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**Our Lady of Victories Girls School**

**Anti-Bullying Policy**

**Full Compliance**

In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the Code of Behaviour guidelines issued by TUSLA Education Welfare Services, **the Board of Management of Our Lady of Victories GNS 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, and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017, which seek to ensure that children are not at risk of harm whilst they are in school.

This Anti-Bullying Policy integrates with and supports a number of other key school policies including…

* Child Safeguarding Statement
* Code of Behaviour
* Internet Acceptable Usage Policy

**Key Principles and Best Practices**

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) 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;

**(b) Effective leadership**

**(c) A school-wide approach**

**(d) A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact**

**(e)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;

**(f) Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils**

**(g) Supports staff to effectively deal with incidents**

**(h) Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies)**

**(i) On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.**

**This policy applies to activities and events that take place;**

* **During School Time (including break times)**
* **School Tours, Trips and Sporting Events that may take place after school**

**Parents are reminded that the school and/or Board of Management takes no responsibility for the actions of and/or supervision of pupils outside school hours.**

**Definition and Types of Bullying**

In accordance with the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* and in the context of these procedures, 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,
* identity-based bullying such as homophobic bullying, transphobic bullying, racist bullying, bullying based on a person’s membership of the Traveller community and bullying of those with disabilities or special educational needs.
* cyber bullying *which incorporates bullying on social media networks or platforms*

**Cyber Bullying:** Parents are reminded that there is a minimum age requirement of 13 for the use of social media. No child under the age of 13 in OLV Girls’ School should have an account on these apps.

Reports (supported by evidence) of cyber bullying between children attending OLV Girls’ School, where it has previously been determined that bullying behaviour has occurred between these children, will be recorded and added to the relevant file in the Principal’s office.

It is important that staff, parents and students are aware that while bullying involves a repetition of unwelcome behaviour the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools, September 2013, states:

*2.1.3. In addition, in the context of these procedures 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.*

The school and/or Board of Management cannot sanction children for such incidents described in section 2.1.3 that take place outside of school hours, when the children’s internet usage is the responsibility of the parents/guardians. The school will however, follow the correct procedures if incidents described in section 2.1.3 spill over into school life e.g. sanctions from Code of Behaviour/open bullying investigation as per policy etc.

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.

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

**Examples of bullying behaviours** (this list is not exhaustive)

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| **General behaviours which apply to all types of bullying** | * Harassment based on any of the nine grounds in the equality legislation e.g. sexual harassment, homophobic bullying, racist bullying etc. * Physical aggression * Damage to property * Name calling * Slagging * The production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other materials aimed at intimidating another person * Offensive graffiti * Extortion * Intimidation * Insulting or offensive gestures * The “look” * Invasion of personal space * A combination of any of the types listed. |
| **Cyber** | * **Denigration**: Spreading rumors, lies or gossip to hurt a person’s reputation * **Harassment**: Continually sending vicious, mean or disturbing messages to an individual * **Impersonation**: Posting offensive or aggressive messages under another person’s name * **Flaming**: Using inflammatory or vulgar words to provoke an online fight * **Trickery**: Fooling someone into sharing personal information which you then post online * **Outing**: Posting or sharing confidential or compromising information or images * **Exclusion**: Purposefully excluding someone from an online group * **Cyber stalking**: Ongoing harassment and denigration that causes a person considerable fear for her safety * Silent telephone/mobile phone call * Abusive telephone/mobile phone calls * Abusive text messages * Abusive email * Abusive communication on social networks e.g. Facebook/Twitter/YouTube or on games consoles * Abusive website comments/Blogs/Pictures * Abusive posts on any form of communication technology |
| **Identity Based Behaviours**  **Including any of the nine discriminatory grounds mentioned in Equality Legislation** (gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community). | |
| **Homophobic and Transgender** | * Spreading rumours about a person’s sexual orientation * Taunting a person of a different sexual orientation * Name calling e.g. Gay, queer, lesbian...used in a derogatory manner * Physical intimidation or attacks * Threats |
| **Race, nationality, ethnic background and membership of the Traveller community** | * Discrimination, prejudice, comments or insults about colour, nationality, culture, social class, religious beliefs, ethnic or traveller background Exclusion on the basis of any of the above |
| **Relational** | This involves manipulating relationships as a means of bullying. Behaviours include:   * Malicious gossip * Isolation & exclusion * Ignoring * Excluding from the group * Taking someone’s friends away * “Bitching” * Spreading rumours * Breaking confidence * Talking loud enough so that the victim can hear * The “look” * Use or terminology such as ‘nerd’ in a derogatory way |
| **Sexual** | * Unwelcome or inappropriate sexual comments or   touching   * Harassment |
| **Special Educational Needs,**  **Disability** | * Name calling * Taunting others because of their disability or learning needs * Taking advantage of some pupils’ vulnerabilities and limited capacity to recognise and defend themselves against bullying * Taking advantage of some pupils’ vulnerabilities and limited capacity to understand social situations and social cues. * Mimicking a person’s disability * Setting others up for ridicule |

**Roles and responsibilities**

In these procedures, the member of teaching staff who has responsibility for investigating and dealing with bullying is referred to as the “relevant teacher”. The relevant teacher will normally be the class teacher.

All staff are responsible for implementing this policy.

* All teachers have responsibility for investigating and recording incidents of bullying/alleged bullying behaviour which have been brought to their attention
* These issues will be brought to the attention of the Principal or Deputy Principal in her absence.
* Special Needs Assistants have responsibility for assisting teachers in monitoring all pupils.

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| **Education and Prevention Strategies** |
| Our Lady of Victories Girls’ School adopts aschool-wide approach to fostering respect for all members of the school community as it has been laid down in the school’s ethos and mission statement.  **All Staff**   * ‘Catch them being good’ – notice and acknowledge desired respectful behaviour by providing positive attention for it. * Modelling of respectful relationships and good communications by all staff will develop a culture of respect within 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 pupils through both curricular and extracurricular activities. Pupils will be provided with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth through formal and informal interactions. * Identification of ‘hot-spots’ or times when bullying can occur. In the line, during transitions, on the way in and out of school, on the way in or out to the yard, if children go to the bathroom 2 at the time etc. * Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extra- curricular activities. SNAs and ancillary staff need to be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers. Supervision will also apply to monitoring student use of communication technology within the school. * Encourage a culture of telling, with particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders. In that way pupils will gain confidence in ‘telling’. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It should be made clear to all pupils that when they report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.   **Teachers**   * The full implementation of the relevant SPHE, RSE & Stay Safe Programmes, including Weaving Wellbeing and Seán Fallon Anti-Bullying Programme. * Explicitly teach pupils about the appropriate use of social media- webwise. * Explicitly teach pupils what respectful language and respectful behaviour looks like, acts like, sounds like and feels like in class and around the school. * Development and promotion of an Anti-Bullying code for the school- Anti-Bullying Promise to be displayed publicly in classrooms and in common areas of the school. * Engage with the Gardai re delivery of the Garda SPHE Programmes. These lessons, delivered by Community Gardai, cover issues around personal safety and cyber-bullying * Teacher conversations with pupils about the importance of friendship & respect. * Circle Time and similar strategies such as restorative practice in order to address issues. * Anti-bullying programme and awareness-raising throughout the school year. * Negotiating agreements between pupils and following these up by monitoring progress. This can be on an informal basis or implemented through a more structured mediation process. * Working with parents/guardians to support school interventions. * All class teachers will endeavour to deliver **Regular anti-bullying lesson (both formal and informal)**  from either evidence based programmes e.g., webwise or from their own resources * Specific focus on new pupils as they settle into school – class buddy system * Ensuring that pupils know who to tell and how to tell, examples include.: * Direct approach to the teacher at an appropriate time, for example after class. * Hand note up with homework. * Get an SNA to tell on your behalf * Make a phone call to the school or to a trusted teacher in the school. * Worry box in classroom * Get a parent/guardian/friend to tell on your behalf. * Administer a confidential questionnaire once a term to all pupils. * Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place.   **Principal, Deputy Principal, Assistant Principals and SET Team**   * Ensure Anti-Bullying is on each Staff Meeting Agenda. * Ensure Anti-Bullying is on each Board of Management Agenda. * Inform and support relevant staff if ‘Pupil Alert’ is issued. * Ensure policy is reviewed annually. * Identify clear protocols to encourage parents/guardians to approach the school if they suspect that their child is being bullied. * A regular audit of professional development needs with a view to assessing staff requirements through internal staff knowledge/expertise and external sources * School wide awareness raising and training on all aspects of bullying, to include pupils, parents/guardians and the wider school community. * The school’s anti-bullying policy is discussed with pupils and a copy is available to all parents/guardians on the school website [www.olvgns.ie](http://www.olvgns.ie) * The implementation of regular whole school awareness measures e.g. annual Friendship Week and parents/guardians seminars; termly student surveys * The school will implement the advice in “Sexual Orientation advice for schools” (See Appendix 2) * The school will specifically consider the additional needs of SEN pupils with regard to programme implementation and the development of skills and strategies to enable all pupils to respond appropriately.   **HSCL**   * Coordinate Care Team meetings with relevant School Completion Programmes to support the social, behavioural and emotional needs of our target children. * Liaise with parents when appropriate |

**Procedures for Reporting, Investigating, Recording and Follow-Up of Bullying Behaviour**

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| Since the failure to report bullying can result in a continuation or deterioration in bullying behaviours, the school and parents encourage pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying to any teacher, SNA, the Principal or their parents.  **Any parent who has a concern about bullying must report it to the class teacher first and always.**  All school staff consistently relay the message that reporting incidents of bullying is responsible behaviour, and is not considered to be ‘telling tales’. This is a ‘Telling School’ as defined in the Stay Safe Programme.  While the school supports parents and pupils in dealing with issues that arise outside of school (e.g. cyber bullying via social media), parents should be aware that the school is extremely limited in its power to deal with issues that arise while the children are not under our care.  **The primary aim 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).**  **The school’s procedures must be consistent with the following approach:**  Every effort will be made to ensure that all involved (including pupils, parents/guardians) understand this approach from the outset.  **Reporting bullying behaviour**   * Any pupil or parent/guardian may bring a bullying incident to any teacher in the school. * Children are explicitly taught who to tell and how to tell, by their class teacher and/or SET teacher, where applicable. * 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), must report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher.   **Investigating and dealing with incidents**  **Principles**   * Reports of bullying behaviour will be investigated in a fair and professional manner by the school staff. * In investigating and dealing with an allegation of bullying, the relevant teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved. * Parents/guardians and pupils are required to cooperate 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. * Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach. * Pupils should understand that there are no innocent bystanders and that all incidents of bullying behaviour must be reported to a teacher.   **Investigating**   * The relevant teacher must inform the principal of all incidents being investigated. * Where possible incidents should be investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved, whilst the class is supervised by another teacher; * All interviews should be 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. * Teachers may request the assistance of another staff member in such investigations. * Each child should be supported through the process and any possible peer pressures * It may also be helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s) (if appropriate). * When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher should seek answers to questions of **what, where, when, who and why**. This should be 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 should be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved should be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member should be asked for her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other’s statements; * Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that may face them from the other members of the group after the interview by the teacher. * In cases where it has been determined that the behaviour reported **was not** bullying behaviour the relevant teacher and the principal, will determine if a ‘Pupil Alert’ should be issued to monitor the situation. * In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents/guardians of the parties involved should be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken (by reference to the school policy). The school should give parents/guardians an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports provided to the pupils; * Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to her how she is now in breach of the school’s Anti-Bullying Policy and efforts should be made to try to get her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied; * It must also be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parents/guardians) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined and her parents/guardians and the school.   **Recording of bullying behaviour**  It is imperative that all recording of bullying incidents must be done in an objective and factual manner.  The school’s procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour are as follows:  **Informal- pre-determination that bullying has occurred**   * All staff must keep a written record of any incidents witnessed by them or notified to them in the relevant Class Green Folder (GDPR Action 2018) and/or online Green Folder (introduced Sept 2021). All incidents must be reported to the relevant teacher. * While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the relevant teacher must keep a written record of the reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding the same. * The relevant teacher must inform the principal of all incidents being investigated.   **Formal Stage 1-determination that bullying has occurred**   * 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.   **Formal Stage 2**  The relevant teacher must use the recording template at **Appendix 1** to record the bullying behaviour in the following circumstances:  a) in cases where he/she considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour occurred; and  b) in cases where the bullying behaviour is a serious breach of the schools code of behaviour it must be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable  **Follow-Up**   * In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant teacher must, 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/guardians or the school Principal or Deputy Principal   * Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved should 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. * Where parents/guardians are not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents/guardians must be referred, as appropriate, to the school’s complaints procedures. * In the event that parents/guardians has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and are still not satisfied, the school must advise the parents/guardians of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children. |

**Programmes of Support**

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| The school may access the following supports for pupils affected by bullying (both victims and those involved in bullying behaviour):   * Code of Behaviour * Class Circle Time as part of SPHE * Restorative Practice Techniques * Weaving Wellbeing * No Blame Approach – supporting both parties without apportioning blame * Referral to school Special Education Team – focus on ‘at-risk’ pupils * Close monitoring of pupils (those bullying and those being bullied) on yard/in class in the weeks following an incident of bullying * Social groups will be provided where possible for children deemed at risk as part of the SEN provision in the school * Provision of opportunities in/outside class to participate in activities designed to raise self-esteem, to develop friendship and social skills and thereby build resilience (as per SPHE programme) * Individual Behaviour Plans –School Support Plans * Access to Support Teacher – facilitation of self-esteem building activities. * Information regarding any past bullying issues will be passed on to new teachers in June/September handover meetings. |

**Record Keeping**

* The school will retain records of all allegations, investigations, incidents and their outcomes.
* All Green Folders and Records of bullying behaviour will be filed when the children leave the school. They will be retained until the relevant pupils reach 21 yrs.

**Supervision and Monitoring of Pupils**

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.

**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.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

This policy has been made available to school personnel and published on the school website. 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. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

(Principal)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date of next review: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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| Appendix 1Template for recording bullying behaviour **1. Name of pupil being bullied and class group**  Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Class\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  **2. Name(s) and class(es) of pupil(s) engaged in bullying behaviour**   |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | |  | | | | | | | **3. Source** of bullying concern/report (tick relevant box(es))\* |  |  | **4. Location** of incidents (tick relevant box(es))\* |  | | Pupil concerned |  |  | Playground |  | | Other Pupil |  |  | Classroom |  | | Parent |  |  | Corridor |  | | Teacher |  |  | Toilets |  | | Other*(specify)* |  |  | Other*(specify)* |  | |  |  |  |   **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)* | |  |  |  |  |  |   **8. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact**   |  | | --- | |  |  1. **Details of actions taken**  |  | | --- | |  |   Signed \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Relevant Teacher)  Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Date submitted to Principal \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |

**Appendix 2**

**SEXUAL ORIENTATION – ADVICE FOR SCHOOLS**

**GENERAL POINTS**

• Schools can foster a culture that is accepting of difference. This can be expressed where appropriate, rather than making the assumption that everyone understands it.

• An integral part of RSE is learning to respect others; this will include respect for families or individuals who are different from the norm.

• The Equal Status Acts 2000 and 2004 provide protection against discrimination on nine grounds, one of which is sexual orientation. The Acts oblige those who manage schools to protect students and staff from discrimination or sexual harassment.

• If children are using the word ‘gay’ in a negative fashion it is better not to ignore it in the hope that it will go away. The same advice would apply for any instance of bullying.

• Schools are advised to develop a strategy for responding to children who have questions about sexual orientation or who are taunting others about being gay. This should be done in the context of the school’s ethos and RSE policy and with the awareness that primary school children are probably too young to engage in any detailed discussion of sexual identity.

**PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS**

• Depending on the context and the age group of the children, the teacher could ask a child or a class group what they mean by the word ‘gay’

• A school could decide on a response to this question, such as ‘The majority of people are attracted to people of the opposite sex. This is called being heterosexual. Some people are attracted to people of the same sex. This is called being homosexual or gay.’

• To give factual information like this in an open and straightforward way may help to remove the secrecy which is necessary for any bullying to flourish.

• Homophobic insults should be treated in exactly the same way as racist or other insults – the teacher can calmly explain to the child that such insults are hurtful to the other person and are not acceptable.

• Schools promote a culture of communication which actively discourages abusive name calling