



LORETO COLLEGE ST STEPHEN'S GREEN **ANTI-BULLYING POLICY**

Introduction

This policy has been developed by the Board of Management of Loreto College St Stephen's Green in co-operation with the school staff, both teaching and non teaching, and in consultation with the parents and students. It is informed by:

- *Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour, 1993,*
- *CircularM33/91: Guidelines towards a positive policy for school behaviour and discipline,*
- The Education Act, 1998
- The Education (Welfare) Act, 2000
- The Equal Status Act, 2000/2004

This policy replaces the previous Anti-Bullying policy. It reflects changes in legislation and school needs and also recognises the school's engagement with the 'Cool School' anti bullying programme.

By involving all members of the school community in the process of agreement on what is meant by bullying and the resultant development of school-based strategies for preventing or dealing with it, is hoped to increase awareness of the problem.

Scope

While it is acknowledged that all members of the school community may engage in or be victim of bullying behaviour this policy applies, in particular to students of Loreto College, St Stephen's Green. It relates to all activities during normal school hours and those beyond school hours school which are deemed to have a direct impact on school life.

Rationale

In the knowledge that no school is immune from bullying it was identified as a priority at this time, by staff, parents and students that strategies for the prevention and management of bullying behaviour be devised. At this school we strive to create the best environment for learning and for the growth and development of each student. As a caring school community, we hold that all cruel and abusive behaviour, which is persistent and pervasive, is unacceptable and repugnant to the ethos of our school. Bullying behaviour, by its very nature, may cause personal psychological harm and damage to the educational process.

Relationship to the Characteristic Spirit of the School

Mission Statement

In an atmosphere of mutual respect and justice, we are a community that aims to provide a rich and diverse curriculum catering for the needs of each individual student. . . . Each student is challenged to realise her full potential and to recognise the dignity of each human being.

This policy has been developed in line with our mission statement which has at its core, care of the student. The school believes that respect for the individual is essential to the smooth running of a school, where effective teaching and learning can take place. The school's ethos is shaped by the philosophy of Mary Ward and this policy is underpinned by her words:-

We should always be on our guard not to speak of the faults of others... Use gentle and kind words because they will have a greater effect than those which are harsh and unkind... We should be as courteous towards each other as if we were strangers, but at the same time as gentle and amiable as we usually are with our close friends

Aims of the Policy

This policy aims

- to raise awareness of bullying as an unacceptable form of behaviour and to establish a high degree of collective vigilance.
- to create an atmosphere of openness which encourages students to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying.
- to ensure that there is no ambivalence with regard to the rights of each student to a safe and secure learning environment
- to ensure that each member of the school community recognises his/her responsibility to protect those rights.
- to develop procedures for reporting and recording incidents of bullying behaviour

Definition of Bullying

Bullying is repeated aggression, verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against others.

Isolated incidents of aggressive behaviour, which should not be condoned, can scarcely be described as bullying. However, when the behaviour is systematic and ongoing it is bullying.

(Dept. of Education and Science Guidelines on Bullying, 1993)

Types of Bullying Behaviour

The following list was compiled in consultation with students and as a result of a specially designated Staff Day. The school community presents these as examples of unacceptable bullying behaviour aware that the list is not exhaustive.

- 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 e-mail, messaging etc.
- Victimisation; including very personal remarks.
- Exclusion and isolation.
- Intrusion through interfering with personal possessions or locker.
- An attack by rumour, gossip, innuendo or ridicule on any individual's reputation.
- Cyber-bullying; unwanted or nasty comments on websites e.g. Bebo or intimidating or harassing phone calls or text messages.

Strategies for Prevention of Bullying

- A full-time chaplain is employed, part of whose duties is to relate to students in a more informal manner thus encouraging disclosure of bullying incidents.
- Each class in the school has a Sixth Year representative. Students who may not feel at ease talking to a teacher about bullying incidents may confide in the representative, who then will inform the relevant Year Head.
- Topics such as belonging and integrating, self management, communication skills, friendship are all covered in the SPHE programme in First, Second and Third Year by the class tutor.
- Outside groups are invited in to school by the Guidance Counsellor and SPHE Co-ordinator to provide workshops and dramatic activity to illustrate the negative effects of bullying e.g. 'Sticks and Stones'.
- This Anti-bullying policy is published in the school journal with an SPHE class dedicated to how to report incidents of suspected bullying.
- A Spirit Week is organised by the Student Council to promote good will and a friendly atmosphere in the school community and a Friendship Week is organised as part of the *Cool School Programme*
- Adequate supervision is provided by staff before school, during morning break, at lunch time and after school. All areas of the school are covered with particular attention given to areas where bullying is more likely to take place.
- Students are strongly encouraged to join in extra-curricular activities particularly in First Year to help foster friendship and integration.
- The school's Caomhnóir has special responsibility for the integration of new students

New Initiatives to begin September 2008,

- New students who join the school in year groups other than First, are allocated a buddy from the same year group to facilitate integration into the new school and prevent them being targeted by bullies.
- The sixth year representatives in their induction programme in September will receive guidance from the Guidance Counsellor on reporting bullying behaviour.

How to report an incident of bullying as a student

A student should report bullying in any way she feels comfortable e.g.

1. Write down her concerns and give it to somebody she trusts
2. Talk to tutor or subject teacher or somebody else she can trust
3. If she feels she cannot do either of the above maybe she ask can her parents/guardians to contact someone in the school

How to report an incident of bullying as a teacher

All suspected bullying incidents should be reported in the first instance to the Year Head on the appropriate section of the Unacceptable Behaviour Report Form

Follow –up Procedures

Stage 1 Consultation

Year Head consults with some or all of the following (the order is not prescribed)

- (a) Staff member reporting the incident
- (b) The students involved
- (c) The Chaplain
- (d) The Guidance Counsellor
- (e) The Tutor
- (f) The Principal
- (g) The Deputy Principal
- (h) A Guardian/Parent

At the end of this process, a decision will have to be made as to whether a genuine case of bullying has occurred, if not, no further action is taken otherwise the Year Head will proceed to the next stage.

Stage 2: Action Taken

Option A – to be used for situations where immediate action can be taken.

- An informal reprimand issued to the student/students against whom the complaints have been made.
- Parents should be informed by phone or letter
- If further action is required, a formal reprimand is issued by the Year Head or Principal/Deputy Principal.

Option B – to be used in more complex situations, where there is no concrete evidence.

- Individuals need to be monitored by parents (if involved), class tutor, lunchtime supervisors etc.,
- Feedback to Year Head to take place as frequently as necessary.
- Students involved may be interviewed individually or collectively by Year Head/Chaplain/Guidance Counsellor/Principal/Tutor.

Students involved in either option A or B may be encouraged to visit the Chaplain or Guidance Counsellor for follow-up.

Stage 3: Further Action

Parents are called in to see the Principal to be informed of their daughter's behaviour.

Stage 4: Sanctions

- at the final stage, as above, appropriate sanctions will be put in place in accordance with the code of Behaviour and at the discretion of the Year Head, Deputy Principal and Principal.

- bullying or intimidation of a very serious nature, even if it is a once off occurrence, will be dealt with as a serious breach of the Code of Behaviour.
- where there is evidence that a student has been bullied over a period of time (even if it stops as a result of reporting) a suitable sanction will be imposed upon the perpetrator as per procedures as outlined followed.

Note

- none of the parties involved in the incidents has the right to discuss them with friends or other students in such a way as to make matters worse for any party involved. Taking away a person's good name is itself a form of bullying and will be treated as such.
- False accusations/reports will be dealt with as a serious offence under the school's Code of Behaviour

Implementation

As the official Anti-bullying Policy of Loreto College, St Stephen's Green, all registered students of the school will have a copy in their school journal and their parents/guardians can download a copy from the school website.

The policy is also available in hard copy from the school upon request.

Amendments to the policy will be communicated to the stakeholders in writing.

When a major review is carried out, the resulting policy will be circulated to all the stakeholders in written form.

Review

The policy will be reviewed one year after its implementation initially.

A major review will be carried out no later than five years after the date of implementation and will involve consultation with the parents, students, staff, management and Board of Management of the school.

Timeframe

This policy was devised in consultation with the students, parents, staff, management and Board of Management of Loreto College St Stephen's Green. The process was begun in September 2006 and the resulting policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 22nd October 2008 and became official school policy on 23rd October 2008

The policy was reviewed in November 2009. A major review is scheduled for 2013.