Stranmillis Primary School

Anti-Bullying Policy

Date: June 2021

1. **Introduction**

Stranmillis Primary School community repudiates bullying of any kind, to any member of the school community, by any member of the school community. All reports of bullying will be treated seriously and dealt with calmly.

This document aims to set out the approach to bullying that will be taken at Stranmillis. It is an integral part of a whole school approach. The only effective way of eliminating bullying is for the whole school community (pupils, teachers, parents and the wider community) to confront the issue and work together in a concerted way to establish a safe emotional and physical environment.

A copy of this policy will be given to all new families; it will also be available for downloading from the school website. In addition, each year a summary leaflet will be sent home to all parents.

2. **The Legislative Context**

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

       Addressing Bullying in School Bill (2016)

       DE Circular 2007/20 - the Education (2006 order) Order (N.I.) 2007

       Health and Safety at Work NI Order 1978

       The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995

       The Human Rights Act 1998

       The Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 Article 3 – see DE 1998/25

       DE Circular Number 2003/13 - welfare and protection of pupils, Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) order 2003 which amends Article 3 of 1998 N.I. Order

       Pastoral Care in Schools: Child Protection, DE, 1999

       Pastoral Care in Schools: Promoting Positive Behaviour, DE, 2001

3. **The Process of Participation and on-going Consultation**

- As part of the regular development planning process parents, pupils, staff and governors are involved in a survey of school life every third year. The results of these surveys are analysed and feedback is provided to all participants.
- The results of these surveys are used to inform development priorities and identify professional development requirements
- Pupil's views are sought in the regular reviews of school policies etc.
- Pupils have regular opportunities to participate in decision making processes through the school council and through class discussions etc.
- As regards this particular policy review:
  - ✓ Parents were consulted through focus groups.
  - ✓ A focus group of year 6 pupils were asked to contribute their views on how we tackle bullying and on the proposals being brought forward.
  - ✓ The school council discussed the proposed policy contributing their views on how we tackle bullying.
  - ✓ The draft policy was discussed by teaching and non-teaching staff and by the school governors.

4. **Guiding Principles**

At Stranmillis the problem of bullying will always be treated with the greatest seriousness. Bullying in whatever form it is manifested is totally unacceptable and every effort will be made to resolve any problems that are identified.

> Every pupil has the right to a safe school and the responsibility to help stop bullying.
>
> Every Parent has the right to have his/her concerns listened to sensitively and taken seriously, and the responsibility to work with the school to resolve the problem.
>
> Every teacher has the right to effective support in maintaining safe and supportive classrooms, and the responsibility to ensure that all concerns are acted upon swiftly and effectively.

All members of our school community, pupils, parents and staff:

- have a right to learn and work in a safe and supportive environment, free from intimidation and fear;
- will be mutually respectful of everyone's right to be safe and will behave in ways which keep everyone else both emotionally and physically safe;
- have a responsibility to speak up when there is a bullying concern, safe in the knowledge that their concerns will be listened to and responded to with sensitivity;
- will work together actively to promote and sustain a strong anti-bullying culture within the school; and
- will work collaboratively to promote the welfare and wellbeing of all its members.

5. What is Bullying?

If we are to deal with bullying effectively, it is essential that we have a shared understanding of what bullying is.

Bullying is the repeated use of power by one or more persons intentionally to hurt, harm or adversely affect the rights and needs of another or others." (N.I. Anti-Bullying Forum)

Types of Bullying Behaviour

Types of unacceptable anti-social behaviours which infringe everyone's right to be safe include:

- **physical**: jostling, hitting, kicking, etc.;
- **verbal**: name-calling, insults, jokes, threats, racist remarks, spreading rumours etc.; and
- **indirect**: isolation, refusal to work with/talk to/play with/help others, interfering with personal property, Cyber-bullying.

Cyber-bullying *(cf. the eSafety Policy)*

Cyber-bullying can be defined as the use of Information and Communications Technology (IT), particularly mobile phones and the internet, deliberately to upset someone else. School staff, parents and pupils aim to work together to prevent such behaviour and to act appropriately and effectively when it occurs. Deliberate abuses which happen outside school, but which impinge upon or affect school pupils and staff will be dealt with through appropriate disciplinary, and where appropriate, external agency action.

The above unacceptable anti-social behaviours constitute bullying behaviours when there is evidence that the behaviour:

- is repetitive / persistent;
- is intentionally hurtful / harmful;
- involves an imbalance of power, leaving someone feeling helpless to prevent it or put a stop to it; and
- is targeted towards a specific individual(s).

All unacceptable behaviour will be sanctioned in line with the Pastoral Care and Behaviour Policy's procedures.

Anyone may be targeted for bullying; such bullying can be <u>motivated</u> by a range of factors, including: disability; race; religion; culture; gender; or perceived sexual orientation.

All forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying, can be very damaging. Remember, what one person may think is just a joke, may be very upsetting for someone else.

6. Measures to Prevent Bullying:

The school community works together to prevent bullying occurring by promoting and sustaining a robust anti-bullying culture through effective whole school relationships. The main features of this are:

- a caring and supportive ethos where the rights, dignity and well-being of the child are paramount;
- an effective Positive Behaviour Policy which promotes safeguarding, positive behaviour management, celebration and an ethos of aspiration and achievement for all;
- a determination that bullying will not be tolerated and that incidents will be taken seriously and investigated thoroughly;
- classroom activities and strategies aimed at creating a climate where bullying becomes unacceptable amongst the children themselves;
- clear procedures for staff, pupils and parents as to how concerns regarding alleged bullying should be handled;
- whole school strategies to be employed in dealing with specific bullying incidents;
- support for children who have been bullied;
- support for the child who is displaying bullying behaviour aimed at helping him / her to recognise and modify their unacceptable behaviour;
- robust monitoring and follow up arrangements to assess the effectiveness of any and all interventions; and
- regular school audits to assess the effectiveness of the current anti-bullying policy.

7. Roles, Responsibilities and Expectations:

The Board of Governors ensures that the bullying policy is regularly reviewed, that appropriate measures are in place to prevent bullying and that relevant records are kept.

To ensure that bullying behaviour is prevented, *every member of the school community* (pupils, parents, carers, staff) is expected to:

- foster positive self-esteem; respect the right of others to be safe and at all times 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 that a child may be being bullied;
- inform the school of any concerns relating to bullying behaviours;
- refrain from becoming involved in any kind of bullying behaviour, even at the risk of incurring temporary unpopularity;
- support any person who is being bullied, unless it is unsafe to do so;
- report any concerns or instances of bullying, witnessed or suspected, to a member of staff; and
- listen sensitively to anyone who has been bullied, take what is said seriously, providing reassurance that appropriate action will be taken.

8. Procedures for staff dealing with suspected Bullying

i. Each member of staff, whether teacher, supervisor, ancillary or administrative, has a duty of care to the children. Consequently, if a child, parent or other individual makes an allegation of bullying it must be taken seriously.

ii. Involving bystanders is a very important aspect of tackling bullying because there are always people who know what is going on. Children will be made aware that **Stranmillis is a 'telling school'**; pupils are encouraged to report incidents so that even if the children who have been bullied are too frightened to say anything the child who is displaying bullying behaviour will know he/she cannot get away with abusive behaviour.

iii. At Stranmillis we use a two-stage process. All problems should be reported to the class teacher who will decide whether a Stage One or Stage Two approach will be most appropriate:

Stage One: This approach is best suited for those issues that can best be resolved informally by the class teacher. The teacher should:
- talk to the children involved;
- talk with their parents, if appropriate;
- discuss the incident with the Principal or a member of the SLT; and
- keep a simple written record in the class file.

Stage Two: This approach is best suited for more serious / persistent issues. Such incidents will be investigated and resolved by the Principal, SENCO, or senior member of staff. The member of staff should:
- talk to the children;
- on the basis of evidence, complete page 1 of the 'Bullying Concern Assessment Form' (Appendix 3) to determine:
    - ✓ whether bullying behaviour has or has not occurred;
    - ✓ the type of bullying;
    - ✓ the motivation behind the bullying; and
    - ✓ the details of what happened.
- use the "effective responses to bullying" outlined in section 9 of this policy or in the NIABF's guidance document "Effective Responses to Bullying Behaviour" to identify appropriate support interventions for resolving issues & repairing relationships; and
- talk with the children's parents.
- Keep a written record of the incident, investigation and outcomes using the 'Bullying Concern Assessment Form'; a copy passed to the principal to be held in the anti-bullying file. The contents of this file will be confidential and the file will be stored securely.

iv.   If the incident is being dealt with by the Principal or other senior member of staff, the class teachers of any children directly involved must be informed of the issue and how it is being handled.

v.   It should be recognised that bullying may be going on without the person who is being bullied reporting it to those in authority. Members of staff should therefore be on the lookout for specific behaviour patterns that might indicate that bullying is occurring.

Signs of bullying might include:
- unwillingness to come to school;
- withdrawn, isolated behaviour;
- persistently complaining about missing possessions;
- refusal to talk about the problem;
- being easily distressed;
- standard of work falling;
- rate of progress much less than expected;
- reluctance to talk about problems;
- bedwetting; or
- damaged or incomplete work.

Staff dealing with a bullying incident should:
- acknowledge that the bullying is now out in the open and can be dealt with;
- support the pupil being bullied;
- identify what has happened;
- stop the immediate bullying;
- avoid recriminations;
- help the child who is engaging in bullying behaviours to change his or her behaviour; and
- if appropriate, make the peer group aware and ask them to help the child being bullied. This would need to be handled with great sensitivity

The staff at Stranmillis will:
- endeavour to notice when a pupil is isolated and sad;
- look for the reasons for this;
- never see it as just play-fighting, name-calling, a bit of fun or part of growing up;
- not tell the victim to ignore it, to sort it out themselves or to hit back;
- work with the perpetrator to stop the offending behaviour; and
- model appropriate behaviour ourselves.

Incidents of persistent or significant bullying should be discussed with the teacher receiving the class the following year; it is important that teachers are aware of previous incidents, in order to inform future judgements.

9. Effective Responses to Bullying

A number of different strategies will be used depending upon the nature of the concern. Appropriate Intervention strategies will be chosen from the Intervention Tables within the NIABF guidance document "Effective Responses to Bullying behaviour" and from the following approaches traditionally used effectively at Stranmillis:

1. **The No Punishment / Robust Monitoring Approach.** This will be used only at the early stages. The aim is to sort out the problem for the 'victim' rather than to punish the bully. This overcomes the typical bullying cycle where the victim is further targeted for having got the bullies into trouble. Regular reviews of the situation are inbuilt, and the victim is given a simple and unobtrusive means of reporting to the teacher / Principal regarding progress.

    We find that this is a very successful method in the majority of cases as in most cases the 'bullies' do not appreciate the effect their behaviour is having and once this is understood, or indeed once the bullies see that the situation is being taken seriously and regularly monitored, the problem stops.

2. **Involving Parents.** In all but the most minor of cases parents will be informed immediately if their child is being bullied or involved in bullying. Parents are asked to remember that even serious bullying issues can sound trivial when reported; what one person may think is just a joke, may be very upsetting for someone else.

    If the problem persists the parents of the bullies will be asked to be involved in discussing the problem with school staff and in particular in agreeing a planned approach, setting out strategies, possible sanctions, and dates for review.

3. **Peer Support.** This involves identifying a small circle of friends who will be supportive to the victim and who will discreetly inform the class teacher if the victim continues to be targeted. This strategy will not be appropriate in all incidents and will in any event only be used after the parents of the victim have given their consent. The victim will be centrally involved in identifying children who might be part of the circle of friends.

4. **Redirection:** Identifying activities, where possible, to redirect the bullies' energies to more productive and social activities.

5. **External Support.** Involving the Education Welfare Officer, CIDS Team or other support services in working directly with the bully and his / her family.

6. **Temporary Exclusion.**

7. **Permanent Exclusion.**

10. Classroom Strategies

All teachers should be aware of the problem of bullying and of their role in cultivating a climate where bullying will not be tolerated by onlooking children. To this end a number of classroom activities can be employed as part of the ongoing work in PDMU. This might include:

1. drama and role-play;

2. circle time (for general discussion of bullying, not to be used for dealing with specific incidents): (children sit in a circle with their teacher and engage in a programme of activities to challenge and motivate the class / group to promote positive relationships; activities include a wide range of co-operative games, rounds, drama strategies and discussions in which children take turns to listen to one another);

3. video and discussion;

4. literature – stories / poetry;

5. art; and / or

6. debate / discussion

At least one session each term will be given over to the issue of bullying.

In addition each P4 – 7 class will have a secure 'Feeling Safe / What I have liked today' box, in which pupils can post notes about their worries or concerns regarding not only bullying but any other issues. Teachers will open these boxes regularly and follow up on any concerns that have been posted.

In the playground

A 'Buddy Bench' is available in the playground. Children at 'a loose end' can sit on this bench; all children will be encouraged to look out for anyone sitting on the bench and to include them in their activities.

If you are being bullied:

✓ **tell your parents**

✓ **tell your teacher or an assistant**

✓ **tell Mrs Wilson**

✓ **tell a friend**

✓ **tell a playground buddy**.

It's Cool to Tell.

If you see anyone else being bullied at school please tell someone about it.

It's Cool to Include.

People who are being bullied often feel alone so if you can help someone who is so unhappy please do so.

It's not Cool to Bully.

We take bullying seriously. It will be sorted out.

Appendix 2: Advice to Parents

If you feel your child is being bullied:

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Don't

- ✓ Panic.

- ✓ Ignore the problem and hope that it will go away.

Do

- ✓ Tell the class teacher

- ✓ Tell the principal

- ✓ Be prepared to work with the school to resolve the problem.

- ✓ Keep the school informed if the bullying does not immediately stop or if at a later date it re-occurs.

Most reports of bullying behaviour are resolved after one intervention from the staff. A few may take longer to be resolved and will involve ongoing reviews.

Appendix 3: Bullying Concern Assessment Form

Part 1: Assessment of Concern   **Date:**

Bullying is the repeated use of power by one or more persons intentionally to hurt, harm or adversely affect the rights and needs of another or others."

Pupil(s) alleged to be experiencing bullying	Pupil(s) alleged to have been bullying

Type of incident:	**Motivation (if applicable):**
[ ] *Physical bullying*	[ ] Disability
	[ ] Homophobic / transphobic
[ ] *Verbal bullying*	[ ] Racist
	[ ] Sectarian
[ ] *Indirect bullying*	[ ] Other: _____

Is this Bullying or anti-social behaviour?

[ ] Are these behaviours repetitive / persistent?
[ ] Ae the behaviours intentionally hurtful?
[ ] Is there a power-imbalance?
[ ] Are the behaviours targeted towards a specific individual / group?

In light of the above does this meet the definition of bullying? _____

Are there previous records involving any of these pupils?

Details of the incident:

Part 2: Details of the interventions to be deployed	
The pupil(s) who have been bullied	*The pupil(s) who have been displaying bullying behaviour*
Have parents of each child been informed? (if not, why not?)	
Monitoring arrangements:	
Review (one week later):	**Review (one term later):**