

Gorey Central School

Anti-bullying policy/Anti-social policy (children)

1. 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 Gorey Central 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.

2. **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(including use of established intervention strategies); and
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

3. 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:

Physical:

1. Pushing **2.** Hitting **3.** Shoving **4.** Punching **5.** Kicking **6.** Poking **7.** Tripping (or similar behaviours).

Verbal:

1. Name calling which hurts, insults or humiliates. **2.** Having rumours spread about you.

3. Being teased. **4.** Threatening (including being forced to hand over something that belongs to an individual)

Emotional:

1. Threats or persistent hurtful remarks regarding sensitive areas e.g. appearance, dress, progress, colour, sexual orientation, membership of the Traveller community, culture and disability. **2.** Isolation or leaving out.

Cyber bullying

1. **Text messages** – can be threatening or cause discomfort. Also included here is 'Bluejacking' (the sending of anonymous text messages over short distances using bluetooth wireless technology)
2. **Picture/video-clips via mobile phone cameras** – images sent to others to make the victim feel threatened or embarrassed
3. **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
4. **Emails** – threatening or bullying emails, often sent using a pseudonym or somebody else's name
5. **Chat room bullying** – menacing or upsetting responses to children or young people when they are in a web-based chat room
6. **Instant messaging (IM)** – unpleasant messages sent while children conduct real-time conversations online using MSM (Microsoft Messenger), Yahoo Chat or similar tools
7. **Bullying via websites** – use of defamatory blogs (web logs), personal websites and online personal 'own web space' sites such as You Tube, Facebook, Ask.fm, Bebo (which works by signing on in one's school, therefore making it easy to find a victim) and Myspace – although there are others.

NB: The above lists are not exhaustive.

Isolated or once-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour, including a once-off offensive or hurtful cyber contact do not fall within the definition of bullying and should be dealt with, as appropriate, in accordance with the school's code of behaviour (providing they occur during school hours and when pupils are under school staff supervision).

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.

4. The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying is/are the class teacher(s).

A pupil or parent may bring a bullying concern to any teacher in the school. Individual teachers must take appropriate measures regarding reports of bullying behaviour in accordance with the school's anti-bullying policy. In these procedures, the member of teaching staff who has responsibility for investigating and dealing with bullying is referred to as the "relevant teacher(s)".

NB: This does not apply to incidents of bullying that take place outside of school hours.

5. Education and Prevention strategies

Effective practice includes prevention and awareness raising measures across all aspects of bullying and involves strategies to engage pupils in addressing problems when they arise. In particular, such strategies need to build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils. Subjects such as SPHE and P/E provide opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth, co-operation, team work, and an attitude of respect for all.

The following may also be used:

Preventative Measures (see appendix 1)

Friendship Fortnight (appendix 2)

Webwise Programme (e.g. appropriate online behaviour, how to stay safe online, how to report concerns of cyber bullying etc)

Stay Safe Programme

RSE programme

Walk Tall Programme

SALT Programme

6. 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.

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 must 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 must use the IRF (an Incident Report Form which records bullying or other anti social behaviour, see appendix 5).

The IRF must be completed in full and 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 on the IRF 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.

Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), caretakers, cleaners etc are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher.

Complaint of bullying behaviour: The Process

Should a parent/guardian have any concerns which need to be discussed with a teacher, all staff members are more than willing to facilitate a meeting, made only through the proper channels i.e. a phone call to the office to arrange a convenient time for both parties involved. This arrangement ensures that all concerns are dealt with in a dignified, meaningful manner, without infringing on valuable teaching time.

NB: When a parent(s) and/or child make a complaint of a serious nature the class teacher/Principal may ask parents to fill out a sheet, naming, dating and if possible giving the time of the incident(s). If there is any evidence of a physical nature (e.g. notes etc) the school will ask for a copy of these. They may then be presented to the parent(s) of the alleged perpetrator. This will be at the discretion of the school.

Stage One

1. a) Unless the incident is of a very serious nature, it will be dealt with by the classroom teacher who will talk to the children involved.

1b) When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher(s) should seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This should be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner.

1c) If a group is involved, each member should be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved may be brought together as a group. At the group meeting, each member be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements.

1d) Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that they may face them from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher.

1e) Where the relevant teacher(s) has/have determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts should be made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied.

1f) It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s).

(See Appendix 3)

2. Each class has an "Observation/Incident Folder". This folder is used to record any incidents of pupil bullying, social or anti-social behaviour both in or out of the classroom. The folder is passed on to the new class teacher at the beginning of each school year and content discussed as necessary.

3. a) When a teacher becomes aware that a child is regularly involved in incidents he/she or the staff member who witnessed the incident will fill out an IRF form on the day the Incident occurs. The purpose of this form is:

- To aid memory by recording details of the incident
- For clarity in assessment of the situation
- For planning and intervention

b) If a teacher has concerns they may contact a senior member of staff for advice.

4. When **5 IRFs** have been recorded the Principal will be informed. (If deemed appropriate the Principal may be informed earlier than this)

5. If an incident of Bullying is discovered/reported a Sociogram (recommended by the Anti-Bullying unit in Trinity College Dublin) may be conducted confidentially with all pupils by the class teacher, under the guidance of the Principal/ Senior Staff. (see sample

in Appendix 4). Alternatively the Sociogram may be conducted at Stage 2 if more appropriate.

6. Should the action taken at this stage prove not to have resolved the issue, the staff may proceed to stage two.

NB: Content/Seriousness of these IRFs will also be taken into consideration before deciding to proceed to Stage Two.

Stage Two

1. In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher(s) that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved will be contacted by the class teacher to inform them of the matter and to explain the actions being taken. The school will 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 children.

2. It will also be 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 pupils being disciplined, his or her parents and the school.

3. Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved *may* be 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

4. An additional follow-up meeting with parents of the children involved *may* take place after an appropriate time to ensure that the matter has been resolved satisfactorily

5. Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents will be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures.

6. The children themselves may be required to attend part or all of these meetings.

7. The children who are involved will be placed on observation. This means that the children's behaviour in all areas is monitored during the day.

8. An Individual Behaviour plan (see Appendix 6) will be planned and implemented by the class teacher under the guidance of the Principal. Parents may be informed. This plan will be reviewed when necessary.

9. If appropriate, the child who has been accused of bullying will have a daily meeting with his/her teacher (end of the day) and together they decide on what is to be written for that day. All positive behaviour, progress on work etc will be noted. The purpose of this report is to focus as much as possible on the positive qualities and efforts of the child, and to motivate the child to move away from negative behaviour. The child should see that parents and school are working together in his/her interest. Co-operation of parents is essential.

10. Initially a review of the reports will be carried out, as deemed appropriate, on a weekly/fortnightly/regular basis in a meeting with the teacher, parents and child.

11. If progress is being made, longer intervals between meetings may be decided upon.

12. The class teacher will repeat discussions with class(es) about rights, responsibilities, using role play questionnaires etc.

13. A buddy system may be introduced within the class.

14. The class teacher will emphasise to the class that children reporting incidents of bullying are acting responsibly

15. The class teacher will keep a record of how the matter was handled and the outcome. When the class moves on, the succeeding teacher will be informed by the current class teacher of any problems that existed.

16. The class teacher, with the support of the Principal, will ensure that all staff members (including non-teaching staff) on yard duty are aware of the situation.

Stage Three

It is the duty of the school to provide a safe environment for all the children. Should the above interventions fail and the bullying continue, a programme of appropriate sanctions may be implemented by the Principal in consultation with the class teacher and Board of Management. The Principal and class teacher will advise the parents of the appropriate sanctions that may be implemented. Sanctions implemented aim to encourage positive behaviour and support the esteem of the child. Sanctions for the pupil may be some or all of the following and they are in no particular order:

- Advice and assistance will be sourced from agencies such as the Lucena Clinic and SESS advisors from the Dept of Education.
- Psychological Educational Assessment
- The Principal in consultation with the teacher, psychologist and DES Inspector may look for a Special Needs Assistant for the pupil.
- Pupil may be prohibited from attending school tours, educational trips etc in total, or, alternatively, may only attend in the company of the pupil's parent.
- Shortened day
- Suspension during which there may be ongoing consultation with the parents to decide on appropriate action(s) to be taken in the best interests of the child. Suspension for any period of time will be reported by the Principal to the Chair of the Board of Management.
- Expulsion.

7. Bullying outside of school hours:

If it is discovered /reported to the school that a child/children is/are involved in any form of bullying outside of school hours the staff and/or the Board of Management will inform the parents of the child/children involved.

However, parents will be advised by the class teacher, with the support of the Principal, that staff/BOM will not undertake any involvement with regards to difficulties arising from bullying incidents outside of school hours (unless there are repercussions during school hours). This will be phone/letter or email.

8. If accusations of bullying are made but there is *no clear evidence* to indicate any particular pupil(s) is guilty a restorative approach will be taken as follows:

- a) A record will be kept of the complaint
- b) The class teacher will speak to each pupil involved individually and a written record will be kept of any information gathered.
- c) Under the guidance of the class teacher(s) all pupils involved may have a chance to speak to each other and explain why they feel upset.
- d) Programmes such as Stay Safe, Walk Tall, The Salt Programme , The Bucket Story etc may be used
- e) After the initial complaint the class teacher(s) will check in regularly with all pupils involved. He/She will also remind them of the Dear Teacher Box (or similar) that is in the classroom.
- f) If appropriate Principal/all staff will be advised.
- g) Should points a-f not help and there is still a difficulty, but no proof, a period of separation may begin where all parties, in as far as is possible, are kept separate for all activities during the school day. This includes seating arrangements in class and in Church, team/group activities

in P.E., Drama, HipHop, Swimming, Tours, Trips etc. At break times pupils are not allowed to play together and are encouraged to join other groups in the playground.

- h) **NB:** It is the responsibility of the class teacher to ensure that all staff including non-teaching staff and parent helpers at events such as tours, swimming etc. are made aware of these arrangements. Information in this regard will only be given on a need-to-know basis in order to maintain pupil/school confidentiality.
- i) This decision (f) will be reviewed when necessary.

9. Programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying

Such pupils may need counselling and/or 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 is also part of the school's intervention process. Pupils involved in bullying behaviour may need assistance on an ongoing basis. For those with low self-esteem, opportunities are developed to increase feelings of self-worth. Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour may need counselling from outside agencies to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others.

Pupils who observe incidents of bullying behaviour are also encouraged to discuss them with teachers.

Please see support guidelines for further information (appendix 3)

10. S.E.N (Special Educational Needs) Pupils

Our school's approach to tackling and preventing bullying takes particular account of the needs of pupils with disabilities or with SEN, and joins up with other relevant school policies and supports and should ensure that all the services that provide for such pupils work together. Approaches to decreasing the likelihood of bullying for pupils with SEN include improving inclusion, focusing on developing social 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.

11. 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.

12. 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.

13. Ratification:

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on _____ [date].

14. Availability:

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

15. Review:

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year. Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parent's Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Signed: _____
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: _____
(Principal)

Date: _____

Date: _____

Date of next review: _____