



LADYSWELL NATIONAL SCHOOL

Anti-Bullying incl. Cyber Bullying Policy

Introductory Statement

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 Ladyswell National School has adopted the following anti-bullying policy within the framework of the school's overall code of behaviour. This policy fully complies with the requirements of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary School's which were published in September 2013.

Rationale

The Board of Management recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of pupils and is therefore fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour:

- Creating a positive school culture and climate which-
 - is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity and respect
 - encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment; and
 - 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 (including awareness raising measures) that-
 - build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and
 - explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, racist, 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); and
- 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. We have defined it in our school as *'Any repeated and deliberate behavior which interferes with the confidence and independence of another person.'*

Isolated or once-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour, including a once-off offensive or hurtful **private** message, 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.

Types of bullying

The following are some of the types of bullying behaviour that can occur amongst pupils:

- **Physical aggression:** This behaviour includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping people. It may also take the form of severe physical assault. While pupils often engage in 'mess fights', they can sometimes be used as a disguise for physical harassment or inflicting pain.
- **Intimidation:** Some bullying behaviour takes the form of intimidation: it may be based on the use of very aggressive body language with the voice being used as a weapon. Particularly upsetting can be a facial expression which conveys aggression and/or dislike.
- **Isolation/exclusion and other relational bullying:** This occurs where a certain person is deliberately isolated, excluded or ignored by some or all of the class group. This practice is usually initiated by the person engaged in bullying behaviour and can be difficult to detect. It may be accompanied by writing insulting remarks about the pupil in public places, by passing

around notes about or drawings of the pupil or by whispering insults about them loud enough to be heard. Relational bullying occurs when a person's attempts to socialise and form relationships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined. One of the most common forms includes control: "Do this or I won't be your friend anymore" (implied or stated); a group ganging up against one person; non-verbal gesturing; malicious gossip; spreading rumours about a person or giving them the "silent treatment".

- **Identity-based Bullying:** Included in this are sexist bullying, racist bullying, homophobic bullying, bullying based on a person's membership of the Traveller community, and bullying of those with disabilities or Special Educational needs.
- **Name calling:** Persistent name-calling directed at the same individual(s) which hurts, insults or humiliates should be regarded as a form of bullying behaviour. Often name-calling of this type refers to physical appearance, e.g., size or clothes worn. Accent or distinctive voice characteristics may attract negative attention. Academic ability can also provoke name calling. This tends to operate at two extremes. There are those who are singled out for attention because they are perceived to be weak academically. At the other extreme there are those who, because they are perceived as high achievers, are also targeted.
- **Damage to property:** Personal property can be the focus of attention for bullying behaviour. This may result in damage to clothing, mobile phones, school materials or personal belongings. The contents of school bags and pencil cases may be scattered on the floor. Items of personal property may be defaced, broken, stolen or hidden.
- **Extortion:** Demands for money may be made, often accompanied by threats (sometimes carried out in the event of the targeted pupil not delivering on the demand). A pupil may also be forced into theft of property for delivery to another who is engaged in bullying behaviour.
- **Cyber-bullying:** This type of bullying is increasingly common and is continuously evolving. It is bullying carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as text, social network sites, e-mail, instant messaging (IM), apps, gaming sites, chat-rooms and other online technologies. Being the target of inappropriate or hurtful messages is the most common form of online bullying. As cyber-bullying uses technology to perpetrate bullying behaviour and does not require face to face contact, cyber-bullying can occur at any time (day or night). Many forms of bullying can be facilitated through cyber-bullying. For example, a target may be sent homophobic text messages or pictures may be posted with negative comments about a person's sexuality, appearance etc.

Cyberbullying behaviours include but are not limited to:

- hurtful posts
- exclusion in online groups
- false reporting
- posting personal information of another
- impersonating via fake/hacked profiles causing harm

Harassment

Although a one-off incident does not constitute bullying, we are aware that a single incident can have a serious effect on a pupil and may also constitute harassment, which is legally prohibited in schools under equality legislation. Harassment is any form of unwanted conduct related to any of the nine discriminatory grounds (gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community). Any cases of harassment will be given serious attention and dealt with within the school Code of Behaviour.

Responsibility for Dealing with Bullying

The relevant teacher for investigating and dealing with bullying is the class teacher. The class teacher may if necessary seek the help of the year head, Principal or Deputy Principal.

Education and Prevention Strategies

School Culture

Ladyswell National is a co-educational, DEIS Band 1 school, with a diverse population. To this end, we strive to create an atmosphere of friendship, respect and tolerance. Children's self-esteem is developed through celebrating individual differences and achievements, acknowledging and rewarding good behaviour and manners, and providing opportunities for success throughout the school. We acknowledge the importance of extra-curricular activities and a wide range of learning activities and approaches in allowing all children to experience success. Our school's Code of Behaviour is based on Discipline for Learning. This focusses on positive behaviour and as a result, allows all children to feel valued.

Pupil Awareness

Teachers discuss the school's anti-bullying policy with the pupils and focus on developing the pupils' awareness and understanding of bullying, including its causes and effects. Teachers use behavioural management strategies which focus on problem solving and enable students to take an active role in finding a solution to problems. Teachers help pupils to develop empathy by discussing feelings and trying to put themselves in the place of others. Teachers may celebrate Friendship Week, or place a specific focus on the importance of kindness and mutual respect with their class, if necessary.

Staff Awareness

Staff at Ladyswell N.S. are aware of the possible detrimental effects of bullying on children's mental and physical health. Therefore, we are vigilant and respond sensitively and caringly to pupils who disclose incidents of bullying, and to those who instigate the bullying. We ensure good supervision and monitoring systems are in place, particularly in hot-spots, such as, corridors and the school yard and at particular times, such as, immediately before and after school and when entering and leaving the classroom and yard. We investigate all incidents of bullying fully.

Curriculum

The formal school curriculum is used to educate all pupils against bullying behaviour. Opportunities for preventative education may arise through Religious Education, the SPHE

Programme, Stay Safe Programme, Walk Tall programme, RSE Programme, Weaving Well-being (Senior Classes), and Friends Programmes. Web Wise resources are used to educate the children about cyberbullying. The HSCL Teacher organises cyberbullying talks for parents. Circle Time may be used as a suitable methodology for class discussions around friendship, feelings, bullying, etc.

More Vulnerable Pupils

Vulnerable groups include pupils with disabilities or special educational needs, those from ethnic minority and migrant groups, pupils from the Traveller community, lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) pupils and those perceived to be LGBT and pupils of minority religious faiths. We prioritise inclusion of all children within our school. We put a lot of focus on development of language and social skills among children with additional needs so that they can build friendships, feel included, and have the confidence and skills required to recognise and report bullying. We make a special effort to include some of our more vulnerable children in extra-curricular activities, committees, jobs, etc. to show that they are valued and can experience success.

Parent Awareness

The anti-bullying policy is communicated to parents via the school journal. We ask all parents to sign this every year to ensure awareness.

Parents receive communication from the school while the Stay Safe programme is being taught so that they can discuss any relevant issues with their child.

The HSCL Teacher regularly organises cyberbullying awareness talks for parents.

When a parent/guardian reports a bullying incident, they are listened to and receive feedback when the issue has been investigated. The parents of both the victim and the perpetrator are made aware of the situation, and given advice regarding supporting their child.

Parents of incoming Early Start and Junior Infant pupils are invited to a meeting at which we ask the parents to:

- Encourage positive behaviour and discourage negative behaviour both at home and at school.
- Discuss appropriate online-behaviour with their children and monitor access.
- Encourage children to solve difficulties without resorting to aggression.
- Encourage children to share, to be kind, to be caring, and to be understanding towards others.
- Watch out for signs and symptoms that their child is being bullied or is bullying others.
- Look for unusual behaviour in their children. For example, they may suddenly not wish to attend school, feel ill regularly, or not complete work to their normal standard
- Not dismiss their instincts as being wrong

- Always take an active role in their child's education. Enquire how their day has gone, who they have spent their time with, how lunch time was spent etc.
- Discuss the school's anti-bullying policy with her/him.
- Inform the school IMMEDIATELY if they feel their child may be a victim of bullying behaviour. The complaint will be taken seriously and appropriate action will follow.
- Tell their child there is nothing wrong with him or her. It is not his or her fault that they are being bullied
- Support the school in its efforts to prevent and treat bullying.

Procedures for Dealing with Bullying

Investigating an Incident

- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. In that way pupils will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It should be made clear to all pupils that when they report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.
- Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), caretakers must be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher.
- Parents and pupils are required to co-operate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving any issues and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved as quickly as possible.
- It is very important that all involved (including each set of pupils and parents) understand the above approach from the outset.
- Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents.
- Incidents are generally best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.
- All interviews should be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this way. When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher should seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This should be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner.
- If a group is involved, each member should be interviewed individually.
- Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that they may face from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher.
- It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s).

Discipline Steps

In order to assist in the prevention of bullying in our school, the Stay- Safe lessons will be taught each year. To ensure the safety of each child it is essential that all children are encouraged to report any incident of bullying to a responsible adult. All investigations / interviews will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights and privacy of all pupils concerned. Minor issues will be dealt with immediately and major issues will proceed according to the Disciplinary steps.

The children will also be taught the following steps which will be implemented in the case of a bullying incident.

As per school discipline policy, class teacher will have recorded incidences in pupil's journal as they occur.

If class teacher observes a pattern of three incidents of bullying behaviour the following steps should be implemented.

Step 1

Teacher will talk to each of the children involved separately. The incident/s will be noted in the perpetrator's journal and the class teacher will keep a separate record of the event. Letter 1 of the Anti- Bullying policy will be sent home, and signed by parent / guardian. Parents / guardians of the victim will be informed by the class teacher that the issue is being dealt with in accordance with the Anti-Bullying policy.

Step 2

Should another incident arise involving the same perpetrator, Letter 2 of the Anti-Bullying Policy will be sent home by the Year Head (teacher who supports class teachers at each level). Parents / guardians will be invited to meet the Year Head to discuss the behaviour and will be given a copy of the schools Anti-Bullying Policy. Class teacher will communicate with the parents/guardians of the victim to outline the steps that have been taken to date.

Step 3

If a further incident arises, the Principal/Deputy Principal will meet with parents/guardians of the child who is bullying with a view to supporting them to change their child's behaviour.

Step 4:

If the child's behaviour continues, the Principal / Deputy Principal, class teacher and parent/guardian of the child who is bullying will meet the Chairperson of the Board of Management in order to provide further support. If issues are not progressing satisfactorily, it may lead to Suspension/ Expulsion according to the N.E.W.B. Guidelines.

Record Keeping

If it is established that bullying has taken place, the relevant teacher must keep appropriate written records (stored in the Black Book). If teachers find it helpful the headings from Appendix 1 can be used when recording the incident(s). Follow-up should also be recorded e.g. Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased, whether any issues between the parties have been resolved, whether the relationships between the parties have been restored, whether the pupils are receiving ongoing support or any feedback received from the parties involved.

In cases where the relevant teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days, the teacher must fill in a *Record of Serious or Ongoing Bullying*. (see Appendix 1)

In cases where the teacher believes that the bullying incident is particularly serious, he/she can also fill in the *Record of Serious or Ongoing Bullying*.

A copy of the completed form must be given to Principal/Deputy Principal, and the original stored by the relevant teacher in the Black Book.

Serious instances of bullying behaviour, in accordance with the *Children First* guidelines, should be referred to Túsła and/or Gardaí as appropriate.

Procedures for Appeal

Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents will be referred to the school's complaints procedures. In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school will advise the parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for children.

Supports for Pupils Affected by Bullying

If bullying is suspected we talk to the suspected victim, the suspected bully and any witnesses. If any degree of bullying is identified, the following action will be taken:

Help, support and counselling will be given, as is appropriate, to both the victims and the bullies.

We support the **victims** in the following ways:

- by offering them an immediate opportunity to talk about the experience with their class teacher, or another teacher if they choose.
- by informing the victims' parents/guardians.
- by offering continuing support when they feel they need it.
- by arranging for them to be escorted to and from the school premises or allowing senior pupils to leave early.

- by following the disciplinary steps outlined above to prevent more bullying.

We also discipline, yet try to help the **bullies** in the following ways

- by talking about what happened, to discover why they became involved.
- by informing the bullies' parents/guardians.
- by continuing to work with the bullies in order to get rid of prejudiced attitudes as far as possible.
- by following the disciplinary steps described above to prevent more bullying.

Where appropriate, follow up meetings with the relevant parties may be arranged with a view to repairing relationships/forming friendships. This can have a therapeutic effect for all of the pupils involved.

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 behaviour 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.

Evaluation

The effectiveness of this policy will be reviewed periodically.

The *Record of Serious or Ongoing Bullying* form (Appendix 1) for recording and reporting serious or unresolved bullying to the school Principal or Deputy Principal will be a valuable and readily accessible source of data in relation to bullying behaviour in the school. Data gathered from these reports will collated and analysed at least once in every school year with a view to monitoring levels of bullying behaviour and identifying any particular issues that require attention or any significant trends in behaviour. A record of this analysis will be retained and made available to the Board of Management. Appropriate responses to any issues identified will be drawn up and implemented.

A survey will be conducted of pupils, staff and parents in Term 2 of the school year (2024/25), and every 5 years thereafter, to evaluate the policy, and to ensure all behavioural trends are covered by it. Results from both this survey and the analysis and responses mentioned above will be discussed at a staff meeting, shared with the Board of Management, and made available to parents, upon request.

Oversight

At least once in every school term, the principal must provide a report to the Board of Management setting out:

1. The overall number of bullying cases reported by means of the Appendix 1 form since the previous report to the Board and
2. Confirmation that all cases referred to at 1 above have been or are being, dealt with in accordance with the school's anti-bullying policy and the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

Ratification and Implementation

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 21st September 2023 and was implemented from 22nd September 2023. It has been made available to school personnel and published on the school website. It is readily accessible to parents and pupils on request. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

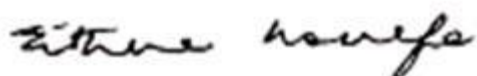
Review

This policy and its implementation was reviewed and ratified in September 2024 and will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year.

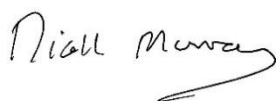
Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to the patron, school personnel and published on the school website. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Signed on behalf of the Board of Management by:

Chairperson: Eithne Woulfe



Principal : Niall Murray



Date: 11/09/2024

- Ratified by the Board of Management
- Staff notified of review at staff meeting
- Parents notified of review
- Published on school website

Appendix 1: Record of Serious or Ongoing Bullying

Name of pupil being bullied				Teacher		Class & Room			
Name/s of pupils engaging in bullying behaviour				Teacher		Class & Room			
Name of person(s) who reported the bullying concern				Date reported					
This person is (please tick)									
The pupil concerned	<input type="checkbox"/>	Another pupil	<input type="checkbox"/>	Parent	<input type="checkbox"/>	Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (Please Specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Location of incident(s)									
Classroom		Corridor			Toilets				
Yard		Entering/Leaving School			Other				
Type of bullying behaviour (please tick)									
Physical Aggression			<input type="checkbox"/>		Cyber-bullying		<input type="checkbox"/>		
Damage to Property			<input type="checkbox"/>		Intimidation		<input type="checkbox"/>		
Isolation/Exclusion			<input type="checkbox"/>		Malicious Gossip		<input type="checkbox"/>		
Name Calling			<input type="checkbox"/>		Other (Please Specify)		<input type="checkbox"/>		
Where behaviour is regarded as identity-based bullying, indicate the relevant category									
Homophobic		Disability/SEN		Racist		Membership of Traveller community	Other (Please Specify)		
<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Brief description of the bullying behaviour and its impact									
Details of actions taken and by whom									
Signed (Teacher)					Date				
Signed (Principal/Deputy)					Date				