

Larne High School



Policy statement

In relation to

Anti-bullying

January 2024

1.Introduction

1.1 The school requires an Anti- Bullying Policy to meet its statutory duties under the *Education and Libraries (NI) Order 2003*

1.2 Mission Statement

‘Larne High School provides a secure, happy learning environment where everyone is valued, respected and committed to working together to achieve success in preparation for a changing world.’

Our Mission Statement makes clear that bullying is entirely contrary to the values and principles we in this school work and live by. All members of the school community have a right to work in a secure and caring environment. They also have a responsibility to contribute, in whatever way they can, to the protection and maintenance of such an environment.

1.3 Principles underpinning the Policy

1. Pupils have a right to learn free from intimidation and fear.
2. The organisation of the school positively supports the maintaining of a caring community which promotes tolerance, mutual respect, courtesy, thoughtfulness and kindness.
3. The school seeks to ensure a high degree of collective vigilance in order to minimise opportunities for bullying behaviour and to create an ethos that the school will not tolerate bullying behaviour.
4. Members of the school community should be aware of the
 - types and causes of bullying behaviour;
 - signs of bullying behaviour; and
 - established procedures for dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.
5. Established procedures are followed where the school has been alerted to possible bullying behaviour incidents.
6. The school seeks to create and maintain a climate where pupils, parents and staff feel confident that any complaints of bullying behaviour are taken seriously.
7. The school seeks to ensure that any complaints of bullying behaviour are dealt with promptly, consistently, sensitively and, where possible, discreetly.
8. Parents are made aware of the school’s anti-bullying policy.
9. A close working partnership between home and school is encouraged in the prevention, detection and elimination of bullying behaviour.
10. The school provides support and counselling for both the pupil experiencing bullying behaviour and the child who is displaying bullying behaviour.

1.4 Links with other School Safeguarding Policies

The policy is linked to the school’s Pastoral Care, Child Protection, Sustaining Positive Behaviour and Internet policies and the Pupil Code of Conduct.

The Anti-Bullying Policy seeks to create a safe and caring environment in which effective teaching and learning can take place and all pupils are given the opportunity to develop to their full potential.

2. THE AIMS OF THE POLICY AND DEFINITION OF BULLYING

2.1 Larne High School is a closely knit community in which everyone is entitled to equal rights, opportunity, respect and worth. The aim of our anti-bullying policy is to clarify for students, staff and parents that bullying is totally unacceptable. In Larne High School, we wish to encourage an environment where independence is celebrated and individuals can flourish without fear. We believe that every student has the right to be safe and happy in school and to be protected from bullying. In order to fulfil these objectives, this school adopts a strong and active anti-bullying stance.

In practice, this means that we aim:

- to ensure understanding of what constitutes bullying behaviour;
- to stop bullying behaviour taking place;
- to ensure that pupils, staff and parents are aware of the school's Anti-bullying Policy;
- to create an environment where pupils feel safe to report incidents of bullying behaviour;
- to ensure a suitable and consistent response to all reported incidents of bullying behaviour.

2.2 Definition of bullying

The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016

This new legislation provides a common definition of bullying; requires all schools to centrally record incidents of bullying, their motivation and their outcome; and requires the Board of Governors collectively to take responsibility for the development, implementation, monitoring and periodic review of the school's Anti-Bullying policies and procedures.

Definition of Bullying

The Act contains a non-exhaustive definition of 'bullying' which applies only to pupil to pupil bullying, i.e. bullying behaviours by a pupil or a group of pupils against another pupil or group of pupils.

The definition includes 3 key elements:

- Non-limitation to repeated behaviours
- Methods of bullying
- Intention to cause harm

'Bullying includes but is not limited to the repeated use of any verbal, written or electronic communication, any other act or any combination of those, by a pupil or group of pupils against another pupil or groups of pupils, with the intention of causing physical or emotional harm to that pupil or group of pupils.' Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016

The following list is **not exhaustive** but bullying behaviour can take forms such as:

1. **Physical:** pushing, kicking, hitting, punching, use of items as a weapon and any other forms of violence, or threats of the same.
2. **Verbal:** name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours about a pupil or their family, insults, persistent teasing, jokes, abusive or threatening notes/social media messages/phone calls.
3. **Emotional:** tormenting, humiliating, socially excluding, spreading rumours, manipulating situations, belittling another pupil's abilities and achievements.
4. **Sexual propositioning:** unwanted physical contact, abusive comments, sexting, or vulgar gestures.
5. **Prejudicial:** taunts, graffiti or gestures based on race, way of speaking, appearance, disability, religion, political views or sexual orientation.
6. **Damage to property or theft:** clothing, school books or other personal property may be hidden, damaged or stolen.

7. **Cyber:** use of technology to harass, threaten, embarrass or target. Cyber bullying can occur anytime, anywhere, the audience can be large and involved quickly and the scale of consequences of actions can be unintentional.

3. PROCEDURES

A pupil who reports an incident of bullying or a pupil who is being bullied must be listened to, taken seriously and assured that the matter will be dealt with. It is desirable that a pupil who reports he/she has been bullied should not have to tell his/her 'story' more than once. However, depending on the circumstances, the pupil may have to repeat his/her account in the course of investigating the matter.

The teacher (or member of support staff) to whom the bullied pupil speaks first is, therefore, responsible for ensuring that the pupil is highlighted to the TiC responsible for Anti-bullying. The TiC for Anti-bullying is responsible for ensuring that the information is recorded on SIMS and also the Bullying Concern Assessment Form.

A member of the school's support staff who is informed of, or who witnesses an incident of bullying behaviour must take immediate action to stop the bullying behaviour if necessary and report the matter to the TiC Anti-bullying.

A teacher, who is informed of, or who witnesses an incident of bullying behaviour must record the information on SIMS and the Bullying Concern Assessment Form and inform the TiC Anti-bullying.

The school will report back fully and promptly, to any parent who has raised with the school a concern about bullying behaviour.

Consistency of approach when dealing with bullying behaviour is important. All teachers should, therefore, follow the steps outlined below.

3.1 Staff responsibility

All Staff, teaching and non-teaching, have a collective responsibility to be alert to signs of bullying behaviour and to listen carefully if a child reports that he/she is unhappy due to the attitude and behaviour of others. Identifying and managing bullying behaviour is different from other disciplinary situations and requires sensitive handling. When bullying is reported to school by a parent the complaint should be investigated promptly and thoroughly, and responded to within a promised number of working days. Where the complaint is made in writing, the school should always respond in writing, even if this is to confirm a conversation.

3.2 Advice to Non-teaching Staff

If you witness bullying taking place or if an incident of bullying is reported to you, you should take immediate action to stop the bullying if necessary and report the matter to the TiC Anti-bullying.

3.3 Advice to Teaching Staff

All the following steps should be taken.

- Listen to the pupil reporting bullying/the pupil who is being bullied and assure him/her that the matter will be dealt with.
- Assure the pupil being bullied that he/she is being taken seriously, is not being blamed for the situation and will be kept involved in the solution.
- Record the pupil's account, using SIMS behaviour management and Part 1 of the Bullying Concern Assessment Form.
- This information must be passed on to the HOY before the end of the school day.

3.4 Year Head

- Read any notes given to you and ensure that confidentiality is respected in relation to them.
- Reassure the pupil experiencing the bullying behaviour that the problem is being addressed.
- Complete the assessment of Part 1 of the Bullying Concern Assessment Form.
 1. If the criteria are met and it is deemed that bullying behaviour has occurred, inform the TiC Anti-bullying. Await response from TiC Anti-bullying with advice on how to monitor the situation.
 2. If the criteria are not met, record the details in the Behaviour Incident section of SIMS. Refer to the Positive Behaviour Policy of the school and continue to track and monitor to ensure the behaviour does not escalate.
- Support the pupil experiencing bullying behaviour and offer him/her the option of counselling.
- If appropriate, use the 'No Blame Approach' with the child displaying behaviour and help him/her to realise that his/her behaviour is unacceptable.
- Keep records of the matter securely and ensure that confidentiality is respected in relation to it.
- Contact a parent/guardian for each pupil involved.

3.5 TiC Anti-bullying

- Plan to meet the child within 24 hours of receiving the referral
- Complete part 2 and 3 of the Bullying Concern Assessment Form.
- Clarify a time-line of intervention so that the pupil knows what to expect and identifying a named individual staff member who will follow-through with the child.
- Contact parents, either by telephone or in person, to discuss the situation and share the time-line.
- Ensure the interview and time-line are documented.
- In additions to administering sanctions to those responsible for bullying behaviour, it will be necessary to work with these pupils to try to help them change their unacceptable behaviour. Bullying behaviour should be treated in the same way as any other behavioural difficulty and addressed through the 3 stages of the Code of Practice. Depending on the circumstances, it may be necessary to move directly to Stage 1 and discuss the matter with the SENCO and put a behaviour programme in place to address the behavioural problems of the pupil displaying the bullying behaviour.
- Since research has shown that a high proportion of bullies were themselves, or remain, the victims of abuse, the school must consider whether the Child Protection procedures for the child displaying bullying behaviour need to be instigated.
- Counselling can be offered in school to the child who has experienced bullying behaviour and/or the child who displays bullying behaviour.
- Relevant professional such as the EWO or the Educational Psychologist may be contacted or a child's name put forward for consideration at a Care Team Meeting.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 Board of Governors

The Board of Governors is responsible for the formulation, implementation, operation and review of the Anti-Bullying Policy and associated procedures.

The Designated Governor will take the lead responsibility for the Anti-Bullying policy and procedures.

The Board of Governors delegates the responsibility for the day-to-day operation of the policy to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and staff of the school.

4.2 School staff will:

- foster in our pupil's self-esteem, self-respect, and respect for others.
- demonstrate by example the high standards of personal and social behaviour we expect of our pupils.
- discuss bullying behaviour, so that every pupil learns about the damage it causes to both the child and the child exhibiting bullying behaviour, and the importance of telling a teacher about bullying behaviour when it happens.
- be alert to signs of distress and other possible indications of bullying behaviour.
- listen to children who have been bullied behaviour, take what they say seriously and act to support and protect them.
- report suspected cases of to the appropriate member of staff, e.g. TiC Anti-bullying;
- follow up any complaint by a parent about bullying behaviour, record the information on SIMS and complete the Bullying Concern Assessment Form and report back promptly and fully on the action that has been taken.
- deal with observed instances of bullying behaviour promptly and effectively, in accordance with agreed procedure.

4.3 Pupils of this school should:

- refrain from becoming involved in any kind of bullying, even at the risk of incurring temporary unpopularity.
- intervene to protect the pupil who is being bullied, unless it is unsafe to do so.
- report to a member of staff any witnessed or suspected instances of bullying, to dispel any climate of secrecy and help prevent further instances.

4.4 Anyone who becomes the target of bullies should:

- not suffer in silence but have the courage to speak out, to put an end to their own suffering and that of other potential targets.

4.5 Parents should:

We ask our parents to support their children and the school by:

- watching for signs of distress or unusual behaviour in their children, which might be evidence of bullying.
- advising their children to report any bullying to their form teacher, year head or indeed any member of staff and explain the implications of allowing the bullying to continue unchecked, for themselves and for other pupils.
- advising their children not to retaliate violently to any form of bullying.
- being sympathetic and supportive towards their children and reassuring them that appropriate action will be taken.
- keeping a written record of any reported instances of bullying.
- informing the school of any suspected bullying, even if their own children are not involved.
- co-operating with the school if their children are accused of bullying, try to ascertain the truth and point out the implications of bullying, both for the children who are being bullied and the bullies themselves.

4.6 Everyone should:

- work together to combat and, hopefully in time, to eradicate bullying.

4.7 Preventive Measures

- Development of an 'Anti-bullying working group'
- Deployment of a Senior Teacher with responsibility to promote anti-bullying
- The creation of a 'Telling', 'Listening' and 'Responding' environment.
- Awareness raising measures such as assemblies
- School Council
- Participation in 'Anti- Bullying' week (NIABF)
- Publicity around the school, eg. posters, homework diaries
- Use of a post box (in Pupil Support room and library)
- Counselling and 'anger management' provision
- Care Team meetings
- Behaviour Support
- Identification and management of 'hot spots'
- Peer support – the assignment of senior pupils/prefects to Year 8 classes
- Classroom management
- Curriculum – content within Citizenship, Personal Development, Learning for Life and Work, English (e.g. work arising from reading the novel 'Buddy' in Year 9).
- Every teacher needs to focus on fostering self-confidence and self-esteem: in every pupil, in every lesson, every day.

4.8 What to do if you are experiencing bullying behaviour-

- Tell someone you can trust, e.g. a parent, a teacher, any member of staff e.g. classroom assistant, lunchtime supervisor, a friend or a relative. Do not keep it to yourself. Remember that your silence is the bully's greatest weapon.
- If the person you tell does not believe you, do not give up - tell someone else.
- If you feel the need, ask a friend to come with you to talk to an adult, or ask your friend to talk to an adult on your behalf.
- Always be honest - do not exaggerate. If anything you say is untrue, then people may doubt your whole story.
- Tell yourself that you do not deserve to experience this behaviour and that it is wrong. The person(s) acting in this way need to change - not you.
- Be proud of who you are. It is good to be individual.
- Try not to show that you are upset - a person displaying bullying behaviour thrives on someone's fear.
- Stay with a group of people if you are anxious about being alone. There is safety in numbers.
- Try being assertive. Walk away and go straight to someone you trust - a friend, a teacher or member of staff.
- You could call CHILDLINE (Tel. 0800 1111) or use their online support at www.childline.org.uk. They provide a 24-hour confidential counselling service for young people in trouble or in danger. Calls are free and do not show up on your phone bill.

You will be taken seriously and every effort will be made to stop this bullying behaviour.

5.ADVICE TO PARENTS

5.1 Introduction

The school is committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all pupils so that they can learn in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. Bullying behaviour of any kind is totally unacceptable and has no place in the school.

Everyone has the right to feel safe in school, and on the way to and from school.

A close, working partnership between home and school is encouraged in the prevention, detection and elimination of bullying behaviour.

5.2 Recognising possible signs in a pupil experiencing bullying behaviour

A child may indicate by his/her behaviour that he/she is experiencing bullying behaviour. If your child shows some of the following signs, bullying behaviour may be occurring, and you may want to ask if someone is displaying bullying behaviour towards them.

Children may;

- be frightened of walking to or from school,
- change their usual routes,
- not want to go on the school bus,
- beg you to drive them to school,
- be unwilling to go to school (they may even be school-phobic),
- feel ill in the mornings,
- begin truanting,
- begin to do poorly in their school work,
- come home regularly with clothes or books destroyed,
- come home starving (lunch has been taken)
- become withdrawn, start stammering, lack confidence,
- become distressed and anxious; stop eating,
- start self-harming or attempt or threaten suicide,
- cry themselves to sleep; have nightmares,
- repeatedly "lose" their possessions and/or money,
- ask for money or begin stealing money (to pay someone),
- refuse to say what is wrong (too frightened to explain physical injuries),
- have unexplained bruises, scratches, cuts,
- begin to bully other children or siblings,
- become aggressive and unreasonable, or
- give improbable excuses to explain any of the above.

5.3 What to do if you are concerned your child may be experiencing bullying behaviour

If you are worried about your child

- do not ignore the problem.
- encourage your child to talk to you about his/her feelings - tell your child that you are always willing to listen, and that you want to help and support him/her whatever the problem is.
- take whatever your child says seriously and find out exactly what has been going on.
- try not to over-react, even if you are furious - it may frighten your child into silence, and children who are experiencing bullying behaviour should be encouraged to talk, not retreat.
- do not promise to keep the information secret, but reassure your child that you will help him/her sort out the problem.

- be positive and reassure him/her that the bullying behaviour is not his/her fault and make sure that he/she feels protected.
- discuss possible ways of changing the situation, and try to minimise opportunities for bullying behaviour
- advise your child not to resort to the same tactics as the child who is displaying the bullying behaviour since that can make matters worse.
- build up his/her self-confidence with plenty of praise and affection. Encourage him/her to do something he/she is particularly good at.
- encourage your child to develop new hobbies or interests which may lead to a supportive group of friends, both in and out of school.
- take any threats of suicide or other desperate pleas seriously and seek help-better safe than sorry. Young people sometimes go to extremes if they are miserable. It is vitally important that the school is made aware of any such circumstances. Any information given in this regard will be treated in the strictest confidence.
- try to sort out the issue at first as quietly and constructively as possible.

If your child is experiencing cyber- bullying:

- get them to show you the messages and tell you at once if anything new happens.
- tell them never to respond to cyber-bullying or to abusive texts or the like
- make sure they only use moderated chatrooms
- tell them that bullying behaviour usually stops once they tell other people
- if bullying behaviour starts in a chatroom, tell them to leave, inform you and the moderator.
- tell them to never give out contact details or photographs of themselves on websites/ chatrooms.

In addition, report your concerns to the school, giving opportunity and time for the school to explore the concern fully and respond appropriately:

1. Contact the Head of Year immediately and discuss the problem. If necessary, request a meeting and provide detailed background information. Your complaint will be taken seriously and appropriate action will follow.
2. Arrange a follow-up appointment with the Head of Year to discuss both the results of any investigations, and the outcomes
3. Try to give the situation time to change.
4. If there is no improvement, make an appointment to see the Senior Teacher (Pastoral). If you feel that the alleged bullying incident is very serious, you may wish to speak to the Principal at the outset.

5.4 What to do if your child is displaying bullying behaviour

If you learn that your child is displaying bullying behaviour

- Try to stay calm.
- Try not to become angry and defensive.
- Ask exactly what your child has been doing.
- Ask if he/she has behaved like this before.

Talk to teachers, and to other parents. The more you can find out about what has been going on, the easier it will be to work out why your child has been displaying bullying behaviour, and what can be done about it. It is in their best long-term interest and that of the child who is experiencing bullying behaviour that the issue is dealt with. The school will support in this process.

5.5 Helping your child to stop bullying behaviour

- Ask your child if he/she can explain what has happened, and why - try not to be too judgmental at this point.
- Reassure your child that you still love him/her - it is his/her behaviour you disapprove of.
- Try to ascertain the nature, frequency and duration of the bullying behaviour.
- Talk with your child and find out if there are ways you can work together to stop his/her behaviour.
- Explain that the bullying behaviour must stop, and that the situation may become worse if it does not.
- Explain how frightening the bullying behaviour is for the victim, and try to encourage empathy.
- Work out a way for your child to make amends for the bullying behaviour
- Tell your child that you know he/she can change the bullying behaviour. Give your child the confidence to try to change.
- Look for good behaviour from your child and praise it when it occurs. Create opportunities for him/her to shine.
- Set limits. Stop any show of aggression immediately, and help the child find other, non-aggressive ways of reacting.
- Explain that getting away from a situation where he/she can feel himself/herself losing his/her temper, or things getting out of hand, is not weakness. It is a sensible way of ensuring that the situation does not get worse.
- Try to spend as much time with your child as you can, especially listening to his/her concerns. Sometimes children bully other children as a way of getting attention.
- Make it clear that you do not accept bullying behaviour, and that there will be consequences at home, such as loss of privileges, if the bullying does not stop.
- Talk to the school staff. Explain that your child is making an effort to change his/her behaviour. Ask what ideas they have to help.

Parents can help by controlling their own aggression, and by making it clear that any kind of bullying behaviour is always unacceptable.

The school provides support and counselling for both pupils who are subject to bullying behaviour and to those who display bullying behaviour.

6. APPLICATION

The School will support this anti-bullying policy by:

6.1 Using teaching methods which encourage co-operative work and a variety of groupings so that pupils extend their relationships beyond a small group of friends.

6.2 Dealing with the topic of bullying, in a way which explores why it happens and gives alternative ways of behaving and dealing with difficulties. This topic will be covered in assemblies, as part of the Learning for Life and Work Programme and during Anti-Bullying Week (usually November).

7. REVIEW & EVALUATION

7.1 This Policy will be reviewed and evaluated annually by the Safeguarding Team in consultation with the school Pastoral team and pupils.

Policy Review Date: August 2022