

Anti-Cyber Bullying Policy for Guardian Angels’ National School

Introduction

Guardian Angels’ N.S. aims to ensure that children in our care are safe and feel safe from bullying, harassment and discrimination. Our school community is committed to teaching children the knowledge and skills to be able to use ICT (Information and Communications Technology) effectively, safely and responsibly. Before cyber-bullying became an issue in society it had been for many years a central value in Guardian Angels’ N.S. that pupils would experience respect, given and received, within the various groups that form the school community. This value has been experienced as a great blessing. So in order that wholesome caring relationships will continue to flourish as we face new challenges we have decided to devise and adopt this Anti-Cyber Bullying Policy.

The aims of this policy are to:

- To provide background information on cyber bullying which forms the basis of information provided to parents and students which will ensure that pupils, staff and parents understand what cyber bullying is and how it can be combated
- To outline the practices and procedures to be used by the school to prevent and control cyber bullying and to ensure that reported incidents of cyber bullying are dealt with effectively and in a timely manner

Background information on cyber bullying

Definition of bullying included in DES “action Plan on Bullying” January 2013:

“Bullying is (1) intentional negative behaviour that (2) typically occurs with some repetitiveness and is (3) directed against a person who has difficulty defending himself or herself”

What is cyber-bullying?

Cyber bullying can be defined by the definition of bullying above that occurs over the internet or via mobile phone. Cyber bullying can take many forms which include:

1. Text messages – can be threatening or cause discomfort. Also included here is ‘Bluejacking’ (the sending of anonymous text messages over short distances using bluetooth wireless technology).
2. Picture/video-clips via mobile phone cameras – images sent to others to make the victim feel threatened or embarrassed.
3. Mobile phone calls – silent calls, abusive messages or stealing the victim’s phone and using it to harass others, to make them believe the victim is responsible.
4. Emails – threatening or bullying emails, often sent using a pseudonym or somebody else’s name.
5. Chat room bullying – menacing or upsetting responses to children or young people when they are in a web-based chat room.

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6. Instant messaging (IM) – unpleasant messages sent while children conduct real-time conversations online using MSM (Microsoft Messenger), Yahoo Chat or similar tools.
7. Bullying via websites – use of defamatory blogs (web logs), personal websites and online personal ‘own web space’ sites such as You Tube, Facebook, Ask.fm, Bebo (which works by signing on in one’s school, therefore making it easy to find a victim) and Myspace, Snapchat, or any such site that may be developed in the future. Game consoles which have internet access and internet gaming opportunities to connect with other users are also a channel which can be misused and abused.

Our advice to parents on prevention and control of cyber bullying

Because mobile devices are not usually allowed in school premises, it is our experience that cyber bullying usually occurs outside of school premises and school hours.

Therefore, it is strongly recommended that in order to prevent or curb cyber bullying, Guardian Angels’ school recommends that parents should seek to ensure the following:

- Children should not have access to the Internet on a phone, computer or any device which cannot be in full view in the home and in particular children should not have unsupervised access to these devices in their bedrooms.
- Parents should become aware of cyberbullying. There are many excellent websites which can help you understand cyber bullying e.g. www.esafety.ie.
- No primary school child should have access at any time to Facebook, Bebo or any such social media site which is used by adults.
- Parents should be aware of and monitor all of their children’s activity online.
- If a parent becomes aware that their child is being bullied via online routes by another child within the Guardian Angels school, we strongly advise that parents do not approach other parents but instead bring the matter to the attention of the school.

Our advice to pupils on prevention and control of cyber bullying

This advice will be provided to all children in Guardian Angels school at relevant times in their education (see later on how)

If you are being bullied by phone or the Internet:

- Remember, bullying is never your fault, but it is something over which you can have an influence. It can be stopped and it can usually be traced.
- Don’t ignore the bullying. Tell someone you trust, such as a teacher or parent or call an advice line (e.g. Childline).
- Never give out your personal details online.
- Keep and save any bullying emails, text messages or images. Then you can show them to a parent or teacher as evidence.
- If you can, make a note of the time and date bullying messages or images were sent, and note any details about the sender
- There are plenty of online resources advising on how to react to cyber bullying e.g.

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www.esafety.ie.

Text/video messaging

- You can easily stop receiving text messages for a while by turning-off incoming messages for a couple of days. This might stop the person texting you by making them believe you’ve changed your phone number
- If the bullying persists, you can change your phone number. Ask your mobile service provider about this.
- Do not reply to abusive or worrying text or video messages. Your mobile service provider will have a number for you to ring or text to report phone bullying - visit their website for details.
- Do not delete messages from cyber bullies. You should keep them as evidence.

Policy of the Guardian Angels school on prevention and management of cyberbullying

- **Our policy is to minimise opportunities within the school premises for cyberbullying.**
 - The pupils in Guardian Angels’ are not permitted to have a mobile phone switched on while on the school premises and grounds.
 - The computers in the school have a blocking system which blocks all social media websites which limits access to opportunities to engage in any inappropriate activity online. Parents are made aware of this policy at enrolment and school newsletters.
 - Pupils will sign an Acceptable Use of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) contract.
- **Our policy is to maximise opportunities to raise awareness within the school on all issues concerning bullying and cyber bullying.**

Staff, pupils, parents and Board of Management (BoM) will be made aware of issues surrounding cyber bullying through

 - Staff and Board of management training and development:
 - Staff CPD (Continuous Professional Development) events will be provided by the school to assist in learning about current technologies
 - Inclusion on the agenda of staff meetings
 - Inclusion on the agenda of board of management meetings
 - Discussion with teachers on problems occurring within the school
 - Poster and information leaflets in staff room
 - Parents
 - Parents will be provided with information and advice on how to prevent and combat cyber bullying, through
 - School newsletters (once a year)
 - Education evenings for parents in conjunction with the parents teacher association (every 2-3 years)

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- Other opportunities as they arise
 - School website
- Pupils
 - Pupils will learn about cyber bullying through
 - Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme
 - The issue being raised regularly at weekly assemblies
 - Other curriculum projects which will be used to raise awareness of cyberbullying and other forms of bullying
 - Posters and leaflets which will be displayed throughout the school.
- **Our policy is to ensure that all reports of cyber bullying are investigated, recorded, and stored in the Principal’s office and monitored regularly**
 - The Anti-bullying Policy of Guardian Angels’ school shall apply to this policy also.
 - Staff, pupils and parents will be urged to report any incident of cyber bullying to the school
 - All reports of cyber bullying will be investigated, recorded, stored in the Principal’s office and monitored regularly
 - In order to ascertain the veracity of an accusation the School Principal may look at material on a child’s phone, tablet or other such device in the presence of the child’s parent/guardian.
 - Incidents of cyber bullying in relation to any member of staff will be taken very seriously indeed, up to and including suspension and expulsion in extreme cases.
 - The Gardaí/Social Services will be contacted in cases of actual or suspected illegal content

This policy has been compiled in consultation with staff, parents/guardians and Board of Management.

This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis.

Ratified by the Board of Management

Date: 19/11/2013