

Anti-Bullying Policy

Introduction

This policy was formulated by the staff and parent representatives of St. Michael's N. S. and will be ratified by the Board of Management annually for the promotion of positive behaviour and to deal with any incidents of bullying which may occur.

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. Michael's National 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.

Rationale

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
- 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)
- Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils;
- Supports for staff;
- Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies)
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy

Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of the school

In keeping with our Catholic Ethos, St. Michael's wants to encourage our children

- to learn to think independently;
- to listen to and actively engage with others
- to respect and value diversity
- to respect themselves and others
- to be responsible for themselves and to society

Aims:

- To raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with school management, teachers, pupils, parents/guardians
- To create a school ethos which encourages children to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour and thus reduce its prevalence and prevent its recurrence
- To ensure comprehensive supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of school activity are kept under observation
- To develop procedures for noting, investigating and dealing with all incidents of bullying behaviour including identity-based and cyber-bullying

- To implement a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and for those involved in bullying behaviour
- To work with appropriate agencies in countering all forms of bullying and anti-bullying behaviour

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.

The following types of bullying behaviour are included in the definition of bullying:

- physical aggression (pushing/shoving, pinching, kicking, etc)
- deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying
- cyberbullying
- identity-based bullying such as homophobic bullying, racist bullying, bullying based on a person's membership of the Traveller community and bullying of those with disabilities or special educational needs.

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 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 public message, image or statement which 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 with the school's Code of Behaviour.

Information on the types of bullying, impact, indicators and other characteristics of bullying behaviour are set out in Appendix 1

The relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows:

- The Class Teacher
- Principal Teacher
- All school staff

Prevention strategies

The education and prevention strategies that will be used by the school are as follows:

1. Positive school culture and climate

A cornerstone in the prevention of bullying is a positive school culture and climate that is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity and respect. St. Michael's promotes a positive school climate which encourages respect, trust, care, consideration and support for others.

Central to our positive school culture is respectful relationships across the entire school community. This encompasses relationships amongst peers (e.g. pupil to pupil, teacher to teacher) and relationships between groups (e.g. teachers and pupils, parents and teachers etc.).

We challenge the misconception that bullying is a normal phase of development and that it teaches pupils to toughen up. The school endeavours to create an environment where pupils feel comfortable and free to discuss and disclose incidents of bullying. We explicitly teach pupils to realise that they also have a responsibility for the safety and welfare of fellow pupils.

St. Michael's encourages open dialogue between all school staff and pupils. We provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to raise their concerns in an environment that is comfortable for the pupil.

The key elements of our positive school culture and climate are outlined in Table A Appendix 2

2. Effective leadership

- St. Michael's endeavours to provide effective leadership through its Principal, Deputy Principal, Teachers, Staff and Board of Management supporting a school culture and climate that celebrates difference.
- All those in leadership roles within the school play their part in stimulating a school-wide approach to preventing and tackling bullying.
- The Principal uses her position of influence to affect attitudes and set standards in dealing with bullying behaviour.
- All staff strive to engender an ethos under which bullying is unacceptable. They ensure that practical steps are taken to challenge and respond to bullying. They also involve both staff and pupils in developing and implementing a vision of the school where diversity is accepted and celebrated.
- As pupils model their behaviour on that of adults, so all staff members are careful to act as good role-models and are fair, firm, clear and consistent in their disciplinary measures.
- Parents are also expected to model the standards that pupils are asked to respect. They are encouraged to understand the importance of expecting pupils to behave according to these standards.
- The ways in which parents and teachers interact provide pupils with a model of good working relationships.

3. A school-wide approach

- St. Michael's employs a school-wide approach to dealing with the problem of bullying behaviour. Bullying behaviour affects not only those immediately involved. It can affect everyone in the classroom, in the school and, ultimately, in the wider community.
- A positive school-wide attitude and involvement assists us in countering bullying behaviour in our school. In addition to the role of management and staff, parents and pupils have a role and responsibility in helping the school to prevent and address school-based bullying behaviour and to deal with any negative impact within the school of bullying behaviour that occurs elsewhere. Parents are encouraged to recognise that a school that openly discusses bullying is acting positively and that they need to work with the school to ensure there is a coherent, school-wide approach to tackling the issue.
- Bullying behaviour thrives in an atmosphere of uncertainty and secrecy in which the pupil often feels a sense of hopelessness and futility against the power being exercised by the person engaged in bullying behaviour. We strive to provide a high degree of school-wide vigilance and openness to ensure that bullying behaviour can be adequately tackled.

- We promote relevant home/school/community links as a tool to countering bullying behaviour and this has become a normal part of the school's effective operation. While we recognise that we have no jurisdiction over incidents that occur outside the school, if we become aware of such incidents, we reserve the right to become involved in cautioning pupils against such behaviour and informing parents where necessary. In this regard we encourage those members of the wider community who come directly in daily contact with school pupils (school bus drivers,) to play a positive role in assisting us to counter bullying behaviour by reporting such behaviour to parents and/or to the school as appropriate. Through this approach, a network is formed.
- In certain cases, however, it may be necessary for the school to seek the assistance of other local persons and formal agencies such as NEPS, HSE social workers, community workers, Gardaí, etc.

Implementation of education and prevention strategies including awareness raising

- St. Michael's promotes a preventative approach to bullying as an integral part of our anti bullying policy
- Effective practices we employ include prevention and awareness raising measures across all aspects of bullying and involves strategies to engage pupils in addressing problems when they arise. We teach strategies to build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils.
- As self-esteem is a major factor in determining behaviour, St. Michael's through both curricular and extra-curricular programmes, provides pupils with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth.
- St. Michael's provides programmes focused on developing pupils' awareness and understanding of bullying, including its causes and effects, which deal with the issue of identity-based bullying including homophobic and transphobic bullying. Pupils in the senior classes will be taught not to use homophobic or transphobic terms as a means of insult or abuse.
- We believe that the best way to address cyber-bullying is to prevent it happening in the first place. Pupils are educated on appropriate online behaviour, how to stay safe while on-line and also on developing a culture of reporting any concerns about cyber-bullying. Through our Broadband Filtering Network and our mobile phone policy the scope for cyber-bullying to occur as a result of access to technology from within the school is minimised. However, if we become aware of incidents of cyber-bullying outside of school, we reserve the right to become involved in cautioning pupils against such behaviour and informing parents.
- Programmes that we use as prevention measures in the above areas include Alive-O, SPHE Programme, Stay Safe, Walk Tall, RSE Programme, and the Anti-Bullying Campaign Tools for Teachers. These curriculum components and programmes are particularly relevant to the prevention of bullying and the promotion of respect for diversity and inclusiveness. There is also 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.
- Approaches to decreasing the likelihood of bullying for pupils with SEN include improving inclusion, focusing on developing social skills, paying attention to key moments such as transitioning from primary to post-primary and enriching our good school culture, which has 'respect for all' and 'helping one another' as central tenets.

Supports for staff

- The Board of Management provide copies of the school's anti bullying policy to members of school staff to ensure that they have sufficient familiarity with it to enable them to effectively and consistently apply the policy when required.
- Anti-Bullying policy and practices are included on Staff Meeting agendas. It is hoped that DES will provide the necessary in-service supports for staff appropriate to their role to enable them to recognise bullying, implement effective strategies for preventing bullying and where appropriate, intervene effectively in bullying cases.
- The Board of Management also makes appropriate arrangements to ensure that temporary and substitute staff have sufficient awareness of the school's code of behaviour and supports for staff
- Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies)
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy

Procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying

- The primary aim for the relevant teacher 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);
- Teachers, who are investigating cases of bullying keep a factual, written record of their discussions with those involved;
- 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 will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. In that way pupils will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It is made clear to all pupils that when they report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly;
- Non-teaching staff such as secretary, special needs assistants (SNAs), caretakers, cleaners are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to 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 take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents;
- Incidents are generally investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved;
- All interviews are 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 in this way.
- When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher seeks answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This is 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 is interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved are met as a group. At the group meeting, each member is asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements;
- Each member of a group is supported through the possible pressures that they may face from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher;
- At the teacher's discretion, it may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s);
- In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved are 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 should 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;
- Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it is made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and every effort is made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied;
- It is 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 are 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.
- 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 is recorded by the relevant teacher in the recording template at Appendix 3
- In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant teacher must, as part of 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
 - 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 are 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 will advise the parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

Procedures for recording bullying behaviour in St. Michael's N.S.

All records will be maintained in accordance with relevant data protection legislation. The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour will include the following:

(i) While all reports, including anonymous reports, of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, she will use her professional judgement in relation to the records to be kept of these reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same

(ii) If it is established by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred, she must keep appropriate written records (in the Bullying Report Book in the Staff Room) which will assist her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as practicable, the relationships of the parties involved

(iii) The relevant teacher will use the recording template at Appendix 3 to record the bullying behaviour in the following circumstances:

a) In cases where she considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after she determined that bullying behaviour occurred

b) In certain circumstances, bullying behaviour must be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable

In each of the circumstances at a) and b) above, the recording template at Appendix 3 will be completed in full and retained by the teacher in question and a copy provided to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable. It should also be noted that the timeline for recording bullying behaviour in the recording template at Appendix 3 does not, in any way, preclude the relevant teacher from consulting the Principal or Deputy Principal at an earlier stage in relation to a case.

At least once in every school term, the Principal will provide a report to the B.O.M. setting out:

- The overall number of bullying cases reported (by means of the bullying recording template in Appendix 3) to the Principal or Deputy Principal since the previous report to the B.O.M. and
- Confirmation that all of these cases have been, or are being, dealt with in accordance with the school's anti-bullying policy and these procedures
- As part of these arrangements, the B.O.M. will undertake an annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation by the school. Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, will be readily accessible to parents and pupils on request and provided to the Parents' Association. A standardised notification is included at Appendix 4. A record of the review and its outcome is made available if requested to the patron and the Department.

Support for bullies and perpetrators

A programme of support for those pupils involved in bullying behaviour also forms part of St. Michael's N.S. intervention process. Pupils involved in bullying behaviour need assistance on an ongoing basis. For those with low self-esteem, opportunities will be developed to increase feelings of self-worth. That is why the learning strategies applied within our school allow for the enhancement of all pupils' self-worth. In St. Michael's N. S. this is done by giving pupils a say in decisions which affect them (child-centred decision making). The pupils are involved in formulating class rules and a positive behavioural management system is in place. Our policy is to catch the children 'Being Good' rather than constantly harping on about what could or should have been done in a particular instance.

Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour may need counselling to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others. Such help will be sought from the HSE, in consultation with parents, if and as the need arises. Every effort will be made to raise awareness among parents of the different types of bullying behaviour and of their negative impact on the victim. They will also be made aware of the destructive forces it brings to bear on the perpetrator and, in most cases, is a sign of underlying issues that need to be addressed.

Parental permission will not be required for the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) to anonymously seek advice from the HSE regarding the management of the behaviour of a particular pupil or group of pupils as this is a legal requirement. The safety and/or wellbeing of the majority of the children in the school will always take precedence over the rights of the minority.

Bullying as part of a continuum of behaviour

It is also important to note that bullying behaviour can be part of a continuum of behaviour rather than a stand-alone issue and in some cases behaviour may escalate beyond that which can be described as bullying to serious physical or sexual assault or harassment. To ensure that any such cases are dealt with appropriately, St. Michael's National School's anti-bullying policy provides for appropriate linkages with the overall code of behaviour and provides for referral to be made to relevant external agencies and authorities where appropriate. As mentioned earlier, in cases where the school has serious concerns in relation to managing the behaviour of a pupil, the advice of the National Education Psychological Service (NEPS) will be sought.

15. Referral of serious cases to the HSE

In relation to bullying in schools, Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011 (Children First) and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools provide that certain cases may be reported to the HSE and/or the Gardaí at the discretion of the DLP (Designated Liaison Person). The DLP in St. Michael's N. S. is the Principal, Josephine Gallery.

16. On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy

The effectiveness of the school's anti-bullying policy will be subject to continuous review in the light of incidents of bullying behaviour encountered. The school will make provision for periodic examination of the prevention and intervention strategies in place. Surveys of pupils, staff and parents will be used to provide important information about the effectiveness of the anti-bullying measures in place and identify any significant behavioural trends that may benefit from early intervention.

Supervision and Monitoring of Pupils

The B.O.M. 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 B.O.M. 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.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on _____

This policy has been made available to school personnel and is readily accessible to parents and pupils on request and provided to the Parents' Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the B.O.M. once in every school year. Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, be readily accessible to parents and pupils on request and provided to the Parents' Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Signed: _____
(Chairperson of B.O.M.)

Signed: _____
(Principal)

Date: _____

Date: _____

Date of next review: _____

Appendix 1

1. Types of Bullying

The following are some types of bullying behaviour that can occur amongst pupils:

Physical aggression: This behaviour includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping people. It may also take the form of severe physical assault. While pupils often engage in 'mess fights', they can sometimes be used as a disguise for physical harassment or inflicting pain.

Intimidation: Some bullying behaviour takes the form of intimidation: it may be based on the use of very aggressive body language with the voice being used as a weapon. Particularly upsetting can be a facial expression which conveys aggression and/or dislike.

Isolation/exclusion and other relational bullying: This occurs where a certain person is deliberately isolated, excluded or ignored by some or all of the class group. This practice is usually initiated by the person engaged in bullying behaviour and can be difficult to detect. It may be accompanied by writing insulting remarks about the pupil in public places, by passing around notes about or drawings of the pupil or by whispering insults about them loud enough to be heard. Relational bullying occurs when a person's attempts to socialise and form relationships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined. One of the most common forms includes control: "Do this or I won't be your friend anymore" (implied or stated); a group ganging up against one person (girl or boy); non-verbal gesturing; malicious gossip; spreading rumours about a person or giving them the "silent treatment".

Cyber-bullying: This type of bullying is increasingly common and is continuously evolving. It is bullying carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as text, social network sites, e-mail, instant messaging (IM), apps, gaming sites, chat-rooms and other online technologies. Being the target of inappropriate or hurtful messages is the most common form of online bullying. As cyber-bullying uses technology to perpetrate bullying behaviour and does not require face to face contact, cyber-bullying can occur at any time (day or night). Many forms of bullying can be facilitated through cyber-bullying. For example, a target may be sent homophobic text messages or pictures may be posted with negative comments about a person's sexuality, appearance etc.

Name calling: Persistent name-calling directed at the same individual(s) which hurts, insults or humiliates should be regarded as a form of bullying behaviour. Often name-calling of this type refers to physical appearance, e.g., size or clothes worn. Accent or distinctive voice characteristics may attract negative attention. Academic ability can also provoke name calling. This tends to operate at two extremes. There are those who are singled out for attention because they are perceived to be weak academically. At the other extreme there are those who, because they are perceived as high achievers, are also targeted.

Damage to property: Personal property can be the focus of attention for bullying behaviour. This may result in damage to clothing, mobile phone or other devices, school books and other learning material or interference with a pupil's locker or bicycle. The contents of school bags and pencil cases may be scattered on the floor. Items of personal property may be defaced, broken, stolen or hidden.

Extortion: Demands for money may be made, often accompanied by threats (sometimes carried out in the event of the targeted pupil not delivering on the demand). A pupil may also be forced into theft of property for delivery to another who is engaged in bullying behaviour

2. Where does bullying happen?

Bullying can happen anywhere at any time but there are certain times and places which particularly facilitate bullying.

Cyber-Bullying: Access to technology means that cyber-bullying can happen around the clock and the pupil's home may not even be a safe haven from such bullying. Pupils are increasingly communicating in ways that are often unknown to adults and free from supervision. The nature of these technologies means digital content can be shared and seen by a very wide audience almost instantly and is almost impossible to delete permanently. While cyber-bullying often takes place at home and at night, the impact can also be felt in school

Areas of unstructured activity: Bullying in schools frequently takes place in the playground/school yard. School grounds with hidden or obscured parts may provide an environment conducive to bullying. Many common playground/school yard games present opportunities for bullying because of their physical nature. It is relatively easy to single out and bully another pupil. The noise level masks much of what is going on. The playground/school yard provides the opportunity for older pupils to pick on younger pupils. It can also be the setting for bullying by groups. Continuing provocation may eventually lead to a physical fight and ironically, in some cases, the person being bullied may appear to be the aggressor because he/she finally gives vent to his/her frustration.

Toilets, corridors and cloakrooms may also be the scene of verbal, psychological and physical bullying. The behaviour of pupils in those areas needs careful monitoring. Everyone accepts that prevention is better than cure and that we all have a role in ensuring that bullying behaviour is kept to a minimum in our school.

Bullying in the classroom: Bullying may also take place in class. It may occur subtly through glances, looks and sniggers but may take the more overt form of physical intimidation. It may also be exacerbated if a classroom atmosphere prevails whereby pupils are allowed to make derogatory comments about their classmates or other teachers. However, teachers need to be alert to the underlying reasons for such comments in case pupils are trying to disclose something which is disturbing them and thus needs further investigation. Bullying may also occur between class periods irrespective of whether the class or the teacher moves.

Coming to and from school: The area immediately outside the school, the local shops and local neighbourhood are often the scenes of bullying. Bullying can also take place at the bus-stop or on the journey to and from school whether the individuals are walking, cycling or on school buses.

3. Impacts of Bullying:

The following are some of the effects that bullying behaviour that can have on victims, witnesses and those who engage in bullying:

- Pupils who are being bullied may develop feelings of insecurity, humiliation and extreme anxiety and thus may become more vulnerable. Self-confidence may be damaged with a consequent lowering of self-esteem. While they may not talk about what is happening to them, their suffering is indicated through changes in mood and behaviour. Extreme cases of bullying may result in suicide. It is, therefore, essential to be alert to changes in behaviour as early intervention can be very effective.
- Pupils who witness bullying may also be affected and may suffer in similar ways to those who are bullied. For example, pupils who witness identity-based bullying and share that identity can experience anxiety and feel under threat themselves. Pupils can also feel guilt or distress at not being able to help the person being bullied.
- There are also consequences for individuals who engage in bullying behaviour. Pupils who become involved in such behaviour can be at higher risk of depression. Other possible long-term consequences may include an increased risk of developing an anti-social personality, anxiety disorders, a likelihood of substance abuse and law-breaking behaviour in adulthood and decreased educational and occupational attainment.

4. Indicators of Bullying:

The following are some of the signs that may indicate that bullying behaviour is occurring:

- Anxiety about travelling to and from school e.g. requesting parents to drive or collect him/her, changing travel routes, avoiding regular times for travelling to and from school;
- Unwillingness to go to school, refusal to attend, truancy;
- 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 which may be particularly noticeable before returning to school after weekends or more especially after longer school holidays;
- Visible signs of anxiety or distress e.g. 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; and
- Reluctance and/or refusal to say what is troubling him/her.

There may be other signs depending on the individual and his/her circumstances. There may be other signs depending on the individual and his/her circumstances. The above signs do not necessarily mean that a pupil is being bullied but if repeated or occurring in combination, these signs do warrant investigation in order to establish what is affecting the pupil.

5. Characteristics Associated with Bullying:

It is important to recognise that any pupil can be bullied or can engage in bullying behaviour.

The pupil who engages in bullying behaviour

- A significant proportion of bullying is not merely behavioural but is rooted in a lack of respect for diversity and in social inequalities. “Prejudice-based” or “identity-based” bullying can be a significant factor in bullying behaviour.
- Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour tend to display aggressive attitudes combined with a low level of self-discipline. They may lack any sense of remorse convincing themselves that the other person deserves the treatment they are receiving.
- Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour can be attention seeking: setting out to impress bystanders and responding to the reaction their behaviour provokes. They can lack the ability to empathise. They can appear unaware or indifferent to the other person’s feelings. It is of note that pupils who exhibit bullying behaviour often suffer from a lack of confidence and have low self-esteem.
- However, it must also be recognised that pupils who engage in bullying behaviour do not always intend to bully or may not recognise the potential negative impact of their words and actions on others.
- It is not uncommon to find that pupils who engage in bullying behaviour may also have been bullied themselves.

The pupil who is bullied

Any pupil through no fault of their own may be a target of bullying. It is common in the course of normal interaction for pupils to tease or taunt each other. However, at a certain point, teasing and taunting may become forms of bullying behaviour. As pupils can be particularly quick to notice differences in others, pupils who are perceived as different in some way can be more prone to encounter such behaviour. However, the pupils who are most at risk of being bullied are those who react in a vulnerable and distressed manner. The seriousness and duration of the bullying behaviour can be related to the pupil’s continuing response to the verbal, physical or psychological aggression.

Pupils who are bullied often experience difficulties in speaking up about bullying. The difficulties include:

- Fear of reprisals;
- Concerns about being perceived as a “tell-tale” for reporting bullying;
- Concerns about “getting into trouble” with the principal or teacher for reporting bullying;
- Not having evidence to back up a bullying allegation;
- Not knowing how the matter will be dealt with by the school; and
- Not feeling fully confident of being believed.

More vulnerable pupils

While bullying can happen to any pupil, it is known that some may be more vulnerable to or at risk of experiencing bullying. Such vulnerable groups include pupils with disabilities or special educational needs, those from ethnic minority and migrant groups, pupils from the Traveller community, lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) pupils and those perceived to be LGBT and pupils of minority religious faiths.

- There can be an increased vulnerability to bullying amongst pupils with special educational needs and particularly those who do not understand social cues and/or have difficulty communicating. Some pupils with complex needs may lack understanding of social situations and therefore trust everyone implicitly. Such pupils may be more vulnerable because they do not have the same social skills or capacity as others to recognise and defend themselves against bullying behaviour. Research suggests that children with disabilities and with special educational needs (SEN) are more likely to be bullied than others. Bullying can also have a more severe impact on such children. For example, some studies which compare the impact of bullying on children with and without certain disabilities, such as a speech and language difficulty, show that bullying has a greater impact on self-esteem for those with a disability. Homophobic and transphobic bullying (bullying targeted at those who are or who are perceived to be LGBT) has also been found to be prevalent with evidence that such pupils have particular difficulty in speaking up or reporting the bullying behaviour.

Appendix 2 Practical tips for building a positive school culture and climate

The following are some practical tips for immediate actions that can be taken to help build a positive school culture and climate and to help prevent and tackle bullying behaviour.

- Model respectful behaviour to all members of the school community at all times
- Explicitly teach pupils what respectful language and respectful behaviour looks like, acts like, sounds like and feels like in class and around the school
- Display key respect messages in classrooms, in assembly areas and around the school. Involve pupils in the development of these messages
- Catch them being good – notice and acknowledge desired respectful behaviour by providing positive attention
- Consistently tackle the use of discriminatory and derogatory language in the school – this includes homophobic and racist language and language that is belittling of pupils with a disability or SEN
- Give constructive feedback to pupils when respectful behaviour and respectful language are absent
- Have a system of encouragement and rewards to promote desired behaviour and compliance with the school rules and routines
- When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher seeks answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This is to 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 is interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved are met as a group. At the group meeting, each member is asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements;
- Each member of a group is supported through the possible pressures that they may face from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher;
- At the teacher's discretion, it may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s);
- Highlight and explicitly teach school rules in pupil friendly language in the classroom and in common areas
- Explicitly teach pupils about the appropriate use of social media
- Positively encourage pupils to comply with the school rules on mobile phone and internet use. Follow up and follow through with pupils who ignore the rules
- Actively involve parents and/or the Parents' Association in awareness raising campaigns around social media
- Actively promote the right of every member of the school community to be safe and secure in school

Appendix 3 Template for recording bullying behaviour

1. Name of pupil allegedly being bullied and class group

Name: _____ Class: _____

2. Name(s) and class(es) of pupil(s) allegedly engaged in bullying behaviour

3. Source of bullying concern/report
(tick relevant box(es))

Pupil concerned	
Other pupil	
Parent	
Teacher	
Other	

4. Location of incidents
(tick relevant box(es))*

Playground	
Classroom	
Corridor	
Toilets	
School Bus	
Other	

5. Name of person(s) who reported the bullying concern

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6. Type of Bullying Behaviour (tick relevant box(es))*

Physical Aggression		Cyber-Bullying	
Damage to Property		Intimidation	
Isolation/Exclusion		Malicious Gossip	
Name Calling		Other (specify)	

7. Where behaviour is regarded as identity-based bullying, indicate the relevant category:

Homophobic	Disability/SEN related	Racist	Membership of Traveller Community	Other (specify)

8. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact

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9. Details of actions taken

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Signed: _____ (Relevant Teacher) Date: _____

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal: _____

Appendix 4 Checklist for annual review of the Anti-Bullying Policy and its implementation

The Board of Management must undertake an annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation. The following checklist must be used for this purpose. The checklist is an aid to conducting this review and is not intended as an exhaustive list. In order to complete the checklist, an examination and review involving both quantitative and qualitative analysis, as appropriate across the various elements of the implementation of the school's anti-bullying policy will be required.

	Yes/No
Has the Board formally adopted an anti-bullying policy that fully complies with the requirements of the <i>Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools</i> ?	
Has the Board provided a copy to the Parents' Association	
Has the Board ensured that the policy has been made available to school staff (including new staff)?	
Is the Board satisfied that school staff are sufficiently familiar with the policy and procedures to enable them to effectively and consistently apply the policy and procedures in their day to day work?	
Has the Board ensured that the policy has been adequately communicated to all pupils?	
Has the policy documented the prevention and education strategies that the school applies?	
Have all of the prevention and education strategies been implemented?	
Has the effectiveness of the prevention and education strategies that have been implemented been examined?	
Is the Board satisfied that all teachers are recording and dealing with incidents in accordance with the policy?	
Has the Board received and minuted the periodic summary reports of the Principal?	
Has the Board discussed how well the school is handling all reports of bullying including those addressed at an early stage and not therefore included in the Principal's periodic report to the Board?	
Has the Board received any complaints from parents regarding the school's handling of bullying incidents?	
Have any parents withdrawn their child from the school citing dissatisfaction with the school's handling of a bullying situation?	
Have any Ombudsman for Children investigations into the school's handling of a bullying case been initiated or completed?	
Has the data available from cases reported to the Principal (by the bullying recording template) been analysed to identify any issues, trends or patterns in bullying behaviour?	
Has the Board identified any aspects of the school's policy and/or its implementation that require further improvement?	
Has the Board put in place an action plan to address any areas for improvement?	

Signed: _____
Chairperson, Board of Management

Date: _____

Signed: _____
Principal

Date: _____

Notification regarding the Board of Management's annual review of the anti-bullying policy

To: _____

The Board of Management of St. Michael's National School wishes to inform you that:

- The Board of Management's annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation was completed at the Board meeting of _____ (date)
- This review was conducted in accordance with the checklist set out in **Appendix 4** of the Department's *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

Signed: _____ Date: _____
Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed: _____ Date: _____
Principal

