

St. Columba's College Stranorlar



Anti-Bullying Policy

February 2025

1. Anti-Bullying Policy

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 St. Columba's 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.

2. Key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour

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 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: 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 pupils and explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.
- Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils during school activities (including break/lunch times), going to and from school, school tours/trips, extra-curricular activities, etc.;
- 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.

All members of the school community are subject to this policy. Bullying behaviour such as cyber bullying which breaks the law may be referred to the Gardai. The school reserves the right to apply its Anti-Bullying policy in respect of bullying that occurs at any location, activity, function or programme, if, in the opinion of the school management the alleged bully has created a hostile environment at school for the victim and if it impacts upon the school or relationships within the school. If the rights of the victim of the bully have materially or

substantially disrupted the education process or the orderly operation of the school, the school also reserves the right to apply its anti-bullying policy and contact the relevant bodies to assist.

3. Definition of Bullying Behaviour

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 and
- 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, Remote Learning Policy, Acceptable Use Policy and Communications Policy

Examples of bullying behaviours includes:

- Harassment based on any of the nine grounds in the equality legislation e.g. sexual harassment, homophobic bullying, racist bullying etc.
- Physical aggression
- Peer Pressure whereby a student feels they are within a toxic friendship group or a particular person is threatening/isolating them if they refuse to do something.
- Any type of manipulation
- Any type of behaviour which attacks another person’s self confidence
- Blackmail and intimidation
- Damage to property
- Name calling

- Slagging
- The production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other materials aimed at intimidating another person
- Offensive graffiti
- Extortion
- Insulting or offensive gestures
- The 'look'
- Invasion of personal space
- A combination of any of the types listed.

Cyber Bullying has been defined as:

An aggressive, intentional act carried out by:

- A group or individual
- Using social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat etc... on a once off basis, repeatedly and/or over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself.
- Cyber bullying does not involve face to face or physical confrontation.
- It does not require any close proximity to the cyber victim.
- Cyber bullying can also be carried out anonymously.
- Disinhibition exists where young people say and do things online that they would never do face to face. It is conducted in an environment perceived as free from adult supervision. As the fear of discovery is absent, there is no perceived control on the cyber bully's behaviour that exists in 'real world' encounters.

Computers/Smartphones

- **Denigration:** Spreading rumours, lies or gossip to hurt a person's reputation
- **Harassment:** Continually sending vicious, mean or disturbing messages to an individual
- **Impersonation:** Posting offensive or aggressive messages under another person's name
- **Flaming:** Using inflammatory or vulgar words to provoke an online fight
- **Trickery:** Fooling someone into sharing personal information which you then post online
- **Outing:** Posting or sharing confidential or compromising information or images
- **Exclusion:** Purposefully excluding some from an online group
- **Fraping:** Hacking into a person's social networking account to send false/untrue messages or to change details while pretending to be that person
- **Cyber stalking:** Ongoing harassment and denigration that causes a person considerable fear for his/her safety
- Silent telephone/mobile phone call
- Abusive telephone/mobile phone calls
- Abusive text messages
- Abusive email
- Abusive posts or comments on any form of social media

- Any kind of abuse in a remote learning environment

Homophobic and Transgender

- Spreading rumours about a person's sexual orientation
- Taunting a person of a different sexual orientation
- Name calling e.g. Gay, queer, lesbian.... used in a derogatory manner
- Physical intimidation or attacks
- Threats

Race, nationality, ethnic background and membership of the Traveller community

- Discrimination, prejudice, comments or insults about colour, nationality, culture, social class, religious beliefs, ethnic or traveller background
- Exclusion on the basis of any of the above

Relational

- Isolation/exclusion from groups/ignoring
- Ignoring
- Excluding from the group
- Taking someone's friends away
- 'Bitching'
- Spreading rumours
- Breaking confidence
- Talking loud enough so that the victim can hear
- The 'look'
- Use or terminology such as 'nerd' in a derogatory way

Sexual

- Unwelcome or inappropriate sexual comments or touching
- Harassment
- 'Slut shaming' where girls are targeted on social media or elsewhere and bullied through degradation/humiliation for their perceived sexual conduct

Special Educational Needs, Disability

- Name calling
- Taunting others because of their disability or learning needs
- Taking advantage of some pupils' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to recognise and defend themselves against bullying
- Taking advantage of some pupils' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to understand social situations and social cues
- Mimicking a person's disability
- Setting others up for ridicule

4. The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying issues

Any teacher may act as a relevant teacher when and if circumstances warrant it. A pupil or parent may bring a bullying concern to any teacher in the school. Individual teachers must take

appropriate measures regarding reports of bullying behaviour in accordance with the school's anti-bullying policy. The members of teaching staff who have responsibility for investigating and dealing with bullying are the year heads, guidance counsellors/ deputy principals. The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows: Class teachers, Class tutors, Year Heads, Guidance Counsellors, the Deputy Principals and the Principal. All staff members, students and parents have a responsibility to report any instances of bullying.

5. 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:

- Weekly assemblies and daily meetings with class tutors are used to promote positive reinforcement and emphasise the school's ethos of care and compassion.
- A culture of reporting bullying is fostered in the school through assemblies, visits by management to classes, SPHE lessons and the Wellbeing Programme. Particular emphasis is placed on standing up for others, encouraging self-confidence, recognising both good and toxic relationships and being forthcoming with information to help the school authorities in identifying and solving issues of bullying.
- Students of all years and age groups are continually reminded of who they can tell if they are being bullied or they feel that someone else is.
- A safe space where students can go at break and lunch times if they are being isolated or feel in any way that they need time out is currently in development.
- Initiatives which deal explicitly with identity based bullying include; LGBTQ posters around the school building, LGBTQ Week, SPHE (in Junior Cycle) and RSE modules (in Senior Cycle)
- Particular attention is paid to the key period of transition to secondary school during the Transfer Programme in August for incoming 1st Year students. The changes brought by the move from Junior to Senior Cycle are also recognised for 5th Year students coming from TY and 3rd Year. Positive connections among 5th Year students are promoted during Team Building activities in September.
- The FUSE anti-bullying programme is being conducted with 1st and 2nd Years.
- Mental Health Week involves the promotion of positive mental attitudes and the importance of inclusion.
- We encourage parents to approach the school authorities if they feel their child is being bullied. They can have confidence in the school's determination to help and support their child. Similarly, parents are reminded that if their child is involved in bullying behaviour, they have a responsibility to support the school's anti-bullying policy and address their child's inappropriate behaviour.
- Continuous Professional Development for staff in delivering these programmes.
- School wide delivery of lessons on bullying from evidence based programmes.

- School wide delivery of lessons on Relational aggression, Homophobic and Transphobic Bullying, Diversity and Interculturalism.
- Wellbeing Week, Anti-Bullying Week, the promotion of a 'Random Act of Kindness' and the One Good School initiative all promote having care and respect for ourselves and others.
- All students must sign the Code of Behaviour and agree to the Acceptable Use Policy in the school, which both prohibit bullying in any form.
- Accessing the support of Community Gardaí and Donegal Youth Services to cover issues around personal safety and cyber-bullying.
- The school will specifically consider the additional needs of SEN pupils with regard to programme implementation and the development of skills and strategies to enable all pupils to respond appropriately.
- All subject teachers strive to promote respect, harmony and tolerance in their class rooms.

"There is space within the teaching of all subjects 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. In English, there is a wide range of literature available which could be used to stimulate discussion. In Civil, Social and Political Education (CSPE), the interdependence of people in communities at local, national and international levels is stressed. In Geography and History references to colonisation, exploitation and dictatorships could be used to illustrate the negative aspect of power. The work could be extended into many other areas such as Art, Drama, Religious Education, and Physical Education. Co-operation and group enterprise can be promoted through team sports, school clubs and societies as well as through practical subjects. Sporting activities in particular can provide excellent opportunities for channelling and learning how to control aggression." (6.5.10 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools)

6. The school's procedures for investigation, follow-up and recording 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:

- In investigating and dealing with bullying, the relevant teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved. If the relevant teacher establish that bullying has occurred, appropriate records will be kept. The record template (**Appendix 2**) will be used in instances such as these.
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) and pupils 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;
- Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach.

- Where possible incidents should be 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 pupils concerned. Pupils 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.
- If a group is involved, each member should be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved should be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member should be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements.
- Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that may face them from the other members of the group after the 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 parent(s)/guardian(s) 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 parent(s)/guardian(s) an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports provided to the pupils.
- Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts should be made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied.
- It must also be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parent(s)/guardian(s)) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school.

Established intervention strategies include the following:

- Teacher interviews with all students.
- Negotiating agreements between students and following these up by monitoring progress. This can be on an informal basis or implemented through a more structured mediation process.
- Working with parent(s)/guardian(s) to support school interventions.
- 'No Blame' approach.
- Circle Time.
- Restorative interviews.
- Restorative conferencing.
- Implementing sociogram questionnaires.
- Peer mediation where suitable training has been given.

7. The School's Programme of Support

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

- Students who have been involved in bullying incidents will be advised by Class Tutor/Year Head/Deputy Principal/Principal of the availability of the Guidance Counsellor
- All in-school supports and opportunities will be provided for the pupils affected by bullying to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop friendships and social skills and build resilience e.g.
 - Pastoral care system
 - Tutor/Year head system
 - Guidance/Care team/Student Support Team
 - Group work
 - SPHE/RSE and within subject classes through a variety of activities and lessons
 - Guest speakers
 - Outside agencies such as Donegal Youth Services and Donegal Sexual Abuse and Rape Crisis Centre
 - Referral to Tusla or/and An Garda Síochána
- If students require counselling or further supports the school will endeavour to liaise with the appropriate agencies to organise same. This may be for the pupil affected by bullying or involved in the bullying behaviour. Guidance staff may liaise with parents in relation to supports available from relevant agencies.
- Students should understand that there are no innocent bystanders and that all incidents of bullying behaviour must be reported to a teacher. Students who witnessed bullying are encouraged to discuss it with a teacher and if assistance with a Counsellor is required, their availability will be ascertained.
- Parents will be advised of the Anti-Bullying Policy and procedures during the enrolment process and also during scheduled Information Meeting during their son's/daughter's time in the college.

8. 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 behaviour and to facilitate early intervention where possible. Supervision of breaks are organised on a rota basis. Each teacher has a responsibility to actively supervise their designated area during their allocated time slot. Senior pupils in their role as prefects can be very effective in identifying potential problem areas. Each 1st Year class is allocated a team of Senior Prefects to visit their Tutor class or Assembly at least once a week.

A mentoring programme has been developed in the college through which 1st Years are linked up with 5th Year students.

Non-teaching staff can also be instrumental in alerting management to possible problems.

9. 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.

10. Adoption of Policy

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on **5th February 2024**

11. Notification to Staff and Parents

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website (or where none exists, is otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parents' Association (where one exists). A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

12. Policy Review

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' Council. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department of Education.

This Anti-Bullying Policy was reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management on 5th February 2025.

Signature: P. J. O'Gowan Date: 5/2/25
(Chairperson, St. Columba's Board of Management)

Signature: [Signature] Date: 05/02/2025
(Principal)

Appendix 1: Practical tips for building a positive school culture and climate

The following are some practical tips for immediate actions that can be taken to help build a positive school culture and climate and to help prevent and tackle bullying behaviour.

- Model respectful behaviour to all members of the school community at all times.
- Explicitly teach pupils what respectful language and respectful behaviour looks like, acts like, sounds like and feels like in class and around the school.
- Display key respect messages in classrooms, in assembly areas and around the school. Involve pupils in the development of these messages.
- Catch them being good - notice and acknowledge desired respectful behaviour by providing positive attention.
- Consistently tackle 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.
- Give constructive feedback to pupils when respectful behaviour and respectful language are absent.
- Have a system of encouragement and rewards to promote desired behaviour and compliance with the school rules and routines.
- Explicitly teach pupils about the appropriate use of social media.
- Positively encourage pupils to comply with the school rules on mobile phone and internet use.
- Follow up and follow through with pupils who ignore the rules.
- Actively involve parents and/or the Parents' Association in awareness raising campaigns around social media.
- Actively promote the right of every member of the school community to be safe and secure in school.
- Highlight and explicitly teach school rules in pupil friendly language in the classroom and in common areas.
- All staff can actively watch out for signs of bullying behaviour.
- Ensure there is adequate playground/school yard/outdoor supervision.
- School staff can get pupils to help them to identify bullying "hot spots" and "hot times" for bullying in the school.
- Hot spots tend to be in the playground/school yard/outdoor areas, changing rooms, corridors and other areas of unstructured supervision.
- Hot times again tend to be times where there is less structured supervision such as when pupils are in the playground/school yard or moving classrooms.
- Support the establishment and work of student councils.

Appendix 2: Form 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	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Pupil	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parent	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

On the grounds	<input type="checkbox"/>
Classroom	<input type="checkbox"/>
Corridor	<input type="checkbox"/>
Toilets	<input type="checkbox"/>
School Bus	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

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

Physical Aggression	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cyber-bullying	<input type="checkbox"/>
Damage to Property	<input type="checkbox"/>	Intimidation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Isolation/Exclusion	<input type="checkbox"/>	Malicious Gossip	<input type="checkbox"/>
Name Calling	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

Homophobic	Disability/SEN related	Racist	Membership of Traveller community	Other (specify)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact

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9. Details of actions taken

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Signed _____ (Relevant Teacher) Date _____

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal _____

Appendix 4: Checklist for annual review of the anti-bullying policy and its implementation

The Board of Management (the Board) must undertake an annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation. The following checklist must be used for this purpose. The checklist is an aid to conducting this review and is not intended as an exhaustive list. In order to complete the checklist, an examination and review involving both quantitative and qualitative analysis, as appropriate across the various elements of the implementation of the school's anti-bullying policy will be required.

	Yes /No
Has the Board formally adopted an anti-bullying policy that fully complies with the requirements of the <i>Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools</i> ?	
Has the Board published the policy on the school website and provided a copy to the parents' association?	
Has the Board ensured that the policy has been made available to school staff (including new staff)?	
Is the Board satisfied that school staff are sufficiently familiar with the policy and procedures to enable them to effectively and consistently apply the policy and procedures in their day to day work?	
Has the Board ensured that the policy has been adequately communicated to all pupils?	
Has the policy documented the prevention and education strategies that the school applies?	
Have all of the prevention and education strategies been implemented?	
Has the effectiveness of the prevention and education strategies that have been implemented been examined?	
Is the Board satisfied that all teachers are recording and dealing with incidents in accordance with the policy?	
Has the Board received and minuted the periodic summary reports of the Principal?	
Has the Board discussed how well the school is handling all reports of bullying including those addressed at an early stage and not therefore included in the Principal's periodic report to the Board?	
Has the Board received any complaints from parents regarding the school's handling of bullying incidents?	
Have any parents withdrawn their child from the school citing dissatisfaction with the school's handling of a bullying situation?	
Have any Ombudsman for Children investigations into the school's handling of a bullying case been initiated or completed?	
Has the data available from cases reported to the Principal (by the bullying recording template) been analysed to identify any issues, trends or patterns in bullying behaviour?	
Has the Board identified any aspects of the school's policy and/or its implementation that require further improvement?	
Has the Board put in place an action plan to address any areas for improvement?	

Signed _____
Chairperson, Board of Management

Date _____

Signed _____
Principal

Date _____

Appendix 4 Notification regarding the Board of Management's annual review of the anti-bullying policy

To: _____

The Board of Management of _____ wishes to inform you that:

- The Board of Management's annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation was completed at the Board meeting of _____ [date].
- This review was conducted in accordance with the checklist set out in **Appendix 4** of the Department's *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

Signed _____
Chairperson, Board of Management

Date _____

Signed _____
Principal

Date _____