

# **Presentation College, Currylea, Tuam Student Anti Bullying Policy**

## **Scope**

**The policy deals primarily with bullying between students. It deals with behaviours which arise in school and which affect the progress of students at school.**

The school's Mission Statement also informs this policy.

## **Rationale**

The purpose of this policy is to protect students from being bullied and to ensure that effective remedial steps are taken where bullying arises.

Furthermore, the policy applies outside the school if the behaviour impacts upon any person's participation in our school. It deals with negative behaviours and attitudes which arise or occur in school and which affect the progress and sense of emotional wellbeing of students or other people at the school. The policy will outline the necessary steps to be taken when a bullying incident is reported.

Bullying behaviours such as cyber-bullying which break the law may be referred to the Gardaí.

This policy is underpinned by three basic principles viz.

- **Respect must be shown to all persons at all times.**
- **All students are entitled to an education free from fear and intimidation.**
- **Bullying is wrong and will not be tolerated.**

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 Presentation College, Currylea 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.

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 (a) welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity (b) encourages pupils to disclose the discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment and (c) 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 (a) build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils and (b) explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying. In particular, the school will implement the ‘Anti-Bullying Campaign: Break through the Cloud of Bullying’, led by management, a co-ordinator, school leaders and teachers.
- Including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying (behaviour or language which makes a young person feel unwelcome or marginalised because of their actual or perceived sexual preference or gender identity).
- 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.

## 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 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.

The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with Bullying are as follows:

Teresa Kelleher (Assistant Principal), Máire Keating (Assistant Principal), Ann Marie Fahy (Assistant Principal) Norita Harris (Assistant Principal), Leona Quirke (Assistant Principal), Neasa Cosgrove (Principal), Seán McGrath (Deputy Principal), Ber Jordan (Guidance Counsellor) and Jennifer Payne ('Anti-Bullying Campaign: Break through the Cloud of Bullying' Co-ordinator)

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:

The school will work proactively to ensure as far as it can that bullying does not take place. Bullying can be prevented by raising awareness of all in the school community about the reality of bullying and of its detrimental effects. In order to prevent bullying the school uses a number of strategies:

- The school promotes an atmosphere of openness, respect, understanding and belonging.
- A whole school approach involving management, teachers, parents and students is taken to bullying. Having a shared understanding between these groups is imperative in preventing bullying. In 2019 the 'Anti-Bullying Campaign: Break through the Cloud of Bullying' has been implemented. The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber-bullying, homophobic and transphobic bullying) used by the school are as follows:
  - The anti-bullying module of the SPHE programme as it applies in each school year,
  - The anti-bullying sections of the CSPE programme as it applies in each school year,
  - At least five awareness-raising exercises per school year for each class group (*e.g. those available from the 'Awareness-Raising' strand of the Anti-Bullying Campaign website*) at least one carried out per half-term, pro-actively explaining the nature and variety, causes, consequences and unacceptability of bullying.
  - Pupils are helped to examine the issue of bullying in a calm rational way, outside of the tense context of particular bullying incidents. In the process they are made more aware of the nature of bullying and the various forms that it can take.
  - Pupils are made aware that the consequences of bullying behaviour are always bad for those who are targeted, even if this is not always obvious at the time.
  - Pupils are encouraged to recognise, reject and report bullying behaviour, either spontaneously or through questionnaires that are regularly used in the school.
  - Through presentations or other exercises, the school staff and parents/guardians are made aware of the nature of bullying and the signs that might indicate that a pupil is being bullied. They are encouraged to be vigilant in watching out for signs

of bullying and to report any suspicion of bullying they may have to the relevant Year Head, Anti-Bullying Coordinator or any staff member.

- Through regular reports in school newsletters and other communications as well as at meetings with parent/guardian groups, parents/guardians are regularly informed of the activities of the school encouraged to support its work.
- Anti-bullying/friendship day/week.
- Further awareness is provided by Assembly, School Website, Workshops and Speakers from appropriate outside agencies and the Code of Behaviour.
- The school provides a range of extra-curricular activities that are open to all students and encourages student to become involved. This is seen as important in the development of student self esteem.
- Teachers regularly stress to students the importance of reporting matters of concern.
- All new staff members are properly inducted and updated with relevant policies.
- The school will endeavour to keep lines of communications open with parents.
- The school promotes a positive school culture and rewards its students for positive behaviour.
- A support structure involving management, year heads, class tutors, class prefects, buddies, chaplain, Senco and guidance counsellor exists within the school.
- Informative literature on all aspects of sexuality is available to students.
- Students know that the school is a “telling” school and that it is ok to report issues of Bullying.
- School computers do not allow access to social media sites.
- Students have access to the school Wi-Fi system.
- The school ensures there is adequate supervision at break times.

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:

Effective uncovering of bullying in the school relies on the co-operation of students, on their understanding that they have a responsibility for the safety and welfare of other students; that they have a responsibility to tell.

All reports of bullying will be noted, investigated and dealt with by the school. In this way it is intended to ensure that all in the community will have confidence in the school’s procedures.

It is of the utmost importance that reports of bullying behaviour be dealt with in a discreet and sensitive manner.

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

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.

**Teachers:** If you suspect or are told that a pupil is being subject to bullying behaviour you are required to respond to it. All alleged incidents of bullying should be reported to the Year Head or Deputy Principal.

- The Year Head will speak to the student and establish if in fact bullying behaviour as defined in this policy is taking place. It is important at this stage to get the student to make a record of incidents that have occurred to date.
- If possible the Year Head will speak to somebody not directly involved who saw some or all of what has happened.
- Speak to the alleged bully when appropriate.
- It can be useful to get all those involved to write an account of what happened.

**Students** should report any concerns to any of their teachers or directly to the Year Head or Deputy Principal. Students will be advised that telling about such incidents is the responsible way of responding when they become aware of any incident of bullying behaviour. If the student prefers she can tell her parents/guardians.

**Parents & Guardians** should report any concerns or knowledge of incidents directly to Year Head, Guidance Counsellor or Deputy Principal. Parents are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour, which come to their attention through their children or other parents or guardians. Parents may make an informal or formal complaint to the school.

**Non-teaching staff** should report to the Deputy Principal or Principal any incidents of bullying behaviour observed by them or mentioned to them.

## **Procedures for investigating reported incidents**

The aim in investigating alleged incidents of bullying is to bring the bullying to an end and to resolve the issues that gave rise to the bullying in the first place. The initial focus will be to establish answers to the questions ‘what, where, when, who and why’. All reports of bullying behaviour will be dealt with. In dealing with reports of bullying behaviour the school will adopt a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach which will set an example in dealing effectively with conflict in a non-aggressive manner. Incidents will be investigated as discretely as possible. Restorative practice may be used as a way to resolve the situation.

In line with the implementation of the ‘Anti-Bullying Campaign: Break through the Cloud of Bullying’, 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 (*e.g. the six step approach available from the ‘Dealing with Incidents’ section of the Anti-Bullying Campaign website*) are as follows:

The Year Head or Anti Bullying Co-Ordinator investigates all instances of reported or suspected bullying behaviour, whether

these take place within the school or outside it, with a view to establishing the facts and bringing any such behaviour to an end.

- The School, through the Year Head or Anti-Bullying Co-ordinator, reserves the right to ask any pupil to write an account of what happened, as part of an investigation. This will be a standard procedure and does not necessarily imply that a pupil is guilty of misbehaviour. Students complaining of bullying behaviour against them will be encouraged to keep an account in writing of what is happening, so that a clear pattern can be observed and an appropriate response devised.
- Pupils who are alleged to have been involved in bullying behaviour are interviewed by the Year Head or Anti-bullying co-ordinator to establish the nature and extent of the behaviour and any reasons for it. In the event that they have been involved in bullying behaviour they are asked to sign a binding promise that they will treat all pupils fairly, equally and respectfully including the targeted pupil(s).
- In line with the 'Anti-Bullying Campaign: Break through the Cloud of Bullying', guidelines parents or guardians may not be informed upon report of the first incidents of bullying. This is in line with restorative practices and to remove the fear of punishment and reprisals. However, this will only apply on case by case basis, with strict adherence to child protection guidelines. Parents or Guardians of a student who is being bullied or who is engaged in bullying behaviour may therefore be informed of any incidents of bullying behaviour so that they too are given an opportunity to discuss the matter with their child and with the school. They will be advised how they can re-enforce or support the actions taken by the school.

## **Resolving a Complaint**

Where appropriate, and particularly in the case of first offenders, the school will adopt an approach that underlines the seriousness of the incident but seeks a resolution on an amicable basis.

If the school concludes that a student has engaged in bullying behaviour it will be made clear to them that they are in breach of the school's Code of Behaviour and the school will seek to get them to see the situation from the point of view of the student who is being bullied.

- In line with the implementation of the 'Anti Bullying campaign', the Year Head or Anti-Bullying Co-ordinator does not apportion blame but rather treats bullying behaviour as a 'mistake' that can and must be remedied. It emphasises that its intention is not to punish perpetrators but to talk to them, to explain how harmful and hurtful bullying is and to seek a promise that it will stop. If that promise is forthcoming and is honoured there will be no penalty and that will be the end of the matter. Pupils who report bullying therefore are not getting others 'in trouble' so much as enabling them to get out of trouble into which they may ultimately get if the bullying continued.
- When an investigation is completed and/or a bullying situation is resolved, the Year Head or anti-bullying co-ordinator involved will complete a report, to include

the findings of its investigation, strategy adopted and the outcome of the intervention, as well as any other relevant information.

- If a pupil has signed such a promise but then chooses to break that promise and continue the bullying behaviour, this can then no longer be considered a 'mistake.' In this event parent(s)/guardian(s) will be informed and requested to countersign their daughter's promise. Breach of this additional promise by further bullying behaviour is regarded as a very grave matter and a serious sanction may be imposed by the school authorities (See sanctions below).
- All documentation regarding bullying incidents and their resolution is retained securely in the school.

#### Sanctions:

Where a pupil has been found to be engaged in bullying behaviour, has formally promised to stop and has broken that promise, any of the following sanctions may be imposed:

- She may be required to sign another promise, this time countersigned by a parent/guardian;
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) may be contacted by the Year Head or Anti-bullying coordinator and informed of the nature and extent of the bullying behaviour with a view to agreeing a strategy whereby a promise to end the bullying behaviour would be honoured;
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) may be invited to a meeting with the Year Head or Anti Bullying coordinator and the Principal and the pupil may be suspended from school.
- The case may be referred to the Board of Management and the pupil may be expelled from the school.

Appropriate sanctions will be implemented depending on the case. Where the school is satisfied that any student has persisted in engaging in bullying behaviour, serious disciplinary sanctions will be considered. This will be in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour and may include suspension or expulsion.

All instances of bullying should be recorded using a standard recording template. A copy of this should be kept in the relevant teachers file. Another copy of this will be given to the Principal on the occasion of Year Head meetings to allow the Principal report to the Board of Management. The Principal will outline to the Board how many cases have occurred since the previous meeting and confirm that they are being or have been dealt with. This will be recorded in the minutes.

Where cases fall under the remit of the Child Protection Guidelines, cases will be reported to the Designated Liaison Person or the Deputy Designated Liaison Person and will be dealt with in accordance to the Child Protection Policy.

**The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows:**

Open lines of communication will be maintained with parents and guardians at all stages in the process.

Students who are bullied or who are involved in bullying behaviour may need assistance on an ongoing basis. The teaching staff and the Guidance Counsellor may be able to offer some assistance. The Year Head and tutor would also keep in touch with students involved.

The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows:

- Bullied pupils:
  - Ending the bullying behaviour,
  - Changing the school culture to foster more respect for bullied pupils and all pupils,
  - Changing the school culture to foster greater empathy towards and support for bullied pupils,
  - Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through the awareness-raising programme,
  - Indicating that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupils through the speedy identification of those responsible and speedy resolution of bullying situations,
  - After resolution, enabling bullied pupils to complete a victim-impact statement,
  - Making adequate counselling facilities available to pupils who need it in a timely manner,
  - Helping bullied pupils raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that help develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and participation in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school).
  - Use of the 'buddy system' in the school
  
- Bullying pupils:
  - Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are not blamed or punished and get a 'clean sheet,'
  - Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are doing the right and honourable thing and giving them praise for this,
  - Making adequate counselling facilities available to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs besides violating the rights of others,
  - Helping those who need to raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that help develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school),
  - Using learning strategies throughout the school and the curriculum to help enhance pupils' feelings of self-worth,
  - In dealing with negative behaviour in general, encouraging teachers and parents to focus on, challenge and correct the behaviour while supporting the child,
  - In dealing with bullying behaviour seeking resolution and offering a fresh start with a 'clean sheet' and no blame in return for keeping a promise to reform.



Where a matter is investigated and appears to have been resolved but the problem persists or re-emerges, the student who is being bullied and their parent(s) or guardian(s) should advise the school immediately.

Further support may be available from

- N.E.P.S.
- Outside services such as Jigsaw
- Parents may seek outside professional help
- The Designated Liaison Person and the Child Protection Policy.
- Year Heads
- Class Tutors

## **Appeals**

Where a matter remains unresolved after these procedures have been followed, the matter shall be referred to the Board of Management for their consideration. Where a matter fails to be resolved at that level students, parents and guardians will be advised of their rights of appeal to the Ombudsman for Children.

## **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 behavior 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.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2019.

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.

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.

