



**Anti-Bullying Policy Review September 2021, September 2022, Reviewed 12th September 2023.
Countering Bullying Behaviour in the School Community**

Anti-Bullying Policy and Procedures

BCS Lismore recognises that it has a responsibility to counter bullying behaviour and our policy requires that staff and students show due respect and courtesy to each other.

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 **Blackwater Community School** has adopted the following anti-bullying policy within the framework of the school's overall Behaviour Policy. This policy fully complies with the requirements of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools which were published in September 2013 by the Department of Education and Science.

The Board of Management recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of students or staff 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 students and staff 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 students.
 - ✓ 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).
- 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.
- 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.

Those who bully others in a non-physical way often do not realise that their actions may have serious legal consequences for them. **The reality, however, is that bullying may constitute a criminal offence.**

BCS reserves the right to apply its anti-bullying policy in respect of bullying that occurs at a location, activity, function, or program that is not college related if it is in the opinion of the Principal and/or Board of Management the alleged bullying has created a hostile environment at school for the victim, has infringed on the rights of the victim at the school and/or has materially or substantially disrupted the education process or the orderly operation of the school.

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 people who establish the facts in alleged Bullying are:

- The relevant Tutor / Year Head & Deputy Principal
- Deputy Principal / Principal

The Prevention and Education Strategies that will be used by the school are as follows:

- Develop a school wide approach to deal with Bullying, with the provision of anti-bullying workshops.
- Positive school culture incorporating a print rich environment highlighting the fact that bullying in any form is unacceptable in **BCS**.
- S.P.H.E. programme specifically devised to raise awareness and prevention of and consequences of bullying.
- Outside agencies e.g. H.S.E, Gardai, N.E.P.S., where/when necessary.
- School's Mentoring System for first years – anti bullying week.
- Student Council members are encouraged to bring concerns about bullying behaviour to the attention of the relevant year head/member of the pastoral care team.
- School's annual pursuit of the Amber Flag Status and the establishment of the Yellow Flag.
- Weekly Pastoral Care Meetings
- Weekly Year Head / SMT Meetings.
- Annual Staff refresher on Anti-Bullying Procedures as per DES guidelines.

The school establishes the facts, records, and follows up on bullying behaviour as follows:

Phase One:

STEP 1: Teacher observation identifies potential bullying behaviour/ Students reports Bullying behaviour to a member of staff/year head/deputy principal/principal or Staff report Bullying behaviour to Year Head. (Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), caretaker, cleaners are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them or mentioned to them.)

Step 2: Year Head speaks to pupils involved, outside of class, and takes a brief note in a calm, dispassionate manner. Get the facts: What, Where, Who, When and Why, all in accordance with procedures set out in section 6.8 of the Anti-bullying procedures for Primary & Post Primary schools.

Step 3: Interview the student identified separately and take a brief note of their accounts of the incident. Inform tutor.

Step 4: Try and resolve the situation. Tell the students the bullying must stop immediately, and that the situation is being monitored. Tell the student being bullied to stay away from the students doing the bullying and the student to keep a record of any further incidents. They should be told to return to you immediately if the situation continues.

Step 5: Fill out the *Bullying Incident Form* in the Teachers' Handbook (Appendix 3 from Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools) and file for future reference with the relevant Year Head.

Phase Two:

Step 1: If bullying persists, inform their Tutor and Year Head.

Step 2: At this stage pupils engaged in bullying should be informed they are in breach of the School Code of Behaviour and will follow disciplinary procedures.

Step 3: The victim should be given support by having a link person who the return to immediately should the bullying continue. Ideally this would be the teacher dealing with the initial incident or the Tutor, Guidance Counsellor, Chaplain, Head of Year or Class Tutor.

Teachers reporting bullying behaviour:

The relevant teacher must record the bullying behaviour in the standardised recording template (and a copy must be provided to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable) in the following circumstances:

- *in cases where he/she considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour occurred; and*
- *where the school has decided as part of its anti-bullying policy that in certain circumstances bullying behaviour must be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable.*

Dealing with Complaints, Disclosures, Suspicions of Bullying

Bullying behaviour may come to the attention of a staff member in a variety of ways. While there may be different levels of incidents, all incidents should be recorded in the '*Bullying Incident Form*' in the Teacher's Handbook'.

1.1 [Just Telling](#)

Subjects or witnesses of bullying behaviour may gain confidence by ‘telling’ and just talking about what has happened to them. Building confidence may be a vital factor in making progress. A pupil may simply wish to:

- Discuss what is happening to him/her
- Seek advice
- Express how he/ she feels in relation to the perceived incidents of bullying
- While doing this with a trusted teacher, he/she may not want any action to be taken for the time being. The teacher should respect the pupil’s wishes in so far as this may be done without endangering him/her *but should document the meeting.*

1.2 [Handling a disclosure with sensitivity](#)

In handling a disclosure of bullying behaviour, a staff member should:

- Listen sympathetically
- Reassure the child that bullying does not mean that there is something wrong with him/her
- Emphasise that the problem lies with the offender, not with him/her
- Encourage him/her to talk about how he/she feels
- Reassure him/her that he/she has a right to be free from intimidation/harassment by bullies
- Make clear to the child that he/she is not telling tales but behaving responsibly
- Try to boost self-esteem through lots of encouragement
- Do not interrogate the subject or witness in a detailed and persistent way as this usually makes him/her feel worse.
- Do not give the impression that the problem is minor or that he/she has easy solutions. To the child being bullied, the problem usually appears to be of major proportions
- Do not advise extremes of either ignoring or retaliating.
- Do not encourage the youngster to hit back. Firstly, the subject may suffer physical injury and may be proven physically inferior. The student may injure the offender which may give the offender the opportunity to appear, or to say, he/she was acting in self-defence. The fight may provide entertainment for bystanders.

1.3 [Support Strategies for the subject of bullying behaviour](#)

- A teacher who suspects that a student may be the subject of bullying behaviour or if a teacher receives a disclosure that a pupil is the subject of bullying behaviour is requested to fill in the ‘*Bullying Incident Form*’ in the teacher’s handbook.
- This form should be passed on to the relevant Year Head who will be in a position to verify if other staff members also have concerns relating to the same individual.

Depending on the wishes of the subject of bullying behaviour:

- The student may be referred to the school counsellor or any trusted teacher.
- Parents may be contacted
- The student will be monitored by the class teacher / tutor or Year Head.

2.2 [Strategies used to eliminate the offender’s bullying behaviour](#)

- A teacher who receives a disclosure that a pupil is the offender of bullying behaviour or if a teacher witnesses a bullying incident, they should fill out the ‘*Bullying Incident Form*’ in the teacher’s handbook and pass on to the relevant Year Head as soon as possible.
- The teacher should inform the offender that this has been done and attempt restorative justice. An official warning not to re-offend should be given
- The Year Head collates evidence and is in a position to verify if there were other incidents.
- If there are other incidents the Year Head will interview the offender and where relevant discuss with parents and the pastoral care team.
- The offender may be asked to give written assurance that the bullying will not be repeated.
- The student may be asked for a written account of the bullying incident and the student’s plans to put things right with the subject.
- A behaviour management plan may be established for the offending student.

- They may be referred to the school counsellor
- In cases of bullying behaviour, where individuals do not respond to the above strategies or if they persist in their actions, further action will be required.
- They will be referred to the Monitor of Discipline, who will follow the relevant Code of Behaviour.
 - Lack of progress with the offender will lead to subsequent meetings with the Deputy Principal, the Principal or the Board of Management as required.

Note:

Incidents which are considered to be of the most serious nature may immediately be referred to the Principal and the Board of Management.

3.1 [Proactive Strategies at BCS to increase awareness of bullying behaviour & promote positive school culture](#)

- Annual student surveys regarding incidents or evidence of bully at BCS.
- Presentation to students regarding bullying and consequences of same
- Presentation to parents regarding bullying and consequences of same.
- SPHE focus on bullying with all year groups and building self-esteem.
- A bullying awareness week poster competitions, guest speakers and drama workshops.
- Cairde System to support first years and trained to look out for vulnerable students.
- Lunch time activities for first and second years to promote integration. Tie breakers and games and table quizzes held in September for 1st Years.
- Emphasis on Mental Health Awareness, Meditation and Mindfulness and Suicide Awareness Programmes.
- Management, Staff and Parents strive to create atmosphere where bullying is unacceptable. Supervision and monitoring of pupils particularly at break times and staff informed by management/Year Heads of vulnerable students. Early indicators eg truancy, poor concentration, signing out sick is monitored.
- Visits to primary schools before 1st years come to secondary to get information on incoming students and disseminating this to staff at first meeting in August.
- Positive Discipline System – to promote positive behaviour and compliance with school rules.
- Establishment of Mental Health Social Awareness Committee.

Anti Bullying Policy (amendments)

- Homophobic bullying is bullying that is motivated by a dislike or fear of someone because of the real or perceived lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender identity of the individual targeted.
- It should be noted that while bullying is defined as ‘repeated’ incidents, are incident of harassment and/or sexual harassment is considered a breach of the Equal Status Acts (2000 & 2004)
- Students can feel comfortable representing incidents of bullying, including homophobic bullying at any time during or outside of school has to the Principal’s or Deputy Principal’ offices.

In cases where the school has serious concerns in managing the behaviour of a pupil the advice of N.E.P.S., H.S.E, Gardai(or other relevant agencies) will be sought (dependant on availability)

Supervision and Monitoring of Anti-Bullying in BCS:

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 BCS 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 the harassment of students 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.

Reporting to the Board of Management

As per section 7.1 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, the Principal will provide a report to the Board of Management at least once in every school term outlining the following:

- (i) *the overall number of bullying cases reported since the previous report to the Board and*
- (ii) *confirmation that all cases referred to at (i) above have been or are being, dealt with in accordance with the school’s anti-bullying policy and the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary schools.*

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on September 12th 2023 and will be reviewed in September 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 will be made available to the Department and the patron 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 and provided to the Parents’ Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Signed: (Chairperson of Board of Management) _____

Signed: (Principal) _____

Date: 12th September 2021

