

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

This policy should be read, and its implementation understood, in conjunction with other relevant school policies including, for example, the school's Code of Behaviour.

MISSION STATEMENT

We encourage our students to be sensitive to the rights, needs and dignity of others. Our school community believes that each student has the right to an education free from fear and intimidation. Bullying is not tolerated, and there are procedures in place for preventing bullying and dealing with any instance which may occur.

AIMS OF THE POLICY

This policy aims to foster an ethos which:

- raises awareness of bullying as unacceptable behaviour
- encourages students to disclose confidentially incidents of bullying behaviour
- encourages all members of the school community to look out for and after one another
- dispels a culture of secrecy in which a student might feel a sense of hopelessness and futility against the power being exercised by those involved in bullying behaviour
- ensures partnership between students, teachers and parents in the implementation of this policy

DEFINITION

Bullying is repeated aggression or other inappropriate behaviour, whether physical, verbal or psychological, conducted by an individual or group with the intent to harm or undermine the confidence of others. This should not be confused with the good-natured banter that occurs as part of the normal social interchange between students or within the limits of normal professional classroom management by teachers.

Inappropriate behaviour of the type referred to would include the following: humiliation; verbal, physical or psychological abuse; aggressive or obscene language; name calling or taunting; offensive jokes; victimisation; exclusion and isolation; interference with locker/personal possessions or any other intrusion on personal space/privacy; threats of blackmail; any attack on an individual's reputation; use of sexual, homophobic or racist comments; unpleasant notes/phone calls/text messages/emails or other cyber-bullying; any other repeated unkind behaviour.

This behaviour might occur at school, on the way to or from school, on school sponsored trips, or in any other school-related context. Cyber bullying which occurs outside of school should be reported to the relevant bodies (hosting websites, service providers and/or Gardai).

ALL STUDENTS HAVE BOTH RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Every student has the right to:

- be treated with respect
- be physically safe
- expect his/her property to be safe
- be free from all forms of verbal bullying
- be free from extortion
- be free from emotional bullying
- be free from any hurtful remarks regarding his/her abilities, ethnicity, religion, culture, or sexual orientation.

Every student has the responsibility to ensure that:

- others are treated with respect at all times
- the physical safety of others is not endangered
- the property of others is not endangered/damaged/destroyed
- others are free from verbal bullying
- others are free from extortion
- others are free from emotional bullying
- others are free from hurtful remarks regarding their abilities, ethnicity, religion, culture, or sexual orientation.

N.B. These lists do not purport to be exhaustive.

CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

Behaviour which contributes to intimidation and bullying directly contravenes the school's code of behaviour, which states that “- - - all students will have care, concern and respect for the safety and well-being of all persons living in, attending and working in the school. High standards of self-respect and respect for others are expected”.

PREVENTATIVE STRATEGIES

Prevention of bullying is fostered through a variety of strategies including peer mentoring, and awareness-raising in Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE), Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), Religious Education (RE) and, when relevant, in other subject areas. As appropriate, time is also devoted to prevention of bullying at the weekly Form Teacher/Form class meeting. A Friendship theme week is held early in each school year.

SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS

For the victim, the act of telling someone can be therapeutic. A teacher who has been contacted by a student will find a suitable time and location and allow the student time to tell his/her story. The teacher will seek to reassure as follows:

- help is available
- action will be taken
- telling is the correct and responsible thing to do as nobody should have to put up with bullying

The teacher will also need to be satisfied with regard to the student's personal safety; if there is any risk, suitable arrangements will be made.

The student will also be made aware that confidentiality cannot be absolute (please refer to the Guidance and Counselling Policy, specifically the Code of Ethics). However, only those who need to know will be told, and a reason will be given as to why relevant information may need to be shared with others.

REPORTING BULLYING

It is the duty of everyone who sees/ is aware of an instance of bullying, or potential bullying, to act to stop it – this duty applies to all students, all teachers and all other members of staff.

Students are made aware that when they report incidents of bullying they are not telling tales but are behaving responsibly.

Students should report instances of bullying in any of the following ways:

- direct approach to the Form Teacher or any teacher with whom the student is comfortable;
- a written note with homework;
- signed notes in the Anti-Bullying Box (located outside the Headmaster's office);
- asking a Prefect, friend or parent to report.

PROCEDURES FOR INVESTIGATING /DEALING WITH BULLYING

Teachers investigating bullying are advised to take a calm, unemotional and non-confrontational approach when dealing with reports of bullying behaviour. Both alleged victim and alleged perpetrator will be interviewed individually by appropriate personnel and records kept. All interviews will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all students concerned. The general aim will be to ease tension, establish the truth and resolve conflict. The alleged victim and alleged perpetrator may be asked to write down any relevant details. Students who are not directly involved may also be interviewed as they can often provide very useful information.

For a minor incident, if appropriate and safe, a verbal warning will be given to the perpetrator, who will be asked to stop his/her unacceptable behaviour; the perpetrator will be told that his/her behaviour is in breach of the school's Code of Behaviour, and will be asked to see the situation from the victim's point of view. Parents may be contacted if necessary, and the form teacher will be informed.

If the behaviour persists, the parents/guardians of the victim and of the perpetrator will be informed, allowing them an opportunity to discuss the matter and support their children before a crisis occurs. The perpetrator may be required to complete a “Student Behaviour Promise” form (also signed by parents/guardians).

If a serious incident occurs, the matter will be reported immediately to the Year Head and/or Deputy Principal. Parents will then be informed and, following investigation, sanctions applied where appropriate.

Perpetrators and victims may be referred to counselling if appropriate.

Complaints regarding a staff member must be referred immediately to the Headmaster.

PERSISTENT BULLYING

In the case of persistent bullying, planning steps to intervene may take more time. The parents of the victim should be involved at this stage. The school management may need to be involved. Students who are repeatedly bullied or who persistently bully others may need additional support and referral to the Psychological Services.