

Anti-Cyber-Bullying Policy

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. Paul's National School has adopted the following anti-cyber-bullying policy within the framework of the school's overall code of behaviour. This policy was written with the help of our student council and complies with the requirements of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* which were published in September 2013.

St. Paul's National School aims to ensure that children are safe and feel safe from bullying, harassment and discrimination both online and in person. The school is committed to helping the children acquire the knowledge and skills to be able to use IT effectively, safely and responsibly but, because most of the children's online activity happens outside of school we need the cooperation and support of parents at home.

At all times, in person or online, we encourage the children to **T.H.I.N.K.** before they speak and ask themselves - is what they are going to say -

TTrue

Honest

Inspiring

Nice

Kind

Despite this some children will become involved in, or experience, cyberbullying. We hope this policy will help explain what it is and what to do if it happens.

UNDERSTANDING CYBER-BULLYING:

- Cyber bullying is the use of IT (usually a mobile phone and/ or the internet) to abuse another person
- It can take place anywhere and involve many people
- Anybody can be targeted - children and adults
- It can include threats, intimidation, harassment, cyber-stalking, spreading rumours and mis-information, exclusion, peer rejection, impersonation, unauthorised publication of private information or images etc.
- While bullying, by definition, involves the repetition of unwelcome behaviour the **Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools, September 2013**, states:

2.1.3. In addition, in the context of these procedures placing a once-off offensive or hurtful public message, image or statement on a social network site or other public forum where that message, image or statement can be viewed and/or repeated by other people will be regarded as bullying behaviour.

WHAT IS CYBER-BULLYING?

There are many types of cyber-bullying. The more common types are:

1. **Text / Whatsapp messages** - can be threatening or cause discomfort or hurt.
2. **Fake profiles** - A person hiding their true identity and /or pretending to be the victim's friend and causing hurt by sending cruel messages.
3. **Picture/video-clips via mobile phone cameras** - images sent to others to make the victim feel threatened or embarrassed.
4. **Mobile phone calls** - silent calls, abusive messages or stealing the victim's phone and using it to harass others, to make them believe the victim is responsible.
5. **Bullying via websites** -TikTok, Snapchat, Instagram etc - Hurtful comments
6. **Online Gaming** - Bullying can occur in a number of ways through gaming. The child's avatar may be targeted; the child themselves may be targeted in person because of something their avatar did; the child can be subjected to isolation, targeted attacks while online with a group; your child can engage with strangers who identify themselves as children or even friends; your child can be exposed to offensive language and comments while gaming with others online.

Some of the above have the added concern in that they are not age appropriate and so, if your child encounters difficulty while on these sites or playing these games, they may be reluctant to inform you.

Explanation of slang terms used when referring to cyber-bullying activity:

1. **'Flaming'**: Online fights using electronic messages with angry and vulgar language
2. **'Harassment'**: Repeatedly sending offensive, rude, and insulting messages
3. **'Cyber Stalking'**: Repeatedly sending messages that include threats of harm or are highly intimidating or engaging in other on-line activities that make a person afraid for his or her own safety
4. **'Dissing'**: Sending or posting cruel gossip or rumours about a person to damage his or her reputation or friendships. Can include posting photos or videos and is often done by someone whom the child knows.
5. **'Impersonation'**: Pretending to be someone else and sending or posting material online that makes someone look bad, gets her/him in trouble or danger, or damages her/his reputation or friendships
6. **'Outing and Trickery'**: Tricking someone into revealing secret or embarrassing information which is then shared online
7. **'Exclusion'**: Intentionally excluding someone from an on-line group, game or friend list

*** This list is not exhaustive and the terms used continue to change. ***

TO PREVENT CYBER-BULLYING:

- Parents should ensure that they have set the controls on their child's devices (phone, ipad, X box, Playstation etc) to ensure the greatest level of privacy and protection for their children. The settings can be changed during uploads so parents need to check occasionally.
- Parents' contact details should be used when setting up accounts.
- Parents should be aware of the sites visited and the platforms used by their child.
- Children should only speak with friends online and should never share their assess details with anyone.
- Children will learn about cyber bullying through Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), specific programmes (Friends for Life etc), class lessons and curriculum projects
- The school will engage a speaker to facilitate a workshop on cyber bullying for the older classes annually.
- Parents will be provided with an opportunity to engage with a speaker in order to gain information and advice on how to combat cyber bullying
- Children will agree to an Acceptable Use of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) contract
- Children from 2nd class up will be expected to sign an Acceptable Use of ICT contract annually
- Parents will be expected to agree to an Acceptable Use of ICT contract annually and to discuss its meaning with their children
- Children and parents will be urged to report all incidents of cyber bullying to the school
- All reports of cyber bullying will be investigated
- Procedures and sanctions from our school Code of Behaviour and Anti-bullying Policy shall apply
- The Gardaí will be contacted in cases of actual, or suspected, illegal content

Parents - Check that the content is appropriate; set passcodes, parental controls and privacy settings. Teach your child to **STOP, BLOCK, TELL**.

- **STOP** what they are doing and never retaliate
- **BLOCK** the person who is harassing them or posting inappropriate content
- **TELL** a trusted adult so they can help to resolve the issue

INFORMATION FOR CHILDREN:

If you are being bullied on your phone, when online or while gaming:

- Remember, **bullying is never your fault**. It can be stopped and it can usually be traced.
- Don't ignore the bullying. Tell someone you trust, such as a teacher or parent.
- Block the number to prevent messages or calls to your phone.
- Try to keep calm. If you are frightened, try to show it as little as possible. Don't get angry, it will only make the person bullying you more likely to continue.
- Don't give out your personal details online - do not say where you live, the school you go

to, your email address etc. Don't show upload pictures of your home or school uniform etc,. All these things can help someone who wants to harm you to build up a picture.

- Keep and save any bullying emails, text messages or images. Screenshot them if possible. Then you can show them to a parent or teacher.
- If you can, make a note of the time and date bullying messages or images were sent, and note any details about the sender.
- There is plenty of online advice on how to react to cyber bullying. For example, internetmatters.org and webwise.ie have some useful tips.

Text/video messaging

- You can easily stop receiving text messages for a while by turning-off incoming messages for a couple of days. This might stop the person texting you by making them believe you've changed your phone number
- You can also block the incoming calls by blocking their number
- If the bullying persists, you can change your phone number.
- Don't reply to abusive or worrying text or video messages.
- Your mobile service provider will have a number for you to ring or text to report phone bullying. Visit their website for details.
- Don't delete messages from cyber bullies. You don't have to read them, but you should keep them as evidence. Screenshot them if possible.

Useful Websites

Safesearchkids.com

Google kids space

Youtubekids.com

Internetmatters.org

Webwise.ie

Kids.justalk.com

Ratification and review:

This policy was reviewed by the Board of Management on the 4th October 2023.