

## **Section One: Child Bullying**

### **Anti-Bullying Policy**

This draft policy was formulated in May 2010 through the combined efforts of teachers, non-teaching staff, parents and the Board of Management. The pupils (Junior and Senior Infants) did not have an input at this stage. Anti-bullying was identified as a priority area by the staff following an assessment of the needs of the school. The first section deals with child bullying and the second section with adult bullying. This is the first anti-bullying policy in Scoil Ghráinne.

This policy has been formulated in accordance with the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005, the Employment Equality Acts 1998 and 2004 and the Education Acts 1998 and 2007.

#### **The aims of this policy**

- To raise and maintain awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour within the school community i.e. school management, teaching and non-teaching staff, pupils and parents/guardians
- To foster a high degree of collective vigilance throughout the school
- To encourage children to put into practice the ‘Stay Safe’ motto – Say no, get away and tell someone you trust
- To create a school ethos which promotes equality, inclusion, mutual and self-respect and which encourages children to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour
- To devise measures to prevent and deal with incidents of bullying
- To develop procedures for noting, reporting, investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour

#### **The Ethos of Scoil Ghráinne**

Scoil Ghráinne is committed to a positive work environment where work is done in an atmosphere of respect, collaboration, openness and equality. This school has a safe and caring environment in which all children can develop to their full potential. Bullying behaviour is contrary to this ethos as it undermines and dilutes the quality of education and has an adverse affect on victims. Every child has the right to education in a disruption free environment. A stable secure learning environment is an essential requirement to achieve this goal. Scoil Ghráinne aims to foster a positive school ethos among pupils, staff and parents. We believe that when pupils are given opportunities to assume responsibilities and achieve success, it enhances their positive attitude to the school and to each other.

**Scoil Ghráinne will not tolerate or condone bullying of any form or at any level of the school community. This school will actively seek to prevent bullying and ensure that all members of the school community – pupils, staff and parents are enabled to act effectively to deal with bullying.**

## **Strategies for Prevention of Bullying**

Scoil Ghráinne will take preventative measures to reduce the incidence of bullying occurring and to empower children to tell an adult they trust if they find themselves in a bullying situation. Some strategies for prevention include:

- Maintaining a programme of positive action and promoting an atmosphere of friendship, respect and tolerance.
- Using the Multi-faith Religious Education Programme, *Goodness Me, Goodness You*, the SPHE curriculum, including the Stay Safe programme and Circle Time to educate pupils against bullying behaviour
- Having a whole-school approach to raising self-esteem and developing a positive school spirit e.g. Pupil/Star of the Week, Best Líne, Superstar, Heart Buddies.
- Having a whole-school approach to bullying, discipline and dealing with unacceptable behaviour that is consistent with the school's Code of Behaviour and this anti-bullying policy.
- Organising a staff day on the subject of bullying complemented by an awareness day for pupils and parents/guardians
- Encouraging team work through co-operative games in PE and organising collaborative lessons in other curriculum areas e.g. a class mural, science project
- Teaching acceptance of differences and respect for everyone
- Fostering positive self-esteem among pupils by celebrating individual differences/achievements, by acknowledging and rewarding good behaviour and by providing opportunities for success.
- Helping pupils develop empathy by discussing feelings and by trying to put themselves in the place of others.
- Responding sensitively to pupils who disclose incidents of bullying.
- Being particularly vigilant in monitoring pupils who are considered 'at risk' of bullying/ being bullied and intervening when necessary
- Recording incidents that occur during yard supervision by including them in the Yard Supervision Folder, informing all staff of areas of concern and that particular children may need extra observation
- Investigating all disclosed incidents of bullying
- Adhering to stringent supervision and monitoring of pupils activities in class and in the yard, supervising all sections of the playground at break times and ensuring children are never left unsupervised at any time
- Awareness building in the school regarding positive behaviour and unacceptable behaviour.
- Encouraging the whole school community to take responsibility for identifying and reporting incidences of bullying
- Using the yard supervision book, all staff will be informed of causes of concern and that particular children need extra observation

## **Maintaining awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour**

Some practical ways in which the school can emphasise that bullying behaviour is unacceptable are as follows.

- Facilitating a common understanding among staff, pupils and parents on what bullying behaviour is through discussion and providing information.
- Using both the formal and informal curriculum to emphasise behaviour that is unacceptable. ...visual arts activities, drama, role-play, SPHE, cooperative games...
- Organising special events such as a Friendship Week or similar.
- Dealing with incidents immediately and letting children know that it is being dealt with.
- Creating awareness of anti-bullying through posters, slogans showing zero tolerance of bullying behaviour.
- Having some immediate resolution strategies e.g. Shaking hands, saying sorry, doing a kind gesture.
- Encouraging children to look out for each other. If they see a child by themselves, ask them would they like to play and join in e.g. Bus-stop strategy.
- Encouraging parents to inform teachers of any difficulties, worries and concerns.
- Encourage parents to talk to their children so they know bullying behaviour is unacceptable
- Modelling of good behaviour by staff and parents so children know what it looks like e.g. Teachers' share resources and help each other, parents take turns to do the school run, children share crayons etc

## **Definition of Bullying**

The Board of Management adopts the definition of adult bullying as set out by the HSA 2002 Code of Practice on the Prevention and Resolution of Bullying at Work,

*"Workplace Bullying is repeated inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another or others, at the place of work and/or in the course of employment, which could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individual's right to dignity at work.*

*An isolated incident of the behaviour described in this definition may be an affront to dignity at work but, as a once off incident, is not considered to be bullying".*

Bullying among pupils is a pattern of repeated behaviour, not just an isolated incident, which causes hurt or humiliation to the victim. This is consistent with the general definition of bullying mentioned above. Bullying may be defined as repeated acts of aggression: which may be verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against others. As a form of aggressive behaviour, it is usually hurtful and

deliberate. It is persistent over time and makes it difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves. It is intentionally aggravating and intimidating.

**It is important not to confuse bullying with isolated incidents of aggressive or antisocial behaviour, which must not be condoned. However when the behaviour is systematic and ongoing it becomes bullying.**

### **Types of Bullying among Pupils – Examples of Behaviour (not exhaustive)**

- **Physical Aggression:** severe physical assault, physical harassment or intentionally inflicting pain, pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking or tripping people up.
- **Damage to Property:** clothing, school books and other items of personal property may be defaced, broken, stolen or hidden
- **Extortion:** demands, often accompanied by threats for money, lunch or other items of value.
- **Intimidation:** use of the voice, aggressive body language, gestures or facial expression – the so-called ‘look’ which conveys aggression and /or dislike.
- **Name calling:** persistent name calling directed at the same individual(s), which hurts, insults or humiliates e.g. ‘*big ears, swot, dummy*’. Taunting, which is defended as ‘only slagging’.
- **Cyber:** Anonymous/abusive phone calls, texts or emails.  
Abusive website comments/blogs/pictures.  
Camera phone abuse
- **Racial:** discrimination, prejudice, comments or insults about colour, nationality, culture, social class, religious beliefs or ethnic background.
- **Relational:** Manipulating relationships as a means of bullying. Behaviours include: Malicious gossip, spreading rumours, isolation and exclusion.
- **Sexual:** Spreading rumours about a person’s sexual orientation,  
Taunting or name-calling e.g. gay, lesbian.  
Display or circulation of sexual material aimed at intimidating.
- **Other:** Graffiti, invasion of personal space, taunting.

### **Taunting or Slagging?**

One of the most frequent forms of bullying in school is taunting. It is often difficult to distinguish between the regular banter or ‘slagging’ that occurs between pupils and taunting which can cause hurt or personal offence. The Board of Management in

consideration of this issue offers the following guidelines for pupils, parents and staff as a distinction between slagging and taunting:

***Slagging is 'a fun thing you do with friends – with people you care about. Taunting is a choice to bully someone for whom you have contempt', (Coloroso 2005, p.37).***

### **Slagging**

- Allows the teaser and the person involved to swap roles with ease
- Isn't intended to hurt the other person
- Maintains the basic dignity of everyone involved
- Pokes fun in a light-hearted, clever and benign way
- Is meant to get both parties to laugh
- Is only a small part of the activities shared by children who have something in common
- Is innocent in motive
- Is discontinued when the person teased becomes upset or objects to the teasing

### **Procedures for dealing with reported incidents of bullying**

All reports of bullying, no matter how trivial, should be noted, investigated and dealt with by teachers. In that way pupils will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance. We aim to reinforce the importance of speaking out about incidents of bullying in our school. Pupils are taught the difference between tattling and telling: **Tattling is what you do to get someone into trouble: telling is what you do to get someone out of trouble.** Pupils are advised that it is the teacher's job to deal with bullying and that all incidents should be reported to him/her.

Non-teaching staff such as Special Needs Assistants, secretaries, caretakers, cleaners are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the appropriate teaching member of staff (i.e. Principal/Deputy Principal or Bullying Co-ordinator). Teachers will:

- Find out the "what, where, when, who and why" of the incident.
- Talk to the victim and talk to the accused and get their sides of the story – use a no-blame approach. Don't use the word bully to describe a child. Rather use the phrase, "*the child has demonstrated bullying behaviour*"
- If the bullying incident occurs in the yard, the teacher on duty will record it and will inform the class teacher and the principal.
- Consult with the bullying co-ordinator to help deal with incidents
- All reported incidents will be investigated outside the classroom to avoid public humiliation of the victim or the pupil engaged in bullying behaviour.
- Any allegation will be dealt with sensitively. Teachers are expected to support the esteem of each party involved. Teachers will take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach and set an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner.
- A written/typed record of all reported incidents will be kept by the Principal. These will be kept for the duration of the pupil's education within the school.

- Parents will be informed as necessary. Discretion will be used for less serious incidents or those occurring for the first time.
- In instances involving allegations of bullying of teachers or school personnel by pupils the situation will be referred to the Principal for investigation and the procedures outlined above will be followed.
- In circumstances where the incident involves the school Principal, the matter will be referred to the Board of Management for investigation.

### **Steps for dealing with confirmed incidents**

If it is concluded that a pupil has engaged in bullying behaviour the following steps are taken:

- If it is the first occurrence of a minor incident, the bully is given a verbal warning and will be advised regarding the inappropriateness of their behaviour, particularly from the victim's point of view. Parents of both the victim and the bully will be made aware of the incident by the class teacher.
- Relevant staff will be notified of the pupils involved and will monitor the situation
- In serious cases or if the behaviour persists, parents/guardians will be informed by the school Principal. A meeting with the parents of the bully, the class teacher, Principal may be appropriate at this stage. Ways of dealing with the situation will be discussed and the Principal will explain the actions being taken and the reasons for them, referring them to the school policy. He will discuss ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions taken by the school.
- The child who is bullying will be placed on report. This means that the child's behaviour in all areas is monitored during the day. The child has three meetings with his/her teacher and together they decide on what is to be written for that part of the day. All positive behaviour, progress on work etc will be noted. At the end of the day, the teacher writes his/her own comment. The purpose of this report 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 be able to see that parents and school are working together in his/her interest, so the co-operation of the parents is essential. Initially a review of the reports will be carried out on a weekly basis, in a meeting with the Principal, teacher, parents and child. If progress is being made, longer intervals between meetings may be decided upon.
- The Principal will arrange to meet separately with the parents of the victim of bullying. The child who is the victim of bullying may attend all or part of this meeting. The aim of such a meeting(s) will be to address emotional needs and devise strategies for the child to deal with the bullying. This may involve reinforcing the programme being covered in class or other strategies.
- Follow-up meetings may be arranged with the two parties involved separately with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date if the victim is ready and agreeable.
- The school is very aware that pupils involved in bullying and their victims may need help on an on-going basis. The school will use the resources available to

ensure that both the victim and the bully are given an opportunity to talk, with the aim of enhancing their self-esteem, social skills and coping strategies. The bully will be helped to see the situation from the victim's point of view.

- 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 parents and Board of Management.
- Sanctions implemented aim to encourage positive behaviour and support the esteem of the child. These sanctions may include a period of suspension during which there will 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 in writing by the Principal to the Chairperson of the Board of Management.
- The parents of a pupil who has been suspended will be expected, with the support of the school, to seek whatever help is deemed appropriate.
- In very serious incidents where the school fears for the safety of a pupil, the Gardaí will be informed.
- If the above procedures fail to overcome the problem, the parents of the bully may be asked to find an alternative school placement for their child.

**Throughout the process, the victim is assured of ongoing support and encouraged to report any further incidents.**

#### **Bullying involving Staff/School Personnel**

A teacher or member of staff may unwittingly or otherwise, engage in, instigate or reinforce bullying behaviour in a number of ways: -

- Using sarcasm or insulting or demeaning form of language when addressing pupils, making negative comments about a pupil's appearance or background.
- Humiliating directly or indirectly, a pupil who is particularly academically weak or outstanding or vulnerable in other ways.
- Using any gesture or expression of a threatening or intimidatory nature or any form of degrading physical contact or exercise.

Reasonable and essential correction and behaviour arising from the management of the conduct, behaviour and performance of pupils at school or in the interests of safety, health and welfare of pupils does not constitute bullying.

Bullying of pupils by teachers or other school personnel is defined as a pattern of behaviour which can threaten, harm, humiliate, induce fear or cause pupils substantial emotional distress. While bullying usually involved repeated behaviour, a once off incident involving an adult and a pupil can, if it is sufficiently serious, constitute bullying.

In the context of allegations or suspicions of bullying by a staff member, the primary goal is to protect the pupils within the school.

- Any allegation will be dealt with sensitively and support provided for the parties involved.
- The staff member will be treated fairly which includes the right not to be judged in advance of a full and fair enquiry.
- All complaints about a staff member will be directed in the first instance, to the staff member in question, if possible, and then if necessary to the Principal. Where it has not been possible to agree a framework for resolution, the matter should be referred in writing by both parties to the Board of Management for investigation.
- In the case of a complaint against the Principal, the matter should be raised with the Principal, if possible, or referred to the Board of Management in line with the procedures outlined above.
- In circumstances where it is found on investigation that staff members have been subject to malicious or false allegations, disciplinary measures will be taken, when deemed necessary by the Board of Management.
- In the case of Parent/Visitor to the school – child bullying, the complaint should be referred in the first instance to the child’s class teacher and subsequently to the Principal if unresolved. This includes parent to child bullying where the child is their own or other than their own.
- The Board of Management also recognises the potential for teachers and school personnel to be bullied by pupils by means of physical assault, damage to property, verbal abuse, taunting, cyber bullying, threats to people’s families etc.

### **Effects and Indications of Bullying**

Bullying involving pupils can have far reaching and detrimental effects on the educational, emotional and social development of pupils. It can damage their self-confidence and consequently, lower their self-esteem. Pupils who are being bullied may develop feelings of insecurity and extreme anxiety and thus may become more vulnerable. See Appendix 1 for signs/symptoms, which may suggest that a pupil is being bullied.

### **Success Criteria – the practical indicators of the success of this policy?**

- Positive feedback from staff members and parents and children
- Observation of appropriate behaviour in class rooms, corridors, yard
- Teaching and learning can proceed in a calm and harmonized manner
- Behavioural problems are managed in a way that does not interfere with teaching and learning
- Children are enjoying playtime safely

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

All members of the school community have a role to play in the prevention of bullying. Everyone needs to recognise that any pupil can be a victim of or a perpetrator of bullying behaviour. Likewise any staff member, teaching or non-teaching, can become a victim or a perpetrator of bullying.



The Principal has a key role in dealing with bullying behaviour in school because he is in a strong position to influence attitudes to and to set standards in dealing with such behaviour in school.

Staff will coordinate and monitor the implementation of this policy. As pupils model their behaviour on the behaviour of adults, all staff have to be careful to act as good role-models and not misuse their authority. Moreover, they should be firm, clear and consistent in their disciplinary measures. All staff will be vigilant, respond sensitively and caringly to pupils who disclose incidence of bullying and report or investigate all disclosed incidents of bullying as appropriate.

Pupils in time will realise that they have a responsibility for the safety and welfare of fellow pupils. They learn that they are not telling tales but behaving responsibly.

Parents have a major responsibility in changing their child's behaviour. Parents contribute to and support the school's policy on bullying by encouraging positive behaviour both at home and at school, by being vigilant for signs and symptoms that their child is being bullied or is bullying others, by communicating concerns to the school. Parents need to encourage positive behaviour and discourage negative behaviour both at home and at school. Children need to learn to solve difficulties without resorting to aggression. Parents need to watch out for signs and symptoms that their child is being bullied or is bullying others. Support the school in its efforts to prevent and treat bullying.

**Implementation Date**

This policy will apply with immediate effect.

**Review Date**

This policy will be reviewed in November 2012 and amended if necessary.

**Ratified by the Board of Management on \_\_\_\_\_  
Date**

**Signed \_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson, Board of Management**

**Reference Section:**

- Coloroso, B (2005) The Bully, the Bullied and the Bystander, London, Picadilly Press.
- Code of Practice on the Prevention of Workplace Bullying HAS, 2002
- Department of Education and Science Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post Primary Schools (1993) available on DES website [www.irlgov.ie/educ](http://www.irlgov.ie/educ)

- Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools, NEWB, 2008
- Education Act, 1998 Section 15 (2(d) (DES website)
- Education Act 2007
- Education (Welfare) Act 2004
- Employment Equality Acts 1998 and 2004
- Mosley, J (2000) Quality Circle Time in the Primary School, LDA.
- Policy on the Prevention and Resolution of Bullying, Scoil Náisiúnta Bhantiarna Lourdes, Bunclody, Co. Wexford. [www.bunclodyns.com](http://www.bunclodyns.com)
- Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005
- SPHE Curriculum Guidelines
- Stay Safe and Walk Tall Programmes
- Working Together. Procedures and Policies for Positive Staff Relations. INTO, 2000
- IPPN website [www.ippn.ie](http://www.ippn.ie)
- INTO website [www.into.ie](http://www.into.ie)
- PPDS website [www.ppds.ie](http://www.ppds.ie)
- NPC website [www.npc.ie](http://www.npc.ie)

## **Appendix 1**

## **Advice for Parents/Guardians**

### **Effects of Bullying**

Bullying can affect pupils in many different ways. When pupils are bullied their lives may be made miserable. They may suffer injury. They may be unhappy about coming to school. They may lose self-confidence and self esteem, blaming themselves for the bullying. Some children may experience stressful symptoms such as stomach aches and headaches, nightmares or panic attacks. (This form of unhappiness is likely to affect their concentration and learning). If unchallenged other pupils can learn that bullying is a quick and effective way of getting what they want.

### **Indications of Bullying Behaviour – Signs and Symptoms**

The following signs/symptoms may suggest that a pupil is being bullied:

- Anxiety about travelling to and from school - requesting parents to drive or collect them, changing route of travel, avoiding regular times for travelling to and from school.
- Unwillingness to go to school, refusal to attend, mitching.
- Deterioration in educational performance, loss of concentration and loss of enthusiasm and interest in school.
- Pattern of physical illnesses (e.g. headaches, stomach aches).
- Unexplained changes either in mood or behaviour. It may be particularly noticeable before returning to school after weekends or more especially after longer school holidays.
- Visible signs of anxiety or distress - stammering, withdrawing, nightmares, difficulty in sleeping, crying, not eating, vomiting, bedwetting.
- Spontaneous out-of-character comments about either pupils or teachers.
- Possessions missing or damaged.
- Increased requests for money or stealing money.
- Unexplained bruising or cuts or damaged clothing.
- Reluctance and/or refusal to say what is troubling her/him.

**These signs do not necessarily mean that a pupil is being bullied. If repeated or occurring in combination, these signs warrant investigation in order to establish what is affecting the child.**

### **What to do if your child is being bullied?**

- Discuss the experience with your child to find out the precise details of what has happened.
- Reassure her/him that you and the school will help her/him.
- Discuss with her/him what to do next - he may be able to suggest strategies for dealing with it (if child is older and more mature)
- Encourage her/him to tell his teacher.
- Contact the school as soon as possible.
- Follow-up to ensure that the matter is dealt with and resolved.

**What to tell your child to do if someone they know is being bullied?**

- Tell a teacher (privately if necessary)
- Tell his/her parents - they will contact the school.
- Talk to the person who is being bullied - you may be able to help her/him.
- Reject bullying behaviour among your friends - tell them that it is wrong to bully.
- Help the bullied person to get away from the situation.
- Know and follow the school code of discipline.

**What to tell your child to do if he/she is being bullied?**

- Tell the teacher immediately.                      Tell your parents when you get home.
- Help the teacher to investigate it.                Tell a friend about what is happening.
- Tell the bully to stop.