

Abbey Community 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 **Abbey Community 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.

Our policy is informed by the Department of Education's *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice* (2019) as well as *Cinéaltas: Action Plan on Bullying* (2022).

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;
- 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.

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.

As per *Cinéaltas: Action Plan on Bullying*, bullying is defined as follows:

Bullying is targeted behaviour, online or offline, that causes harm. The harm caused can be physical, social and/or emotional in nature. Bullying behaviour is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power in relationships between two groups or groups of people in society.

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.

- Additional information on different types of bullying is set out in Section 2 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying is (are) as follows:

Each case of alleged bullying is unique and often complex. Investigations of allegations of bullying can take a considerable amount of time and may involve all or a combination of the following:

Member of Student Support Team, Subject Teacher, Year Head, Guidance Counsellor, Chaplain, Deputy Principal, Principal and outside agencies.

The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber-bullying, homophobic and transphobic bullying) that will be used by the school are as follows:

All members of the College community have a collective responsibility in maintaining our Charter of Care.

Our Charter of Care is displayed in each classroom and is implicitly communicated through our actions.

We endeavor to raise awareness in our school regarding the distress and hurt caused by bullying behaviour using the following initiatives:

- Open night for prospective students and parents outlining our expectations as a school community.
- Signing off on the Code of Behaviour each year in the student record books.
- Information transfer from National School.
- Other supporting school policies.
- Induction Programmes (First Year, Transition Year, Fifth Year).
- Supporting Curriculum (Wellbeing, Personal Development, SPHE, RSE, and CSPE).
- Peer mentoring structures including Cara programme.
- Pastoral care / Student Support Team (*Year Head, Home-School Liaison Officer, Guidance Counsellor, Chaplain, Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator, Behaviour for Learning Co-ordinator, Wellbeing Co-ordinator, Year Heads, Deputy Principals, Principal*).
- Liaising with external organisations and agencies.
- Routine year group assemblies.
- Positive Behaviour Programme.
- Effective supervision and monitoring.
- Anti-Bullying Week activities
- Wellbeing activities including promotion of Respectful relationships (SSE focus).
- Information evening for parents.
- Co-curricular programmes.
- Anonymous surveying.
- Behaviour support programmes.

Initiatives are periodically reviewed and are in line with current best practice and available resources.¹

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:

- Each case of alleged bullying should be directed to the Year Head.
- Informal investigations should elicit the facts.

¹ Circular 045/2013

Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools. September 2013
Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice (2019)
Cinéaltas: Action Plan on Bullying (2022).

- Through consultation with one or a combination of the following; *Year Head, Guidance Counsellor, Chaplain, Deputy Principal, Principal* a decision to proceed or not formally will be made.

In cases where it has been determined that bullying behaviour has occurred

- The Principal and/or Deputy Principal together with the Year Head will investigate the incident(s) by interviewing both parties.
- The victim(s) and perpetrator(s) will be interviewed separately.
- The interview will be conducted in a fair and non judgemental manner.
- Factual notes of the investigation/interview will be recorded using the standardised recording template².
- Students may be requested to put in writing their account of the incident(s).
- The victim of bullying will be assured that s/he is entitled to a school environment free of any bullying and will be encouraged to report any further incidents if they should occur.
- Where bullying behaviour is determined, the perpetrator(s) will be informed that their behaviour is a serious breach of the Code of Behaviour. They may be required to re-affirm their commitment to the School's Code of Behaviour and possibly engage in a behavioural support programme.
- The parents of the perpetrator will be informed and/or invited to a meeting in the school.
- The parents of the victim will also be informed and /or invited to a meeting in the school and where it is deemed necessary, may be offered further help from the school and/or outside agencies.
- Following investigation and consideration, sanctions may be imposed in line with the School's discipline procedures.
- Where bullying behaviour is determined to be of a grave nature, additional procedures may take place up to and including suspension and expulsion.
- In-school support will be made available to **both** victim(s) and perpetrator(s); Counselling and remediation will be recommended if deemed appropriate.
- Post intervention monitoring of both parties will occur.

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

- In-school supports
 - Counselling.
 - Remediation where appropriate.
- Referrals to outside agencies where deemed appropriate.
- Post intervention monitoring.
- Periodic review of initiatives.
- Promoting self esteem through curricular and co-curricular activities.

Supervision and Monitoring of Pupils

² Appendix 3 *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools. September 2013*
Abbey Community College – Anti-Bullying Policy

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.

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.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 02/09/2024.

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Association. A copy of this policy is made available to the school patron and will be made available to the Department if requested.

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' Association (where one exists). A record of the review and its outcome will be made available to the patron and to the Department, if requested.

Signed: 

Chairperson of Board of Management

Date: 02/09/24

Signed: 

Principal/Secretary to the Board of Management

Date: 02/09/24

Date of next review: September 2025



**Abbey
Community College**

**Ferrybank, Waterford
Phone: 051-832930**