



Addressing Bullying Policy

for

St. Brigid's Primary School, Ballymoney

Ratified by Board of Governors:

Date: 19/11/2025

Chairperson: Mr Gerry Doran

Principal: Mr Kieran O'Neill

Contents

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. The Context – Legislation and Guidance –Duties placed on Board of Governors and Principal**
- 3. Ethos and Aims**
- 4. Consultation and Participation**
- 5. Preventative Measures**
- 6. Bullying Behaviour Defined**
- 7. Responsibilities**
- 8. Reporting a Bullying Concern**
- 9. Responding a Bullying Concern**
- 10. Recording**
- 11. Professional Development of Staff**
- 12. Monitoring and Review of the Policy**
- 13. Links with Other Policies**

Section 1 – Introduction

At St Brigid's, we believe that all pupils have the right to learn in a safe and supported environment and that all forms of bullying behaviour are unacceptable. Our school community repudiates bullying behaviour of any kind, to any member of the school community, by any member of the school community.

Section 2 – The Context - Legislation and Guidance

This policy is informed and guided by the following current legislation and DE Guidance listed below:

The Legislative Context:

- The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016
- The Welfare and Protection of Pupils 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 Education (2006 Order) (Commencement No. 2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2007
- 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)

Duties placed on Board of Governors and Principals as a result of current legislation and guidance:

The 'Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016' places the following duties on Board of Governors:

- *to secure measures to prevent bullying.*
- *to keep a 'Record of Incidents' of all incidents of bullying or alleged bullying involving a registered pupil/s at the school.*

The 'Welfare and Protection of Pupils Education and Libraries (NI) Order 2003' (DE Circular 2003/13 which amends Article 3 of 1998 NI Order as follows: 'Article 17- Duty to Safeguard and Promote the Welfare of Pupils'

requires the Board of Governors to:

- *safeguard and promote the welfare of all registered pupils whether they are on the school premises or elsewhere while in the lawful control or charge of a member of staff of the school (Article 17: 2)*
- *consult with registered pupils on the general principles which will be reflected in the school's discipline policy (Article 19: 13 & 14)*

and the Principal to:

- *when deciding on measures which will be used to encourage good behaviour in the school must specifically include measures to prevent bullying among pupils (Article 19:14)*
- *before deciding on measures to encourage good behaviour the principal must consult with pupils registered at the school and their parents" (Article 19:14)*
- *All schools will need to be satisfied that their current discipline policy deals with the prevention of bullying among pupils in a sufficiently clear and robust way to satisfy the new legal requirement (Article 19:15)*

'The Education (2006 Order) (Commencement No. 2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2007- DE circular 2007/20' – 'Duty to promote good behaviour, discipline and welfare'

places the following implications for Area Learning Communities:

- 19 *Since schools may expect to have unregistered pupils attending them from other schools, **Boards of Governors must safeguard and promote the welfare of all pupils attending their school, whether registered or not**, when they are on the premises of the school or in the lawful control or charge of a member of staff of the school.*
- 20 *the responsibilities of Boards of Governors and principals for ensuring that policies are pursued to promote good behaviour and discipline among registered pupils are extended to cover all pupils attending the school whether registered or not.*

- 21 *the punishment of detention after school may be imposed only by the principal of (or an authorised teacher in) the school at which a pupil is registered even if he is attending another school under Article 21 arrangements ... misdemeanours which warrant detention should be reported to the school at which the pupil is registered to enable it to decide on the appropriate action to be taken.*

In considering the above legislation and guidance, the Governors will:

- Secure a preventative, responsive and anti-bullying ethos, in association with other relevant policies, to ensure a safe, inclusive, happy, organised and engaging school environment.
- Have overall responsibility for ensuring the Anti-Bullying Policy is in place and updated every four years.
- Keep a 'Record of Incidents' of all incidents of bullying or alleged bullying involving a registered pupil/s at the school.
- Support the principal in following the guidelines and practices agreed in the policy.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of strategies promoted in the policy.
- Support the principal in following the guidelines and practices agreed in the policy.
- Consult with the school community on the general principles and practices reflected in the policy.

To ensure the above are carried out effectively the Board of Governors will ensure:

- Anti-bullying will be a standing item on the termly meetings.
- To consider the views/feedback of the school community in relation to anti-bullying to inform and guide whole school development planning with regards to targets, success criteria and outcomes.

The Principal will:

- Ensure this policy and associated policies are implemented consistently throughout the school.
- Facilitate any necessary staff development in relation to behaviour management and anti-bullying.

Section 3 – Ethos & Aims

Statement of Ethos

The Catholic Ethos of St Brigid's permeates all aspects of school life. It reflects the values, attitudes, beliefs and practices of our Catholic Faith and involves all members of the school community.

"At St Brigid's Primary School, we are committed to nurturing each child's unique potential in a caring, inclusive, and faith-filled environment. Guided by Gospel values, we provide a rich and flexible curriculum, foster strong partnerships with families and the wider community, and promote respect, achievement, and personal growth for all."

Core Values

The following core values underpin all learning in Brigid's PS:

At St Brigid's PS

We value each person's uniqueness and dignity, guided by Gospel values: love, justice, respect, tolerance, acceptance, and forgiveness.

We offer a broad and flexible curriculum tailored to each child's stage of development, encouraging achievement across diverse experiences.

We foster a caring and stimulating environment where effort is rewarded, talents are nurtured, and individual needs are met.

We promote positive relationships and open communication so that children and adults feel supported, respected, and valued.

We actively support the partnership between home, parish, and community, complementing the Catholic foundation of each child's upbringing.

Aims

Providing an excellent education is our highest priority and by implementing the content and skills of the 'Northern Ireland Curriculum' we aim to:

- Excellent Education: Deliver high-quality teaching aligned with the Northern Ireland Curriculum.
- Safe & Inclusive Environment: Create a happy, organised, and engaging space for all learning styles.
- Caring Attitudes: Promote independence, self-respect, confidence, courtesy, and respect for others.
- Pastoral Care & Child Protection: Ensure strong safeguarding in every aspect of school life.
- Anti-Bullying Ethos: Commit to preventative, responsive, and restorative approaches.
- Critical Thinking: Develop enquiring minds that question, form opinions, and make informed decisions.
- Love of Learning: Foster motivation and a desire for success.
- Life Skills: Equip pupils to become responsible, contributing members of society.
- Community Partnership: Work closely with parents, parish, and local community.
- Global & Cultural Awareness: Encourage understanding of diversity, interdependence, and respect for beliefs.
- Participation: Build an ethos of involvement and engagement.

Section 4 – 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.

The processes of how consultation took place included:

- Consultative workshops with pupils
- Class-based activities
- Pupil questionnaires
- Online questionnaires distributed to all parents/carers

Section 5 – Preventative Measures

In St Brigid's the following measures are in place to prevent bullying among pupils:

1. Consistent implementation of the Positive Behaviour Policy which:
 - *upholds everyone's right to be safe both physically and emotionally and requires high standards of behaviour at all times from every member of the school community*
 - *promotes early intervention and provides tailored support for those young people who experience difficulty in meeting acceptable standards of behaviour*
 - *acknowledges and affirms positive behaviours*
 - *acknowledges and sanctions inappropriate/unacceptable behaviours*
 - *carries out regular school evaluations to assess the effectiveness of the policy*
2. Promotion of anti-bullying messages through the curriculum and pastoral care e.g. inclusion of age-appropriate material specific to individual subject areas related to bullying, positive behaviour and inclusion.
3. Addressing issues such as the various forms of bullying, including how and why it can happen, through PDMU.
4. Involvement in meaningful and supportive shared education projects, supporting pupils to explore, understand and respond to difference and diversity.
5. Active promotion of positive emotional health and wellbeing through the pastoral/preventative curriculum.
6. The development of emotional literacy, interpersonal and intrapersonal skills through the pastoral/preventative curriculum, for e.g. participation in circle time, workshops etc.
7. Active whole-school participation in Anti-Bullying Week activities.
8. Engagement in key national and regional campaigns, e.g. Safer Internet Day.
9. Development of peer-led systems (e.g. School Council) to support the delivery and promotion of key anti-bullying messaging within the school.
10. Focused assemblies to raise awareness and promote understanding of key issues related to bullying.
11. Development of effective strategies for playground management, e.g. training for supervisors, zoning of playgrounds, inclusion of specific resources and provision of a variety of play options to meet the needs of all pupils.
12. Development of effective strategies for the management of unstructured times (e.g. break time, lunch).
13. Ongoing tracking and monitoring of supervision arrangements re. canteen, playground, corridors.
14. Provision and promotion of extra and co-curricular activities, aimed at supporting the development of effective peer support relationships and networks. For e.g. sporting activity, creative arts, leisure and games, etc.

We are also committed to the prevention of bullying behaviour on the way to and from school. Measures include:

1. 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.
2. Measures to empower pupils to challenge inappropriate and unacceptable behaviour of their peers during the journey to and from school. This may include the implementation of peer monitoring systems on buses and for those walking.
3. Regular engagement with transport providers (e.g. EA Transport, etc.) to ensure effective communication and the early identification of any concerns.
4. Promotion of key anti-bullying messages and awareness of behaviour expectations of pupils amongst the local community.
5. Appropriate deployment of staff to support the transition from arriving for the school day to the journey home.

The **'Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016'** gives the school the authority to take steps to prevent bullying through the use of electronic communication amongst pupils at any time during term, where that behaviour is likely to have a detrimental effect on the pupil's education at school. As a result, we will continue to raise awareness of the nature and impact of online bullying and support pupils to make use of the internet in a safe, responsible and respectful way. This may include:

- Addressing key themes of online behaviour and risk through PDMU, including understanding how to respond to harm and the consequences of inappropriate use.
- Participation in Anti-Bullying Week activities.
- Engagement with key statutory and voluntary sector agencies (e.g. C2k, PSNI, Public Health Agency, Safeguarding Board for NI e-Safety Forum) to support the promotion of key messages.
- Participation in annual Safer Internet Day and promotion of key messages throughout the year.
- Development and implementation of robust and appropriate policies in related areas (e.g. Acceptable Use and e-Safety Policy).

Section 6 – Bullying Behaviour Defined

“Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016” - Definition of “bullying”:

(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, i.e. leaving someone out on purpose.

In St. Brigid's we recognise that there is a continuum of inappropriate/unacceptable behaviours which can impact on everyone's right to be safe and happy. These inappropriate/unacceptable behaviours **(which are not considered as bullying)** will be dealt with in line with the school's Positive Behaviour Policy procedures.

However, on occasions we will be challenged to differentiate between inappropriate/unacceptable behaviours and those which do constitute bullying. Bullying is a 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.

We will consider if the inappropriate/unacceptable behaviours **BECOME BULLYING BEHAVIOURS** when the information gathered from investigation clearly demonstrates that the inappropriate/unacceptable behaviours meet the criteria below:

- intentional
- targeted at a specific pupils or group of pupils
- repeated*
- causing physical or emotional harm
- omission

***While bullying is usually a repeated behaviour, one-off incidents may be considered bullying.**

When assessing a one-off incident, to make a decision on whether to classify it as bullying, we 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

The following inappropriate/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 of a game*
 - *Refusing to include someone in group work*
- **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 not an exhaustive list and other behaviours which fit with the definition may be considered bullying behaviour.

Definition of emotional and physical harm which are set out in the DE Guidance.

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.

Motivations

The various motivations behind bullying 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
- Looked After Child 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, in St Brigid's we will not refer to a child as 'a bully', nor will we refer to a child as 'a victim'. Instead, we will refer to the child by describing the situation surrounding that child, for example:

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

Other unkind behaviours can be called 'socially unacceptable behaviour'.

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

Section 7 – Responsibility

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

*Some indicators of bullying may include:

- withdrawal
- lack of concentration
- marked deterioration in schoolwork
- absenteeism
- change from 'normal' behaviour

Section 8 – Reporting a Bullying Concern

Pupils Reporting a Concern

In St Brigid's, through our pastoral/preventative work, we continually encourage pupils to raise concerns with any member of staff, including teaching and non-teaching staff. We also reinforce that ANY pupil can raise a concern about bullying behaviour, not just the pupil who is experiencing the behaviour. Through our preventative work the key message focuses on 'getting help' rather than 'telling'.

Ways of reporting a bullying concern may involve:

- Verbally - talking to a member of staff
- By writing a note to a member of staff
- By posting a comment in a 'worry box'

Parents/Carers Reporting a Concern

Parents/Carers should raise concerns about alleged bullying behaviour with the school at the earliest opportunity. Also, in St Brigid's we stress the need for parents/carers to encourage their children to react appropriately to bullying behaviour and to not do anything to retaliate or to 'hit back'.

The processes for reporting a bullying concern are:

- In the first instance, all bullying concerns should be reported to the Class Teacher
- Where the parent/carer 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 principal.

Where the parent/carer remains unsatisfied that the concern has not been appropriately responded to, the school's Complaints Procedure should be followed.

In St Brigid's, while the majority of reports of bullying concerns will come from pupils and their parents/carers, the school will be open to receiving such reports from anyone.

Within this policy, all reports of bullying concerns received from pupils and/or parents/carers, will be responded to in line with this policy and that 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.

Section 9 – Responding to a Bullying Concern

The processes outlined below provide a framework for how the school will respond to any bullying concerns identified. In St Brigid's, staff are expected to respond to bullying concerns promptly and effectively therefore the processes outlined will ensure that when a bullying concern has been reported, everyone involved in the management of the incident, knows what the procedures are and will implement them immediately.

Using the '*NIABF Effective Responses to Bullying Behaviour*' resource, the member of staff responsible shall...

- Gather information, clarify facts and perceptions
- Check records for previous incidents and identify behavioural patterns
- Assess the incident against the criteria for bullying behaviour and on this basis determine whether bullying behaviour has taken place.
- Use the information gathered to complete part 1 of the 'Bullying Concern Assessment Form' (BCAF)

If, on the basis of the information gathered, the criteria for bullying behaviour has not been met, the inappropriate behaviour will be dealt with under the schools 'Positive Behaviour Policy'.

If, on the basis of the information gathered, the criteria for bullying behaviour has been met, the following processes will be followed:

- Complete the BCAF form and implement
- Identify any themes or motivating factors
- Identify the type of bullying behaviour being displayed
- Identify intervention level – level 1-4
- Select and implement appropriate interventions (level 1-4) 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

When responding to a bullying concern, school staff shall implement interventions 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. (refer to Positive Behaviour Policy)

Parents/carers should understand that in St Brigid's information regarding any action taken regarding a pupil cannot be disclosed to anyone other than that pupil and his/her parents/carers.

Section 10 – Recording

The legal requirement, as set out in the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016, is for schools to maintain a record of all incidents of bullying and alleged bullying behaviour.

St Brigid's 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.

Records will be kept on the online SIMS Behaviour Management Module, which is part of the C2k system in schools. Access to these records will be restricted and only provided to those members of school staff with a legitimate need to have access.

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.

Section 11 – Professional Development of Staff

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

- stating a commitment to 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

Section 12 – 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 Anti-Bullying Policy shall be reviewed as required, in consultation with pupils and their parents/carers within 4 years of ratification.

Section 13 – 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
- Educational Visits
- Staff Code of Conduct

Care must be taken to ensure that all policies are consistent.