



Mohill Community College Equality, Diversity and Anti-Racism Policy

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1. Rationale

Mohill Community College is a community of teachers, students, parents and non-teaching staff that aims to provide the highest possible standard of education for all its students in a stable, non-threatening environment.

Racism is the prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism by an individual, community, or institution against a person or people based on their membership of a particular racial or ethnic group, typically one that is a minority or marginalized. Acts of racism are known to cause physical and/or psychological damage and to negatively affect the quality of the teaching and learning provided. All members of the school are united in recognising their role in supporting an ethos of anti-racism and a zero tolerance for racism.

It is the responsibility of every member of the school community to respect the right of others to learn in an atmosphere free from discrimination towards themselves or their belongings and to assist in the prevention of racist speech, discrimination and/or harassment. To this end it is imperative that every member of the school community recognises that racism will not be tolerated.

In our School we define a racist incident as being discriminated against, or being targeted, based on colour, race, ethnicity, nationality, culture, language or religion/belief through actions and/or words. Racist incidents need not be directed towards an individual, and can include racist, sweeping statements within the classroom.

An anti-racism policy is a crucial component of a school's effort to create a safe and inclusive learning environment for all. At Mohill Community College, our anti-racism policy sets the tone and expectations for behaviour in the school community, while sending a clear message that racism, prejudice, and discrimination will not be tolerated in any form.

By articulating a clear anti-racism policy, schools can help to prevent and address incidents of racism and discrimination, while promoting a culture of respect and understanding. This can help to create a more positive and welcoming learning environment for all students, regardless of their race, ethnicity or cultural background

2. Scope

The School Anti-Racism Policy (“the Policy”) applies in the following contexts:

2.1. The relationships between students and other students.

2.2. The relationships between students and their teachers.

3. Application

The Policy applies to the following:

- When students are on the school grounds.
- When students are travelling to and from School.
- When students are on School tours and trips.
- When students are engaged in extracurricular activities organised by the school.
- The school reserves the right, in exceptional circumstances, to apply the Policy in respect of hate speech, discrimination and/or harassment that occurs at any other time when there is a clear connection with the school. This can also include alleged behaviour that is likely to have a significant negative reflection on the school’s ethos. This could include but is not limited to discriminatory language or racist attacks by a student using social media outlets or other forms of messaging services.

4. Principles

The Board of Management recognises the very serious nature of racism 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 racist 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 racism in a non-threatening environment and promotes respectful relationships across the school community;
- Effective leadership;
- A school-wide approach;
- A shared understanding of what racism is and its impact;
- Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that build empathy, respect and understanding in students; and explicitly address the issues of discrimination and hate speech including, gaslighting and micro-aggressions.
- Effective supervision and monitoring of students;
- Supports and training for staff
- Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of racist behaviour or incidents (including use of established intervention strategies);
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-racism policy.

5. Aims of the Anti-Racism Policy

- To support and give meaning to our school ethos of inclusion, equality and partnership and to ensure effective protection and redress against discrimination in the school through a structured policy framework.
- Ensure a safe and welcoming environment for all, in which racist speech and behaviour are continually challenged.
- To dismantle stereotypical views which have an underlying racist bias.
- To empower our school community to identify and engage with racist or discriminatory behaviour.
- To develop staff awareness of implicit racism.
- To ensure the completion of anti-bias training for staff to aid them in directly intervening with incidents of racism. Staff will be provided with the tools and management support to create a more effective and coordinated response to racist incidents.
- To further the eradication of racism in society.

6. Definition of a racist incident

In our school we define a racist incident as being when an individual is discriminated against, or targeted, based on colour, race, ethnicity, nationality, culture, religion/belief or language.

Racism: Racism is the belief that a ground such as “race“, colour, language, religion, nationality or national or ethnic origin justifies contempt for a person or a group of persons, or the notion of superiority of a person or a group of persons, which manifests through those power dynamics present in structural and institutional arrangements, practices, policies and cultural norms, which have the effect of excluding or discriminating against those individuals. (European Commission on Racism and Intolerance, 2023)

Racial discrimination: The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), which Ireland is party to terms “racial discrimination” as any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.” (Article 1, ICERD)

The following types of behaviour are included in the definition of racist behaviour but not limited to:

- Discriminatory hate speech or name-calling, insults, racist jokes and language.
- Verbal abuse and threats of a racist nature.
- Physical assaults of a racist nature.
- Ridicule based on differences of colour, race, ethnicity, nationality, culture, religion or language.
- Refusal to co-operate with others because of any of the above differences.
- Stereotyping based on colour, race, ethnicity, nationality, culture, religion/belief or language.
- Racist graffiti.
- Written abuse of a racist nature including racist comments made by emailing, text messaging and/or on any social media forums.

- Damage to property motivated by racism.
- Incitement of others to act in a racist manner.
- Provocative behaviour such as wearing racist badges, insignia or clothing.
- Discrimination due to Membership of the Traveller or Roma Community.

A whole school Approach and Response

- Decolonising the curriculum: learn about the lives of people in other countries, and of their contribution to art, history, music, drama, sciences etc.
- Increasing awareness of the historical roots of racism and discrimination, and their impacts on communities must be identified as a priority.
- Anti-racism and human rights education are explicitly undertaken during anti-racism week and implicitly throughout the school year.
- Building cultural competencies and empathy programme
- Diversity represented with dignity on the walls of the school (not the charity model) with a clear message of zero tolerance to racism.
- By means of (example: targeted coffee-mornings), all parents are encouraged to visit the school and participate in their child's education and school activities.
- Teachers respond sensitively to pupils who disclose incidents of racism.
- All disclosed incidents of racism are investigated.
- Parents contribute to and support the schools Anti-Racism policy by encouraging positive attitudes and behaviour both at home and at school and by being vigilant for signs and symptoms that their child is subject to racism or is subjecting another child to racism.

7. Procedures for Dealing with Incidents of Racism- The Four “R”us Technique

All reports of racism involving a student or member of staff will be passed on to the relevant member of staff will be noted, investigated, and dealt with by the member of staff and the principal. In this way, all members of the school community will be encouraged to ““talk”” about racist incidents within school. Class Teachers, Tutors, Year Heads, Deputy Principal and Principal will engage as per the predetermined structures. A restorative approach means

that the primary aim in any investigation, in the first instance and as far as is practicable, is to resolve issues and restore relationships. It aims to identify and clarify how the behaviour of one individual can have an enormous impact on another. A restorative approach will also clarify how a situation can best be resolved. A student who engages in racist behaviour after a restorative intervention does so in the knowledge that they have ignored the efforts of the school to help them on this occasion to change their behaviour.

There are four “Rs” when it comes to dealing with incidents of racism.

REPORT

An incident of racism must be reported. There is a chain of command that this goes through. This is as follows:

1. A student or parent/guardian may report an incident to the relevant teacher or teaching assistant. This incident may be directly affecting them or be a witnessed incident. This incident can involve a member of staff, a student or a combination of both. In the case of a member of staff being alleged to be racist, the next relevant level of authority must be informed. This may be done anonymously initially.
2. The alleged victim should be listened to and asked to write an account of the incident. A racism report must be filled out. The incident is best investigated outside the classroom in a calm manner and with appropriate privacy. Incidents may also be reported to the principal.
3. A teacher reporting an incident of racism directed at them must report to the next relevant level of authority excluding others involved in the incident.

RESPONSE

Each incident that is reported must be assessed as to severity. If an investigation uncovers no evidence of actual racist behaviour, then the issue may be dealt with in the context of promoting better behaviour.

1. Where there is a report of a racist incident in school or within the school environs, the principal and the member of staff/school community involved, will meet with all

parties to establish what happened and address the issues accordingly. This includes staff meetings and keeping a record of the frequency of these incidents to measure the effectiveness of the policies.

2. The person responsible for the racist incident must be aware of the effect the incident has had and be appropriately sanctioned. Repeat offenses should be sanctioned in accordance with the Code of Behaviour, and Grievance Procedures. Actions taken could result in suspension, expulsion or dismissal (in the case of a member of staff). For other members of the school community, this could result in barring from the school grounds or school buildings.
3. Support for the person experiencing the racist incident including, but not limited to classroom discussion, one to one teacher/chaplain/counsellor-student support and peer support groups.
4. Parents of the students involved will be informed of the issue and the actions taken.

REASSESS

1. The school should return to reevaluate the effectiveness of their dealing with the incident, to check on the victim but also that the aggressor has understood why the school has responded this way.
2. In cases where the relevant teacher or principal considers that the racist behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately resolved within 20 school days after he/she has determined that racist behaviour has occurred, it must be recorded by the relevant teacher.
3. Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a racism case in accordance with these procedures, the parents must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures.
4. If the incident is extreme or leading to more extreme behaviour the incident should be reported to the community liaison garda representative.
5. There should also be an annual review of the policy to ensure it is at its most effective and the possibility of amendment for best practise.

REPEAT

The more often and openly the school discusses racism in all its forms the easier it is to call it out in the community and create a safe environment for all to thrive in. Every incident is not a crisis but rather an opportunity for a teachable moment as well as a support to those affected by racism. Having these conversations increases awareness and widens students and staff's horizons as to their privilege or lack thereof in a wider world context. Racism is local and lived, it can be inflicted by strangers but also by those we see on a day-to-day basis. The only way to tackle it is head on with open, frank discussion.

8. Signs and Symptoms of Racism

As racism is not always easy to spot, teachers and parents/guardians should be vigilant in keeping an eye out for signs and symptoms that may indicate that a student is being subjected to racial targeting or is engaging in racist activity.

Signs and symptoms may include, but are not limited to:

- Deterioration in academic performance.
- Possessions missing or damaged.
- Refusal to talk to a parent/ guardian about what is troubling him/her. When explained the rationale may not make sense to those told but it is very real for him/her.
- Reluctance to go to school.
- Generalised anxiety/ difficulties sleeping/ loss of appetite

9. Strategies for the Prevention of Racism in the School

- As a school community, there is a zero-tolerance approach towards racism.
- Having an anti-racism policy is the first step, so that when incidents occur there is a policy to refer to. But it is only the beginning.
- It is vital to also have a diversity and inclusion panel in schools, giving voices to students from different ethnic backgrounds. This can feed into the student council, where there is one, and should be geared towards researching the way the school can interact with other cultures- trips, diversifying the library, goals for each school year.
- Teachers have access to resources to guide them in creating a welcoming classroom for students for whom English is a second language, and in communicating with their parents.
- Authentic and organic interactions with anti-racism, engaging with anti-racism week, but not as a tokenistic gesture, rather as the culmination of the school's year-round work.
- Discouraging being a bystander when it comes to racism. Silence is a statement. The student that lets racism pass by without question is as much to blame.
- Inviting speakers from many ethnic backgrounds and disciplines and experiences to provide diverse role models and alternatives to what may be around students daily. Anti bias training for the school wide community, not just the students.
- Parents contribute to and support the schools Anti-Racism policy by encouraging positive attitudes and behaviour both at home and at school and by being vigilant for signs and symptoms that their child is subject to racism or is subjecting another child to racism.
- Ensure that library reading material and textbooks represent appropriate lived experiences of children and adults from different national and cultural backgrounds. Ensuring that movies and documentaries being watched have that same reflection and including material that investigates false beliefs.

10. Roles and Responsibilities

Board of Management

The Board of Management must take leadership in terms of the drafting of the Anti-Racism Policy. The Board must clearly outline the consequences of racist behaviour within the Policy and be prepared to take the necessary and sometimes difficult steps regarding the sanctioning of offenders of racist incidents.

Principal

The principal must take direct leadership of the issue of racism within the school. They must set the standard for the teachers and administration below him. The principal must communicate the serious and unacceptable nature of racist incidents to parents, staff and students alike. The principal must ensure that policies are carried out and that this is done with due diligence to those affected. The principal must communicate emerging issues such as racism to the Board of Management or any other relevant authority. The principal must know who the local garda ethnic liaison officer is.

Teachers

Teachers are obliged to ensure that no child under his/her supervision is subjected to racism. Teachers must keep track of and notify the relevant authority of any racist incidents and complete racist incident forms where appropriate. Teachers must seek to support persons who have experienced racist incidents appropriately with compassion and mindfulness- empathy rather than denial, open questions rather than doubting ones. Teachers must also take part in and engage with anti-bias and anti-racism training. Teachers must not, at any time, engage in stereotyping, ridiculing or encouraging racist discourse within the classroom. Teachers set the tone and must always challenge discriminatory language.

Students

Students must be made aware of their obligation and responsibility to ensure that other students are not subjected to racist incidents. Students must report such incidents to the nearest teacher. Students must not engage in any racist activity. This is not limited to the school grounds. Outside school and online students are as responsible for their behaviour as they would be on school grounds.

Parents

Parents must be familiar with the school's anti-racism policy and duly accept the sanctions as determined by the school. Parents should be encouraged to partake in activities which encourage the appreciation for diversity and cross-cultural relationships.

Revision of This Policy

This policy shall be regularly revisited by the school management team.

Review/Ratification/Communication

This policy was ratified by the BOM on _____ This was reviewed on the _____.

It will be reviewed again and amended if necessary.

SOURCES

<https://www.scoilchoilmens.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/4.5-SC-Anti-Racism-Policy.pdf>

<http://theredcard.ie/2014/01/05/drafting-school-anti-racism-policies/>

<https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2000/act/22/enacted/en/pdf>

<https://assets.gov.ie/24429/3b6f3db2de154ebaa1f69a0856c97c8e.pdf>

https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/236745b0-a222-4b2a-80b1-42db0a3c7e4c/Intercultural-Education-in-Primary-School_Guidelines.pdf

Date of Ratification: _____

Chairperson of Board of Management: _____

Date: _____

Principal: _____

Date: _____