

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 positive 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 first 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;
- Online bullying;
- Gender based bullying.

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 and Transgender

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

Cyber

- **Denigration:** Spreading rumors, lies or gossip to hurt a person's reputation
- **Harassment:** Continually sending vicious, mean or disturbing messages to an individual
- **Impersonation:** Posting offensive or aggressive messages under another person's name
- **Flaming:** Using inflammatory or vulgar words to provoke an online fight
- **Trickery:** Fooling someone into sharing personal information which you then post online
- **Outing:** Posting or sharing confidential or compromising information or images

- **Exclusion:** Purposefully excluding someone from an online group
- **Cyber stalking:** Ongoing harassment and denigration that causes a person considerable fear for his/her safety
- 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.

Special Educational Needs/ Disability

- Name calling
- Taunting others because of their disability or learning needs
- Taking advantage of some pupils' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to recognise and defend themselves against bullying
- Taking advantage of some pupils' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to understand social situations and social cues.
- Mimicking a person's disability
- Setting others up for ridicule

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.

School Wide approach:

- A school-wide approach to the fostering of respect for all members of the school community.
- The promotion of the value of diversity to address issues of prejudice and stereotyping, and highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour.
- The fostering and enhancing of the self-esteem of all our pupils through both curricular and extracurricular activities. Pupils will be provided with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth through formal and informal interactions.
- O' Carolan College has an established 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.
- Professional development with specific focus on the training of the relevant teacher(s). O' Carolan college is a participant in the Safe and Supportive Schools initiative, and all staff have completed training to support LGBTQ+ students.
- School wide awareness on all aspects of bullying.
- Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extra-curricular activities. Non-teaching and ancillary staff will be encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers. Supervision will also apply to monitoring student use of communication technology within the school.
- Involvement of the student voice in contributing to a safe school environment and other student support activities that can help to support pupils and encourage a culture of peer respect and support.
- The school's anti-bullying policy is published on the school website.
- The implementation of regular whole school awareness measures.
- Encourage a culture of telling, with particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders. 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.

- Ensuring that pupils know who to tell and how to tell.
- The development of an Acceptable Use Policy in the school to include the necessary steps to ensure that the access to technology within the school is strictly monitored, as is the pupils' use of mobile phones;
- The DCU Anti-Bullying – Fuse program- will be rolled out across the 2023/2024 school year to all 1st, 2nd and 3rd year students.
- The HSE Cool Schools anti bullying program will again be rolled out to all first years and continue with a small group of selected students within the year group.
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Implementation of curricula

- The full implementation of the Wellbeing, SPHE and CSPE curricula and the RSE Programmes.
- Continuous Professional Development for staff in delivering these programmes.
- School wide delivery of lessons on bullying from evidence based programmes.
- The school will specifically consider the additional needs of SEN pupils with regard to programme implementation and the development of skills and strategies to enable all pupils to respond appropriately.

Links to other policies

O'Carolan College's Anti bullying policy is also linked with our Code of Positive Behaviour and Child Protection policy.

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 relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows:

Principal
Deputy Principal
Members of the Anti-Bullying Committee
Year heads
Tutors
Care Team /Student Support Team personnel
Guidance counsellor

Any teacher may act as a relevant teacher if circumstances warrant it.

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 positive 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;
- If a group is involved, each member should be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved should be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member should be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements.
- Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that may face them from the other members of the group after the interview by the teacher; It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s).
- If the 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 Síochána 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 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.

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.

Prevention of Harassment

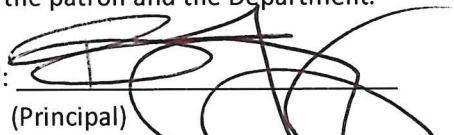
The Board of Management confirms that the school will, in accordance with its obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the sexual harassment of pupils or staff or the harassment of pupils or staff on any of the nine grounds specified i.e. gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.

10. This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 21.11.2023

11. 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.

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 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: Paul McCabe
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: 
(Principal)

Date: 21-11-2023

Date: 21-11-2023

Date of next review: September 2024