



Our Lady of Good Counsel School
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Chairperson of the Board of Management: Harold Brooks
Principal: Aisling Power

Policy: Anti-Bullying Policy for Pupils

Date of Issue: April 2014

Review Date: Annually

Amendments / Reviews

September 2014 – Ratified by Board of Management

September 2017- Chairperson Change

September 2020- BoM Review, no change.

Aim of Policy: To provide the school community with clear guidelines regarding the implementation of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary School and Post Primary Schools 2013.

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INTRODUCTION

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 Our Lady of Good Counsel 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.

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 staff. Therefore the school is fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour by promoting:

- A positive school culture and climate which is welcoming of difference and diversity and encourages pupils to identify, disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment using whatever means of communication is available to them.
- Respectful relationships across the school community.
- Effective leadership with all adults providing models of behaviour that reflect the school ethos where diversity is accepted and celebrated.
- A school-wide approach involving management, staff, parents and pupils;
- 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.
- Recognition of the fact that cyberbullying can occur via text and social media.
- Awareness that staff can engage in behaviours toward pupils that could be interpreted as bullying.
- Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils throughout the school day.
- 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 using the school self-evaluation review system.

The *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* defines bullying 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.

Staff identified the following pupil to pupil behaviours which could fall within the definition of bullying in the context of our school:

1. *Cyberbullying:*

- Inappropriate comments/photos, etc. on Facebook or other social media.
- Inappropriate texts/messages/photos via pupils' phones.
- Inappropriate pictures/websites on iPads, laptops, etc.

2. *Physical:* Pushing, pulling, kicking, spitting, pinching, hitting, squeezing, head-butting, body products, biting, choking, stabbing, scratching.

3. *Emotional:* Exclusion, name calling, teasing, ignoring, intimidation, expression, body language, shouting, growling, taking or breaking possessions, destroying work, invasion of privacy, telling lies, verbal intimidation, peer pressure.

Isolated or one-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour, including aggression towards a peer do not fall within the definition of bullying and will be dealt with, as appropriate, in accordance with the school's code of behaviour. *The one exception to this is one off comments which are communicated via social media. These fall within the remit of bullying as they can be shared by a wide audience almost immediately and are almost impossible to delete permanently.*

In accordance with Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* the relevant teacher for investigating and dealing with bullying will be the class teacher. The Principal and or Deputy will provide support and guidance where necessary.

AWARENESS & PREVENTION:

The following awareness and preventative strategies and programmes are used in the school (see Section 6.5 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools):

- Careful planning of class groups each year – openness to changing this if necessary mid-year.
- Recognition that some pupils do not ‘get on’ with others.
- Identification and risk assessing ‘Hot Spots’ - playground, toilets, corridors, transitions from one activity to another, visiting other classrooms or areas of the school where the presence of another child causes anxiety, assembly and home time – implementation of strategies to reduce identified risks such as delaying some pupils at home time, providing additional supervision in toilet areas, Behaviour Support Plans, etc.
- School transport – close liaison with escorts, drivers, parents and school staff regarding behaviours on school transport.
- Developing ‘Pupil Profiles’ at the end of each year for handover to next classroom.
- Staff awareness of pupils who have a documented history of engaging in risky behaviours and support provided to them to manage incidents where necessary.
- Certified training provided to staff of how to physically intervene in certain situations (c.f. Safeguarding Children, Safeguarding Staff Policy).
- Awareness of staff on the importance of taking the time to listen to children and to give them time to process what is said to them.
- Teaching relevant SPHE and Stay Safe programmes.
- Developing Social Stories on building respect, empathy and resilience.
- Implementation of the School Rules.
- Active communication and liaison with parents, bus escorts and drivers.
- Regular team meetings with parents of relevant pupils.
- Implementation of positive handling strategies as outlined in our Positive Handling Policy such as diversion, diffusion, de-escalation, re-directing etc.
- Use of relevant educational materials to promote and foster respect for others.
- A strong and active culture of child protection.

Other Relevant Related Policies

- Supervision Policies.
- Photo and Video Policies.
- Monitoring internet and phone usage in school – ICT Policy.
- Child Protection Policy – Intimate Care and General Handling of Pupils Policies.
- Child Protection Policy – Code of Behaviour and Positive Handling Policies.
- Health and Safety Policies.
- Safeguarding Children, Safeguarding Staff Policy.

Diversity and Difference:

The school promotes a positive school culture and climate which is welcoming of difference and diversity and will avail of opportunities to respect and/or to celebrate the following:

- Different cultural holidays/events.
- Religious observances including those related to food and fasting.
- Use of materials that include pictures of persons from different cultural backgrounds.
- Geography lessons - clothes, hairstyle, music, etc.
- Social observances - for example respecting a child's cultural background which teaches that maintaining eye contact when interacting with a staff member is disrespectful.

Procedures for Investigating and dealing with bullying: (Section 6.8.9 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools):

School authorities must ensure that the school has clear procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying and that these are set out in the school's anti-bullying policy. The school's procedures must be consistent with the following:

- i. 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).
- ii. 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.
- iii. All reports, including anonymous report of bullying must 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 should be made clear to all pupils that when they report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.
- iv. Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), bus escorts, caretakers, cleaners must be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher.
- v. 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.
- vi. It is very important that all involved (including each set of pupils and pupils) understand the above approach from the outset.
- vii. Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents.
- viii. Incidents are generally best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.
- ix. All discussions with pupils should be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the fact that all pupils in the school have been diagnosed with moderate learning disabilities. This means that some will have difficulty communicating with each other and with staff. Appropriate supports will be provided to assist pupils during discussion, if necessary.
- x. When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher should consult other staff.
- xi. In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved should be 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.
- xii. Where the relevant teacher has 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 using appropriate supports such as visual schedule, social stories, etc. Referrals to multi-d team members may be made to support the pupils involved.
 - xiii. It must 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 pupil being disciplined, his or her parents and the school.
 - xiv. Follow-up with the relevant parties involved may be organised with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date if the pupil who has been bullied is ready and agreeable. This can have a therapeutic effect.
 - xv. 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 must be recorded by the relevant teacher in the recording template at Appendix 1.
 - xvi. 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 has been resolved, as far as is practicable.
 - Whether the relationship 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.
 - xvii. Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures.
 - xviii. In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

Follow Up:

- Where disciplinary sanctions may be required, it will be a private matter for the person being disciplined, his/her family and the school.
- Follow up meetings may be scheduled with the relevant parties as required or social skills programmes set up to develop co-operation and mutual respect.
- 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 must be recorded by the teacher in the template at Appendix 2.
- In determining if it has been adequately addressed, the teacher will take into account the following factors:
 - Has the bullying behaviour ceased ?
 - Have the issues between the parties been resolved as far as is practicable ?

- Has the relationship between parties been restored ?
- Has any feedback been received from their families or the Principal or Deputy Principal ?
- Where a parent is not satisfied with how the school has dealt with the bullying case, the parents have the right to complain to the Board of Management. If they remain dissatisfied with local representations, they can decide to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.
- Serious incidents bullying behaviour may be referred to the HSE Children & Family Services and/or the Gardai as appropriate.

Recording:

The template in Appendix 1, for recording the investigation into allegations of bullying behaviour, will be provided to the Principal or Deputy Principal. Data gathered from these reports will provide information in relation to the presence of bullying behaviour in the school. This data will be collated at least once each year and analysed with a view to monitoring levels of bullying behaviour and identifying any particular issues that require attention or any trends in behaviour. A record of this analysis will be retained and made available to the Board of Management once each term. Appropriate responses to any issues identified should be drawn up and implemented.

Supports for children affected by bullying will include their engagement in programmes to develop their self-esteem, develop their friendship and social skills and promote their resilience to actions of a bullying nature.

SUPERVISION & 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.

* * * * *

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on _____

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

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, and be readily accessible to parents and pupils on request 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: _____
Chairperson of Board of Management

Date: _____

Principal

Date: _____

Date of next review: _____

APPENDIX 1: TEMPLATE FOR RECORDING INCIDENTS OF BULLYING BEHAVIOUR BY CHILDREN.

1. Name of pupil being bullied and class group

Name: _____ Class _____

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

3. Source of bullying concern/report

(tick)

Pupil concerned	
Other pupil	
Parent	
Teacher	
Special Needs Assistant	
Bus Escort	
Other	

4. Location of incidents

(tick)

School Bus	
Corridor	
Classroom	
Toilets	
GP Hall	
Therapy room	
Other	

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

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6. Type of bullying behaviour (tick the relevant box)

Physical Aggression		Verbal abuse name calling	
Damage to property		Taunting	
Intimidation		Removing possessions from child	
Assault		Gossip	
Isolation/Exclusion		Cyber bullying	

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

Homophobic	Disability/SEN related	Racist	Traveller	Other (Specify)

8. Brief description of bullying behaviour and its impact:

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9. Details of action taken:

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Signed: _____ (Relevant Teacher) Date: _____

Date submitted to Principal / Deputy Principal: _____

APPENDIX 2: CHECKLIST FOR ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE ANTI-BULLYING POLICY AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION

The Board of Management of Our Lady of Good Counsel School will undertake an annual review of the school’s anti-bullying policy and its implementation using the following checklist for this purpose. The checklist is an aid to conducting this review and is not intended as an exhaustive list. In order to complete the checklist, an examination and review involving both quantitative and qualitative analysis, as appropriate across the various elements of the implementation of the school’s anti-bullying policy will be required.

	<i>Yes/No</i>
Has the Board formally adopted an anti-bullying policy that fully complies with the requirements of the <i>Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools</i> ?	
Has the Board provided a copy to the Parents’ Association ?	
Has the Board ensured that the policy has been made available to school staff (including new staff) ?	
Is the Board satisfied that school staff are sufficiently familiar with the policy and procedures to enable them to effectively and consistently apply the policy and procedures in their day to day work ?	
Has the Board ensured that the policy has been adequately communicated to all pupils ?	
Has the policy documented the prevention and education strategies that the school applies ?	
Have all of the prevention and education strategies been implemented ?	
Has the effectiveness of the prevention and education strategies that have been implemented been examined ?	
Is the Board satisfied that all teachers are recording and dealing with incidents in accordance with the policy ?	
Has the Board received and minuted the periodic summary reports of the Principal ?	
Has the Board discussed how well the school is handling all reports of bullying including those addressed at an early stage and not therefore included in the Principal’s periodic report to the Board ?	
Has the Board received any complaints from parents regarding the school’s handling of bullying incidents ?	
Have any parents withdrawn their child from the school citing dissatisfaction with the school’s handling of a bullying situation ?	
Have any Ombudsman for Children investigations into the school’s handling of a bullying case been initiated or completed ?	
Has the data available from cases reported to the Principal (by the bullying recording template) been analysed to identify any issues, trends or patterns in bullying behaviour ?	
Has the Board identified any aspects of the school’s policy and/or its implementation that require further improvement ?	
Has the Board put in place an action plan to address any areas for improvement ?	

Signed: _____

Date _____

Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed: _____
Principal

Date _____

NOTIFICATION REGARDING THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT'S ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

To: _____

The Board of Management of Our Lady of Good Counsel School R.N: 18208A wishes to inform you that:

- The Board of Management's annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation was completed at the Board meeting of _____ [date].
- This review was conducted in accordance with the checklist set out in **Appendix 4** of the Department's *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

Signed: _____
Chairperson, Board of Management

Date _____

Signed: _____
Principal

Date _____