

Coláiste Muire

Anti-bullying policy

In Coláiste Muire we aim to develop the full potential of every student in a learning environment where fairness, understanding, success and discipline are pursued.

This policy is based on the schools fundamental aim to foster in students an attitude and appreciation of learning to serve them for life. Students are encouraged to strive for excellence at the level of their full potential.

Coláiste Muire encourages students to abide by the principle:

“Treat others as you yourself would like to be treated”

In doing this, we hope that all our students learn to assume responsibility for their own behaviour, tolerate and value diversity, respect themselves and each other and become responsible contributors to society.

This anti-bullying policy sets out, in writing, the framework within which the whole school community of Coláiste Muire manages issues relating to bullying and the school’s strategy to prevent bullying behaviour.

The policy will apply to a number of time periods/activities such as:

- School time (including break times)
- Going to and from school
- School tours/trips
- Extra-curricular activities
- Social networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook and texting, all inside and outside school.

Furthermore the policy applies outside the school if the behaviour impacts upon any person’s participation in our school.

The policy deals with negative behaviours and attitudes which arise or occur in school and which affect the progress and sense of emotional wellbeing of students or other people at the school.

The policy will outline the necessary steps to be taken when a bullying incident is reported

Bullying behaviours which break the law may be referred to the Gardai.

1. 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 Muire school 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.

2. 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.

3. 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 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*.

4. The relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows:

- An Múinteoir Ábhair
- An Múinteoir Ranga – Ról Tréadchúram
- An Ceann Bliana
- Leas Príomhoide
- Príomhoide

Students should discuss any incident of bullying with a teacher or another trusted adult within the school system.

Parents/guardians/staff should contact the Year Head/Deputy Principal/Principal regarding incidents of bullying behaviour which they might suspect or that have come to their attention through their children or any other person.

5. 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 the school are as follows:

Publishing and Publicising an Anti-Bullying Policy

- Excerpts from the Anti-Bullying Policy i.e. The Anti Bullying Code will be visible throughout the school in corridors and classrooms.
- It will be published on the school web-site www.colaistemuire.eu.
- The Anti-Bullying Policy will be promoted at various occasions e.g. parents' nights, first year enrolment and open nights.

Supervision and Monitoring

- Bullying “black spots” within the school will be identified and monitored during break times.
- Staff will be vigilant and follow the procedures as outlined in this policy as incidents arise.
- A questionnaire will be given to students, once a term, in SPHE class to give students an opportunity to voice concerns. Every student must write something down.
- Social networking sites will continue to be blocked.

Student Involvement

- Senior students will continue to assist newcomers to the school through the Ceannaire and Leas-Ceannaire system and the Students council, thus helping the new student to “settle in”.

Inclusion in the Curriculum

- SPHE: Anti-Bullying lesson plans and/or similar plans will be implemented in SPHE class.
- CSPE: Linkages can be made within the “Human Dignity” and “Rights and Responsibilities” section of the curriculum that will encourage positive behaviour between students.

Involving Parents/Guardians and the Wider Community

- Awareness of the Anti-Bullying Policy will be raised on parents’ nights e.g. First Year enrolment and open nights.
- There will be continued involvement with the local community to gain awareness of any existing problems.

Friendship week

Friendship Week is a core strategy central to the implementation of Whole School Support. Activities are planned that raise awareness and prioritise anti-bullying interventions. These may include:

- Teaching anti-bullying lessons
- Administration of anti-bullying questionnaire
- Structured activities for individual year groups and the whole school community*
- Parent Seminar*

6. 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:

Who to tell?

- Any staff member with whom the student feels comfortable.

- Parents
- Friends, who will speak on your behalf,
- Principal,
- Deputy Principal,
- Tutor or Year Head,
- DLP
- DDLP

How to tell?

- Direct approach to teacher at an appropriate time, e.g. after class, hand note up to teacher with homework.
- Get a parent or friend to tell on your behalf.
- Parents can inform the school
- Bystanders can inform appropriate person
- Administer a confidential questionnaire once a term to all students

It is important to note that records of all incidents of bullying and action taken to resolve them will be kept.

Noting and Recording

- A folder with records of incidents forms will be kept in the Principals office.
- Any incidents of bullying will be recorded and filed by staff in this folder.
- The Year Head in consultation with teacher and care committee will then decide on what action is to be taken.
- The Principal and Deputy Principal are responsible for maintaining files in their offices for security and confidentiality for at least seven years.
- These files may be accessed by students/parents in the future.
- Comments made should be factual, non-judgmental and objective
- These files are kept separate from the students' main school file with access only by the Principal and Deputy Principal and Pastoral care Councillor.

Procedures for Dealing with Reported Incidents:

Procedures for Teachers

If a student informs you of an incidence of bullying affecting either themselves or a friend, follow these steps:

- Listen; encourage the student to tell their story as this is a very important first step.
- Take notes; record all the details such as date, time, location, names of those involved, witnesses etc.
- Reassure; tell the student help is available, action will be taken, it is not their fault and that they will not have to face this on their own.
- Satisfy yourself that no student is in immediate danger.

- Confidentiality is respected and the victim's privacy is protected, but a teacher must not give guarantees not to tell anyone.
- Inform the class tutor without delay
- New staff must also be made familiar with the policy during their induction.
- All serious incidents of bullying (e.g. an assault or long term exclusion) should be reported to the Principal straight away

Procedures for Staff Member Investigating the Reported Incident

Actions may include

- Have them write down the behaviours and how it is affecting them as early as possible.
- Talk with alleged bully about their behaviour and their experiences of incidents mentioned.
- Have the alleged bully write down an account of their behaviours and their effects as early as possible
- Challenge bullying behaviour as being unacceptable.
- Discuss possible solutions with both parties separately/together if appropriate.
- Write down a record of all conversations.
- Inform the Year Head of the complaint
- Make further appointment to discuss situation with complainant and/or other relevant individuals.
- Record details of complaint on official form
- The evidence will be evaluated by management and fair appropriate action will be taken in accordance with the code of behaviour.
- It is vital that the person reporting the incident is protected from victimisation. Whoever is dealing with the incident must be discreet and careful. Staff will support students who report bullying by conducting follow-up meetings with them.

Procedures for Student to Staff Bullying

- Teachers to speak to students involved
- Explain unacceptable behaviour as in policy
- Explore a working solution
- Refer to Deputy Principal
- Refer to Principal
- Request meeting with parents

Procedures for Staff to Student Bullying

- We recommend that students talk to staff member on his or her concerns
- We recommend that students talk to staff member with parent present informally
- Refer to Deputy Principal
- Refer to Principal

Procedures for Staff to Staff Bullying

- We recommend that staff member engage with other staff member on his or her concerns
- If unresolved contact Deputy Principal to facilitate
- If still unresolved contact principal to facilitate process
- If still unresolved The procedures followed here may be under the Dignity at Work Act.

Teacher Support Service

www.eas@vhics.ie

Phone 1800411057

4 Sessions offered free.

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

The school will provide supports for both victim and offender by

- A counselling referral to the schools Pastoral Care Councillor may be offered to all concerned.
- The incident will be monitored on a regular basis by informal discussions and class surveys
- If necessary, the parents will be invited to a meeting with management.
- If bullying persists, the Board of Management will be informed.
- Arranging activities to raise self esteem and social skills in order to build resilience.
- Encourage parents to support the school in the effort to combat bullying.

8. Supervision and Monitoring of Pupils

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.

9. 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 (LGBTI+), religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.

10. This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 19.09.2023

11. This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website (or where none exists, is otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parents' Association (where one exists). A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

12. 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 (or where none exists, be otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parents'

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

Signed: Barion M. Connell
(Chairperson of Board of Management)
Date: 19/9/23

Signed: Gráinne Ní Fhlannabha
(Principal)
Date: 19.09.2023

Date of next review: Meán Fómhair 2024