

Coláiste Chiaráin, Leixlip Community School Anti-Bullying Policy

Relationship to Mission Statement

The community of the school works in a holistic manner to ensure that dependence is gradually replaced by responsibility for self, society and the world. The dignity of each student, staff member and parent is honoured and reflected in school policies and structures, including this policy.

Coláiste Chiaráin seeks to:

- enable each student to develop her/his full potential.
- provide a safe and secure environment for learning.
- promote respect for the diversity of values, beliefs, traditions, languages and ways of life in society.
- promote habits of mutual respect, courtesy and an awareness of the inter-dependence of people in groups and communities.
- take particular care of at risk students and uses its monitoring system to provide early intervention when/if necessary and responds to the needs, fears and anxieties of individual students in a sensitive manner.

Rationale: The purpose of this policy is to protect all members of our school community from being bullied and to ensure that effective remedial steps are taken where bullying arises.

In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the code of behaviour guidelines issued by the NEWB, the Board of Management of Coláiste Chiaráin 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.

Scope:

The policy

- addresses bullying behaviour, as defined in the *Anti-Bullying Procedures* and includes cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying (such as homophobic bullying and racist bullying)
- addresses the requirement under equality legislation to take such steps as reasonably practicable to prevent harassment and sexual harassment (*Anti-Bullying Procedures, 5.5.1*)
- applies to all students, staff or anyone who visits the school including parents visiting sports teams etc. (*Anti-Bullying Procedures, 5.5.2*)

- applies to all aspects of school life, i.e. School time (including break times), going to and from school, school tours/trips, extra-curricular activities, other times where bullying behaviour affects the lives of students in school.

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 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;
- Effective leadership;
- A school-wide approach;
- A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact;
- 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.
- Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils;
- Supports for staff;
- Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies); and
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

Definition of Bullying: In accordance with the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* 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,
- cyber-bullying and
- identity-based bullying such as homophobic bullying, racist bullying, bullying based on a person's membership of the Traveller community and bullying of those with disabilities or special educational needs.

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.

However, in the context of this policy, 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.

Negative behaviour that does not meet this definition of bullying will be dealt with 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*.

Investigation: The relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying are:

- Class Teacher (in the first instance)
- Year Head
- Deputy Principal
- Principal

Education and Preventative Strategies: The school community will work proactively to promote an environment where bullying does not take place. Every effort will be made to prevent bullying by raising awareness of all in the school community about the reality of bullying and its detrimental effects.

To help prevent bullying Coláiste Chiaráin will use a number of strategies:

- The school will seek to promote a positive, open and caring school climate. To enhance this, school assemblies will regularly stress the importance of reporting matters relating to bullying.
- There will be information sessions for incoming First Year students in May and September/October each year at which our anti-bullying policy will be outlined and discussed. This will include a focus on Cyber-Bullying.

- The GLUAIS student's leadership training programme will incorporate information on bullying and each First Year class will be linked to a member of the team.
- The Student Council and Peer Mentors will provide forums for student discussion and reporting of matters related to bullying.
- Curricular areas such as SPHE, CSPE, Religion and PE will offer opportunities to address issues relating to respect, justice and fair play throughout the academic year.
- A 'Friendship Week' will be part of the anti-bullying programme during which time there will be opportunities to invite guest speakers, run poster or literary competitions and display posters.
- Restorative practices/conferencing may be used as one method of dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour. Restorative Practice is a proactive tool used to promote fairness and justice in the school community and which encourages a healthy environment.
- Students will be made aware of the location of 'Bully Boxes' and will be encouraged to anonymously report incidents of bullying.
- The school will display posters to heighten awareness and to encourage students to 'tell' about bullying they may experience or observe.
- The school will seek opportunities to enhance the self-worth of all its students by providing a wide range of extra-curricular activities.
- With regard to the use of IT, filtering software and/or equivalent systems will be used in order to minimise the risk of exposure to inappropriate material.
- Students and teachers will be provided with training in the area of Internet safety.
- Uploading and downloading of inappropriate software/material is not permitted.
- The use of personal memory sticks or other digital storage media in school will require a teacher's permission. Software and activities which circumvent the filtering system is prohibited. Use of such software or such activities will be considered a very serious breach of discipline

Reporting and investigating incidents of bullying

Rationale for noting and reporting incidents of bullying behaviour:

Responsible reporting must be seen as the norm within the school. The prevalent misconception among some adults and students - that bullying is a normal phase of development, that it teaches students to toughen up - needs to be challenged. Bullying thrives in an atmosphere of uncertainty and secrecy in which the person who is being bullied feels a sense of hopelessness and futility against the power being exercised by the bully. Effective uncovering of bullying in the school relies on the co-operation of the silent majority of students, on their understanding that they have a responsibility for the safety and welfare of other students; that they have a responsibility to tell. Likewise, Parents/guardians should report a suspected incident of bullying to the class tutor, year head or principal.

Non-teaching staff such as Special Needs Assistants, Caretakers, Secretaries, cleaning staff and supervisors will also be encouraged to report any incident of bullying witnessed by them.

Principles informing the investigation of reported incidents: The aim in investigating alleged incidents of bullying is to bring the bullying to an end and to resolve the issues that gave rise to the bullying in the first place. The initial focus will be to establish answers to the questions 'what, where, when, who and why'. Students who feel they are the victim of Cyber-Bullying are encouraged to keep records of the event e.g. screen shots of messages. All reports of bullying behaviour will be dealt with in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour and with the school's Mission Statement. In dealing with reports of bullying behaviour the school will adopt a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach which will set an example in dealing effectively with conflict in a non-aggressive manner. Incidents will be investigated as discretely as possible outside of the classroom situation in a way which avoids as far as possible public humiliation of the student who is being bullied or the student allegedly involved in the bullying behaviour.

Procedures for noting and reporting incidents of bullying:

- All reports of bullying will be noted and investigated.
- When a teacher receives a report of bullying, a Bullying Report Form will be completed.
- The Bullying Report Form will be passed on to the Year Head who will investigate the report, if necessary in conjunction with the school chaplain, counsellor, Deputy Principal or Principal.
- Serious cases of bullying will be referred immediately to the Principal.
- In cases where this initial investigation establishes that bullying behaviour has occurred, the student(s) involved will be told to stop this behaviour immediately.
- The Year Head will monitor the situation closely.

If the bullying behaviour continues or recurs, parents of the perpetrator will be informed immediately.

Resolving a Complaint: Where appropriate, and particularly in the case of first offenders, the school will adopt an approach that underlines the seriousness of the incident but seeks a resolution on an amicable basis.

If the school concludes that a student has engaged in bullying behaviour it will be made clear to them that they are in breach of the school's Code of Behaviour and the school will seek to get them to see the situation from the point of view of the student who is being bullied. Appropriate sanctions will be implemented depending on the case. This will be in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour and may include suspension or expulsion. Where the school is satisfied that any student has persisted in engaging in bullying behaviour, serious disciplinary sanctions will be considered.

Open lines of communication will be maintained with parents and guardians at all stages in the process.

Students who are bullied or who are involved in bullying behaviour may need assistance on an on-going basis. The teaching staff and the Guidance Counsellor may be able to offer some assistance but it may be necessary in some cases for

parents to seek outside help. In some cases, particularly where a problem persists, the perpetrator may be required to seek professional help.

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.

Complaints of Bullying or Harassment among Staff: Where a staff member feels s/he is being bullied or harassed s/he should refer to the 'Code of Practice for Dealing with Complaints of Bullying and Harassment of Staff in Community and Comprehensive Schools' which has been agreed between ACCS, ASTI, TUI and IMPACT. Copies of this are available from the office. In processing a complaint school management will follow the procedures outlined in the Code.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 10 th February 2014
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