



**Edmund Rice College,  
Carrigaline,  
Co. Cork  
Anti-Bullying Policy**

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**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 Edmund Rice College 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 by the Department of Education and Skills 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 students, teachers and the wider school community 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 students to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment
  - 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 students
  - explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including, for example, homophobic and transphobic bullying, racial, sectarian and ethnic bullying, physical appearance, family background, special and exceptional educational needs, gender-identity and hobbies and interests bullying. This list is not exhaustive.
- Effective supervision and monitoring of students
- Supports for staff
- Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies)
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the Anti-Bullying Policy.

## **Definition of Bullying**

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

*Bullying is unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, written, psychological or physical conducted, by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time. It also includes any kind of aggressive behaviour/ threats and interfering with another's property.*

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.

## **Scope of Policy**

The school will investigate all alleged incidents of bullying that occur during the time the school is acting in loco parentis. The school reserves the right to apply its Anti-Bullying Policy in respect of bullying that occurs at any location, activity or function if, in the opinion of the school management, the alleged bully has created a hostile environment at school for the victim. If the rights of the victim of the bully have materially or substantially disrupted the education process or the orderly operation and/ or reputation of the school, the school also reserves the right to apply its Anti-Bullying Policy.

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 will 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.

## **Reporting and Investigation of Alleged Bullying**

It is of the utmost importance that students tell if they are being bullied in school or if they know if another student is being bullied. The student may report bullying to any teacher or adult in the school community. Investigation of reports of alleged bullying is undertaken by the Year Head with the option to include the Deputy Principal and/ or Principal in consultation with the Guidance Counsellor as deemed appropriate.

## **Education and Prevention Strategies**

The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyberbullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying) that are used by the school are as follows:

- Modelling respectful behaviour and language to all members of the school community at all times.
- Explicitly teaching students what respectful behaviour and language looks like, acts like and sounds like both in class and around the school.
- Encouraging and acknowledging respectful behaviour and respectful language at all times.
- Consistently tackling the use of discriminatory and derogatory language in the school.
- Promoting the value of diversity to address issues of prejudice and stereotyping and highlighting the unacceptability of bullying behaviour.
- Using the space available within the teaching of all subjects to foster an attitude of respect for all in accordance with the ethos of Edmund Rice College, Carrigaline.

- Actively promoting the right of every member of the school community to be safe and secure in school.
- Informing incoming 1st year students of the Anti-Bullying ethos of the school during their orientation programme.
- Providing Anti-Bullying workshops for Junior Cycle students.
- Delivering the SPHE syllabus in full for all students which helps students to build empathy, respect, resilience and a sense of self-worth.
- All teachers endeavour to build the self-esteem of each student in their care. It is recognised that a student with high self-esteem is less likely to be bullied and if bullied will be better equipped to deal appropriately with the issue.
- Highlighting and explicitly teaching students the content of and rationale for the school's Code of Behaviour.
- Staff watching out for signs of bullying behaviour and following with appropriate procedures.
- Ensuring that there is adequate student supervision.
- Staff engaging with students to help them to identify places and times when bullying can occur.
- Encouraging a culture of telling, with particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders. In that way students will gain confidence in "telling". This confidence factor is of vital importance. It is made clear to all students that when they report incidents of bullying, they are not considered to be telling tales, but are behaving responsibly.
- Ensuring that students know who to tell and how to tell, e.g.: direct approach to teacher, get a parent/guardian or friend to tell on one's behalf and ensuring that bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place.
- Developing and implementing an Internet Acceptable Use Policy in the school to include the necessary steps to ensure that the access to technology within the school is strictly monitored, as is the students' use of mobile phones.
- Teaching students about the appropriate use of social media and implementing the school's Internet Acceptable Use Policy.

## **Procedures for investigating and dealing with 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 are as follows:

- The primary aim in dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.
- In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved.

- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying will be investigated and dealt with by the Year Head. In that way pupils will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It will be made clear to all students that when they report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.
- Non-teaching staff including office staff, special needs assistants (SNAs), caretakers, cleaners and sports coaches will be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to subject teachers, the Year Head, Deputy Principal or Principal.
- Parents/ guardians 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.

### **The Investigation:**

- The primary aim for the Year Head 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.
- Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by students, staff or parents/ guardians.
- Teachers should report the alleged incidents to the Year Head for investigation. • Incidents are generally best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.
- All interviews will 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 Year Head will seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This will be done in a calm manner; it may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s).
- If a group is involved, each member will be interviewed individually at first.
- Each member of a group shall be supported through the possible pressures that they may face from the other members of the group after interview.

### **Action to be taken:**

- In cases where it has been determined by the Year Head that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents/ guardians of the parties involved will 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 will give parents/ guardians an opportunity to discuss ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school.
- Where the Year Head has determined that a student has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it is made clear to him/ her how s/he is in breach of the school's AntiBullying Policy and efforts are made to ensure that s/he understands the situation from the perspective of the student being bullied.

- Any sanctions decided upon shall be communicated to the parents/ guardians and the student by the Year Head or Deputy Principal or Principal.

- It shall be made clear to all involved (students and parents/ guardians) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the student being disciplined, his/ her parents/ guardians and the school.

### **Follow-up:**

- In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the Year Head must, as part of his/her 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;

- >Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents/ guardians or the Principal or Deputy Principal.

- Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties will be arranged separately and discreetly with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date if the student who has been bullied is ready and agreeable.

- If parents/ guardians are not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents/ guardians will be referred, as appropriate, to the School's Complaints Procedures.

- In the event that parents/ guardians have exhausted the school's complaints procedures and are still not satisfied, the school will advise them of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

### **Recording of bullying behaviour**

It is imperative that all recording of bullying incidents is done in an objective and factual manner. The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour are as follows:

- All staff must keep a written record of any incidents witnessed by them or notified to them. All incidents must be reported to the Year Head.

- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying, must be investigated and dealt with by the Year Head who must keep a written record of the reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same. The Year Head must complete the relevant form (copy attached to this policy) and place it in the confidential storage unit designated for such records.

- The Year Head must inform the Principal of all incidents being investigated.

- If it is established by the Year Head that bullying has occurred, the appropriate written records will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.

- In certain circumstances, it may be deemed appropriate to report an alleged incident directly and immediately to the Principal.

## **Support for Students Affected by Bullying**

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

- Students who have been involved in bullying incidences will be advised by the Year Head of the availability of the Guidance Counsellor.
- Both parties involved in the incident(s) of bullying may receive counselling and/ or opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise self-esteem, to develop friendship and social skills and thereby build resilience whenever this is needed.
- Students who observe bullying behaviour are always encouraged to discuss it with a teacher. The assistance of the Guidance Counsellor may also be called upon by the student, parents/guardians and/ or teacher if required.

## **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.

## **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 students or staff or the harassment of students 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.

## **Communication of this policy to the relevant stakeholders**

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 of Education and Skills and the patron if requested.

## **Periodic summary reports to the Board of Management**

At every meeting of the Board of Management, the Principal will provide a report setting out:

- The overall number of confirmed bullying cases reported.
- Confirmation that all cases referred to above have been or are being dealt with in accordance with this policy. This will be recorded in the minutes of each meeting but no identifying details of students involved will be included.

## **Regular review by the Board of Management**

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year in accordance with Appendix 5 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and PostPrimary Schools which were published by the Department of Education and Skills in September 2013.

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 of Education and Skills. The school will put in place an action plan to address any areas for improvement identified by the review.