



St John's Education Centre (Anti-Bullying Policy)

Definition of Bullying

Bullying is a systematic and on-going form of aggressive behaviour. This repeated aggression can be cyber, verbal, psychological or physical. Bullying behaviour is a sustained and deliberate attempt by one person or a group of people to intimidate another person. Bullying requires an imbalance of power and intent to hurt. The action is repeated over time and there is no justification for the action. A once off incident of fighting between two people of the same standing does not **constitute** bullying. Incidents of this nature or any other serious misbehaviour will be brought to the attention of the Education Programme Leader.

Aims and Objectives

The ethos of the St. John's encourages mutual respect, trust, care, consideration and support for all. Our goal is to create and maintain a safe and secure environment in which everyone can learn and work. The aim of this policy is to prevent and deal with any behaviour deemed as bullying. The implementation of this policy will create an ethos where bullying will not be tolerated. All the staff working in St. John's have a responsibility to recognise bullying when it occurs and take appropriate action in accordance with this policy.

Policy Aims

- ✚ To raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with programme management, teachers, students, parents/guardians.
- ✚ To ensure supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of centre activity are kept under observation.
- ✚ To develop procedures for noting and reporting incidents of bullying behaviour in written Form as 'incident reports'.
- ✚ To develop procedures for investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.
- ✚ To create an ethos that encourages students to disclose incidents of bullying behaviour.
- ✚ To work with and through the various local agencies in countering all forms of bullying and anti-social behaviour.
- ✚ To monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this policy on anti-bullying behaviour.

Types of Bullying Behaviour

| Types | Examples |
|---------------|---|
| General | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Harassment · Physical Aggression · Damage to property · Name-calling · Slagging · Taunting · Verbal abuse · Offensive joke · Victimisation · Intimidation · The “look” · Exclusion · Extortion · Graffiti · Threats · Intrusion through interfering with personal belongings · An attack by rumour, gossip, innuendo or ridicule on any individual’s reputation |
| Cyber(1) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Silent phone calls · Abusive phone calls · Abusive text messages · Abusive e-mail · Abusive website comments/blogs/MSN and all social networking sites. · Online polls/fake pages/camera phone abuse |
| Homophobic | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Taunting · Name calling · Spreading rumours |
| Racial | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Discrimination, prejudice, comments or insults in regard to colour, nationality, social class, religious beliefs, ethnic background |
| Relational | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · This involves manipulating relationships as a means of bullying. Behaviours include: · Ignoring and isolation · Exclusion from a group · Taking someone’s friends away · Spreading Rumours · Talking loudly enough so the intended victim can hear · The ‘look’ |
| Sexual | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Unwelcome sexual comments or contact |
| Special Needs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · See page 6 |

(1) See cyber-bullying guidelines

Indications of Bullying Behaviour – Signs and Symptoms

The following signs and systems may suggest that a student is being bullied:

- Anxiety about travelling to and from St. John’s Education Centre – requesting parents to drive or collect them, changing route of travel, avoiding regular times for travelling to and from the centre.
- Fear of going out into the Centre’s grounds and perimeter.
- Unwillingness/refusal to attend St. John’s.
- ‘Mitching’.
- Loss of concentration and loss of enthusiasm and interest in the Programme.
- Pattern of physical illnesses (e.g. headaches, stomach aches).
- Unexplained changes in either mood or behaviour.
- Visible signs of anxiety or distress – stammering, withdrawing, nightmares, crying, not eating, vomiting, bedwetting.
- Spontaneous out-of-character comments about either students or members of staff.
- Becoming disruptive or aggressive.
- Possessions missing or damaged.
- Increased requests for money or stealing money to meet extortion demands.
- Unexplained bruising or cuts or damaged clothing.
- Reluctance and/or refusal to say what is troubling the student.
- Becoming isolated in the class.
- Unexplained absences.
- May begin to bully other younger students.

These signs do not necessarily mean that a student is being bullied. They can also be indicative of other problems. If repeated or occurring in combination these signs do warrant investigation in order to establish whether or not bullying is the root cause.

Bullying of Students with Special Education Needs

St. John’s Education Centre is an inclusive centre. We provide a secure, accepting, safe and stimulating environment where everyone is valued.

We have students who have learning disabilities and/or communication difficulties. Everyone involved in St. John’s is very aware that these students can be especially vulnerable to bullying and we must therefore be particularly vigilant at all times.

Response to Bullying

St. John’s response to bullying behaviour is to provide the highest standard of education in a caring, stable, secure learning environment. Bullying behaviour, by its very nature, undermines and dilutes the quality of education. It affects not only those immediately involved but also the rest of the community. Bullying behaviour thrives in an atmosphere of uncertainty and secrecy. The goal of our programme is to prevent bullying behaviour from taking a foothold. This is achieved through collective vigilance among all our staff. All incidents of bullying behaviour will be dealt with in a fair and equitable manner.

Management Committee

The Management Committee is responsible for ensuring that all members of the St. John's community are enabled to deal effectively with bullying. The committee is committed to providing time and resources for the implementation of the policy. The Management Committee will ensure that proper supervisory and monitoring measures are in place to prevent bullying and to deal with incidents appropriately as they arise.

Student's Response

St. John's Education Centre provides a positive ethos where learning and personal development can take place.

- Students are expected to show respect for themselves and for all members of the centre. They are taught to be tolerant of the differences and needs of others. Students know that bullying is an unacceptable form of aggressive behaviour both inside and outside of St. John's. Like other forms of aggression, bullying unfolds in a set of social contexts: between two students, within peer group, or in the general environment. It is recognised that most students are bystanders of bullying situations, aware of what is going on and sometimes participating. As well as those who are bullied and those who bully, there are usually others who are witnesses. The following participant roles have been identified:
 - **Assistants** who join in and assist the bully.
 - **Reinforcers** who do not actively attack the victim but provide an audience thus giving positive feedback to the perpetrator.
 - **Outsiders** who do not take sides but allow the bullying to continue by their 'silent approval'
 - **Defenders** who comfort the victim and try to stop the bullying.

The majority of peers become **Bystanders** because

- They are afraid of getting hurt themselves.
- They are afraid of becoming the new target
- They feel that by intervening they will only make the situation worse.
- They do not know what to do and do not have the knowledge or the skills to intervene effectively.

Our anti-bullying policy will seek to empower all young people to

Recognise,

Reject and

Report any incident that disrespects another member of our community and ultimately becoming an **Up-stander**.

Parents'/guardians Response

Parents/guardians play a vital role in supporting the young person here at St. John's programme. Parents/guardians are the first to be told about persistent bullying behaviour. The onus is on the parent/guardian to inform the centre, thus setting in motion the procedure of reporting and investigation. Prior to making a report to the St. John's, parents/guardians are best advised to take a calm problem-solving approach and to gather as much information as possible.

Procedures for Reporting and Investigating Bullying Incidents

General Guidelines

- In line with our motto is **"If you don't report it you support it"** all students are encouraged to report all bullying incidents to a member of staff.
- All reported incidents will be recorded, investigated promptly and treated fairly and equitably, giving due regard to individual circumstances.
- Serious cases of bullying will be referred onto the Education Programme leader and the core team.
- All involved are best advised to take a calm unemotional, problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour reported by staff, students or parents/guardians.

Process

Incidents of bullying behaviour, no matter how trivial, which are drawn to the attention of a member of staff.

- Appropriate personnel. (Education Programme Leader, teacher or any other member of staff), will interview all of the students involved (either separately or together as deemed appropriate) in a bullying incident outside the classroom situation.
- When analysing incidents information will be probed using the following questions: Who?, What?, When?, Where?, Why?, and How?
- The alleged victim and alleged perpetrators of the incident will be spoken to and encouraged to solve the problem:
 - Separately
 - Together
- Bullying by more than one person
 - If a gang is involved in the incidents each member should be interviewed individually and then as a group.
 - The alleged victim and perpetrators will be invited to write down any relevant details and complete a "Bullying Report Form" (see Appendix 1)
 - Written statements from all involved in the incident will be attached to the Report Form.
 - All interviews will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all students involved.
 - It should be made clear to all students that when they report incidents of bullying they are not telling tales, but behaving responsibly.
 - Records will be kept of all incidents and of the procedures that were followed.
 - Parents are informed if deemed appropriate.**
 - The class teacher will monitor progress of the students involved in a bullying incident by liaising with parents and students involved (separately) at follow-up meetings.

Response to Bullying Behaviour

- 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 the student to see the situation from the

victim's point of view. **The incident will no longer be considered if there is no recurrence within that academic year.**

- If the behaviour persists the Education Programme Leader and parents/guardians of the victims and bullies will be informed. Thus, they will be given the opportunity to discuss the matter and are in a position to help and support their child. Appropriate sanctions will be imposed. The incident will no longer be considered if there is no recurrence in that academic year.
- If there are repeated incidents, perhaps repeated verbal assault or coercion, the matter should be reported. Parents will be involved and appropriate sanctions applied. In some cases both sets of parents/guardians may be asked to meet in the centre to resolve the issue and to monitor the situation.
- Where the incident is deemed to be more serious (e.g. gross misbehaviour or physical assault), the Education Programme Leader should be informed immediately and he/she will inform the Management Committee.
- Offenders and victims of bullying may be referred to counselling.
- Sanctions may include:
 - A contract of good behaviour.
 - Withdrawal of privileges.
 - Exclusion from the breaks in the appropriate break area.
 - Detention
 - Suspension
 - Exclusion from St. John's Education Programme.

Complaint against a Staff Member

In the case of a complaint regarding a staff member or a teacher, this will be referred to the Education Programme Leader and Chairperson of the Management Committee.

Complaint against the Education Programme Leader

In the case of a complaint regarding the Education Programme Leader, this will be referred to the Chairperson of the Management Committee.

Complaint by a Teacher against a Student

In the case of a complaint by a Teacher against a student, the teacher talks to the student, the teacher refers the matter to the Education Programme Leader.

Cyber bullying

While we must provide the highest protection possible for students using new technologies, **families must also foster a balance between protecting children and teaching them to be aware of potential dangers** and assessing threats for themselves. Encouraging students to talk about issues they come across online is a step towards building trust in young people's ability to use the internet and mobile phones responsibly and to safeguard themselves and their peers against those who use the internet to threaten their welfare. (Barnados, 2009)

Cyber bullying involves using the Internet or texting on mobile phones to send hurtful messages or posting information to damage people's reputation and friendships. Cyber bullying is similar to other types of bullying, except that it takes place online and through text messages sent to mobile phones. Cyber bullies can be classmates, online acquaintances, and even anonymous users, but most often they do know their victims.

Preventing cyber bullying in St. John's

- Supervision is always in place when students are online.
- Websites are previewed and evaluated.
- Firewalls and filters have been installed in all computers and these are regularly updated.
- Students' internet usage will be monitored by checking user files, temporary files and history files.
- Students have access to computers for curriculum use only.

St. John's Education Centre teaches students that all types of bullying including cyber bullying is hurtful and wrong. Students are encouraged to treat other students on and offline with respect.

All staff members of St. John's are fully aware of the sanctions that will be imposed arising from the misuse of the centre's computers that result in hurt and distress to other members. Students are made aware of their rights and responsibilities online and offline. Students are taught that the Internet is not a private place and they should guard their private information online. St. John's promotes the positive use of technology, discusses etiquette and personal safety issues. Our centre encourages a 'telling' atmosphere, including the reporting of cyber bullying.

The Parents' response to cyber bullying

- Offer support and reassurance to your child.
- Help your child to keep relevant evidence for investigation by printing webpages and by not deleting mobile messages, snap shots, photos and visuals.
- Show your child how to prevent it happening again by changing password and contact details, blocking contacts, reporting abuse on site.
- Ensure that the student knows not to retaliate or return the message.
- Encourage the student to keep personal information private online.
- Insist that your child never, ever gives their personal password to another person even a friend.
- Insist that your child never accepts as a "an online friend" a stranger whom they do not know in real life.

Investigating incidents

Parents/guardians must take full responsibility for their child's inappropriate use of the Internet or mobile phones outside the centre. All incidents of cyber bullying that have their origins in our centre will be fully investigated, recorded and dealt with under the procedures laid down in the Code of Behaviour and the Anti-Bullying Policy. Sanctions laid down in these policies will be adhered to in response to inappropriate use of media and information technology.

Incidents of cyber bullying that take place outside and affect a student in St. John's will be brought to the attention of parents/guardians. With regard to serious incidents of this type of bullying behaviour, it may be appropriate to inform the Gardaí.

Mobile phones must be switched off and handed up at the start of each day at all times once the student enters St. John's .

³ See Mobile Phone Policy

This policy was ratified by the Trustees Interim Management Committee on: 30th May 2024

Joe Twomey.

Signature: _____

Joe Twomey
Chairperson
Trustees' Interim Management Committee
St John's Education Centre

Appendix 1. Bullying Report Form

Bullying Record Form

Date: _____

Time: _____

Staff Member: _____

Activity : _____

Names of those involved: _____

Details of Incident: _____

Action Taken (Warning, Agreement, Mediation, Sanctions, Referral, Other)

SIGNED: Student: _____

Staff Member: _____

Parent/guardian: _____

Suggestions for follow-up
