _____ Date: _____

Date of next review: October 2017

13. Appendix

Definitions of Bullying

Bullying

- Bullying is repeated aggression, verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or a group against other individual(s). (Department of Education & Science Guidelines, 1993).
- In this school persistent unacceptable behaviour is considered to be bullying behaviour.

Harassment

- Harassment, any form of unwanted conduct in relation to any of the nine groups named in the equality legislation that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading or offensive environment for the victim.

Types of Bullying – Example of Behaviour.

- These may be physical, verbal or psychological in nature.
- Harassment and discrimination based on any of the nine grounds in the equality legislation, e.g. sexual harassment, homophobic bullying, racist bullying etc.
- Physical Aggression
- Damage to property
- Name calling
- Constant negative intimidating comments
- The production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other materials aimed at intimidating another person
- Graffiti
- Extortion
- Intimidation
- Gestures
- Silent telephone/mobile phone call
- Abusive telephone/mobile phone calls
- Abusive text messages
- Abusive email
- Cyber bullying is when someone is tormented, threatened, harassed, humiliated, embarrassed, or otherwise targeted by another person using the Internet, interactive and digital technologies or mobile phones.
- Spreading rumours about a person's sexual orientation
- Name calling

This involves manipulating relationships as a means of bullying. Behaviours include:

- Malicious gossip
- Isolation and exclusion
- Ignoring
- Excluding from the group
- Taking someone's friends away
- Spreading rumours
- Unwelcome sexual comments or touching
- Harassment.

This list is not exhaustive and simply outlines examples of behaviour.

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.

Signs and Symptoms of Bullying Behaviour:

The following signs/symptoms may suggest that a pupil is being bullied:-

- anxiety about travelling to and from school - requesting parents to drive or collect them, changing route of travel, avoiding regular times for travelling to and from school;
- unwillingness to go to school, refusal to attend, mitching;
- deterioration in educational performance, loss of concentration and loss of enthusiasm and interest in school;
- pattern of physical illnesses (e.g. headaches, stomach aches);
- unexplained changes either in mood or behaviour; it may be particularly noticeable before returning to school after weekends or more especially after longer school holidays;
- visible signs of anxiety or distress - stammering, withdrawing, nightmares, difficulty in sleeping, crying, not eating, vomiting, bedwetting;
- spontaneous out-of-character comments about either pupils or teachers;
- possessions missing or damaged;
- increased requests for money or stealing money;
- unexplained bruising or cuts or damaged clothing;
- Reluctance and/or refusal to say what is troubling him/her.