

# **St Laurence O'Toole's GNS**

## **Anti-Bullying Policy**

### **1.1 POLICY STATEMENT:**

Every child has a right to pass safely through childhood, and to an education free from fear and intimidation.

### **1.2 DEFINITION**

As our school sees it, bullying is when an individual (or group), for one reason or another, hurts or upsets another individual (or group). Bullying may take the form of deliberately saying or doing unpleasant or nasty things; hitting, kicking, threatening or excluding another individual (or group). Bullying is a repeated action and is carried out by an individual (or group) over a period of time and through one or more media. A once off fight or disagreement is not bullying nor is it necessarily bullying when two individuals (or groups) of about the same strength quarrel or fight.

1.2.2 Our School Community accepts the definition of bullying presented above. The School Community accepts that definitions may vary, but all definitions have the underlying theme of wilful, conscious and intentional aggression which may be of a physical or psychological nature by a stronger individual or group (though not necessarily physically stronger) on an individual or group over a period of time.

1.2.3 Our School Policy will also consider Sexual Harassment; Adult bullying, Racial bullying, Adult - Child and Adult -Adult bullying, bullying in the workplace, Bullying of or by Children with Special Educational Needs.

1.2.4 Our School Community recognizes that it is not bullying when a teacher has made a fair and just comment on a student's work or, after investigating an alleged wrong doing in accordance with school procedures, finds it necessary to discipline a child in accordance with the discipline policy of the school

### **1.3 OBJECTIVES**

- St Laurence O'Toole's GNS will endeavour to keep the anti-bullying policy alive through an active process of consultation whereby all the constituted groups within the school Community will be consulted prior to any proposed change in the school policy. The teaching staff will have the responsibility for the preparation of any amendments to the policy on bullying comment
- The Board of Management through the Principal of St Laurence O'Toole's GNS will have the responsibility for the implementation of this policy.
- This policy will be given to all parents in the school as a matter for public record. It will be displayed on the school website and will be available through the school office.
- Given the different perspectives on bullying which may exist within the school community, as far as practicable, St Laurence O'Toole's GNS will maintain an 'open door' approach to the reporting of bullying.. Any comments on the anti-bullying policy from any representative group within the school community will be considered by the Board of Management.

St Laurence O'Toole's GNS will endeavour to create a supportive ethos which will break down the culture of secrecy and create a telling school.

- St Laurence O'Toole's GNS will endeavour to provide a multi-level approach, to counter bullying.

- St Laurence O’Toole’s GNS undertakes to inform all who use the school of its anti-bullying policy.

### **1.3.1 RATIONALE**

- St Laurence O’Toole’s GNS accepts that it is everyone’s responsibility to report incidents of bullying to the school authorities, and that those employed in St Laurence O’Toole’s GNS are obliged to act on any such disclosures.
- St Laurence O’Toole’s GNS accepts that parents are expected to cooperate with staff on bullying issues, and that the staff acts in good faith when dealing with bullying behaviour.
- St Laurence O’Toole’s GNS accepts that bullying must be intentional and directed, and that the victim must experience a degree of intimidation due to this behaviour. St Laurence O’Toole’s GNS also recognizes that there are different forms of aggression which do not necessarily constitute bullying but will be dealt with under the discipline code. It is everyone's responsibility to report incidents of bullying to the school authorities.
- St Laurence O’Toole’s GNS accepts that those employed in St Laurence O’Toole’s GNS are obliged to act on any reported incident(s) of bullying.

St Laurence O’Toole’s GNS accepts that bullying may focus on the more vulnerable members of school and society, who are perceived as being different in some respects: this may include being physically, culturally, emotionally or academically different from other pupils

St Laurence O’Toole’s GNS recognises that there are different forms of bullying and that individuals may fall into different categories of bullies and victims. These types include: Bully/victims; anxious bullies, passive victims, colluding victims and false victims. Different approaches may be required in dealing with these categories.

Similarly, St Laurence O’Toole’s GNS accepts that a variety of bullying behaviours exist and that different approaches may be employed to deal with these.

St Laurence O’Toole’s GNS is aware that there are different forms of aggression which do not necessarily constitute bullying but will be dealt with under the Code of Discipline.

St Laurence O’Toole’s GNS recognises that children with Special Educational Needs may have a greater involvement in bullying, as bully and/or victim, than mainstream children. Special measures, which may not be described in this policy, may be required to deal with these children,

St Laurence O’Toole’s GNS accept that this policy will be reviewed regularly see below.

## **ANTI-BULLYING POLICY**

### **1.1 ROLE OF PATRON**

- To ensure the policy is in keeping with the ethos of the school.

To support the Board of Management in their role in the implementation of the policy

### **1.2 ROLE OF THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT**

- To approve the policy
- Ensure Policy is reviewed as required and at regular intervals
- To support the Principal and staff in implementing the policy.
- To support and fund training of staff in the area of anti-bullying.
- To ensure all parents joining the school, receive a copy of the Anti-Bullying School

Policy.

- To provide the physical infrastructure to make school environment a more child-friendly place.
- To provide for the health and safety of all those using its premises.

### **1.3 PARENTS**

- Parents will be supplied with information regarding bullying and what to do about it, and will be invited to report any suspicions to the class teacher or principal.
- The genuine concern of teachers for the child should be accepted. Any information regarding the involvement of the child in bullying will be communicated to the parent. Parents are asked to accept this information in good faith.
- Parents will be invited to devise and implement, with the class teacher, a plan of action regarding the involvement of their child in bullying. The plan would relate to action that would be taken by both the teacher and the parent.
- Parents are asked that when in the presence of their child, they will fully support any policy decisions relating to behaviour, discipline and bullying about which they have previously been consulted. If they need to question decisions, this will be done privately with the class teacher.
- Parents should acknowledge the unique role that both they and the teachers hold.
- Parents should acknowledge the different relationships which both they and teachers have with the child.
- Parents are asked to respect the need for confidentiality in all discussions re incidents of bullying.

### **1.4 TEACHERS**

- Teachers should acknowledge and respect the unique role that both they and parents hold.
- Teachers should acknowledge the different relationships which both they and parents have with the child.
- Teachers must respect the need for confidentiality when they are dealing with parents or children who are involved in bullying, notwithstanding the professional obligations of the teacher.
- Teachers should acknowledge the importance of the parent - teacher partnership; they will particularly recognise the needs of those parents whose children are involved in bullying.
- Teachers should acknowledge the right of all children to a fair hearing.

### **1.5 CHILDREN**

- All children will be encouraged to respect the rights of others.
- Bystanders will be encouraged to report any instances of bullying that they may be aware of.
- Children should tell their class teacher and parents when they are unhappy.
- Children should find private time and report instances of bullying to the class teacher.
- Children should stay within sight of staff during break times.

### **1.6 STRATEGIES for Dealing with Bullying**

The following support systems may be employed when dealing with various forms of bullying:

- Mediation

- Peer mediation
- Peer mentoring
- No Blame Approach
- Method of shared concern
- Social skills training
- Behavioural counselling
- Curricular approach i.e. Multi-Denominational Education Programme (MDEP), Social, Personal Health Education (SPHE), Circle Time, Quality Circle Times (QCT's)
- Thematic Approach
- Outside Supports may be engaged, when necessary, to assist in tackling bullying.

## **2.0 POSSIBLE SIGNS OF BULLYING**

Parents and teachers must be aware of possible signs that an individual may have some involvement in bullying, be it as victim or bully; these may include:

- Deterioration in school performance.
- Damage to personal belongings.
- Change in mood of individual e.g. may become withdrawn and may develop a stammer or display loss of confidence.
- Phantom illness.
- Requests for money.
- Individual may refuse to say what is wrong.
- Individual may give improbable excuses.
- Self-harm.

### **2.1 PARENTS SHOULD ASSESS:**

If their child is a bully.

Possible indicators include that your child may be a bully:

- Child may be sullen.
- May have violent outbursts.
- May not be able to account for money or possessions.
- May be acting differently.

### **2.2 Parents should assess if their child may be a victim.**

Possible indicators include:

- May be reluctant to go to school. This is not to be confused with school phobia.
- May be unable to explain why some of his/her belongings are missing or damaged.
- Change in behaviour – quiet or withdrawn.

### **2.3 BEFORE COMING TO SCHOOL IT IS ADVISED THAT:**

Parents consider any factors at home which may have coincided with the onset of behavioural difficulties.

### **2.4 IF YOU THINK YOUR CHILD IS A VICTIM OF BULLYING:**

It may be useful to consider the following questions before coming to the school.

Answer the following questions before coming to school:

- What happened to the child?
- How often?
- Who is responsible?
- When did the bullying take place?

- Where did the bullying take place?
- Did your child report this?
- To whom was it reported?
- Who told you (parent) about this bullying?
- What are the signs that something is wrong?
- Is your child anxious about anything else?

### **2.5 IF YOU THINK YOUR CHILD IS A BULLY:**

It may be useful to consider the following questions before coming to the school.

Answer the following questions before coming to school:

- Who is your child bullying?
- What does your child do to this person?
- When does it happen?
- Where does it happen?
- How long has it been going on?
- How did you get to know of it?
- Has anyone reported it to the school?
- Why do you feel that he or she is involved?
- Is your child witnessing bullying behaviour at home or in the community?
- Parents should record full details and inform the school.

### **2.6 ON APPROACH TO THE SCHOOL**

All incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported will be investigated and recorded.

The contact person in the school (usually the class teacher) will:

- Attend to the safety needs of the victim.
- Acknowledge what the person says
- Listen actively and record factual information
- Will use a standardized reporting form.
- Follow agreed procedures.

### **2.7 INVESTIGATION/REPORTING OF ALLEGED BULLYING**

The contact person will

- Step 1 – Interview with the bullied pupil.
- Step 2 – Arrange a meeting for all those involved. (i.e. victim, bully)
- Step 3 – Explain the problem.
- Step 4 – Share responsibility.
- Step 5 – Identify solutions.
- Step 6 – Let the pupils take action themselves.
- Step 7 – Meet them again.

### **2.8 STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING THE BULLY**

At the initial meeting with the bully the teacher will:

- Define the problem.
- Decide on a course of action.
- Involve her in designing a programme to change this behaviour.
- The child may be involved in drafting reasonable sanctions which will be used if he/she continues to bully.
- Parents do not necessarily have to be involved at this stage.

The teacher involved will file a copy of this programme signed by the child concerned and parent, if deemed necessary.

### **2.8.1 IF THE BULLYING PERSISTS**

If the bullying persists and involves the same individuals or if the bully bullies other individuals St Laurence O'Toole's GNS will:

- Interview those involved in bullying – bystanders and others.
- The victim(s) will record the events in writing.
- The bully will record the events in writing.
- The teacher will record their discussions with the pupils.
- The teacher will record their discussions with the both parents.
- These reports will be kept on file.
- The parents of the children will be obliged to respond in writing.

A behavioural contract will be drawn up and agreed by the bully and/or victim. This contract will be signed by the teacher, parent and the bully and if necessary the victim. This contract will specify the sanction to be imposed if this contract is broken.

### **2.9 SANCTIONS:**

May range from a written exercise, missing out on a school activity, to suspension and in extreme cases expulsion. Please refer to the school Code of Discipline.

### **3.0 The 'No Blame Approach' may be employed for dealing with 'Bully Gangs'**

- The victims will be met separately; the victims will give an account of what happened.
- Every member of the 'gang' will be interviewed- and they will write down what happened.
- It will be agreed with every member of the gang separately what is expected of him/her and discussed how he/she has broken school guidelines.
- The 'gang' will be interviewed as a group. As a group each member will state what happened. It will be necessary to ensure that everyone is clear about what has happened.
- Strategies will be decided which involve children in solving the problem e.g. method of shared concern (see below) no blame approach.
- False excuses or redefinition of incident will not be accepted.
- If there is serious injury to an individual the board will decide on whether to suspend or expel the bully concerned. This is covered under rules for National School No. 130 as included in Circular 20/90.
- Serious injury may require Garda or other intervention.

### **3.1 DEALING WITH THE VICTIM**

It may be necessary to find out what type of victim the pupil is..; ie Is he/she a classic victim (not responsible) or a provocative victim (responsible)? The victim will be encouraged to find ways in which they can improve the situation.

If the victim is a provocative victim then he or she needs to realise that their own behaviour is contributing to the bullying behaviour.

STAGE 2 Follow up meetings. (individual meetings)

STAGE 3 Group meeting.

#### **3.1.1 Assertiveness Training for Victims and Other Groups**

The aim of this is to allow opportunities for pupils to explore alternative strategies appropriate to the particular bullying situations they currently face or of previous situation which they would have preferred to have handled differently.

Victims may be identified through surveys of school records. Boys and girls may be separated. This training may deal with:

- Use of body language i.e. non victim body language.
- Assertive techniques.
- How to respond appropriately to difficult situations.
- Resisting manipulation and threats.
- Responding to name – calling.

How to enlist support.

- Remaining calm in stressful situations.
- Boosting of self esteem.
- How to be positive about oneself.
- How to stand up for oneself.
- Maintaining assertive behaviour.
- The role of bystanders, the responsibilities of bystanders to help change behaviours.

If it is the view of the principal that the child would benefit from professional counselling then they will be referred to the appropriate outside agencies

### **3.2 DEALING WITH BULLYING OF A NEW CHILD TO THE SCHOOL**

Given that a new child to the school might be more vulnerable to bullying or has a history of involvement in bullying the school may:

- Require parents/guardians to forward all documentation, regarding their previous placement.
- Contact the previous school or institution attended by the child (with parental consent).
- With parental consent, contact any other body that may have had an involvement with the child in question.

### **3.3 SPECIAL NEEDS**

All Teachers and parents need to be aware that, children with special educational needs (which includes children with learning, behavioural and emotional difficulties) tend to have greater involvement in bullying as victims and are more likely to bully others. The child with special educational needs may have a heightened sensitivity and may over react to certain situations.

These situations will be addressed according to the Special Education Needs programme or Individual Education Programme of the children concerned. In so far as is appropriate for the individual child, policy procedures will be adhered to.

### **4.0 SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

Sexual Harassment among school children:

The distinction between sexual harassment and general unacceptable behaviour is not clear and the invisibility of sexual harassment will continue unless children can name it and challenge it directly.

Sexual Harassment is:

- Inappropriate touching.
- Use of derogatory names, insults or sexist jokes.
- Sexist graffiti.
- Bringing sexist materials into the school.
- Sexist comments or innuendo through any media.
- Ridicule of an individual on the basis of stereotypes.
- Inappropriate comments of a sexual nature.

Homophobic Bullying is:

- Use of derogatory names, insults or homophobic jokes.
- Homophobic graffiti.
- Bringing homophobic materials into the school.
- Homophobic comments or innuendo through any media.
- Ridicule of an individual on the basis of stereotypes.

The Response:

- Raise awareness.
- Follow procedures for monitoring and evaluation (as above).
- Reporting – as in guidelines for bullying.

School needs to deal with sexual harassment whenever it occurs and deal with assumptions about sexuality in the curriculum and structures of the school.

## **5.0 RACIAL HARASSMENT/BULLYING**

Racial Harassment is:

- Physical assault because of colour, ethnicity or nationality.
- Use of derogatory names, insults or racist jokes.
- Racist graffiti.
- Provocative behaviour such as wearing racist badges or insignia.
- Bringing racist materials into the school.
- Verbal abuse or threats.
- Incitement of others to behave in a racist way.
- Racist comments in the course of a discussion.
- Attempts to recruit others to racist organizations and groups.
- Ridicule of an individual for cultural differences e.g. food, music, dress etc.

Refusal to co-operate because of a person's colour, ethnic origin or nationality.

The Response

The school will follow the procedures as outlined above (3.2)

## **5.1 LOCATION OF BULLYING e.g. THE YARD**

- Most bullying in schools takes place in the yard. The school staff will at all times be vigilant for any signs of bullying.
- All accessible areas will be patrolled during break time.
- The school community will endeavour to provide activities for children during break time.
- On the last meeting of the year the staff will evaluate improvements made to the general school environment.
- Children will be surveyed as regards any improvements required.
- Any suggestions will be considered in the first staff meeting of the following term.
- St Laurence O'Toole's GNS will encourage the children to become involved in the design stage of any development of the school environment.

## **6.0 ADULT/CHILD BULLYING i.e. TEACHER/CHILD**

Such a complaint may be made by a parent or significant adult against a teacher. In this case please refer to agreed procedures. These procedures are outlined in the school booklet and on the St Laurence O'Toole's GNS website. Any allegation of bullying by a teacher of a child will be taken seriously by the school and acted upon under the St Laurence O'Toole's GNS Communication Policy.

## **7.0 BULLYING IN THE WORKPLACE**

Where there is an allegation of bullying between a teacher and the principal, a teacher and a teacher, a teacher and a member of the Board of Management or the principal and a teacher and/or a member of the Board of Management the 'Working Together Document' agreed between the Managerial Bodies and the I.N.T.O. will apply.

Any non-teaching staff may use this approach when dealing with alleged bullying but will be advised at the appropriate stage to seek advice from their representative body.

### **7.1 Bullying between Members of Staff and Members of the School Community**

St Laurence O'Toole's GNS Communications Policy outlines the steps to be taken in the event of a parent wishing to raise an issue with a teacher. This procedure is an agreed one at national level between the teachers' union and the management bodies and is recognised and supported by the Department of Education & Science. There is no parallel procedure in the event of a teacher wishing to raise an issue with a parent.

Teachers are entitled to: expect that this procedure will be respected and that they will not be subjected to criticism in any forum or other public assembly. This includes situations where a teacher may not be explicitly named but is clearly identifiable due to the context of the discussion. The school community understands that the committee of any constituted group within the school community is responsible for the conduct of its members during any meetings/talks they organise. It is the responsibility of the chairperson/acting-chairperson to ensure the proper conduct of meetings. St Laurence O'Toole's GNS recognizes that repeated breaches of this procedure may represent bullying.

Parents are entitled to: confidentiality with respect to all discussions they hold with teachers. They are entitled to expect (notwithstanding the professional responsibilities of the teacher) that this confidentiality will not be breached, including in circumstances where although a parent is not explicitly named, they are clearly identifiable. St Laurence O'Toole's GNS recognizes that repeated breaches of confidentiality may represent bullying.

## **8.0 Inspectorate**

It is expected that inspectors will familiarize themselves with all school policies. If a teacher should have difficulty with an inspector then that teacher should follow the agreed procedures.

## **9.0 Teacher and Parent**

A member of staff who feels that excessive and unreasonable demands are being placed on him/her by a parent or parents of a child in St Laurence O'Toole's GNS, this may include constant meetings being called, teacher having to repeatedly account for actions or curricular decisions, might feel that he or she is being bullied. Similarly if a teacher feels the he or she is constantly being monitored or is being undermined and that their professionalism is constantly being questioned then he or she may feel that he or she is being bullied.

- This should be referred to the Principal.
- The parent should be informed that he or she should follow agreed procedures as outlined in the communication's policy of St Laurence O'Toole's GNS.
- It is school policy that probationary and substitute teachers when meeting a parent or parents in a formal setting may have a senior member of staff in attendance.

## **10.0 DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION WILL BE THROUGH:**

- School Newsletter
- Information Booklet on the school
- Anti-Bullying Week
- School website
- Referred to in talks to parents

The Anti-Bullying Policy will be posted on the Website. Procedures for the reporting of bullying will be printed regularly in the Newsletter. Posters will be posted in prominent locations around the school. Reference will be made to the policy at all parent information nights. Anti-bullying week will take place every year in the first term. The Parents Association will inform members of this policy.

## **11.0 INFORMATION ON AND AVENUES FOR THE REPORTING OF ALLEGED BULLYING**

The school will provide avenues for the Reporting of bullying behaviour. A Bully box will be placed in a prominent place in the school. These boxes will be checked daily and any reports will be distributed to the relevant teacher. All notes must be signed and will be verified.

Bystanders who report witnessing bullying will not be named unless prior permission is granted but will be noted.

Children may approach any member of the Staff to report bullying concerns. This will be noted in the Bullying File.

Children or parents may write a note in the homework journal or letter. This note will be photocopied and filed.

The parent or guardian may contact the school by either ringing or requesting a meeting with the class teacher. A note of this communication will be filed. The parent will have to follow-up this call by writing an account describing what happened.

The Principal will be informed of any bullying identified.

### **11.1 How does the school provide opportunities for the reporting of bullying?**

- The THOUGHT BOX.
- Through the peer mentoring scheme.
- Letters or phone call to the teacher and or principal.

All reports of bullying will be recorded in writing.

## **12.0 TACKLING OF BULLYING THROUGH THE CURRICULUM**

The aim of curricular intervention is:

- To help children develop an awareness of what happens in social situations and to provide practice in the skills needed to cope effectively.
- To heighten the self-esteem of children by providing opportunities to improve their relationship with others.
- To encourage pupils to formulate positive goals.
- The subject of bullying will be dealt with through the Social Personal and Health Education and Multi-Denominational Education Programme.
- Efforts will be made to include material in various subject areas which will deal with the theme of bullying.
- Circle time, quality circles, role plays etc., will be employed to explore the theme of bullying and to identify approaches to dealing with various situations that students may find themselves in.

- In a situation where chronic bullying has been identified, intensive curricular intervention may be employed.

### **13.0 ANTI-BULLYING WEEK**

An Anti-Bullying Week will take place every year.

### **14.0 ANNUAL BULLYING SURVEY**

The Annual Bullying Survey will take place prior to Easter.

### **15.0 DATE FOR REVIEW**

This policy will be reviewed in 2009.