

O' Carolan College Anti-bullying 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 O' Carolan College 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.

School Mission Statement

Our mission statement is based on the motto incorporated in the school crest Saothar agus Sonas. Saothar - meaning hard work. To produce hard working students who aspire to achieve their maximum potential both during school and in the world outside of school and to instil in the students a positive work ethic where effort and endeavour are highly valued qualities. Sonas - meaning happiness and prosperity. To develop our students as well adapted healthy members of a modern Ireland, so that they may understand that prosperity of the mind is our most valued quality.



In developing a vision for our future we have specifically identified the following aims:

- To create a safe and secure environment for learning and growth for students free from intimidation and bullying.
- That each student will achieve to the maximum of their ability in examination.
- To build a system of personal development and pastoral care that enables every student to grow in maturity, confidence and self-esteem.
- To develop a network of extra-curricular activity.
- To foster contacts with the community, business and industry.

We aim to foster and encourage every child's talents in a caring way.

This policy was developed in 2015 in line with the mission statement of OCC, whose ethos and philosophy have at its core, the care and welfare of all students. The school strives to provide a safe and secure learning environment for the development of our students.

Preventing and tackling bullying behaviour

In O' Carolan College, we recognise the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of pupils and we are 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.

Types of Bullying

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.

Bullying behaviours which are not accepted in O' Carolan College

This list is not exhaustive. All incidents will be dealt with on an individual basis.

General

- Harassment based on any of the nine grounds in the Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2004: age, gender, religion, race, sexual orientation, marital status, family status and membership to the Traveller community;
- Physical aggression, damage to property, pushing, tripping;
- Name calling, slagging, "bitching";
- The production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other materials aimed at intimidating another person;
- Graffiti, sniggering, sarcastic remarks, extortion;
- Intimidation, name belittling;
- The "look", staring, degrading remarks regarding body shape;
- Mocking or excluding a student for working well and achieving;
- Invasion of personal space.

Relational

This involves manipulating relationships as a means of bullying. Behaviours include:

- Whispering in company so as to exclude another;
- Malicious gossip;
- Isolation and exclusion;
- Ignoring, turning others against a student.

Racial

Discrimination, prejudice, comments or insults about colour, nationality, culture, social class, religious beliefs, ethnic or Traveller background.

Homophobic

- Name calling e.g. Gay, queer, lesbian, etc...
- Spreading rumours about a person's sexual orientation.
- Taunting a person of a different sexual orientation.

Cyber

- Silent phone calls;
- Abusive phone calls;
- Abusive, threatening or malicious text messages (SMS, online messaging, email etc.);
- Abusive, threatening or malicious website comments/blogs/pictures on social media sites e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and others;
- Any misuse of Information and Communication Technology

Sexual

- Unwelcome sexual comments or touching;
- Harassment;
- Unwelcome sexual texts, emails or online messages.

Isolated or once-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour, including a once-off offensive or hurtful text message or other private messaging, is not considered bullying and will be dealt with, as appropriate, in accordance with our 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.

Indicators of bullying behavior

The following signs and symptoms may suggest that a pupil is being bullied:

- Anxiety about travelling to and from school e.g. requesting parents to drive or collect him/her, changing travel routes, avoiding regular times for travelling to and from school;
- Unwillingness to go to school;
- Deterioration in educational performance, loss of concentration and loss of enthusiasm and interest in school;

- Pattern of physical illnesses e.g. headaches, stomach aches or unexplained cuts/bruising;
- Unexplained changes either in mood or behaviour which may be particularly noticeable before returning to school after weekends or more especially after longer school holidays;
- Possessions missing or damaged;
- Reluctance to talk about what is troubling him/her.

There may be other signs depending on the individual and his/her circumstances. The above signs do not necessarily mean that a pupil is being bullied but if repeated or occurring in combination, these signs do warrant investigation in order to establish what is affecting the pupil.

Education and Prevention Strategies

In O' Carolan College, we welcome and value diversity. We endeavour to create and maintain an inclusive and supportive school environment, in which student's self-esteem is allowed to grow. Education about bullying and its effects is provided to all students through the SPHE program. The Cools Schools Program is implemented annually, and is a valuable preventative measure. Stand-up Week (LGBT awareness) and Mental Health Week are also key in promoting acceptance and providing support for students who may be struggling with these issues.

O' Carolan College has a proactive Anti-bullying Committee. This committee is visible and the relevant teachers are known to all students. Regular bullying audits of class groups are carried out, in which students can confidentially report bullying behaviour directly to the Anti-bullying committee.

Procedures for reporting bullying

If a student is experiencing bullying, or has knowledge of another being bullied/committing bullying behaviours, they should report the problem directly to any of the following relevant people:

- Their class tutor;
- A member of the Anti-bullying Committee;
- Their Year Head;
- The Principal or Deputy Principal;
- Any teacher or staff member they feel comfortable talking to;
- Parents;
- A friend who will speak to a teacher on your behalf.
- Incidents of bullying that come to the attention of the school counsellors may be referred to the Anti-Bullying Committee.

How to tell:

- Approach a teacher/tutor at an appropriate time, e.g. at the end of class. Alternatively hand a note up to the teacher;
- Make a phone call to the school, parents can inform the school;
- Get a parent or a friend to tell someone on your behalf;

- A bystander who has witnessed bullying behaviour can report it;
- Report the problem on the bullying audit questionnaire form.

In the case of cyber bullying, students should save screenshots of offensive texts, online messages, pictures etc. These should then be shown to the relevant teacher.

Procedures for investigating bullying incidents

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). The O' Carolan College Anti-bullying Committee is committed to restorative practices as effective methods to resolving bullying issues and to reduce recidivism. All incidents of bullying are dealt with within the overall framework of the school's code of behaviour.

- 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 pupils will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It should be made clear to all pupils that when they report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly;
- Parents and pupils are required to co-operate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving any issues and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved as quickly as possible. The school will employ, as it sees necessary, sanctions set down in the code of behaviour.
- All interviews will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned.
- Students will be encouraged to write down the details of the event(s) during interview.
- In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the student being bullied will be reassured that the behaviour is not acceptable, and that they will be supported as the issue is being dealt with. They will be encouraged to check in with the relevant teacher in future, and to report to them immediately if the bullying reoccurs.
- Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts should be made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied;
- In any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parents and the school;
- In cases where the relevant teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed, the case will be referred to the Principal and/or Deputy Principal.
- If the school deems it necessary, An Garda Siochana and/or the HSE may be contacted.
- Follow-up:
 - Counselling may be offered to all students involved;

- The incident will be monitored on a regular basis by informal discussions and bullying audits;
- If necessary, the parents will be contacted;
- If bullying persists the Board of Management will be informed.

Procedures for recording bullying behaviour

All records will be maintained in accordance with relevant data protection legislation.

- 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, that teacher will keep written records which will assist him/her to resolve the issue.
- The Anti-bullying Committee keeps a written record of investigations.
- All records of bullying incidents are factual, objective and non-judgemental.

Supports for pupils affected by bullying

Through the delivery of the SPHE and Cool Schools Program, and O' Carolan College's pastoral care procedures, students have a supportive environment in which to grow and develop. The pastoral care system ensures that all students have a teacher (their class tutor) who is timetabled to see them every morning, and to whom they can bring any bullying problems. Through the wide network of extra-curricular activities available at O' Carolan College, students are encouraged 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. Students who have been affected by bullying, or have displayed bullying behavior may be referred for counseling within the school, where it is deemed necessary.

Ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti- bullying policy

The effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy will be periodically reviewed by school management and the Anti-Bullying Committee. The policy will also be reviewed periodically by the Board of Management.

Timeframe

This Anti-bullying Policy was ratified on 16th December 2015 in consultation with the Board of Management of our school and became an official school policy. This policy has been made available to school personnel and the Parent's Association. It will also be published on the school website. A copy of this policy will be made available to the DES and the ETB if requested.