

Ringsend College

Anti-Bullying Policy

1. In accordance with the requirements of the [Education \(Welfare\) Act 2000](#) and the Code of Behaviour [guidelines](#) issued by the NEWB, the Sub-Committee of Ringsend College has adopted the following Anti-Bullying Policy within the framework of the College's overall Code of Behaviour. This policy fully complies with the requirements of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Colleges, which were published in September 2013.

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

- **Bullying Prevention Policy – Compliant Procedure for ETB Staff.**
- **Harassment/Sexual Harassment prevention policy – complaint procedure for ETB staff.**

2. The Sub-Committee of Ringsend College adopts the [Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Colleges](#) issued by the Department of Education and Skills (September 2013) as the basis for the way in which the Ringsend College community addresses the issue of bullying.

3. The Ringsend College Sub-Committee recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of students or staff and is therefore fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour.

- I. A positive College culture and climate which:

- ✓ is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity;
- ✓ encourages students and staff to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment; and
- ✓ promotes respectful relationships across the College community.

- II. Effective leadership.

- III. A College-wide approach.

- IV. A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact.

- V. 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 in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.

- VI. Effective supervision and monitoring of students.

- VII. Supports for staff.
- VIII. Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies).
- IX. On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the Anti-Bullying Policy.

4. In accordance with the [Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Colleges](#) bullying is defined as follows:

Bullying is unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time.

The following types of bullying behaviour are included in the definition of bullying.

- ✓ Deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying.
- ✓ Cyber-bullying.
- ✓ Identity-based bullying such as homophobic bullying, racist bullying, bullying based on a person's membership of the Traveller community and bullying of those with disabilities or special educational needs.

Isolated or once-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour, including a once-off offensive or hurtful text message or other private messaging, do not fall within the definition of bullying and should be dealt with, as appropriate, in accordance with the College'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.**

Additional information on different types of bullying is set out in Section 2 of the [Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Colleges](#).

Those who bully others in a non-physical way often do not realise that their actions may have serious legal consequences for them. **The reality, however, is that bullying may constitute a criminal offence.**

For example, bullying may constitute a criminal offence under **Section 10** of the **Non-Fatal Offences against the Person Act 1997**.

Section 10 of this act deals with harassment and provides that a person may be guilty of this crime if s/he:

'... without lawful authority or reasonable excuse, by any means including by use of the telephone, harasses another by persistently following, watching, pestering, besetting or communicating with him or her.

'For the purpose of this section, a person harasses another where-

- (a) he or she, by his or her acts intentionally or recklessly, seriously interferes with the other's peace and privacy or causes alarm, distress or harm to the other,*

and

(b) his or her acts are such that a reasonable person would realise that the acts would seriously interfere with the other's peace and privacy or cause alarm, distress or harm to the other'.

Section 10 harassment is an arrestable offence and, if convicted on indictment, carries a **jail** term not exceeding 7 years. On conviction also, a court may make an order that the guilty party may not, for a specified period, communicate by any means, or come within a specified distance of a person's home or workplace.

Section 2 of the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act (1989) makes it a criminal offence for a person *to publish or distribute written material, to use words, behave or display written material ... or to distribute, show or play a recording of visual images or sounds, if the written material, words, behaviour, visual images or sounds, as the case may be, are threatening, abusive or insulting and are intended or, having regard to all the circumstances, are likely to stir up hatred.*

Those convicted on indictment under this provision may be sentenced to a maximum of two years imprisonment and/or a fine of up to €10,000.00.

Even where bullying does not amount to a criminal offence, the perpetrator may be held liable for damages in civil court proceedings. For example, **statements made on social media sites are covered by the provisions of the Defamation Act 2009**, which at Section 2 defines a defamatory statement as 'one which tends to injure a person's reputation in the eyes of reasonable members of society'.

Many, young and not so young, seem to feel that by posting anonymously on social networking sites, they can guarantee that their identity is protected. This, however, is not the case. Indeed, in many cases the content of messages makes it easy to identify the perpetrator. In any case, where the Gardaí have grounds for believing that criminal activity may be occurring, applications can be made to the courts requiring the internet service provider or others in possession of relevant information to divulge a perpetrator's identity.

Where it is felt that bullying may amount to a criminal act, the College will seek legal advice and the matter will be reported to the Gardaí.

5. To whom should concerns about a student being bullied be reported – relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying?

Students, parents, 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 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 Colleges](#).

6. Education and prevention strategies to combat bullying – Section 6.5 of [DES Procedures](#)

- 6.1 The College makes it clear to all members of the College 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 College 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.
- 6.2 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 College nevertheless reserves the right to take disciplinary action (up to and including suspension and expulsion), where such is warranted, in accordance with the College's Code of Behaviour, against those who bully others.
- 6.3 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.
- 6.4 The focus of the College's prevention strategy will be to build empathy, respect and resilience in students.
- 6.5 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 about statements of welcome and respect for LGBT members of the College community, teaching the Social, Personal, Health Education (SPHE) resource, Growing Up LGBT and (as appropriate) participating in LGBT awareness events.

The College 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 College will make every reasonable effort to ensure that the full potential of these programmes to combat bullying is exploited.

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.

- 6.6 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.

- 6.7 The College will, in all its communications with students and their parents, commencing with the induction of the student into the College, 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 College management. All teaching staff will reinforce this point to students on an ongoing basis.

- 6.8 The College will adopt a College-wide approach (involving management, staff, parents, students and members of the wider community with a connection to the College) to prevent and combat bullying. In this context, the College is committed to engaging with parents. Firstly, the College will involve them in the development of policies and practices to combat bullying. Secondly the College will hold **annual information evenings for parents** to ensure that they understand the way the 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 realise that **anyone can be a bully and anyone can be a target of bullying**. It is not just other people's sons and daughters that can bully. Here, also, it is 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**.
- 6.9 In accordance with 6.8.9 of the [DES Procedures](#) 'parents and students are expected to co-operate with any investigation and assist the College in resolving any issues and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved as quickly as possible'.
- 6.10 Where necessary the College will seek the assistance of and work with NEPS, the HSE and the Gardaí, as appropriate, to combat bullying – identify the perpetrators and support the victims.
- 6.11 In combating bullying, the College 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 College culture that respects everyone and values helping one another.

6.12 The College will devote a staff development session (for teaching and non-teaching staff – as appropriate) each College 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 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.

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 Colleges](#) consistently and effectively.

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

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

6.15 The College will, each year, hold a Safe Internet Awareness day as part of an Anti-bullying Awareness Week to highlight the whole issue of bullying and staying safe using modern technology.

6.16 The College's senior students, especially through the Ringsend College Prefect Team will have a specific responsibility for recognising bullying behaviour, for bringing concerns about bullying behaviour 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 College for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour (Section 6.8 of [DES Procedures](#))

7.1 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 Colleges](#). Alternatively, the teacher may refer the matter to Class Tutor/Year Head, the Principal or Deputy Principal.

7.2 Given the extent to which the Principal and Deputy Principal are privy to all kinds of personal information about students, it is necessary that teachers check with either of them before taking any action in relation to bullying behaviour.

7.3 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.

- 7.4 The College reserves the right to investigate allegations of bullying (and to take disciplinary action where necessary) where bullying is perpetrated by a member of the College community and it impinges on the work or well-being of a student in the College, even where the bullying acts are committed outside of the College.
- 7.5 The College reserves the right, in accordance with Section 6.3.5 of the [DES 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 College deems bullying behaviour to be potentially abusive (see sections 6.8.12, 6.8.13 and 6.8.14 of the [DES 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 Colleges.](#)
- 7.6 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 Colleges.](#) 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. Bullying Concern Form (Appendix 1) shall be filled out and mark the date when the first report is being made.
 - c. 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.
 - d. 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, Class Tutor/Year Head 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.
 - e. 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/add to the recording template at **Appendix 1** to record the bullying behaviour in the following circumstances:

- a) At the time of initial concerns of bullying – please mark in the date of initial reporting.
- b) Where s/he considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 College days after s/he has determined that bullying behaviour occurred; and
- c) Where it is necessary to report **serious** bullying behaviour immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal (**see 7.3**) or where a relevant teacher at any time passes on concerns or allegations of bullying to the Principal or Deputy Principal (**see 7.1**).

In each of the circumstances at (a), (b) and (c) above, the recording template at **Appendix 1** must be 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 Class Tutor/Year Head, 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.

- f. All non-teaching staff such as clerical and administrative, study supervisors, special needs assistants (SNAs), caretakers, cleaners, sports' coaches, those taking extracurricular activities 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.
- g. Incidents of bullying will be investigated in a calm, unemotional problem-solving manner.
- h. Incidents of bullying will generally be investigated outside of the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.
- i. 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.
- j. Those investigating bullying behaviour will calmly seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why.

- k. 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.
- l. 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.
- m. Where deemed appropriate, those being interviewed may be asked to write down their account of what happened.
- n. 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 College policy). The College will give parents an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the College.
- o. 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 College'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.
- p. Where the College 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 College.
- q. 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.
- r. Where the relevant teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 College days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, the additional bullying incident information must be added to the Bullying Concern Form (Appendix 1).
- s. 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 or the 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 Colleges, s/he will be advised of his/her right to make an appeal to the College Sub-Committee. Such appeals shall be submitted, in writing setting out the grounds for the appeal, to the Chairperson of the Board within 15 school days of the parent/guardian informing the College Principal that s/he 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 Colleges](#).

Where a parent/guardian, having exercised his/her appeal to the Ringsend College Sub-Committee, is still not satisfied s/he will be advised of his/her right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

8.0 Programme of support for working with students affected by bullying - see Sections 6.8.15, 6.8.16 and 6.8.17 of [DES Procedures](#)

- 8.1** 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; and
 - ✓ 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; and
 - ✓ 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.

9.0 Supervision and Monitoring of Anti-Bullying in College

- The Sub-Committee 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 end of year 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 surveys of parents/staff/pupils on bullying.
- At each end of year Sub-Committee meeting the Principal will provide a report setting out the following:
 - ✓ the overall number of bullying cases reported by means of the bullying recording template since the previous report to the Board.
 - ✓ confirmation that all cases referred via the recording template have been or are being, dealt with in accordance with the College's Anti-Bullying Policy and the [Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Colleges](#). The minutes of Sub-Committee meetings will record the Principal's report but in doing so will not include any identifying details of the students involved.

10.0 Prevention of Harassment

The Sub-Committee 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.

11.0 Policy Adoption and Review

This policy was adopted by the Ringsend College Sub-Committee on **2nd April 2014**.

12.0 Policy Dissemination and Publication

This policy will be made available to College personnel, published on the College website and provided to the Parents' Representative Group.

13.0 Policy Review

- The Sub-Committee will undertake an annual review of the College's Anti-Bullying Policy and its implementation in accordance with the procedures set out in Section 7.2 of the [Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Colleges](#) – see **Appendix 2**.
- The Sub-Committee will ensure that an action plan is put in place to address any areas for improvement identified by the annual review.

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- Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to College personnel, published on the College website and provided to the Parent Representative Group.
- Details of the review will be recorded in the minutes of the Sub-Committee meeting that adopted the review and a record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, will be made available to the CDET and the DES. In the case of the DES, it is appreciated that the Inspectorate will place a strong focus on the actions the College takes to create a positive College culture and to prevent and tackle bullying.

Signed: _____
(Chairperson of Ringsend College Sub-Committee)

Date: _____ **Date of next review:** _____

Signed: _____
(Principal)

Date: _____