

GAIRMSCOIL MHUIRE

ANTI BULLYING POLICY

**ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT
15/06/2010**

**APPROVED BY CO. GALWAY VEC
21/06/2010**

**THIS POLICY HAS BEEN PREPARED IN CONSULTATION WITH PARENTS, STUDENTS, STAFF,
THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT AND COUNTY GALWAY VEC**

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

LINK TO MISSION STATEMENT

We aim to protect the well being of students by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. Schools which have a good network of relationships, where there is a concern for the whole person throughout the life of the school, will be in a better position to respond the concerns of students and parents.

DEFINITION

Bullying is defined as repeated aggressive, offensive, abusive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, or abuse of power conducted by an individual or group against others. The repeated nature of bullying is its defining characteristic.

TYPES OF BULLYING

Physical bullying includes any physical contact that would hurt or injure a person like hitting, kicking, punching, etc. Taking something that belongs to someone else and destroying it would also be considered a type of physical bullying.

Verbal bullying is name-calling, making offensive remarks, or joking about a person's religion, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or the way they look. It can also include a bully making verbal threats of violence or aggression against someone's personal property.

Indirect bullying includes spreading rumours or stories about someone, telling others about something that was told to you in private, and excluding others from groups.

Social alienation is when a bully excludes someone from a group on purpose. It also includes a bully spreading rumours, and also making fun of someone by pointing out their differences.

Intimidation is when a bully threatens someone else and frightens that person enough to make him or her do what the bully wants.

Cyber bullying is a new strain of bullying which has emerged where people use the internet, mobile phones or other technological devices to hurt someone else.

TYPES OF BEHAVIOUR DEEMED TO BE INAPPROPRIATE

- Humiliation; including name-calling, reference to academic ability etc.
- Intimidation; including aggressive use of body language.
- Verbal abuse, anonymous or otherwise.
- Physical abuse or threatened abuse.
- Aggressive or obscene language.
- Offensive joke; whether spoken or by email, text messaging etc.
- Victimisation; including very personal remarks.
- Exclusion and isolation.
- Intrusion through interfering with personal possessions or locker.
- Threats, including demands for money.
- An attack by rumour, gossip, innuendo or ridicule on any individual's reputation either verbally or through electronic media
- In school: Posting insults about a person on a website or sending upsetting text messages on a mobile. Putting up pictures on a message board, pretending to be someone else in a chat room or on a web page. This also applies at home where the person being bullied is a student of this or another school.

THIS POLICY APPLIES

- In class, between classes and while on the school premises
- While in school uniform
- On the way to and from school
- On school based activity, school tours etc.
- To anything done in the school name
- To any behaviour that adversely affects the school reputation or **the education of any student in the school**

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF EACH MEMBER OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Right	Responsibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have the right to be safe in school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have a responsibility to make our school a safe and secure place for others

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF STUDENTS AND STAFF

I have a right to be:	I have the responsibility to ensure that:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treated with respect • Physically safe and to expect my property to be safe at school • Free from all forms of verbal bullying • Free from intimidation • Free from unwelcome sexual comments or touching • Free from any hurtful remarks or gestures regarding person, ethnicity, religion and culture • Able to learn & teach without disruption 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Others are treated with respect • Others are physically safe and the property of others is safe • Others are free from verbal bullying • Others are free from intimidation • Others are free from unwelcome sexual comments or touching • Others are free from any hurtful remarks or gestures regarding person, ethnicity, religion and culture • Others/students are able to learn without disruption • Bullying behaviour is acted upon as appropriate

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS

I have a right to:	I have the responsibility to ensure that:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expect that my child is safe in school and that she can learn without disruption 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report bullying behaviour to the school • Co-operate fully with the implementation of school policy

RESPONSIBILITIES OF BYSTANDERS/WITNESSES

Do	Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Say 'no' or 'stop' when you see or hear someone behaving unfairly - be assertive but not aggressive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Join in bullying behaviour for example, laughing at, sneering, 'slagging' or fighting etc.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek help immediately from an adult, if the situation is dangerous. • Tell when you know a student is being bullied. (This is not 'ratting'. It is telling to be safe.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cheer on somebody who is bullying. • Stay in a dangerous situation, e.g. a fight. • Bully the 'bully'.
--	--

PREVENTATIVE STRATEGIES

- It is School policy to provide **education on bullying** in the following manner:
 - All year groups are facilitated through the S.P.H.E. (Social, Personal and Health Education) programme which incorporates bullying information and learning.
 - Everyone is encouraged to participate in Friendship/Anti-bullying Week, which takes place on an annual basis.
 - Students are surveyed at least once a year
 - A Mentor/Buddy system is in place, where 5th year student(s) are paired with 1st year student(s) at the start of the new academic year; training is provided for the 5th years on how to be a good mentor/buddy. This pairing continues for four terms – i.e. until Christmas of the following year or for as long as is practicable.
 - New students, who join the School at other times, are allocated a buddy – ideally, this is another student from within the same year group.
 - Positive reinforcement of behaviour for the better good of the community is encouraged through the Code of Behaviour and at school assemblies
- The school has an excellent pastoral care system in place, and reports of all incidents (wherever they may have been reported) will be filtered through the Class Tutor, who is the primary person for pastoral care of the student in her/his form class.
 - **Pastoral Care Structure:**
 - Chain of support: Student / Buddy / Class Prefect / Class Tutor / Year Head / Pastoral Care Team.
 - The pastoral care team comprises the Guidance Counsellors / Home School Liaison / Head of SPHE / Principal and SEN co-ordinator
- Staff will be watchful and observe relationships between students in class, note absence patterns and let it be known that high standards of behaviour are expected at all times

WHO TO TELL AND HOW TO TELL

Students should report bullying behaviour to their Class Tutor or any member of staff with whom they feel comfortable by:

- A direct approach to an adult at an appropriate time
- Handing up a signed note e.g. with homework, or in bullying box outside the Guidance office
- Making a phone call to an adult in the school
- Asking a parent/guardian or friend to tell on your behalf
- Reporting in a confidential questionnaire when given in school

PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

- Students should discuss any incident of bullying with a teacher or another trusted adult within the school system; this is responsible behaviour rather than “telling tales”.
- Parents/guardians should contact the Class Tutor or any other member of staff with whom they are comfortable with regarding incidents of bullying behaviour which they might suspect or that have come to their attention through their children or other parents.

Incidents of bullying behaviour, no matter how trivial, which are drawn to the attention of a teacher, will be dealt with in the following manner:

The teacher will

1. listen, take notes, reassure the student, ensure the students safety as far as possible, negotiate confidentiality
2. Consult with the class tutor, year head and/or principal

We work to ensure that the person being bully feels safe and secure at all times. Therefore the person being bullied will be asked what they want done about the matter and how they might want it addressed in the first instance.

This may involve a number of different strategies

- Simply asking the bully to stop
 - Speaking to a class group in general about particular issues (If the bully is concerned about their anonymity)
 - Bringing both the bully and the person being bullied together
3. Appropriate personnel will interview all of the students involved in a bullying incident. **(should the person being bullied and their parent so wish)**
 - The alleged victim and alleged perpetrators of the incident will be spoken to and encouraged to solve the problem.
 - The alleged victim and perpetrators will be invited to write down any relevant details and a “Bullying Report Form” will be completed. Written statements from all involved in the incident will be attached to the Report Form.
 - All interviews will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils involved.
 - Records will be kept of all incidents and of the procedures that were followed.
 - The Tutor(s) will be kept informed of all incidents and have access to relevant written records.

The Year Head will monitor progress of students involved in a bullying incident by liaising with tutor and students involved (separately) at follow-up meetings.

- Where the incident is deemed to be minor, a verbal warning will be given to the bully to stop the inappropriate behaviour, pointing out how she is in breach of the Code of Behaviour and trying to get her to see the situation from the victim’s point of view. If deemed appropriate, parents may be contacted. The incident will no longer be considered if there is no recurrence.

- If the behaviour persists, the Year Head and the parents/guardians of the victims and bullies will be informed. Thus, they will be given the opportunity of discussing the matter and are in a position to help and support their children before a crisis occurs. Appropriate sanctions will be imposed. The incident will no longer be considered if there is no recurrence.
- If there is a serious incident, perhaps repeated verbal assault or coercion, the matter should be referred to the Principal, parents will be involved and appropriate sanctions applied.
- Where the incident is deemed to be more serious (e.g. gross misbehaviour or physical assault), the Principal should be informed immediately and she will inform the Board of Management, if necessary.
- Offenders and victims of bullying may be referred to counselling.
- Sanctions may include:
 - A contract of good behaviour
 - School community service
 - Withdrawal of privileges
 - Other sanctions as may be deemed appropriate
 - Suspension
 - Expulsion.
- In the case of a complaint regarding a staff member, this should be referred immediately to the Principal.
- Where cases, relating to either student or teacher, remain unresolved at school level, the matter should be referred to the Board of Management.

In order to appeal a decision, a parent/student may request a review by writing to the Principal.

REVIEW AND EVALUATION OF THIS POLICY

The implementation, monitoring and review of this policy will be done by senior management in conjunction with the staff, parents and the board of management on an ongoing basis. It is envisaged that the policy would be reviewed on a formal basis two years after the date of adoption by the board of management.

Date adopted by the Board of Management 15 June 2010
Date approved by co Galway VEC 21 June 2010

GUIDANCE AND ADVICE

For pupils...

These ideas as to what you can do have been suggested by pupils

If you are being bullied

- tell someone you trust
- remember **you** are not the one with the problem!
- if you can, ignore the bully
- if you can, do not show you are upset
- be assertive, if you can
- walk away quickly and confidently, even if you do not feel that way inside
- your safety is more important than your possessions. If you are in danger, don't hold on to them
- if you are different in some way, be proud of who you are.

Friends

- listen and talk it through
- try to be sensitive
- try not to leave them on their own
- persuade the person being bullied to talk to an adult

Bystanders

- even if you don't take part in bullying but see it and walk away, you are ignoring your responsibilities
- get help
- give sympathy to the person being bullied

WHO TO TELL AND HOW TO TELL

Students should report bullying behaviour to their Class Tutor or any member of staff with whom they feel comfortable by:

- A direct approach to an adult at an appropriate time
- Handing up a signed note e.g. with homework, or in bullying box outside the Guidance office
- Making a phone call to an adult in the school
- Asking a parent/guardian or friend to tell on your behalf
- Reporting in a confidential questionnaire when given in school

FOR PARENTS/CARERS and TEACHERS

Recognising the signs

Someone who is being bullied may

- be frightened of walking to or from school
- insist on being driven to school
- change the route to school
- be unwilling to go to school
- regularly have books or clothes damaged
- have possessions 'go missing'
- continually 'lose' money
- begin doing badly in schoolwork
- have unexplained bruises, scratches, cuts
- ask for money or begin stealing money
- become withdrawn or start stammering
- have noticeable and prolonged changes in mood
- become distressed
- become bad-tempered
- refuse to say what is wrong
- lose appetite, or start overeating
- cry himself/herself to sleep or have nightmares
- attempt or threaten to harm him/herself

For Parents/Carers ...

Any of the behaviour above may indicate other problems. But, if you become aware of and are concerned by any of this behaviour, and think your child is being bullied

- encourage him/her to talk about the problem
- reassure him/her of your support
- try to listen calmly and not overreact
- attempt to find out when and where the bullying takes place. Is there a pattern?
- contact the Class Tutor or Year Head to discuss the problem
- work with the school to support your child within or outside school
- if the bullying takes place outside school, report the matter to the police

For Staff ...

All members of staff, teaching and non-teaching, should deal with any incident of suspected or observed bullying by

- talking to the pupil and giving reassurance
- taking action appropriate at the time
- producing a written statement of what has happened and the action taken
- reporting the incident to the Class Tutor or Year Head

KEY ADVICE TO YOUNG PEOPLE ON CYBER BULLYING

Being sent an abusive or threatening text message, or seeing nasty comments about yourself on a website can be really upsetting. This code gives you seven important tips to protect yourself and your friends from getting caught up in cyber bullying and advice on to how to report it when it does happen.

1) Always respect others

Remember that when you send a message to someone you cannot see the impact that your words or images may have on the other person. That is why it is important to always show respect to people and be careful what you say online or what images you send. What you think is a joke may really hurt someone else. Always ask permission before you take a photo of someone. If you receive a rude or nasty message or picture about someone else, do not forward it. You could be assisting a bully, and even be accused of cyber bullying yourself. You could also be breaking the law.

2) Think before you send

It is important to think before you send any images or text about yourself or someone else by email or mobile phone, or before you post information on a website. Remember that what you send can be made public very quickly and could stay online forever. Do you really want your teacher or future employer to see that photo?

3) Treat your password like your toothbrush

Don't let *anyone* know your passwords. It is a good idea to change them on a regular basis. Choosing hard-to-guess passwords with symbols or numbers will help stop people hacking into your account and pretending to be you. Remember to only give your mobile number or personal website address to trusted friends.

4) Block the Bully

Most responsible websites and services allow you to block or report someone who is behaving badly. Make use of these features, they are there for a reason!

5) Don't retaliate or reply!

Replying to bullying messages, particularly in anger, is just what the bully wants.

Save the evidence

Learn how to keep records of offending messages, pictures or online conversations. These will help you demonstrate to others what is happening, and can be used by your school, internet service provider, mobile phone company, or even the police, to investigate the cyber bullying.

7) Make sure you tell

There are people that can help:

- Tell an adult who can help you to report it to the right place, or call a helpline like ChildLine
- Tell the provider of the service you have been bullied on (e.g. your mobile phone operator or social network provider).
- Tell your school. Your teacher or the anti-bullying co-ordinator at your school can support you and can discipline the person bullying you.
-

Finally, don't just stand there – if you see cyber bullying going on, support the victim and report the bullying. How would you feel if no-one stood up for you?