

Anti-Bullying Policy



First Drafted: January 2000

Date Updated: January 2020

MISSION STATEMENT

Kinsale Community School is committed to:

- enabling all students to fulfil their academic, intellectual, moral, spiritual, social, cultural and physical potential.

- fostering the development of personal responsibility
- engendering a spirit of co-operation and mutual respect among students, staff, management, parents and the wider community
- facilitating the professional development of staff in a safe and caring environment.

Context

To quote from guidelines issued by the Department of Education and Skills:

“The role of the school is to provide the highest possible standard of education for our pupils. A stable, secure learning environment is an essential requirement to achieve this goal. Bullying behaviour by its very nature undermines and dilutes the quality of education and imposes psychological damage.”

Intimidating behaviour is unacceptable. Such behaviour affects not only the victim but the entire class, school and outside community. The behaviour thrives in a secretive atmosphere and it is controllable only when the

whole school community accepts that “telling” is right and that they are being responsible when they report bullying. We are all dependant on each other and need to help one another.

Definition:

Bullying is defined by the Department of Education and Skills guidelines as repeated physical, verbal or psychological aggression directed by an individual or group against others. Bullying can occur at any age, in any environment, and can be long or short term.

It is universally acknowledged that bullying affects the self-esteem and confidence of those who experience its impact. In keeping with the school’s mission statement, the partners within the school community are determined to take every reasonable step to:

- Prevent bullying.
- Provide the pupils, through SPHE and other programmes with the necessary skills to deal with incidents of bullying.
- Provide the necessary training and support to all staff dealing with this issue

Board of Management

The Board of Management is responsible for ensuring that all members of the school community are enabled to deal effectively with bullying. The Board is committed to providing time and resources for the implementation of the policy. The Board will ensure that proper supervisory and monitoring measures are in place to prevent bullying and to deal with incidents appropriately as they arise.

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 diversity and is based on inclusivity. This positive school culture should encourage pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment, thereby ensuring respectful relationships across the school community.
- Effective leadership.
- A whole school approach.
- A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact.
- Implementation of education and preventative strategies that build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils. These measures will 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. This will include use of interventional strategies.

- Ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

The Principal will report to the Board of Management at least once per term on the overall bullying cases reported and confirm that these cases have been dealt with in accordance with this policy.

School Staff

The school staff will foster an atmosphere of friendship, respect and tolerance. Students' self-esteem will be developed through celebrating individual differences, achievements, acknowledging and rewarding good behaviour and manners and providing opportunities for success throughout the curriculum and the school. Teachers will help pupils to develop empathy by discussing feelings and trying to put themselves in the place of others. Relationships with pupils will be based on mutual respect and trust so that pupils will have confidence in the school staff. Teachers will be vigilant, respond sensitively and caringly to pupils who disclose incidents of bullying. Designated teachers will discuss the school's anti-bullying policy with the pupils. The formal curriculum of the school will also be used to educate all pupils against bullying behaviour. Anti-bullying issues may be raised through a year group assembly, or any one of the following school programmes: the school religion programme, the Social Personal and Health Education programme, the Civic, Social, Political Education programme.

All staff will foster a 'Reform not blame' approach to encourage pupils to report incidents of bullying and help the Bully to reform his/her behaviour.

Pupils

- ✓ Pupils are expected to be tolerant and to have mutual respect. Pupils should report incidents of bullying to their parents and teachers.
- ✓ Pupils should report incidents to teachers where either they or another pupil are the subject of the bullying behaviour.

Parents/guardians

- ✓ Encourage positive behaviour and discourage negative behaviour both at home and at school.
- ✓ Encourage pupils to solve difficulties without resorting to aggression.
- ✓ Encourage pupils to share, to be kind, to be caring, and to be understanding towards others.
- ✓ Watch out for signs and symptoms that your child is being bullied or is bullying others. Don't dismiss your instincts as being wrong.
- ✓ Discuss the school's anti-bullying policy with your child. Support the school in its efforts to prevent and treat bullying. Prevent and tackle bullying.

Access to technology means that cyber bullying can happen around the clock and the pupil's home may not be a safe haven from such bullying. Pupils are increasingly communicating in ways that are often unknown to adults and free from supervision. The nature of these technologies means digital content can be shared and seen by a very wide audience almost instantly and is almost impossible to delete permanently. While cyber bullying often takes place at home and at night, the impact can also be felt in school.

Since access to social media is not provided by the school, parents have a responsibility to supervise the pupil's behaviour on these sites.

In any case where it has been determined that bullying behaviour has occurred the parents of both parties involved may be contacted to inform them of the matter and to explain the actions being taken by the school.

Types of Bullying:

- (1) **Physical Aggression:** This includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking and tripping people. It may also take the form of severe physical assault. “Mess” fights can be used to disguise more serious intentions
- (2) **Damage to Property:** Damage to personal property may be used as a weapon - bicycles, clothes, books, pencil cases and bags can be broken, torn, hidden or defaced
- (3) **Extortion:** victims can be forced to hand over money or valuables or to steal for the bully. Threats of physical violence can be made if victims do not comply
- (4) **Intimidation:** this is where aggressive body language is used as a weapon, including the voice and “the look”
- (5) **Isolation:** Being deliberately isolated, ignored or excluded from group activities is Bullying. It is usually set up by one person and is accompanied by notes, drawings, comments loud enough to be heard, groups giggling/ laughing when the victim is near.
- (6) **Name Calling:** Persistent name calling directed at the same person, which hurts or humiliates is a form of bullying. Most refer to physical appearance or academic ability (both high and low)
- (7) **Slagging:** Slagging can be simply good-natured banter/teasing between friends but when this is repeated and personal it becomes bullying
- (8) **Racial:** Discrimination, prejudice, comments or insults about colour, nationality, culture, social class, religious beliefs, ethnic or traveller background
- (9) **Homophobic bullying and Sexual Harassment:** Remarks of a suggestive/ sexual nature or about a person’s sexual orientation are forms of bullying. Spreading rumours about a person’s sexual orientation, taunting a person of a different sexual orientation, name calling e.g. Gay, Queer, Lesbian
- (10) **Cyber-bullying:** the use of information and technologies such as email, cell phone and pager text messages, instant messaging (IM), defamatory personal web sites, and defamatory online personal polling web sites, to support deliberate, repeated and hostile behaviour by an

individual or group that is intended to harm another: Sending offensive, cruel or threatening messages, emails, photos or video: Making silent phone calls: Posting malicious comments or pictures on a blog, bulletin board, website or chat room: Pretending to be someone else in a chat room or message board or text message and making malicious comments: Accessing someone's accounts in order to intimidate them or cause trouble for them.

Students should note that any intimidation expressed in the form of physical assault, damage to property, verbal abuse, threats to people's family etc. is unacceptable and may lead to a criminal prosecution. Such actions will also be subject to the rigours of the Code of Behaviour and may result in the permanent exclusion of a student.

Signs and Symptoms

Bullying has the effect of lowering one's self-esteem and confidence and causes insecurity and anxiety. While the complainant may not talk about it, their suffering can often be obvious in mood changes and behaviour. Early recognition and intervention are vital.

Signs:

- Anxiety about travelling to and from school: students asking parents to pick them up or avoiding regular times and routes.
- Unwillingness or refusal to go to school, mitching.
- Deterioration in school work, interest, enthusiasm, concentration.
- Pattern of minor physical illness (headache, stomach ache etc).
- Unexplained changes either in mood or behaviour, especially after holidays or weekends.
- Visible signs of distress/ anxiety (vomiting, crying, sleepiness, not eating, withdrawing, bedwetting, nightmares, stammering).
- Out of character outbursts about other students or teachers.
- Possessions missing or damaged.
- Increasingly requesting/stealing money.
- Unexplained bruises, cuts or damage to clothing.
- Reluctance/ refusal to talk about what is wrong.

Where does bullying go on?

- Playground/ Sports field –physical contact, noise and so called ‘messing’ mask bullying.
- Toilets, cloakrooms, showers, etc.
- Corridors.
- Buses.
- Classes – Subtle glances, comments, notes, pinches etc.
- School environs, local shops, etc.
- Cyberspace.

Reporting Procedure:

Bullying must be reported in all instances

Anyone may report it: complainant, parents, friends, other students, by direct report, letter, phone call, class comment, written note to any staff member or a note in the relevant **Year Tutor's box**.

- If an incident has taken place that might involve bullying, a record of whatever details are known should be recorded on the students CloudSchool profile.
- All actions taken to deal with such an incident should be recorded on the students CloudSchool profile.
- The incident should be referred to the relevant Year Head and the incident will be discussed by the Pastoral Care team.

Once a report is made:

1. Where appropriate a staff member may deal with it directly.
2. The staff member may need to discuss strategies with the pastoral team.
3. Where necessary the staff member informs the class teacher and the Year Tutor.
4. The Year Tutor is the centre for information and should be informed of all serious instances of Bullying.
5. Whether there has been an incident or not, to find out if there is bullying taking place all classes in the year group will be surveyed at the same time. Each class will be read "Information Before Class Survey," headed "Where this school Stands on Bullying" by each teacher completing the survey with them.
6. Explain that any students found to be involved in bullying will not be punished provided they promise to stop the bullying and keep that promise. (This "Reform, not Blame" approach is necessary so students

will feel able to give honest information. They will usually know if someone is treating others unfairly but may be reluctant to report it, for various reasons, if perpetrators are likely to be punished).

7. The teacher will explain that the survey is confidential, that nobody will be shown what anyone wrote about what might be going on, (unless it was so bad that the Gardaí had to be told, which is very unlikely) but that they will have to put their names on their questionnaires.
8. All classes in the year group are surveyed using copies of the "Regular Class Survey". This is necessary since bullying might take place in the yard at break time and students from other classes might see it. The students are asked to put their names on the questionnaires. The students should be told that anyone who honestly does not know of any bullying taking place should write "I don't know" on each line of the questionnaire before putting their name on it.
9. It is likely that there will be several possible bullying situations mentioned but some may not all actually involve bullying. For it to be considered bullying the behaviour must be deliberate, hurtful and repeated over time.
10. Any alleged perpetrators are interviewed using the "Alleged Bullying Interview" form and the "Bullying Behaviour Checklist" form. Those interviewed are reminded that they must be honest in the interview so the school can trust their promise to stop and avoid any punishment at the end. Clarification may be sought at any stage in the interview by asking the student to "explain."
11. All staff member involved should subsequently monitor behaviour of bullies and report any change (or lack of it) to the Year Tutor and class teacher.
12. The Year Tutor may inform the parents, Chaplain, Health Education co-ordinator, Guidance Counsellor or where the instance is serious, the Principal and or the Deputy Principal.

13. In cases where the relevant teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after they determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, it must be recorded by the relevant teacher in the standardised recording template (Appendix 3 of Anti Bullying Procedures, 2013) and referred to the Anti-Bullying team for further consideration and follow-up. This may involve trying different interventions and application of the school's Code of Conduct (up to and including suspension and exclusion), or referral of the case to the HSE or An Gardaí.

How are instances dealt with?

1. Confidentiality is very important. Those who report must feel confident that the information will not be repeated outside the agreed structure.
2. It is vital that information is acted upon as quickly and as discreetly as possible and that it is not ignored.
3. The most effective approach is usually low key and non-judgemental (**'Reform not blame'**).
4. Both parties should be spoken to separately in the initial stages.

In the case of a complainant:

One of the aims of this policy is to express support, gather information, assure him/her that necessary action will be taken with prior consultation.

The student may need help in coping with the impact of being bullied and in developing ways of dealing with any possible future incidents.

In the case of the bully:

Positive changes should be encouraged and rewarded. The bully may need help in understanding his/her behaviour and learning new and more appropriate ways of behaving. Parents/guardians may need to be consulted in these cases.

1. A written record of discussions should be kept.
2. At this stage no blame should be assigned but co-operation may be sought in sorting things out because feelings have been hurt.
3. In some cases both sides may be brought together (in controlled conditions, with a staff member present and only after both sides have been consulted).
4. In the event that there has been bullying taking place, the student is asked to complete a signed "Student Behaviour Promise" form and

the relevant Year Head countersigns it. If the student breaks this promise, then a second form must be signed by the student and his/her parent/guardian.

5. In the unlikely event that this fails, the school's code of discipline will be referred to.

In cases where school rules have been broken (e.g. fighting or deliberate injury) then normal disciplinary action may be taken.

Staff members/Year Tutors monitor the on-going situation and discretely check back with the complainant and/or friends of the complainant later.

Where a student is found to have bullied others, and where restorative and interventional efforts have been tried and failed, then it may be necessary in such circumstances for the Board of Management to consider the permanent exclusion of that student.

Sexual Harassment

Kinsale Community School is totally opposed to sexual harassment and is committed to providing an environment free from sexual harassment and ensuring that such behaviour is not tolerated.

Sexual harassment is a form of discrimination, a form of abuse. Sexual harassment means unwanted conduct of a sexual nature or other conduct based on sex affecting the dignity of the person at work or at school. This can include unwelcome physical verbal or non-verbal conduct, which is offensive and causes discomfort or humiliation to the person.

Sexual harassment can include:

- Unwanted verbal or physical advances or contact
- Requests or demands for sexual favours
- Unwelcome touching or a discriminatory remark
- Offensive use of pornographic material/display of offensive graffiti
- Aggressive, intimidating or threatening behaviour of a sexual nature
- Unwelcome comments of a sexual nature about physical appearance or dress

Note that it is the impact of the conduct on the recipient and not the intent of the accused person that determines whether the behaviour is acceptable or not. It should not be confused with normal social interaction involving mutual acceptable behaviour.

Sexual harassment is illegal under the Employment Equality Act of 1977 and the Labour Court has determined that freedom from sexual harassment is a condition of work which staff and students are entitled to expect.

Complaints of sexual harassment will be taken seriously and investigated. Malicious complaints will be treated as serious misconduct.

Employees and students shall be protected from intimidation, victimisation or discrimination for filing a complaint or assisting in an investigation.

Retaliation against any person complaining about harassment is also a disciplinary offence.

Complaints made by parents/guardians, students or staff will be investigated in accordance with the Codes of Practice for Community And Comprehensive Schools as agreed by ACCS, ASTI, TUI and PACCS. These documents have been approved by The Board of Management of Kinsale Community School and copies are available on request from the school office.

In General:

1. It is vital that effective communication exists within the school and that “telling” is the norm
2. The school promotes a ‘Reform not Blame’ approach when dealing with incidents of bullying.
3. Everyone has a responsibility for others and a spirit of cooperation must be present.
4. Those not reporting what they know are passively supporting the bully. Bullying only works if others are willing to ignore it.
5. Pupils can discuss bullying as part of the pastoral care and religious education programme.
6. Members of the Pastoral team are always available for advice.
7. Bullying is contrary to the school’s Code of Behaviour.
8. Bullying is contrary to the UN declaration of Human Rights

Supervision and Monitoring:

- All School breaks and activities are supervised by teaching staff on a rota basis
- Non-teaching staff will be asked to report incidences of bullying
- The pastoral care team (including year tutors, class teachers, SPHE, Guidance, RE) CSPE, Learning Support teachers) may monitor bullying behaviour
- Senior students are invited to be involved in a mentoring (Meitheal).

In relation to Acceptable Use Policy of computers in the school:

Where internet access is made available users are subject to the Acceptable Use Policy. Internet usage may be monitored and sites that are deemed unsuitable will be blocked

Please see Acceptable Use Policy for further information.

Policy Review:

The Board of Management will undertake an annual review of the School's Anti-Bullying Policy and its implementation in accordance with the procedures set out in Section 7.2 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools using the checklist included at Appendix 4 of those procedures.

The Board of Management will ensure that an action plan is put in place to address any areas for improvement identified by the annual review. 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. Details of the review will be recorded in the minutes of the Board of Management' meeting that adopted the review and a record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, will be made available to the Patrons and the DES.

In the case of the DES, it is appreciated that the Inspectorate will place a strong focus on the actions the school takes to create a positive school culture and to prevent and tackle bullying.

Communication of Policy:

A copy of this policy will be provided upon request from the secretary's office. It will also be published on the School's website.

Signed: *Sa Rita Twomey* (Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: *Seamus O'Carry* (Principal)

Date: 28th January 2020

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 28th January 2020