

January 2011

Bullying Policy St. Oliver Plunkett Eoghan Ruadh

Statement of Intent

St. Oliver Plunkett Eoghan Ruadh GAA Club is committed to providing a friendly and safe environment where members can participate in and attend Gaelic Games in a secure and respectful atmosphere. We aim to create a supportive environment where all forms of bullying are deemed to be unacceptable. In accordance with the GAA Best Practice in Youth Sport, bullying is a “whole organisation matter” and as such requires a “whole organisation approach whereby all members are required to inform the Club Children’s Officer if instances of bullying occur or are suspected of having occurred.

The ethos of our club is that it is “ok to tell”.

St. Oliver Plunkett Eoghan Ruadh GAA club abides by and respects the GAA Best Practice in Youth Sport and the GAA Code of Behaviour when working with underage players.

What is Bullying?

Bullying behaviour can be defined as repeated aggression, be it verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against others.

Key Features of Bullying include:

- An intention to be hurtful.
- The intention is carried out.
- The targeting of a person or person by the Bully
- The behaviour harms the target (the person or persons being Bullied).
- The Bully overwhelms the target with his or her power.
- There is often no justification for the action.
- The behaviour is repeated.
- The Bully derives a sense of satisfaction from hurting the target.

Types of Bullying include:

- Verbal Bullying – e.g. ridiculing, slagging, name calling, spreading rumours
- Physical Bullying- e.g. pushing, shoving, kicking or any form of violence

- Gesture Bullying – e.g. non-verbal gestures/glances which can convey threatening or frightening messages/intent.
- E-Bullying/Cyber-Bullying –e.g. using email, internet chat room, mobile threats by text messaging & calls, misuse of associated technology such as camera & video
- Homophobic Bullying – e.g. typically aimed at young people who are gay or perceived to be gay. It can include name calling, isolation exclusion etc.
- Racial Bullying – e.g. graffiti, racial taunts,
- Mobbing – Bullied by a group of perpetrators

Any one of the above examples or a combination of any of these examples could constitute Bullying in a sports context.

Why is it Important to Respond to Bullying?

Every Club, and Mentor has a responsibility to ensure that all children and young people who participate in our Games and other activities are cared for in a safe and enjoyable environment. Everybody has the right to be treated with respect, equality, safety and without any forms of discrimination. No one deserves to be a target of bullying and we will respond promptly and effectively to issues of Bullying. Through educating our members and making them aware of why Bullying is unacceptable we will strive to prevent Bullying in all forms happening in our Club.

Objectives of this policy

- All club members, mentors, and volunteers should have an understanding of what Bullying is.
- All club members, mentors, parents and volunteers should know what the club policy is on Bullying, and follow it if Bullying is suspected or reported
- Bullying is taken seriously at St. Oliver Plunkett Eoghan Ruadh. Players, mentors and parents should be assured that they will be supported when Bullying is reported.
- Bullying will not be tolerated. The ethos of St. Oliver Plunkett Eoghan Ruadh is that where Bullying occurs it is not just right but is vital “to tell”. Every member of the Club should know that its **OK To Tell** if Bullying happens.

Signs and Symptoms of being Bullied:

If someone is being Bullied, they will often deny that it is happening. This is especially true for children. There are however certain signs that can indicate if Bullying is occurring. These include:

- Signs of being isolated from others of the same age
- Signs of regular interference with personal property, kit, personal; belongings, theft etc. Continual loss or damaging sports kit, boots, hurleys etc.
- Unexplained bruises and cuts etc.; reluctance to explain bruises;
- Anxious and afraid when going to or coming from training or matches (or school etc.)
- A decline in standards relating to both Sports and School performances
- Being nervous when a text message is received; Reluctance to use the internet and/or mobile phone
- Bullying younger siblings or other children
- Asking for, or even stealing money; has continually “lost” lunch money / weekly subs or other monies etc.
- Looking nervous, tense, unhappy, lacking in confidence

“The above signs can also occur in problems unrelated to bullying, but it is important that they are not ignored. It is important to be aware that the bullying of a child in a GAA club may be carried out by other children, younger or older, by children individually or as part of a group or by an adult or adults involved in the club. Indeed a child may be suffering from Bullying outside of the club but the actions suffered may still impinge upon the child’s participation in your club activities and your games.” (GAA Code of Best Practise in Youth (2009).

Recommended Club Procedures/Actions involving Bullying by children or where children are Bullied:

1. Report all incidents of bullying to the Club Children’s Officer (or alternate officer) as soon as possible. Take all reports seriously and investigate complaints fully. Gather information with care and sensitivity.
2. Try to establish the reasons behind the actions of the Bully.
3. Reassure the target (person/s bullied) that they are supported, and clearly heard.

4. Investigate and where proven stop the bullying action. In some instances a brief intervention or informal discussion may be appropriate; often a genuine apology solves the problem.
5. Adopt appropriate intervention strategies appropriate to the incident(s) of Bullying including Mediation, The No Blame Approach, Method of Shared Concern, Parental/Guardian involvement and if necessary invoke disciplinary measures.
6. If appropriate a small panel made up of possibly three persons could be constituted to meet with the child alleging bully and the child's parent. Details should be given and minutes taken for clarity. Minutes and decisions should be agreed by all.
7. If the parents of the child being bullied wish to complain formally, they should submit a written complaint.
8. Where it is alleged that the person carrying out the Bullying is a child (person under 18 yrs of age) no person on behalf of the Club should meet with the alleged Bully until parental consent has been received and a parent/guardian is also present. This does not prevent the Club from investigating matters or clarifying issues following allegations of Bullying.
9. The panel appointed by the Club, as referred to above, should meet with the alleged Bully and their parents. The incident should be discussed and their views and responses noted.
10. If the panel is of the opinion that bullying has occurred, the alleged Bully should be warned and given notice of further action. e.g. temporary or permanent suspension. Any disciplinary measures taken will be in full accordance with our club's constitution and the GAA Code of Behaviour and should be commensurate with the level of Bullying as proven. A full apology to the target should be given. It might be appropriate to reconcile both parties together.
11. As deemed appropriate coaches/mentors involved with the team/child where incidents of Bullying have occurred should be informed of any concerns relating to Bullying and of the outcomes of any investigation carried out to determine if Bullying has occurred.
12. Each case should be monitored to ensure that the bullying behaviour has stopped and / or all parties are satisfied.
13. If necessary and appropriate, statutory authorities and the GAA County Board or National Children's Office may be consulted where incidents of Bullying are reported or suspected.

Prevention

1. St. Oliver Plunketts Eoghan Ruadh will continue to implement the GAA Code of Best Practice in Youth Sport and the GAA Code of Behaviour. These codes outline clearly what is proper and acceptable behaviour for all members of our club.
2. All club members should sign the declaration on the membership form to indicate acceptance of our codes.
3. The Club Children's Officer should regularly raise awareness about bullying, and the levels of conduct appropriate for players, mentors and other personnel in the club as appropriate. The Children's Officer should meet with Executive Committee / Management on all matters relating to bullying and bullying issues. There Club shall also appoint an alternate Children's Officer to officiate when the Children's' Officer is unavailable.
4. This bullying policy should be made available to all members of the club and reviewed on a yearly basis.

Linda Penny
Club Children's Officer

Bullying Policy to be reviewed: January 2013

Resources and References

Children First, National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children, Department of Health and Children, Hawkins House, Hawkins Street, Dublin 2

Our Duty to Care. Principles of Good Practice for the Protection of Children and Young People Department of Health and Children, Hawkins House, Hawkins Street, Dublin 2

Let's Beat Bullying: An anti-bullying resource for those working with young people in Youth Work Settings National Youth Council of Ireland, 3 Montague Street, Dublin 2

Web

For information on the safe use of the Internet check www.webwise.ie

The GAA Code of Best Practice in Youth Sport, the Code of Behaviour for all Persons Working with Young People and Guidelines for Dealing with Allegations of Abuse (Fourth Edition 2009), and GAA Official Guide are downloadable at <http://www.gaa.ie/clubzone>