

St. Columba's College Stranorlar



Anti-Bullying Policy

February 2021

Anti-Bullying Policy

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1. Link to Mission Statement and Ethos

St. Columba's College is a Catholic Voluntary Secondary School in the trusteeship of CEIST and is committed to the pursuit of excellence in a caring environment.

Characteristic Spirit and Ethos

Inspired by the vision of Catherine Mc Auley, Mercy education is committed to the holistic development and to the achievement of the full potential of each student, particularly those who are disadvantaged or marginalised. It is a process informed by the teachings of Jesus Christ and is conducted in an atmosphere guided by the core values of CEIST –

Promoting – *Spiritual and Human Development*

We believe a knowledge of, and a personal relationship with Jesus Christ give meaning and purpose to our lives.

Achieving – *Quality in Teaching and Learning*

We are committed to excellence and to continually improving the quality of teaching and learning.

Showing – *Respect for Every Person*

We respect the unique and intrinsic value of every person.

Creating Community – Our schools are faith communities of welcome and hospitality where Gospel values are lived and where there is special care for those most in need.

Being Just and Responsible – We seek to act justly and responsibly in all our relationships.

2. Rationale

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 St. Columba's College 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.

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.

3. Aims of the policy

- To promote a positive school culture and climate that is inclusive and welcoming of difference.
- To promote bullying prevention and education strategies.
- To raise awareness amongst the entire school community of bullying and unacceptable bullying behaviours.
- To promote procedures for reporting, investigating and recording incidents of bullying.
- To provide support for those affected by, and involved in, bullying.
- To facilitate ongoing evaluation and review of the effectiveness of the schools anti-bullying policy.

All members of the school community are subject to this policy. Bullying behaviour such as cyber bullying which breaks the law may be referred to the Gardai. The policy will be applicable during the following:

- School time (including break/lunch times)
- Going to and from school
- School tours/trips
- Extra-curricular activities
- Any occasion when the student is in uniform during school hours and up to a period of 15 minutes after school.
- The school reserves the right to apply its Anti-Bullying policy in respect of bullying that occurs at any location, activity, function or programme, if, in the opinion of the school management the alleged bully has created a hostile environment at school for the victim and if it impacts upon the school or relationships within the school. If the rights of the victim of the bully have materially or substantially disrupted the education process or the orderly operation of the school, the school also reserves the right to apply its anti-bullying policy and contact the relevant bodies to assist.

4. 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, Remote Learning Policy, Acceptable Use Policy and Communications Policy

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

The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows: Class tutors, the Year Heads, the Deputy Principal and the Principal. All staff members, students and parents have a responsibility to alert these teachers of any suspicions of bullying.

5. Education and prevention strategies

The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying) that will be used by the school are as follows:

- Weekly assemblies and daily meetings with class tutors are used to promote positive reinforcement and emphasise the school's ethos of care and compassion.
- A culture of reporting bullying is fostered in the school through assemblies, visits by management to classes, SPHE lessons and the Wellbeing Programme. Particular emphasis is placed on standing up for others, encouraging self confidence, recognising both good and toxic relationships and being forthcoming with information to help the school authorities in identifying and solving issues of bullying.
- Students of all years and age groups are continually reminded of who they can tell if they are being bullied or they feel that someone else is.
- A safe space where students can go at break and lunch times if they are being isolated or feel in any way that they need time out is currently in development.
- Initiatives which deal explicitly with identity based bullying include; LGBTQ posters around the school building, LGBTQ Week, SPHE (in Junior Cycle) and RSE modules (in Senior Cycle),
- Particular attention is paid to the key period of transition to secondary school during the Transfer Programme in August for incoming first years.
- Mental Health Week involves the promotion of positive mental attitudes and the importance of inclusion.
- We encourage parents to approach the school authorities if they feel their child is being bullied. They can have confidence in the school's determination to help and support their child. Similarly, parents are reminded that if their child is involved in bullying behaviour, they have a responsibility to support the school's anti-bullying policy and address their child's inappropriate behaviour.
- Continuous Professional Development for staff in delivering these programmes.

- School wide delivery of lessons on bullying from evidence based programmes.
- School wide delivery of lessons on Relational aggression, Homophobic and Transphobic Bullying, Diversity and Interculturalism.
- Accessing the support of Community Gardaí and Donegal Youth Services to cover issues around personal safety and cyber-bullying.
- 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.
- All subject teachers strive to promote respect, harmony and tolerance in their classrooms.

“There is space within the teaching of all subjects to foster an attitude of respect for all: to promote the value of diversity; to address prejudice and stereotyping and to highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour. In English, there is a wide range of literature available which could be used to stimulate discussion. In Civil, Social and Political Education (CSPE), the interdependence of people in communities at local, national and international levels is stressed. In Geography and History references to colonisation, exploitation and dictatorships could be used to illustrate the negative aspect of power. The work could be extended into many other areas such as Art, Drama, Religious Education, and Physical Education. Co-operation and group enterprise can be promoted through team sports, school clubs and societies as well as through practical subjects. Sporting activities in particular can provide excellent opportunities for channelling and learning how to control aggression.” (6.5.10 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools)

Good supervision and monitoring systems also facilitate early intervention. Supervision of breaks are organised on a rota basis. Each teacher has a responsibility to actively supervise their designated area during their allocated time slot.

Senior pupils in their role as prefects can be very effective in identifying potential problem areas.

Each First Year class is allocated a team of Senior Prefects to visit their Tutor class at least once a week.

A mentoring programme has been developed in the college through which 1st Years are linked up with 5th Year students.

Non-teaching staff can also be instrumental in alerting management to possible problems.

6. The School’s Procedures for Investigation

Recording of bullying behaviour and the established intervention strategies used by the school for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour are as follows:

- In dealing with a reported issue of alleged bullying the relevant teacher will investigate whether it has occurred. That teacher will work with the pastoral care structures in the school in recording and dealing with this issue.
- Each situation whether bullying or not should be recorded on accompanied templates (see Appendix 1) and stored by the relevant teachers.
- If it is decided between all relevant parties that Bullying has occurred, all reports will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher.
- In cases where it is determined that bullying has occurred the parents of the parties involved will be contacted.
- Where it has been determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour the school's Code of Behaviour will be applied. This will be a private matter between his/her parents and the school.
- Non-teaching staff should report any incidents of bullying witnessed by or mentioned to them to the Principal/Deputy Principals.
- Parents and pupils are required to co-operate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving the issues.
- Teachers will take a calm, unemotional and problem solving approach to incidents of alleged bullying. Teachers will record all actions between all parties and notes of meetings held.
- Incidents will usually be investigated outside the classroom to ensure the privacy of all concerned.
- If a group is involved each member will be interviewed individually as far as is practicable.

7. The School's Programme of Support

The school's proof of support for working with students affected by bullying is as follows:

- Students who have been involved in bullying incidents will be advised by Class Tutor/Year Head/Deputy Principal of the availability of the Guidance Counsellor
- The target of bullying may receive counselling to help her regain her self-esteem where affected.
- The student deemed to be the bully may also receive counselling to give him/her the opportunity to learn other ways of meeting his/her needs without violating the rights of others.
- Students who witnessed bullying are encouraged to discuss it with a teacher and if assistance with a Counsellor is required, their availability will be ascertained.

8. Supervision and Monitoring of Students

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.

9. Examples of bullying behaviours

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
- Peer Pressure whereby a student feels they are within a toxic friendship group or a particular person is threatening/isolating them if they refuse to do something.
- Any type of manipulation
- Any type of behaviour which attacks another person's self confidence
- Blackmail and intimidation
- 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
- Insulting or offensive gestures
- The 'look'
- Invasion of personal space
- A combination of any of the types listed.

Cyberbullying

Cyber Bullying has been defined as:

An aggressive, intentional act carried out by:

- A group or individual
- Using social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat etc... on a once off basis, repeatedly and/or over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself.
- Cyber bullying does not involve face to face or physical confrontation.
- It does not require any close proximity to the cyber victim.

- Cyber bullying can also be carried out anonymously.
- Disinhibition exists where young people say and do things online that they would never do face to face. It is conducted in an environment perceived as free from adult supervision. As the fear of discovery is absent, there is no perceived control on the cyber bully's behaviour that exists in 'real world' encounters.

Computers/Smartphones

- **Denigration:** Spreading rumours, 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 some from an online group
- **Frapping:** Hacking into a person's social networking account to send false/untrue messages or to change details while pretending to be that person
- **Cyber stalking:** Ongoing harassment and denigration that causes a person considerable fear for his/her safety
- Silent telephone/mobile phone call
- Abusive telephone/mobile phone calls
- Abusive text messages
- Abusive email
- Abusive posts or comments on any form of social media
- Any kind of abuse in a remote learning environment

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

This involves manipulating relationships as a means of bullying. Behaviours include:

- Malicious gossip/spreading rumours

Relational

- Isolation/exclusion from groups/ignoring
- 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 of terminology such as 'nerd' in a derogatory way

Sexual

- Unwelcome or inappropriate sexual comments or touching
- Harassment
- 'Slut shaming' where girls are targeted on social media or elsewhere and bullied through degradation/humiliation for their perceived sexual conduct

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

10. Investigating and Dealing with Incidents

The school's procedures for investigation, follow-up and recording of bullying behaviour and the established intervention strategies used by the school for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour are as follows:

- In investigating and dealing with bullying, the relevant teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved. Should the relevant teacher establish that bullying has occurred, appropriate records will be kept. The record template (Appendix 1) provided by the Department of Education and skills will be used in instances such as these.
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) and pupils are required to co-operate 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.
- Where possible incidents should be investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved;
- 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 in this way.
- 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 his/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. It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s).
- In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parent(s)/guardian(s) 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 parent(s)/guardian(s) 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 him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts should be made to try to get him/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 parent(s)/guardian(s)) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school;

Established intervention strategies

- Teacher interviews with all students.

- Negotiating agreements between students and following these up by monitoring progress. This can be on an informal basis or implemented through a more structured mediation process.
- Working with parent(s)/guardian(s) to support school interventions.
- No Blame Approach.
- Circle Time.
- Restorative interviews.
- Restorative conferencing.
- Implementing sociogram questionnaires.
- Peer mediation where suitable training has been given.

11. Support

The school's programme of support for working with students affected by bullying is as follows (see Section 6.8.16 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools):

- All in-school supports and opportunities will be provided for the pupils affected by bullying to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop friendships and social skills and build resilience e.g.
 - Pastoral care system
 - Tutor/Year head system
 - Guidance/Care team/Student Support Team
 - Group work
 - SPHE/RSE and within subject classes through a variety of activities and lessons
 - Guest speakers
 - Outside agencies such as Donegal Youth Services and Donegal Sexual Abuse and Rape Crisis Centre
 - An Garda Síochána
- If students require counselling or further supports the school will endeavour to liaise with the appropriate agencies to organise same. This may be for the pupil affected by bullying or involved in the bullying behaviour. Guidance staff may liaise with parents in relation to supports available from relevant agencies.
- Students should understand that there are no innocent bystanders and that all incidents of bullying behaviour must be reported to a teacher.

12. 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.

13. Policy Review

The school will monitor and evaluate the policy and all related work and procedures to ensure legal compliance and the maintenance of best practices.

This Anti-Bullying Policy was formally adopted by the Board of Management on 3rd February 2021.

Signature: Date:
(Chairperson, St. Columba's Board of Management)

Signature: Date:
(Principal)

Date for Review: February 2022

Appendix 1: Form 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))*

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Pupil concerned | |
| Other Pupil | |
| Parent | |
| Teacher | |
| Other | |

4. Location of incidents (tick relevant box(es))*

| | |
|----------------|--|
| On the grounds | |
| Classroom | |
| Corridor | |
| Toilets | |
| School Bus | |
| Other | |

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

| |
|--|
| |
|--|

9. Details of actions taken

| |
|--|
| |
|--|

Signed _____ (Relevant Teacher) Date _____

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal _____