

Our Lady of Lourdes School Ballymoney

Caring, Sharing, Learning together to meet the future

Anti-Bullying Policy



Anti-bullying policy statement

Bullying is a highly distressing and damaging form of abuse and is not tolerated in our school. All staff are vigilant at all times to the possibility of bullying occurring, and will take immediate steps to stop it happening, to protect and reassure the child who has been bullied and to discipline the child who is displaying bullying behaviour.

Parents of both these children will be contacted immediately bullying behaviour is identified.

Any complaint by a parent that their child is being bullied will be fully investigated by the Pastoral Care Team and if necessary the Principal. Team action will be taken to protect the child who is the target of bullying. A parent making a complaint about bullying will have a response within a reasonable time period.

The sanctions taken against the pupil who bullies will depend on the seriousness of the case. His / her behaviour will be monitored until staff are satisfied that the problem has stopped. If a pupil's bullying persists, the second stage will be to inform the Chairperson of the Board of Governors and instigate child protection procedures.

Defining Bullying

The term bullying refers to a range of harmful behaviour, both physical and psychological. All bullying usually has the following four features:

- It is repetitive and persistent
- It is intentionally harmful
- It involves an imbalance of power, leaving someone feeling helpless to prevent it or put a stop to it.
- It causes distress

Definition of Bullying

Our school uses the Northern Ireland Anti Bullying Forum Definition of Bullying which defines bullying as

The repeated use of power by one or more persons intentionally to hurt, harm or adversely affect the rights and needs of another or others.

Preventative Measures

- The Principal and the School Leadership Team will encourage good behaviour in and around school at all times:
 - Written rules for good behaviour have been given to all pupils in the Information Guide for Pupils and Parents;
 - Topics in Principal's assembly reinforce school rules, knowing the difference between right and wrong, having consideration/respect for others, understanding one's own feelings and those of others, knowing who to tell if someone is bullying you
 - Good behaviour is promoted by classroom assistants and teachers in all areas of school
 - Staff observe children closely. If there is a change in a child's behaviour, this is addressed
- The school's Personal and Social Education Programme addresses all the areas in which our children are encouraged to develop the ability to identify, understand and express their emotions in a friendly way.

Responding to a Bullying Concern

Staff will adopt a positive mind set when responding to bullying concerns. They should be prepared with options for how to respond to incidents of bullying in a planned, deliberate and positive way. Confronting pupils who have bullied requires a high amount of self-control as well as preparation to know what to say and do. The following are important factors when managing a bullying situation.

Be calm. It is important to be clear thinking and emotionally in control.

Be positive. Have in mind the importance of maintaining a positive relationship with the pupil. A pupil is much more likely to modify his/her behaviour if he/she perceives that a teacher cares.

Be assertive. Staff should directly and clearly express their thoughts, feelings and expectations concerning the need for the pupil to not only stop bullying, but also make restitution with the child who has been bullied.

Be confident. It is important to trust that you will be successful in implementing practices that can have an impact on the pupil's future behaviour. It is always helpful to focus on the behaviour, not the pupil.

Ensure that the specific behaviour is in fact bullying behaviour which conforms to the school's agreed definition of bullying as identified in the school's current anti-bullying policy.

Assess the situation and its severity level. Determine the appropriate level of response required to manage the situation effectively.

To determine level of severity, staff should take account of the following:

The **nature** of the bullying behaviour- for example deliberate teasing, excluding or hitting. There is a tendency among those who have a duty of care to rate some bullying, particularly violence, as more serious than other subtle forms. This can be a dangerous mistake and leave us vulnerable to ignoring 'teasing' or 'exclusion'.

The **frequency** of the bullying behaviour: daily, weekly or less often.

The **duration** of the bullying behaviour: whether over a short or prolonged period of time.

The **perceptions** of the child being bullied – The seriousness of bullying can only be measured by the degree of distress suffered by the target.

“It can be defined as bullying only by measuring the effects the acts have on the vulnerable child” [Besag 1989]

Our response to a Bullying Concern

1. Gather and clarify the facts.
2. Check:
 - That the behaviour constitutes bullying behaviour as defined in our current policy.
 - Records for any previous incidents.
3. Complete the Bullying Concern Assessment Form.
4. On the basis of this initial assessment:
 - Choose an appropriate intervention(s) from the Intervention Levels
 - Ensure effective communication amongst all parties.
 - Consider the possible need for:
 - Parental involvement
 - Pastoral Care Team involvement
 - Risk assessment
 - External agency involvement e.g. the Child Protection Support Service for Schools (CPSS).
6. Monitor and evaluate the on-going effectiveness of your chosen intervention/strategy.
7. Record actions taken and outcomes achieved using our school's recording system.
8. Review the outcomes to determine whether further action is required and progress accordingly.

Implementing the above process will provide opportunities for self-reflection, development and learning for all parties concerned, resulting in the effective management of bullying incidents. This reflection should inform and guide the on-going review and development of the school's anti-bullying policy, procedures and practice

Referral System

Incidents of bullying are recorded as a record of unacceptable behaviour and intervention taken by the Pastoral Care Team and the Principal

(Incidence/ observation and accidents are more formally recorded on separate forms and maintained by the Pastoral Care Team/Principal

Sanctions

Sanctions are decided by the Pastoral Care Team and Principal and are outlined in our Information Guide for Pupils and Parents.

Staff monitor pupils for signs of bullying reoccurring.

The Head of Year will keep a record of all communications.

If a pupil's bullying behaviour persists, the Chairperson of the Board of Governors will be informed and Child Protection procedures may be instigated.

Bullying in the Curriculum

Pupils in Our Lady of Lourdes School engage in PSHE classes, which allow each child and the teacher to discuss issues that are relevant to the class at a particular time.

Assemblies also deal with the problem at the pupil's level.

Child Safety Programmes dealing with aspects such as Bullying are also included in PSHE class. Resources for teachers to deal with bullying are available in school and these will be increased over time.

Complaints Procedure

An open door policy exists in Our Lady of Lourdes School. If at any time a parent has concerns or wishes to make a complaint regarding bullying they can contact the school through the office.

The Pastoral Care Team will also be informed of any problems and they will meet to discuss a way forward with the complaint.

The Pastoral Care Team will also deal with problems arising during the transportation of children to and from school. They will then liaise with the parent, Translink and bus escort as necessary.

Understanding the Levels of Intervention

Level 1 Intervention - Low Level Bullying Behaviour

Interventions at Level 1 are to help individuals to recognise/reflect on their unacceptable behaviour and to “get them back on track” while listening to and supporting/strengthening the pupil(s) experiencing bullying. **NEVER ignore low level bullying behaviour.**

Staff will;

- Explain the inappropriateness of the behaviour in line with the school’s values.
- Identify possible consequences if the bullying behaviour continues.
- Point out the level of distress experienced by the bullied pupil.
- Talk with the pupil being bullied to explore whether he/she has in any way provoked the bullying behaviour.
- Help the bullied pupil to identify ways in which he/she may be strengthened and supported, e.g. peer support.
- Encourage reparation to be made, if appropriate.
- Monitor the situation carefully.
- Be prepared to intervene with a higher response level if the situation persists or deteriorates.

Level 2 Interventions - Intermediate Level Bullying Behaviour

While interventions at Level 2 involve continuing with the above, there is shift from individual support to group interventions. To be effective small group work needs:

- The consent and involvement of the pupil being bullied.
- To be planned and timetabled, session length dependent on age and ability.
- Parental / carer consent and agreement from participating pupils.
- Carefully selected group membership.
- To take place in a suitable and comfortable environment.
- To be uninterrupted.
- To be facilitated in a positive manner, ideally by two adults whose roles may alternate allowing one to participate and one to observe.
- Structured and focused activities using active learning approaches to stimulate discussion and debate amongst members and develop group identity.
- Decision and outcomes to be agreed and recorded, e.g. on a flipchart.
- To facilitate the development of empathy amongst pupils.
- A solution focused approach to the situation.
- To provide opportunities for pupils to take responsibility.
- Regular meetings of the group.
- Regular meetings with the bullied pupil to assess ongoing effectiveness of agreed actions.
- To ensure regular feedback is given on agreed actions.

Level 3 Interventions - Complex Bullying Behaviour

Interventions at Level 3 will often involve the Head of Pastoral Care, and the Senior Leadership Team, in collaboration with pupil(s) and parents to determine the way forward in affecting change.

This planning may occur through a multi-agency discussion, involving external support agencies. The manner in which teachers and others are involved in planning and how they are kept informed about the implementation of the plans will vary.

Bullying at this level often involves complex group dynamics, where a number of roles are evident, such as those displaying bullying behaviour, bystanders and pupils experiencing bullying. Consequently interventions may require one-to-one meetings, small group work and whole class involvement. These will often require group interventions along with individual support and strength building programmes.

Level 4 Interventions - High Risk Bullying Behaviour

Bullying behaviours assessed as Level 4 are severe and involve a significant threat to the safety and welfare of any or all of the pupils involved. Such severe bullying concerns may be new or may have proved resistant to earlier school interventions and have now been assessed as high risk. Incidents at this level must be assessed in relation to the risk posed to any/all of the pupils involved. As such, the school's Child Protection Policy and safeguarding procedures will need to be invoked.

In addition to safeguarding procedures and practices including referral to external support services, the school's interventions at Level 4 should continue to implement interventions detailed at Level 3 as appropriate.

Cyber-bullying Policy

Our Lady of Lourdes School embraces the advantages of modern technology in terms of the educational benefits it brings, however the school is mindful of the potential for bullying to occur. Central to the School's Anti-Bullying Policy is the belief that 'all pupils have a right not to be bullied' and that 'bullying is always unacceptable'. The School also recognises that it must 'take note of bullying perpetrated outside School which spills over into the School'.

Definition of Cyber-bullying

Cyber-bullying is an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual using electronic forms of contact repeatedly over time against a victim who cannot easily defend himself/herself.

By cyber-bullying, we mean bullying by electronic media:

- Bullying by texts or messages or calls on mobile phones
- The use of mobile phone cameras to cause distress, fear or humiliation
- Posting threatening, abusive, defamatory or humiliating material on websites, to include blogs, personal websites, social networking sites and any form of blackmailing
- Using e-mail to message others
- Hijacking/cloning e-mail accounts
- Making threatening, abusive, defamatory or humiliating remarks in chat rooms, to include Facebook, YouTube and Ratemteacher.

Legal Issues

Cyber-bullying is generally criminal in character. The law applies to cyberspace.

- It is unlawful to disseminate defamatory information in any media including internet sites.
- Section 127 of the Communications Act 2003 makes it an offence to send, by public means of a public electronic communications network, a message or other matter that is grossly offensive or one of an indecent, obscene or menacing character.
- The Protection from Harassment Act 1997 makes it an offence to knowingly pursue any course of conduct amounting to harassment.

Our Lady of Lourdes School educates its pupils both in the proper use of telecommunications and about the serious consequences of cyber bullying and will, through PSHE and in ICT lessons and assemblies, continue to inform and educate its pupils in these fast changing areas.

Guidance For Pupils

If you believe you or someone else is the victim of cyber-bullying, you must speak to an adult as soon as possible. This person could be a parent/guardian, your Form teacher, Head of Year or Head of Pastoral Care.

- Do not answer abusive messages but log and report them
- Do not delete anything until it has been shown to your Form Teacher, (even if it is upsetting, the material is important evidence which may need to be used later as proof of cyber-bullying)
- Do not give out personal IT details
- Never reply to abusive e-mails
- Never reply to someone you do not know
- Stay in public areas in chat rooms



Guidance For Parents

It is vital that parents and the school work together to ensure that all pupils are aware of the serious consequences of getting involved in anything that might be seen to be cyber-bullying. Our Lady of Lourdes School informs parents of the Cyber-Bullying Policy and the procedures in place to deal with cyber-bullying.

- Parents can help by making sure their child understands the school's policy and, above all, how seriously Our Lady of Lourdes School takes incidents of cyber-bullying
- Parents should also explain to their sons or daughters legal issues relating to cyber-bullying
- If parents believe their child is the victim of cyber-bullying, they should save the offending material (if need be by saving an offensive text on their or their child's mobile phone) and make sure they have all relevant information before deleting anything
- Parents should contact the Head of Year or Head of Pastoral Care as soon as possible. A meeting can then be arranged, which may involve other relevant members of staff
- If the incident falls in the holidays or outside of school time Our Lady of Lourdes School reserves the right to take action against bullying perpetrated outside the school which spills over into the school.



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School Poem

You're **unique** and **one of a kind**
Your life can be what you want
Take the days just one at a time
Count your blessings not your troubles
You'll make it through whatever comes along
Don't put limits on yourself
So many dreams are waiting to be realised
Decisions are too important to leave to chance
Reach for your **peak**, your **goal**, your **prize**
The longer one carries a problem the heavier it gets
Live a life of serenity not a life of regret
Remember that a **little love** goes a long way
A lot goes forever
Remember that **friendship** is a wise investment
Life's treasures are people...together
Realise that it is **never too late**
Do ordinary things in an extraordinary way
Have **health and happiness**
Take the time to **wish upon a star**
And don't forget – for even a day
How very **special** you are

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