

## *St. Louis Secondary School Anti-Bullying Policy*

It is a basic right of each pupil in this school to receive her education free from unprovoked hurt. Being bullied can have a devastating effect on the victim, ranging from absenteeism and underachievement in school to depression and even suicide. As a school there are procedures in place to deal with the problem in a consistent manner. This policy provides guidelines for the prevention of bullying and for intervention if the problem occurs.

### Aims of St. Louis's Anti-Bullying Policy

1. To promote and develop the ideals, values and beliefs of the school as set out in the school mission statement.
2. To ensure pupils, staff and parents understand and accept a common definition of what constitutes bullying behaviour.
3. To develop a preventative and reactive approach to deal with bullying at management, class and individual level.
4. To raise an awareness and understanding of bullying through the curriculum.
5. To create an atmosphere where students, staff and parents feel that if they report bullying, they will be listened to, and swift, sensitive action will be taken.
6. To have a secure environment in which all members of the school community respect and support each other.
7. To develop an ethos which makes it clear to everyone that bullying behaviour is unacceptable in any form.

Definition of Bullying: this can be defined as unprovoked, systematic, emotional or physical hurt caused to an individual by the behaviour of another. Forms of bullying include physical, verbal and psychological. No

definition is all inclusive as bullying can take many subtle forms. Sometimes it can be overt and easily identified while in other cases it is insidious, hidden and thus difficult to identify and deal with.

Preventative Approach:

St. Louis is actively involved in the HSE North East Cool School Programme. The school is supported by specially trained staff on its Anti-Bullying Programme. The school has a structured anti-bullying programme involving the following:

- Creation of a positive anti-bullying ethos and raising awareness about bullying.
- Whole school preventative measures.
- Procedures for supervision and monitoring.
- Procedures for noting and recording incidents.
- Strategies for investigating and resolving bullying problems.
- Specific curricular work with students.
- Strategies for supporting victims and bullies.
- Parent education.
- Evaluating the policy.

At every opportunity students are reminded of the St. Louis ethos of respect and courtesy towards fellow students and teachers.

Regular class meetings are held where the anti-bullying focus of the school is constantly emphasised. Students are encouraged not to tolerate unacceptable bullying behaviours and to report it in confidence to a member of staff.

First Year: as soon as possible after the students start in St. Louis, anti-bullying workshops are held with each class. Two members of staff – the class teacher and a staff member from the school's anti-bullying committee-work with the students. This work involves drawing up a definition of bullying and listing out unacceptable bullying behaviours under three categories – physical, verbal and psychological. The three types of behaviour are examined for three interactions involved in school – Pupil to Pupil; Pupil to Teacher; and Teacher to Pupil. This helps the student to recognise bullying behaviour and they are given strategies on how to deal with this.

They are encouraged to come forward in full confidence that situations will be responded to effectively. Each class's lists of unacceptable behaviours is kept by the class teacher and referred to throughout the school year.

Second Year: A series of classes specifically dealing with bullying situations is carried out in second year usually in the Pastoral Care class with their Class Teacher. A programme on Relational Aggression is carried out in 2<sup>nd</sup> Year. The SPHE curriculum also deals with bullying.

Third Year: Third years are reminded constantly about the work done in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Years and deal with the topic in the SPHE programme.

Fifth Year: Bullying is being dealt with in the 5<sup>th</sup> Year SPHE programme.

Sixth Year: again through regular class meetings and year meetings the students are reminded of the school's anti-bullying ethos.

From time to time, random surveys are carried out on students to give them the opportunity to report on bullying behaviours in a confidential and non-focussed manner. A message box is in place in the school office into which can be placed any information on bullying incidents/behaviour which is of concern to students.

Response to Bullying: - a general outline.

When a student talks to a member of staff about an alleged incident, a record is made of this report. The teacher will then consult with any of the following – the class teacher, the Year Head, Deputy Principal or Principal. The student is interviewed by the teacher so that the nature of the problem can be established. The teacher will work with the student to reassure her that the situation will not deteriorate as a result of her report. The school will endeavour help the student deal with hurt feelings, develop self-esteem and coping strategies.

Once the details of the bullying incident have been established, the student involved in carrying out the bullying will be interviewed by her class teacher or her Year Head in connection with the reported incident. She will be given the opportunity to write her own report of the incident and this will be kept on record. The Year Head will record the nature and extent of the bullying as well as who was involved in the incident. The class teacher, Year Head, or

if the incident warrants it, the Deputy Principal or Principal will work with the perpetrator of the incident to help her to understand why her behaviour is viewed as bullying behaviour and unacceptable in or out of school. The record of the incident will be kept on file and, depending on the seriousness of the incident, will be removed at the end of the school year. Depending on the situation, the student who carries out the bullying and the student who is bullied may be brought together in a neutral environment with a teacher as mediator to help bring about a resolution and prevent the incident happening again. At a session such as this there is an opportunity to make an apology and give an undertaking of no further bullying behaviour.

The Year Heads will use their discretion concerning informing the parents /guardians of the girl involved in the bullying behaviour; once again depending on the seriousness of the incident.

Any sanctions levied will relate to the seriousness of the incident.

The situation will then be subject to ongoing monitoring by the subject teachers and class teachers.

#### Ensuring Maintenance of the policy:

Commitment to anti-bullying is long term and always subject to evaluation and development. We can never be complacent about this type of behaviour. Bullying is *always* on the agenda for every class meeting and Year Meeting. The anti-bullying committee within the staff meet and evaluate the policy. Staff are involved in ongoing training in dealing with types of bullying behaviours. The Cool School Programme regularly meets with the staff of member schools to help identify areas which need attention. The Cool School personnel also carry out surveys to establish the effectiveness of the programme.

#### Bullying and all members of the St. Louis School Community:

All members of the school community i.e. students, staff and parents are entitled to interact in an environment free from bullying and aggression. This policy applies to all relationships i.e. student/student; student/teacher; teacher/student; teacher/teacher; parent/teacher and teacher/parent. All

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members of the school community are expected to comply with the principles of this policy document.

*St. Louis has a Dignity in the Workplace Policy Document which entitles all staff to work in an environment free from bullying and aggression. Parents & guardians are requested to note this in relation to meetings with members of the school's staff whether at parent teacher meetings or any meeting arranged or otherwise in the school.*