

Lusk Community College

Anti-Bullying Policy

(Adopted by the Board of Management on 01/07/2013)

Non-bullying School Ethos:

Lusk Community College is committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe learning environment for all our students, staff, parents and visitors. Bullying is unacceptable and will not be tolerated in our school community.

Rationale:

“Bullying behaviour can have a serious impact and potentially tragic consequences for children and young people, families, school communities and wider society.” *Action Plan on Bullying 2013*

Our Anti-Bullying Policy strives to guide and support students. It is expected that the relationships between students and between students and staff are based on mutual respect, trust, caring and consideration for others resulting in a highly motivated learning environment. Every student has a right to an education free from fear and intimidation. The purpose of this policy is to protect that right. Bullying will not be tolerated in Lusk Community College. All staff, students and parents will know what the school policy on bullying is and what they should do if bullying arises. There is a whole school/community approach to bullying behaviour in our school. The school community includes parents, students, staff and Board of Management.

Scope:

The Anti-Bullying Policy applies to the bullying of students, staff or visitors to Lusk Community College and should be observed while in school, while travelling to and from school and while attending any school activity including trips, sporting and cultural events. This policy was formulated taking cognisance of the Department of Education and Skills Anti-Bullying Guidelines including “Action Plan on Bullying” 2013, “Well-being in Post-Primary Schools” 2013, “Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post-Primary Schools” 1993 and Circular M33/91.

Definition of bullying

According to *Action Plan on Bullying 2013* “Bullying can include deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying; cyber bullying and identity-based bullying (specifically including homophobic bullying, transphobic bullying, racist bullying and bullying of those with disabilities or special educational needs). “

The term bullying also encompasses (1) harassment and (2) sexual harassment, defined as follows:

(1) **Harassment:** any form of unwanted conduct in relation to any of the nine grounds named in the equality legislation that has the purpose or effect of violating a person’s dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading or offensive environment for the victim. The nine grounds are gender, civil status, family status, age, disability, sexual orientation, race, religion and membership of the travelling community.

(2) **Sexual Harassment:** any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading or offensive environment for the victim.

Lusk Community College is prepared to respond appropriately to both repeated and once-off incidents, including the misuse of social media.

“Bullying is not a problem schools can solve alone. Bullying behaviour is a complex social issue and can take place anywhere children and young people are together.” *Action Plan on Bullying 2013*. “It is clear that parents and other adults who interact with children and young people, in formal and informal settings, have a huge role to play in preventing bullying and also in supporting children and young people who are: being bullied, have bullied someone else or have witnessed someone being bullied.” *Action Plan on Bullying 2013*

Types of Bullying

Your behaviour is considered to be intimidating and/or of a bullying nature when for example, but not limited to:

- ◆ You deliberately exclude or isolate another student by making or writing insulting remarks about them anywhere on the students personal or school property or any communal student area e.g. toilets, notice boards. This is also done through texts, nasty web postings, emails, and instant messages.
- ◆ You say/write unpleasant comments to/about another person e.g. name calling, being sarcastic, spreading rumours, teasing, making sexually abusive comments or gestures.
- ◆ You push, hit, kick and/or threaten another student, trip another student, make any physical contact or use any form of violence, severe or in any other way, against another student.
- ◆ You take or damage another student's property, demand or extort another student's money; or coerce another student into doing the same.
- ◆ You use very aggressive body language toward another student. This could take the form of a particular tone of voice or a facial expression, which conveys aggression and/or dislike towards another student.
- ◆ You use abusive and/or anonymous telephone messages, Internet websites, text messages or MMS messages to intimidate another student.
- ◆ You use persistent name-calling or you 'slag' another student by making very personal remarks about them, which are hurtful, insulting or humiliating e.g. another student's physical appearance, voice, character, academic ability, sexual orientation, race, religion, where they live, social background or nationality.
- ◆ You attempt to intimidate or abuse any school personnel. This includes teachers, substitutes, Special Needs assistants, cleaning staff, office staff, caretakers and visitors.
- ◆ You prevent another person from participating fully in any school activity.
- ◆ You engage in cyber bullying using any form of technology.
- ◆ You engage in sexual bullying.
- ◆ You engage in identity based bullying (specifically including homophobic bullying, transphobic bullying, racist bullying and bullying of those with disabilities or special educational needs.

This list is not exhaustive.

Any of the above, whether spoken, written or in cyber-space will be regarded as bullying behaviour.

Procedures for Noting and Reporting an incident of Bullying Behaviour

1. All reports of bullying will be noted, investigated and dealt with by the Principal or teachers. In that way it is hoped that students will gain confidence in 'telling'.
2. When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, teachers will refer cases to the Guidance Counsellor and/or Year Leader and /or Principal. The staff member will meet both parties individually to discuss the matter and to seek possible solutions. An attempt will be made to get the perpetrator to see the situation from the target's point of view. A written record of the incident will be placed in the files of all students involved. (If a group is involved, each member will be interviewed individually and then will be met as a group.)
3. If the perpetrator is involved in a further incident it will be referred to the Principal for further consideration.
4. If it is concluded that he/she has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it will be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the Code of Positive Behaviour. His/her parents or guardians will be informed and a meeting arranged.
5. The parents of the target will be informed in the first instance, and kept informed during the process.
6. Follow up meetings by the Guidance Counsellor will be arranged with the two parties involved separately with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date if the target is ready and agreeable. This can have a therapeutic effect.
7. Where possible the necessary counselling provision will be made within our school for both parties. Referrals will be made when appropriate.

In certain cases, however, it may be necessary to invite the assistance of other local persons and formal agencies such as general medical practitioners, Gardaí, HSE with their social workers and community workers.

Our anti-bullying school policy also embraces those members of the wider school community. They are encouraged to play a positive role in assisting our school to counter bullying behaviour by reporting such behaviour to parents and/or schools as appropriate.

Sanctions

Students are aware that if they are involved in bullying the following will happen:

1. They will be warned to stop immediately. A record will be placed in their file by the Year Leader or Principal.
2. If a further incident occurs involving the perpetrator the student will be referred to the Year Leader or Principal.
3. Their parents will be informed and the student may be sent home until a meeting with the parents and the Year Leader or Principal is arranged
4. More serious sanctions ranging from suspension to exclusion will apply to students who engage in continual serious bullying incidences

Preventative Strategies:

The following preventative strategies will be put in place in Lusk Community College:

- the whole school, including students, parents / guardians and teachers will be involved in the on-going formation of the school's Anti-Bullying Policy.
- on admission to the school students sign an anti-bullying agreement and are informed about the School's Anti-Bullying Programme
- the open and easy access to the Guidance Counsellor will play a significant role in preventing bullying in this school

- A Friendship Week will be organised by the staff and students each year during which an Anti -Bullying Workshop will be given to all years by the Guidance Counsellor. A Confidential Questionnaire will be administered to students. This questionnaire will be designed to identify and then help any students having problems with bullying. Parents will be invited to an Anti-Bullying information evening that will be organised annually and this will happen, where possible, during the Friendship Week.
- the school's Anti-Bullying Policy will be circulated to new staff members in Lusk Community College and training in procedures given to staff periodically.
- Our Anti-Bullying Policy is given to the student in the Student Journal and is discussed with students by staff at least once a term in SPHE and RE Classes. It is addressed with students as part of the Pastoral Care system in the school (e.g. Guidance Counsellor, Class Teachers, Tutors, Year Leaders and Principal).

OUR STAFF MEMBERS SHARE A COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY, UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE PRINCIPAL, TO ACT IN PREVENTING BULLYING/AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR BY ANY MEMBER OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY.

Anti-Bullying Agreement

I understand fully and agree to abide by the Anti-Bullying Policy.

I am aware that:

- A record of incidents will be kept
- Procedures as described in our anti-bullying Policy will be followed
- Everyone involved in bullying will receive help
- Students who bully will be subject to sanction

I understand no one has the right to:

- Hurt another person physically or emotionally
- Threaten or intimidate another person
- Deliberately exclude or isolate another person

Signature of Student _____

Date _____

Signature of Parent(s)/Guardian(s)/Carer(s) _____

Date _____

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Effects of Bullying

Signs and Symptoms of Bullying

A student may indicate by signs or behaviour that he/she is being bullied. Staff and parents must be aware of these possible signs and they should make enquiries if a student :

- Is frightened of walking/taking the bus to or from school
- Begs to be driven to school
- Changes his/her usual routine
- Is unwilling to go to school
- Begins truanting or educational performance declines
- Becomes withdrawn, anxious or lacking in confidence
- All of a sudden starts stammering, withdrawing, has nightmares, has difficulty in sleeping, cries frequently, is not eating, is vomiting or bedwetting.
- Attempts or threatens suicide or runs away or unexplained changes either in mood or behaviour. It may be particularly noticeable before returning to school after weekends or more especially after longer school holidays.
- Cries himself/herself to sleep at night.
- Feels ill in the morning or patterns of physical illnesses (e.g. headaches, stomach aches) develop.
- Comes home with clothes torn and /or books or property damaged.
- Has possessions that go ‘missing’ Asks for money or starts stealing money.
- Has lunch or other monies continually ‘lost’
- Has unexplained cuts or bruises
- Comes home starving perhaps because lunch money is stolen
- Becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- Is bullying other students or siblings
- Is frightened to say what’s wrong
- Gives improbable excuses for any of the above
- These signs and behaviour could indicate other problems, but bullying will be considered a possibility and will be investigated.

Appendix 2 – Effects of Bullying

Effects of Bullying

Students who are being bullied may develop feelings of insecurity and extreme anxiety and thus may become more vulnerable. Self-confidence may be damaged with a consequent lowering of their self-esteem. While they may not talk about what is happening to them, their suffering is indicated through changes in mood and behaviour. Bullying may occasionally result in feelings of hopelessness, loneliness and isolation in victims. It is, therefore, important to be alert to changes in behaviour as early intervention is desirable.

Appendix 3 – Programme for Work with Victim and Bullies

Programme for work with victims and bullies

Students who engage in bullying behaviour may need counselling to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others. Victims may need counselling and opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem and to develop their friendship and social skills whenever this is needed. The learning strategies applied within our school will allow for the enhancement of the student's self-worth. Students who observe incidents of bullying behaviour will be encouraged to discuss them with their teachers. Counselling provision will be made within our school to the best of our ability for bullies and their victims.

Appendix 4 – Community

Community Networking to counteract bullying in our school

In Lusk Community College there is a whole community approach to the problem of bullying behaviour. Our school as a community is made up of management, teachers, non-teaching staff, students and parents/guardians. However, incidents of bullying behaviour may extend beyond our school gates. It is known that they can occur on the journey to and from school. Therefore, our anti-bullying school policy also embraces those members of the wider school community who come directly in daily contact with our students. Local people, including business owners, shopkeepers and school bus drivers are encouraged to play a positive role in assisting our school to counter bullying behaviour by reporting such behaviour to parents and/or our school as appropriate.

Monitoring and Reviewing of Anti-Bullying Policy

The Anti-Bullying Policy will be monitored by the Principal, the Year Leaders, Class tutors, class teachers and the Guidance Counsellor in conjunction with Student Council and Parents' Association on an annual basis and will be formally reviewed in 2013/2014 academic year.

(adopted by Board of Management on 01/07/2013)