

Loreto Secondary School Kilkenny

Anti-Bullying Policy

December 2013



Contents

- 1 Mission Statement
- 2 Introduction
- 3 Compliance with Legal Framework
- 4 Key Principles of Best Practice
- 5 Definition and Types of Bullying
- 6 Indicators of Bullying
- 7 Education and Prevention Strategies
- 8 Supervision and Monitoring of pupils
- 9 Prevention of Harassment
- 10 Relevant Staff for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying
- 11 Schools Procedures for Investigation, Follow Up and Recording of Bullying Behaviour
- 12 Programme of support for working with pupils affected by Bullying
- 13 Committee Members
- 14 Date on which Policy was adopted
- 15 Availability of School Policy
- 16 Review of School Policy
- 17 References

Appendices

- | | |
|------------|--|
| Appendix 1 | Types of Bullying and Definitions associated with Cyber Bullying |
| Appendix 2 | Sample Student Questionnaire |
| Appendix 3 | Guidelines for Students |
| Appendix 4 | Guidelines for Parents |
| Appendix 5 | Guidelines for Staff |
| Appendix 6 | Bullying Record Template |
| Appendix 7 | Standard Referral Form |
| Appendix 8 | Board of Management Checklist |
| Appendix 9 | Notification regarding the Board of Management's annual review of the anti-bullying policy |

1 Mission Statement

As a Catholic school in the Loreto tradition, we aim to create a warm and caring environment. In an atmosphere of respect and fairness, through support and friendship, we affirm each person's self-worth and dignity.

We aim to provide a student-centred education that nurtures the talents and potential of all. In co-operation with parents and guardians, we work towards the spiritual, moral, social and academic development of each student. Our wish is that our students will grow into happy, confident and responsible adults.

2 Introduction

Bullying in Ireland is a behavioural problem which affects the lives of thousands of school children and their families. The humiliation, fear, frustration, social isolation and loss of self-esteem which children experience when bullied results in absenteeism from school, poor or deteriorating schoolwork, personality changes, illness, depression and unfortunately sometimes suicide. It is well recognised that bullying undermines the confidence and dignity of individuals.

In keeping with the school's Mission statement which values respect and promotes the personal dignity of each individual, the Board of Management recognises that all students have the right to have a school free from bullying. In order to ensure this, the Board is fully committed to the development and implementation of this revised Anti Bullying policy.

As part of the revision of this policy, the rapid advance of information technology in modern society cannot be ignored. Social media are a dynamic and rapidly evolving means of communication especially among young people. Inappropriate use of social media may lead to what is commonly known as cyber bullying. Cyber-bullying may take many forms such as personal intimidation and humiliation, impersonation, exclusion and false reporting. It is an affront to human dignity and will be treated in accordance with the principles and procedures of the school's Anti-Bullying Policy.

3 Compliance with Legal Framework

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 Loreto Secondary School 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.

4 Key Principles of Best Practice

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 which includes students, parents, staff and management
- 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 (including use of established intervention strategies)
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

5 Definition and Types of bullying

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. A detailed list of the behaviours that constitute bullying and some definitions in relation to cyber bullying are set out in **Appendix 1**.

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.

Distinction between Bullying and Harassment: A single incident can have a serious effect on a pupil and may also constitute harassment which is legally prohibited in schools under equality legislation. Harassment is any form of unwanted conduct related to any of the nine discriminatory grounds (gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community).

6 Indicators of Bullying

The following signs and symptoms may suggest that a pupil is being bullied:

- 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.

7 Education and Prevention Strategies

The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying) that will be used by the school are as follows in conjunction with the *Department of Education and Skills Anti-Bullying procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, September 2013* are as follows:

- The creation of a positive school environmentt for the learning, growth and development of each individual student while building empathy, respect and resilience
- Teachers reiterating the importance of respect and leading by example and encouraging pupils to be inclusive. This is particularly relevant to the prevention of bullying and the promotion of respect for diversity and inclusiveness.
- Staff vigilance and supervision of students before and after school and during breaktimes limits opportunities for bullying,
- Raising awareness of bullying through various syllabii such as Art, CSPE, Religion, Drama, Debating, English, Languages, Home Economics and PE.
- The SPHE curriculum makes specific provision for exploring bullying as well as the inter-related areas of belonging and integrating, communication, conflict, friendship, personal safety and relationships. The Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) programme provides opportunities to explore and discuss areas such as human sexuality and relationships, which has particular relevance to identity-based bullying.
- A wide range of extra curricular activities to help students build their self esteem e.g. the games club and various sporting activities.
- The provision of effective supports for children with Special Education needs with particular reference to the development of social skills and the transition from primary to secondary school.
- Promotion of safe use of technology in computer lessons
- Effective referral system within the school

- Provision of ongoing support for students by Class Tutors, Year Heads, Guidance Counsellors and Home School Liaison Teacher.
- Students taking on leadership roles within the school e.g. Senior/Class Prefect
- Annual anti bullying campaign
- Community Garda talk on cyber bullying
- Friendship campaign in collaboration with the Student Council
- Cara Programme
- Safe Internet Day
- Stand up Awareness Week against homophobic/transphobic bullying,
- Positive Mental Health week to raise awareness of mental health issues and suicidal behaviour among young people
- Annual survey of students experiences in relation to bullying A template survey can be seen in **Appendix 2**.
- Review of staff education, training and provision of support services as needed
- Co-ordinated training and resources for the Board of Management and parents
- Provision of an S.P.H.E. notice board with relevant information on bullying.

A positive school-wide attitude and involvement can assist considerably 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 should also recognise that a school that openly discusses bullying is acting positively and that they need to work with our school to ensure there is a coherent, school-wide approach to tackling the issue. Guidelines for Students, Parents and Staff can be found in **Appendices 3, 4 and 5**.

8 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.

9 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.

10 Relevant Staff for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying

The relevant teachers responsible for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows:

- Relevant Year Head
- Deputy Principal
- Principal

Any report of bullying behaviour is usually dealt with in the first instance by the relevant Year Head(s) who will record the bullying behaviour in the standardised recording template at **Appendix 6**. A copy of this report will be provided to the Deputy Principal. In certain circumstances the bullying behaviour may be recorded and reported immediately to vice principal or principal as appropriate.

11 Schools Procedures for Investigation, Follow Up and Recording of Bullying Behaviour

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:

Bullying behaviour may come to the attention of a staff member in a variety of ways. All incidents should be recorded on a standard referral form and passed onto the relevant teacher.

All non-teaching staff are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher, using the standard referral form given in **Appendix 7**.

Any report of bullying behaviour is usually dealt with in the first instance by the Year Head(s).

All reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher

The year head then must complete the bullying behaviour report sheet set out in **Appendix 6**.

The Year Head will investigate the incident by talking to the victim and then to the perpetrator. His or her first actions will be to take a **no blame/shared concern approach** so that the perpetrator is made aware of how hurtful her behaviour is. This approach is taken to prevent repercussions for the victim. Guidelines for teachers are given in **Appendix 5**.

A low key approach is adopted given the vulnerability of the victim. Perpetrators are questioned separately and no allegations are made.

The Year Head expresses concern for the victim of bullying and asks what information the perpetrator knows about the situation. As soon as the student has acknowledged some awareness of the situation, she is asked what she can do to improve matters. Proposals or plans may need to be prompted by the Year Head. They should be simple, clear, realistic and agreed.

The Year Head may find it necessary to talk to witnesses of the alleged bullying before preparing a report for the Deputy Principal or Principal.

The Year Head may also consult with and/or enlist the Guidance Counsellor if he or she considers it appropriate at this stage.

The Year Head will apply sanctions as appropriate in consultation with the Deputy Principal or Principal. He /She will monitor progress and keep Deputy Principal or Principal informed.

Students may be asked to give a written report of the behaviour and if possible provide evidence. In relation to cyber bullying, students will be asked to retain offensive messages or photos that have been sent electronically and allow staff access to phones or face book accounts etc. to assist with the investigation. Once a copy of the offending material is saved for school records the material is removed. Phones or other multimedia devices may be confiscated and accessed with the agreement of all parties involved.

During an investigation parents or guardians of both bully and victim will be contacted and will be kept informed until the problem is resolved.

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, he/she should submit a letter of concern to the Deputy Principal/Principal as appropriate.

In a very serious case all the above steps will be taken as well as those taken below. The Principal or Deputy Principal will:

- Contact the chairperson of the Board of Management
- Inform the Gardaí
- Prepare a statement to be issued if the incident is likely to attract media attention
- Keep a very detailed report on file.

Bullying behaviour outside of school

The school reserves the right to apply its bullying policy in respect of bullying that occurs at a location, activity, function or programme that is not school related if in the opinion of the Principal and/or the Board of Management the alleged bullying has created a hostile environment at school for the victim, has infringed on the rights of the victim of the school and/or has materially or substantially disrupted the education process or the orderly operation of the school.

Sanctions

Sanctions are applied with a view to rehabilitating the bully while supporting the victim. It must also be made clear to all involved 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.

Such sanctions might include –

- Verbal correction
- An apology to the student who has been bullied
- Detention
- Being placed on school report
- Withdrawal of privileges
- A written account of the behaviour by the bully and an assurance that the bullying will not be repeated
- Exclusion from school activities
- Being escorted to and from school if the bullying behaviour has occurred en route to school
- Suspension outside of school which is placed on the student's school record
- Exclusion from school

12 Programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying

Pupils may be affected by bullying in the following ways;

- Pupils who are being bullied may develop feelings of insecurity, humiliation, anxiety and vulnerability this can lead to low self confidence and self-esteem. Extreme cases of bullying may result in suicide.
- Pupils who witness bullying may also be affected and suffer in similar ways. Pupils can also feel guilt or distress at not being able to help the person being bullied.
- Pupils who engage in bullying 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.

The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows:

- The victim of bullying should be kept informed about what steps the offender has agreed to rectify the problem.
- She may also need to be offered advice and support with the Guidance Counsellor on building self-esteem and conflict management. It would be hoped that the development of such skills would prevent problems for the victim in the future.
- Follow up meetings should take place to closely monitor the situation. It may be possible to bring bully and victim together if the consent of both parties is received.
- Progress is evaluated in Care team meetings on a regular basis.
- The Principal reports to the Board of Management at monthly meetings.
- There is an annual review of the anti-bullying policy. The template for this review can be seen in **Appendix 8**.
- A record of the review is publically posted on the school website and distributed to the parents association and school personnel.

Serious Incidents

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 must 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 must seek advice from the HSE Children and Family Social Services.

13 Committee Members

The committee was made up of seven members consisting of representatives from the students, staff and management.

Student Representatives

Niamh Cusack, Charlotte Mc Cluskey

Board of Management Trustee Representative

Brenda Cooper

Board of Management Parent Representative

Pauline Purcell

Teacher Representatives

Ciara McDonald, Marie Therese Gallagher, Marian Moran

14 Date on which policy was adopted

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 6th of May 2014

15 Availability of school policy

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and is readily accessible to parents and pupils on request. A copy of the policy has also been provided to the Parents' Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department of Education and the patron if requested.

16 Review of school policy

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year used the annual review checklist given in **Appendix 8**. Written notification that the review has been completed will be recorded using the form in **Appendix 9** and will be made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Signed: *Martin Hanrahan*
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: *Colm Keher*
(Principal)

Date: 6th May 2014

Date: 6th May 2014

Date of Next Review: 2015/2016 academic year.

17 References

Anti-Bullying Centre, Trinity College, Dublin

Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools, Department of Education and Skills

Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools

Code of Behaviour Guidelines (NEWB)

Code of professional Conduct for Teachers

‘Dealing with Cyberbullying’ NAPD (2013)

Education (Welfare) Act (2000)

‘Get with it’ A parent’s guide to social networking websites Office for Internet safety (2011)

‘Guidelines for preventing cyber- bullying in the school environment: A review and recommendations. COST IS0801

‘The Cyberbully in your school’ March (2013) Mason, Hayes and Curran

‘Understanding Cyberbullying’ NAPD (2013)

Useful Websites

www.teachingcouncil.ie

www.makeitsecure.org

www.netsecure.ie

www.childline.ie

www.hotline.ie

www.internetsafety.ie

www.watchyourspace.ie

www.ncte.ie

www.barnardos.ie

www.webwise.ie

www.rollercoaster.ie

www.scoil.net

www.equality.ie