

VICTORIA PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL



Anti-Bullying Policy

Date	Policy Reviewed	Policy Amended	Added to Website
November 2021	November 2021	November 2021	November 2021

CONTENTS

1. Introduction	3
2. Context	3
3. Ethos and Principles	3-4
4. Consultation and Participation	4
5. What is Bullying?	4-6
6. Preventative Measures	6-7
7. Responsibility	7
8. Reporting a Bullying Concern	7-8
9. Responding to a Bullying Concern	8-9
10. Recording	9
11. Professional Development of Staff	9
12. Monitoring and Review of Policy	10
13. Links to Other Policies	10

1. Introduction

Victoria Park Primary School is completely opposed to bullying and it will not be tolerated. Bullying, regardless of what form it takes, is entirely contrary to the values and principles we work and live by. All members of the school community have a right to work in a secure and caring environment. We also have a responsibility to contribute, in whatever way we can, to the protection and maintenance of such an environment. Parents, in turn, will be expected to work with the school to ensure that bullying does not take place. The Board of Governors has an overarching responsibility to ensure that the school provides a safe and harmonious learning environment for all who use the premises. The Board takes this responsibility very seriously.

2. Context

The policy has been developed in accordance with the following legislation and supported by the following policy/guidance:

The Legislative Context

- The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016
- The 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 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)

3. Ethos and Principles

We work extremely hard with our staff, pupils and parents to create a safe and happy environment for all underpinned by the following principles:

- We are committed to a society where children and young people can live free and safe from bullying.
- We believe in a society where bullying is unacceptable and where every child and young person is safe and feels safe from bullying.
- We believe that every child and young person should be celebrated in their diversity.

- We are committed to a preventative, responsive and restorative anti-bullying ethos across the whole school.
- We value the views and contributions of children and young people and we will actively seek these views and we will respect and take them into account.
- We understand that everyone in our school community has a role to play in taking a stand against bullying and creating a safe and welcoming environment for all.

4. Consultation and Participation

The policy has been developed following consultation with pupils, parents and the school community in compliance with the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016. Discussion-based consultation with the pupils took place during Anti-Bullying Week 2021. The final draft of the policy was circulated to parents via the school app and Seesaw to allow them the opportunity to make any comments or suggestions they felt might be appropriate. The staff also had the opportunity to share their views during training sessions in August and November.

5. What is Bullying?

We have adopted the Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forum's definition of bullying behaviour:

Bullying is behaviour that is usually repeated, which is carried out intentionally to hurt, harm or to adversely affects the rights and needs of another or others.

This statement is based on the non-exhaustive definition of 'bullying' outlined in the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016:

1.—(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.

In exceptional circumstances, a one-off incident may be considered as bullying if, in the view of the school, it is aggravated by the level of harm caused and/or the intent. In any such case, the school will decide if the behaviour meets the threshold to be defined as bullying.

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

Any incidents which are not considered bullying behaviour will be addressed under the Positive Behaviour Policy.

The following 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.

It should be noted that the list above is not exhaustive and that other behaviours which fit with the definition may be considered bullying behaviour.

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 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;

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

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.

6. Preventative Measures

Under the legislation, the focus for all anti-bullying work should be on preventing bullying behaviour. The following measures will be undertaken to promote a strong anti-bullying ethos within the school and the wider school community:

- raise awareness and understanding of the school's positive behaviour expectations, as set out in the Positive Behaviour Policy;
- promote anti-bullying messages through the curriculum, e.g. inclusion of age-appropriate material specific to individual subject areas related to bullying, positive behaviour and inclusion;
- address the various forms of bullying, including the how and why it can happen, through PDMU;
- involvement in meaningful and supportive shared education projects, supporting pupils to explore, understand and respond to difference and diversity;
- through the preventative curriculum actively promote positive emotional health and wellbeing (e.g. mindfulness training);
- participate in the NIABF annual Anti-Bullying Week activities;
- engagement in key national and regional campaigns, e.g. Safer Internet Day
- use the pupil-led School Council to support the delivery and promotion of key anti-bullying messaging within the school;
- development of effective strategies for playground management, e.g. zoning of playgrounds, buddy benches, etc;
- regular reminders of the positive behaviour expectations of pupils whilst travelling to and from school;
- visible presence of staff at the front of the school to support the transition from school day to journey home;

- addressing key themes of online behaviour and risk through ICT and 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 (eg. 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 (eg. Acceptable Use of the Internet Policy, Mobile Phone Policy, etc.)

7. Responsibility

All Victoria Park's stakeholders, including pupils, their parents/carers and the staff of the school, are responsible for creating a safe and supportive learning environment for all members of the school community and 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.

8. Reporting a Bullying Concern

There are various ways in which pupils, parents and anyone else with concerns can make these known to the school.

Pupils Reporting a Concern

Our pupils are encouraged to raise concerns with any member of staff, including teaching and non-teaching staff. The ways in which pupils can raise concerns include:

- talking to a member of staff;
- writing a note to a member of staff, e.g. in their homework diary;
- posting a note in the class 'worry box'.

Any pupil can raise a concern about bullying behaviour, not just the pupil who is experiencing this behaviour. Through the preventative work taken forward under Section 6, we encourage pupils to focus on 'getting help' rather than 'telling'. As such, all pupils should be encouraged to 'get help' if they have a concern about bullying that they experience or is experienced by another.

Parents/Carers Reporting a Concern

Parents/carers should raise concerns about alleged bullying behaviour at the earliest opportunity and we ask them to encourage their children to react appropriately to bullying behaviour and to not do anything to retaliate or to 'hit back'.

The process of parents/carers reporting bullying concerns is as follows:

- in the first instance, all bullying concerns should be reported to the Class Teacher;
- where the parent 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 Vice-Principal;
- where the parent is not satisfied that appropriate action has been taken by the Head of Year/Vice-Principal 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. This involves making a formal, written complaint, to the Chair of the Board of Governors.

While the majority of reports of bullying concerns will come from pupils and their parents/carers, the school must be open to receiving such reports from anyone.

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.

9. Responding to a Bullying Concern

The processes outlined below provide a framework for how the school will respond to any bullying concerns identified.

Using the NIABF Effective Responses to Bullying Behaviour resource, the member of staff responsible shall:

- clarify facts and perceptions;
- check records (SIMS Behaviour Management Module);

- assess the incident against the criteria for bullying behaviour;
- identify any themes or motivating factors;
- identify the type of bullying behaviour being displayed;
- identify intervention level;
- select and implement appropriate interventions 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;
- select and implement further intentions as necessary.

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.

Information regarding any action taken regarding a pupil cannot be disclosed to anyone other than that pupil and his/her parents/carers.

10. Recording

In accordance with the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016, the school will maintain a record of all incidents of bullying and alleged bullying behaviour. Using the Bullying Concern Assessment Form (BCAF), the College 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.

These 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 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 College'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.

11. Professional Development of Staff

The school is committed to ensuring that staff, including teaching and non-teaching staff, are provided with appropriate opportunities for professional development as part of the school's ongoing CPD provisions. CPD records will be kept and updated regularly.

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, on or before September 2025.

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 Policy;
- Acceptable Use of the Internet and Digital Technologies Policy;
- Mobile Phone Policy;
- Educational Visits Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct

November 2021