

Our Lady of Good Counsel GNS

Anti-Bullying Policy

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 Lady of Good Counsel GNS has adopted the following Anti-Bullying Policy, within the framework of the Our 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 was published in September 2013.

The Board of Management recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact it can have on the lives of pupils. The board 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
 - i. is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity
 - ii. encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment
 - iii. 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, that
 - i. build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils
 - ii. explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity based bullying, 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

Definition 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
- identity based bullying such as homophobic bullying, racist bullying, bullying based on a person's membership of the Travelling community and bullying of those with disabilities or special educational needs.

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.

Additional information on different types of bullying is set out in Section 2 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

Examples of bullying behaviours

<p>General behaviours which apply to all types of bullying</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harassment based on any of the nine grounds in the equality legislation e.g. sexual harassment, homophobic bullying, racist bullying etc. • Physical aggression • Damage to property • Name calling • Slagging • The production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other materials aimed at intimidating another person • Offensive graffiti • Extortion • Intimidation • Insulting or offensive gestures • The "look" • Invasion of personal space • A combination of any of the types listed.
<p>Cyber</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Denigration: Spreading rumours, lies or gossip to hurt a person's reputation • Harassment: Continually sending vicious, mean or disturbing messages to an individual • Impersonation: Posting offensive or aggressive messages under another person's name • Flaming: Using inflammatory or vulgar words to provoke an online fight

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trickery: Fooling someone into sharing personal information which you then post online • Outing: Posting or sharing confidential or compromising information or images • Exclusion: Purposefully excluding someone from an online group • Cyber stalking: Ongoing harassment and denigration that causes a person considerable fear for his/her safety • Silent telephone/mobile phone calls • Abusive telephone/mobile phone calls • Abusive text messages • Abusive emails • Abusive communication on social networks e.g. Facebook/Ask.fm/ Twitter/You Tube or on games consoles • Abusive website comments/Blogs/Pictures • Abusive posts on any form of communication technology
<p>Identity Based Behaviours Including any of the nine discriminatory grounds mentioned in Equality Legislation (gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community).</p>	
Homophobic and Transgender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spreading rumours about a person's sexual orientation • Taunting a person of a different sexual orientation • Name calling e.g. Gay, queer, lesbian...used in a derogatory manner • Physical intimidation or attacks • Threats
Race, nationality, ethnic background and membership of the Traveller community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discrimination, prejudice, comments or insults about colour, nationality, culture, social class, religious beliefs, ethnic or traveller background • Exclusion on the basis of any of the above
Relational	<p>This involves manipulating relationships as a means of bullying. Behaviours include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Malicious gossip • Isolation & exclusion • Ignoring • Excluding from the group • Taking someone's friends away • Spreading rumours • Breaking confidence • Talking loud enough so that the victim can hear • The "look" • Use or terminology such as 'nerd' in a derogatory way
Sexual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unwelcome or inappropriate sexual comments or touching • Harassment

Special Educational Needs, Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name calling • Taunting others because of their disability or learning needs • Taking advantage of some pupils' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to recognise and defend themselves against bullying • Taking advantage of some pupils' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to understand social situations and social cues. • Mimicking a person's disability • Setting others up for ridicule
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Responsibility for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying

The relevant teachers in this school are the Principal, the Deputy Principal and all teachers. The relevant teacher for investigating and dealing with bullying will normally be the class teacher. However, 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.

Education and Prevention Strategies

The education and prevention strategies that will be used in this school are as follows:

- Cultivating a positive school culture and climate which is based on respect for self and for others, and which focuses on co-operation and helping one another, for example:
 - i. Communicating a clear message that bullying in any form is not tolerated at this school
 - ii. Promoting the value of diversity through our annual Intercultural Week
 - iii. Implementing Social Skills programmes at various class levels
 - iv. Developing an Anti-Bullying Charter with pupils, for pupils, at an age-appropriate level in each class at the beginning of each school year.
 - v. Building links with parents and the wider community
 - vi. *(Further examples are available in Appendix 2, Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools)*
- The implementation of the Stay Safe and RSE programmes at every class level, as part of the Social, Personal and Health Education Curriculum for Primary schools.
- Co-operation with the Ferrybank Youth Development Project in implementing Cyber-Bullying, and Drugs and Alcohol Awareness Programmes with Fifth and Sixth Classes

The Board will ensure that all relevant members of the school community will have a shared understanding of what is meant by bullying, in the context of this policy, by providing a copy of the policy to all staff members in hard copy or electronic format, by providing a hard copy to the Parents' Association, by notifying the wider school community through 'The School Bell' and by publishing the policy on the school's website. A Parents' Charter is included as Appendix 2. The Parents' Charter will also be appended to the school's Enrolment Form and will be considered a condition for enrolment.

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:

- The relevant teacher will exercise her/his professional judgement (in accordance with the definition of bullying used in this policy) to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved
- All reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher
- All staff members will be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them to the relevant teacher.
- Teachers will take a calm, unemotional, problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying
- Incidents are generally best investigated outside the classroom. When analysing reports of bullying behaviour the teacher should seek answers to the following questions, which are based on the concept of Restorative Justice:
 - What happened?
 - What were you thinking at the time?
 - What have you thought about since?
 - Who has been affected by what you have done? In what way?
 - What do you need to do to make things right?
- To ensure a consistent approach, these questions will be provided to each teacher on a laminated card (**Appendix 3**).
- The relevant teacher will question each member of a group individually at first, then bring the group together. Each group member should then be asked for her account to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements. The following format, based on the concept of Restorative Justice will be used:
 - Offenders tell what they did
 - Everyone talks about what impact this has had on them
 - The group reaches a shared understanding of the harm that has been done
 - The group negotiates an agreement about how to repair the damage and minimise further harm

If a teacher determines that a pupil **has not** been engaged in bullying behaviour, she/he will use her/his professional judgement in relation to the records to be kept of these reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved.

If a teacher determines that a pupil **has** been engaged in bullying behaviour:

- She/he will make clear to the pupil that she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy.

- She/he will make an effort to get the pupil to see the situation from the perspective of the person being bullied.
- The parents/guardians of the pupils involved should be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions taken
- Parents/Guardians and pupils are required to co-operate with any investigation and to assist the school in resolving issues and restoring relationships as quickly as possible
- Parents/guardians should be given an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support actions being taken by the school
- It must be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parents) that in any situation where sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, her parents and the school.
- Where possible the pupil who has been bullying and the pupil being bullied should be brought together at a later date to try to repair the relationship.
- If the teacher investigating determines that the behaviour has not been adequately addressed within 20 school days after the bullying behaviour has occurred, it must be recorded in the recording template (**Appendix 1**)
- 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
- If the parent is not satisfied following the implementation of the school's complaints procedures, the school will advise the parents of his/her right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

Recording of Bullying Behaviour

It is imperative that all recording of bullying incidents must be done in an objective and factual manner. The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour are as follows:

Informal- pre-determination that bullying has occurred

- All staff must keep a written record of any incidents witnessed by them or notified to them.
- All incidents must be reported to the relevant teacher. Each class teacher will maintain a notebook in which any incidents of bullying behaviour reported to her/him are recorded. These notebooks will be kept in the teacher's classroom and at the end of the year they will be passed on with the class.
- While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the relevant teacher must keep a written record of the reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same

Formal Stage 1-determination that bullying has occurred

- 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 inform the principal of all incidents being investigated at this stage.

Formal Stage 2- (From DES Procedures)

The relevant teacher must use the recording template at Appendix 1 to record the bullying behaviour in the following circumstances:

- in cases where he/she considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour occurred; and
- Where the school has decided as part of its anti-bullying policy that in certain circumstances bullying behaviour must be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable. Behaviours that must be recorded and reported immediately to the principal are acts of physical aggression, reports of cyber bullying, damage to/theft of property, acts of identity based bullying and intimidation.

When the recording template is used, it must be retained by the relevant teacher in question and a copy maintained by the principal. The relevant teacher must ensure that Appendix 1 forms are retained safely and are considered confidential. At the end of each school year, any Appendix 1 forms retained by the relevant teacher must be attached to the child's report booklet. Appendix 1 forms will be retained as long as the child remains in the school. Appendix 1 forms retained by the Principal will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the Principal's Office.

Programme of Support for Working with Pupils Affected by Bullying

The learning strategies used across the Curriculum are aimed at enhancing pupils' self-esteem and self-worth, enabling them to develop friendships and social skills and thereby build resilience.

Subject areas such as Drama and SPHE are particularly relevant to developing the skills listed above. Every opportunity is used to praise pupils' achievements e.g. at weekly school assemblies and through the fortnightly school newsletter.

Where appropriate, and in line with the *Children First Guidelines* and the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, advice will be sought from and referrals will be made to the HSE through TUSLA.

There is no counselling service available to Primary schools. Where possible the school will seek support for pupils from the National Educational Psychological Service and from the HSE.

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 behaviours and to facilitate early intervention where possible.

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.


Ratification and Review

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 08-05-2014.

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.

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 provide 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 – BOM

Signed: 
Principal

Date: 25th October 2023

This policy was reviewed and re-ratified by the Board of Management on 23rd June 2015.

Date for further review: Annual

Appendix 1

Our Lady of Good Counsel GNS Recording Alleged Bullying Behaviour

1. Name of pupil allegedly being bullied and class group

Name: _____ **Class:** _____

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

3. Source of alleged bullying concern/report

Pupil concerned	
Other pupil	
Parent	
Teacher	
Other	

4. Location of incidents

Playground	
Classroom	
Corridor	
Toilets	
Other	

5. Name of person reporting the alleged bullying concern

6. Type of alleged bullying

Physical aggression		Cyber-bullying	
Damage to/Theft of property		Intimidation	
Isolation/Exclusion		Malicious gossip	
Name calling		Other(specify)	

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

Homophobic	Disability/SEN related	Racist	Membership of Traveller community	Other (specify)

8. Brief description of alleged bullying behaviour and its impact

9. Details of action taken

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____
Relevant Teacher

Submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal on: _____

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Appendix 2

Our Lady of Good Counsel GNS

Anti-Bullying Policy – Parents’ Charter

I agree to support the school’s Anti-Bullying Policy.

I understand that if my child is bullied or if my child bullies, I am required to co-operate with the school in dealing with the bullying issue.

I understand that in any situation where sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, her parents/guardians and the school.

I agree to talk to my child about bullying and explain to her what bullying means in the context of this policy.

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.

I acknowledge that I am aware that the legal age for children using Facebook is 13 years of age.

I am aware that there may be risks and dangers for my child if she uses social media and that as a parent/guardian I have a responsibility to provide supervision in this area.

I am aware that the school has safeguards in place with regard to pupil internet/website access at school and that use of the internet/websites outside of school falls under parental responsibility.

I know the dangers of cyber bullying and undertake to avail where possible of any information evenings organised by the school or the Parents’ Association.

Signed:

Parent/Guardian

Parent/Guardian

Date:

Appendix 3 – Cards for Teachers

When analysing a report of alleged bullying, use the following questions with individuals who have been accused of bullying:

- What happened?
- What were you thinking at the time?
- What have you thought about since?
- Who has been affected by what you have done? In what way?
- What do you need to do to make things right?

When analysing a report of alleged bullying, use the following questions with individuals who have been accused of bullying:

- What happened?
- What were you thinking at the time?
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- What do you need to do to make things right?

When analysing a report of alleged bullying, use the following questions with individuals who claim to have been bullied:

- What happened?
- What were you thinking at the time?
- What have you thought about since?
- How have you been affected by this?
- What do you think needs to happen to make things right?

When analysing a report of alleged bullying, use the following questions with individuals who claim to have been bullied:

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