



Beech Hill College

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 Beech Hill College has adopted the following anti-bullying policy within the framework of the school's overall ethos of promoting positive behaviour. This policy complies with the requirements of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools which were published in September 2013.

The Board of Management recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of students **[Appendix 1]** and is therefore fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour:

[a] 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;
- [Appendix 2]**

[b] Effective leadership

[c] A school-wide approach

[d] A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact

[e] 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.

[f] Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils;

[g] Supports for staff

Members of school staff have sufficient familiarity with the school's anti bullying policy to enable them to effectively and consistently apply the policy when required. Supports for staff should be appropriate to the individual's role and should enable staff to recognise bullying, implement effective strategies for preventing bullying and where appropriate, intervene effectively in bullying cases.]

[h] Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies)

[i] On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

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.

Types of bullying

The following are some of the types of bullying behaviour that can occur amongst pupils:

General bullying which apply to all:

- Harassment based on any of the nine grounds in the equality legislation, sexual harassment, homophobic bullying, racist bullying, etc
- Physical aggression

- Damage to property
- Name calling
- Slagging
- The production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other materials aimed at intimidating or ridiculing another person
- Offensive graffiti
- Extortion
- Intimidation
- Insulting or offensive gestures
- The “look”
- Invasion of personal space

Cyber bullying:

- Denigration: Spreading rumours, lies or gossip to damage 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: Purposfully excluding someone from an online group
- Cyber stalking: Ongoing harassment and denigration that causes a person considerable fear for his/her safety
- Silent calls
- Abusive text messages
- Abusive e mail
- Abusive communications on social networks
- Abusive website comments, Blogs, pictures
- Abusive posts on any form of communication technology

Identity Based Bullying

Including any of the nine discriminatory grounds mentioned in Equality Legislation [gender, including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community]

Homophobic and Transgender

- Spreading rumours about a person’s sexual orientation
- Taunting a person of a different sexual orientation
- Name calling
- 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 belief, ethnic or traveller background
- Exclusion on the basis of any of the above

Relational Bullying:

This involves manipulating relationships as a means of bullying and includes

- Malicious gossip
- Isolation and exclusion
- Ignoring
- Excluding from the group
- Taking someone's friends away
- "Bitching"
- Spreading rumours
- Breaking confidence
- Talking loud enough so the victim can hear
- "The look"

Sexual Bullying

- Unwelcome or inappropriate sexual comments or touching
- Harassment

Special Educational Needs/ Disability Bullying

- Name calling
- Taunting
- Taking advantage of a student's vulnerabilities and limited capacity to recognize and defend themselves against bullying
- Taking advantage of a student's vulnerabilities and limited capacity to understand social situations and social cues
- Mimicking a person's disabilities
- Setting others up for ridicule
- Using a person's giftedness as a focus for ridicule

Negative behaviour that does not meet this definition of bullying will be dealt with in accordance with the school's code of behaviour.

The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying is (are) as follows: (see Section 6.8 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools):

Principal, Deputy Principal, Year Heads, Tutors, Student Support Team and Guidance Counsellor

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

A school-wide approach

- A positive school-wide approach involving school management, staff, parents and pupils assists considerably in countering bullying behaviour in schools. In addition to the role of management and staff, parents and pupils have a role and responsibility in helping the school to prevent and address school-based bullying behaviour and to deal with any negative impact within school of bullying behaviour that occurs elsewhere. Parents should also recognise that a school that openly discusses bullying is acting positively and that they need to work with their school to ensure there is a coherent, school-wide approach to tackling the issue.
- The promotion of the value of diversity to address issues of prejudice and stereotyping and highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour eg Awareness weeks such as 'Stand Up Week'
- The fostering and enhancing of the self-esteem of all students through curricular and extracurricular activities.
- School wide awareness raising on all aspects of bullying.
- Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours, extra curricular activities and ICT use. Non-teaching and ancillary staff are encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers.
- Involvement of the Student Council in contributing to a safe school environment.
- A summary of the Anti Bullying Policy will be included in the student journal to be signed by students and parents.

- Students will be informed who to tell and how to tell: eg, direct approach to a teacher, hand up note with homework, phone call to school, parent or friend, confidential questionnaire, bystanders.
- Parents are encouraged to approach the school if they suspect their child is being bullied.

Delivery of lessons re Bullying in the School Curriculum

- During WELLBEING (Tutor time), SPHE, CSPE, RELIGION and RSE.
- 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 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.

Links to other policies

Promoting Positive Behaviour, Child Protection policy, Supervision of students, Acceptable Use policy, Statement of Strategy on Attendance, RSE policy, Substance Use policy.

Procedures

Procedures for investigation, follow-up and recording of bullying behaviour and the established intervention strategies used by **Beech Hill College** for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour are as follows (see Section 6.8 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools):

Investigating and Resolving Bullying in School

Restorative Practices

A useful framework for dealing with bullying behaviour is offered by the concept of Restorative, as opposed to Retributive Justice. The staff of Beech Hill College underwent training in Restorative Practices in 2018/2019. This training included a number of whole staff sessions facilitated by the PDST and sessions with a core team, which consisted of members of the Senior Management Team who are often to the fore in investigating and resolving bullying in school.

Restorative Practices contrasts the traditional model of apportioning blame and applying punishment with a more holistic view, which seeks to restore the balance of relationships between pupils in school. In addition to supporting victims a restorative model also takes into account the needs of the person who is bullying.

Retributive

Misdemeanour defined as violation of school rules.

Focus on establishing blame, on guilt, on the past. (Did you do it?)

Adversarial relationship and process.

Punishment to deter/prevent.

Restorative

Misdemeanour defined as violation of one person's rights by another.

Focus on problem-solving by expressing feelings and needs first, and then how to meet those needs.

Dialogue and negotiation. Everyone involved listening to each other.

Restitution. Reconciliation and

Accountability defined as taking punishment.

restoration as goal.

Accountability defined as understanding the impact of the action, deciding to put things right and making reparation.

Conflict seen as individual v. school.

Misdemeanours recognised as interpersonal conflicts.

Value of conflict as potential opportunity for learning recognised.

Strategies for Investigating and Resolving Bullying

It is important that the prevention, investigation, and management of bullying be an ongoing process. There are many opportunities for school staff and management to address bullying, both formally and informally, for example by communicating with feeder schools, by asking for information on enrolment forms, by conversing with parents at induction and at parent teacher meetings. Informal networking between teachers on a day to day basis provides opportunities for pre-empting and monitoring. Where a specific technique is being used to respond to a particular situation in a class, it is important that all teachers involved with the class be informed of the approach being taken, and be given appropriate feedback. In any approach to resolving bullying, care should be taken to ensure that information supplied to or by a teacher is not used to further torment a victim.

Although much of the bullying in school takes place in the classroom, behaviour in corridors, yard, toilet areas, changing rooms etc. should also be included. Very often, ancillary staff in schools are very knowledgeable about what is really going on and their observations and comments should be encouraged.

Interviewing Techniques.

Interviewing an alleged bully [this general approach and structure may also be used with victims and bystanders, adjusting the content as necessary.]

Background considerations

- Young people who are bullying others may respond in different ways when confronted. It is important to be aware of how an involved person might feel and the attitudes that may be displayed. The fear of being caught, labelled a bully, punished or expelled may inspire defiance, or a visible display of power. Students who feel cornered may decide never to admit wrongdoing.
- Some young people may feel ashamed of their involvement in bullying behaviour, and may feel guilty. Because of a desire to save face, they may deny all knowledge of involvement. Other pupils when challenged may respond by saying nothing, or by agreeing with everything that is said. The likelihood here is that the student will offer temporary compliance, without fundamentally reconsidering a change of behaviour.
- Occasionally, bullies have no feelings of shame, guilt, or empathy with their victim's suffering. Expecting a response on the basis of remorse may not be productive. In such cases the consequences of bullying behaviour must be made very explicit.
- Even when there is an anti-bullying policy in place, some young people may be unaware that their bullying behaviour is wrong. This will have to be explained clearly, especially to those who tend to respond aggressively to problematic situations.
- In school environments where bullying has not been effectively addressed, many of the bullying behaviours which students inflict on each other may be socially acceptable. Pupils may be modelling the behaviour of others, or may be behaving in accordance with accepted hidden traditions. This occurs, for example where there is covert acceptance by students and staff of bullying of 1st. year students, new students, or of vulnerable students.
- The challenge to a teacher is to disarm these attitudes, fears and beliefs and the non-confrontational approach suggested here may help to diffuse tension.

Key elements of an interview

Privacy

Dealing with incidents in public can cause unnecessary embarrassment for the victim, increasing vulnerability, and may encourage confrontation and denial on the offender's side.

Privacy is also important for witnesses and other members of the class. They may be experiencing subtle pressure to support one side or the other, or worse still, threats may have been made.

In a case where group bullying is suspected, teachers will find it helpful to enlist the help of a colleague to interview members of the group individually.

Non-confrontational approach

Take a non-confrontational approach. This will reduce tension and build trust. Avoid labelling of the young person as a "Bully". Refer to the behaviour rather than the person. Be calm, constructive, and adopt a problem-solving approach, and allow enough time for the interview. Most young people respond to patience, and the opportunity to talk, rather than to pressure, anger, or impatience.

What if there is complete denial?

Cases will arise from time to time where there is complete denial of involvement.

Repeat the evidence as you see it, and try again. Stay focussed on what you believe actually took place. Do not accuse the young person of lying.

Explain your role again as above, and let the young person know that this is a very positive opportunity for them to be forthright and honest. If there is still denial, explain that you are not going to let the matter rest until it has been resolved, and outline what the next steps are according to school policy.

Contacting outside agencies such as the Juvenile Liaison Officer, or the Gardai. National Educational Psychological Services may have a role if it appears that there are psychological difficulties.

Whether or not there is an admission of involvement, it is critically important to be unequivocal about the immediate and future behaviour of the young person.

It should be made clear that

- The specific behaviour you have discussed should cease immediately

- That the young person is made aware that disciplinary implications already apply in the situation.
- Agreement should be sought about not taking revenge against the victim or others whom the bully suspects may have provided information to teachers.
- If agreement is not forthcoming, a warning should be given which also extends to friends of the bully.
- Measures need to be taken by the school to ensure the safety of the victim, and to supervise the behaviour of any others involved. A case discussion involving school management and other relevant personnel will decide on possible sanctions.
- If bullying continues, management has to choose between suspension/expulsion or referral of the offender for clinical psychological assessment. An assessment will point to whether the young person has psychological/psychiatric difficulties contributing to the behaviour or not, and whether anger management training might be a useful next step.
- Discuss with the parents the possibility of counselling their son/daughter.
- Keep a record of the interview. BULLYING RECORD FORM [Appendix 3.a & 3.b]

5. Reconciliation and Mediation

There are circumstances where reconciliation between the parties is possible. However in practice it may be more effective to tell the young people involved to leave each other alone. The same instruction should apply to friends on both sides, whether they are in the school or not.

When is Mediation appropriate?

Where you believe reconciliation may be achieved with further support, mediation through the skilled facilitation of a teacher may be a useful next step.

The advantage of arranging and facilitating mediation for young people is that it involves them in problem-solving at their own level. It gives them a sense of ownership of the solution, rather than imposing it from outside. The process itself can be as valuable as the end result, because it allows divergent points of view and attitudes to emerge and be resolved in a structured and safe way. The presence of an adult helps provide focus, fairness, and safety to the interaction. A crucial consideration to be borne in mind is the openness of the participants to the process. A young person who has been victimised will need to feel confident enough to face a direct meeting with someone who has caused them suffering, and the teacher should be aware that this may take time. Some young people may never feel confident enough to engage in the mediation process.

When is mediation not appropriate?

A young person who insists on minimising the effects of their bullying behaviour is not ready for mediation. They need to show that they understand what is wrong about their behaviour, and be prepared to change.

In assessing the situation, the guiding principle should be that mediation should not make matters worse, and that the bullying should stop.

Preparation for mediation

In order to assess the suitability of the candidates for mediation, it is necessary to hold an individual preparatory interview with both parties. There should be a clear assurance of safety and an atmosphere of welcome and affirmation. Explain the process and clarify that the objective of mediation is to resolve the conflict. Allow each person to tell the story from their point of view. This will show where points of difference and similarity lie and help the facilitator to establish what would be a fair solution to the problem.

Set the ground rules for mediation. There should be an attitude of respect on all sides and each person must listen to the other's story without interruption. Each party's contribution should be treated with respect and must not be spoken about in a way that would be considered abusive by either party. Encourage both to come to mediation prepared to reach agreement and with suggestions for solving the problem.

Mediation process

- Mediation should take place in a calm atmosphere, so it should be arranged for a time when both parties have had an opportunity to de-stress, and not in the immediate aftermath of an incident.
- Check each party for new information and new understandings.

Values to foster

Respect

Teamwork

Collaboration

Trust-building

Communication

Empathy

Recognition & Acceptance of differences.

Validation

Honesty

Integrity.

- Make sure that responsibility is being taken by the offender for what happened and that there is a clear understanding that this behaviour must stop immediately.
- Summarise each party's concerns and check for accuracy.
- Ascertain both parties' willingness to proceed to solutions.
- Focussing on the list of issues, generate suggestions /ideas/options on how they might work through each issue. Accept all suggestions without judging their merit.
- Options to consider may include:

An apology.

A promise to change behaviour.

An agreement to avoid each other if necessary.

Retribution for damaged property.

An agreement that friends of both parties will be discouraged from engaging in destructive behaviour which might exacerbate the situation.

- Encourage both parties to speak to each other and come to agreement as to a preferred option. Discuss the appropriateness, practicality and acceptability of any agreement reached.
- An agreement may be signed and a review date set for checking progress.
- End the session by thanking both parties for their cooperation and praising them for their contributions to peace-making.

Personal responsibility

Participation

Empowerment

Respect

Collaboration

Recording

The Principal should be informed of all incidents being investigated. All incidents of bullying will be reported to the Board of Management

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. All incidents of bullying will be reported to the Board of Management

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 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.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on

This policy has been made available to school personnel, the Parents' Association and Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board, it is also available on the school website.

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 provided to Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board.

SIGNED:

Aidan Campbell
Chair Person

Date

SIGNED:

Patrick McArdle
Principal/Secretary to B.O.M

Date

Appendix 1

Effects of Bullying

The consequences of being bullied are wide-ranging and severe, affecting many areas of a person's life. Below is a list of some of the common reactions to being bullied.

Physical Effects Emotional/Psychological Effects

Frequent minor illnesses Anxiety

Aggression/Anger

Violence / Fights

Loss of confidence /Loneliness

Physical damage Fear

Loss of or damage to property

Social isolation

Depression

Suicidal thoughts/ behaviour

Effects on school staff

Punctuality problems Class disruption

Deteriorating academic performance

Poor attendance

Truancy Low morale

School dropout

School refusal/phobia

Stress related illnesses

Absenteeism

Appendix 2

Key elements of a positive school culture and climate

The school acknowledges the right of each member of the school community to enjoy school in a secure environment.

The school acknowledges the uniqueness of each individual and his/her worth as a human being.

The school promotes positive habits of self-respect, self-discipline and responsibility among all its members.

The school prohibits vulgar, offensive, sectarian or other aggressive behaviour or language by any of its members.

The school has a clear commitment to promoting equity in general and gender equity in particular in all aspects of its functioning.

The school has the capacity to change in response to pupils' needs.

The school takes particular care of "at risk" pupils and uses its monitoring systems to facilitate early intervention where necessary and it responds to the needs, fears or anxieties of individual members in a sensitive manner.

The school recognises the need to work in partnership with and keep parents informed on procedures to improve relationships on a school-wide basis.

The school recognises the role of parents in equipping the pupil with a range of life-skills.

The school recognises the role of other community agencies in preventing and dealing with bullying.

The school promotes habits of mutual respect, courtesy and an awareness of the interdependence of people in groups and communities.

The school promotes qualities of social responsibility, tolerance and understanding among all its members both in school and out of school.

Staff members share a collegiate responsibility, under the direction of the Principal, to act in preventing bullying/aggressive behaviour by any member of the school community.

Appendix 3.b

**Beech Hill College
Bullying Record Form**

Date _____ Time _____

Teacher _____ Class _____

Names of students involved

Details of incident

Action Taken [Warning, Sanction, Referral, Mediation, Other]

Signed

STUDENT _____

TEACHER _____

PARENT _____

Suggestions for follow-up
