

## Anti-Bullying Policy

### RATIONALE

If children are to make progress in their education, the environment for learning should be safe and caring. Every child has the right to:

- Be educated in a safe secure environment where their moral, intellectual, personal and social development is promoted.
- Their parents and carers being informed and re-assured that their children are being educated in a safe, caring and respectful atmosphere.

### BULLYING

Bullying behaviour is demeaning, frightening and emotionally damaging and the effect on the individual who is bullied can be long term. All forms of bullying behaviour are wholly unacceptable. Allowing bullying behaviour to go unchallenged results in a failure to provide a safe educational environment, consequently management has a responsibility to ensure that the whole school community and all educational professionals are pro-active in the prevention of bullying and where it occurs, adequate steps are taken to deal with the issues.

### Definition of Bullying:

**Bullying is defined as the repeated use of power by one or more people intentionally to harm, hurt or adversely affect the rights and needs of another or others.**

Bullying can be described as repeated aggression: verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against others. It can be hitting, name calling, ostracising, damaging or stealing a person's property as well as racial, sexual and disability harassment.

Isolated incidents of aggressive behaviour, which are by no means condoned, can scarcely be described as bullying. However, when the behaviour is systematic and on-going it is bullying. A once off incident may be regarded as bullying if it has a serious effect on the victim.

Bullying can include name-calling, taunting and hurtful slugging. 'I was only messing' cannot be an acceptable reason for a culture of name-calling.

Cyber-bullying i.e. the mis-use of mobile communication devices for example texting, face-booking etc. to communicate inappropriate information about other students/staff or threatening to use same will be fully investigated and may be reported to the Gardai/H.S.E.

Any form of intimidation of a member of staff will be considered under Colaiste an Chraoibhin's Anti-Bullying Policy and will be dealt with accordingly.

A false accusation of bullying against another member of our school community will be dealt with severely.

Coláiste an Chraoibhín will actively strive to:

- (a) Prevent bullying occurring.
- (b) Detect if bullying is occurring.
- (c) Deal effectively with cases of bullying.

### Prevention of Bullying

In order to prevent bullying, the following policies, systems and activities have been put in place:

- Code of Behaviour.
- Anti-Bullying policy.
- Supervision of all areas of the building and external playing areas during breaks.
- Weekly Pastoral care meetings.
- Weekly staff briefings.
- Merit Award System (increasing self-esteem of students).
- Buddy system.

- Awareness by all staff members for signs of bullying.
- Discussions on the topic of bullying and its effects in S.P.H.E. classes.
- Availability of school counsellor to deal with bullying situations.

### **Detection of Bullying**

#### **Symptoms of Bullying**

The symptoms parents and teachers should watch out for are:

- Unwillingness to go to school.
- Frightened to walk to and from school.
- Underachieving in school.
- Students clothes or books damaged or destroyed (with no apparent reason)
- Repeated loss of money.
- Withdrawn.
- Distressed, not eating.
- Unexplained bruises, scratches or cuts.
- Missing possessions.
- Stealing money.
- Refusing to say or giving improbable excuses to explain what is wrong.
- The desire to remain with adults.
- Significant change in mood.

### **Anti-Bullying Procedure**

#### **Report and get support.**

#### **Reporting**

Students, parents/guardians are encouraged to report any concerns they may have regarding incidents of bullying to the school authority. In particular students should contact any one of the following if they are being bullied or they are aware of other students being bullied:

- Year Head.
- Subject teacher.
- Principal or Deputy Principal.
- Any teacher.
- Buddy (In the case of first years).
- Their friends or classmates.
- Their Parents/Guardians, who will then contact the school.
- Teachers who are suspicious that a student is being bullied will report verbally to his/her Year Head or Principal/Deputy Principal.
- A record of this suspicion will be entered under 'Concerns' in the schools Record Sheet and a copy will be given to the student's Year Head for filing.

### **Strategy**

#### **Dealing with Incidents of Bullying**

- The Year Head, (and in the event of their unavailability the Principal or Deputy-Principal) after receiving a report of bullying will interview and reassure the victim that the matter will be dealt with confidentially and speedily.
- The Year Head may seek the assistance of the school counsellor to help deal with the alleged problem.
- The Year Head will interview the alleged bully and impress upon him/her that such behaviour is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.
- The Year Head may decide to impose sanctions on the bully (e.g. an Observation Card) depending on the seriousness of the incident. A strict verbal warning may be sufficient.
- In the event of a repeated incident, Parents/Guardians of the bully will be asked to visit the school to discuss the matter.
- The student will be placed on a Report Card.
- If a solution cannot be achieved, the Year Head will request the assistance of the Principal and or Deputy Principal.
- The bully may be suspended.
- On returning to school, the student and his/her Parents/Guardian will be interviewed by the Principal/Deputy Principal/Year head. They will be asked for a guarantee of future good behaviour.

- The student will be placed on a Report Card
- Further incidents of bullying will lead to further sanctions.
- Victims and their Parents/Guardians will be continually reassured where necessary.

#### **NOTE**

Under no circumstances will the Parents/Guardian of the victim be allowed talk to or meet the bully.

It is also school policy that the Parents/Guardian of either student should not make contact with one another, as this could exacerbate the situation.

Each incident will be dealt with individually and on its own merits.

#### **Safe Use of the Internet**

Social Media Technologies are defined as information and communication technologies (ICT), such as the internet, digital media or the mobile phone ( eg. Text messages, group messaging services, instant messaging, personal messaging services, online personal polling websites, social media networks etc).

Cyber Bullying means any usage of Social Media Technologies that seeks to undermine or humiliate a member, or members, of the school community. This includes circulating or publishing through ICT, material **recorded and circulated without consent** for the purpose of undermining or causing damage to the professional or personal reputation of another person whether considered a “joke” or not.

1. Any usage of the internet, digital media or mobile phones which intrudes on the privacy and dignity of staff, students or their families is deemed a serious breach of the school Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy.
2. Behaviour which endangers the health and safety of any member of the school community will be treated with the utmost seriousness by the Principal and Board of Management and may lead to suspension or expulsion. Any inappropriate use of social media which is deemed as harassing staff, students or their families may be reported to the Gardaí (Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act 1997).
3. Facebook/Social Media Technologies
  - A student who sets up a Facebook page is responsible for the content on that page.
  - All students who have administrator rights to a Facebook page have shared responsibility for its contents.
  - When a student clicks “Like” to a posting on a Facebook page it draws attention and awareness of this entry to his/her own Facebook friends. Therefore when a student indicates that he/she “Likes” an entry which is inappropriate or offensive, they are **contributing** to the intrusion of privacy and dignity of staff, students and their families. This will be deemed a serious breach of the school Code of Behaviour.
4. Behaviours that constitute Cyber Bullying
  - **Flaming:** sending angry, rude vulgar messages about a person to an online group or to that person via email or text messaging.
  - **Masquerade:** pretending to be someone else and posting material that makes another person look bad.

- **Online Harassment:** sending offensive messages via electronic means through personal communication channels or through public forums such as chat rooms and discussion groups
- **Cyber stalking:** includes online harassment that includes threats of harm or behaviour that is excessively intimidating.
- **Denigration:** sending harmful, untrue or cruel statements about a person to other people or posting such material online. Included within this category of cyber bullying is posting or sending a digitally altered photo of someone particularly in a way which portrays them in a sexualised or harmful way. Online slam books which are created to make fun of students/teachers/members of the school community also represent a form of denigration
- **Outing:** involves sending or posting material about a person that contains sensitive, private or embarrassing information, including forwarding private messages or images
- **Exclusion:** cruelly excluding someone from an online group
- **Happy Slapping/Hopping:** One person assaulting/slaps someone while another captures it on camera which is then uploaded onto the web