



St. Patrick's College
Lacken Cross, Killala - Co. Mayo

Anti-Bullying Policy

St Patrick's College
Lacken Cross
Killala
Co Mayo

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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, the Board of Management of St Patrick's College, Lacken Cross, Killala school 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:

1. 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;
 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 (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.

Defining 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*.

Relevant Teachers Involved in Investigating Incidents

The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows;

- Class Tutor
- Year Head
- Deputy Principal
- Principal

Staff, Parents, and pupils have a particularly key role and responsibility in helping the school to prevent and address school-based bullying behaviour and to deal with any negative impact within school of bullying behaviour that occurs elsewhere.

Educational and Preventative 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:

Publishing and Publicising an Anti-Bullying Policy

- Excerpts from the Anti-Bullying Policy will be visible throughout the school in corridors and classrooms.
- Anti bullying Posters on display in classrooms.
- It will be published on the school website: www.lackencross.ie
- Students and Parents shall sign the policy in the school journal.
- The Anti-Bullying Policy will be promoted at various occasions eg. parents' nights, first year enrolment and open nights.

Supervision and Monitoring

- Bullying "black spots" within the school will be identified and monitored during break times.
- Staff will be vigilant and follow the procedures as outlined in this policy as incidents arise.
- Students will be consulted via questionnaires throughout the school year.
- Student use of social media will be monitored. The Anti-Bullying Policy operates in conjunction with the school's Acceptable Use Policy.

Student Involvement

- Senior students will continue to assist First Years to the school through the *mentoring/paired reading* programme, thus helping the new student to "settle in".
- The Student Council supports the creation of a positive school atmosphere through the implementation of the Anti-Bullying policy.

Inclusion in the Curriculum and links to Curriculum Delivery

- In post-primary schools, Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) must be timetabled as part of the Junior Cycle core curriculum. Social, Personal and Health Education provides students with opportunities to develop the skills and competencies to care for themselves and others and to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives, and social development. The issue of bullying is dealt with in each of the three years of Junior Cycle Social, Personal and Health Education.
- The Social Personal and Health Education Senior Cycle curriculum currently being developed by the NCCA will also deal with issues related to bullying, including dealing with abusive behaviour and understanding the effects of homophobic bullying.
- CSPE: Linkages can be made within the "Human Dignity" and "Rights and Responsibilities" section of the curriculum that will encourage positive behaviour between students.
- Guidance and Counselling Service: Interviews will be held with First Year students to assess how they are settling in.
- Other links may include:
 - Transition Year courses
 - LCVP.
 - Guest Speakers - Foróige Real U etc.
 - Informal curriculum e.g., which extra-curricular activities can assist in raising awareness of the unacceptable nature of bullying behaviour and/or incorporate a focus on promoting equality and affirming diversity.

Link to Related School Policies

School policies need to be consistent with one another, within the framework of the overall School Plan. Relevant school policies already in place, being developed or reviewed should be examined by reference to the Anti-Bullying Policy and any implications which it has for them should be addressed.

The following policies may be among those considered:

- Code of Positive Behaviour.
- Child Protection.
- Internet Acceptable Use Policy.
- Health and Safety.
- Critical Incident Policy.
- SPHE/RSE Policy.
- Guidance and Counselling Programme.
- Attendance Policy.
- Admissions Policy.
- Induction for new staff and students.
- Pastoral Care Policy.

Involving Parents/Guardians and the Wider Community

- Awareness of the Anti-Bullying Policy will be raised on parents' nights e.g. First Year enrolment and open nights.
- There will be continued involvement with the local community to gain awareness of any existing problems.
- External speakers will be engaged for both students and parents where necessary.

Procedure for Investigating, Following Up and Recording 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 (see Section 6.8 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools)

Who to tell?

- Parents
- Any staff member with whom the student feels comfortable.
- Friends who will speak on your behalf.
- Deputy Principal.
- Tutor or Year Head.
- Guidance Counsellor.
- Student 'Mentor'.

How to tell?

- Direct approach to teacher at an appropriate time, e.g., after class, hand note up with homework or use the suggestion box in room 10.
- Make a phone call to the school or to a trusted teacher in the school.
- Email the school.
- Get a parent or friend to tell on your behalf.
- Parents can inform the school.
- Witnesses can inform appropriate person.
- Administration of a confidential questionnaire to all students during the year.

It is important to note that records of all incidents of bullying and action taken to resolve them will be kept.

Noting and Recording

- All incidents of alleged bullying will be recorded on an incident form (See appendices) and given to relevant Year Head.
- The relevant Tutor/Year Head will then decide on what action is to be taken.
- The Principal and Deputy Principal are responsible for maintaining files for security and confidentiality for at least seven years after they leave school.
- These files may be accessed by students/parents in the future.
- Comments made should be factual, non-judgmental and objective.

Procedures for Dealing with Reported Incidents

Procedures for Teachers

If a student informs you of an incident of bullying affecting either themselves or a friend, follow these steps:

- **Listen**; encourage the student to tell their story as this is a very important first step.
- **Take notes**; record all the details such as date, time, location, names of those involved, witnesses etc. student's own words must be recorded.
- **Reassure**; tell the student that help is available, action will be taken to

investigate, it is not their fault and that they will not have to face this on their own.

- Satisfy yourself that no student is in immediate danger.
- Confidentiality is respected and the student's privacy is protected, but a teacher must not give guarantees not to tell anyone.
- Inform the Year Head without delay. Complete Incident Form for recording bullying behaviour (Appendix 3)
- All serious incidents of bullying (e.g., an assault or long-term exclusion) **must** be reported to the Principal straight away.

Procedures for Staff Member Investigating the Reported Incident

Actions may include the following and may incorporate elements of 1 or more of the six main responses to addressing bullying behaviour (1. Traditional Disciplinary Approach, 2. Strengthening the Victim, 3. Mediation, 4. Restorative Practice, 5. The Support Group Method, 6. The Method of Shared Concern)

- Have the student reporting bullying write down the behaviours and how it is affecting them as early as possible.
- Talk with alleged bully about their behaviour and their experiences of incidents
- Have the alleged bully write down an account of their behaviours and their effects as early as possible.
- Challenge bullying behaviour as being unacceptable.
- Discuss possible solutions with both parties separately/together if appropriate.
- The Guidance Counsellor may be involved if required.
- Write down a record of all meetings.
- Inform the Year Head of the incident.
- Refer complainant to Guidance Counsellor.
- Make further appointment to discuss situation with complainant and/or other relevant individuals.
- Record details of complaint on official form.
- The evidence will be evaluated by management and fair appropriate action will be taken in accordance with the code of behaviour.
- It is vital that the person reporting the incident is protected from Whoever is dealing with the incident must be discreet and careful. Staff will support students who report bullying by conducting follow-up meetings with them.

Follow-up steps to be taken

- The students involved will be monitored on a regular basis by informal discussions.
- Counselling may be offered to all concerned.
- If necessary, the parents will be invited to a meeting with management.
- If bullying persists the Board of Management will be informed.

Procedures for Student to Staff Bullying

- Teacher(s) to speak to students involved.
- Explain unacceptable behaviour as in policy.
- Explore a working solution.
- Refer to Deputy Principal and Principal.
- Request meeting with parents.

Procedures for Staff to Student Bullying

- We recommend that students talk to Deputy Principal or Principal .
- Principal will discuss the allegation with the teacher involved.
- Explore a working solution.
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Procedures for Staff to Staff Bullying

Procedures to be followed in accordance with the Dignity at Work Act.

The school's programme of supporting for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows:

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.

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 MSL ETB if requested.

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.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on _____ [date].

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department if requested.

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year. Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, published on the school website (or where none exists, be otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parents' Association (where one exists). A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

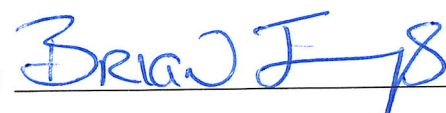
The following evaluation tools may be used to review and evaluate the Anti-Bullying Policy.

Possible methods of review:

Random Surveys.
Staff meetings.
Parents meetings.
Feedback from the student body, SPHE class/Focus Groups

Signed: 
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Date: 12/3/25

Signed: 
(Principal)

Date: 12/03/25

