

Coachford College

Anti-Bullying Policy



1. General

1.1. **Scope**

The policy applies to the students of Coachford College, to their parents/guardians and to the staff of the school.

1.2. Relationship to the school's mission and characteristic spirit

Coachford College is a community. Together we share mutual respect in a positive environment. We develop individual potential in all fields. As an inclusive post-primary school which aims to provide a safe, secure, welcoming and ordered community, Coachford College seeks to develop the individual potential of each student academically, socially, personally and morally and to respect both themselves and others. The school's Mission Statement sets the context for the school's attitude to incidents of bullying.

1.3. **Context**

This policy has been devised following consultation with all members of the school community and in keeping with the school's characteristic spirit and Wellbeing programme. It should be read in conjunction with the school's Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment, Health and Safety Statement, Discipline Policy, Acceptable Use of Technology Policy, Pastoral Care Policy, Discipline Policy, Policy on School Outings, Acceptable Use of Technology Policy and Data Protection Policy.

1.4. **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 Coachford College has adopted this policy within the framework of the school's overall Discipline Policy. The policy fully complies with the requirements of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* (2013).

1.4. Objectives

The Board of Management recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of students and is therefore fully committed to the creation and maintainance of a positive school culture and climate which:

- is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity;
- encourages students to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment; and
- promotes respectful relationships across the school community;
- has effective leadership;
- has a school-wide approach to student wellbeing;
- has a shared understanding of what bullying is and of its impact;
- implements educational and preventative strategies (including awareness raising measures) which build empathy, respect and resilience in students,
- explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.
- effectively supervises and monitors its students;
- supports staff;
- consistently records, investigates and follows up on bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies); and
- evaluates on an ongoing basis the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

2. Policy content

2.1. 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 or family

structure, and bullying of those with disabilities, special educational needs or any other reason.

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 Discipline 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*.

2.2. Education

The educational 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:

1. 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 through the school's Wellbeing programme, at staff meetings, Parent Council meetings, Student Council meetings and Board of Management meetings. It is hoped these discussions will lead to a school wide approach to deal with the problem of bullying behaviour.
2. The school will refer to the national anti-bullying website <http://www.tacklebullying.ie/> where necessary.
3. The school actively promotes the right of every member of the school community to be safe and secure in school.
4. Coachford College aims to make provision for exploring bullying and its inter-related areas on a cross-curricular level. Issues related to bullying are explored across a diverse range of subjects such as:
 - a) The Wellbeing curriculum: SPHE makes specific provision for exploring bullying and many inter-related areas. 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. Physical Education classes and sporting activities including hurling, football, camogie and ladies football, can provide opportunities for channelling and learning how to control aggression and negative feelings. They also provide an opportunity to build school spirit.

- b) The RSE programme provides opportunities to explore such areas as human sexuality and relationships, which has particular relevance to identity based bullying.
- c) All subjects allow space to foster an attitude of respect for all.

2.3. Preventative strategies

1. The school aims to provide effective supervision of students by
 - (a) Identifying 'hotspots' (that being where bullying incidents are most likely to occur), such as:
 - Specific corridors or areas on the school site;
 - Empty classrooms;
 - Toilets and wash areas;
 - Changing rooms.
 - (b) Identifying 'hot times' (that being when bullying incidents are most likely to occur), such as:
 - The changeover of classes;
 - At the end of the school day as pupils exit;
 - Break times;
 - At the start of the school day.
2. At appropriate opportunities, teachers will explicitly teach students what respectful language and respectful behaviour consists of both in class and around the school.
3. Relevant messages are displayed in classrooms, in assembly areas and around the school. Students are involved in the development of same.
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 students 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'.
7. Students are taught about the appropriate use of social media.

8. Students are positively encouraged to comply with the school rules on mobile phone and internet use. There is appropriate follow up and follow through with students who ignore the rules.
9. The school highlights and explicitly teaches school rules in student-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 actively watch out for signs of bullying behaviour. In the event of concern staff consult the Student Support Team and/or Year Head.
11. The school supports the establishment and work of the Student Council. 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.
14. The school will regularly review and evaluate its prevention strategies.

2.4. Investigation of Bullying

The relevant teachers for the investigation of and dealing with Bullying are:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Year Heads, including The Programme Co-ordinator● Assistant Principals, excluding members of the Student Support Team● Deputy Principal● Principal. |
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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:

1. Students who observe incidents of bullying behaviour are encouraged to discuss them with teachers.
2. 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).
3. 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.

4. It is very important that all involved (including students and parents/guardians) understand the school's approach from the outset.
5. 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.
6. All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. In that way students gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It should be made clear to all students that when they report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.
7. 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.
8. Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents.
9. Incidents are generally best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.
10. All interviews should be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all students concerned. Students who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this manner.
11. 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.
12. 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.
13. If it is deemed fitting, each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that they may face them from the other members of the group after interview by the relevant school staff.
14. It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s).
15. In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents/guardians 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/guardians an opportunity to discuss ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports for their students.

16. Where the relevant teacher has determined that a student 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.
17. It must also be made clear to all involved (students and parents/guardians) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the student being disciplined, his or her parents/guardians and the school;
18. 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 student who has been bullied is ready and agreeable.
19. 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));
20. In certain cases, the advice of NEPS will be sought.
21. The school will consult with Tusla, in accordance with the requirements of *Child Protection Guidelines for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2017)*.
22. A programme of support is provided for the student(s) being bullied, and the student(s) who have been involved in the bullying, who may need assistance on an ongoing basis, (see Section 3 below).
23. 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:
 - Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased;
 - Whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable;
 - Whether the relationships between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable; and
 - Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents/guardians or the school Principal or Deputy Principal.

24. Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents/guardians must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures;
25. 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.

2.5. Procedures for recording bullying behaviour

The school's procedures for the formal noting and reporting of bullying behaviour are as follows:

1. The school's Relevant Teachers are Year Heads including The Programme Co-ordinator, Assistant Principals excluding members of the Student Support Team, the Deputy Principal, the Principal.
2. When a member of staff becomes aware of a bullying issue involving students, then that member of staff must report that matter to a Relevant Teacher in writing.
3. The Relevant Teacher receiving the report of a bullying issue must log the report in the student's file in keeping with the requirements of the school's Data Protection Policy, GDPR and Records Retention Schedule. When the work of the Relevant Teacher is completed, a report must be filed accordingly.
4. When dealing with bullying, a Relevant Teacher may opt to set up a team , inclusive of the Relevant Teacher, consisting of:
 - i. At least one Year Head;
 - ii. At least one of the Deputy Principals or the Principal;
 - iii. At least one Assistant Principal.

All records must be maintained in accordance with the school's Data Protection Policy. The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour must adhere to the following:

1. 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.
2. The relevant teacher must keep appropriate written records which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues.
3. The relevant teacher must use the recording template at Appendix 3 in the following circumstances:

- If he /she considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately addressed within 20 days after the bullying has occurred;
 - In certain circumstances bullying behaviour must be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal.
4. Data gathered from reports of bullying incidents must be regularly collated and analysed. A record of this must be made available to the Board of Management.

3. Student Support

3.1. Programme of support for students affected by bullying

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

(a) 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 support is offered.
- If the support is accepted, the SST team will meet with the student.
- The SST links with parents/guardians 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.
- The advice of outside agencies, e.g. Tusla, 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.

(b) Programmes of Support in the school include:

- Junior Cycle Wellbeing programme
- Senior Cycle RSE Programme
- Workshops on Anti-Bullying & Student Mental Health
- Mentoring Programme
- NEPS / Tusla advice
- 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

3.2. Supervision and Monitoring of Students

The Board of Management confirms that appropriate policies and procedures are in place to both prevent and deal with bullying behaviour and to facilitate early intervention where possible.

4. 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 students or staff or the harassment of students 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.

5. Oversight

The Board of Management shall, at every meeting, oversee Child Protection concerns which have arisen from alleged bullying behaviour, as relevant, in accordance with Sections 9.4 to 9.8 of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* (2017).

This policy was adopted, following review by the Board of Management, on March 5th 2019, having been signed by Fr. Peadar Murphy, Chairperson of the Board of Management and Áine-Máire Ní Fhaoláin, Principal.

It has been made available to all members of the school community and is published on the school website.

The policy will be reviewed annually and/or as deemed necessary. Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Council.