

St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Axminster

Anti-Bullying Policy

Due for Review every 3 years Reviewed by Teaching and Learning Committee

Last reviewed October 2022

Living, Loving and Learning with God

**STATEMENT OF SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN**

At St Mary's, our school community has a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are our pupils. This means that we have a Safeguarding Children and Child Protection Policy and Procedures in place. All staff including our volunteers and supply staff must ensure that they are aware of our procedures. Parents and carers are welcome to read these on request.

Sometimes we may need to share information and work in partnership with other agencies when there are concerns about a child's welfare. We will always ensure that our concerns about our pupils are discussed with their parents/carers first unless we have reason to believe that this is not in the child's best interests.

Our Designated Safeguarding Officer is: Mrs Debbie Gill.

Our Deputy Designated Safeguarding Officers are: Mr Rob Meech, Mrs Debbie Fudger and Rachel Burrough

Our Designated Child Protection Governor is: Hilary Sharp

**Liaising with parents/carers**

We encourage discussion and maintain open lines of communication with parents/carers, especially those whose children are experiencing difficulties abiding by agreed school rules. We are in no doubt that parental support is paramount in ensuring continuity and consistency to help children improve their social skills.

**Rationale of Anti- bullying Policy**

St Mary's Catholic Primary School aims to be a happy, caring and compassionate Catholic community where each child's gifts are developed to the full and the foundations for lifelong learning are laid down. We believe that teaching children the importance of respect is an essential part of our school mission to educate and develop every child's potential within our Catholic School Family. Every child is a gift from God, made in His image and likeness and therefore entitled to be valued and respected as a unique individual. We aim to ensure that positive relationships are a key part of each child's everyday experience at school. Bullying, whether verbal, physical, emotional or technological, whether carried out directly or indirectly, is not tolerated. It is everyone's responsibility to try to prevent occurrences of bullying and to deal with any incidents quickly and effectively. Everybody has a right not to be bullied in any way, shape or form.

Bullying may be brought to the attention of any member of staff by the victim(s), their friend(s), their parent(s)/ carer(s) or other interested people.

## Policy Development

This policy is formulated in consultation with the whole school community with ongoing input from:

- Members of staff and governors.
- Children, through the School Council, circle time discussions, etc.
- Parents/Carers
- Guidance from DfE

## Aims

- To provide a safe, caring environment for the whole school community, especially the children in our care.
- To instil in children that bullying is unacceptable, that everyone has the right not to be bullied, the responsibility not to bully others and that reports of bullying will be taken seriously, recorded and acted upon.
- To reassure children that they will be listened to and will know that it is all right to tell.
- To ensure children feel confident to seek support from school should they feel unsafe or threatened.
- To heed parents and keep them informed of actions taken in response to a complaint.
- A full investigation will follow any report of bullying with detailed records kept of incidents, reports and complaints.
- To take appropriate action, including exclusion in cases of severe bullying.
- To monitor any incidents of bullying during the school year.

## Definition of Bullying

Bullying can be described as being:

*'A deliberate act done to cause distress solely in order to give a feeling of power, status or other gratification to the bully. Bullying can range from ostracising, name-calling, teasing, threats, threatening or aggressive language or body posturing, and extortion, through to physical intimidation, assault on persons and/or their property. It can be an unresolved single frightening, premeditated incident that casts a shadow over a child's life, or a series of such incidents. We believe that bullying starts where caring stops.'*

The DCSF definition of bullying, as defined in their September 2007 Guidance: 'Safe to Learn: embedding anti-bullying in schools', is: *'Behaviour by an individual or group, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally.'*

Types of bullying There are four main types of bullying.

- Physical i.e. hitting, kicking, biting or taking belongings
- Verbal i.e. name calling, insulting or making offensive remarks
- Emotional (which is often indirect) - spreading unpleasant stories about someone, exclusion from social groups, being made the subject of malicious rumours.
- Technological: Being made the subject of malicious rumours including written abuse, sending malicious e-mails or text messages on mobile phones/online, insulting or

making offensive remarks, inappropriate text messaging and e mailing; sending offensive images by phone or via the internet.

There is no hierarchy of bullying - all forms should be taken equally seriously and dealt with appropriately. Although bullying can occur between individuals it can often take place in the presence of others who become the 'bystanders' or 'accessories'.

### **Behaviour that is not bullying**

Bullying is not:

- One off falling out with people resulting in name calling, threats or physical violence
- Short-term arguments
- A fight or a quarrel between children of equal power and strength
- Friends breaking up
- Occasional teasing

This behaviour is not acceptable and will be dealt with appropriately but we do not consider it bullying. Some bullying is deliberate but some may not be, especially where very young children are involved. Sometimes children are unaware of the effect their behaviour is having on others.

### **One off incidents**

Occasionally an incident may be deemed to be bullying even if the behaviour has not been repeated or persistent - if it fulfils all other descriptions of bullying. This possibility should be considered, particularly in cases of sexual, sexist, racist, ethnic, religious, cultural, gender, trans-gender, special educational needs, disability or homophobic bullying and when people with disabilities are involved. If the victim might be in danger then intervention is required urgently.

### **Equality and Diversity**

St. Mary's Catholic Primary School is firmly committed to equality and diversity, and when carrying out our functions, we always have due regard to the need: to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment and to promote equality of opportunity. Many adults and children are bullied because they are seen as different. This is referred to as a prejudice-related bullying. Children and young people may be seen as different because of their ethnicity, religion or culture, sexual orientation (perceived or actual), gender or trans-gender identity (perceived or actual), special educational needs or disabilities.

### **Strategy for Dealing with Bullying**

Guidelines for Staff In dealing with bullying, staff should:

- Never ignore suspected bullying.
- Do not make premature assumptions.
- Listen carefully to all accounts - several pupils with the same version does not mean they are telling the truth.
- Adopt a problem-solving approach that moves pupils forward from self-justification.

- Work with pupils towards restorative justice and non-punitive approaches
- Follow up proven cases to check bullying has not returned.
- Keep detailed records.

Strategies are implemented at St Mary's Catholic Primary School to reduce bullying. These strategies cover raising awareness about bullying and the Anti-bullying Policy, increased understanding for victims and teaching pupils how to manage relationships in a constructive way.

Staff should apply one or more of the strategies below, depending on the perceived seriousness of the situation. The emphasis should always be one of showing a caring and listening approach. Staff should always be mindful of the fact that children are sometimes singled out because they are affluent, deprived, in care, overweight or deemed to be 'different' for a variety of reasons. Some prejudices surface fleetingly in sessions or play such as 'you're just a girl', addressed to either bender, 'that's gay', or 'boys don't cry'. Such comments can seem part of growing up, but, if left untackled, can contribute to a culture in which bullying incidents can occur.

In response to a complaint of bullying, the discipline procedures of St Mary's Catholic Primary School should be followed, with staff making a full investigation, keeping detailed records and applying sanctions as necessary.

The order in which the investigation takes place will depend on individual circumstances. Logs should be kept of all incidents/alleged incidents, with next steps recorded.

1. Discuss the nature of the bullying with the 'victim' at length, recording all the facts. This will require patience and understanding.
2. Identify the bully/bullies and any witnesses, and any written material if applicable.
3. Interview witnesses.
4. Discuss the incident(s) with the alleged bully/ies. Present and carefully question them regarding the allegations and ask them to tell the truth about the situation/incident. Make it clear that this is only an investigation at this stage.
5. If the suspected bully does identify that they are bullying, make it understood that bullying is not acceptable at St Mary's Catholic Primary School and what effect it has on the education of the victim and the rest of the children in the class/school. Apply sanctions relevant to the type of bullying.
7. If the allegation of bullying is denied, investigate further. If there is sufficient evidence that the bullying occurred, apply relevant sanctions.
8. Hold separate discussions with parents of bully and victim.

### **Sanctions for the bully :**

**At St Mary's we work within a framework of restorative approaches. We work to assume that all behaviour, including wrong choice, is an expression of a child's internal world.**

**We would look at the reasons behind the behaviour and would seek to ensure that the child understood the impact on others and how this would be replayed if it were possible.**

Bullying is a serious incident. In society it has been shown that it can have serious and negative consequences on those subjected to it.

It would be important to work involving parents where appropriate.

It would be important to secure clear and agreed outcomes that would work to ensure that these behaviours stop.

The school Exclusions Policy will be used as guidance in such circumstances.

### **Individual Behaviour Programmes or Relational Support Plans**

Some children have genuine difficulty in responding to normal incentives or sanctions. In such cases St Mary's use an individual emotional support plan or Relational Support Plan. This would be completed with pupil and parent, class teacher and led by the SENCO, Head teacher. It is possible that other agencies will be involved.

### **Support for the victim and the bully**

Provide a Pastoral Support Programme for the victim with a mentor/named person monitoring and observing at break times and lunchtimes, and through discussion, to support a resolution to the bullying. The mentor will be decided upon by the Head Teacher. The school raises awareness of the nature of bullying through the PSHE curriculum programmes, assemblies and subject areas as appropriate, to attempt to eradicate such behaviour.

### **St Mary's Catholic Primary School is an inclusive school, we DO:**

- Respect all children and their parents and believe that their integrity and self-esteem is paramount
- Remember that the children we are dealing with are just that - children. This means that, like everyone, they are human, that they can make mistakes like all of us and that they are somebody's son or daughter.
- Keep our Mission Statement, Aims and Behaviour and Discipline Policy at the heart of all our dealings with children
- Remember that children's opinions differ from those of adults. This means that they can be anxious or scared of someone one day and be 'best friends' the next; it means that their perceptions of the definition of bullying often differ from those of their parents, something that parents should also be aware of.
- Show great discernment and distinction between what IS bullying and what is simply what may be described as normal development behaviours.
- Try to establish a 'no blame' culture in which people take responsibility for what they say and do
- Adopt a problem-solving approach which is positive and moves all the children forward, including the 'bully'.
- State clearly what is right and what is wrong
- Discourage parents from discussing bullying incidents and carrying these incidents with them outside of the school, where they develop into playground gossip.
- Investigate each incident thoroughly and monitor children carefully
- Remember that changes in behaviour do not always happen overnight. This means informing the parents of both the victim and the child who has bullied that this may be the case, and giving them their reassurance that the situation will be monitored very closely indeed.

- Schools are busy places. The school cannot guarantee that bullying behaviour will not take place again, but EVERY effort will be made to try to ensure that it does not.

#### **At St Mary's Catholic Primary School, we DO NOT:**

- Ignore any incidents or situations
- Label or brand a child as a 'bully'
- Jump to conclusions, instant or otherwise
- Carry out public humiliation or degrading punishments
- Discuss any incidents of bullying outside the school, other than as necessary with the appropriate authority such as the LA, for serious incidents.

In order to reduce incidents of bullying and recognise bullying behaviour, at St Mary's Catholic Primary School, all staff watch for early signs of distress in pupils. **At St Mary's Catholic Primary School we LISTEN and ACT as appropriate.**

The school has an active School Council, representatives from which discuss issues related to bullying, through their discussion of positive playtimes and the promotion of playtime games. Children are regularly interviewed in groups, or in class sessions about their perceptions of behaviour, bullying and staff responses to these within the school.

St Mary's has embedded a system which ensures that children know that they have the right to say 'stop' and to 'tell'. This is very actively promoted and reviewed on a regular basis.

St. Mary's has a Team system with Team Leaders as well as Year 5 and 6 Playleaders who are responsible for the younger children at lunchtimes. We encourage all children to feel safe to talk to each other. We have good across age pupil links.

#### **Monitoring Procedures**

Records will be kept of all reported bullying incidents by the Headteacher who will provide support to pupils and liaise with parents. An observation in the record will be made as to how these facts were obtained e.g observation, hearsay, gossip, the age and gender of all pupils involved, the nature of the incident and the type of response made. CPOMs will be regularly monitored and follow up interviews with pupils (and parents, where appropriate) will be implemented.

A factual brief summary of the incident will be placed in the victim's and perpetrator's file.

#### **Complaints procedures**

Any complaints about the anti-bullying procedures or programme should be made to the Head Teacher who will report to the governors.

#### **Curriculum**

There is a whole school ethos based on Gospel Values, kindness and care for other people as well as respect for differences.

St. Mary's uses a variety of opportunities within the curriculum to help children to understand about all aspects of bullying and its consequences, for example, PSHE lessons, assemblies and through all curriculum subjects where relevant. Our School values are fully embedded to work to support a very positive and supportive ethos.

#### **Bullying off the School Premises**

St Mary's Catholic Primary School is not directly responsible for bullying which may occur off the school premises; however, if both the victim and the bully are from the School, action will be taken as if the incident has occurred within the school, and this includes informing parents. Where possible, the School will support pupils who have been bullied, especially on their way to or from school, by pupils from another school or by other persons.

The following steps should be taken.

- Talk to the pupil(s) and parents involved from the other school.
- Talk to the Head Teacher of another school whose pupils are bullying off school premises.
- Talk to the Police about problems on the local streets.
- Talk to the local transport company, if bullying is occurring on school buses.
- Talk to pupils about how to avoid or handle bullying situations.
- Talk to pupils to ensure they understand how to use technology in a positive way thus avoiding bullying.

### **Bullying Directed Towards Race, Gender, Sexual Orientation or Disability**

St Mary's Catholic Primary School will not tolerate bullying against anyone because of his or her race, gender, sexual orientation or disability. The school will take preventative action to reduce the likelihood of bullying incidents of this nature occurring. Stereotypical views are challenged and pupils learn to appreciate and view positively differences in others, whether arising from race, gender, ability or disability.

### **Racial Bullying/Harassment**

Racial bullying will not be tolerated in St Marys Catholic Primary School and will be treated severely. If a child receives verbal abuse, physical threats or attacks, or if a pupil brings racist literature into school, incites others to behave in a racist way or writes racist insults, the strategies in the Policy for Education for Race Relations and Ethnic Diversity will be implemented.

A full investigation will be carried out, recording incidents in a separate incident book and on Devon LA forms. St Mary's Catholic Primary School has a duty to develop children's understanding of ethnic diversity issues and explore racial tolerance in PSHE and Citizenship lessons, Assemblies and in Religious Education lessons. The School guarantees confidentiality and support for those being bullied. Racial incidents are reported to the Governing Body and Devon LA as required

### **Sexual Bullying**

Sexual bullying has an impact on both genders. A sexual assault will lead to the exclusion of the perpetrator from St Marys Catholic Primary School. Sexual bullying is characterised by abusive name-calling, comments about appearance, attractiveness and emerging puberty, inappropriate and uninvited touching, sexual innuendoes and propositions (i.e. sexual harassment), and, in its extreme form, sexual assault or rape. **Sexual bullying will not be tolerated at St Mary's Catholic Primary School.**

### **Sexual Orientation**

Sexual bullying can also be related to sexual orientation, perceived or actual. Children do not have to be homosexual or bi-sexual to experience such bullying.

### **Special Education Needs or Disabilities**

Some pupils with special educational needs or disabilities might not be able to articulate experiences as fluently as other children. However, they are often at greater risk of being bullied, both directly and indirectly, and usually about their specific disability.

St Mary's Catholic Primary School makes sure the behaviour of staff does not trigger bullying unintentionally. They should avoid undue attention towards SEND children compared with others, and should not make comments based on pupils' appearance or perceived character.

Staff try to make classroom activities and lessons sensitive to such children's needs. We teach assertiveness and other social skills and teach victims to say 'No' or to get help. A named mentor/friend is appointed for the pupil to confide in.

If the bullying is serious, St Mary's Catholic Primary School undertakes a full investigation, including a full discussion with witnesses, recording incidents in the incident book and contacting parents. Discipline procedures are implemented.

High attainers, gifted or talented pupils can also be affected by bullying. Teachers should treat this as seriously as any other type of bullying.

### **Cyberbullying/Internet Bullying**

St Mary's Catholic Primary School has a clear policy for use of the Internet in school and offers additional guidance and support to parents for use of the Internet outside school. This Policy is available on the school website. There is a clear use of the Internet Code of Conduct, visible throughout the school and children sign an Internet Code Agreement which is re-visited regularly. Government and Local Authority advice is given to parents via the newsletter. This includes recommendations to parents to follow guidelines from CEOP: 'Child Exploitation Online Protection' at [www.ceop.gov.uk](http://www.ceop.gov.uk) The Headteacher attends regular Child Protection training updates as the Lead Officer for Child Protection, and is kept updated on cyberbullying trends. Mobile phones are not allowed in school.

**Date of approval & adoption:** October 2022

**Date of next review:** October 2025

**This Policy should be read in conjunction with St Mary's Catholic Primary School's Policies for:**

- Attendance
- Safeguarding Children and Child Protection
- Positive Behaviour and Discipline
- Special Educational Needs
- PSHE Policy
- Exclusions
- Equality
- Health and Safety
- Positive Handling Policy
- Policy for the Use of the Internet
- E-Safety Policy (from South West Grid for Learning)
- Ethnic Diversity and Race Relations
- Transgender policy



- SRE Policy