

Bullying Policy

The following policy was developed through a collaborative approach involving the teaching staff, the Parent Association, the Student Council, the student body, and the Board of Management/Manager of Clonkeen College.

The policy respects the roles, functions, rights and responsibilities of the entire school community, and outside agencies, as prescribed in the Education Act 1998 and the Education Welfare Act 2000.

The policy observes the procedures in dealing with bullying as set out in the “*Anti Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools*” published by the Department of Education in 2013.

Aims

1. To prevent bullying by taking proactive measures to foster an anti-bullying climate.
2. To create a school ethos which encourages students to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.
3. To raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour in the student body, teaching staff, management, and parents/guardians.
4. To establish procedures for reporting and recording incidents of bullying.
5. To establish procedures for investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.
6. To evaluate the effectiveness of the policy regularly.

There are three sections:

1. Anti-Bullying Statement
2. Procedures for dealing with complaints, disclosures, and suspicions of bullying.
3. The Anti-Bullying Charter. This is displayed in prominent positions throughout the school

1. ANTI-BULLYING STATEMENT

- The school position is that the students of Clonkeen College play a vital role in their own education
- The relationship which each class group establishes amongst its members is one of the most important factors in their social and educational development
- The **Student Council** and **Class Representatives** have a formal role to play in establishing a positive environment, in cooperation with **the teaching**

staff, parents and school management. It is important that there should be mutual respect and a cooperative approach amongst these groups

- This respect will define the tenor of whole school relationships and have a positive impact on the school community's efforts to establish a safe, secure learning and teaching environment
- This environment is a living thing and must be constantly renewed in the actions of all the participants
- The **Mission Statement** expresses this organic nature of the school community.

Mission Statement.

Clonkeen College is a voluntary Catholic secondary school, where each individual and group within the school community is encouraged and facilitated to contribute to the creation of a caring, supportive, and inclusive educational environment, conducive to developing the diverse talents of all the participants.

- The aim of this policy is to address the issue of bullying in so far as it constitutes behaviour which is directly opposed to the achievement of the school mission statement
- We wish to ensure that there is no ambivalence about the right of each student and staff member to a safe, secure learning and working environment

Definition.

Bullying is repeated inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, by one or more persons against another or others, which could be reasonably regarded as undermining the latter's right to personal dignity.

Types of Identity-Based Bullying:

- Gender_
- Family status _
- Disability_
- Race/Ethnicity (including membership of the Travelling community)_
- Sexual orientation_
- Religious belief_
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The school recognises that the above categories are particularly pertinent issues which can often give rise to bullying. While the above list is not exhaustive, and bullying may constitute abuse or harassment about other issues, bullying based on these issues will not be tolerated.

Examples of Bullying:

Physical aggression – pushing – shoving – punching – tripping, etc.

Damage to, or theft of, a student's property

Extortion – demands for money etc.

Exclusion, such as socially excluding an individual from their peers or groups

“Slagging”. This usually refers to good-natured banter. When it descends to very personal, frequently repeated, remarks about appearance, clothing, personal hygiene, or members of one's family it is regarded as bullying

Sarcasm, humiliation, verbal abuse, intimidating behaviour, degrading physical contact, coercion to act inappropriately, cruel teasing, taunting, etc.

Cyberbullying repeated, intentionally aggressive abuse, mockery or harassment using electronic forms of communication eg: text messaging, email, online forums, school platforms, messaging apps, social networking websites, videos, camera phones, etc.

Online Bullying. The placing of 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

Intimidation

- phone calls or text messaging. **Parents are asked to be particularly vigilant in this area**
- misuse of mobile phones. **Parents' attention is drawn to the school policy on mobile phones**
- mockery, e.g. of work in class, physical characteristics, accent, social or racial origins
- writing insulting remarks/graffiti about another person
- passing around notes about another person
- passing around drawings of another person
- whispering insults about another person loud enough to be heard
- spreading malicious rumours or lies about another person
- name calling which hurts, insults, or humiliates
- ostracising another person from games or group activities
- surrounding and pointing mockingly at an individual
- threats, demands, invitations or coercion to fight
- using any type of equipment to cause fear in another person
- using computers, mobile phones, or other electronic devices to cause fear in

another person whether inside or outside of school

- coercing or encouraging another to act inappropriately
- coercing another to bully, intimidate or harass
- undermining behaviours such as non-cooperation or deliberately sabotaging another's work/project
- blackmail
- supporting/encouraging/facilitating bullying behaviour
- stalking or following to intimidate

Note: This list is not exhaustive. What constitutes bullying is effectively defined by the experience of the target of bullying.

Effects of Bullying:

- Insecurity
- Anxiety
- Paranoia/Hypervigilance
- Loss of confidence
- Lowering of self-esteem
- Changes of mood and behaviour
- Self-harm
- Deterioration in health, both mental and physical
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Suicide

Signs and Symptoms of Bullying:

Parents and teachers are particularly asked to be observant in this regard

- Reluctance to go to school
- Truancy
- Deterioration in educational performance
- Pattern of physical illness – headaches, stomach aches, weight loss, etc.
- Loss of interest, lack of concentration
- Avoidance or withdrawal
- Changes in mood and behaviour, especially before returning to school after holidays
- Signs of anxiety/distress – stammering, nightmares, loss of appetite, poor sleep patterns
- Property missing or damaged.
- Increased demands for money or stealing.
- Unexplained bruising, cuts, damage to clothing.
- Reluctance to say what is wrong

- In cases of cyberbullying, indications also may include:
 - Sudden cease of use of the computer or mobile phone
 - Avoiding the computer or mobile phone
 - Appearing upset after using the computer or mobile phone
 - Secrecy around online activities or mobile phone use

2. PROCEDURES

A. Prevention:

The school will endeavour to prevent bullying in general by encouraging an open, proactive, and relatively informal relationship between staff and students and specifically by:

- displaying the **Anti-Bullying Charter** prominently throughout the school
- raising awareness in the **SPHE, R.E, and CSPE** classes
- frequent contact with individual students by **Tutors** and **Year Heads** to establish good personal relationships,
- surveys of students by **Year Heads** and **Tutors**, especially in First Year, about their sense of well-being in Clonkeen College
- Ongoing **monitoring** of the situation, by Tutor, Year Head and relevant teacher(s) as required, where an alleged incident of bullying is reported
- encouragement of the role of the **Student Council and Class Representatives** in promoting the general well-being of the students
- sustaining and developing the **school culture** of students, management, parents, and staff operating together in the development of the school culture and infrastructure
- Promoting and organising **initiatives** which raise awareness and encourage a culture of inclusivity and respect for diversity throughout the school community. e.g. Stand-Up Week, Multicultural and Diversity Week, the Amber Flag etc.
- The formation of the **Wellbeing Team**, whereby a group of staff members review associated subject plans and policies, devise and organise events for the creation and promotion of a positive, compassionate culture and caring atmosphere for all.

Dealing with Incidents and Suspicions of Bullying:

B.1 Reporting

All incidents or suspicions of bullying should be brought to the attention of the Year Head, the Class Tutor, the Principal, the Deputy Principal, a member of the Student Council or any adult the person trusts who will report the complaint to the Principal or Deputy Principal for investigation.

- Incidents should be recorded on a Bullying Report Form (Appendix 1) and suspicions on a Bullying Alert Form (Appendix 2) by the alleged target of bullying, or the person to whom it is reported, as soon as practicable, but within two days of receiving the report. The form should be given to the Year Head. These forms are available from the school office and on the school MIS
- All such reports will be treated as confidential and stored in a secure place.
- Any notes or records produced because of actions taken will be stored with the original report and kept as confidential material in a secure place.
- **NB. All reports should be entirely factual. No personal opinions or conjecture should be included. Always hear both sides of any allegations before acting.**

B.2.1 Actions

Dealing with Complaints, Disclosures, Suspicions of Bullying

The best course of action will be decided through consultation between some, or all, of the following: reporting teacher, Tutor, Year Head, Guidance Counsellor, Principal, Deputy Principal, and parent(s). The following are some of the principles and possible approaches.

- The Tutor and/or Year Head, with other staff where necessary, will conduct an initial investigation, following a report or incident
- The target(s) of bullying, witness(es) and alleged perpetrator(s) will be interviewed
- The Year Head must retain any written records in a secure place. Depending on the outcome of the investigation action taken could be to:
 - Obtain an undertaking (written or oral) from the parties involved and keep the situation under observation and review
 - Inform the Deputy Principal/Principal
 - Contact parents
 - Initiate pastoral strategies in the interests of the target(s) of bullying and/or perpetrator(s), including contact with outside agencies
 - Complete a Bullying Report Form
 - Impose disciplinary sanctions

B.2.2 Principles

- Initial steps taken to deal with an incident will be pastoral and non-judgemental
- The Year Head will consult with other staff about the best approach

- The aim of intervention is to protect the target(s) of bullying by modifying the behaviour of the alleged perpetrator(s) and, where necessary, the target(s) of bullying
- All actions taken will have the safety of the target(s) of bullying and the well-being of the target(s) and the alleged perpetrator(s) as their primary aim
- The rights of the target(s) of bullying and the alleged perpetrator(s) will be respected
- Parents of the target(s) of bullying and the alleged perpetrator(s) will be informed and involved at the earliest appropriate moment of all bullying incidents
- Parents are expected to conform to, and help with, the school's approach
- Where necessary the school will seek the help of outside agencies to deal with counselling, behaviour management/adjustment or other difficulties
- In severe cases, where pastoral efforts prove ineffectual, disciplinary action under the Code of Behaviour will be taken to protect the target(s) of bullying.