

# Anti-Bullying Policy Framework

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## Section 1 – Introduction and Statement

The College is completely opposed to bullying and will not tolerate it. It is entirely contrary to the values and principles we live by and the ethos of the school. All pupils have a right to be taught (and staff have a right to work) in a secure, caring environment, free from the threat of psychological and physical abuse. Everyone in the College has a responsibility to contribute in whatever way they can to the protection and maintenance of such an environment. If bullying does occur, it will be dealt with promptly, effectively and appropriately.

“Children have the right to be protected from all forms of violence (physical and mental). They must be kept safe from harm and they must be given proper care by looking after them.” Article 19 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

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## Section 2 – Context

This policy is informed by the following:

### The Legislative Context:

- [The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2016](#)
- [The Education and Libraries Order \(Northern Ireland\) 2003 \(A17-19\)](#)
- [The Education \(School Development Plans\) Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2010](#)
- [The Children \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1995](#)
- [The Human Rights Act 1998](#)
- [The Health and Safety at Work Order \(Northern Ireland\) 1978](#)

### The Policy & Guidance Context

- The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 Statutory Guidance for Schools and Boards of Governors (DE, 2019)
- [Pastoral Care in School: Promoting Positive Behaviour \(DE, 2001\)](#)
- [Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools: A Guide for Schools \(DE, 2017\)](#)
- [Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland \(Dept. of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, 2016\)](#)
- [Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland Policies and Procedures \(SBNI, 2017\)](#)

### The International Context

- [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(UNCRC\)](#)

The following are noted:

- The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016:
  - Provides a legal definition of bullying.

- Places a duty on the Board of Governors to put in place measures to prevent bullying behaviour, in consultation with pupils and parents.
  - Requires the College to record all incidents of bullying behaviour and alleged bullying incidents.
  - Sets out under which circumstances this policy should be applied, namely:
    - In school, during the school day
    - While travelling to and from school
    - When under control of school staff, but away from school (eg. school trip)
    - When receiving education organised by school but happening elsewhere (eg. in another school in the Area Learning Community)
  - Requires that the policy be updated at least every four years.
- The Education and Libraries Order (NI) 2003, requires the Board of Governors to:
    - ‘Safeguard and promote the welfare of registered pupils’ (A.17)
  - The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) sets out every child’s right to:
    - Be protected from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, maltreatment or exploitation (A.19);
    - Be protected from discrimination (A.2);
    - Express their views, in a supported and accessible way, on issues that affect them, and to have their opinions taken seriously (A.12);
    - Education (A.28).

### **Section 3 – Ethos & Principles**

Founded by the Methodist Church in 1865 the College is a non-denominational, co-educational grammar school, where pupils of all faiths and none are welcomed into a safe, supportive and inclusive environment. We aim to provide equal opportunities for all and the diverse talents of each of our pupils are appreciated, nurtured and celebrated. The development of intellectual curiosity, critical debate, active and independent learning, and the pursuit of excellence are all valued. Through the pursuit of curricular and extra-curricular activities we support and promote our belief in the importance of developing the whole child. Our pupils are encouraged to be enthusiastic, confident and tolerant young people, who have respect for themselves and for others.

It should be noted that:

- We are committed to a society where children and young people can live free and safe from bullying;
- We believe that every child and young person should be celebrated in their diversity;
- We are committed to a preventative, responsive and restorative anti-bullying ethos across the whole school;
- We value the views and contributions of children and young people; we will actively seek these views and we will respect and take them into account;

- We understand that everyone in our school community has a role to play in taking a stand against bullying and creating a safe and welcoming environment for all.
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#### **Section 4 – Consultation and Participation**

This policy, reviewed every 4 years, has been developed in consultation with registered pupils and their parents/guardians and staff, in compliance with the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016.

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#### **Section 5 – Definition of Bullying (as stated in The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016)**

Bullying includes (but is not limited to) the repeated use of—

- (a) any verbal, written or electronic communication,
- (b) any other act, or
- (c) any combination of those,

by a pupil or a group of pupils against another pupil or group of pupils, with the intention of causing physical or emotional harm to that pupil or group of pupils.

Note also that, “act” includes omission.

In other words:

Bullying is behaviour that is usually repeated, which is carried out intentionally to cause hurt, harm or to adversely affect the rights and needs of another or others.

While bullying is usually repeated behaviour, a one-off incident may constitute bullying. This will be assessed, taking account of the following:

- severity and significance of the incident
- evidence of pre-meditation
- impact of the incident on individuals (physical/emotional)
- impact of the incident on the wider school community
- previous relationships between those involved
- any previous incidents involving the individuals

Any incidents which are not considered bullying behaviour will be addressed under the Positive Behaviour Policy.

The following unacceptable behaviours, when repeated, targeted and intentionally hurtful, may be considered a bullying behaviour:

- Verbal or written acts
  - saying/writing mean and hurtful things to, or about, others
  - making fun of others
  - telling lies or spreading false rumours about others
  - trying to make other pupils dislike another pupil/s
- Physical acts
  - hitting
  - kicking
  - pushing
  - material harm, such as taking/stealing money or possessions or causing damage to possessions
- Omission (Exclusion)
  - Leaving someone out of an activity
  - Refusing to include someone in group work
- Electronic Acts
  - Using online platforms or other electronic communication to carry out many of the written acts noted above
  - Impersonating someone online to cause hurt
  - Sharing images (eg. photographs or videos) online to embarrass or hurt someone

This list is not exhaustive and other behaviours which fit with the definition may be considered bullying behaviour.

The various motivations behind bullying, may include, but are not limited to:

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|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| • Age                             | • Pregnancy                 |
| • Appearance                      | • Marital status            |
| • Breakdown in peer relationships | • Race                      |
| • Community background            | • Religion                  |
| • Political affiliation           | • Disability / SEN          |
| • Gender identity                 | • Ability                   |
| • Sexual orientation              | • Looked After Child status |
|                                   | • Young Carer status        |

The College recognises that the use of the terms 'bully' and 'victim' are unhelpful and should be avoided. Consequently:

Bullying is an emotive issue, therefore it is essential that we ensure we use supportive, understanding language when discussing these matters. For this reason staff in the College will not refer to a pupil as 'a bully', nor will they refer to a pupil as 'a victim'. Instead, they will refer to:

- A pupil displaying bullying behaviours
- A pupil experiencing bullying behaviours

All members of the school community are encouraged to use this language when discussing bullying incidents.

In determining 'harm' we define:

- Emotional or psychological harm as intentionally causing distress or anxiety by humiliating or affecting adversely a pupil's self-esteem.
  - Physical harm as intentionally hurting a pupil by causing injuries such as bruises, broken bones, burns or cuts.
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## **Section 6 – Preventative Measures**

This section sets out the measures to be taken by the College to prevent bullying behaviour, as defined in the section above. We wish to promote a strong anti-bullying ethos within the College and the wider school community.

It is the College's position that the focus for all anti-bullying work should be on prevention. As such, this section is the lynchpin of the policy document. To prevent bullying, the College will undertake to do the following:

- Raise awareness and understanding of the positive behaviour expectations, as set out in the Positive Behaviour Policy;
- Promote anti-bullying messages through the curriculum eg. inclusion of age-appropriate material specific to individual subject areas relating to bullying, positive behaviour and inclusion;
- Address through LLW issues such as the various forms of bullying (eg. racist, homophobic, transphobic, disablist, sectarian etc.) and how and why it can happen;
- Encourage involvement in meaningful and supportive shared education projects, to allow pupils to explore, understand and respond to difference and diversity;
- Through the preventative curriculum actively promote positive emotional health and wellbeing (eg. mindfulness training);
- Participate in the NIABF annual Anti-Bullying Week activities;
- Engage in key national and regional campaigns, eg Safer Internet Day, Good Relations Week, etc.;
- Use peer-led systems (eg. Form Council) to support the delivery and promotion of key anti-bullying messaging within the school;
- Use effective strategies for unstructured-time management, eg. staff supervision, training for staff, effective pupil engagement by staff, etc.;

- Assemblies to raise awareness and promote understanding of key issues related to bullying;
- Provision and promotion of extra- and co-curricular activities, aimed at supporting the development of effective peer support relationships and networks.

The College also recognises the importance of encouraging an anti-bullying culture on the way to and from school and promotes this by:

- Requiring pupils to take responsibility for their role as ambassadors for their school within the community;
- Providing regular reminders of the positive behaviour expectations of pupils whilst travelling to and from the College and in the community;
- Encouraging pupils to challenge inappropriate and unacceptable behaviour of their peers during the journey to and from school;
- Engaging with transport providers (eg. Translink, EA Transport, etc.) to ensure effective communication and the early identification of any concerns;
- Working with the local community to address any issues of concern regarding the behaviour of pupils.

The College has the authority to take action to address bullying that uses electronic communication or social media, where that behaviour is likely to have a detrimental effect on the pupil's education at school. There are many opportunities to raise awareness of the nature and impact of online bullying to pupils and to support them in making use of the internet in a safe, responsible and respectful way. This may include:

- Addressing key themes of online behaviour and risk through LLW, including understanding how to respond to harm and the consequences of inappropriate use;
- Participation in Anti-Bullying Week activities;
- Engagement with key statutory and voluntary sector agencies (eg. C2k, PSNI, Public Health Agency, Safeguarding Board for NI e-Safety Forum) to support the promotion of key messages;
- Participation in annual Safer Internet Day and promotion of key messages throughout the year;
- Development and implementation of robust and appropriate policies in related areas (eg. Acceptable Use Policy, Positive Behaviour policy).

These lists above are not exhaustive.

## **Section 7 – Responsibility**

Everyone has responsibility for creating a safe and supportive learning environment for all members of the school community.

Everyone in the College community, including pupils, their parents/guardians and the staff of the school are expected to respect the rights of others to be safe.

Everyone has the responsibility to:

- foster positive self-esteem;

- model high standards of mutual respect;
  - be alert to signs of distress and other possible indications of bullying behaviour;
  - refrain from becoming involved in any kind of bullying behaviour;
  - refrain from retaliating to any form of bullying behaviour;
  - intervene to support any person who is being bullied, unless it is unsafe to do so;
  - report any concerns or instances of bullying behaviour witnessed or suspected, to a member of staff;
  - emphasise the importance of seeking help from a trusted adult about bullying behaviour when it happens or is observed;
  - explain the implications for themselves and/or others, of allowing the bullying behaviour to continue unchecked;
  - listen sensitively to anyone who has been bullied, take what is said seriously, and provide reassurance that appropriate action will be taken;
  - know how to seek support;
  - resolve difficulties in restorative ways to prevent recurring bullying behaviour and meet the needs of all parties.
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## **Section 8 – Reporting a Bullying Concern**

### **Pupils Reporting a Concern**

Pupils are encouraged to raise concerns with any member of staff, including teaching and non-teaching staff, in the following ways:

- Talking to a member of staff;
- Writing a note to a member of staff (eg. in a homework diary);
- Sending an email to a member of staff or to a dedicated email address;
- By posting a comment in the Familyworks 'box' (located in H block).

ANY pupil can raise a concern about bullying behaviour, not just the pupil who is experiencing this behaviour. It is the College's position that the focus should be on 'getting help' rather than 'telling'. As such, all pupils should be encouraged to 'get help' if they have a concern about bullying that they experience or is experienced by another.

### **Parents/Guardians Reporting a Concern**

- In the first instance, all bullying concerns should be reported to the Head of Form or Deputy Head of Form.
- Where the parent is not satisfied that appropriate action has been taken, the concern should be reported to the Head of Section.
- Where the parent is still not satisfied that appropriate action has been taken then the concern will be addressed using the College's Complaints Procedure.

All reports of bullying concerns received from pupils and/or parents/carers will be responded to in line with this policy. Appropriate feedback will be provided to those persons directly

involved. Certain information may not be able to be shared because of the need to preserve confidentiality.

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## **Section 9 – Responding to a Bullying Concern**

The focus of any intervention will be on responding to the bullying concern and restoring the wellbeing of those involved. As such, any strategy for responding to bullying concerns will concentrate on the prevention of any further incidents.

Staff responding to a concern about bullying behaviour will:

- *Clarify facts and perceptions;*
- *Check records;*
- *Assess the incident against the criteria for bullying behaviour.*

*If the behaviour fulfils the criteria, staff will:*

- *Confirm the type of bullying behaviour being displayed.*
- *Identify any themes or motivating factors.*
- *Select and implement appropriate interventions for all pupils involved.*
- *Track, monitor and record effectiveness of interventions.*
- *Identify and implement further interventions if necessary.*

The College will promote a restorative approach when responding to bullying behaviour.

The staff shall implement interventions aimed at responding to the behaviour, resolving the concern and restoring the wellbeing of those involved. Where appropriate, staff may implement sanctions for those displaying bullying behaviour.

Certain information may not be able to be shared because of the need to preserve confidentiality.

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## **Section 10 – Recording**

There is a legal requirement, as set out in the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016, for the College to maintain a record of all incidents of bullying and alleged bullying behaviour.

The College will record centrally all relevant information related to reports of bullying concerns, including:

- how the bullying behaviour was displayed (the method);
- the motivation for the behaviour;
- how each incident was addressed by the school;
- the outcome of the interventions employed.

Access to these records will be restricted and only provided to those members of school staff with a legitimate need. All records will be maintained in line with relevant data protection



legislation and guidance and will be disposed of in line with the College's Retention and Disposal of Documents Policy. Collated information regarding incidents of bullying and alleged bullying behaviour will be used to inform the future development of anti-bullying policy and practice within the school.

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### **Section 11 – Professional Development of Staff**

The College recognises the need for appropriate and adequate training for staff, including teaching and non-teaching school staff. The College is committed to:

- ensuring that staff are provided with appropriate opportunities for professional development;
  - ensuring opportunities for safeguarding training are afforded to Governors and all staff – teaching and non-teaching;
  - reviewing policy and practice in the light of experience, to inform future staff development.
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### **Section 12 – Monitoring and Review of Policy**

It is the responsibility of the Board of Governors, in liaison with the Principal, to monitor the effectiveness of the Anti-Bullying Policy.

To this end, the Board of Governors shall:

- maintain a standing item on the agenda of each meeting of the Board where a report on recorded incidents of bullying will be noted;
- identify trends and priorities for action;
- assess the effectiveness of strategies aimed at preventing bullying behaviour;
- assess the effectiveness of strategies aimed at responding to bullying behaviour.

It is a legal requirement that the Anti-Bullying Policy be reviewed at intervals of no more than four years. However, the policy will be reviewed following any incident which highlights the need for such a review. It will also be reviewed when directed to by the Department of Education and in light of new guidance. As such, the timeline for the review of this policy is:

This Anti-Bullying Policy shall be reviewed as required, in consultation with pupils and their parents/carers, on or before the 31 August 2025.

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### **Section 13 – Links to Other Policies**

In the development and implementation of this Anti-Bullying Policy, the Board of Governors has been mindful of related policies, including:

- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Pastoral Care procedures & practice
- Child Protection Policy
- Special Educational Needs Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Relationships and Sexuality Education
- Acceptable Use of Internet Policy
- Educational Visits Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct