

Coachford College Anti-Bullying Policy, 24.03.2014

1. 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 Coachford 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.
2. 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. Coachford College's Mission Statement sets the context for the school's attitude to incidents of bullying: We are a community. Together we share mutual respect in a positive environment. We develop individual potential in all fields.
4. 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*.

5. The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying is (are) as follows:

Year Head(s)

The Guidance Counsellor

The Chaplain

The Special Needs Co-ordinator

The Deputy Principal

The Principal.

6. 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:

The school aims to develop a positive school culture and climate which encourages respect, trust, care, consideration and support for others by providing effective leadership in relation to anti bullying measures. The school aims to develop a shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact by prioritising anti bullying procedures at staff meetings, parent council meetings, student council meetings and Board of Management meetings in the 2013-2014 school year. It is hoped these discussions will lead to a school wide approach to deal with the problem of bullying behaviour.

The school will refer to the national anti-bullying website which will be available shortly where necessary.

The school actively promotes the right of every member of the school community to be safe and secure in school.

Educational strategies

Cross-curricular Approaches

Coachford College aims to make provision for exploring bullying and its inter-related areas on a cross-curricular level. The issues explored across a diverse range of subjects such as:

1. The SPHE curriculum makes specific provision for exploring bullying and many inter related areas.
2. The RSE programme provides opportunities to explore such areas as human sexuality and relationships, which has particular relevance to identity based bullying.
3. CSPE provides opportunities for students to examine online privacy in the context of rights and responsibilities, raise awareness of cyber bullying in their school communities, and create a class school charter of online rights and responsibilities.
4. Physical Education classes and sporting activities including hurling, football, camogie and ladies football, can provide opportunities for channelling and learning how to control aggression. They also provide an opportunity to build school spirit.
5. All subjects allow space to foster an attitude of respect for all.

Preventative strategies

1. The school aims to provide effective supervision of pupils by
 - (a) Identifying 'hotspots'(that being where bullying incidents are most likely to occur)
 - The corridor area outside 8B and 9B
 - Travelling on school buses
 - Empty classrooms
 - Toilets
 - The narrow area of the C corridor (outside 6C-8C)
 - The changing rooms
 - (b) Identifying 'hot times' (that being when bullying incidents are most likely to occur)
 - The changeover of classes
 - At the end of the school day as pupils exit at the exit near IA
 - Break times
 - At the start of the school day
2. At appropriate opportunities, teachers will explicitly teach pupils what respectful language and respectful behaviour consists of both in class and around the school.
3. Relevant maxims are displayed in classrooms, in assembly areas and around the school. Pupils are involved in the development of these messages. An example of this would be the students' involvement in drawing up the schools mission statement.

4. The school will consistently tackle the use of discriminatory and derogatory language in the school – this includes homophobic and racist language and language that is belittling of pupils with a disability or SEN.
5. The school gives constructive feedback to pupils when respectful behaviour and respectful language are absent.
6. The school has a system of encouragement and rewards to promote desired behaviour and compliance with the school rules and routines. Desired respectful behaviour will be acknowledged. Examples include 'Student of the Year', 'Endeavour award', the accolade of becoming 'Head Boy' and 'Head Girl'. A collaborative 'buddy System' between transition year and 1st year students is in operation.
7. The school explicitly teaches pupils about the appropriate use of social media. In the 2013-2014 school year, the transition year group, in conjunction with Trend Micro delivered a peer education internet safety programme to junior classes.
8. Pupils are positively encouraged to comply with the school rules on mobile phone and internet use. There is appropriate follow up and follow through with pupils who ignore the rules.
9. The school highlights and explicitly teaches school rules in pupil friendly language in the classroom and in common areas, particularly at the beginning of the school year. Tutorial classes provide an opportunity for rules to be discussed. It is a requirement that all parents and students sign a code of behaviour, which is agreed by all parties, thereby agreeing to abide by the rules of the school community.
10. All staff can actively watch out for signs of bullying behaviour. In the event of concern staff can consult the pastoral care team.
11. The school supports the establishment and work of student councils. Meetings of the council are convened regularly. Students are elected democratically.
12. All members of the school community model respectful behaviour towards each other at all times.
13. The school will strive to foster and promote desired, respectful behaviour using positive reinforcement.

It is the intention of the school to regularly review and evaluate its prevention strategies

7. 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:

Pupils who observe incidents of bullying behaviour are encouraged to discuss them with teachers.

The primary aim 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);

Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), caretakers and cleaners are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher;

It is very important that all involved (including each set of pupils and parents) understand the schools' approach from the outset;

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;

All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. In that way pupils will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It should be made clear to all pupils that when they report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly;

Parents 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 when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents;

Incidents are generally best 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, if appropriate. 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;

If it is deemed fitting, each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that they may face from the other members of the group after interview by the relevant school staff;

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 parents of the parties involved may 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 parents an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports for their 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 parents) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parents and the school;

In some circumstances, follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved may be arranged separately with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date if the pupil who has been bullied is ready and agreeable;

In cases where the relevant teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, it must be recorded by the relevant teacher in the recording template at Appendix 3 (See Section 6.8.10 (iii));

In certain cases, the advice of NEPS will be sought.

Where the behaviour is regarded as potentially abusive, the school will consult the HSE Children and Family Social Services. It may also be reported to the HSE and /or Gardai.

A programme of support is provided for the pupil(s) being bullied, and the pupil(s) who have been involved in the bullying-they may need assistance on an ongoing basis, (see section 7).

In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant teacher will, as part of his/her professional judgement, take the following factors into account:

- a. Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased;
- b. Whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable;
- c. Whether the relationships between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable; and
- d. Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the school Principal or Deputy Principal;

Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures;

In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

Procedures for recording bullying behaviour

The Board of Management must ensure that the school has clear procedures for the formal noting and reporting of bullying behaviour and these must be documented in the school's anti-bullying policy. All records must be maintained in accordance with relevant data protection legislation. The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour must adhere to the following:

While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the relevant teacher will use his/her professional judgement in relation to the records to be kept of these reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same;

The relevant teacher must keep appropriate written records which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues.

The relevant teacher must use the recording template at Appendix 3 in the following circumstances:

- (A) If he /she considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately addressed within 20 days after the bullying has occurred.
- (B) In certain circumstances bullying behaviour must be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal

Data gathered from reports of bullying incidents must be regularly collated and analysed. A record of this must be made available to the BOM.

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

The Student Support Team (SST) is comprised of the Guidance Counsellor, the Chaplain and the Special Needs Co-ordinator.

Details of the school's programmes for working with students affected by bullying are:

Student Support Team (SST): In the event of a bullying incident the student making the complaint is offered support.

- The student is referred to the SST by the relevant teacher, where pastoral support is offered.
- If the support is accepted, the SST team will meet with the student.

- The SST links with parents where appropriate.
- The SST links with the relevant teacher.
- Where appropriate, the SST will offer support to the ‘alleged’ bully.
- In certain circumstances mediation may be the best option, this can be facilitated by the SST, in order to restore good relationships.
- With permission of parents and student(s), the advice of outside agencies may be sought.
- On-going support may be provided for the student(s) to enhance their self-esteem, build confidence and explore future coping strategies.

Programmes of Support in the school include:

- SPHE –Junior Cycle Programme
- Senior Cycle – RSE Programme
- Rainbows – Bereavement and Loss Programme
- Workshops on Anti-Bullying & Student Mental Health
- Mentoring Programme (1st Year-TY Buddy System)
- NEPS / HSE advice
- Child Protection Services
- Pastoral Care/Student Support Services Notice Boards for Students (create positive school climate, which include contact details of support services within and outside the school)
- Staff Support from the Student Support Team

9. 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.

10. 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.

11. This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on _____ [date].
12. This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website (or where none exists, is otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parents’ Association (where one exists). A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.
13. 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.

Signed: Archdeacon Robin Bantry White
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Date: 24.03.2014

Signed: Patrick O’Connor
(Principal)

Date: 24.03.2014

Date of next review: the date of the next review of the anti-bullying policy is the date of the fourth meeting of the Board of Management in the 2014/2015 school year.