



Columba College



Anti-Bullying Policy 2023/2024

Date Ratified: _____

Signature: _____ Chairperson of the Board

Signature: _____ Principal

Date of Review: _____



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

Columba College recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of students and is therefore fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour:

Columba College strives to provide a positive school culture 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
- promotes respectful relationships across the school community;
- builds empathy, respect and resilience in pupils
- explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.



Definition of Bullying

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.

Types of Bullying

- The following are some of the types of bullying behaviour that can occur amongst students:
 - **Physical aggression:** This behaviour includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping people. It may also take the form of severe physical assault.
 - **Intimidation:** Some bullying behaviour takes the form of intimidation: it may be based on the use of very aggressive body language with the voice being used as a weapon. Particularly upsetting can be a facial expression which conveys aggression and/or dislike.
 - **Isolation/exclusion:** This occurs where a certain person is deliberately isolated, excluded or ignored by some or all of the class group. This practice is usually initiated by the person engaged in bullying behaviour and can be difficult to detect. It may be accompanied by writing insulting remarks about the pupil in public places, by passing around notes about or drawings of the pupil or by whispering insults about them loud enough to be heard. One of the most common forms includes control: “Do this or I won’t be your friend anymore”(implied or stated); a group ganging up against one person; non-verbal gesturing; malicious gossip; spreading rumours about a person or giving them the “silent treatment”.
 - **Cyber-bullying:** This type of bullying is increasingly common and is continuously evolving. It is bullying carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as text, social network sites, e-mail, instant messaging (IM), apps, gaming sites, chat-rooms and other online technologies. Being the target of inappropriate or hurtful messages is the most common form of online bullying. As cyber-bullying uses technology to perpetrate bullying behaviour and does not require face to face contact, cyber-bullying can occur at any time (day or night). Many forms of bullying can be facilitated through cyber-bullying.
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- **Name calling:** Persistent name-calling directed at the same individual(s) which hurts, insults or humiliates should be regarded as a form of bullying behaviour. Often name-calling of this type refers to physical appearance, e.g., size or clothes worn. Accent or distinctive voice characteristics may attract negative attention. Academic ability can also provoke name calling. This tends to operate at two extremes. There are those who are singled out for attention because they are perceived to be weak academically. At the other extreme there are those who, because they are perceived as high achievers, are also targeted.
- **Damage to property:** Personal property can be the focus of attention for bullying behaviour. This may result in damage to clothing, mobile phone or other devices, school books and other learning material or interference with a student's locker or bicycle. The contents of school bags and pencil cases may be scattered on the floor. Items of personal property may be defaced, broken, stolen or hidden.
- **Extortion:** Demands for money may be made, often accompanied by threats (sometimes carried out in the event of the targeted pupil not delivering on the demand). A student may also be forced into theft of property for delivery to another who is engaged in bullying behaviour.

Isolated or once-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour including a once-off offensive or hurtful text message or other private messaging may not fall within this definition of bullying and should be dealt with, as appropriate, in accordance with the school's code of behaviour.

However, in the context of these procedures 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.

The above list is not an exhaustive list of bullying behaviour



Role of Staff in Columba College

All staff share a responsibility, under the direction of the Principal to act in preventing bullying and harassment by any member of the school community. Teachers will regularly emphasise the importance of raising issues of concern with their Class Teacher/Year Head/Guidance Counsellor/Deputy Principal/Principal

All members of the school community have an obligation to report incidents of bullying.

Students may report an incident of bullying in the following ways:

- Direct approach to a Subject Teacher, Year head Guidance Counsellor, Deputy Principal, Principal
- A note from a student or parent/guardian handed to a teacher/Principal
- A phone call by a parent/guardian or student to the Guidance Counsellor, Form Teacher, Deputy Principal, Principal in the school

Incidents of bullying behaviour, no matter how trivial, which are drawn to the attention of a teacher, will be dealt with by the relevant member of staff e.g.: Principal, Deputy Principal, Year Head

Non-teaching staff e.g. Secretaries, Caretakers and Cleaners are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, to the appropriate member of staff.

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:

- SPHE Classes- Social Personal and Health Education class is timetabled as part of the junior cycle core curriculum. SPHE provides students with opportunities to develop the skills and competencies to care for themselves and others and to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives and social development. The issue of bullying is dealt with in each of the three years of the SPHE junior cycle programme
- Anti-Bullying Awareness Week- events take place across the whole school in an effort to raise awareness around acceptable behaviour.



- YSI- Opportunities are taken to educate students on bullying when they arise in other subjects and activities e.g. Transition Year Programme and the Young Social Innovators Programme
- Publicising and Promoting the Anti-Bullying Policy
- The informal curriculum also provides opportunities to promote awareness of the unacceptable nature of bullying and they have at their core the aim of encouraging the development of responsible and caring attitudes in students and affirming diversity e.g. Chess Club, Sports Clubs, Choir, Green Schools,
- Staff, students and parents are made aware of expectations through the inclusion of information around conduct and respect in the School Journal
- Guest speakers to the school with a view to promoting the mental health, relationship and confidence building and wellbeing of all students

Maintaining a Positive School Culture

- Modelling respectful behaviour to all members of the school community at all times.
- Explicitly teaching pupils what respectful language and respectful behaviour looks like, acts like, sounds like and feels like in class and around the school.
- Displaying key respect messages in classrooms, in assembly areas and around the school. Involve pupils in the development of these messages.
- Catching students being good - notice and acknowledge desired respectful behaviour by providing positive attention in class and assembly and through the awarding of positive VS Ware points.
- Consistently tackling the use of discriminatory and derogatory language in the school – this includes homophobic and racist language and language that is belittling of pupils with a disability or SEN.
- Giving constructive feedback to pupils when respectful behaviour and respectful language are absent.
- Having a system of encouragement and awards to promote desired behaviour and compliance with the school rules.



- Promoting the appropriate use of social media.
- Actively promoting the right of every member of the school community to be safe and secure in school.
- Highlighting and explicitly teaching school rules in pupil friendly language in the classroom, during induction and during assembly.
- All staff actively watching out for signs of bullying behaviour.
- Ensuring there is adequate supervision.

Dealing with reports 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:

- The primary aim for the relevant teacher 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).
- In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher will exercise his/her professional judgment to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved.
- All reports will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. In that way students will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It is made clear to all pupils that when they report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.
- Parents and students 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.
- It is very important that all involved (including each set of students and parents) understand the above approach from the outset.



- Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by students, staff or parents.
- Incidents are generally best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.
- All interviews should be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all students concerned. Students who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this way.
- When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher 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.
- Where a group of students is affected by a bullying incident, each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that they may face from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher.
- It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s).
- In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher 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 students.
- Where the relevant teacher has determined that a student has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to her how she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts should be made to try to get her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied.
- Where the relevant teacher has determined that bullying has taken place, a verbal warning will be given to the perpetrator to stop the inappropriate behaviour, pointing out how she/he is in breach of the Code of Behaviour and helping her/him to see the situation from the victim's point of view. This may involve a meeting between both or all parties if they are willing.



- 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.
- 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.
- Sanctions may include:
 - An agreement of good behaviour
 - Withdrawal of privileges e.g. participation in school trips, events
 - Lunch time detention
 - After school detention
 - Suspension

Those affected by bullying may be referred to the Guidance Counsellor and/or relevant external agencies for counselling or other supports/interventions if deemed necessary.

Procedures for recording bullying behaviour

Columba College ensures that the staff have clear procedures for the formal noting and reporting of bullying behaviour and these must be documented. All records must be maintained in accordance with relevant data protection legislation. The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour must adhere to the following:

- While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying are investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the relevant teacher will use his/her professional judgment in relation to the records to be kept of these reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same
- If it is established by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher must keep appropriate written records which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.



Template for recording bullying behaviour

1. Name of pupil being bullied and class group

Name _____ Class _____

2. Name(s) and class(es) of pupil(s) engaged in bullying behaviour

3. Source of bullying concern/report (tick relevant box(es))*

Pupil concerned	
Other Pupil	
Parent	
Teacher	
Other	
Other	

4. Location of incidents (tick relevant box(es))*

Outdoors	
Classroom	
Corridor	
Toilets	
School Bus	
Other	

5. Name of person(s) who reported the bullying concern

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6. Type of Bullying Behaviour (tick the relevant box(es):

Physical Aggression		Cyber-bullying	
Damage to Property		Intimidation	
Isolation/Exclusion		Malicious gossip	
Name Calling		Other (specify)	

7. Where behavior is regarded as identity-based bullying, indicate the relevant category:

Homophobic	Disability/SEN related	Racist	Membership of Traveller community	Other (specify)

8. Brief Description of bullying behavior and its impact

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9. Details of actions taken

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Signed: _____(Teacher)

Date: _____

