

Scoil Ursula

■ Title

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY (revised December 2015)

■ Introductory Statement

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 Scoil Ursula has adopted the following anti-bullying policy within the framework of the school's overall code of behaviour. This policy fully complies with the requirements of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* which were published in September 2013. An initial draft was disseminated to staff members and published on the school website. There followed a one month period of consultation where parents and staff were invited to make written submissions. The final draft was then ratified by the Board of Management on the 24th of March, 2014. Copies were provided to all staff members and to Scoil Ursula Parents Association. The policy is also published on the school's website at www.scoilursula.com Following consultation with PDST Advisor, Ciara Delaney, the policy was further reviewed in December, 2015.

■ Rationale

The Board of Management recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of pupils and is therefore fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour:

- A positive school culture and climate which-
 - is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity;
 - encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment; and
 - promotes respectful relationships across the school community;
- Effective leadership;
- A school-wide approach;
- A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact;
- Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that-
 - build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and
 - explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.
- Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils;
- Supports for staff;
- Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

■ Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of the School

Scoil Ursula believes that its pupils have the right to learn in a supportive, caring and safe environment without the fear of being bullied. All institutions, both large and small, contain some numbers of pupils with the potential for bullying behaviour. If a school is well disciplined and organised, it can minimise the occurrence of bullying. The School also has a clear policy on the promotion of good citizenship, where it is made clear that bullying is a form of anti-social behaviour. It is our policy to promote this belief, where both pupils and parents/guardians are fully aware that any bullying complaints will be dealt with firmly, fairly and promptly.

In keeping with our Catholic Ethos and our Ursuline Philosophy and Traditions, Scoil Ursula

- Values the dignity and uniqueness of each child and helps develop a sense of their own worth, through promoting self-confidence and self-expression.
- Develops in its Catholic/Christian pupils a personal relationship with God and the expression of Christian values.
- Nurtures the holistic development of each child; spiritual, moral, emotional, intellectual, physical and social.
- Emphasises the importance of courtesy and kindness.
- Instils in its pupils the courage and confidence to live in justice and truth.
- Creates a sense of responsibility, respect and caring for self, others and the wider community.
- Fosters environmental awareness and care among its pupils through SESE and participation in the Green Schools initiative
- Encourages involvement of parents through home/school contacts and through their involvement in the Parents' Association.
- Promotes professional and personal development of teachers through staff development programmes.

■ Aims

Through the following aims, we aspire to foster an atmosphere of respect, understanding and encouragement between all who teach, work and learn in the school, so that the development and contribution of every individual can be acknowledged and all can work together to benefit personal growth and the common good.

- To raise awareness among staff, pupils and parents/guardians about bullying and its harmful effects.
- To create the conditions in which children are free to learn and play without fear of intimidation.
- To provide a harmonious, happy, secure learning environment for all pupils.
- To set out strategies whereby incidences of bullying are dealt with in a way that is fair to both victims and children who have engaged in bullying behaviour.
- To raise levels of self-esteem among prospective bullies and victims thereby minimising the potential for such incidences.
- To ensure that the will of persistent bullies will not be indulged at the expense of the rights of other pupils to a safe, happy learning environment.
- To encourage and develop respectful relationships between children and between staff and children.
- To create a school ethos which encourages children to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.

- To raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with school management, staff, pupils, parents/guardians.
- To develop procedures for noting and reporting incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To develop procedures for dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To develop a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and for those involved in bullying behaviour.
- To work with and through various agencies/organisations/individuals in countering all forms of bullying and anti-social behaviour, e.g. community garda, guest speakers, National Educational Psychological Service.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of school policy on bullying behaviour.

■ Guidelines (*content of policy*)

1. Definition:

In accordance with the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* bullying is defined as follows:

Bullying is unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical conducted, by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time.

The following types of bullying behaviour are included in the definition of bullying:

- deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying,
- cyber-bullying and
- identity-based bullying such as homophobic bullying, racist bullying, bullying based on a person's membership of the Traveller community and bullying of those with disabilities or special educational needs.

Isolated or once-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour, including a once-off offensive or hurtful text message or other private messaging, do not fall within the definition of bullying and should be dealt with, as appropriate, in accordance with the school's code of behaviour.

However, in the context of this policy, 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.

Negative behaviour that does not meet this definition of bullying will be dealt with in accordance with the school's code of behaviour.

Isolated incidents of aggressive or inappropriate behaviour towards another or others, which should not be condoned, can scarcely be described as bullying. However, when the behaviour is systematic* and ongoing* it is bullying.

* *Systematic* – is characterised by actions that are planned and methodical and designed to undermine and intimidate the individual.

* *Ongoing* – remaining in existence, developing, continually moving forward.

2. Types of Bullying:

The following are some of the types of bullying behaviour that can occur amongst pupils:

- **Physical aggression:** This behaviour includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping people. It may also take the form of severe physical assault. While pupils often engage in ‘mess fights’, they can sometimes be used as a disguise for physical harassment or inflicting pain.
- **Intimidation:** Some bullying behaviour takes the form of intimidation: it may be based on the use of very aggressive body language with the voice being used as a weapon. Particularly upsetting can be a facial expression which conveys aggression and/or dislike.
- **Isolation/exclusion and other relational bullying:** This occurs where a certain person is deliberately isolated, excluded or ignored by some or all of the class group. This practice is usually initiated by the person engaged in bullying behaviour and can be difficult to detect. It may be accompanied by writing insulting remarks about the pupil in public places, by passing around notes about or drawings of the pupil or by whispering insults about them loud enough to be heard. Relational bullying occurs when a person’s attempts to socialise and form relationships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined. One of the most common forms includes control: “Do this or I won’t be your friend anymore”(implied or stated); a group ganging up against one person (girl or boy); non-verbal gesturing; malicious gossip; spreading rumours about a person or giving them the “silent treatment”.
- **Cyber-bullying:** This type of bullying is increasingly common and is continuously evolving. It is bullying carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as text, social network sites, e-mail, instant messaging (IM), apps, gaming sites, chat-rooms and other online technologies. Being the target of inappropriate or hurtful messages is the most common form of online bullying. As cyber-bullying uses technology to perpetrate bullying behaviour and does not require face to face contact, cyber-bullying can occur at any time (day or night). Many forms of bullying can be facilitated through cyber-bullying. For example, a target may be sent homophobic text messages or pictures may be posted with negative comments about a person’s sexuality, appearance etc.
- **Name calling:** Persistent name-calling directed at the same individual(s) which hurts, insults or humiliates should be regarded as a form of bullying behaviour. Often name-calling of this type refers to physical appearance, e.g., size or clothes worn. Accent or distinctive voice characteristics may attract negative attention. Academic ability can also provoke name calling. This tends to operate at two extremes. There are those who are singled out for attention because they are perceived to be weak academically. At the other extreme there are those who, because they are perceived as high achievers, are also targeted.
- **Damage to property:** Personal property can be the focus of attention for bullying behaviour. This may result in damage to clothing, mobile phone or other devices, school books and other learning material or interference with a pupil’s locker or bicycle. The contents of school bags and pencil cases may be scattered on the floor. Items of personal property may be defaced, broken, stolen or hidden.
- **Extortion:** Demands for money may be made, often accompanied by threats (sometimes carried out in the event of the targeted pupil not delivering on the demand). A pupil may also be forced into theft of property for delivery to another who is engaged in bullying behaviour.

3. Impacts of Bullying:

The following are some of the effects that bullying behaviour that can have on victims, witnesses and those who engage in bullying:

- Pupils who are being bullied may develop feelings of insecurity, humiliation and extreme anxiety and thus may become more vulnerable. Self-confidence may be damaged with a consequent lowering of self-esteem. While they may not talk about what is happening to them, their suffering is indicated through changes in mood and behaviour. Extreme cases of bullying may result in suicide. It is, therefore, essential to be alert to changes in behaviour as early intervention can be very effective.
- Pupils who witness bullying may also be affected and may suffer in similar ways to those who are bullied. For example, pupils who witness identity-based bullying and share that identity can experience anxiety and feel under threat themselves. Pupils can also feel guilt or distress at not being able to help the person being bullied.
- There are also consequences for individuals who engage in bullying behaviour. Pupils who become involved in such behaviour can be at higher risk of depression. Other possible long-term consequences may include an increased risk of developing an anti-social personality, anxiety disorders, a likelihood of substance abuse and law-breaking behaviour in adulthood and decreased educational and occupational attainment.

4. Indicators of Bullying:

The following are some of the signs that may indicate that bullying behaviour is occurring:

- Anxiety about travelling to and from school e.g. requesting parents to drive or collect him/her, changing travel routes, avoiding regular times for travelling to and from school;
- Unwillingness to go to school, refusal to attend, truancy;
- Deterioration in educational performance, loss of concentration and loss of enthusiasm and interest in school;
- Pattern of physical illnesses e.g. headaches, stomach aches;
- Unexplained changes either in mood or behaviour which may be particularly noticeable before returning to school after weekends or more especially after longer school holidays;
- Visible signs of anxiety or distress e.g. stammering, withdrawing, nightmares, difficulty in sleeping, crying, not eating, vomiting, bedwetting;
- Spontaneous out-of-character comments about either pupils or teachers;
- Possessions missing or damaged;
- Increased requests for money or stealing money;
- Unexplained bruising or cuts or damaged clothing; and
- Reluctance and/or refusal to say what is troubling him/her.

There may be other signs depending on the individual and his/her circumstances. The above signs do not necessarily mean that a pupil is being bullied but if repeated or occurring in combination, these signs do warrant investigation in order to establish what is affecting the pupil.

5. Characteristics Associated with Bullying:

It is important to recognise that any pupil can be bullied or can engage in bullying behaviour.

The pupil who engages in bullying behaviour

- A significant proportion of bullying is not merely behavioural but is rooted in a lack of respect for diversity and in social inequalities. “Prejudice-based” or “identity-based” bullying can be a significant factor in bullying behaviour.
- Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour tend to display aggressive attitudes combined with a low level of self-discipline. They may lack any sense of remorse convincing themselves that the other person deserves the treatment they are receiving.
- Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour can be attention seeking: setting out to impress bystanders and responding to the reaction their behaviour provokes. They can lack the ability to empathise. They can appear unaware or indifferent to the other person’s feelings. It is of note that pupils who exhibit bullying behaviour often suffer from a lack of confidence and have low self-esteem.
- However, it must also be recognised that pupils who engage in bullying behaviour do not always intend to bully or may not recognise the potential negative impact of their words and actions on others.
- It is not uncommon to find that pupils who engage in bullying behaviour may also have been bullied themselves.

The pupil who is bullied

Any pupil through no fault of their own may be a target of bullying. It is common in the course of normal interaction for pupils to tease or taunt each other. However, at a certain point, teasing and taunting may become forms of bullying behaviour. As pupils can be particularly quick to notice differences in others, pupils who are perceived as different in some way can be more prone to encounter such behaviour. However, the pupils who are most at risk of being bullied are those who react in a vulnerable and distressed manner. The seriousness and duration of the bullying behaviour can be related to the pupil’s continuing response to the verbal, physical or psychological aggression.

Pupils who are bullied often experience difficulties in speaking up about bullying. The difficulties include:

- Fear of reprisals;
- Concerns about being perceived as a “tell-tale” for reporting bullying;
- Concerns about “getting into trouble” with the principal or teacher for reporting bullying;
- Not having evidence to back up a bullying allegation;
- Not knowing how the matter will be dealt with by the school; and
- Not feeling fully confident of being believed.

More vulnerable pupils

- While bullying can happen to any pupil, it is known that some may be more vulnerable to or at risk of experiencing bullying. Such vulnerable groups include pupils with disabilities or special educational needs, those from ethnic minority and migrant groups, pupils from the Traveller community, lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) pupils and those perceived to be LGBT and pupils of minority religious faiths.
- There can be an increased vulnerability to bullying amongst pupils with special educational needs and particularly those who do not understand social cues and/or have difficulty communicating. Some pupils with complex needs may lack understanding of social situations and therefore trust everyone implicitly. Such pupils may be more vulnerable

because they do not have the same social skills or capacity as others to recognise and defend themselves against bullying behaviour. Research suggests that children with disabilities and with special educational needs (SEN) are more likely to be bullied than others. Bullying can also have a more severe impact on such children. For example, some studies which compare the impact of bullying on children with and without certain disabilities, such as a speech and language difficulty, show that bullying has a greater impact on self-esteem for those with a disability. Homophobic and transphobic bullying (bullying targeted at those who are or who are perceived to be LGBT) has also been found to be prevalent with evidence that such pupils have particular difficulty in speaking up or reporting the bullying behaviour.

Where does bullying happen?

Bullying can happen anywhere at any time but there are certain times and places which particularly facilitate bullying.

Cyber-bullying: Access to technology means that cyber-bullying can happen around the clock and the pupil's home may not even be a safe haven from such bullying. Pupils are increasingly communicating in ways that are often unknown to adults and free from supervision. The nature of these technologies means digital content can be shared and seen by a very wide audience almost instantly and is almost impossible to delete permanently. While cyber bullying often takes place at home and at night, the impact can also be felt in school.

Areas of unstructured activity: Bullying in schools frequently takes place in the playground/schoolyard. School grounds with hidden or obscured parts may provide an environment conducive to bullying. Many common playground/schoolyard games present opportunities for bullying because of their physical nature. It is relatively easy to single out and bully another pupil. The noise level masks much of what is going on. The playground/schoolyard provides the opportunity for older pupils to pick on younger pupils. It can also be the setting for bullying by groups. Continuing provocation may eventually lead to a physical fight and ironically in some cases the person being bullied may appear to be the aggressor because he/she finally gives vent to his/her frustration.

Toilets, corridors, cloakrooms, locker areas, changing rooms, showers, the gym and assembly hall may be the scene of verbal, psychological and physical bullying. The behaviour of pupils in those areas needs careful monitoring.

Bullying in the classroom: Bullying may also take place in class. It may occur subtly through glances, looks and sniggers but may take the more overt form of physical intimidation. It may also be exacerbated if a classroom atmosphere prevails whereby pupils are allowed to make derogatory comments about their classmates or other teachers. However, teachers need to be alert to the underlying reasons for such comments in case pupils are trying to disclose something which is disturbing them and thus needs further investigation. Bullying may also occur between class periods irrespective of whether the class or the teacher moves.

Coming to and from school: The area immediately outside the school, the local shops and local neighbourhood are often the scenes of bullying. Bullying can also take place at the bus-stop or on the journey to and from school whether the individuals are walking, cycling or on school buses.

6. Relevant Teacher:

The relevant teacher for investigating and dealing with bullying is the Class Teacher, who becomes aware of the bullying behaviour or to whom the bullying behaviour is reported.

7. Education and Prevention Strategies:

The education and prevention strategies that will be used by the school are as follows:

'At the centre of a whole school response to bullying is the creation of a positive school climate which focuses on respect for the individual...' (Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post-Primary Schools, 1993)

Positive school culture and climate

- A cornerstone in the prevention of bullying is a positive school culture and climate that is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity and respect. Scoil Ursula promotes a positive school climate which encourages respect, trust, care, consideration and support for others.
- Central to our positive school culture is respectful relationships across the entire school community. This encompasses relationships amongst peers (e.g. pupil to pupil, teacher to teacher) and relationships between groups (e.g. teachers and pupils, parents and teachers etc.).
- We challenge the misconception that bullying is a normal phase of development and that it teaches pupils to toughen up. The school endeavours to create an environment where pupils feel comfortable and free to discuss and disclose incidents of bullying. We explicitly teach pupils to realise that they also have a responsibility for the safety and welfare of fellow pupils.
- Scoil Ursula encourages open dialogue between all school staff and pupils. We provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to raise their concerns in an environment that is comfortable for the pupil.
- The key elements of our positive school culture and climate are outlined as follows:
 - ✓ The school acknowledges the right of each member of the school community to enjoy school in a secure environment.
 - ✓ The school acknowledges the uniqueness of each individual and his/her worth as a human being.
 - ✓ The school promotes positive habits of self-respect, self-discipline and responsibility among all its members.
 - ✓ The school prohibits vulgar, offensive, sectarian or other aggressive behaviour or language by any of its members.
 - ✓ The school has a clear commitment to promoting equity in general and gender equity in particular in all aspects of its functioning.
 - ✓ The school has the capacity to change in response to pupils' needs.
 - ✓ The school identifies aspects of curriculum through which positive and lasting influences can be exerted towards forming pupils' attitudes and values.
 - ✓ The school takes particular care of "at risk" pupils and uses its monitoring systems to facilitate early intervention where necessary and it responds to the needs, fears or anxieties of individual members in a sensitive manner.
 - ✓ The school recognises the need to work in partnership with and keep parents informed on procedures to improve relationships on a school-wide basis.
 - ✓ The school recognises the role of parents in equipping the pupil with a range of life-skills.
 - ✓ The school recognises the role of other community agencies in preventing and dealing with bullying and the school has a close working relationship with our Community Garda Youth Liaison Team.
 - ✓ The school promotes habits of mutual respect, courtesy and an awareness of the interdependence of people in groups and communities.

- ✓ The school promotes qualities of social responsibility, tolerance and understanding among all its members both in school and out of school.
- ✓ Staff members share a collegiate responsibility, under the direction of the Principal, to act in preventing bullying/aggressive behaviour by any member of the school community.

Effective leadership

- Scoil Ursula endeavours to provide effective leadership through its Principal, Deputy Principal, Special Duties Post-Holders and Board of Management supporting a school culture and climate that celebrates difference. All those in leadership roles within the school play their part in stimulating a school-wide approach to preventing and tackling bullying.
- The Principal uses his position of influence to affect attitudes and set standards in dealing with bullying behaviour. Principals and other leaders in the school, including all teachers, strive to engender an ethos under which bullying is unacceptable. All who are identified as leaders within the school community ensure that practical steps are taken to challenge and respond to bullying. School leaders also involve both staff and pupils in developing and implementing a vision of the school where diversity is accepted and celebrated.
- As pupils model their behaviour on that of adults, so all staff members are careful to act as good role-models and are fair, firm, clear and consistent in their disciplinary measures.
- Scoil Ursula has adopted the Teaching Council's *Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers* as its benchmark in relation to the values and standards expected of teachers in their daily work with pupils.
- The adults in the school have a responsibility to model the school's standards of behaviour, in their dealings both with pupils and with each other, since their example is a powerful source of learning for pupils. Parents are also expected to model the standards that pupils are asked to respect. In order to do this, they are made familiar with the standards and encouraged to understand the importance of expecting pupils to behave according to these standards. The ways in which parents and teachers interact provide pupils with a model of good working relationships.

A school-wide approach

- Scoil Ursula employs a school-wide approach to dealing with the problem of bullying behaviour. Bullying behaviour affects not only those immediately involved. It can affect everyone in the classroom, in the school and, ultimately, in the wider community.
- A positive school-wide attitude and involvement assists us in countering bullying behaviour in our school. In addition to the role of management and staff, parents and pupils have a role and responsibility in helping the school to prevent and address school-based bullying behaviour and to deal with any negative impact within school of bullying behaviour that occurs elsewhere. Parents are encouraged to recognise that a school that openly discusses bullying is acting positively and that they need to work with the school to ensure there is a coherent, school-wide approach to tackling the issue.
- Bullying behaviour thrives in an atmosphere of uncertainty and secrecy in which the pupil often feels a sense of hopelessness and futility against the power being exercised by the person engaged in bullying behaviour. We strive to provide a high degree of school-wide vigilance and openness to ensure that bullying behaviour can be adequately tackled.
- We promote relevant home/school/community links as a tool to countering bullying behaviour and this has become a normal part of the school's effective operation. While we recognise that we have no jurisdiction over incidents that occur outside the school, if we become aware of such incidents, we reserve the right to become involved in cautioning pupils against such behaviour and informing parents where necessary. In this regard we encourage those members of the wider community who come directly in daily contact with

school pupils (school bus drivers, school traffic wardens and local shopkeepers) to play a positive role in assisting us to counter bullying behaviour by reporting such behaviour to parents and/or to the school as appropriate. Through this approach, a network is formed.

- In certain cases, however, it may be necessary for the school to seek the assistance of other local persons and formal agencies such as NEPS, HSE social workers, community workers, Gardaí etc.

Implementation of education and prevention strategies including awareness raising

- Scoil Ursula promotes a preventative approach to bullying as an integral part of our anti-bullying policy.
- Effective practice we employ includes prevention and awareness raising measures across all aspects of bullying and involves strategies to engage pupils in addressing problems when they arise. We teach strategies to build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils.
- As self-esteem is a major factor in determining behaviour, Scoil Ursula, through both curricular and extra-curricular programmes, provides pupils with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth.
- Scoil Ursula provides programmes focused on developing pupils' awareness and understanding of bullying, including its causes and effects, which deal with the issue of identity-based bullying including homophobic and transphobic bullying. Pupils in the senior classes are taught not to use homophobic or transphobic terms as a means of insult or abuse.
- Scoil Ursula believes that the best way to address cyber-bullying is to prevent it happening in the first place. Pupils are educated on appropriate online behaviour, how to stay safe while on-line and also on developing a culture of reporting any concerns about cyber-bullying. Webwise is used as a tool for teaching appropriate Internet use and all pupils and parents sign up to our Acceptable Use Policy. The school-wide approach and the role of parents is emphasised in this regard. Through our Broadband Filtering Network and our mobile phone policy the scope for cyber-bullying to occur as a result of access to technology from within the school is minimised. The school website and Class blogs are moderated by teachers to ensure that no hurtful comments are posted. Attempts by pupils to do so are reported to parents. Parents are discouraged from allowing their children to use Facebook and other such social networking sites on grounds of lower age limits which preclude Primary school children from using them. Since these sites cannot be accessed at school, incidents of Cyber-Bullying occurring on them are outside the remit of the school. However, if we become aware of incidents of Cyber-Bullying outside of school, we reserve the right to become involved in cautioning pupils against such behaviour and informing parents. Children, parents and the school community are made aware through anti-bullying lessons and whole school communication that placing a once-off hurtful or offensive message, picture or statement on a public forum such as a social networking site or group messaging app is considered under DES guidelines to be bullying behaviour.
- Programmes that we use as prevention measures in the above areas include Alive-O, SPHE Programme, Stay Safe, Restorative Justice, Walk Tall, RSE Programme, WebWise and the Anti-Bullying Campaign Tools for Teachers. These curriculum components and programmes are particularly relevant to the prevention of bullying and the promotion of respect for diversity and inclusiveness. There is also space within the teaching of all subjects to foster an attitude of respect for all: to promote the value of diversity; to address prejudice and stereotyping and to highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour. In English, there is a wide range of literature available which could be used to stimulate discussion. In SPHE, the interdependence of people in communities at local, national and international levels is stressed. In Geography and History references to colonisation, exploitation and dictatorships are used to illustrate the negative aspect of power. This work is also extended into many other areas such as Art, Drama, and Physical Education. Co-operation and group enterprise

is promoted through Student Council, team sports and school clubs as well as through practical subjects. Sporting activities in particular provide excellent opportunities for channelling and learning how to control aggression.

- In Scoil Ursula, our approach to tackling and preventing bullying takes particular account of the needs of pupils with disabilities or with SEN. Our SEN Team in conjunction with the other staff members use approaches which include improving inclusion, focusing on developing social, personal and safety skills, paying attention to key moments such as transitioning from primary to post-primary and cultivating a good school culture which has respect for all and helping one another as central.

Supports for staff

- The Board of Management provide copies of the school's anti bullying policy to members of school staff to ensure that they have sufficient familiarity with it to enable them to effectively and consistently apply the policy when required. Anti-Bullying policy and practices are included on Staff Meeting agenda. It is hoped that DES will provide the necessary in-service supports for staff appropriate to their role to enable them to recognise bullying, implement effective strategies for preventing bullying and where appropriate, intervene effectively in bullying cases.
- The Board of Management also make appropriate arrangements to ensure that temporary and substitute staff have sufficient awareness of the school's code of behaviour and its anti-bullying policy.

Roles & Responsibilities of Pupils & Parents

Pupil who is being bullied:

- Remember that your silence is the bully's greatest weapon!
- Tell yourself that you do not deserve to be bullied, and that it is WRONG!
- Be proud of who you are. It is good to be individual.
- Try not to show that you are upset. It is hard but a bully thrives on someone's fear.
- Stay with a group of friends/people. There is safety in numbers.
- Be assertive - shout "No!" Walk confidently away. Go straight to a teacher or member of staff.
- Fighting back may make things worse. If you decide to fight back, talk to a teacher or parent/guardian first.
- Generally it is best to tell an adult you trust straight away. You will get immediate support. The teachers will take you seriously and will deal with bullying in a way, which will end the bullying and will not make things worse for you.

Pupil who sees or knows someone is being bullied:

- TAKE ACTION! Watching and doing nothing looks as if you are on the side of the bully. It makes the victim feel more unhappy and on their own.
- If you feel you cannot get involved, tell an adult IMMEDIATELY. Teachers have ways of dealing with the bully without getting you into trouble.
- Do not be, or pretend to be, friends with a bully.

Parents

- Look for unusual behaviour in your children. For example, they may suddenly not wish to attend school, feel ill regularly, or not complete work to their normal standard.
- Always take an active role in your child's education. Enquire how their day has gone, who they have spent their time with, how lunchtime was spent etc.

- If you feel your child may be a victim of bullying behaviour, inform the School immediately. Your complaint will be taken seriously and appropriate action will follow.
- It is important that you advise your child not to fight back. It can make matters worse!
- Tell your own son or daughter there is nothing wrong with him or her. It is not his or her fault that they are being bullied.
- Make sure your child is fully aware of the School Anti-Bullying Policy concerning bullying, so that they will not be afraid to ask for help.
- Try not to over-emphasise negative incidents that occur to your child at school. You may over-sensitise your child to experiences that are part of socialisation and impair his/her ability to develop interpersonal skills and coping mechanisms. A certain amount of negative experience is a normal part of growing up and in ordinary everyday school life, all children will experience some fallings out with their fellow pupils. It is important not to label such events as bullying to your child until the school can establish this conclusively. Your child may develop a victim mentality and see even the most trivial incidents as bullying and this may have a damaging impact on their integration and social interactions with friends and schoolmates. Premature labelling of behaviour as ‘bullying’ can also have a far reaching impact on those children who are unfairly labelled as ‘bullies’. In the vast majority of cases, a quiet word to the Class Teacher from a concerned parent will result in the issue being resolved promptly and fairly to everybody’s benefit.

8. Procedures for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying:

The school’s procedures for investigation, follow-up and recording of bullying behaviour and the established intervention strategies used by the school for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour are as follows:

Investigation

- The primary aim for the relevant teacher in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame);
- Teachers, who are investigating cases of bullying keep a factual, written record of their discussions with those involved;
- In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved;
- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. In that way pupils will gain confidence in ‘telling’. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It is made clear to all pupils that when they report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly;
- Non-teaching staff such as secretary, special needs assistants (SNAs), caretakers, cleaners are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher;
- Parents and pupils are required to co-operate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving any issues and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved as quickly as possible;
- It is very important that all involved (including each set of pupils and parents) understand the above approach from the outset;
- Teachers take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents;
- Incidents are generally investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved;

- All interviews are conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this way.
- When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher seeks answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This is to be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner;
- If a group is involved, each member is interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved are met as a group. At the group meeting, each member is asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements;
- Each member of a group is supported through the possible pressures that they may face from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher;
- At the teacher's discretion, it may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s);
- In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved are contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken (by reference to the school policy). The school should give parents an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports for their pupils;
- Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it is made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and every effort is made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied;
- It is made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parents) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parents and the school;
- Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved are arranged separately with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date if the pupil who has been bullied is ready and agreeable. This is in keeping with our Restorative Justice approach and can have a therapeutic effect;
- In cases where the relevant teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, it is recorded by the relevant teacher in the recording template at **Appendix 1 on Aladdin**
- In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant teacher must, as part of his/her professional judgement, take the following factors into account:
 - Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased;
 - Whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable;
 - Whether the relationships between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable; and
 - Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the school Principal or Deputy Principal;
- Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents are referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures;
- In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school will advise the parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

Recording

All records are maintained in accordance with relevant data protection legislation. The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour adhere to the following:

- While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the relevant teacher will use his/her professional judgement in relation to the records to be kept of these reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same;
- If it is established by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher will keep appropriate written records which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.
- The relevant teacher will use the recording template at **Appendix 1 on Aladdin** to record the bullying behaviour in the following circumstances:
 - a) in cases where he/she considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour occurred
 - b) where the relevant teacher deems the situation to be of a severity to be reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable.

In each of the circumstances at a) and b) above, the recording template at **Appendix 1 on Aladdin** must be completed in full and a copy retained by the teacher in question and a copy provided to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable. It should also be noted that the timeline for recording bullying behaviour in the recording template at **Appendix 1 on Aladdin** does not in any way preclude the relevant teacher from consulting the Principal or Deputy Principal at an earlier stage in relation to a case.

Stages for Dealing with Incidents of Bullying:

In accordance with the Scoil Ursula Code of Behaviour bullying is regarded as a grave offence and is a serious breach of our code. As such, where all the above reasonable avenues of intervention fail to prevent recurrence of bullying behaviour, steps will be taken to remedy the problem up to and including suspension and/or expulsion. The disciplinary steps are along the following lines:

1. Pupils responsible for bullying behaviour will be informed of the school's policy on bullying, reprimanded appropriately and warned against a recurrence and its consequences. It will also be explained to them the impact their behaviour is having on the victim's and others' happiness and learning in an effort to appeal to their better nature to stop. This will be done by the relevant teacher, who will also deal with the theme of bullying at class level in SPHE/Religion.
2. Where the bullying behaviour persists, the relevant teacher will refer the matter on to the Principal or Deputy Principal who will meet with the pupils concerned. Pupils engaging in bullying behaviour will be given an opportunity to amend their behaviour. This will be done in an atmosphere of making things better rather than apportioning blame and imposing punishment.
3. Should the bullying behaviour continue, then some sanctions may be employed such as withdrawal of privileges e.g. Golden Time, sporting events, buddy system, school excursions etc.
4. A letter will go home to the parents/guardians of the child(ren) engaging in bullying behaviour outlining the nature of the behaviour and requesting their help to resolve the issue.
5. The parents will be called in to meet the principal to discuss the matter with a view to ending the behaviour.

6. Depending on the severity of the continued behaviour, if it is felt that the safety of the victim cannot be guaranteed, the principal may bring the matter to the Board of Management with a view to resolving the issue through suspension and/or expulsion when all other avenues of resolution have failed.

As each case is different, the above steps are a general guideline and steps may be combined, repeated or skipped on a case to case basis at the discretion of the teachers or principal. At all times Restorative Practices will be employed.

Restorative Justice

Where we feel that damage resulting from bullying behaviour is such that it is difficult for the victims to re-engage with the bullies in a normal relationship and/or reintegrate into the school environment appropriately, we may employ Restorative Justice strategies. Restorative Justice constitutes an innovative approach to offending and inappropriate behaviour which puts repairing harm done to relationships and people over and above the need for assigning blame and dispensing punishment. A restorative approach in a school shifts the emphasis from managing behaviour to focussing on the building, nurturing and repairing of relationships.

Bullying as part of a continuum of behaviour

Scoil Ursula acknowledges that bullying behaviour can be part of a continuum of behaviour rather than a stand-alone issue and in some cases behaviour may escalate beyond that which can be described as bullying to serious physical or sexual assault or harassment. As such this policy provides for referral to be made to relevant external agencies and authorities where appropriate. In cases where we have serious concerns in relation to managing the behaviour of a pupil, the advice of the National Education Psychological Service (NEPS) will be sought.

Referral of serious cases to the HSE

- In relation to bullying in schools, *Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011* (Children First) and the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* provide that in situations where “the incident is serious and where the behaviour is regarded as potentially abusive, the school will consult the HSE Children and Family Social Services with a view to drawing up an appropriate response, such as a management plan”.
- Serious instances of bullying behaviour will, in accordance with the Children First and *The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, be referred to the HSE Children and Family Services and/or Gardaí as appropriate.
- The *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* also provide that where school personnel have concerns about a child but are not sure whether to report the matter to the HSE, the Designated Liaison Person will seek advice from the HSE Children and Family Social Services.

9. Programme of Support:

In so far as is practical and where human and other resources allow, the school will provide programmes of support for pupils affected by bullying as follows.

- General programmes of support for pupils who have been bullied. Such pupils benefit from opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop their friendship and social skills and thereby build resilience whenever this is needed.

- A programme of support for those pupils involved in bullying behaviour. Pupils involved in bullying behaviour need assistance on an ongoing basis. For those with low self-esteem, opportunities are developed to increase feelings of self-worth. Learning strategies applied within the school allow for the enhancement of the pupil's self-worth. Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour need help to learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others.
- Pupils who observe incidents of bullying behaviour are encouraged to discuss them with teachers.

Such programmes for working with pupils affected by bullying are provided by relevant teachers and in some cases the help of the SEN Team may be sought to provide behavioural and socialisation programmes as appropriate.

10. Supervision and Monitoring of Pupils:

The Board of Management confirms that appropriate supervision and monitoring policies and practices are in place to both prevent and deal with bullying behaviour and to facilitate early intervention where possible.

- Scoil Ursula ensures that good supervisory and monitoring measures are in place both to prevent and deal with bullying behaviour.
- The Deputy Principal draws up Supervision Rotas to ensure that pupils are adequately supervised during break-times. Problem areas and times are identified and monitored closely.
- All pupils and in particular senior pupils are a resource to assist in countering bullying. Our Student Council plays an active role in monitoring and reporting.
- Non-teaching staff also contribute and are an essential part of the process to counter bullying behaviour in our school.

11. Prevention of Harassment:

The Board of Management confirms that the school will, in accordance with its obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the sexual harassment of pupils or staff or the harassment of pupils or staff on any of the nine grounds specified i.e. gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.

■ Success Criteria

The effectiveness of Scoil Ursula's anti-bullying policy is subject to continuous review in the light of incidents of bullying behaviour encountered. The school makes provision for periodic examination of the prevention and intervention strategies in place.

- The templates in **Appendix 1 on Aladdin** for recording and reporting bullying to the school Principal or Deputy Principal is annually collated and analysed with a view to monitoring levels of bullying behaviour and identifying any particular issues that require attention or any significant trends in behaviour. A record of this analysis is retained and be made available to the Board of Management. Appropriate responses to any issues identified are drawn up and implemented.
- The implementation and effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy is included as an agenda item for staff meetings so as to ensure that concerns about the policy or the welfare of individual pupils can be shared and effectively addressed.

- Our success criteria will be based on the achievement of our objectives. We will use staff observation and parental and student feedback as our benchmark for success or otherwise of the policy.

■ **Timeframe for Implementation**

The revised policy will be implemented from April 4th, 2016.

■ **Timeframe for Review**

This policy will be reviewed annually.

■ **Responsibility for Review**

The Board of Management, school principal and school staff will be responsible for reviewing the policy.

■ **Ratification and Communication**

The Board of Management ratified this policy on the _____ of _____.

Signed: _____, (Chairperson, BOM)

Scoil Ursula does not have adequate resources to disseminate all of its policies to all the concerned members of the wider school community. The policy is communicated to the members of the BOM and is available to the wider school community through the parents' representatives on the BOM. All Scoil Ursula policies are available for inspection in the school and at scoilursula.com.

Appendix 1 Template for recording bullying behaviour (template on Aladdin)

1. Name of pupil being bullied and class group

Name _____ Class _____

2. Name(s) and class(es) of pupil(s) engaged in bullying behaviour

3. Source of bullying concern/report (tick relevant box(es))*

Pupil concerned	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Pupil	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parent	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Location of incidents (tick relevant box(es))*

Playground	<input type="checkbox"/>
Classroom	<input type="checkbox"/>
Corridor	<input type="checkbox"/>
Toilets	<input type="checkbox"/>
School Bus	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Name of person(s) who reported the bullying concern

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6. Type of Bullying Behaviour (tick relevant box(es)) *

Physical Aggression	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cyber-bullying	<input type="checkbox"/>
Damage to Property	<input type="checkbox"/>	Intimidation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Isolation/Exclusion	<input type="checkbox"/>	Malicious Gossip	<input type="checkbox"/>
Name Calling	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Where behaviour is regarded as identity-based bullying, indicate the relevant category:

Homophobic	Disability/SEN related	Racist	Membership of Traveller community	Other (specify)

8. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact

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9. Details of actions taken

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Signed: _____ (Relevant Teacher) Date: _____

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal _____

* **Note:** The categories listed in the tables 3, 4 & 6 are suggested and schools may add to or amend these to suit their own circumstances.