



Coláiste Mhuire Co-Ed

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY



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Bord Oideachais agus
Oiliúna Thiobraid Árann
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Coláiste Mhuire Co-Ed

Anti-Bullying Policy

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 Coláiste Mhuire Co-Ed 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. 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*.

- a. An 'Anti- Bullying Team', made up of staff members, exists to cultivate an environment free from bullying and to deal with bullying incidents, should they occur.
- b. The immediate priority, should a bullying incident occur, is ending the bullying and protecting the person (s) being targeted while avoiding any consequent negative repercussions.
- c. All students are expected to contribute to the creation and maintenance of a safe environment within the school. On becoming aware of any instance of bullying, in or outside the school, involving members of the school community they should notify a responsible adult, preferably a member of the 'Anti- Bullying Team'. Bullying is too serious not to report.
- d. Pupils' participation in school life in general is encouraged through existing school structures. Awareness of bullying, and willingness to take action to prevent or stop it, is part of this participation.

4. The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying is (are) as follows: (see Section 6.8 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools):

Principal – Denis Quinn

Deputy Principal – Clare Wallace

Year Heads –Josephine Cahill, John Brennan, Dara Fahy, PJ O'Connell (as appropriate to year level)

Programme Coordinator - Ann Conroy (as appropriate to year level)

Teachers – Mary C Ryan

5. 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 (see Section 6.5 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools):

- In fulfilment of these guidelines Coláiste Mhuire Co- Ed, operates a two-strand approach to bullying;
- Strand one is a programme of awareness raising about the nature and unacceptability of bullying.
- Strand two is the school's system of investigation of, and response to bullying incidents if they arise.

Strand One:

Raising Awareness - Proactively explaining the nature and variety, causes, consequences and unacceptability of bullying.

As part of the first year transition programme – “belonging plus” the Guidance Department delivers a series of lessons on anti-bullying. The Guidance Department also meets with all first year students to discuss their transition to post-primary and as part of this meeting they attempt to determine if a student has been bullied or knows someone who is a victim of bullying. In the wellbeing week the Guidance Department delivers a top up at an age appropriate level with all year groups.

Through the medium of a “Well-being Week” programme the following ideals are established;

- Students are helped to examine the issue of bullying in a calm rational way, outside the tense context of particular bullying incidents. In the process they are made more aware of the nature of bullying and the various forms it can take.
- Students are made aware that the consequences of bullying behaviour are always bad for those who are targeted, even if this is not always obvious at the time.
- Students are encouraged to recognise, reject and report bullying behaviour, either spontaneously or through questionnaires. There is also an email support@cmco.ie and a post-box (outside the staffroom) where students can post concerns.

- Coláiste Mhuire Co- Ed follows a programme of an “Anti- Bullying Charter” which is displayed in prominent places within our school. Staff are encouraged to be vigilant in watching out for signs of bullying and to report any suspicion of bullying they may have to a member the “Anti-bullying Team.”
- Through regular reports in school newsletters and other communications as well as at meetings of parent groups, parents are regularly informed of the activities of the school “Anti Bullying Team” and encouraged to support its work.

6. 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:

Strand One:

Investigating bullying- initially a no-blame approach but the **behaviour** is taken very seriously. The school “Anti- Bullying Team” investigates all instances of reported or suspected bullying behaviour, whether these take place within the school or outside it, with a view to establishing the facts and bringing any such behaviour to an end.

The school through the “Staff Anti Bullying Team” reserves the right to ask any student to write an account of what happened, as part of an investigation. This will be standard procedure and does not necessarily imply that a student is guilty of misbehaviour.

Students who are alleged to have been involved in bullying behaviour are interviewed by a member of the “Anti- Bullying Team” to establish the nature and extent of the behaviour and the reasons for it. In the event that they have been involved in bullying behaviour, and it is the first time the student is involved in bullying, the student is spoken to by members of the anti-bullying team. The student is given a verbal warning and referred to the guidance counsellor for further follow up. If the student is found to be engaged in bullying behaviour for a second time, they are asked to sign a binding promise that they will treat all students fairly, equally and respectfully including the targeted student.

When an investigation is completed and/or a bullying situation is resolved the “Staff Anti-Bullying Team” members involved will prepare a report, to include the findings of its investigation, strategy adopted and the outcome of the intervention, as well as any other relevant information.

The “Anti- Bullying Team” does not apportion blame but rather treats bullying behaviour as a “mistake” that can and must be remedied. It emphasises that its intention is not to punish perpetrators but to talk to them, to explain how harmful and hurtful bullying is and to seek a promise that it will stop. If that promise is forthcoming and is honoured there will be no penalty and that will be the end of the matter. Students who report bullying therefore are not getting others “in trouble” so much as enabling them to get out of trouble into which they may ultimately get into if the bullying continues.

If a student has signed such a promise but then chooses to break that promise and continue the bullying behaviour, this can then no longer be considered a “mistake”. In this event parents will be informed and requested to countersign their son/daughters promise. Breach of this additional promise is regarded as a very grave matter and serious sanction may be imposed by the school authorities. In line with the school’s code of discipline, bullying is a major breach of responsibility. In some incidents it may be considered an extreme breach. The school’s code of behaviour outlines the range of sanctions that may be imposed for students who breach responsibilities and how the discipline process is used in this regard. (see the Code of Behaviour for more information in this regard).

All documentation regarding bullying is retained securely in the school.

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

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);

A programme of support for both parties will be put in place. This will involve referral to the school guidance counsellor or the behaviour for learning teacher, follow up with the home through the HSCL and possible work with the SCP staff to look at appropriate programmes (e.g. self-esteem, retracking etc).

A Wellbeing week is run every year to encourage reporting of bullying.

Where it is felt that the bullying incident is part of a continuum of behaviour rather than a stand-alone issue the bullying incident will be dealt with in accordance with our reporting system and where issues are serious the advice of the NEPS psychologist will be sought.

Where the incident is serious and where the behaviour is regarded as potentially abusive, the school may consult the HSE Children and Family Social Services with a view to drawing up an appropriate response, such as a management plan.

8. 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.

9. Prevention of Harassment of Staff and Students

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.

- 10.** This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website, is otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parents' Association.

- 11.** 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 and provided to the Parents' Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.