

MOHILL COMMUNITY COLLEGE ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

1. 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 Mohill Community 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 in September 2013.

This Policy comprehends bullying that is either perpetrated by students or experienced by students in the School. The matter of intra-staff bullying is addressed in the following ETB policies:

- **Bullying Prevention Policy – Complaint Procedures for ETB Staff**
- **Harassment/Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy – Complaint Procedures for ETB Staff.**

2. Adoption of DES *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*

The Board of Management of Mohill Community College adopts the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* issued by the Department of Education and Skills (September 2013) as the basis for the way in which the Mohill Community College community addresses the issue of bullying.

3. Key Principles of Best Practice

The Board of Management recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact 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:

- 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; 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 students; and
 - ✓ explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying;
 - ✓ including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.
- Effective supervision and monitoring of students;
- 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.

4. 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, psychological or physical conducted, by an individual or group against another person (or persons) 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*.

Potential legal consequences of bullying are dealt with in Appendix 3 of this Policy.

5. Reporting

Students, parents/guardians, non-teaching staff or members of the wider community should feel welcome to report their concerns to any member of the teaching staff – including the Principal, the Deputy Principal. In this regard, any member of the teaching staff of Mohill Community College is deemed to be a relevant teacher in the context of Section 6.8.3 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

Section 7 of this Policy outlines relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying.

6. Education and prevention strategies to combat bullying

Mohill Community College makes it clear to all members of the school community that bullying of any kind is unacceptable, irrespective of whether it is a student a staff member or any other person that is the subject of such behaviour. In this context, all members of the School community have a duty to bring to the attention of the Principal or Deputy Principal any incident of cyberbullying or harassment that they know about or suspect.

While, when investigating and dealing with bullying the primary focus is on resolving differences and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than apportioning blame), the School nevertheless reserves the right to take disciplinary action (up

to and including suspension and expulsion), where such is warranted, in accordance with the School's Student Code of Behaviour, against those who bully others.

The prevention and awareness of bullying is integral to this policy and students will, through both their curricular and extra-curricular programmes, be provided with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth.

The focus of the School's prevention strategy will be to build empathy, respect and resilience in students.

Students will be provided with opportunities to understand the causes and effects of bullying, the issue of identity-based bullying and in particular homophobic and trans-phobic bullying. This will include the display of LGBT posters (as appropriate) and discussions with parents/guardians about statements of welcome and respect for LGBT members of the school community, teaching the Social, Personal, Health Education (SPHE) resource, Growing Up LGBT and (as appropriate) participating in LGBT awareness events.

The school recognises that the SPHE curriculum makes specific provision for exploring bullying as well as the inter-related areas of belonging and integrating, communication, conflict, friendship, personal safety and relationships. Also, that the Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) programme provides opportunities to explore and discuss areas such as human sexuality and relationships, which has particular relevance to identity-based bullying. The school will make every reasonable effort to ensure that the full potential of these programmes to combat bullying is exploited.

The School is committed to using the [*Schools for Health in Ireland Framework*](#) to assist it in ensuring that the school is inclusive, welcoming of diversity and addresses these issues effectively in the interests of all members of the school community.

Furthermore, it is recognised that there is potential within the teaching of all subjects and within extracurricular activities to foster an attitude of respect for all: to promote the value of diversity; to address prejudice and stereotyping and to highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour.

Prevention and awareness raising measures will also deal explicitly with cyber-bullying through educating students about appropriate online behaviour, how to stay safe while on-line and also through developing a culture of reporting any concerns about or incidents of bullying to a member of the teaching staff. The school will, in all its communications with students and their parents/guardians, commencing with the induction of the student into the School, make every effort to highlight the importance of students reporting incidents of or concerns about bullying to a member of the teaching staff on the clear understanding that these matters are being reported in confidence. This means that a student who draws concerns about bullying to the attention of a member of staff will not have his/her identity divulged in any way that might result in those against whom allegations are being made identifying the source of the report.

More than anything else, the combating of bullying will depend on the extent to which students note and report bullying. In this context, the well-being of students is very much dependent on the vigilance of their fellow students and their preparedness to report concerns about bullying to the teaching staff and/or school management. All teaching staff will reinforce this point to students on an ongoing basis.

The School will adopt a school-wide approach (involving management, staff, parents/guardians, students and members of the wider community with a connection to the School) to prevent and combat bullying. In this context, the school is committed to engaging with parents/guardians. Firstly the school will involve them in the development of policies and practices to combat bullying. Secondly the school will hold annual information evenings for parents/guardians to ensure that they understand the way Mohill Community College deals with bullying, and to provide them with reliable information on how they may contribute towards combating bullying. In this regard, it is important that parents/guardians realise that anyone can be a bully and anyone can be a target of bullying. It is also important to realise that disagreements between young people are part and parcel of negotiating the road to adulthood and that every youthful disagreement should not be treated as a full-blown bullying episode.

In accordance with 6.8.9 of the *DES Procedures* 'parents and students are expected 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 school will establish links with school bus drivers and others who come in daily contact with its students in order to enlist them in countering bullying behaviour by reporting it to parents/guardians and/or the school.

Where necessary the school will seek the assistance of and work with NEPS, the HSE and the Gardai, as appropriate, to combat bullying, identify the perpetrators, and support the victims.

In combating bullying, the School will take particular account of the needs of pupils with disabilities or with SEN. This will involve improving inclusion, focusing on developing social skills, paying particular attention to student induction and cultivating a school culture that respects everyone and values helping one another.

The School will devote a staff development session (for teaching and non-teaching staff – as appropriate) each school year towards: raising the awareness of bullying among staff, building an understanding of what bullying is and providing guidance on how it is best combated – prevented, detected, investigated, documented (as appropriate) and resolved. This session will also provide opportunities for exploring the potential that exists within the teaching of all subjects and within extra-curricular activities to foster an attitude of respect for all, to promote the value of diversity, to address prejudice and stereotyping, and to highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour.

A clear focus of all staff development around combating bullying will be the enablement of all staff to implement this policy and the [*Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*](#) consistently and effectively.

The School is committed to surveying the student body regularly (at least once every year) to identify the extent of bullying and, in so far as is possible, the students that are affected by it.

The School's RSE and SPHE programme will specifically address the issue of bullying with each year group, each school year.

The School will, each year, hold a Safe Internet Awareness day and an Anti-Bullying Awareness week to highlight the whole issue of bullying and staying safe using modern technology.

The School's senior students will have a specific responsibility for recognising bullying behaviour, for bringing concerns about bullying to the attention of a teacher and for supporting vulnerable students in relation to bullying. The senior students will be provided with training to assist them in this regard.

7. Procedures for investigating, following up and recording of bullying behaviour, and intervention strategies used by the School/College for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour

Where a member of the teaching staff has a concern about a student being bullied, either as a result of a personal observation or as a result of receiving a report from a third party, s/he may investigate and deal with the matter in accordance with the procedures set out in Section 6.8 of the [Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools](#). Alternatively, the teacher may refer the matter to the Principal or Deputy Principal.

In investigating bullying behaviour or addressing bullying behaviour in any way, teachers are welcome to seek the assistance and support of the principal, the deputy principal or the pastoral care team at any time. Indeed given the extent to which the principal and deputy principal are privy to all kinds of personal information about students, it would be prudent for teachers to check in with either of them before taking any action in relation to bullying behaviour.

Where a teacher is concerned that a particular bullying episode is **causing serious upset to a student**, staff member or other person, s/he should bring it to the attention of either the Principal or Deputy Principal at the earliest possible opportunity.

The School reserves the right to investigate allegations of bullying (and to take disciplinary action where necessary) where bullying is perpetrated by a member of the school community and it impinges on the work or well-being of a student in the school, even where the bullying acts are committed outside of the school/college.

The School reserves the right, in accordance with Section 6.3.5 of the *DES Anti-Bullying Procedures* to seek the assistance of agencies such as NEPS, the HSE, and the Gardaí, where it deems such assistance is necessary to dealing effectively with bullying behaviour. In any case, where the School deems bullying behaviour to be potentially abusive (see sections 6.8.12, 6.8.13 and 6.8.14 of the *DES Anti-Bullying Procedures* it will consult with the HSE's Children and Family Services to assist it in drawing up an appropriate response or to obtain advice or to make a formal child protection report to the HSE or the Gardaí (as appropriate) in accordance with the DES [Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools](#).

Concerns about or allegations of bullying will be investigated and addressed in accordance with Section 6.8 9 of the [Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools](#). These are summarised as follows.

- a. In investigating and dealing with bullying the focus will be on resolving the interpersonal issues and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved - rather than apportioning blame.
- b. 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.
- c. All reports of bullying, including anonymous reports, will be investigated and dealt with either by the teacher who first becomes aware of the allegations/concerns or the Principal and/or Deputy Principal. In this regard, it is incumbent on each teacher who becomes aware of

bullying behaviour either to deal with such behaviour themselves or to bring such behaviour to the attention of the Principal or Deputy Principal at the earliest possible opportunity.

- d. It will be made clear to students in all years that when they report bullying behaviour they are not considered to be 'telling tales' but are behaving responsibly and that the well-being of other students is dependent on them reporting such behaviour to a teacher or to a senior student.

- Those involved in investigating and resolving bullying behaviour will note and report developments as follows and, in doing so, they will comply with relevant data protection legislation.

- The relevant teacher will use his/her professional judgement regarding the records to be kept of information received, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved with the bullying behaviour.

- Where the relevant teacher establishes that bullying has occurred, s/he must keep appropriate written records to assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.

- The relevant teacher must use the recording template at [Appendix 1](#) to record the bullying behaviour in the following circumstances:

- a) Where s/he considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after s/he has determined that bullying behaviour occurred; and
- b) Where it is necessary to report serious bullying behaviour immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal or where a relevant teacher at any time passes on concerns or allegations of bullying to the Principal or Deputy Principal.

In each of the circumstances at (a) and (b) above, the recording template at [Appendix 1](#) must be completed **in full** and retained by the teacher in question and a copy provided to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable.

At any point in either investigating or resolving a bullying matter, the relevant teacher may seek the advice and support of the Principal and/or Deputy Principal while retaining responsibility for dealing with the matter.

Also, at any point in either investigating or resolving a bullying matter, the relevant teacher may hand the matter over to either the Principal or Deputy Principal. In doing so, however, s/he must

complete the recording template at [Appendix 1](#), retain a copy of the completed template in his/her files and provide a copy to the Principal or Deputy Principal, as applicable.

- e. All non-teaching staff such as clerical and administrative, study supervisors, special needs assistants (SNAs), caretakers, cleaners, sports' coaches, those taking extracurricular activities and those driving school buses will be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to either a teacher or the principal or deputy principal.
- f. Incidents of bullying will be investigated in a calm, unemotional problem-solving manner.
- g. Incidents of bullying will generally be investigated outside of the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.
- h. All interviews will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard for the rights of students, irrespective of whether they are allegedly involved in bullying behaviour or in a position to provide information about the behaviour being investigated.
- i. Those investigating bullying behaviour will calmly seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why.
- j. Where a group is allegedly involved in bullying behaviour, each student will be interviewed individually in the first instance. Thereafter, where appropriate, all involved will be met as a group and, at this meeting, each member will be asked for his/her account to ensure that all are clear about what each individual is saying.
- k. Each member of a group will be supported through the possible pressures that s/he may face from the other members of the group after being interviewed.
- l. Where deemed appropriate, those being interviewed may be asked to write down their account of what happened.
- m. Where the teacher investigating a bullying issue determines that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved will be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and to explain the actions being taken (by reference to the school policy). The school will give parents an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school.
- n. Where the relevant teacher determines that a student has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it will be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and **every reasonable effort** will be made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the student/s being bullied.
- o. Where the School deems it necessary to impose disciplinary sanctions, it will be made clear to all involved (both the bullied and those doing the bullying) and their parents) that this is a private matter between the student being disciplined, his/her parents and the School.
- p. As a follow up to a bullying issue being resolved, the relevant teacher should meet separately with the relevant parties to review progress. Subsequently, but only if the student who has been bullied is ready and agreeable, consideration should be given to meeting with both parties simultaneously as this can have a therapeutic effect.
- q. Where the relevant teacher 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, the bullying incident must be recorded by the relevant teacher in the recording template at [Appendix 1](#).
- r. In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant teacher 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; and
- ⇒ Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents/guardians or the school Principal or Deputy Principal.
- s. Where a parent/guardian or a student who is more than 18 years old is not satisfied that the College has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with the [Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools](#), s/he will be advised of his/her right to make an appeal to the Board of Management. Such appeals shall be submitted, in writing, setting out the grounds of the appeal, to the Chairperson of the Board within 15 school days of the parent/guardian informing the principal that he/she is of the opinion that the College has not dealt with the bullying case in accordance with the [Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools](#).
- t. Where a parent/guardian, having exercised his/her appeal to the Board of Management, is still not satisfied s/he will be advised of his/her right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

8. Programme of support for working with students affected by bullying

The College will put in place a programme of supports for students who have been bullied. This programme will involve the following elements.

- Students who have been bullied will be:
 - ✓ offered appropriate counselling;
 - ✓ provided with opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop their social skills and to build their resilience.
- Students who have been involved in bullying behaviour will be:
 - ✓ provided with counselling to help them to learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others;
 - ✓ provided with appropriate opportunities to build their self-esteem and feelings of self-worth.
- Students who observe incidents of bullying behaviour will be encouraged to discuss them with their teachers and their parents and to avail of counselling where they feel it may assist them to cope effectively with what they have experienced.

9. Supervision and Monitoring of Anti-Bullying in Mohill Community College

- 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.
- The implementation and effectiveness of the College's anti-bullying policy will be an agenda item for all staff meetings – so the concerns about the policy and/or the welfare of individual students can be shared and effectively addressed.
- Data gathered through the reporting templates ([Appendix 1](#)) will be collated and analysed annually with a view to monitoring levels of bullying behaviour and identifying issues requiring attention. This analysis will complement the information gathered through bullying surveys.
- At least once in every school term, The Principal will provide a report to the Board of Management setting out the following.
 - ✓ the overall number of bullying cases reported (by means of the bullying recording template (see [Appendix 1](#)) since the previous report to the Board.
 - ✓ confirmation that all cases referred via the recording template ([Appendix 1](#)) have been or are being, dealt with in accordance with the school's anti-bullying policy and the [Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools](#). The minutes of Board of

Management' meetings will record the Principal's report but in doing so will not include any identifying details of the students involved.

10. Prevention of Harassment

The Board of Management confirms that the College 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.

11. Policy Adoption and Review

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 29th April 2014.

12. Policy Dissemination and Publication

This policy will be made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Association.

13. Policy Review

- The Board of Management will undertake an annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation in accordance with the procedures set out in the [Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools](#) using the checklist included at **Appendix 4** of those procedures – see [Appendix 2](#) of this Policy.
- The Board of Management will ensure that an action plan is put in place to address any areas for improvement identified by the annual review.
- 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.
- Details of the review will be recorded in the minutes of the Board of Management' meeting that adopted the review and a record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the Patron and the DES. In the case of the DES, it is appreciated that the Inspectorate will place a strong focus on the actions the School takes to create a positive school culture and to prevent and tackle bullying.

Signed: Mr. Thomas Mulligan

Date: 29th April 2014

(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Date of next review: 23rd June 2023

Signed: Ms. Una Duffy

Date: 29th April 2014

(Principal)

Thereafter reviewed and approved by the Board of Management annually.

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

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

7. Where behaviour 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 behaviour and its impact

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9. Details of actions taken

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Signed _____ (Teacher) Date _____

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal _____