

ANTI – BULLYING POLICY

1. CONTEXT

St. Joseph's College aims to provide a holistic education based on healthy relationships grounded in Gospel values of respect, justice, and compassion. This policy seeks to give practical effect to that vision by actively promoting positive relationships among students, between students and staff, and by outlining interventions that will be made where relationships have been damaged. This policy should be read in conjunction with the school's Code of Behaviour, Dignity in the Workplace Charter, the Child Protection Policy, Pastoral Care Policy, and Internet Acceptable Usage Policy.

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 St. Joseph's College, Garbally 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 (<https://assets.gov.ie/24429/3b6f3db2de154ebaa1f69a0856c97c8e.pdf>)

2. RATIONALE

A student needs a secure, happy, and friendly environment in order to learn effectively. Providing a safe environment for students is the responsibility of the whole school community. Parents of students also have a responsibility to monitor how their child is using the internet and other communications technology. Each member of the school community has a right to feel safe and secure in school – that includes physical, emotional, and psychological safety.

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.

SCOPE

This policy applies to student behaviour within the school and to student behaviour outside school which negatively impacts on the well-being of students and staff within school. It is applicable, among other areas, to:

- Going to and from school
- The school day (including break, lunch times, study times)
- School tours and trips
- Extracurricular activities
- Examinations
- Communications between students on phones, the internet, or other electronic media, including communications that take place outside the school day.

3. DEFINITION

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
- 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. Some examples of bullying behaviour (not exhaustive) are included in Appendix 1.

4. RELEVANT TEACHER

The relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows: the Principal; Deputy Principal; Year Heads; Assistant Year Heads. Members of the Pastoral Care Team may be asked to assist the relevant teacher(s) in an incident.

5. EDUCATION AND PREVENTION STRATEGIES

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:

Supervision

The school will continue to ensure that students are supervised during the time that students are under its care including:

- Supervising students on the school grounds during the school day.
- Supervising student's use of the internet by teachers.
- Supervision during extra-curricular activities; school trips and tours.

The Curriculum

Social Political and Health Education (SPHE)

The school will develop and implement a plan to consistently raise issues relating to bullying within the SPHE programme including such issues as

- Identifying Bullying.
- How to guard against Cyberbullying.
- What to do if bullying is experienced.
- Working together/Teambuilding.
- Anger Management.
- Conflict Resolution
- Respect for Diversity
- Mental Wellbeing
- Responsible use of communication technology

Specific resources used include: 'R U Bn bullied' on <http://sphe.ie/resources.aspx> ; 'Bullying and personal safety' on <http://ie.reachout.com/> ; DVD 'Self-Confidence under Pressure'; DVD 'Anti-Homophobic Bullying' produced by Shout, LGBT Youth www.youthworkgalway.ie
Outside speakers will be invited to the school to talk about combatting bullying.

Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE)

An RSE programme will be developed to ensure that students are educated in this area and that anxieties and prejudices around sexual identity are handled sensitively. The Department of Education curriculum on RSE will be implemented including such issues as:

- Developing relationships based on mutual respect
- Providing information about physical development and sexual health
- Developing a holistic understanding of sexuality

These issues may also be raised in areas of the CPSE curriculum and the RE curriculum, which will highlight the values of respect and justice; moral decision-making; and how to form healthy relationships with other students and with teachers.

Specific resources used at Senior Cycle include Trust programme at <http://www.sphe.ie/downloads/rse/trust.pdf> ;

Computer technology

An internet education module will be developed to educate all students on the appropriate use of information and communications technology (ICT), on the norms that should apply to social media websites (netiquette), and to reinforce the serious consequences of cyberbullying. A programme will be delivered to first year students on social media safety.

Mentors

The school recruits and trains a number of Sixth Year students to act as mentors towards First Year students. Mentors act as a help and as a role model towards First Years and are someone that those students can turn to for advice if they encounter bullying behaviour. Mentors are also encouraged to

act responsibly if they witness or become aware of incidents of bullying behaviour by talking to a Year Head, School Management or the Pastoral Care Team. Mentors will be encouraged to take an active part in organising friendship week. Regular meetings will be organised for mentors to meet with First Year students during the first school term.

The role and the responsibility of the mentor is to report any incident of bullying to the relevant teacher/Year Head/member of Pastoral Care Team/deputy principal/principal.

Parents

Parents play a crucial role in educating their children in how to relate to others, and in teaching them the value of respecting others. Parents are asked to talk to their child regularly about their school day and to encourage their child to tell them if someone is making school difficult or uncomfortable for them. The school welcomes reports from parents of any bullying behaviour that they become aware of, whether it directly affects their child or another student at the school. Reports can be made to the Principal, Deputy Principal, or a member of the Pastoral Care Team.

Parents are requested to monitor their child's use of the internet and ICT to guard against cyberbullying. Parents should also ensure that privacy settings on any social media websites that their child has access to are maintained at a high level.

Periodic talks on how to recognise and combat bullying will be given to parents in the school. The Parents Council will be given an opportunity to develop this policy and to undertake periodic reviews of its content.

Students

Bullying rarely takes place in isolation. Usually there are other students who witness a bullying incident (bystanders). Bystanders who laugh or clap when someone else is harmed or repeatedly ridiculed are encouraging bullying behaviour, and share in the harmful impact of it.

Students have a right to safety in the school. Students are encouraged to report any bullying behaviour that they experience or witness to any teacher, their Year Head, or a member of the Pastoral Care Team. In making a report students are standing up for their own rights and the rights of others.

Students will be given periodic opportunities to complete confidential questionnaires on their experience of bullying behaviour within the school (Appendix 4). This will be used as an exercise to raise awareness, to identify students at risk and also to highlight areas that require further attention to prevent bullying behaviour.

The student council will be given an opportunity to develop this policy and to undertake periodic reviews of its content.

Other Actions

- Including the student charter in the school journal.
- Having a 'friendship week' early in each school year (S.P.H.E. Co-Ordinator).
- Regularly referring to this policy during assemblies (Year Heads/Deputy Principal/Principal)
- Implement the 'Stand-up' programme during the designated week in spring to stand up against homophobic bullying (S.P.H.E. and R.S.E. classes).
- Highlighting 'Safe use of the internet.'

6. INVESTIGATION, FOLLOW-UP, AND RECORDING

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:

Reporting

Students who experience bullying should tell their teacher, Year Head, Assistant Year Head, the Deputy Principal, Principal, a Special Needs Assistant or a member of the Pastoral Care Team. Sometimes students are afraid that telling will make the behaviour worse. Experience shows that telling a parent or a teacher makes it possible for the school to intervene in a way that will change what is happening for the better. Students have a right to safety. By telling someone what is happening, students are standing up for their own rights.

Bullying behaviour often occurs in the presence of witnesses (bystanders). Students who witness bullying behaviour are strongly encouraged to report allegations of bullying to the Year Head, the Principal, the Deputy Principal or the Pastoral Care Team. Such students show leadership, moral courage and responsibility. Reports will, as far as practicable, be treated with confidentiality.

Parents are also actively encouraged to report any allegations of bullying to the Year-head, assistant Year head, Principal, Deputy Principal, or a member of the Pastoral Care Team.

Investigation

All allegations of bullying are treated with priority in the school. Where an allegation is made an investigation will firstly be carried out to establish what happened, by interviewing the alleged perpetrator, the victim and any witnesses, and by viewing any CCTV footage of the incident. Investigations will be carried out in accordance with the guidelines contained in Appendix 2. The primary aim for the relevant teacher(s) 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).

The interview may be conducted by a member of the Pastoral Care Team, Year Head, Deputy Principal or Principal.

The victim's parents and the perpetrator's parents will be informed of the bullying incident by the Relevant Teacher(s). Parents will also be informed of the outcome of the investigation.

Disciplinary response

Following investigation, the Principal or Deputy Principal will determine whatever sanctions are deemed appropriate under the school's Code of Behaviour. These sanctions include a verbal warning, a morning or evening detention, suspension, or referral to the Board of Management by the Principal for consideration of expulsion.

The Board of Management can impose sanctions up to and including expulsion.

The Principal or Deputy Principal, may report any incidents to the Gardaí or the Health Service Executive, and shall comply with their legal obligations as Designated Liaison Person and Deputy Designated Liaison Person under Children First procedures.

Recording

The Relevant Teacher(s) shall keep written notes of all interviews with parties involved in an incident of bullying and with witnesses to that incident and shall keep a note of all actions taken. Copies of these notes shall be furnished to the Principal, or in the Principal's absence to the Deputy Principal. The Principal and/or Deputy Principal shall be advised of all allegations of bullying by the relevant teacher(s), and of the course of action being taken to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.

In cases where the relevant teacher(s) considers that the bullying behaviour has not been resolved satisfactorily within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour occurred the relevant teacher(s) shall complete a formal record of the incident using the template at Appendix 3 attached to this policy. That record shall be held in a central file in the secretary's office. A copy of the record shall be furnished to the Principal and a further copy shall be placed on the file of the student concerned.

The Principal or Deputy Principal, at their discretion, may consider an incident of bullying behaviour as sufficiently serious to warrant immediate completion of the formal record referred to above.

7. PASTORAL RESPONSE

The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows: The victim of the bullying will be supported by the Pastoral Care Team and helped to explore the impact of the behaviour upon him and will be assisted where necessary. Teachers will support this approach within the classroom where possible through project and group-work.

The perpetrator will also be met by the Pastoral Care Team to help give him an insight into the effect of his behaviour on others, and to help him to take responsibility for negative behavioural choices made, and to make positive choices in the future. In cases where it is appropriate the Pastoral Care Team will engage in a process of conflict resolution with the perpetrator and the victim of bullying.

8. SUPERVISION AND MONITORING OF STUDENTS

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

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. ADOPTION OF POLICY

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on the 28/08/2023.

11. PUBLICATION OF POLICY

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website, and provided to the Parents' Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the Patron if requested.

12. REVIEW

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.

Signed: 

28/08/2023

Mr. Paul Walsh,
Principal/Secretary Board of Management.

Signed: 

28/08/2023

Mr. Mick Garrick.
Chairperson of Board of Management.

APPENDIX ONE - Some examples of bullying behaviour (not exhaustive)

- deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip, and other forms of relational bullying.
- Repeatedly making personal remarks about someone's appearance or family
- Making innuendos about somebody or a member of their family.
- Hitting, pushing, or tripping up another.
- Object of repeated practical jokes.
- Spreading rumours/lies.
- Starting' on other students: using threatening behaviour or language.
- identity-based bullying (specifically including homophobic bullying, transphobic bullying, racist bullying and bullying of those with disabilities or special educational needs).
- Harassment of any kind based on gender (including transgender), civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race, and membership of the Traveller community.

Some examples of cyberbullying (not exhaustive)

- Bullying through social media websites, email, text, and picture messaging
- Bullying through instant messaging or in a chat room
- Bullying on gaming sites
- Any usage of information and communications technology that intrudes on the privacy or dignity of staff, students, or their families.
- Video or voice recording of other students or staff
- Making 'prank' telephone calls.
- Spreading rumours, lies or gossip
- Sending mean or disturbing messages
- Posting offensive or aggressive messages under another person's name
- Using inflammatory or vulgar words to provoke an online fight
- Tricking someone into sharing personal information
- Posting confidential or compromising information or images
- Excluding someone from an online group
- Harassment that causes a student to fear for his safety

APPENDIX TWO - Procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying.

(i) The primary aim for the relevant teacher(s) 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).

(ii) In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher(s) will exercise his/her/their professional judgement impartially to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved.

(iii) All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher(s). In that way pupils will gain confidence in 'telling.' This confidence factor is of vital importance. It should be made clear to all pupils that when they report incidents of bullying, they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.

(iv) Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), bus escorts, caretakers, cleaners must be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher.

(v) Parents and pupils are required to co-operate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving any issues and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved as quickly as possible.

(vi) It is especially important that all involved (including each set of pupils and parents) understand the above approach from the outset.

(vii) Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff, or parents.

(viii) Incidents are generally best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.

(ix) All interviews should be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide especially useful information in this way.

(x) When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher(s) should seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This should be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner.

(xi) If a group is involved, each member should be interviewed individually.

(xii) Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that they may face them from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher.

(xiii) It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s).

(xiv) In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher(s) that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved should be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken (by reference to the school policy). The school should give parents an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports for their pupils.

(xv) Where the relevant teacher(s) has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's Anti-Bullying Policy and efforts should be made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied;

(xvi) It must also be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parents) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parents and the school.

(xvii) Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved should be arranged separately with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date if the pupil who has been bullied is ready and agreeable. This can have a therapeutic effect.

(xviii) In cases where the relevant teacher(s) considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, it must be recorded by the relevant teacher in the recording template at Appendix 3.

(xix) In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant teacher(s) must, as part of his/her/their professional judgement, take the following factors into account:

- Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased.
- Whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable.
- Whether the relationships between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable; and
- Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the school Principal or Deputy Principal.

(xx) Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures.

(xxi) In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.
