

Loreto Secondary School

Granges Road, Kilkenny



Anti-Bullying Policy

January 2023

Contents

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

Appendices

- | | |
|------------|--|
| Appendix 1 | Types of Bullying and Definitions of Cyberbullying explained |
| 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 – Compass ‘Recording of Bullying Behaviour’ |
| Appendix 7 | Standard Referral Form – Compass |
| Appendix 8 | Board of Management Checklist |
| Appendix 9 | Notification regarding the Board of Management’s annual review of the anti-bullying policy |

Note: DES refers to the order in the DES Guideline

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 cooperation 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 can experience when bullied can result in a deterioration of a young person's mental and physical health as well inhibiting social, personal and academic development (including increasing absenteeism from school). 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 (discrimination).
- 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. A once-off incident on social media is considered bullying (see below).

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/transphobic bullying,
 - racist bullying,
 - bullying based on a person's membership of the Traveller community
 - the 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, direct 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, comment, image or statement on a social media platform or other public forum where that message, comment, 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. See **Appendix 1 'Is it bullying?'**.

Distinction between Bullying and Harassment: A single incident can have a serious effect on a pupil and may also constitute as harassment, which is legally prohibited in schools under equality legislation (Employment Equality Act, 1998). Harassment is any form of unwanted conduct related to any of the nine discriminatory grounds (gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community).

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.

6. Relevant Staff for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying

Any teacher may act as a relevant teacher if circumstances warrant it. The most usual relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows:

- The teacher to whom the incident has been reported
- The teacher who has witnessed an incident or has cause for concern
- Tutor
- Year Head
- Deputy Principal
- Principal

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 environment 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 break times limits opportunities for bullying,
- Raising awareness of bullying through various syllabi 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.
- Provision of an S.P.H.E. notice board with relevant information on bullying.
- Students are encouraged to participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities to help them 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 – Digital Media Literacy
- Effective referral system within the school - Compass Chronicle.
- School Code of Behaviour is widely accessible on the school website, Compass, and in the school journal.
- Active Care Team in the school.
- The school has a very active and prominent Student Council.
- 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.
- Mentoring 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, parents and staff.
- Year group and class bonding trips

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. 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:

(a) Referral Process

Bullying behaviour may come to the attention of any staff member in a variety of ways. All alleged incidents should be recorded in a 'Referral to Year Head' Compass Chronicle. Guidelines for dealing with a disclosure are available in **Appendix 7.**

All non-teaching staff are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher. The teacher completes

the Compass Chronicle as above.

If the sanction is likely to be a verbal correction, behaviour points or detention then a teacher or tutor can investigate the matter herself/himself and apply the sanctions if required. The teacher may seek advice from a Year Head or Deputy Principal in making this decision. In accordance with the principles of natural justice, if it is deemed that the sanction might be more serious (i.e. suspension/expulsion), every effort should be made to ensure that the investigation is not carried out by the decision-maker. In accordance with Loreto's Suspension and Expulsion policy, Deputy Principals can suspend a student for three days, the Principal can suspend for up to five days (in consultation with the Chairperson of the Board if the suspension exceeds three days) and the Board of Management can suspend a student for ten days. The Board of Management can also expel (permanently exclude) a student. Therefore in relation to possible bullying incidents, the following guideline should be considered:

Possible sanction	Investigation carried out by ('relevant teacher')	Decision-maker
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Verbal correction ● Penalty points ● Detention 	Teacher and/or Tutor	Can be the same as the investigator, e.g. Subject teacher Tutor Year Head
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Being placed on school report 	Subject teacher and/or Tutor Year Head	Year Head
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Withdrawal of privileges ● Exclusion from school activities ● Three-day suspension 	Year Head	Deputy Principal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Four or five-day suspension 	Year Head and/or Deputy Principal	Principal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Six to ten-day suspension 	Year Head and/or Deputy Principal and/or Principal	Board of Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Expulsion 	Year Head and/or Deputy Principal and/or Principal	Board of Management

(b) Initial Actions

- The relevant teacher who becomes aware of the alleged incident will speak with the student (alleged victim) and may consider speaking with parents/guardians.
- The relevant teacher will aim to agree the next steps with the alleged victim and/or her parent/guardian. This may include a conflict resolution approach or an investigation with possible sanctions.

(c) Completing an Investigation

- (i) If an investigation is deemed necessary/appropriate the following will take place....
 - o The relevant teacher will use his/her professional judgement as to the seriousness of the incident and refer to the table above to decide how best to proceed. It should be remembered that not all bullying incidents are the same and many incidents will be resolved by minor interventions.
 - o In the interests of providing learning experiences for students and giving them the opportunity to change their behaviour, it is important not to escalate incidents beyond what is necessary to resolve the situation.
 - o The relevant teacher will investigate the incident by talking to the relevant parties and no allegations are made at this stage.
 - o Students may be asked to give a written report of the behaviour and if possible provide evidence.
 - o During an investigation parents or guardians of relevant parties may be contacted (depending on the seriousness of the incident) and kept informed until the problem is resolved.
 - o In relation to cyber bullying, students will be asked to retain offensive messages or photos, screenshots or screen recordings that have been sent electronically and allow staff access to view them if necessary (including social media accounts e.g. Snapchat, Tik Tok, Instagram etc.) to assist with the investigation. Once a copy of the offending material is saved for school

records the material is removed.

- o If further supports for the student (e.g. counselling), the relevant teacher will fill in a 'Wellbeing Chronicle' or contacts a member of senior management if urgent support is required.

(ii) Concluding the Investigation

- The relevant teacher will later complete the 'Recording of Bullying Behaviour' Chronicle on Compass (as per **Appendix 6B**), once they have investigated and established that an incident of bullying has taken place.
- The relevant teacher (or 'decision-maker' - see above) will apply sanctions as appropriate.
- The relevant teacher will monitor progress..

(d) Further Actions

- In cases where the relevant teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and/or appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, he/she should submit a referral of concern via Compass Chronicles.
- In a very serious case all the above steps will be taken as well as those taken below.
The Principal or Deputy Principal will:
 - o Contact the chairperson of the Board of Management
 - o Inform the Gardaí
 - o Prepare a statement to be issued if the incident is likely to attract media attention
 - o Keep a very detailed report on file

9. 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.

- 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 'check-in' 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.
- A record of the review is publicly 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.

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.

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, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.

12. Committee Members

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

Student Representatives

Hannah Coyle Twomey

Laura Lomba

Board of Management Trustee Representative

Kieran Boland

Parent Representative

Yvonne Finnegan

Teacher Representatives

Chloe Bhreathnach (BOM)

Louise Hogan

13. Date on which policy was adopted

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 19 of January 2023.

14. 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.

15. Review of school policy

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year using 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:



Signed:



(Chairperson of Board of Management)

(Principal)

Date: 19 January 2023

Date: 19 January 2023

Date of Next Review: 2023/2024 academic year

16. References

- Anti-Bullying Centre, Trinity College, Dublin
- Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools, Department of Education and Skills
- Child Promotion Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools Code of Behaviour Guidelines (NEWB)
- Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers
- NAPD (2013) 'Dealing with Bullying'
- Education (Welfare) Act (2000)
- Employment Equality Act (1998)
- '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
- Schools and the Equal Status Act (2005) Available at <https://assets.gov.ie/25063/a6e913a466344dce9530ce261b41d6c5.pdf>
- 'The Cyberbully in your school' March (2013) Mason, Hayes and Curran
- 'Understanding Cyberbullying' NAPD (2013)
- Webwise (2022) Advice for teachers

Useful Websites		
www.teachingcouncil.ie		
www.makeitsecure.org	www.internetsafety.ie	www.webwise.ie
www.netsecure.ie	www.watchyourspace.ie	www.rollercoaster.ie
www.childline.ie	www.ncte.ie	www.scoil.net
www.hotline.ie	www.barnardos.ie	www.equality.ie

