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Innishmore, Ballincollig, Cork. P31FH22

Phone number: *0214878370*

Roll number: *18208A*

School Patron: *The Bishop of Cork and Ross, Bishop Fintan Gavin*.

Principal: *Aisling Power*.

Deputy Principal: *Nollaig Moynihan.*

Chairperson: *Billy Murphy*

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Building Healthy Relationships, Dignity at Work, Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy

Our Lady of Good Counsel School

Date of Original Issue: 1 February 2010

Version: 2026 Review

Circulated to Staff for review and input in May 2026.

Reviewed and Ratified by the Board of Management: 08/06/2026

Chairperson: Billy Murphy

Principal: Aisling Power

Next Review Date: _____

Aim of this Policy

The Board of Management of Our Lady of Good Counsel School is committed to promoting a culture of dignity, inclusion, equality, mutual respect, and positive relationships throughout the school community.

The school recognises the right of every person to work, learn, and participate in school life in an environment that is free from bullying, harassment, intimidation, discrimination, victimisation, and abusive behaviour.

This policy provides guidance and procedures in relation to:

1. Building healthy and respectful relationships within the school community.
2. Maintaining constructive conflict resolution practices.
3. Responding to unacceptable behaviour by parents, guardians, family members or visitors towards staff.
4. Challenging bullying behaviour appropriately.
5. Addressing complaints of bullying and harassment in accordance with current employment legislation and best practice guidance.

This policy applies to:

- Employees
- Board of Management members
- Parents and guardians
- Family members
- Volunteers
- Contractors
- Visiting professionals and therapists
- Students where appropriate
- Any other person associated with the school community

Nothing within this policy shall prevent or delay a staff member from making a report under the **Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools** where safeguarding concerns arise.

PART A

Guidelines for Building Positive Relationships

1. Building Healthy Relationships

Healthy relationships promote wellbeing, support individual growth, encourage collaboration, and contribute to a positive school culture.

1.1 The Art of Communication

Communication is central to all successful relationships. Effective communication involves:

- Expressing ourselves respectfully and clearly.
- Listening actively and attentively.
- Seeking understanding before seeking agreement.
- Maintaining dignity and respect during differences of opinion.

1.2 Expressing Ourselves

When expressing feelings, concerns, opinions, or observations, staff and members of the school community are encouraged to use **"I" statements**.

"I" statements promote responsibility and reduce defensiveness.

For example:

"I feel _____ when _____ because _____."

This approach:

- Encourages honest communication.
- Avoids blame.
- Promotes problem-solving.
- Supports respectful discussion.

1.3 Responding to Others

When listening to others, the practice of **reflective listening** is encouraged.

Reflection involves:

- Listening carefully.
- Identifying both facts and feelings.
- Responding to demonstrate understanding.

Examples:

"It sounds as though you are feeling frustrated because..."

"What I hear you saying is..."

Reflection:

- Does not involve criticism or argument.
- Demonstrates empathy and understanding.
- Helps reduce conflict and misunderstandings.

1.4 Managing Disagreements Fairly

Disagreements are a normal part of working relationships. Constructive conflict management requires:

1. Maintaining goodwill.
2. Focusing on the issue and not the person.
3. Sharing feelings honestly and respectfully.
4. Remaining focused on current issues.
5. Seeking solutions rather than assigning blame.

1.5 Practical Communication Strategies

Members of the school community should:

1. Choose an appropriate time for discussion.
2. Be clear and specific about concerns.
3. Allow uninterrupted opportunities for others to speak.
4. Focus on one issue at a time.
5. Seek reasonable and achievable outcomes.
6. Remain open to differing perspectives.
7. Be willing to compromise.
8. Accept that some conflicts may not have complete resolutions.
9. Consider written communication where appropriate.
10. Express appreciation for genuine efforts to resolve difficulties.

Where direct discussion is unsuccessful, mediation by a neutral third party may be considered.

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2. Keeping Conflicts Constructive in Teams and Groups

Open discussion and respectful disagreement contribute to improved decision-making and stronger professional relationships.

The school encourages staff and stakeholders to:

- Express differing opinions respectfully.
- Be open and honest.

- Listen actively.
- Seek collaborative solutions.
- Value diversity of perspective.

2.1 Expressing Disagreement

Participants should:

- State concerns respectfully.
- Contribute honestly during discussions.
- Avoid withholding significant viewpoints.
- Accept that disagreement can be constructive.

Meeting leaders should ensure that all participants are given reasonable opportunities to contribute.

2.2 Being Sensitive

When expressing disagreement, individuals should consider how language may affect others.

Staff and stakeholders should:

- Avoid stereotyping or generalisations.
- Use inclusive language.
- Show consideration for differing backgrounds, experiences, and protected characteristics.

2.3 Criticise Ideas, Not Individuals

Constructive disagreement should focus on:

- Policies
- Procedures
- Proposals
- Decisions
- Actions

Personal attacks, belittling remarks, sarcasm, intimidation, and name-calling are unacceptable.

Where discussions become personal or hostile, the discussion should be paused and redirected.

2.4 Avoid Defensiveness

When receiving criticism or disagreement:

- Listen carefully.
- Seek clarification.
- Avoid reacting impulsively.
- Explore alternative viewpoints.
- Remain open to new solutions.

The aim should always be mutual understanding and collaborative problem-solving.

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3. Protocol for Dealing with Unacceptable Behaviour Towards Staff by Parents, Guardians, Family Members or Visitors

The Board of Management is committed to maintaining a safe workplace for all employees.

The school recognises that parents and guardians may occasionally experience frustration regarding educational services and supports. However, abusive, intimidating, aggressive, or threatening behaviour towards staff is unacceptable.

Examples include:

- Shouting
- Personal insults
- Aggressive gestures
- Threats
- Harassment
- Discriminatory comments
- Intimidation
- Persistent unreasonable behaviour

The Board reserves the right to place restrictions on engagement with the school where behaviour poses a risk to staff wellbeing or safety.

This protocol should be read alongside:

- The school's Complaints Procedure
- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Code of Behaviour
- Relevant Department of Education guidance

Procedures

At the earliest indication of abusive or aggressive behaviour:

Staff Members Should

- Remain calm and professional.
- Politely terminate the interaction.
- Avoid raising their voice.
- Prioritise their own wellbeing and safety.
- Report the incident promptly to the Principal.
- Complete an appropriate written record.

Depending on Location

School Meetings

- Politely end the meeting and leave if necessary.

Home Visits

- Leave the premises immediately if safety concerns arise.

Telephone Calls

- Inform the caller that the conversation will be terminated if inappropriate behaviour continues.
- End the call if necessary.

Written Correspondence

- Retain copies of any inappropriate communications and notify the Principal.

The Principal shall determine any necessary follow-up actions and may refer serious matters to the Chairperson of the Board of Management.

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4. Guidance for Challenging Bullying Behaviour

Definition

The school adopts the definition contained within the:

Code of Practice for Employers and Employees on the Prevention and Resolution of Bullying at Work (Workplace Relations Commission and Health and Safety Authority, 2021).

Workplace bullying is:

Repeated inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another person or

persons, at the place of work and/or in the course of employment, which could reasonably be regarded as undermining an individual's right to dignity at work.

A single incident may constitute unacceptable behaviour but will not normally constitute bullying unless it forms part of a repeated pattern.

If You Experience Bullying Behaviour

Where appropriate:

1. Inform a trusted colleague.
2. Choose an appropriate time and place to address the issue.
3. Describe the behaviour clearly.
4. Focus on the behaviour and not the individual.
5. Explain the impact of the behaviour.
6. Identify the change you require.
7. State what action you may take if the behaviour continues.
8. Keep accurate records.
9. Seek support.
10. Escalate the matter where necessary.

Employees may also access support through the Employee Assistance Programme currently provided through **Spectrum.Life** or any successor provider.

PART B

Dealing with Complaints of Bullying and/or Harassment

Policy Statement

Employees have a right to work in an environment characterised by dignity, respect, equality, inclusion, and safety.

The Board of Management will not tolerate:

- Bullying
- Harassment
- Sexual harassment
- Victimisation
- Discrimination

on any of the protected grounds under the **Employment Equality Acts 1998-2024**, namely:

- Gender

- Civil status
- Family status
- Sexual orientation
- Religion
- Age
- Disability
- Race
- Membership of the Traveller Community

All complaints shall be treated seriously, fairly, sensitively, confidentially, and in accordance with the principles of natural justice.

Visiting Health Service Personnel

The school works collaboratively with external professionals employed by other organisations.

Complaints involving externally employed personnel shall be managed in cooperation with the relevant employing organisation while ensuring appropriate support for school staff.

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1. Definitions

Workplace Bullying

The school adopts the WRC/HSA 2021 definition of workplace bullying.

Harassment

Harassment is any form of unwanted conduct related to any of the protected grounds under equality legislation that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

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2. Role of Senior Management

The Principal, Deputy Principal (where applicable), and Board of Management shall:

1. Promote awareness of this policy.
2. Model respectful behaviour.
3. Address concerns promptly.
4. Support affected employees.

5. Protect complainants from victimisation.
6. Ensure fair procedures.
7. Monitor outcomes.
8. Maintain confidentiality.
9. Ensure compliance with relevant legislation and guidance.
10. Foster a positive workplace culture.

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3. Informal Resolution Process

Many issues can be successfully resolved informally.

A staff member who believes they are experiencing bullying or harassment should, where appropriate:

1. Explain to the individual that the behaviour is unwelcome and unacceptable.
2. Seek support from:
    - A colleague
    - The Principal
    - A management representative
    - A trade union representative
3. Request assistance in resolving the matter informally.

Choosing not to use the informal procedure will not disadvantage a complainant.

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4. Formal Procedure

If informal resolution is inappropriate or unsuccessful, the following procedures shall apply.

Step 1: Written Complaint

The complainant should submit a signed and dated written complaint outlining:

- Specific allegations
- Dates and times
- Witnesses
- Direct quotations where possible
- Context and circumstances
- Any supporting documentation

Step 2: Notification

The respondent shall receive:

- Written notification of the complaint.
- An opportunity to respond.
- Copies of relevant material where appropriate.

Step 3: Preliminary Assessment

Management shall conduct an initial review to determine whether:

- Informal resolution remains appropriate;
- Mediation may be suitable; or
- A formal investigation is required.

Step 4: Formal Investigation

Any investigation shall:

- Be impartial.
- Be conducted by a suitably qualified investigator or investigators.
- Follow agreed terms of reference.
- Respect confidentiality.
- Comply with the principles of natural justice.
- Provide fair procedures to all parties.

Both parties may be accompanied by:

- A work colleague; or
- A trade union representative.

Step 5: Investigation Report

Following completion of the investigation:

- A written report shall be prepared.
- Findings shall be provided to management.
- Both parties shall have an opportunity to comment on findings prior to a final decision.

Step 6: Outcome

Management shall determine appropriate actions.

Possible outcomes may include:

- No further action.
- Mediation.
- Monitoring arrangements.
- Training.
- Support measures.
- Disciplinary action under school procedures.

Step 7: Appeal and Industrial Relations Mechanisms

Where either party is dissatisfied:

- Existing school grievance procedures may be utilised.
- Parties may access normal industrial relations mechanisms through the Workplace Relations Commission or other appropriate processes.

Confidentiality and Record Retention

All parties involved shall maintain strict confidentiality.

Records arising from complaints and investigations shall:

- Be retained securely.
- Be processed in accordance with GDPR and Data Protection legislation.
- Be accessible only to authorised persons.

Policy Monitoring and Review

This policy shall be reviewed:

- Every three years; or
- Earlier where legislative, organisational, or operational changes require it.

Ratified by the Board of Management of Our Lady of Good Counsel School

Chairperson: Billy murphy

Date:08/06/2026

Review Due: June 2028

Anti-Bullying