

## Anti-Bullying Policy

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## Introduction

In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the Code of Behaviour Guidelines issued by the NEWB, St Patrick's College Lacken Cross has reviewed their 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.

We recognise the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of pupils and are therefore, fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour:

1. A positive school culture and climate which is welcoming of difference and diversity and encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour
2. Effective leadership
3. A school-wide approach
4. A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact
5. Implementation of education and prevention strategies.
6. Explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying.
7. Identity-based bullying such as homophobic bullying.
8. Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils
9. Supports for staff
10. Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour
11. On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

The school reserves the right to apply its bullying policy in respect of bullying that occurs at a location, activity, function or programme that is not school related if in the opinion of the Principal the alleged bullying has created a hostile environment in the school for the victim, has infringed on the rights of the victim at the school and or has materially or substantially disrupted the education process or the orderly operation of the school.

## Rationale

1. As a school we aim to provide a safe and secure environment for students and staff where effective teaching and learning can take place and where there are clear procedures for dealing with behaviour that compromises this environment. It has always been a priority for the school to provide this safe environment.
2. The Department of Education & Skills requires schools to have a written policy that deals with anti-bullying. Under Section 23 of the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 the management authority of a school is obliged to have a policy in place.
3. Schools also have obligations in relation to harassment and sexual harassment under the Equal Status Acts, 2000 to 2004.
4. The Equal Status Acts, 2000 to 2004 prohibit discrimination on nine specific grounds: gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller
5. Community. They also prohibit harassment on all of the discriminatory grounds. This includes harassment of students by principals, teachers or anyone in a position of responsibility in the school.
6. Chapter 6 of the [Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures for Post-Primary Schools](#), issued to all post primary schools in the school year 2004/2005, addresses the issue of peer abuse and bullying.
7. This document, which boards of management have been advised (under [Circular M44/05](#)) to formally adopt as the school's official policy on Child Protection, stresses the importance of having a policy in place to deal with bullying. It specifies that where a bullying incident is serious and where the behaviour involved is regarded as potentially abusive, the school should consult the Health Service Executive with a view to drawing up an appropriate response.

## Scope

This policy applies to the whole school community – students, teachers, other staff, parents/guardians and others insofar as measures under the policy relate to them. The anti-bullying policy addresses bullying behaviour and harassment.

Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim ETB must comply with the requirements of the Employment Equality Acts 1998 and 2004 and, in this regard, also has an anti-bullying and anti-harassment policy in place for staff (a statutory Code of Practice applies to harassment and sexual harassment in the workplace). The ‘Dignity in the Workplace’ policy covers interactions among staff only.

The proliferation of technology in schools and across all age-groups in society has resulted in possibilities for anti-social and bullying behaviour beyond the normal school day. Therefore, it is necessary for this policy to cover activities that happen during the regular school day, including breaks, on school tours or activities arranged by the school and at any other time where the behaviour impacts negatively on any other member of the school community or where it is deemed appropriate or necessary.

## Relationship to Mission Statement of the School

This policy promotes the essence of our mission statement

*We believe we can make a difference by providing a quality education to our students in a caring and respectful environment”*

## Objectives of the policy

- To create a school ethos which encourages students to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To raise awareness of bullying as an unacceptable form of behaviour with school management, personnel, teachers, students, parents/guardians.
- To create a school ethos that acknowledges, accommodates and respects a diversity of students across the nine grounds covered by the equality legislation.
- To ensure that the school’s Social, Personal and Health Education programme raises awareness of the factors associated with bullying behaviour and develops appropriate knowledge, skills and behaviours.
- To take practical actions to prevent incidents of bullying behaviour e.g. to ensure comprehensive supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of school activity are kept under observation.
- To develop procedures for reporting and recording incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To develop procedures for investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To develop a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and those involved in bullying behaviour.
- To work with, and through, the various local agencies in countering all forms of bullying and anti-social behaviour.
- These agencies include the HSE, An Garda Síochána, Mayo Youth Services, and NEPS.

## 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:

- Physical Aggression
- Intimidation
- Name calling
- Deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip

- Cyber-bullying
- Bullying based on a person's identity 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
- Damage to property
- Extortion

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 Cyber bullying behaviour.

## Cyber Bullying

Cyber-bullying can include any or more of the following

- Posting harsh messages or threats on a social network, profile or blog that belongs to either the victim or the perpetrator
- Uploading manipulated images or other images taken without the victim's knowledge or consent
- Using personal information disclosed by the victim against them in a different and damaging context
- Using the public forum to damage the victim's reputation
- Setting up a profile page or blog, posing as the victim, and posting provocative messages or humiliating posts.
- Sending offensive, threatening or hate SMS messages

Negative behaviour that does not meet these definitions of bullying will be dealt with in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour.

A comprehensive explanation of the types of bullying is set out above can be found in Section 2 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools. This can be viewed at <http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/Anti-Bullying-Procedures-for-Primary-and-Post-Primary-Schools.pdf>.

Encouraging other people to engage in any of these types of behaviour is also bullying, even if you do not directly do any of them yourself. In fact, in some ways it is even worse because it affects the people you persuade to do these things as well as the victim. Similarly, sitting idly by while bullying of another student takes place is also unacceptable. Inform someone who is in a position to intervene and stop this behaviour, e.g., a teacher or your parents etc.

For the purposes of this policy, the term bullying also encompasses harassment and sexual harassment, defined as follows:

- Harassment: any form of unwanted conduct in relation to any of the nine grounds named in the equality legislation that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading or offensive environment for the victim.
- Sexual harassment: any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading or offensive environment for the victim.

The nine grounds are gender, marital status, family status, age, disability, sexual orientation, race, religion, and membership of the Traveller community.

## Education and Prevention

Everybody has a role to play in preventing and eliminating bullying from the school. Prevention of bullying can be achieved by raising awareness of the dangers and consequences of bullying among all members of the school community and by minimising the opportunities for bullying to take place. It is the explicit aim of this school to foster an attitude of respect for all and to promote the value of diversity. St Patrick's College endeavours to be a "telling school" where it is responsible behaviour to report all incidents of alleged bullying.

**In the context of the school's Mission Statement the education and prevention strategies that will be used by the school are as follows:**

- Giving a positive example
- The Anti-Bullying policy will be discussed with the student body and the wider school community
- The Anti-Bullying policy will be regularly reviewed
- Provision of programmes particularly through SPHE classes, CSPE classes, the RSE programme in the senior cycle, the pastoral care structures in the school and other relevant curricular provision focused on developing pupils' awareness and understanding of bullying including its causes and effects
- Educate the school community to recognise the potential signs/symptoms that might suggest that a pupil is being bullied
- The provision of programmes to highlight the nature of and the effects of cyber bullying
- The provision of programmes educating pupils on appropriate online behaviour
- Development of a policy on the safe use of social network sites and its integration into the teaching, learning and use of IT
- The school will foster a culture of openness in reporting concerns around Bullying
- The provision of opportunities for students to develop a positive sense of self-worth through their curricular and extra-curricular programmes
- Visible signage of the school's zero tolerance stance on Bullying
- CPD for staff
- The promotion of a cross curricular approach to raise awareness of issues like prejudice, stereotyping, exploitation, aggression and the negative aspects of corrupt power and how it manifests itself in bullying behaviour
- Where appropriate the invitation to outside experts to address the school community (Parents' Association, Students and Staff)
- Implementation of good supervision and monitoring systems

## Student Behaviour

A student or group of students may, unwittingly or otherwise, engage in, instigate or reinforce bullying behaviour in a number of ways including: -

- Using sarcasm or other insulting or demeaning form of language when addressing members of the school community;
- Making negative comments about an individual's appearance or background
- Humiliating directly or indirectly members of the school community
- Using any gesture or expression of a threatening or intimidating nature, or any form of degrading physical contact;

## Role of the Student

You, the student in St. Patrick's College must accept that **'telling is o.k.** You may be reluctant to inform about the behaviour of fellow pupils, out of a sense of loyalty, but it is essential to report bullying. Don't suffer in silence and don't allow another student in your school to suffer either. You are encouraged to approach a member of staff if you are being bullied or if you are aware that another student is being targeted. You should understand that:

- The report will be taken seriously. It will be investigated and appropriate action taken.
- If you feel unable to make the issue public, information will be recorded, signed by you and the person to whom the report is made and kept on file should bullying persist
- In some cases the teacher might not be able to deal immediately with your concerns but will always organise a specific time to deal with you.
- Support is available

Pupils will receive the following guidelines from class tutors at the beginning of each school year and at intervals throughout the year.

- Care for each other and report any incidents of unkind behaviour or verbal abuse to any adult in the school.
- Support the pupil who is the recipient of hurtful behaviour. Remember it could be you.
- Think before you say unkind words and be aware of how your behaviour may be viewed by others.
- Never touch another pupil in an aggressive manner.
- Do not leave other pupils out of social activity. Make an effort to involve everyone whenever possible.

### **Staff Behaviour**

A Principal, Deputy Principal, teacher or ancillary staff may, unwittingly or otherwise, engage in, instigate or reinforce bullying behaviour in a number of ways including:

- Using sarcasm or other insulting or demeaning form of language when addressing members of the school community.
- Making negative comments about an individual's appearance or background.
- Humiliating directly or indirectly, a student who is particularly academically weak or outstanding, or vulnerable in other ways.
- Using any gesture or expression of a threatening or intimidating nature, or any form of degrading physical contact.

### **The Role of the Staff**

The Class Tutor and Year Head

- ⊥ Organise regular talks with class groups with bullying on the agenda
- ⊥ Note changes in friendship groups.
- ⊥ Observe closely the socialisation of new pupils.
- ⊥ Check on patterns of attendance and lateness, and sickness in school.
- ⊥ Liaise with parents if suspicious.
- Record activities on the school server if necessary.

### **The Subject Teacher**

- Note instances of withdrawn personality.
- ⊥ Be suspicious of a sudden drop in achievement.
- ⊥ Be careful of unintended outcomes when choosing groups or when partner work is involved.
- ⊥ Take time out to discuss bullying if the issue arises in your class, directly or indirectly
- ⊥ Talk to the class teacher or year head if you suspect anything unusual

### **The Special Needs Assistant (SNA)**

- ⊥ Be aware of the interactions between the student in your care and other pupils.
- ⊥ If you are concerned about any activity that affects the student in your care or if you are aware of any negative interactions between students please bring it to the attention of a teacher or school management.

### **Personnel on Supervision Duty**

- ⊥ Patrol areas which are not directly observable.
- ⊥ Note the occurrence of isolated pupils.
- ⊥ Observe inappropriate behaviour of pupils in the playground.
- ⊥ Bring any unusual occurrences to the attention of the year head, principal or deputy principal.

### **The Principal, Deputy Principal and Year Head**

- ⊥ Act immediately on parents' suspicions and investigate all matters even if they appear to be trivial.
- ⊥ Make a 'Report File' available on the server and have one person in charge of monitoring this file.
- ⊥ The Deputy Principal (or the Principal if the DP is unavailable) will keep a file on all incidences of reported bullying, including a report on the outcomes of investigations.

- ⊥ Arrange support for both victims and bullies, in consultation with the school counsellor and the parents.
- ⊥ Discuss with staff suitable sanctions where necessary.
- ⊥ Raise awareness through the curriculum, e.g. SPHE, RE etc.
- Give opportunities for pupils to discuss the ideas by setting aside a class period for the class tutor and his/ her class every half term.
- ⊥ Improve links with parents and the community through meetings and other activities
- ⊥ Peer Support and Student Council

The school is mindful of the fact that Parents and Guardians are an integral part of the community and asks for their support.

### **Parent/Guardian Behaviour**

Parents or Guardians may, unwittingly or otherwise, engage in, instigate or reinforce bullying behaviour in a number of ways:

- Through the use of electronic media.
- Using sarcasm or other insulting or demeaning form of language when addressing school personnel; making negative comments about an individual's appearance or background either in person or via social media.
- Humiliating directly or indirectly school personnel.
- Using any gesture or expression of a threatening or intimidating nature, or any form of degrading physical contact.

### **The Role of the Parents**

To safeguard your child and their friends you, the parents, are asked to report suspected instances of bullying if:

- ⊥ ⊥ Your child is a target.
- A friend of your child is a target
- Your child is involved in bullying

All information will, of course, be treated with the utmost discretion so that nobody will feel compromised by passing it on. For legal reasons confidentiality cannot be guaranteed - where the student is likely to harm, or be harmed by, another student.

### **Procedures for dealing with a Bullying Incident.**

#### **Introduction**

A consistent and clear approach to dealing with bullying when it occurs is essential to effective practice. 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:

The primary aims for the relevant teacher 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.

- Incidents of bullying will be investigated in the first instance by the Year Head / Deputy Principal in liaison with the Class Tutor.
- Incidents of bullying will be dealt with in the context of the school's Anti Bullying Policy in combination with the school's Code of Behaviour which is predicated on the basic principle of mutual respect.
- 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 after consultation with relevant staff.

It is important that **all** staff including non teaching staff (administration, maintenance and SNA) report incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them.

Parents 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

## **Specific Procedures**

**Every effort will be made to have the bullying behaviour viewed and examined from the perspective of the pupil who has been bullied Where disciplinary sanctions are to apply this will be a matter for the pupil being disciplined his/her parents and the school. It is not an issue for the victim.**

A “**Record of Bullying Behaviour**” form will be completed for reported incidents and retained by the Year Head and Deputy Principal in a designated file.

- Incidents of Bullying will be investigated outside the classroom situation with due regard to the rights of all pupils.
- Pupils not directly involved may also be interviewed to provide corroborating information
- Those involved will be asked to write down their account of the incident or to verify notes taken during the interviews
- Where groups are involved each member will be interviewed individually at first A group meeting may take place after the initial interviews where it is deemed productive

In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred the parents of the parties involved will be contacted.

- Parents will be informed of the events and the actions to be taken by the school.
- Parents will be given the opportunity to discuss ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school to change and or deter the bullying behaviour and or support the victim of bullying behaviour

Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has engaged in bullying behaviour it will be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the Anti-Bullying Policy and the school’s Code of Behaviour Following an assessment by the relevant teacher the school’s response to the bullying behaviour may be either pastoral or disciplinary.

## **Pastoral Response**

Where the incident is deemed to be minor or low level a pastoral approach will be adopted.

- A verbal warning will be given to stop the inappropriate behaviour pointing out how it is in breach of the Code of Behaviour.
- The parents will be informed.
- A referral to the school’s Guidance Counsellor may be made to provide support for both the victim and the perpetrator.
- Where deemed productive and with the agreement of the pupil who has been bullied and the parents of that pupil, the relevant teacher may arrange to bring the relevant parties together at a follow up meeting.
- Liaising with relevant staff and the victim the behaviour of the perpetrator will be monitored.

The incident will no longer be considered if there is no recurrence.

## **The Monitoring Process**

The Year Head will liaise with the Class Tutor and or the Guidance Counsellor to monitor the on-going behaviour of those involved. The monitoring process will be carried out by the Class Tutor in the first instance.

- The Class Tutor will meet with the pupil who has been bullied to ascertain if the bullying behaviour has ceased.
- The Year Head will meet with the pupil(s) who has/have engaged in bullying behaviour to ascertain whether they have reformed their behaviour and whether they continue to recognise what constitutes bullying behaviour as defined in the school's policy.
- The Year Head will report back to the Principal, Deputy Principal, class tutor as appropriate.

To determine whether a bullying case has been adequately or appropriately addressed the relevant teacher will as part of his/her professional judgement take the following factors into account.

- Has the bullying behaviour ceased?
- Have the issues between the parties been resolved as far as is practicable?
- Have the relationships between the parties been restored as far as is practicable?
- Feedback received from the parties involved, parents or the Deputy Principal or Principal and or other staff.

In cases where the relevant Year Head consider that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, it will then be referred to the Deputy Principal. This record will be retained on the student's file in accordance with the relevant Data protection legislation. This record will inform any further action to be undertaken by the school.

- Parents will be invited in to the school to discuss the matter.
- Appropriate sanctions will be imposed in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour
- Where the incident is deemed more serious (i.e. repeated verbal assault, coercion, physical assault, or gross misbehaviour) the matter will be reported to the Deputy Principal or Principal. Parents will be notified and an appropriate investigation conducted.

In serious cases the bullying behaviour will be recorded and reported immediately to the Deputy Principal or Principal.

This does not preclude the relevant teacher or any member of the school community from consulting with the Deputy Principal or the Principal at an earlier stage in any given case.

## **Disciplinary Response**

The school reserves the right to provide for an appropriate response to Bullying behaviour within the context of its Code of Behaviour. This may be any sanction recognised in the Code of Behaviour up to and including exclusion.

The school may, where necessary, provide for a referral to be made to relevant external agencies and authorities where appropriate. Referrals may be made to the, National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), the HSE Children and Family Services or the Gardai as appropriate

**In the case of a complaint regarding a staff member or from a staff member, this should be referred to the Principal immediately. The Dignity in the Workplace Charter should be referred to.**

**The Code of professional Conduct for Teachers, as published by the Teaching Council of Ireland provides the terms of reference for teachers in their daily interactions with students.**

## **Support for pupils affected by Bullying**

A programme of support for those pupils involved in bullying behaviour must also be part of the school's intervention process. Pupils involved in bullying behaviour need assistance on an on-going basis. The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows:

### **Pupils who have been bullied will be supported by:**

- Offering an immediate opportunity to discuss the experience with the Year Head, Deputy Principal, Principal or member of staff of their choice.
- Reassuring the pupil, using the support systems in the school (Class Tutor, Year Head, Guidance Counsellor etc.)
- Offering continuous support in attempting to restore self-esteem and confidence.

### **Pupils who have bullied will be helped by:**

- Discussing what happened
- Discovering why the pupil became involved
- Establishing the wrong doing and need to change
- Informing parents or guardians to help change the attitude of the pupil.

## **Links to other policies**

This policy is linked to several other policies. The associated policies include:

- The Code of Behaviour
- Dignity in the Workplace
- Children First- National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children
- St Patrick's College-Acceptable Use of the Internet
- St Patrick's College Health & Safety Policy

## **Implementation and Evaluation**

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

The Board of Management the Principal and the Management team are responsible for ensuring that the policy is implemented.

### **Success Criteria**

- The well-being of the whole school community, in the light of incidents of bullying behaviour encountered, will be the chief indicator of success.
- The number of reports of incidences over the course of the year will identify incidents and follow up interviews with these students will show the level of satisfaction of perpetrators and targets of bullying with the school's policy and procedures.

### **Evaluation**

The policy will be reviewed and evaluated annually, as required by Circular 045/2013. The review will be done by

- Random surveying of students, parents and staff by questionnaire.
- Examining the reports on bullying made during the year.
- Regular check in discussions with the class tutor and year head.
- Referral to useful resources through the SPHE, RE and CSPE programmes.
- Providing a forum through the Student Council for feedback from students as to how the policy is working
- Modelling respectful behaviour to all members of the school community at all times

This policy has been made available to school personnel, and is readily accessible to parents and pupils on request. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Parents' Association, the DES and the ETB if requested.

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the school management team once in every school year. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested available to the Parents' Association the DES and the ETB if requested.

### **Finally**

In our school, everybody is valued. We are all different that's what makes us special. The people in this school have the right to be themselves. They also have a responsibility to treat others as they would like to be treated.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2017  
[Date].

Signed: Brian Jennings (Principal)

Signed: Mary Kelly  
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Date: 12<sup>th</sup> October 2017