

# HOLY CROSS COLLEGE

## ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

### RATIONALE

The governors and staff of Holy Cross College are committed to creating and maintaining a safe, secure and happy environment for all our students and staff. Bullying is a highly distressing and damaging form of abuse which can cause emotional and physical distress and is not tolerated. We strive to create a positive and nurturing ethos where everyone is treated with mutual respect and positive relationships are promoted. From time to time pupils may experience bullying behaviour from others, in spite of our caring ethos, our nurturing environment and effective discipline policy. All staff (teaching and non-teaching) collectively work together to create an anti-bullying culture and to ensure incidents of alleged bullying are investigated and dealt with swiftly and effectively.

This policy has been developed in line with current Government guidance and legislation:

#### The Legislative Context:

- [The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2016](#)
- [The Education and Libraries Order \(Northern Ireland\) 2003 \(A17-19\)](#)
- [The Education \(School Development Plans\) Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2010](#)
- [The Children \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1995](#)
- [The Human Rights Act 1998](#)
- [The Health and Safety at Work Order \(Northern Ireland\) 1978](#)

#### The Policy & Guidance Context

- The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 Statutory Guidance for Schools and Boards of Governors (DE, 2019)
- DE Circular2003/13
- [Pastoral Care in School: Promoting Positive Behaviour \(DE, 2001\)](#)
- [Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools: A Guide for Schools \(DE, 2017\)](#)
  - [Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland \(Dept. of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, 2016\)](#)
  - [Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland Policies and Procedures \(SBNI, 2017\)](#)

#### The International Context

- [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(UNCRC\)](#)

*This policy has been developed through consultation which involved all members of the school community; pupils, parents/carers and all school staff. (See Appendix 1)*

In the development and implementation of this Anti-Bullying Policy, the Board of Governors has been mindful of related policies, including: Safeguarding & Child Protection, Learning Support, Pastoral Care, Guidance, Positive Behaviour, Discipline Referral, Health & Safety, Relationships & Sexuality Education, Mobile Phones, E-Safety, Educational Visits and Staff Code of Conduct Policies.

## **AIMS OF THE POLICY**

- To protect and support those who are experiencing bullying behaviour; their needs are paramount.
- Amend the behaviour of the pupil who is displaying bullying behaviour.
- To promote a whole-school approach to raising awareness of bullying.
- To ensure all pupils are free from fear and worry.
- To create an atmosphere where pupils feel confident about speaking out if they feel they, or people they know, are experiencing bullying behaviour from others.
- To develop and implement a programme and strategies to prevent bullying taking place.
- Set down clear procedures to be followed when addressing bullying concerns that have been raised.
- Ensure pupils and parents know who they can talk to if they feel unsafe in school or if they are worried for the safety of others.

## **PRINCIPLES**

Principles and values which Holy Cross College upholds:

- Students have a right to learn in a safe and supportive environment, free from intimidation and fear.
- The pastoral needs of all children are paramount and the needs of the children should be separated from their behaviour, whether they are experiencing or displaying bullying behaviour.
- When bullying concerns are raised the school will work in a positive way to achieve the necessary change.
- Students who are experiencing bullying behaviour will be reassured and supported.
- Students who display bullying behaviours will be supported and encouraged to accept responsibility to change their behaviour.
- Holy Cross College is committed to a preventative, responsive and restorative anti-bullying ethos across the whole school.
- Parents have a right to know their child is safe.
- Staff will ensure school rules are implemented fairly and consistently.

The anti-bullying policy will be reviewed every four years and training for teaching staff, undertaken by Team Leader for Guidance, will take place on a regularly. Training will also be provided to non-teaching staff, canteen staff and supervisors as part of Safeguarding & Child Protection Training.

## PARTICIPATION & CONSULTATION PROCESS

- Awareness raising programmes, e.g. Personal Development programme, outside agencies giving talks (EA, PSNI etc.) presenting dramas to year groups, leaflets to pupils/parents (e.g. cyber bullying, self-harm etc.).
- Awareness raising for pupils at Year Group Assemblies and Form Class lessons.
- Survey/questionnaires distributed to pupils, parents and whole school staff.
- Obtaining the views of elected student representatives i.e. school's council, senior and junior.
- Staff training on anti-bullying.
- Pastoral leaders involved in writing the Anti-Bullying Policy.
- Monitoring evaluation and review.

## DEFINITION OF BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

The *Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016* has provided a definition of bullying which must be adopted by all schools. It reads as follows:

**1.—(1) In this Act “bullying” includes (but is not limited to) the repeated use of—**

**(a) any verbal, written or electronic communication,**

**(b) any other act, or**

**(c) any combination of those, by a pupil or a group of pupils against another pupil or group of pupils, with the intention of causing physical or emotional harm to that pupil or group of pupils.**

**(2) For the purposes of subsection (1), “act” includes omission.**

Therefore, in Holy Cross College we will consider ***Bullying*** as behaviour that is ***usually repeated***, which is ***carried out intentionally to cause hurt, harm*** or to ***adversely affect the rights and needs*** of another or others.

***In determining ‘harm’ we define:***

- ***Emotional or psychological harm as intentionally causing distress or anxiety by scaring, humiliating or affecting adversely a pupil’s self-esteem.***
- ***Physical harm as intentionally hurting a pupil by causing injuries such as bruises, broken bones, burns or cuts.***

This legal definition does allow for ***one-off incidents*** to be considered as bullying behaviour.

In line with guidelines set out by the Department of Education Holy Cross College will use the following criteria when making a decision on whether to classify a particular one-off incident as bullying behaviour:

- ***severity and significance of the incident.***
- ***evidence of pre-meditation.***

- *impact of the incident on individuals (physical/emotional).*
- *impact of the incidents on wider school community.*
- *previous relationships between those involved.*
- *any previous incidents involving the individuals.*

***Any incidents which are not considered bullying behaviour will be addressed under the Positive Behaviour Policy.***

The following unacceptable behaviours, ***when repeated (more than once), targeted and intentionally hurtful***, may be considered a bullying behaviour:

- ***Verbal or written acts***
  - saying mean and hurtful things to, or about, others.
  - making fun of others.
  - calling another pupil mean and hurtful names.
  - telling lies or spread false rumours about others.
  - try to make other pupils dislike another pupil(s)
  
- ***Physical acts***
  - Hitting
  - kicking
  - pushing
  - shoving
  - material harm, such as taking money or possessions without permission or causing damage to possessions.
  
- ***Omission (Exclusion)***
  - Leaving someone out of a game.
  - Refusing to include someone in group work.
  
- ***Electronic Acts***
  - Using online platforms or other electronic communication to carry out many of the written acts noted above.
  - Impersonating someone online to cause hurt.
  - Sharing images (eg. photographs or videos) online to embarrass someone.

**This does not represent an exhaustive list of behaviours that may be considered bullying. Other behaviours which fit the legal definition may be considered bullying behaviour.**

The various motivations for unacceptable behaviour will be given careful consideration when determining whether there was *intention to cause harm*. Such motivation includes, but are not limited to:

- Age
- Appearance
- Breakdown in peer relationships
- Home/family
- Community background
- Political affiliation
- Gender identity
- Sexual orientation
- Pregnancy
- Marital status
- Race
- Religion
- Disability / SEN
- Ability
- Looked After Child status
- Young Carer status

The college will also use its discretion in assessing an individual pupil's capacity to understand the impact of their behaviours, e.g. due to developmental age, disability or delay. This will inform the decision on whether the behaviour displayed meets the criteria set out by the legal definition.

Bullying is an emotive issue, therefore it is essential that we ensure we use supportive, understanding language when discussing these matters.

For that reason, we will not refer to a child as 'a bully', nor will we refer to a child as 'a victim'. Instead, we will refer to the children as:

- ***A child displaying bullying behaviours***
- ***A child experiencing bullying behaviours***

**We encourage all members of the school community to use this language when discussing bullying incidents.**

## **SIGNS OF BULLYING BEHAVIOUR**

Not all pupils will tell someone that they are experiencing bullying behaviour for fear of reprisal, guilt, embarrassment or fear of not being believed. It is essential that all staff are vigilant and look out for signs of bullying. Things to be watchful for include:

- changes in pattern of route to school.

- developing a pattern of illness e.g. headaches, stomach aches etc.
- having possessions missing.
- damaged clothing.
- unexplained bruising or cuts.
- asking for/beginning to steal money.
- crying for an unexplained reason.
- signs of anxiety or distress e.g. having nightmares, not eating etc.
- self-harm/attempted suicide.
- poor attention and concentration in class.
- change in mood – becoming quiet, withdrawn, anxious.
- deterioration in behaviour/school work.
- increased school absences/school refusal.

## **PREVENTATIVE MEASURES**

The college aims to promote a strong anti-bullying ethos, a main focus of which is on prevention. The following measures will support the preventative nature of the anti-bullying ethos within the college.

- Promoting and maintaining an ethos which encourages consideration and respect for others, promotes positive behaviour and is firmly based on the values of Holy Cross College: *Care for All*.
- The Principal/ Vice Principals, Heads of School, Heads of Year, Form Teachers and Guidance Team, together with all staff, working towards reducing the number of incidents of bullying behaviour in Holy Cross College; being vigilant to signs of distress and bullying behaviour at all times.
- Having a common set of School Rules and Code of Behaviour, up-dated regularly and shared with all pupils, staff, parents and other stakeholders. They will be made available annually in the Student Planner, Staff Information Book and Pastoral Care leaflets sent to parents.
- Identifying key staff to address bullying concerns: Principal/Vice Principals, Heads of School, Heads of Year, Form Teachers, with support from Guidance Team.
- Having in place clear procedures where staff in referral chain deal with incidents and keep appropriate records.
- Staff training on procedures for dealing with and monitoring incidents of reported bullying behaviour.
- Proactive use of Peer Mentors from the Sixth Form working with Year 8 students.

Utilising the Senior and Junior Student Councils to promote anti-bullying messaging.

- Educating pupils about the boundaries of appropriate behaviour towards others by addressing bullying behaviour via NIABF Anti-Bullying Week activities, the Learning for Life & Work curriculum, talks from outside agencies, drama productions, focus at assemblies on *'Being kind.'*
- Participation in Shared Education projects to promote and celebrate diversity.
- Implementing ICT lessons on cyber bullying and e-safety: addressing the key themes of online behaviour and risk, including understanding of how to respond to harm and the consequences of inappropriate use. Participation in Safer Internet Day and robust and appropriate policies e.g. e-Safety Policy, Mobile Phone Policy etc.
- Encouraging a strong sense of belonging to Holy Cross through participation in extra-curricular activities, which will support the development of effective peer relationships.
- Ensuring effective supervision of locations within Holy Cross where bullying behaviour could occur and highlighting to pupils, with the support of parents, the importance of appropriate behaviour when travelling to and from school.
- Training of lunchtime supervision staff, use of year group zones in the canteen and lunchtime activities for pupils.
- Appropriate use of staff to support the start/end of day transition: staff duty at school entry/exit points and the bus stop.
- Regular engagement with transport providers to ensure early identification of any concerns.
- Promoting a culture where pupils are proud to be members of the school community, demonstrate positive behaviour whilst travelling to and from school and understand how to respond to any inappropriate behaviour displayed by their peers.
- Holy Cross will promote its anti-bullying ethos via social media platforms so that pupils, parents and members of the community know how they can raise any concerns with the college.
- Liaising with outside support agencies e.g. Social Services, Child Protection Service, EA, PSNI, C2K, Public Health Agency and Safeguarding Board for NI e-safety Forum to support those experiencing bullying behaviour and those displaying bullying behaviour.
- Communicating the policy and procedures to everyone in the school community.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES OF ALL**

Everyone in the school community, including pupils, their parents/carers and the staff of the college are expected to respect the rights of others to be safe. We are all responsible for creating a safe and supportive learning environment.

Everyone has the responsibility to work together to:

- foster positive self-esteem.
- behave towards others in a mutually respectful way.
- model high standards of personal pro-social behaviour.
- be alert to signs of bullying behaviour.
- inform the college of any concerns relating to bullying behaviour.
- refrain from becoming involved in any kind of bullying behaviour, even at the risk of incurring temporary unpopularity.
- refrain from retaliating or encouraging any retaliation to any form of bullying behaviour.
- intervene to support any person who is being bullied, unless it is unsafe to do so.
- report any concerns or instances of bullying behaviour witnessed or suspected, to a member of staff.
- emphasise the importance of seeking help from a trusted adult about bullying behaviour when it happens or is observed.
- explain the implications of allowing the bullying behaviour to continue unchecked, for themselves and/or others.
- listen sensitively to anyone who has been bullied, take what is said seriously, and provide reassurance that appropriate action will be taken.
- know how to seek support – internal and external.
- resolve difficulties in restorative ways to prevent recurring bullying behaviour and meet the needs of all parties.

### **Reporting a Bullying Behaviour Concern**

This section of the policy outlines the ways in which pupils, parents/carers or anyone else with concerns can report these to the college. Whilst most reports of bullying behaviour concerns will come from the pupils and their parents/carers, we are open to receiving reports from anyone with a bullying behaviour concern.

All reports of bullying behaviour concerns will be responded to in line with this policy and feedback will be given to the person who made the report. However, it must be noted that no information about action taken in relation to a pupil can be disclosed to anyone other than the pupil and their parents/carers.

## **Pupils Reporting a Concern**

There are key members of staff in the college who will respond to bullying behaviour concerns including the pupil's Form Teacher, Year Head, Head of Key Stage, Vice Principal and the Principal. However, we encourage pupils to report bullying behaviour concerns to any member of staff, teaching or non-teaching staff.

Pupils will also be made aware that **ANY** pupil can raise a concern about bullying behaviour not just the pupil who is experiencing the behaviour. Pupils are encouraged to get help from a member of staff if they have a concern about bullying behaviour that they are experiencing or is being experienced by another pupil.

Here are some of the ways that a pupil can report a bullying behavior concern:

- Verbally – talking to a member of staff
- Writing a note to a member of staff
- Contacting a member of staff via the C2K email system

## **Parents/Carers Reporting a Concern**

Parents/Carers should raise concerns about alleged bullying behaviour with the college at the earliest opportunity. Parents/Carers should encourage their children to react appropriately to bullying behaviour and to not do anything to retaliate or to 'hit back'.

Parents/Carers can report a concern about alleged bullying behaviour by:

- contacting their child's form teacher.
- where the parent/carer is not satisfied that appropriate action has been taken to prevent further incidents, or where further incidents have taken place the concern should be reported to the child's Year Head/Head of Key Stage.
- where the parent/carer is not satisfied that appropriate action has been taken to prevent further incidents, or where further incidents have taken place the concern should be reported to the Vice Principal/Principal.
- where the parent/carer remains unsatisfied that the concern has not been appropriately responded to the college's complaints procedure should be followed. This involves making a formal written complaint to the Chair of the Board of Governors (Complaints Policy available on the college website).

## Responding to a Bullying Concern

The processes outlined below provide a framework for how the college will respond to any bullying concerns identified.

Using the *NIABF Effective Responses to Bullying Behaviour* resource, the member of staff responsible shall:

- clarify facts and perceptions.
- check records (SIMS/BMM).
- assess the incident against the criteria for bullying behaviour.
- if the incident does not meet the criteria for bullying behaviour the incident will be dealt with using the Positive Behaviour Policy.
- identify any themes or motivating factors.
- identify the type of bullying behaviour being displayed.
- identify intervention level.
- select and implement appropriate interventions for all pupils involved, including appropriate interventions, consequences and sanctions not listed in the Effective Responses to Bullying Behaviour resource.
- track, monitor and record effectiveness of interventions.
- review outcome of interventions.
- select and implement further intentions as necessary.

When responding to a bullying concern, college staff shall implement interventions aimed at responding to the behaviour, resolving the concern and restoring the wellbeing of those involved. Where appropriate, college staff may implement sanctions for those displaying bullying behaviour.

Any action taken regarding a pupil cannot be disclosed to anyone other than that pupil and his/her parents/carers.

## Recording

The college will centrally record all relevant information related to reports of bullying behaviour concerns, including:

- how the bullying behaviour was displayed (the method).
- the motivation for the behaviour.
- how each incident was addressed by the college.
- the outcome of the interventions employed.

Records will be kept on the online SIMS Behaviour Management Module, which is part of the C2k system in schools. Access to these records will be restricted and only provided to those members of college staff with a legitimate need to have access.

All records will be maintained in line with relevant data protection legislation and guidance and

will be disposed of in line with the college's Retention and Disposal of Documents Policy. Collated information regarding incidents of bullying behaviour and alleged bullying behaviour will be used to inform the future development of anti-bullying policy and practice within the college.

### **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF STAFF**

Holy Cross College recognizes the need for appropriate and adequate training for staff, including teaching and non-teaching staff. This will include:

- ensuring that staff are provided with appropriate opportunities for professional development regarding addressing bullying in schools.
- ensuring that opportunities for safeguarding training are afforded to Governors and all staff – teaching and non-teaching.
- Continued Professional Development records being kept and updated regularly.

### **MONITORING AND REVIEW OF POLICY**

It is the responsibility of the Board of Governors, in liaison with the Principal, to monitor the effectiveness of the Anti-Bullying Policy.

To appropriately monitor the effectiveness of the Anti-Bullying Policy, the Board of Governors shall:

- maintain a standing item on the agenda of each meeting of the Board where a report on recorded incidents of bullying will be noted.
- identify trends and priorities for action.
- assess the effectiveness of strategies aimed at preventing bullying behaviour.
- assess the effectiveness of strategies aimed at responding to bullying behaviour.

It is a legal requirement that the Anti-Bullying Policy be reviewed at intervals of no more than four years. In addition to this planned review, the policy will also be reviewed:

- following any incident which highlights the need for such a review.
- when directed to by the Department of Education in light of new guidance.

This Anti-Bullying Policy shall be reviewed as required, in consultation with pupils and their parents/carers, on or before the September 2025.

SIGNATURES/DATE

Chair of BOG \_\_\_\_\_

Principal \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

