

**ANTI-BULLYING POLICY**

**FOR**

**ST. FRANCIS XAVIER SENIOR SCHOOL**

**INCORPORATING SCHOOL CODE OF DISCIPLINE**



*This policy was ratified on November 2012*

*Reviewed: October 2014, June 2017*

*Next Review Date: May 2018*

## **1. POLICY STATEMENT**

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 of St. Francis Xavier Senior School 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.

The aims of the Policy presented here are twofold, firstly to assist our school in devising school-based measures to prevent and deal with bullying behaviour and, secondly, to increase the awareness of bullying behaviour in the school community as a whole, e.g., school management, teaching and non-teaching staff, pupils and parents/guardians as well as those from the local community who interface with the school. It is of particular importance that the issue of bullying behaviour be placed in a general community context to ensure the co-operation of all local agencies in dealing appropriately with it.

The role of St. Francis Xavier Senior School is to provide the highest possible standard of education for all its pupils. A stable, secure learning environment is an essential requirement to achieve this goal. Bullying behaviour, by its very nature, undermines and dilutes the quality of education and imposes psychological damage. As such, it is an issue which must be positively and firmly addressed through a range of school-based measures and strategies through which all members of the school community are enabled to act effectively in dealing with this behaviour.

Bullying behaviour affects not only those immediately involved; it affects everyone in the classroom, in the school community and, ultimately, in the wider community. It is recognized internationally that bullying behaviour is not confined to pupils and schools alone; it is prevalent in society, in the workplace and in the home.

Bullying behaviour thrives in an atmosphere of uncertainty and secrecy in which the victim often feels a sense of hopelessness and futility against the power being exercised by the bully. A high degree of collective vigilance is needed throughout the local community, the school, by other agencies and by parents if bullying behaviour is to be identified and dealt with in a fair and equitable manner.

## **2. THE SCHOOL'S POSITION IN RELATION TO BULLYING**

- The Board of Management, Parents' Association, Principal, Staff (Teaching and Ancillary) are committed not only to providing a safe workplace free from aggressive threatening or violent acts, but also to providing a positive, stable, happy learning environment for all.
- 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, investigating and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies); and
  - On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the Anti-Bullying Policy.
- The school will under no circumstances tolerate any kind of bullying behaviour. Disciplinary procedures will be implemented for dealing with perpetrators of bullying behaviour.
  - A copy of this anti-bullying policy is available to all members of staff (be they permanent, contract or casual staff) as well as to all pupils and their parents.
  - With this in mind a sub-committee was formed in March 2011 to draw up the St. Francis Xavier Senior School Anti-Bullying Policy.

### **3. DEFINITION OF BULLYING**

What is bullying?

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.*

### **4. THE EFFECTS OF BULLYING ON CHILDREN**

1. Emotional effects (severe anxiety)
2. Cognitive (concentration) effects (making mistakes, having accidents)
3. Behavioural effects (smoking, excess drinking, overeating)
4. Physiological effects (contributing to raised blood pressure, heart disease)
5. Reduced resistance to infection, stomach and bowel problems
6. Skin problems

The most serious effects remain fear, anxiety and depression, which can lead (and have led) to suicide. To these may be added severe loss of confidence and low self-esteem. Bullying, like stress generally, has a detrimental effect on the school as a whole because people working in a climate of fear and resentment do not give of their best.

## **5. FORMS OF BULLYING**

- Physical contact
- Verbal abuse
- Implied threats
- Jokes, offensive language, gossip, slander, offensive songs
- Posters, photocopied cartoons, graffiti, obscene gestures, flags, bunting and emblems
- Isolation or non co-operation or exclusion
- Cyber Bullying (Refer to the school's IAU Policy)
- Intrusion by pestering, spying and stalking
- Vandalism of personal property (destroying clothing, scratching paintwork on cars).

## **9. WHAT BULLYING IS NOT**

- Constructive and fair criticism of a pupil's conduct or work does not constitute bullying behavior.
- 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 definitions of bullying and will 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 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 behavior that does not meet this definition of bullying will be dealt with in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour.

## **10. PREVENTION FRAMEWORK**

### **RESOURCES WITHIN THE SCHOOL**

- Through Stay Safe, R.S.E. and Walk Tall Programmes along with regular references to our Code of Behaviour and frequent general informal and formal classroom discussions all teachers endeavour to stress the following points to children:-
  - ❖ That bullying in any form is unacceptable and always wrong
  - ❖ That it should be reported as early as possible
  - ❖ That both victim and bully need help
  - ❖ Knowing that bullying is occurring means you have a duty to do something about it
  - ❖ That every row, cross word, etc. is not bullying

- As a whole school strategy and in keeping with Stay Safe and Walk Tall Programmes, the following script is taught across all class levels, explicitly and through role-play:

STOP  
SAY NO  
TELL

- Prim-Ed photocopiable resources for Upper and Middle classes are also available (Room 2)
- Prim-Ed photocopiable resources dealing with “Bullying in a Cyber World” for Lower, Middle and Upper Classes are also available (Room 2)

### **CHILD TO CHILD BULLYING**

- Bullying in St. Francis Xavier Senior School is not tolerated in any form (See attached Code of Behaviour).
- Teachers recognise the great role that parents have to play in this area. We would encourage parents to talk regularly to their children about bullies and being bullied and to report to the school as early as possible any case of bullying which they may become aware of.
- While every effort is made by teachers to foster appropriate behaviour among children (See Code of Behaviour - Section on Respect) inevitably instances of bullying may occur.

### **WHAT PUPILS CAN DO TO HELP**

- ❖ Do not allow someone to be deliberately left out of a group.
- ❖ Do not smile or laugh when someone is being bullied.
- ❖ Be sure to tell a teacher/or other adult what is happening.
- ❖ Encourage people who are bullied to join in with group games, etc.
- ❖ Tell the bully to stop what they are doing.
- ❖ Be aware of the school’s policy on bullying.
- ❖ Refuse to be involved in any bullying situation.

### **WHAT STAFF CAN DO**

- ❖ Be aware of the school’s policy on bullying.
- ❖ Be role models in word and action.
- ❖ Be observant of signs and stress.
- ❖ Be vigilant of incidents of possible bullying.

## **WHAT PARENTS CAN DO**

- ❖ Be aware of the school's policy on bullying.
- ❖ Remind their child of the STOP - SAY NO – TELL strategy the school has adopted.
- ❖ Advise their son/daughter to tell a Staff Member about the incident.
- ❖ Encourage their son/daughter not to retaliate.
- ❖ Be willing to inform the school of any cases of suspected bullying.
- ❖ Inform the class teacher of any notable behavior change in their child.
- ❖ Attend the Information Evenings on Anti-Bullying and Cyber Safety organised by the Parents' Association every two years.

## **11. SOME THINGS CHILDREN COULD DO IF THEY FEEL THEY ARE BEING BULLIED**

- ❖ Tell yourself that you don't deserve to be bullied, do not blame yourself for what has happened. Bullies appear very powerful. They may even make it seem like the bullying is the victim's fault.
- ❖ Tell an adult you trust what has happened - straight away.
- ❖ Tell your family. Seek the advice of your parents. You need help and support. Have your parents contact the school and tell them what is happening.
- ❖ Keep on speaking up until someone listens.

## **12. HOW THE SCHOOL DEALS WITH BULLYING**

### **INVESTIGATION OF COMPLAINTS**

The person to whom the allegation is made informs the Principal and any other teacher(s) whose pupil(s) may be involved. An investigation of the matter will then commence. Depending on the outcome, the matter will then be dealt with in an informal or formal manner.

### **A. INFORMAL PROCEDURE**

- Through discussion/interview, the matter will be dealt with by Principal/Class Teacher/Other Teachers involved.
- The victim will be reassured.
- In all cases both sets of parents/guardians will be informed.
- Misdemeanour or yellow cards may be issued to the bully/bullies at this stage.
- A verbal warning may solve the matter.
- The situation will continue to be monitored by the class teacher and management.

## **B. FORMAL PROCEDURE**

- In very serious cases the School Discipline Committee may be brought in to deal with the matter. This is a body comprising of a member of the in-school management team and four teachers and was established to write, review and update the Code of Behaviour and Discipline.
- Both sets of parents/guardians will be involved.
- Misdemeanour cards, yellow or red cards may be issued.
- Referral may be made to the Local Health Board Psychological Service.

## **C. EVALUATION AND MONITORING**

- Follow up interviews will be held with the victim to check that the matter has not re-occurred.
- The bully will be interviewed by some of the above Committee and will be closely observed until his/her behaviour has modified.
- Teacher(s) involved record the incident in Bullying Register. This Register will be kept in the office and will be the Official School Log for all bullying incidents.

## **13. PROCEDURE FOR PARENTS TO ADDRESS BULLYING OF PUPIL(S) BY A TEACHER**

### **INFORMAL NON-WRITTEN COMPLAINT**

Unwritten complaints may be processed informally as set out in Stage 1 of this procedure.

#### **Stage 1**

- A parent/guardian who wishes to make a complaint should approach the class teacher with a view to resolving the complaint
- Where the parent/guardian is unable to resolve the complaint with the class teacher, he/she should approach the Principal with a view to resolving it
- If the complaint is still unresolved, the parent/guardian should raise the matter with the Chairperson of the Board of Management with a view to resolving it

### **A FORMAL WRITTEN COMPLAINT**

Only those complaints about teachers which are written and signed by parents/guardians of pupils may be investigated formally by the Board of Management.

#### **Stage 2**

- If the complaint is still unresolved and the parent/guardian wishes to pursue the matter further, he/she should lodge the complaint in writing with the Chairperson of the Board of Management
- The Chairperson should bring the precise nature of the written complaint to the notice of the teacher and seek to resolve the matter between the parties within 10 days of receipt of the written complaint

### **Stage 3**

- If the complaint is still not resolved the Chairperson should make a formal report to the Board within 10 days
- If the Board considers that the complaint is not substantiated, the teacher and the complainant should be so informed within three days of the Board meeting
- If the Board considers that the complaint is substantiated or that it warrants further investigation, it proceeds as follows:-
  - a) The teacher should be informed that the investigation is proceeding to the next stage
  - b) The teacher should be supplied with a copy of any written evidence in support of the complaint
  - c) The teacher should be requested to supply a written statement to the Board in response to the complaint
  - d) The teacher should be afforded an opportunity to make a presentation of case to the Board. The teacher would be entitled to be accompanied by another person of his/her choice at any such meeting
  - e) The Board may arrange a meeting with the complainant if it considers such to be required. The complainant would be entitled to be accompanied by another person of his/her choice

### **Stage 4**

- When the Board has completed its investigation, the Chairperson should convey the decision of the Board in writing to the teacher and the complainant within five days of the meeting of the Board
- The decision of the Board shall be final

### **Review Procedures**

This Policy will be reviewed when necessary to evaluate its effectiveness and to ascertain what changes, if any, are necessary.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2012 and reviewed in June 2017.

Next review date: May 2018.

*John Mitchell* (Chairperson)

