



Student Bullying – a policy for Coláiste Muire, Ballymote

This policy applies equally to ALL Coláiste Muire students.

Introduction

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 Ballymote has adopted the following anti-bullying policy within the framework of the school's overall code of behaviour.

Coláiste Muire's ethos and mission statement promotes being respectful and acting with dignity towards all members of the school and local communities. It acknowledges the right of each member of the school community to enjoy school in a secure environment. In accordance with our ethos we will continue to promote responsibility, respect, tolerance, dignity and understanding. This policy fully complies with the requirements of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools which were published in September 2013.

Key Principles

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.

Definitions

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*.

Key persons

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*):

Yearheads, Class Tutors, Deputy Principal & Principal

All staff have a responsibility to report bullying if it is observed by or noted to them.

Education & 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 (see Section 6.5 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):

- Publishing and Publicising an Anti-Bullying Policy and School Code of Behaviour. School code of behaviour and anti-bullying policy on school website, with extracts in student journal and accepted by all students and parents upon enrolment to the school
- The Anti-Bullying Policy will be included in the school journal and discussed in S.P.H.E. class with opportunities to discuss appropriate behaviour
- Supervision and Monitoring
- Students are supervised in the corridors and also at lunch times by staff
- The students' internet sessions are supervised by a teacher
- Student workshops, e.g. Cyber safety, Garda talks, Resilience programmes, FUSE Anti-Bullying programme
- SPHE programme taught to students in 1st, 2nd and 3rd year
- Cross curricular links include C.S.P.E./R.S.E. etc.
- 1st Year Induction Programme encouraging positive friendships
- Friendship Week, Wellbeing Week, Safer Internet Week initiatives for the whole school
- Promotion of participation in extra-curricular activities and sport to build self-worth and self-esteem
- Positive Discipline System based on a Restorative Practice approach
- Peer Mentoring Programme by transition and fifth year students for first year students – Big Brother Big Sister programme
- Student Support Teams, including Yearheads and Special Education Teacher meeting regularly to support student welfare
- Student voice sessions with students
- Student Council established in the school
- All staff will be aware of and implement this policy. Proactive class teachers and year heads take an active role in the care of their students
- Guidance Counsellor and SET Team
- 'Open Door' policy of the Principal and Deputy Principal
- Parents are encouraged to report unwanted behaviour to the school management
- Early communication with parents where concerns arise and regular follow-ups thereafter
- All staff model positive and inclusive behaviour

- The school follows the practical tips for building a positive school culture and climate detailed on page 42 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*

Procedures for investigation, follow-up and recording of bullying behaviour

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 (see Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):

Tell a responsible adult

1. Any student or their parent/guardian can report an allegation of bullying to any member of staff
2. Students should discuss any incident of bullying with a teacher; this is responsible behaviour and promotes the "telling" culture within the school
3. School policies and procedures are designed to help promote an atmosphere of mutual respect and acceptance of others. The school's code of behaviour and student support structures in particular demonstrate this
4. Parents/guardians should contact a teacher/Year Head/Deputy Principal/Principal regarding suspected incidents of bullying behaviour that have come to their attention through their children, friends of their children or other parents

School Investigation

Incidents of bullying behaviour, no matter how trivial, which are drawn to the attention of a teacher, will be dealt with in the following manner:

1. Appropriate personnel will speak and listen to all of the students involved in a bullying incident. (Year head and/or deputy principal and/or principal). Opportunities will be given for unwanted behaviours to change
2. The alleged victim and alleged perpetrators of the incident will be spoken to and encouraged to solve the problem. Both parties may be invited to participate in a Restorative Practice session together with a staff member to restore relationships
3. The alleged victim and perpetrators may be invited to provide a written statement detailing the incident(s)
4. All meetings will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils involved
5. The person who deals with the incident will monitor progress of students involved in a bullying incident by liaising with tutor and students involved (separately) at follow-up meetings

Recording of Bullying Behaviours

Records will be kept of all incidents and of the procedures that were followed.

All incidents of bullying are recorded on the template for recording bullying behaviour (see Section Appendix 3 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*). All records are maintained, stored and processed in line with the schools Data Protection & Retention Policies and GDPR 2016.

The Deputy Principal and Principal will be kept informed of all incidents and have access to relevant written records.

Support/Sanctions

The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows (see Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*) :

1. Where the incident is deemed to be minor, a verbal warning will be given to the bully to stop the inappropriate behaviour, pointing out how he/she is in breach of the Code of Behaviour and/or anti-bullying policy and trying to get him/her to see the situation from the victim's point of view. If deemed appropriate, parents may be contacted. Both parties may be invited to participate in a Restorative Practice session together with a staff member to restore relationships
2. If the incident is deemed to be serious, appropriate sanctions may be imposed in accordance with the sanctions in the school's code of behaviour
3. If there is a serious incident, perhaps repeated verbal assault or coercion, the matter should be reported to the Deputy or Principal, parents will be involved and appropriate investigations conducted
4. Where the incident is deemed to be more serious (e.g. gross misbehaviour or physical assault), the Principal should be informed immediately, who will inform the Board of Management, if necessary
5. Offenders and victims of bullying may be referred to Counselling/Guidance/Home Youth Liaison Service
6. Where sanctions are deemed appropriate, they may include: (in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour)
 - A contract of good behaviour
 - School community service i.e. helping to maintain or improve the school community/environment
 - Withdrawal of privileges
 - Other sanctions as may be deemed appropriate e.g. detention
 - Suspension
 - Expulsion
7. The behaviour of students will be monitored on an ongoing basis by the Yearhead and/or Deputy Principal

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.

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.

Policy Review & Implementation

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 13th January 2025.

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to all parents. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

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 parents. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Signed *John Perry*

Date: 13/01/2025

Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed **Damien MacGraith**

Date: 13/01/2025

Principal/Secretary to the Board of Management

Date of next review: January 2026