



GORT COMMUNITY SCHOOL
POBALSCOIL GHORT INSE GUAIRE

GORT
CO. GALWAY
IRELAND

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY



1. 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 Gort Community 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 Schools* which were published in September 2013.

2. 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:

- A positive school culture and climate which
 - is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity;
 - 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, 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.

3. 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.

The following types of bullying behaviour are included in the definition of bullying:

- deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying,
- cyber-bullying and
- identity-based bullying such as homophobic bullying, racist bullying, bullying based on a person's membership of the Traveller community and bullying of those with disabilities or special educational needs.

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

Negative behaviour that does not meet this definition of bullying will be dealt with in accordance with the school's code of behaviour.

Additional information on different types of bullying is set out in Section 2 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

4. The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying is (are) as follows: (see Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):

In the first instance, the relevant Yearhead will take responsibility for investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying. The relevant supporting Deputy Principal may become involved if necessary.

5. The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyberbullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying) that will be used by the school are as follows (see Section 6.5 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):

Gort Community School recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on students. Gort Community School is fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing bullying.

Gort Community School promotes a positive school culture and climate which:

- is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity
- encourages students to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment; and
- promotes respectful relationships across the school community

Gort Community School has effective leadership which supports a school culture and climate that celebrates difference. The Principal and other leaders in Gort Community School, including all teachers strive to engender an ethos under which bullying is unacceptable. They will also ensure that steps are taken to challenge and respond to bullying. The Principal and teachers will act as good role models and will not misuse their authority. They will be fair, firm, clear and consistent in their disciplinary measures.

Our school-wide approach to bullying involves all members of the school community, school management, staff, parents and students. Other members of the community, who come into contact with students on a daily basis, will be encouraged to play a role in assisting Gort Community School to counter bullying behaviour by reporting such behaviour to parents or to the school.

Gort Community School will ensure that all relevant members of the school community understand what constitutes bullying behaviour as set forth in this policy and its impact. The policy will be published on our school website www.gortcs.com, provided to the Parents' Association and a summary will be published in the students' School Journal.

Gort Community School implements education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that:

- build empathy, respect and resilience in students; and
- explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular homophobic and transphobic bullying.

The following action is taken:

- The school has an Anti-Bullying Code displayed on the inside of each classroom door.

The Charter reads as follows:

"Every student has the right to be happy in school during their class and leisure time.

- *Our school community does not accept any unkind actions or remarks by pupils to students even if these actions or remarks are not intended to hurt.*
 - *Students should support each other by not being afraid to report instances of bullying to their class tutor or to any staff member.*
 - *Be certain that all such reports whether by word of mouth or in writing will be treated in the strictest confidence.*
 - *Students must be able to go to and from school and attend school in safety.*
 - *Students must not be subjected to physical or verbal abuse, intimidation, ridicule or sexual harassment. Students must not be deliberately isolated.*
- Information on bullying and its effects are dealt with through programmes such as C.S.P.E., S.P.H.E., Religious Education etc. In this context, the programmes explicitly deal with the issue of identity-based bullying, in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.
 - The issue of cyber-bullying is addressed in IT classes where the focus is on educating students on appropriate online behaviour, how to stay safe while on-line and also on developing a culture of reporting any concerns about cyber-bullying
 - The issue of bullying is addressed on a regular basis at all year group assemblies and at meetings with class captains and vice-captains.
 - The Student Council address the issue on an on-going basis especially with first year students.
 - Anti-bullying posters, including LGBT posters, are displayed throughout the school.
 - The school has an excellent pastoral care system in place. The members of this team include the deputy principal, chaplain, career guidance counsellor, special needs coordinator and a class teacher.

- Students are encouraged to discuss any incident of bullying with the class tutor or another trusted adult within the school. This is considered to be responsible behaviour.
- Parents are encouraged to contact the class tutor or Year Head regarding incidents of bullying behaviour which they may suspect, or which may have come to their attention.
- Bullying is addressed in the school Code of Good Behaviour Section 13.

Particular account is taken of the needs of students with disabilities or with SEN, and this policy links up with other relevant school policies and supports to ensure that all the services that provide for such students work together. Approaches to decreasing the likelihood of bullying for students with SEN include improving inclusion, focusing on developing social skills, paying attention to key moments such as transitioning from primary to post-primary and cultivating a good school culture which has respect for all and helping one another as central.

An effective system of supervision and monitoring of pupils is in place in Gort Community School, both to prevent and deal with bullying behaviour.

Bullying is addressed on a regular basis at staff meetings. Teachers are advised on what to look out for and on the procedures for dealing with a suspicion or report of bullying. Supports provided enable staff to recognise bullying, implement strategies to for preventing bullying and intervene effectively when appropriate. A copy of our anti-bullying policy is available to all staff members.

6. The school's procedures for investigation, follow-up and recording of bullying behaviour and the established intervention strategies used by the school for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour are as follows (see Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):

Gort Community School has a system in place for the recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour. The members of the teaching staff who have responsibility for investigating and dealing with bullying are referred to as 'relevant teachers'. In Gort Community School the relevant teachers are the Year Heads.

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

- The primary aim for the relevant teacher in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame).
- In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved.

- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. It is 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), bus drivers, caretakers, cleaners are 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 take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents.
- Incidents are generally investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.
- All interviews are 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 seeks answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This is 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 is interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved are met as a group. At the group meeting, each member is asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements.
- Each member of a group is supported through the possible pressures that they may face from the other members of the group after being interviewed by the teacher.
- Those involved may be asked to write down their account of the incident(s).
- In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved are contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken. The school will give parents an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports for their pupils.
- If it is established by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher must keep appropriate written records which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.
- Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it will be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts will be made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied.
- It will also be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parents) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parents and the school.

- Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved will be arranged separately with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date if the pupil who has been bullied is ready and agreeable. This can have a therapeutic effect.
- While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the relevant teacher will use his/her professional judgement in relation to the records to be kept of these reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same.
- In cases where the relevant teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has **not** been adequately and appropriately addressed within **20** school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, it will be recorded by the relevant teacher in the recording template at **Appendix 1**. The relevant teacher will retain the completed template and provide a copy to the Principal/Deputy Principal. The Board of Management of Gort Community School will ensure that the school has clear procedures for the formal noting and reporting of bullying behaviour. All records will be maintained in accordance with relevant data protection legislation.
- In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant teacher will, as part of his/her professional judgement, take the following factors into account:
 - Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased
 - Whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable
 - Whether the relationships between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable
 - Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the school Principal or Deputy Principal.
- 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, as appropriate, 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 must advise the parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.
- In cases where a school has serious concerns in relation to managing the behaviour of a pupil, the advice of the National Education Psychological Service (NEPS) may be sought.
- Serious instances of bullying behaviour will, in accordance with the Children First and *the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, be referred to the HSE Children and Family Services and/or Gardai as appropriate. The *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* also provide that where school personnel have concerns about a child but are not sure whether to report the matter to the HSE, the Designated Liaison Person must seek advice from the HSE Children and Family Social Services.

7. The school's programme of support for working with students affected by bullying is as follows (see Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):

Where appropriate Gort Community School will refer students affected by bullying for counselling, either within the school or with an external agency. This will be done in consultation with the parents/guardians. Opportunities may also be provided for the student(s) to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop friendships and social skills and thereby build resilience whenever this is needed. Gort Community School also recognises that students involved in bullying behaviour need assistance on an ongoing basis. For those with low self-esteem, opportunities will be provided to increase feelings of self-worth. These students may need counselling to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others. Counselling will be provided in the school or with an external agency, in consultation with the parents/guardians. Students who observe incidents of bullying behaviour will be encouraged to discuss them with a teacher.

8. Supervision and Monitoring of Students

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.

9. 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.

10. This policy was reviewed by the Board of Management on 13/12/2023

11. This policy has been:

- made available to school personnel,
- published on the school website and
- provided to the Parents' Association.


A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

12. This policy and its implementation 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 school personnel, published on the school website (or where none exists, be otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parents' Association (where one exists). A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Signed: 
(Acting Chairperson Board of Management)

Date: 13/12/2023

Signed: 
Principal, Secretary board of Management

Date: 13/12/2023

Date of next review: December 2024

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Template for recording bullying behaviour

1. Name of student being bullied and class group

Name Class

2. Name(s) and class(es) of student(s) engaged in bullying behaviour

Names **Class**

3. Source of bullying concern/report(tick relevant box(es))*

Student concerned
Other student
Parent
Teacher
Other

4. Location of incidents

(tick relevant box(es))*

Playground
Classroom
Corridor
Toilets
School Bus
Other

5. Name of person(s) who reported the bullying concern

6. Type of Bullying Behaviour (tick relevant box(es))*

Physical Aggression	Cyber-Bullying
Damage to Property	Intimidation
Isolation/Exclusion	Malicious Gossip
Name Calling	Other (specify)

7. Where behaviour is regarded as identity-based bullying, indicate the relevant category:

Homophobic	Disability/SEN related	Racist	Membership of Traveller Community	Other (specify
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8. Brief description of the bullying behaviour and its impact

9. Details of actions taken

Signed: _____ (Relevant Teacher) **Date:** _____
Date submitted to the Principal/Deputy Principal _ _ _ _ _

Note: The categories listed in 3,4, & 6 are suggestions and may be amended.

Appendix 2 - Checklist for annual review of the anti-bullying policy and its implementation

The Board of Management (the Board) must undertake an annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation. The following checklist must be used for this purpose. The checklist is an aid to conducting this review and is not intended as an exhaustive list. In order to complete the checklist, an examination and review involving both quantitative and qualitative analysis, as appropriate across the various elements of the implementation of the school's anti-bullying policy will be required.

	Yes/No
1. Has the Board formally adopted an anti-bullying policy that fully complies with the requirements of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools?	Yes
2. Has the Board published the policy on the school website and provided a copy to the parents' association?	Yes
3. Has the Board ensured that the policy has been made available to school staff (including new staff)?	Yes
4. Is the Board satisfied that school staff are sufficiently familiar with the policy and procedures to enable them to effectively and consistently apply the policy and procedures in their day to day work?	Yes
5. Has the Board ensured that the policy has been adequately communicated to all pupils?	Yes
6. Has the policy documented the prevention and education strategies that the school applies?	Yes
7. Have all of the prevention and education strategies been implemented?	Yes
8. Has the effectiveness of the prevention and education strategies that have been implemented been examined?	Yes
9. Is the Board satisfied that all teachers are recording and dealing with incidents in accordance with the policy?	Yes
10. Has the Board received and minuted the periodic summary reports of the Principal?	Yes
11. Has the Board discussed how well the school is handling all reports of bullying including those addressed at an early stage and not therefore included in the Principal's periodic report to the Board?	Yes
12. Has the Board received any complaints from parents regarding the school's handling of bullying incidents?	No

13. Have any parents withdrawn their child from the school citing dissatisfaction with the school's handling of a bullying situation?	No
14. Have any Ombudsman for Children investigations into the school's handling of a bullying case been initiated or completed?	No
15. Has the data available from cases reported to the Principal (by the bullying recording template) been analysed to identify any issues, trends or patterns in bullying behaviour?	N/A
16. Has the Board identified any aspects of the school's policy and/or its implementation that require further improvement?	No
17. Has the Board put in place an action plan to address any areas for improvement?	N/A

Signed: 
Acting Chairperson, Board of Management

Date: 13/12/2023

Signed:  Date: 13/12/2023
Principal, Secretary to the Board of Management

Appendix 3 - Notification regarding the Board of Management's annual review of the anti-bullying policy

To: The stakeholders of Gort Community School

The Board of Management of Gort Community School wishes to inform you that:

- The Board of Management's annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation was completed at the Board meeting of 13/12/23
- This review was conducted in accordance with the checklist set out in **Appendix 4** of the Department's *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

Signed: 

Date: 13/12/2023

Acting Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed: 

Date: 13/12/2023

Principal, Secretary to the Board of Management