

Anti-Bullying Policy of Coláiste Muire Cobh

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 Muire Cobh has adopted the following Anti bullying policy within the framework of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post –Primary Schools* which were published in September 2013. This Policy now considers child protection concerns that may arise from bullying as outlined in the Children First Act 2015 and in the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017

The school regards bullying as an infringement of individual rights, which could affect the self-esteem and self-confidence of targeted students. Therefore, the Board of Management does not tolerate bullying in school of any kind, in person, or online.

The Anti Bullying policy is based on the gospel values of *compassion, caring, justice and forgiveness*

Every student who attends the school has the right to feel safe and happy. This right is safeguarded by the school pastoral care system, by management, the Whole School Guidance Policy, Year Heads and Class Teachers, by the Anti-Bullying Committee (ABC) and by the provision of supervision and monitoring measures throughout the school.

As the Board of Management recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of pupils, it is 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
- Effective leadership
- A whole school approach
- A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact
- Implementation of education and prevention strategies that build empathy and resilience in pupils and explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying
- Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils
- Supports for staff
- Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour
- Ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti bullying policy

In accordance with the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post –Primary Schools* bullying is identified as follows:

“Bullying is repeated aggression, verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against others.”

Bullying is behaviour that is (a) deliberate, (b) hurtful and (c) repeated.

Examples of bullying behaviour:

- **Physical aggression or assault**
- **Stealing or damage to personal property**
- **Intimidation and humiliation, in person or online, or in writing e.g by note or graffiti in a public place**
- **Unwanted voice messages or calls**
- **Deliberate isolation / exclusion / prevention of friendship formation (e.g. “you can’t be friends with them and be friends with me”)**
- **Insulting language.**
- **Repeated name-calling / ‘slagging’ / malicious gossip**
- **Homophobic, transphobic or racial bullying or bullying that is based on a person’s membership of the Traveller community or bullying of those with disabilities or special educational needs.**
- **Online: posting abusive messages or images digitally, sharing/distributing/broadcasting/validating, ‘liking’ same with others on social media, creating false social media accounts in a pupil’s name, using school hosted online platforms for hurting others repeatedly and deliberately, e.g. Microsoft 365 suite of learning tools, online teaching aides e.g. Kahoot.**
- **Extortion, blackmail.**

Some indications that a student is being bullied:

- **Anxiety about walking to and from school**
- **Unwillingness to go to school**
- **Performance in school deteriorating**
- **Patterns of physical illnesses**
- **Unexplained changes in mood or behaviour**
- **Visible signs of distress**
- **Reluctance or refusal to say what is wrong**
- **Out of character comments**
- **Unexplained bruises or cuts, self harming**
- **Possessions – missing or damaged**
- **Reluctance to participate in classwork**

The relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying will be called the Anti Bullying Committee (‘ABC Committee’). The names of the teachers involved will be posted at the start of the school year at either end of the five main corridors of the school.

The school will educate students on the nature and unacceptability of bullying behaviour. The following strategies will be used:

- **Including the Anti-Bullying Policy in student and staff journals and on the**

school website

- **Involving the Student Council in developing and publicising an Anti-Bullying commitment**
- **Visiting speakers and presentations e.g drama groups**
- **Raising awareness of bullying behaviour in the SPHE, Religious Education and Wellbeing lessons.**
- **Posters around the school**
- **Online resources for parents / drawing attention to the ABC policy at information evenings.**

Prevention measures may include:

- **Encouraging students to recognise, to reject and to report bullying behaviour**
- **Making school staff, students and parents aware of the nature of bullying and the signs that might indicate that a student is being bullied. They are encouraged to be vigilant in watching out for these signs and to report any suspicion of bullying.**
- **Conducting regular assessments of how prevalent bullying behaviour is in our school, e.g. by questionnaire**
- **Mentoring of incoming 1st years by appropriately trained senior students (the Meitheal team).**
- **Whole staff training**
- **Whole school agreement that casual comments, not directed at anyone, which could cause unintended upset are unacceptable e.g. "thats gay".**

Procedures for reporting and recording Bullying Behaviour:

- **Students who experience bullying are encouraged to report the incident to their Class Teacher, Year Head, Guidance Counsellors, Deputy Principal, Principal or Member of the ABC Committee**
- **Any student who knows about, or witnesses bullying behavior, should report it**
- **Parents or guardians should contact the Year Head, Guidance Counsellors, Deputy Principal or Principal regarding incidents, or suspected incidents of bullying behaviour**
- **Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, cleaning staff, caretakers, and supervisors should report incidents of bullying behaviour to the Deputy Principal or Principal.**
- **Reports of bullying behaviour are investigated, noted, and dealt with by the Anti Bullying Committee (ABC)**
- **An Anti-Bullying Report Form will be used to record the incident. This will be filed, and the file will be maintained by the Principal and stored in a secure location in the Principal's office.**
- **Reports of bullying will be reported to the Board of Management at the next**

Board Meeting

- Any child protection concerns relating to incidences of bullying will be reported to the Board in the Child Protection Oversight Report.

Investigating and responding to bullying behaviour:

- All reports, substantiated or otherwise, will be forwarded to the ABC Committee
- Bullying behavior is taken very seriously
- **Initially, there will be “a no blame approach” and the aim will be to end the behaviour**
- The ABC investigates all instances of bullying behaviour with the aim of establishing the facts and bringing any such behaviour to an end
- Students who are alleged to have been involved in bullying behaviour are interviewed by a member of the ABC
- In the event that a student has been involved in bullying, details of the behavior will be recorded.
- The ABC does not encourage a “blame culture approach” but rather treats bullying behaviour as a mistake which must be remedied
- This approach will encourage students to report bullying, knowing that they are not getting anyone in trouble. There will be no penalty and that will be the end of the matter
- A serious incidence of bullying resulting in trauma to the victim can be sanctioned at an early stage
- A further breach by a student already recorded is regarded as a very serious matter. The bullying behaviour can no longer be treated as a mistake. Parents are informed. A sanction commensurate with a serious breach of behaviour may be imposed.
- For any further ongoing bullying behaviour, the student(s) concerned will be given sanctions. Repeated bullying behaviour will lead to serious sanctions, such as those set down in the Code of Behaviour for irresponsible behaviour placing others at risk, i.e. suspension and/or expulsion.
- Incidents of confirmed bullying will be reported to the Board of Management under a separate item on the agenda
- Incidents of confirmed bullying confirmed as abusive will be reported to the Board of Management as part of the Child Protection Oversight Report.

Scope Of The Policy: ^[L]_[SEP] This policy applies to general school life, both in person, and online if hosted by the school learning platform. The policy is also operative during first and lunch breaks, when travelling to and from school, during school trips and extra- curricular activities organised by the school. **Please note that online bullying outside school hours / sanctioned events is not the responsibility of the school.** If it is having an impact on relationships within the school, the ABC committee will, if requested, facilitate a resolution through mediation.

Support for those who are affected by bullying behavior and those who perpetrate it.

- **Students who have been the subject of bullying behavior may need support. This will include the offer of a meeting with a guidance counsellor/member of ABC to help them deal with the effects of bullying.**
- **Students who engage in bullying behaviour may also need help, to learn other ways of meeting their own needs, without violating the rights of other students. Students who have been found to be involved in more than one bullying incident will be expected to meet with their Year Head/ Deputy Principal and to co-operate with guidelines on improving their behaviour.**

Supervision and Monitoring of Pupils

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

Bullying and Harassment:

Harassment is defined as any form of unwanted conduct in relation to any of the nine grounds named in the equality legislation that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading or offensive environment for the victim.

The 9 grounds are: Gender including transgender, Marital status, Family status, Age, Disability, Sexual orientation, Race, Religion, Membership of the Traveler Community.

Sexual harassment is defined as any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading or offensive environment for the victim.

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.

This policy will be made available to school personnel, published on the school's website and provided to the Parents' Council. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the Trustees (PBST) if requested.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management 16th September 2024

Date of Next Review

January 2025 (Bi Cinealta review)