



ANTI-BULLYING/HARASSMENT POLICY

Our school community provides a caring, happy and safe environment, which strives to foster a love of life-long learning.

We endeavour to develop each person's academic, physical, moral cultural and spiritual potential based on mutual respect, fairness and honesty.

We want our students to emerge as confident, adaptable, responsible and caring citizens.

SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT

INTRODUCTION

The Board of Management of St. Colmcille's Community School recognises that all members of the school community, including teachers, administration staff, caretaking staff, students and parents /guardians have a right to a school free of bullying and harassment and is fully committed that this right be upheld by all.

OBJECTIVES

- In keeping with the School Mission Statement and the Code of Behaviour this policy aims to promote an environment free of bullying and harassment in order to protect the dignity and physical, social, and psychological well being of each individual.
- In keeping with the Education Act 1998 this policy aims to promote the social and personal development of the members of the school community.
- In keeping with the Employment and Equality Act 1998 and the Equal Status Act 2000 this policy aims to prohibit discrimination and thus harassment on the grounds of gender, marital status, family status sexual orientation, religion, age disability race and membership of the travelling community.
- This policy aims to reflect and uphold best practices as outlined by the D.E.S, A.C.C.S., Impact, A.S.T.I and T.U.I.
- The policy aims to outline the procedures to be followed in the event of a bullying/harassment incident.

DEFINITION

Bullying/harassment may be defined as **repeated** aggressive behaviour of a verbal, physical or psychological nature, conducted by an individual or group, against another or others.

Bullying/harassment may present itself in any of the following ways:

Teacher/Pupil Behaviour

- Using sarcasm or other insulting or demeaning forms of language when addressing pupils or making negative comments about a pupil's background or appearance.
- Intentionally humiliating a pupil who is academically weak or outstanding, or vulnerable in other ways.
- Our school community provides a caring, happy and safe environment, which strives to Using any gesture or expression of a threatening or intimidatory nature, or any form of degrading physical contact or exercise.

Pupil/Pupil Behaviour- Staff/Staff Behaviour

- This behaviour includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking, tripping and blocking.
- Personal property can be the focus of attention for the bully. This may result in damage to clothing, books, journal or unwanted interference with a person's property.
- Often bullying/harassment takes the form of intimidation (demands for lunch money/tickets etc.) accompanied by threats and aggressive body language.
- An abusive telephone call or text message.
- The deliberate shunning or marginalising of a colleague peer, or classmate.
- Unwanted and **repeated** name-calling.
- Unwanted slagging usually refers to the good-natured banter which occurs as part of the normal social interchange between people. However, when this **repeated** slagging extends to personal remarks aimed at one individual or group of individuals about gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age disability race and membership of the travelling community, then it assumes the form of bullying/harassment.
- Deliberately withholding information making it difficult for a task to be fulfilled.
- Removing - for no justifiable reason – areas of work /responsibility from an individual.
- **Repeatedly** undermining a person's authority, work or achievements.
- Maligning or spreading malicious gossip about another person.
- Setting impossible and unreasonable objectives for an employee/student or constantly changing the work requirements without telling him/her and criticising him/her for not meeting these impossible objectives.

This list is not exhaustive.

PREVENTATIVE STRATEGIES

The entire school community will work proactively to promote an environment where bullying/harassment does not take place. Bullying/harassment CAN BE prevented by raising awareness of all in the school community about the reality of bullying/harassment and its detrimental effects. The school will use the following approaches:

- By repeatedly stressing the importance of reporting matters of concern an environment of openness and tolerance may be promoted and help to dispel the culture of secrecy often associated with bullying and harassment.
- Awareness of bullying/harassment and its consequences could be featured in many areas of the curriculum such as SPHE, CSPE, Religion and PE.
- The school provides a wide range of extra curricular activities that are open to all pupils. It is hoped that these activities will develop self-esteem and assertiveness skills.

- Supervision of students.
- Provision of guidelines for staff in dealing with reports of bullying and harassment.
- Liaison with primary schools to track any history of bullying/harassment.
- Liaison with local shops such as Spar and Superquinn to notify school of any potential bullying/harassment incidents.
- Involve students through the student council, mentoring system and class Charter.
- Provide the necessary support structures and financial resources to ensure staff and student body (Council and Mentoring group) are adequately trained.
- Anti-bullying/harassment campaign, to include Anti bullying/harassment Awareness Week.
- Ensure that teaching staff is kept informed of bullying/harassment policies, programmes and cases as appropriate.
- Provide all necessary information about bullying/harassment at meetings of incoming 1st Yr. Parents, the Parents Council, general meetings of parents.

PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS, DISCLOSURES AND SUSPICIONS OF BULLYING/HARASSMENT AMONGST STUDENTS

In order to combat bullying/harassment it is important that all bullying/harassment behaviour be reported. The following is an outline for dealing with bullying and harassment.

- Incidents of bullying/harassment behaviour should be reported initially to the class teacher/Year Head. He/She will investigate the report. The perpetrator will be made aware of how hurtful his/her behaviour is. The Year Head may enlist the help of a School Guidance Counsellor if appropriate. If a case is deemed serious the Deputy Principal/Principal will be informed at this stage.
- If no improvement follows the Deputy Principal will be informed. Both the Year Head and Deputy Principal are empowered to take written statements, formally question students notify parents and to impose sanctions at any time in the course of the investigation.
- Should the matter persist the Principal will be involved. Following due process the Principal and B.O.M may impose a term of suspension. The Principal will refer any further instances of bullying/harassment by the same party to the Board of Management.

PROCESS

- If a student is involved in a bullying/harassment incident they will be warned to stop this behaviour.
- A record will be opened.
- Year Head will monitor this record.
- If the bullying/harassment continues, parents will be informed.
- The matter may then be transferred to the Deputy Principal/Principal/B.O.M

SANCTIONS

Sanctions may include any of the following as appropriate;

- Verbal warning
- Detention
- Written Work
- Community Service
- Apology
- Suspension
- Escorted to and from school by a parent (if bullying/harassment occurs en route to and from school)
- Expulsion

This list is not exhaustive.

PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS AND DISCLOSURES AMONGST STAFF**Informal Procedures**

- A staff member who feels that he/she has been bullied or harassed should seek to resolve the situation initially by asking the person harassing them to stop. It may be sufficient for the person to explain how they perceive the behaviour towards them for the behaviour to stop.
- If the behaviour continues the complainant may then ask advise of the TUI/ASTI rep. on staff.

Formal Procedures

- Alternatively, the complainant may wish to formally lodge a complaint with the Principal of the school. This must be in writing.
- Investigations of any complaint will be handled with sensitivity and with due respect to both parties involved. Complaints will be investigated with minimum delay. The Principal investigating the complaint should
 1. Supply the staff member complained of with a copy of the written complaint and invite his/her written response.
 2. Arrange meeting(s) with the parties either separately or together with a view of resolving the complaint. These meetings should take place within ten working days.
 3. Another person of their choice may accompany both parties. (non-legal)
- The Principal should convey in writing to both parties the outcome of the meetings within six working days.
 1. He/she should indicate whether the matter has been resolved to the satisfaction of all parties.
 2. Where findings are inconclusive then the school internal investigations end and the parties to the complaint shall be so advised.
 3. If the complaint is upheld both parties are informed and the subject of the complaint has the right to appeal.
 4. If the complaint is deemed unfounded then the complainant has the right to appeal this decision.
- A report must be made to the BOM of the investigation and its conclusions. This report must be accompanied by all the documentation involved in the investigation.

- The Board will convene to consider all documentation. The aim would be that all hearings and meetings relating to the complaint would take place within 15 working days of receiving documentation relating to the complaint. There may be cases where this timescale would need to be extended.
- The subject of the complaint may attend this meeting and be accompanied by another person (non-legal).
- The complainant may also attend this meeting and be accompanied by a person of their choice (non-legal).
- The Board is entitled to seek appropriate expert advice in the course of the investigation.
- The complainant and subject of the complaint must be notified of the Board's decision and recommended disciplinary sanctions within six working days of the decision being taken. Both parties have the right to appeal.

SANCTIONS

1. Oral warning
2. Written warning
3. Final written warning
4. Withholding/refusal of increment
5. Demotion
6. Suspension
7. Dismissal

While these sanctions are progressive the Board may deem it necessary to enforce more serious action at an earlier stage.

- Written warnings, (1 above) will be placed on the file of staff member. This may be removed after an agreed specified period of time.
- 3-7 will remain on the staff member's file permanently.
- Where a complaint has been rejected, deemed unfounded or upheld, a statement to that effect shall be placed in the complainants file.
- Where a complaint has been rejected/unfounded all records relevant to the case will be removed from the file of the subject of the complaint.

APPEALS

- Both the complainant and the subject of the complaint will be afforded an opportunity to appeal the decision of the Board to a Forum.
- The Board will refer the appeal to a forum composed from a panel agreed between ACCS, ASTI, TUI and IMPACT.
- Both parties must attend the Forum and be accompanied by a person of their choice (non-legal).
- The Forum will consider the report and recommendations of the Board and decide to ratify, reject or amend this decision.
- Proposed disciplinary sanctions will be in accordance with appropriate union/school management agreements and relevant legislation.
- The decision of this forum is final and will be communicated to all involved parties.

PROTECTION

Retaliation against a member of staff for complaining about bullying/harassment/harassment is a disciplinary offence.

A malicious complaint made by a staff member will be treated as misconduct under the disciplinary procedures addressed.

SUPPORT

- The Board will ensure that victims of bullying/harassment are supported and if requested counselling services made available.
- Similarly, perpetrators of bullying/harassment may be requested to attend counselling services, again to be made available by the Board.

CONFIDENTIALITY

It is the aim of St. Colmcille's Community School only to involve those properly concerned with a bullying/harassment incident. Students, parent/guardians, teachers, administration and caretaking staff are however made aware of the following

- The duty of the teachers and staff of the school preclude them from offering total confidentiality to any student if they are informed of a bullying/harassment incident.
- The school may be required to contact the Health Board
- The School may need to engage the expert assistance of an appropriate third party in the resolving of a bullying/harassment incident.

REVIEW

As part of its on going Development Planning process, St. Colmcille's Community School will monitor, review and evaluate this Policy and all related work and procedure on an on going basis to ensure legal compliance and the maintenance of best practices.