

1. The 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 Coláiste Bhríde 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.

2. Key Principles of Best Practice

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

- ⊙ A positive college culture and climate which-
- ⊙ is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity;
- ⊙ encourages students to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment; and
- ⊙ promotes respectful relationships across the college community;
- ⊙ Effective leadership;
- ⊙ A college-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 students; and
- ⊙ explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.
- ⊙ Effective supervision and monitoring of students;
- ⊙ 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.

3. Definition of Bullying

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:

- **Physical aggression:** This behaviour includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping people. It may also take the form of severe physical assault. While students often engage in 'mess fights', they can sometimes be used as a disguise for physical harassment or inflicting pain.
- **Intimidation:** Some bullying behaviour takes the form of intimidation: it may be based on the use of very aggressive body language with the voice being used as a weapon. Particularly upsetting can be a facial expression which conveys aggression and/or dislike.
- **Isolation and exclusion:** This occurs where a certain person is deliberately isolated, excluded or ignored by some or all of the class group or by some or all of peers in student houses. It may include deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying. It may be accompanied by writing insulting remarks about the student in public places, by passing around notes about or drawings of the student or by whispering insults about them loud enough to be heard.
- **Relational bullying:** This occurs when a person's attempts to socialise and form relationships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined.
- **Cyber-bullying:** It is bullying carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as text, social network sites, e-mail, instant messaging (IM), apps, gaming sites, chat-rooms and other online technologies. Being the target of inappropriate or hurtful messages is the most common form of online bullying.
- **Name calling:** Persistent name-calling directed at the same individual(s) which hurts, insults or humiliates should be regarded as a form of bullying behaviour. Often name-calling of this type refers to physical appearance. Accent or distinctive voice

characteristics may attract negative attention. Academic ability can also provoke name calling.

- **Damage to property:** Personal property can be the focus of attention for bullying behaviour. This may result in damage to clothing, mobile phone or other devices, college books and other learning material. Items of personal property may be defaced, broken, stolen or hidden.
- **Extortion:** Demands for money may be made, often accompanied by threats. A student may also be forced into theft of property for delivery to another who is engaged in bullying behaviour.
- **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.

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

4. Relevant Teachers

The relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying are the class teachers, the Principal and the Deputy Principal.

5. Education and prevention strategies

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 Coláiste Bhríde are as follows:

- We document the specific education and prevention strategies that the college will implement and especially to address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.
- Effective practice includes prevention and awareness raising measures across all aspects of bullying and involves strategies to engage students in addressing problems when they arise. In particular, such strategies need to build empathy, respect and resilience in students.
- We provide students with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth .
- The best way to address cyber-bullying is to prevent it happening in the first place. Our prevention and awareness raising measures focus on educating students on appropriate online behaviour, how to stay safe while on-line and also on developing a culture of reporting any concerns about cyber-bullying. The college-wide approach and the role of parents is of importance in this regard. Our prevention and awareness raising measures also takes into account the scope for cyber-bullying to occur as a result of access to technology from within the college.
- Our approach to tackling and preventing bullying takes particular account of the needs of students with disabilities or with SEN, and joins up with other relevant college policies and supports and ensures that all the services that provide for such students work together. Approaches to decreasing the likelihood of bullying for students with SEN include improving inclusion, focusing on developing social skills, and cultivating a good college culture which has respect for all and helping one another as central.

6. Procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying

Coláiste Bhríde's procedures for investigation, follow-up and recording of bullying behaviour and the established intervention strategies used by the college for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour are as follows:

- The primary aim for the relevant teacher in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame). 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.
- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. In that way students will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It is made clear to all students that when they report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.
- Parents and students are required 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. Teachers take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by students, staff or parents.
- Incidents are generally best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved. All interviews are conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all students concerned. Students who are not directly involved also provide very useful information in this way. When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher seeks answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This is done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner.
- If a group is involved, each member is interviewed individually at first and thereafter, all those involved are met as a group. At the group meeting, each member is asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statement. Each member of a group is supported through the possible pressures that may face them from the other members of the group after

interview by the teacher. It may also be appropriate or helpful sometimes to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident.

- In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved are 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 gives parents an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the college and the supports for their students. Where the relevant teacher has determined that a student has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it is made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the college's anti-bullying policy and efforts are made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the student being bullied.
- It is made clear to all involved (each set of students and parents) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the student being disciplined, his or her parents and the college. Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved are arranged separately with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date if the student who has been bullied is ready and agreeable. This can have a therapeutic effect.
- Where a parent is not satisfied that the college has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents must be referred, as appropriate, to the college's complaints procedures. In the event that a parent has exhausted the college's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the college must advise the parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

7. Procedures for recording bullying behaviour

The Board of Management of Coláiste Bhríde has ensured that the college has clear procedures for the formal noting and reporting of bullying behaviour and these must be documented in the college's anti-bullying policy. All records must be maintained in accordance with relevant data protection legislation. The college's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour must adhere to the following:

- While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the relevant teacher will use his/her professional

judgement in relation to the records to be kept of these reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same.

- If it is established by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher must keep appropriate written records which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.
- Each written record should be clear and concise, based solely on the disclosure and should be hand-written. The course official *that is the Principal or Vice-Principal*) will keep these records in a locked, fire-proof cabinet.

8. Supports for students affected by bullying

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

- A programme of support for students who have been bullied is in place in Coláiste Bhríde. Such students may need counselling and/or opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop their friendship and social skills and thereby build resilience whenever this is needed. We adopt a method of shared concern. We use restorative practice, mediation or reconciliation where appropriate. We maintain open communications between college, parents and outside agencies. We work together to resolve the situation and protect the victim.
- A programme of support for those students involved in bullying behaviour is also part of the college's intervention process. Students involved in bullying behaviour need assistance on an ongoing basis. For those with low self-esteem, opportunities are developed to increase feelings of self-worth. Therefore we recognise that it is important that the learning strategies applied within the college allow for the enhancement of the student's self-worth. Students who engage in bullying behaviour may need counselling to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others.

9. Referral of serious cases to the HSE

In relation to bullying in colleges, *Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011* (Children First) and the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary*
Amended Version April 2023

and Post-Primary Colleges provide that in situations where “the incident is serious and where the behaviour is regarded as potentially abusive, the college must consult the HSE Children and Family Social Services with a view to drawing up an appropriate response, such as a management plan”.

Serious instances of bullying behaviour are, in accordance with the Children First and *the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Colleges*, referred to the HSE Children and Family Services and/or Gardaí as appropriate.

The *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Colleges* also provide that where college personnel have concerns about a child but are not sure whether to report the matter to the HSE, the Designated Liaison Person must seek advice from the HSE Children and Family Social Services.

10. Bullying as part of a continuum of behaviour

Bullying behaviour can be part of a continuum of behaviour rather than a stand-alone issue and in some cases behaviour may escalate beyond that which can be described as bullying to serious physical or sexual assault or harassment. To ensure that any such cases are dealt with appropriately, the college’s anti-bullying policy provides for appropriate linkages with the overall code of behaviour and referrals will be made to relevant external agencies and authorities where appropriate.

11. Supervision and Monitoring of Students

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.

12. Prevention of Harassment

The Board of Management 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.

13. This policy has been made available to college personnel, and published on the college website.

14. This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every college year.

This policy was amended, reviewed and adopted by the Coláiste Bhríde Board of Management on 15th April 2023.

Signed: p.p. *Mall Ílháin*

Chair of Management Board

Date: 15 April 2023

Signed: *Seán de facto*

College Secretary

Date: 15 April 2023

Date of next review: Yearly