

**St. Patrick’s P.S. Mullanaskea**

**Anti-Bullying Policy**

**Date Ratified by Board of Governors:…To Be Ratified Feb. 2023 ……………………….**

**Chair of Board of Governors:……Rev. Fr. J. Halton………………………………………**

**Principal:………Ms L O’Neill…………………………………………………….**

**Date to be Reviewed:…Feb. 2024…………………………………………………….**

**Anti-Bullying Policy for St. Patrick’s Primary School**

**Introductory Statement**

St. Patrick’s is completely opposed to bullying and will not tolerate it. It is entirely contrary to the values and principles we work and live by. All members of our school community have a right to work in a secure and caring environment.

They also have a responsibility to contribute; in whatever way they can, to the protection and maintenance of such an environment.

**Rationale**

DE Circular 2003/13 and Article19, The Education and Libraries (NI) Order 2003 outline the requirement for all schools to have measures in place to prevent all forms of bullying amongst pupils and determine policy details in consultation with staff and pupils. The culture of achievement and ambition exists-with clear expectations that all pupils can and will achieve to the very best of their ability. This is informed by Every School a Good School -human rights issues as highlighted in Human Rights Awareness for School Managers’ (Children’s Law Centre booklet) training received (2013 WELB) based on the publication from NIABF ‘Effective Responses to Bullying Behaviour’ have shaped this updated policy in line with the whole school revision of the Positive Behaviour Policy (2020). This policy is informed by current legislation:

* Health & Safety at Work N.I. Order 1978 The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995
* The Human Rights Act 1998
* The Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 Article 3
* Welfare and Protection of Pupils Education & Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 2003
* The Education (2006 Order) (Commencement No.2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2007
* The Education (School Development Plans) Regulations (Norther Ireland) 2010
* Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016
* D.E. Guidance: Pastoral Care in Schools; Promoting Positive Behaviour DE 2001
* Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools. A Guide for Schools August 2020
* Co-Operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland, Dept. of Health Social Services & Public Safety 2016
* Safeguarding Board for N. Ireland’s (SBNI) Policies & Procedures 2017
* Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016
* Statutory Guidance for Schools and Boards of Governors updated March 2021
* Children & Young People’s EMOTIONAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING in Education Framework, DE/DOH Feb 21

**Aims**

**The overall aim of this policy is to ‘prevent bullying from occurring’. 2003/2016**

* To ensure every child has the right to be educated in a secure environment and their parents and carers are informed and reassured that their children are being educated in a positive, safe, caring and respectful atmosphere.
* To achieve and maintain a shared understanding of the complex issue of bullying.
* To ensure agreed internal referral procedures and links to external support agencies are in place.
* To promote in partnership with all of the key stakeholders: Governors, Staff, Parents, Children who have been targets of bullying and children who display bullying behaviour to ensure that consistent, appropriate and effective support is provided.
* To inform the professional development needs and practice of all school staff and ensure training and support is offered consistent with legislation, current guidance and best practice. This includes induction of new staff.

**School Ethos**

**MISSION STATEMENT**

***The Governors and staff of St Patrick’s Primary School believe the school to be a vital part of our parish and of the wider Catholic community. As such, we are firmly committed to the aims and ideals of Catholic education and the provision of quality education for all our pupils. St. Patrick’s affirms its commitment to a positive and caring pastoral system and to foster an atmosphere of praise, encouragement and mutual respect.***

Therefore, based on our Mission Statement, we, the staff and Governors, at St Patrick’s Primary School, fully realise that our school has an important role in the emotional and personal development of our pupils. It is the responsibility of our school to create a SECURE and CARING ethos where all pupils know when, where and to whom they can confide their problems. Therefore, we have consulted and agreed on this policy, which sets out a preventative approach to all types of bullying. We strive to be a school where pupils’ views are listened to and respected as this builds a strong foundation for solid relationships where problems such as bullying are not tolerated either by staff or by pupils.

**PRINCIPLES**

* Pupils have a right to learn free from intimidation and fear.
* The needs of the targeted child are paramount.
* Targeted pupils will be listened to.
* Reported incidents will be taken seriously and thoroughly investigated.

**Links to Other Safeguarding Policies**

***In the development and implementation of this Anti-Bullying Policy, the Board of***

***Governors has been mindful of related policies, including:***

* Positive Behaviour Policy
* Pastoral Care Policy
* Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
* Special Educational Needs Policy
* Health and Safety Policy
* Relationships and Sexuality Education
* E-Safety Policy & Acceptable Use of Internet Policy
* Mobile Phone Policy
* Staff Code of Conduct
* Handling Complaints Procedure

**DEFINITION OF BULLYING**

*On updating this policy, we have adopted the NIABF ‘Definition of Bullying’* and it defines bullying as

**‘usually repeated behaviour that intentionally hurts, harms or adversely affects the rights and needs of another or others’.**

To avoid labelling individuals, we will strive to report situations as ‘alleged bullying incidents’, victims of bullying as ‘targeted children’ and perpetrators as ‘displaying socially unaccepted behaviour/s.’

**Forms of Socially Unaccepted Behaviours which include:**

* Physical violence such as hitting, pushing or spitting at another pupil.
* Interfering with another pupil’s property, by stealing, hiding or damaging it.
* Using offensive names when addressing another pupil.
* Teasing or spreading rumours about another pupil or his/her family.
* Belittling another pupil’s abilities and achievements.
* Writing offensive notes or graffiti about another pupil.
* Excluding another pupil from a group activity.
* Ridiculing another pupil’s appearance, way of speaking or personal mannerisms.
* Misusing technology (internet or mobiles) to hurt or humiliate another person.

***\* Such socially unacceptable behaviours become bullying behaviour when they are repeated, targeted, intentionally hurtful and persistent.***

**PARTICIPATION & CONSULTATION PROCESS**

**The consultation process is carried out to enable the school to understand the views/ perceptions and experiences that all stakeholders have towards the subject of anti-bullying. It allows the school to guide its policy and practices to address this. The survey questionnaires act as the main tool to fact find and are carried out every 2 years.**

* Awareness raising programmes (Curriculum & Parent Information Evenings)
* Survey/questionnaires distributed to pupils, parents and whole school staff
* Obtaining the views of elected student representatives e.g. class council and school’s council
* Seeking the views of parents at information evenings
* Monitoring evaluation and review
* Governor consultation and ratification process

**RESPONSIBILITIES OF ALL STAKEHOLDERS**

**The Responsibility of Board of Governors**

**Circular 2021/22 issued to schools 6/5/’21 advises of schools’ responsibilities following commencement of the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 on 01 September 2021; and to provide details of the accompanying Statutory Guidance for Schools and Board of Governors. The Act provides a definition of bullying, the school’s responsibility and the responsibility of the Board of Governors in responding to an incident of bullying.**

1. **Definition of Bullying**

The Act contains a non-exhaustive definition of ‘bullying’ which applies only to pupil to pupil bullying, i.e. bullying behaviours by a pupil or a group of pupils against another pupil or group of pupils.

The definition includes 3 key elements:

* Non-limitation to repeated behaviours
* Methods of bullying
* Intention to cause harm

1. **Duty of Board of Governors to Secure Measures to Prevent Bullying**

Governors play an extremely important role in supporting schools to ensure that pupils have every opportunity to develop their full potential within a caring and stimulating learning environment. Governors must work in close partnership with the Principal, staff, parents/carers and pupils to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of their school in providing the best quality of education for all their pupils. The Act clarifies the additional role Governors must play in developing their school’s anti-bullying policy. Governors must also ensure that measures are taken to prevent and address bullying behaviour and they must be informed about the prevalence of bullying and alleged bullying incidents, as well as the motivation behind these behaviours. These measures are kept under review in intervals of no more than 3 years. The school will provide staff and parents with copies of these preventative measures.

1. **Duty to Keep a Record of Incidents of Bullying**

Governors must ensure that all alleged incidents reported as bullying are recorded. Governors must also ensure that the records include, motivation, method/s, and how the incident was addressed plus outcomes. It is important to have a fully transparent system so that reported incidents can be taken forward in line with the school policy and can be traced through the system as having been resolved by the school. The school will be able to record whether the alleged incident of bullying according to the legal definition of bullying is confirmed and responded to through the Anti-Bullying Policy or if the alleged incident is responded to under another policy such as the school's Positive Behaviour Policy.

The 2016 Act extends this to include when travelling to and from school both regarding prevention and for recording. The Board of Governors is required to: ‘safeguard and promote the welfare of all registered pupils whether they are on the school premises or elsewhere while in the lawful control or charge of a member of staff of the school’. (Article 17:2)

**The Responsibilities of the Principal**

The Principal, when deciding on measures which will be used to encourage good behaviour in the school must specifically include measures to prevent bullying among pupils (Article 19:14) The Principal before deciding on measures to encourage good behaviour in the school must consult with pupils registered at the school and with their parents’ (Article 19:14).

**The Responsibilities of Staff**

Our staff will:

* Foster in our pupils self-esteem, self-respect and respect for others.
* Demonstrate by example the high standards of personal and social behaviour we expect of our pupils.
* Discuss bullying with all classes, so that every pupil learns about the damage it causes to both the child who is bullied and to the child who displays bullying behaviours and the importance of telling a teacher about bullying when it happens.
* Be alert to signs of distress and other possible indications of bullying.
* Listen to children who have been targeted, take what they say seriously and act to support and protect them.
* Report alleged cases of bullying to our Principal - Dr. O’Neill or our designated teacher for child protection and head of Pastoral Care – Mrs. Ciara O’Connor
* Follow up any complaint by a parent about alleged bullying by reporting it immediately to the Principal.
* Deal with observed instances of bullying promptly and effectively, in accordance with agreed procedures.

**The Responsibilities of Pupils**

We expect our pupils to:

* Refrain from becoming involved in any kind of bullying, even at the risk of

incurring temporary unpopularity.

* Intervene to protect the pupil who is being targeted, unless it is unsafe to do so.
* Report to a member of staff any witnessed or suspected instances of bullying, to

dispel any climate of secrecy and help to prevent further instances.

***Anyone who becomes the target of bullies should:***

**Not suffer in silence, but have the courage to speak out, to put an end to their own suffering and that of other potential targets.**

**The Responsibilities of Parents**

We ask our parents to support their children and the school by:

* Watching for signs of distress or unusual behaviour in their children, which might be evidence of bullying.
* Advising their children to report any bullying to their class teacher, Mrs O’Connor or the Principal, Dr. O’Neill and explain the implications of allowing the bullying to continue unchecked, for themselves and for other pupils.
* Advising their children not to retaliate violently to any forms of bullying.
* Being sympathetic and supportive towards their children, and reassuring them

that appropriate action will be taken.

* Keep a written record of any reported instances of bullying
* Informing the school of any suspected bullying, even if their children are not involved.
* Co-operating with the school, if their children are accused of bullying, try to

ascertain the truth. And point out the implications of bullying, both for the

children who are targeted and for the children displaying bullying behaviours, themselves.

**The Responsibilities of All**

Everyone should:

* Work together to combat and, hopefully in time, to eradicate bullying.

**The Participation Process and Preventative Measures**

*Our school uses a variety of measures to promote positive behaviour*

Bullying is a complex and emotive issue and can never be eliminated and no school, however, hard staff try, can guarantee that a child in its care will not be subjected to it.

Active promotion of the school Aims, Code of Conduct and promotion of a positive and secure ethos can reduce incidents and build resilience in pupils and staff. This school actively promotes well–being and anti-bullying strategies throughout its curricular and extra–curricular provision. See ‘Examples of current ‘Good Practice’ initiatives below. This school will take reasonable steps to minimise incidents of bullying in a proactive manner through:

* The annual NIABF Anti-Bullying Week Activities
* Pupil Questionnaires
* School/Class Councils
* Special Anti- Bullying Assemblies
* Taught pastoral programmes in R.E., PDMU
* Facility Development through drama, sport, after school activities/break/lunch
* Contribution to school policies such as Positive Behaviour Policy, Teaching and Learning Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy, Assessment Policy, Marking Policy
* Write/Draw Programme

**Preventative Measurers**

* Raising awareness and understanding of the positive behaviour expectations, as set out in the Positive Behaviour Policy
* Promotion of 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 – **Keeping Safe Programme**
* Addressing issues such as the various forms of bullying, including the how and why it can happen, through PDMU/PD/LLW post-primary scheme of work /syllabus (e.g. sectarian, racist, disablist, etc.).
* 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. Write Draw Programme)
* Participation in the NIABF annual Anti-Bullying Week activities
* Engagement in key national and regional campaigns, e.g. Safer Internet Day
* Development of peer-led systems (e.g. **School Student Council)** to support the delivery and promotion of key anti-bullying messaging within the school
* Development of effective strategies for playground management, e.g. training for supervisors, zoning of playgrounds, inclusion of specific resources
* Focused assemblies to raise awareness and promote understanding of key issues related to bullying.
* Development of effective strategies for the management of unstructured times (e.g. break time, lunch)
* Provision and promotion of extra- and co-curricular activities, aimed at supporting the development of effective peer support relationships and networks e.g. sporting activities, creative arts, leisure and games, etc.

**Preventative Measures on the Way To and From School:**

* Development of a culture where our pupils take pride in their school and are viewed as ambassadors for their school within the community. This includes regular reminders of the positive behaviour expectations of pupils whilst travelling to and from school.
* Measures to empower pupils to challenge inappropriate and unacceptable behaviour of their peers during the journey to and from school. This may include the implementation of peer monitoring on buses and for those walking.
* Regular engagement with transport providers (e.g. Translink, E.A. Transport, etc.) to ensure effective communication and the early identification of any concerns.
* Promotion of key anti-bullying messages and awareness of behaviour expectations of pupils amongst the local community (e.g. local shops, cafes, service providers, residents etc.), including information on how to raise any concerns with the school.
* Appropriate deployment of staff to support the transition from school day to journey home (e.g. staff duty at school gate/bus stops, where appropriate).

**Intervention Strategies**

The aim of any intervention applied is to RESPOND to the alleged incidents, RESOLVE the concern and RESTORE the well-being of all involved. Low level bullying must never be ignored, early intervention can diminish problems and reduce potential risk.

Such strategies include:

* an anti-bullying assembly
* anti-bulling week
* listening ear box
* open door to see either Mrs. O’Connor or Ms. O’Neill
* PDMU focussed lessons in each classroom.

**What is Bullying?**

**The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016 provides a legal definition of “bullying”:**

**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.**

**We also believe that whilst bullying is usually repeated behaviour, there are instances of one-off incidents that we as a school will consider as bullying if the one-off criteria has been met.**

When assessing a one-off incident, to make a decision on whether to classify it as bullying, our 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 as socially unacceptable behaviours and dealt with under the Positive Behaviour Policy.**

**The following socially unacceptable behaviours, when repeated, targeted and intentionally hurtful, may be considered as 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
* Trying to make other pupils dislike another pupil/s

**Physical Acts**

* Hitting
* Kicking
* Pushing
* Shoving

**Material Harm**

* Taking/stealing money or possessions or causing damage to
* Possessions

**Omission (Exclusion**)

* Leaving someone out of a game
* Refusing to include someone in group work

**Electronic Acts**

* Using online platforms or other electronic communication to carry out many of the written acts noted above
* Impersonating someone online to cause hurt
* Sharing images (e.g. photographs or videos) online to embarrass someone

**This is not an exhaustive list and other behaviours which fit with the definition may be considered bullying behaviour.**

**Motivations behind bullying, including those named in the Act. These 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 / S.E.N.
* 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 who is experiencing the problems as**

* **‘the targeted child/children’ and alleged perpetrators as ‘displaying socially unaccepted behaviour/s.’**

**We encourage all members of our 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.**

**Identification of Levels to Identify a Range of Appropriate Strategies & Interventions**

The NIABF’s Effective Responses to Bullying Behaviour document promotes identifying bullying across four levels **Low, Intermediate, Complex and High Risk** – these complement the ‘Levels of Unacceptable Behaviour’ outlined in the Positive Behaviour Policy pages 6-8. Assessing the level of risk an individual pupil faces, will help determine the level of severity as well as taking account of the nature, frequency and duration of the bullying behaviour and the perceptions of the child being bullied. A pupil may not wish to disclose incidents so staff should be vigilant in observing symptoms such as:

* Deterioration of work
* Spurious (fake) illness and /or erratic attendance
* Isolation/desire to remain with adults
* Problems reported from home (e.g. bed wetting, nightmares)
* Childhood depression/anxiety
* Unexplained damage or loss of property
* Unwillingness to talk about school/friendships
* Unexplained bruises or marks

**Response**

* When an alleged incident of bullying is witnessed by school staff, reported to staff by a pupil/pupils or a written or verbal complaint is given by a parent the incident(s) will be fully and sensitively investigated to clarify the facts and check if it constitutes bullying as defined in this policy. This may include incidents reported happening out of school e.g. misuse of electronic media, on buses etc.
* The confidentiality and sensitivities of the child who has been targeted or engages in anti-social behaviour/s will be considered.
* Staff must report bullying either orally or in writing using the appropriate concerns form for confidential filing by the pastoral co-ordinator/ principal.
* Staff should be calm, positive, assertive in seeking resolution and restitution and confident in believing that early intervention will impact future pupil behaviour. The Principal will work with all staff to support the pupils and parents involved.

**Resolution**

* If proven, action will be taken to protect the ‘child who has been targeted’ and deal with the ‘child who is displaying anti-social behaviour/s’ in line with the Positive Behaviour Policy sanctions and involving all relevant staff on a need to know basis. Additional and complimentary levels of intervention are outlined in the (NIABF) file ‘Effective Responses to Bullying Behaviour’ pages.
* If parents/guardians are involved (depending on level of severity) they will be given feedback by phone call or via a parent – teacher meeting as guided by the principal. If the parent was the initial complainant a report back will be made (by phone call/interview) in line with the School Complaints Policy. Parents will be informed that they can contact the school again at any time if concerns are still evident.
* Procedures for monitoring and recording incidents are ongoing and further notable incidents recorded by the teacher will be retained in the Record of Concerns Folder.
* Contact will be made with the parents /guardians of the child exhibiting anti-social behaviour/s (if proven and within reason) but not simply because another parent so wishes. The school will only contact a parent if the alleged incident(s) conform to the above definition of bullying.
* The school is happy to direct parents, after consultation, towards appropriate counselling through internal/external agencies

**Recording Requirements**

*Our school 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*
* *The school plans to keep records on the online SIMS Behaviour Management Module, which is part of the C2k system in schools. Access to these records will be restricted and only provided to those members of school staff with a legitimate need to have access.*
* *St. Patrick’s P.S. Mullanaskea will continue to use our Bullying Incident Record File until The Behaviour Management Module is implemented in all schools.*
* *This file is locked securely in The Principal’s office.*
* *All records will be maintained in line with relevant data protection legislation and guidance and will be disposed of in line with the school’s Retention and Disposal of Documents Policy. Collated information regarding incidents of bullying and alleged bullying behaviour will be used to inform the future development of anti-bullying policy and practice within our school.*

**CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF STAFF**

The school offers all staff training in the area of anti-bullying.St. Patrick’sPrimary School Mullanaskea is committed to ensuring that our staff are provided with appropriate opportunities for professional development as part of the school’s ongoing CPD/PRSD provisions. We will note the impact of the training given on both the policy and our procedures e.g. any amendments made, inclusions added etc.

We will ensure that opportunities for safeguarding training are afforded to Governors

and all staff – teaching and non-teaching. We will keep our CPD records updated regularly.

**Monitoring and Review of Policy**

***To appropriately monitor the effectiveness of the Anti-Bullying Policy, the Board of***

***Governors will continue to consult with pupils, parents and staff when reviewing the effectiveness of the preventative measures:***

* 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
* assess the number of complaints/review outcomes of IEPs etc.

***This school is committed to implementing, reviewing and evaluating the impact and efficacy of this policy and it will be monitored and reviewed every year by all staff and Principal and approved by the Board of Governors (2023). Annually, it will be shared with all parents for consultation. A hard copy of the policy will be issued. The latest updated copy is always available on the school’s website.***

**Supporting children in school through the COVID 19 Crisis**

St. Patrick’s Mullanaskea is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all its students.

St. Patrick’s Mullanaskea will continue to be a safe place for all children to attend and flourish. The Principal, Ms O’Neill will ensure that appropriate staff are on site and staff to pupil ratio numbers are appropriate, to maximise safety.

St. Patrick’s Mullanaskea will refer to the Government guidance for education and childcare settings on how to implement social distancing and continue to follow advice from the Public Health Agency on handwashing and other measures to limit the risk of spread of Covid-19.

St. Patrick’s Mullanaskea will ensure that where we care for children of key workers and vulnerable children on site, appropriate support is in place for them.

**Physical, Mental and Emotional Health and Wellbeing of Pupils & Staff**

St. Patrick’s Mullanaskea understands that negative experiences and distressing life events, such as those that may lead to the need to self-isolate at home and school closures, can affect the mental health of pupils and their parents. The school will provide additional wellbeing resources to parents.

For children returning to school after a period of absence, staff will be aware of the possible effects that this period may have had on pupils’ mental health. They will look out for behavioural signs, including pupils being fearful, withdrawn, aggressive, oppositional or excessively clingy, you help identify where support may be needed.

Where possible, St. Patrick’s Mullanaskea will continue to offer our current support for pupil mental health for all pupils.

We will also signpost all pupils, parents/carers and staff to other resources to support good mental health at this time.

When setting expectations for pupils learning remotely and not attending school, teachers will bear in mind the potential impact of the current situation on both children’s and adult’s mental health. The staff of St. Patrick’s Mullanaskea will be alert to mental health concerns in children who are at home, and act on these immediately, following our reporting procedures.

At St. Patrick’s Mullanaskea, we are committed to supporting the positive mental health and wellbeing of our whole school community (children, staff, parents & carers). We recognise that mental health and emotional wellbeing is just as important to our lives physical health.

At St. Patrick’s Mullanaskea, we endeavour to ensure that children are able to manage times of change and stress. We aim to ensure that the children are supported to reach their potential or access help when they need it. We also have a role to ensure that children learn about what they can do to maintain positive mental health, what affects their mental health, how they can help reduce the stigma surrounding mental health issues, and where they can go if they need help and support.

At St. Patrick’s Mullanaskea, we take a whole school approach to promoting positive mental health, aiming to help children become more resilient, happy and successful and to work in a proactive way to avoid problems arising. We do this by:

* Creating and applying consistent ethos, policies and behaviours that support mental health and resilience, and which everyone understands
* Helping children to develop social relationships, support each other and seek help when they need it.
* Promoting self-esteem, and ensuring children understand their importance in the world.
* Helping children to be resilient learners and to manage setbacks
* Teaching children social and emotional skills and an awareness of mental health.
* Identifying children who have mental health challenges and planning support to meet their needs
* Supporting and training staff to develop their skills and their own resilience
* Developing an open culture where it’s normal to talk about mental health.

We promote a mentally healthy environment through:

* Promoting our school values and encouraging a sense of belonging
* Promoting pupil voice and opportunities to participate in decision-making
* Celebrating academic and non-academic achievements
* Promoting opportunities to develop a sense of worth through taking responsibility for themselves and others.
* Promoting opportunities to reflect

Supporting and promoting mental health and wellbeing of staff is an essential component of a healthy school. At St. Patrick’s Mullanaskea we promote opportunities to maintain a healthy work life balance. Staff are supported pastorally and have access to enriched opportunities.

We believe that all staff have a responsibility to promote positive mental health and to understand the protective and risk factors for mental health

**The Promotion of Healthy, Respectful Relationships including the use of Language, Behaviours and Consent**

The school promotes healthy relationships in all of its practices and policies. Healthy relationships are manifested by how we treat each other through our use of tolerant language, appropriate behaviours and consent. This pervades through all of school life including at extra-curricular activities, school trips, class time, play time and at other social events such as dinnertime in the canteen. This value set is also appropriate when children are online. Any contravention of these basic rules is considered disrespectful, and reminders will be constantly issued on how to be the appropriate.

Each week at assembly, examples of good behaviours are promoted and rewarded through the Pupil of the Week Certificate as well as by the Principal in her weekly address to the staff and children. This transcends to all classes where each staff member reiterates these values. School policies reflect this and are shared accordingly with the parents and Governors.

**Operation Encompass**

We are an Operation Encompass school. Operation Encompass is an early intervention partnership between local Police and our school, aimed at supporting children who are victims of domestic violence and abuse. As a school, we recognise that children’s exposure to domestic violence is a traumatic event for them.

When the police have attended a domestic incident and one of our pupils is present, they will make contact with the school at the start of the next working day, to share this information with a member of the safeguarding school. This will allow the school safeguarding team to provide direct or indirect support to this child and family.

This information will be treated like any other child protection information as per DE Circular 2020/07. It will only be shared outside of the safeguarding team on a proportionate and need to know basis. All members of the safeguarding team will complete the online Operation Encompass training, so they able to take these calls. Any staff responsible for answering the phone will be made aware of Operation Encompass and the need to pass these calls on with urgency.

**Appendices**

Appendix 1 The Misuse of Electronic Communication

Appendix 2 Supporting Children in School Through the COVID 19 Crisis

Appendix 3 Recording Incident Sheet

**Appendix 1**

**The Misuse of Electronic Communication**

#### **The misuse of electronic communication is a form of bullying that can be faceless but very dangerous.**

#### **What is misuse of electronic communication?**

The misuse of electronic communication is bullying with the use of digital technologies. It can take place on social media, messaging platforms, gaming platforms and mobile phones. It is repeated behaviour, aimed at scaring, angering or shaming those who are targeted. Examples include:

* spreading lies about or posting embarrassing photos of someone on social media
* sending hurtful messages or threats via messaging platforms
* impersonating someone and sending mean messages to others on their behalf.
* Face-to-face bullying and misuse of electronic communication can often happen alongside each other. But misuse of electronic communication leaves a digital footprint – a record that can prove useful and provide evidence to help stop the abuse.

If your child is worried about his/her safety or something that has happened to him/her; advise your child to urgently speak to an adult in school, he/she can trust. The school needs to be immediately informed. A member of the Board of Governors would also be informed and updated. However, we are aware that a lot of the misuse of electronic communication takes place when the child is out of school. Please monitor your child’s activity online. Often the problems caused then spill into school. This is where our preventative curriculum and restorative practices aim to reduce the opportunities for this to happen. The school has a safe system online monitored by C2K. However, we are fully aware that when it comes to the world wide web, nothing is one hundred percent proof. Therefore, we monitor all children’s usage with the highest degree of scrutiny. No child is ever left to access the internet without adult supervision.

\*The child can also access [Child Helpline International](https://www.childhelplineinternational.org/child-helplines/child-helpline-network/) to find help in your country.

### **Advice for your Child if he/she/ is the victim of the misuse of electronic communication**

### **Am I being bullied online? How do you tell the difference between a joke and bullying?**

##### UNICEF:

All friends joke around with each other, but sometimes it’s hard to tell if someone is just having fun or trying to hurt you, especially online. Sometimes they’ll laugh it off with a “just kidding,” or “don’t take it so seriously.”

But if you feel hurt or think others are laughing at you instead of with you, then the joke has gone too far. If it continues even after you’ve asked the person to stop and you are still feeling upset about it, then this could be bullying.

And when the bullying takes place online, it can result in unwanted attention from a wide range of people including strangers. Wherever it may happen, if you are not happy about it, you should not have to stand for it.

Call it what you will – if you feel bad and it doesn’t stop, then it’s worth getting help. Stopping misuse of electronic communication is not just about calling out bullies, it’s also about recognizing that everyone deserves respect – online and in real life.

### **What are the effects of the misuse of electronic communication?**

##### UNICEF:

When bullying happens online it can feel as if you’re being attacked everywhere, even inside your own home. It can seem like there’s no escape. The effects can last a long time and affect a person in many ways:

* **Mentally** — feeling upset, embarrassed, stupid, even angry
* **Emotionally** — feeling ashamed or losing interest in the things you love
* **Physically** — tired (loss of sleep), or experiencing symptoms like stomach aches and headaches

The feeling of being laughed at or harassed by others, can prevent people from speaking up or trying to deal with the problem. In extreme cases, misuse of electronic communication can even lead to people taking their own lives.

Misuse of electronic communication can affect us in many ways. But these can be overcome and people can regain their confidence and health.

### **Who should I talk to if someone is bullying me online? Why is reporting important?**

##### UNICEF:

If you think you’re being bullied, the first step is to seek help from someone you trust such as your parents, a close family member or another trusted adult.

In your school you can reach out to your class teacher, Mrs. O’Connor or Dr. O’Neill. Mrs. McVitty is also the co-ordinator of ICT and manages the school internet.

And if you are not comfortable talking to someone you know, [search for a helpline in your country](https://www.childhelplineinternational.org/) e.g. Childline to talk to a professional counsellor.

If the bullying is happening on a social platform, consider blocking the bully and formally reporting their behaviour on the platform itself. Social media companies are obligated to keep their users safe.

It can be helpful to collect evidence – text messages and screen shots of social media posts – to show what’s been going on.

For bullying to stop, it needs to be identified and reporting it is key. It can also help to show the bully that their behaviour is unacceptable.

If you are in immediate danger, then you should contact the police or emergency services in your country.

***For bullying to stop, it needs to be identified and reporting it is key.***

If you are experiencing the misuse of electronic communication, speaking to a trusted adult – someone you feel safe talking to – is one of the most important first steps you can take.

Talking to parents is not easy for everyone. But there are things you can do to help the conversation. Choose a time to talk when you know you have their full attention. Explain how serious the problem is for you. Remember, they might not be as familiar with technology as you are, so you might need to help them to understand what’s happening.

They might not have instant answers for you, but they are likely to want to help and together you can find a solution. Two heads are always better than one! If you are still unsure about what to do, consider reaching out to [other trusted people](https://www.unicef.org/end-violence/how-to-stop-cyberbullying#3). There are often more people who care about you and are willing to help than you might think!

UNICEF

### **How can I help my friends report a case of misuse of electronic communication especially if they don’t want to do it?**

##### UNICEF:

Anyone can become a victim of the misuse of electronic communication. If you see this happening to someone you know, try to offer support.

It is important to listen to your friend. Why doesn’t he/she want to report being the victim of the misuse of electronic communication? How is he/she feeling? Let him/her know that he/she does not have to formally report anything, but it’s crucial to talk to someone who might be able to help.

Remember, your friend may be feeling fragile. Be kind to him/her. Help him/her think through what he/she might say and to whom. Offer to go with him/her if he/she decides to report. Most importantly, remind him/her that you’re there for him/her and you want to help.

If your friend still does not want to report the incident, then support him/her in finding a trusted adult who can help him/her deal with the situation. Remember that in certain situations the consequences of misuse of electronic communication can be life threatening.

Doing nothing can leave the person feeling that everyone is against him/her or that nobody cares. Your words can make a difference.

***Anyone can become a victim of the misuse of electronic communication.***

**Appendix 2**

**Supporting Children in School Through the COVID 19 Crisis**

St. Patrick’s Mullanaskea is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all its students.

St. Patrick’s Mullanaskea will continue to be a safe place for all children to attend and flourish. The Principal, Dr. O’Neill will ensure that appropriate staff are on site and staff to pupil ratio numbers are appropriate, to maximise safety.

St. Patrick’s Mullanaskea will refer to the Government guidance for education and childcare settings on how to implement social distancing and continue to follow advice from the Public Health Agency on handwashing and other measures to limit the risk of spread of Covid-19.

St. Patrick’s Mullanaskea will ensure that where we care for children of key workers and vulnerable children on site, appropriate support is in place for them.

**Physical, Mental and Emotional Health and Wellbeing of Pupils & Staff**

St. Patrick’s Mullanaskea understands that negative experiences and distressing life events, such as those that may lead to the need to self-isolate at home and school closures, can affect the mental health of pupils and their parents. The school will provide additional wellbeing resources to parents.

For children returning to school after a period of absence, staff will be aware of the possible effects that this period may have had on pupils’ mental health. They will look out for behavioural signs, including pupils being fearful, withdrawn, aggressive, oppositional or excessively clingy, you help identify where support may be needed.

Where possible, St. Patrick’s Mullanaskea will continue to offer our current support for pupil mental health for all pupils.

We will also signpost all pupils, parents/carers and staff to other resources to support good mental health at this time.

When setting expectations for pupils learning remotely and not attending school, teachers will bear in mind the potential impact of the current situation on both children’s and adult’s mental health. The staff of St. Patrick’s Mullanaskea will be alert to mental health concerns in children who are at home, and act on these immediately, following our reporting procedures.

At St. Patrick’s Mullanaskea, we are committed to supporting the positive mental health and wellbeing of our whole school community (children, staff, parents & carers). We recognise that mental health and emotional wellbeing is just as important to our lives physical health.

At St. Patrick’s Mullanaskea, we endeavour to ensure that children are able to manage times of change and stress. We aim to ensure that the children are supported to reach their potential or access help when they need it. We also have a role to ensure that children learn about what they can do to maintain positive mental health, what affects their mental health, how they can help reduce the stigma surrounding mental health issues, and where they can go if they need help and support.

At St. Patrick’s Mullanaskea, we take a whole school approach to promoting positive mental health, aiming to help children become more resilient, happy and successful and to work in a proactive way to avoid problems arising. We do this by:

* Creating and applying consistent ethos, policies and behaviours that support mental health and resilience, and which everyone understands.
* Helping children to develop social relationships, support each other and seek help when they need it.
* Promoting self-esteem, and ensuring children understand their importance in the world.
* Helping children to be resilient learners and to manage setbacks.
* Teaching children social and emotional skills and an awareness of mental health.
* Identifying children who have mental health challenges and planning support to meet their needs.
* Supporting and training staff to develop their skills and their own resilience.
* Developing an open culture where it’s normal to talk about mental health.

We promote a mentally healthy environment through:

* Promoting our school values and encouraging a sense of belonging
* Promoting pupil voice and opportunities to participate in decision-making
* Celebrating academic and non-academic achievements
* Promoting opportunities to develop a sense of worth through taking responsibility for themselves and others.
* Promoting opportunities to reflect

Supporting and promoting mental health and wellbeing of staff is an essential component of a healthy school. At St. Patrick’s Mullanaskea we promote opportunities to maintain a healthy work life balance. Staff are supported pastorally and have access to enriched opportunities.

We believe that all staff have a responsibility to promote positive mental health and to understand the protective and risk factors for mental health.

**Drawing & Talking Programme**

**Mrs. O’Connor accessed training on a programme entitled Drawing & Talking. It trained her to support children with wellbeing problems. Engage funding via the Department of Education has enabled the school to release her to support identified children. The children’s parents will be informed and the school will request permission for Mrs. O’Connor to work specifically with these children. All matters will be treated in complete confidentiality.**

**Supporting children in school through the COVID 19 Crisis**

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St. Patrick’s Mullanaskea will ensure that where we care for children of key workers and vulnerable children on site, appropriate support is in place for them.

**The Promotion of Healthy, Respectful Relationships including the use of Language, Behaviours and Consent**

The school promotes healthy relationships in all of its practices and policies. Healthy relationships are manifested by how we treat each other through our use of tolerant language, appropriate behaviours and consent. This pervades through all of school life including at extra-curricular activities, school trips, class time, play time and at other social events such as dinnertime in the canteen. This value set is also appropriate when children are online. Any contravention of these basic rules is considered disrespectful, and reminders will be constantly issued on how to be the appropriate.

Each week at assembly, examples of good behaviours are promoted and rewarded through the Pupil of the Week Certificate as well as by the Principal in her weekly address to the staff and children. This transcends to all classes where each staff member reiterates these values. School policies reflect this and are shared accordingly with the parents and Governors.

**Appendix 3**

**Recording Incident Sheet**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Date/time of incident |  |
| Children involved (including bystanders) |  |
| Where incident took place (playground, classroom, etc.) |  |
| Type of anti-social behaviour (physical, verbal, indirect, misuse of electronic communication) |  |
| Form of anti-social behaviour (racist, religious, cultural, sexual, SEN/disability based, homophobic, biphobic, transphobic, related to home circumstances etc.) |  |
| Brief summary of incident including motivation and methods (Also keep record of witness statements) |  |
| Member/s of staff reported to/witnessed by |  |
| Impact of incident |  |
| Action taken |  |
| Follow up action (including dates) |  |
| Outcomes |  |
| Signed (name) |  |