

Rationale

In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000) and the Code of Behaviour guidelines issued by the National Education Welfare Board, the Board of Management of Dundalk Grammar 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 was published in 2013 (045/2013). The purpose of this policy is to provide information on how our school operates in preventing and dealing with bullying behaviour within the school.

Mission Statement

In Dundalk Grammar School, we encourage our students to be sensitive to the rights, needs and dignity of others. Our school community believes that each student has the right to an education free from fear and intimidation. Bullying is not tolerated, and this policy sets out the procedures that are in place for preventing bullying and dealing with any instance which may occur. Our 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

Aims of the Anti-Bullying Policy

The Board of Management of Dundalk Grammar School recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of students and is therefore fully committed to following the key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying. This policy aims to foster an ethos which:

- Raises awareness of bullying as unacceptable behaviour
- Encourages students to disclose confidentially incidents of bullying behaviour
- Disperses a culture of secrecy in which a student might feel a sense of hopelessness and futility against the power being exercised by those involved in bullying behaviour
- Ensures partnership between students, teachers and parents in the implementation of this policy

All students within our school community have both rights and responsibilities.

Every student has the right to:

- Be treated with respect
- Expect his / her property to be safe
- Be free from all forms of verbal, emotional and physical bullying.

Every student has the responsibility to ensure that:

- Others are always treated with respect
- The physical safety of others is not endangered
- The property of others is not endangered / damaged / destroyed
- Others are free from verbal, emotional and physical bullying
- Others are free from extortion (These lists are not exhaustive)

Definition of Bullying

Bullying is defined as unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time.

Inappropriate behaviour of the type referred to would include (but not be limited to) the following: humiliation; verbal or physical or psychological abuse; aggressive or obscene language; name calling or taunting; offensive jokes; victimisation; exclusion and isolation; interference with locker / personal possessions or any other intrusion on personal space / privacy; threats of blackmail; any attack on an individual's reputation; use of sexual, or racist comments; unpleasant notes / phone calls / text messages / emails or other cyber-bullying; any other repeated unkind behaviour.

This behaviour might occur at school, on the way to or from school, on school sponsored trips, or in any other school-related context. Cyber bullying which occurs outside of school should be reported to parents/guardians, who may choose to contact the relevant bodies (hosting websites, service providers and / or Gardai). Isolated or once-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour, including the sending or posting of a once-off offensive or hurtful message or image may not fall within our definition of bullying but may still be dealt with, as appropriate, in accordance with the school's code of behaviour.

The 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 Dundalk Grammar School adopts a school-wide approach in implementing education and prevention strategies. These include:

- The fostering of respect for all members of the school community
- The promotion of the value of diversity to address issues of prejudice and stereotyping and highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour
- The fostering and enhancing of the self-esteem of all our students through both curricular and extracurricular activities. Students will be provided with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth through formal and informal interactions.
- Whole staff professional development on bullying to ensure that all staff develop an awareness of what bullying is, how it impacts on students' lives and the need to respond to it – prevention and intervention.
- Targeted professional development with specific focus on the training of the teachers who have responsibilities in this area.
- School wide awareness raising and training on all aspects of bullying, to include students, parent(s) / guardian(s) and the wider school community. Our SPHE programme ensures that all students have a shared understanding of what constitutes bullying behaviour.
- Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extra-curricular activities. Non-teaching and ancillary staff will be encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers. Supervision will also apply to monitoring student use of school-supplied electronic devices within the school.
- Involvement of the student council in contributing to a safe school environment as well as a Buddy system, mentoring, Lunchtime Pals and other student support activities that can help to support students and encourage a culture of peer respect and support.
- The implementation of regular whole school awareness measures, e.g., a dedicated noticeboard in the school on the promotion of friendship and bullying prevention; ongoing form teacher guidance; annual Friendship Week and regular school or year group assemblies by Headmaster, Deputy or year heads.
- Encourage a culture of intervention with particular emphasis on the role of bystanders. In that way students will gain confidence in coming to the assistance of peers and 'telling' adults. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It is made clear to all students that when they report incidents of bullying, they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.
- Ensuring that students know who to tell and how to tell, e.g.:
 - Direct approach to teacher at an appropriate time, for example after class
 - Email to a teacher
 - Anti-Bullying box (at the bottom of the stairs outside the Staffroom)
 - Administer a confidential questionnaire to all students
 - Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place
- An Acceptable Use Policy has been developed in the school to include the necessary steps to ensure that the access to technology within the school is strictly monitored
- Consistent recording, investigation and follow-up of bullying behaviour
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy

Reporting bullying behaviour

It is the duty of everyone who sees / is aware of an instance of bullying or potential bullying, to act to stop it – this duty applies to all students, all teachers and all other members of staff.

- Any student or parent(s)/guardian(s) may bring a bullying incident to any teacher in the school.
- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying, will be investigated, and dealt with by the relevant teacher.
- Teaching and non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), bus escorts, caretakers, cleaners must report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher.

Support for Victims

For the victim, the act of telling someone can be therapeutic. A teacher who has been contacted by a student will find a suitable time and location and allow the student time to tell his / her story. The teacher will seek to reassure as follows:

- Help is available
- Action will be taken
- Telling is the correct and responsible thing to do as nobody should have to put up with bullying

Investigating Incidences of Bullying

The relevant person for investigating and dealing with bullying in Dundalk Grammar School is usually the Year Head. In certain cases, the Headmaster, Deputy, a subject teacher, form teacher or guidance counsellor will conduct investigations as considered appropriate or may assist with aspects of an investigation. The Year Head will record all incidences of behaviour that are deemed to be bullying.

Procedures for Investigation, follow-up, recording of bullying behaviour and established intervention strategies used by Dundalk Grammar School:

Both the injured party and those allegedly involved will be interviewed. Each may be asked for a written account of the details of the incident(s) under investigation. All interviews should be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all students concerned. Students who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this way. Parents may be contacted at any stage of the investigation, as judged necessary.

The Year Head or Deputy will exercise his or her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved.

In cases where bullying has been determined, the perpetrator(s) will be informed that their behaviour is unacceptable and viewed as a serious breach of the Code of Behaviour and of this Anti-Bullying Policy. Parent(s) / Guardian(s) of both the victim(s) and perpetrator(s) will normally be contacted and informed of the situation. In the rare instances where a student, who is a victim of bullying requests that their parents/guardians are not informed the Management Team will use professional judgement to decide on the appropriateness of parental contact (in cases of Child Protection concerns, confidentiality cannot be maintained). It is a core part of Dundalk Grammar School policy to listen to the wishes of a student who has been bullied. At all times, the welfare of the victim of bullying will be paramount.

Counselling will be offered to both the injured party and the perpetrator(s) as judged necessary and following discussion with the parent(s) / guardian(s) involved. It should be noted, however, that there is a limit to personal counselling that can be offered within a school context, and it is not school policy to offer a programme of on-going counselling regarding issues which are outside the skills or time constraints of the Guidance Counsellor. Sometimes it may be necessary to recommend further, outside help.

The Headmaster, Deputy and Guidance Counsellor will be made aware of the situation at regular Care Team meetings.

Sanctions

For a minor incident, if appropriate and safe, a verbal warning will be given to the perpetrator, who will be asked to stop his / her unacceptable behaviour; the perpetrator will be told that his / her behaviour is in breach of the school's Code of Behaviour, and will be asked to see the situation from the victim's point of view.

If the behaviour persists, the parent(s) / guardian(s) of the victim and of the perpetrator will be informed allowing them an opportunity to discuss the matter and support their children before a crisis occurs. The perpetrator may be required to complete a 'Student Behaviour Promise' form (also signed by parent(s) / guardian(s)).

Follow-up and Recording

The Year Head will formally record incidents of bullying on the standard form (attached) of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, as required by these procedures when:

- He or she considers that the bullying behaviour has not been appropriately addressed by the student(s) or parent(s) within 20 days of the determination that bullying has occurred,
- Where it is considered, in the judgement of the Year Head or Deputy, that the bullying must be reported to the Headmaster immediately
- A suspension of a student for bullying behaviour is warranted. In these cases, the Board of Management will be informed of the situation. Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with this policy and good practice, they should write to the Headmaster detailing their complaint.

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 students or staff or the harassment of students 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.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 15th May 2023.

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website (or where none exists, is otherwise readily accessible to parents and students on request) and provided to the Parents' Association (where one exists). A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

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 students 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.