Sacred Heart BNS

Anti – Cyber – Bullying Policy

Sacred Heart BNS aims to ensure that children are safe and feel safe from bullying, harassment and discrimination. This school is committed to teaching children the knowledge and skills to be able to use ICT effectively, safely and responsibly.

This policy works in conjunction with our Anti-Bullying Policy and Code of Behaviour. The giving and receiving of respect and experiencing respect within our school community is central to our school culture and ethos. Our Anti-Bullying Policy and Code of Behaviour reflects this. However, with the relatively recent emergence of cyber-bullying in our society, we feel that a separate policy document to address this concern will further strengthen our efforts to create a school environment where respect and caring relationships continue to flourish.

Aims of the policy:

- To provide background information on cyber bullying which then forms the basis of information provided to parents and students. This will ensure that pupils, staff and parents understand what cyber bullying is and how it can be combated.
- To outline the practices and procedures to be used by the school to prevent and control cyber bullying and to ensure that reported incidents of cyber bullying are dealt with effectively and in a timely manner.

Background information on bullying:

Definition of bullying included in DES *"Action Plan on Bullying"* January 2013:
"Bullying is (1) intentional negative behaviour that (2) typically occurs with some repetitiveness and is (3) directed against a person who has difficulty defending himself or herself".

What is Cyber-Bullying?:

Cyber bullying can be defined by the definition of bullying above that occurs over the internet or via mobile phone. In contradiction to point (2) in the above definition, intentional negative behaviour towards another through the use of technology only needs to occur **once** to be classified as cyber-bullying. Cyber bullying can take many forms which include:

- **Text messages** – can be threatening or cause discomfort.
- **Picture/video-clips via mobile phone cameras** – images sent to others to make the victim feel threatened or embarrassed.
- **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.
- **Emails** – threatening or bullying emails, often sent using a pseudonym or somebody else's name.
- **Chat room bullying** – menacing or upsetting responses to children or young people when they are in a web-based chat room.
- **Instant messaging (IM)** – unpleasant messages sent while children conduct real-time conversations online using an Instant Mesaging Service
- **Bullying via websites** – use of defamatory blogs (web logs), personal websites and online personal 'own web space' sites such as You Tube, Facebook, Snapchat or any such site or app that may be developed in the future.
- **Game consoles** which have internet access and internet gaming opportunities to connect with other users are also a channel which can be misused and abused.

This list is not exhaustive and will likely change throughout the lifetime of this policy as technology develops. Sacred Heart BNS will investigate any incident that fits the definition of bullying and occurs primarily through the use of communications technology under this policy and our Anti-Bullying Policy.

Our advice to parents on prevention and control of Cyber-Bullying:

Because mobile devices are not usually allowed on school premises and when used, are used under strict supervision, it is our experience that cyber-bullying usually occurs outside of school premises and school hours. Therefore, in order to prevent or curb cyber-bullying, Sacred Heart BNS recommends that parents should seek to ensure the following:

- Children should not have unsupervised access to the Internet on a phone, computer or any other such device.

- Parents should become aware of cyberbullying. There are many excellent websites which can help you understand cyber bullying e.g., www.esafety.ie.
- Parental controls are available to use on the devices used by children and that households discuss "screen time" and what constitutes as a healthy amount of online time for children in each household.
- Parents should be aware of the legal minimum age that a person must be to hold an account on certain apps and websites. Many of these are 13 and therefore, no primary school child should be communicating via social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram or Snapchat.
- Periodically, the school invites speakers to talk to parents about online safety. Sacred Heart strongly recommends that parents attend such events.
- If a parent becomes aware that their child is being bullied via online routes by another child within the Sacred Heart school community, we strongly advise that parents do not approach other parents but instead bring the matter to the attention of the school. We would ask that this is done as soon as possible. Investigating any incident of alleged bullying, including cyber-bullying is easier to do when closer to the time of the incident.

Our advice to pupils on prevention and control of Cyber-Bullying:

This advice will be provided to all children in Sacred Heart BNS at relevant times in their education (see below for how).

If you are being bullied by phone or the Internet:

Remember, bullying is never your fault, but it is something over which you can have an influence. 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. Tell them as soon as possible after the bullying occurs.
- Never give out your personal details online.
- Keep and save any bullying emails, text messages or images. Then you can show them to a parent or teacher as evidence.
- If you can, make a note of the time and date bullying messages or images were sent, and note any details about the sender
- You can easily stop receiving text messages for a while by turning-off incoming messages for a couple of days.

- Do not reply to abusive or worrying text or video messages. Keep them as evidence as stated above and show them to a trusted adult.

Policy of Sacred Heart BNS on prevention and management of cyberbullying:

1. Our policy is to minimise opportunities within the school premises for cyberbullying.

The pupils in Sacred Heart BNS are not permitted to have a mobile phone switched on while on the school premises and grounds. They are asked, if a phone is required for them for the immediate aftermath of the school day, to leave it in the school office or with their teacher for safe keeping.

The computers in the school have a blocking system which blocks all social media websites. This limits access to opportunities to engage in any inappropriate activity online.

The use of computers and tablets is done under the supervision of adults.

Parents are made aware of this policy at enrolment and through school newsletters.

Parents will sign an Acceptable Use of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) policy.

2. Our policy is to maximise opportunities to raise awareness within the school on all issues concerning bullying and cyber bullying.

Staff, pupils, parents and Board of Management (BoM) will be made aware of issues surrounding cyber bullying though:

• Staff and Board of Management training and development

• Staff CPD (Continuous Professional Development) events will be provided by and/or promoted by the school to assist in learning about current technologies

• Inclusion on the agenda of staff meetings periodically

• Inclusion on the agenda of board of management meetings periodically

Parents will be provided with information and advice on how to prevent and combat cyber bullying, through:

• School newsletters

• Education evenings for parents in conjunction with the Parents' Association (every 2-3 years)

• Other opportunities as they arise

• Communication via Aladdin Connect

Pupils will learn about cyber bullying through:

• Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme

• The issue being raised regularly at weekly assemblies

• Peer to Peer learning activities such as the Zeeko Cyber Safety Lessons provided by our Student Council

• Themed weeks and events such as "Friendship Week" and "Internet Safety Day".

3. <u>Our policy is to ensure that all reports of cyber bullying are investigated, recorded, and stored in the Principal's office and monitored regularly.</u>:

The Anti-bullying Policy of Sacred Heart BNS shall apply to this policy also and issues pertaining to cyber-bullying will be investigated in line with the steps laid out in that policy. **It must be noted that, while the definition of bullying in our Anti-Bullying Policy states that bullying behaviour is behaviour that is "repeated over time", this policy defines Cyber-Bullying as <u>any one single incident</u> that falls under the definition of bullying above and occurs through the use of ICT.**

Staff, pupils and parents will be urged to report any incident of cyber bullying to the school. All reports of cyber bullying will be investigated, recorded, stored in line with our Anti-Bullying Policy.

In order to ascertain the veracity of an accusation the School Principal may look at material on a child's phone, tablet or other such device in the presence of the child's parent/guardian.

Incidents of cyber bullying in relation to any member of staff will be taken very seriously, up to and including suspension and expulsion in extreme cases.

The Gardaí/Social Services will be contacted in cases of actual or suspected illegal content.

This policy has been compiled in consultation with staff, parents/guardians and Board of Management.

This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis.

Ratified by the Board of Management on _____

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D Murphy (Principal)

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T O'Hare (Chairperson BoM)

Policy review due: 2024