

Wesley College, Dublin

Anti-Bullying Policy

1. In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the Code of Behaviour guidelines issued by the National Education Welfare Board, the Board of Management of Wesley 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-Bully Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* which was published in September 2013.
2. Wesley College recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of pupils. The College is 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 fosters inclusivity.
 - encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment.
 - promotes respectful relationships across the school community,
 - Effective leadership in the College,
 - Effective discipline in the classroom,
 - A whole-school approach to bullying prevention,
 - 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.
 - explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including homophobic and transphobic bullying,
 - Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils,
 - Consistent recording, investigation and follow-up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies),
 - On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of 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) 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 College 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*.¹

4. The relevant teacher for investigating and dealing with bullying in Wesley College is the Year Head or Deputy Principal. Where the Year Head is referred to in this policy it is always the case that the Deputy Principal or Principal may become involved in any matter of bullying or discipline depending on the seriousness or nature of the issue, or the availability of College personnel.

¹ *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, 2013 is published on the website of the Department of Education and Skills.

In certain cases a Subject Teacher, Tutor or Guidance Counsellor will conduct investigations as considered appropriate, or may assist with aspects of an investigation. It is also possible that the Chaplain may be involved in a case.

The Year Head will record all incidences of behaviour that are deemed to be bullying.

5. Education and Prevention Strategies

The Wesley College Code of Behaviour states the following core principles in unambiguous terms:

Every student has the right to enjoy learning and leisure time in school. Teachers are entitled to teach and students are entitled to learn free from any intimidation.

The College ethos for students emphasizes that students always demonstrate politeness, courtesy, co-operation and respect for others and their property as fundamental principles of behaviour.

All parents/guardians are sent a copy of this Code to be signed and accepted by pupils and parents as a condition of entry to the College.²

The school communicates this ethos and core principles by:

- affirming that Wesley College is a Telling School,
- publication of the Wesley College Charter, posted around the College Campus, which emphasizes rights and responsibilities and states clearly that Wesley College is an inclusive school,
- use of daily Assembly to emphasise the importance of inclusion, the rights of all pupils to feel secure and comfortable in the College,
- teachers and staff being committed to an atmosphere in the College in which bullying is never acceptable,
- dealing with the issue of bullying in subject areas such as: SPHE, Citizenship/CSPE and Religious Education,
- highlighting the issue of appropriate behaviour towards others, during the annual *Bullying Awareness Week* and throughout the academic year,

² Reference should be made to the College Code of Behaviour, copies of which are available in the College Office and on the College Website.

- emphasising the unacceptability of all bullying, through:
 - Assembly
 - Discussion and consideration in RE classes,
 - Whole-year SPHE Days,
- emphasizing the unacceptable nature of cyber-bullying through:
 - the College Policy on the Appropriate Use of Technology,
 - introduction to pupils in 1st Year to this Policy,
 - talks given by the Vice Principal to 1st and 2nd Year pupils on cyber-bullying and appropriate technology use,
- informing parents of the pastoral care system that exists in the College,
- organising a mentoring system between 1st Year pupils and Prefects,
- enhancing the self-esteem of pupils as part of a whole-school agenda using Assembly, extra-curricular activities and in the classroom,
- the provision of an extensive extra-curricular programme with the specific aim of fostering a positive, inclusive community culture.

6. Procedures for investigation, follow-up, recording of bullying behaviour and established intervention strategies used by the College:

The relevant teacher for the purposes of investigating allegations of bullying is the Year Head or Deputy Principal. Where the Year Head is referred to in this policy it is always the case that the Deputy Principal or Principal may become involved in any matter of bullying or discipline depending on the seriousness or nature of the issue, or the availability of College personnel.

In certain cases a Subject Teacher, Tutor, Guidance Counsellor will conduct investigations as considered appropriate, or may assist with aspects of an investigation. It is also possible that the Chaplain may be involved in a case.

Both the injured party and those allegedly involved will be interviewed. Each may be asked for a written account of the details of the incident(s) under investigation. Parents may be contacted at any stage of the investigation, as judged necessary.

The Year Head or Deputy Principal will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved.

In cases where bullying has been determined the perpetrator(s) will be informed that his/her/their behaviour is unacceptable and viewed as a serious breach of the Code of Behaviour and this Anti-Bullying Policy.

Parents of both the victim(s) and perpetrator(s) will normally be contacted and informed of the situation. In the rare instances where a senior pupil, or other pupil, who is a victim of bullying requests that their parents are not informed because unnecessary hurt, embarrassment or upset will result, the Management Team will use professional judgement to decide on the appropriateness of parental contact. It is a core part of Wesley College policy to listen to the wishes of a pupil who has been bullied. At all times the welfare of the victim of bullying will be paramount.³

Counselling will be offered to both the injured party and perpetrator(s) as judged necessary and following discussion with the parents/guardian involved. It should be noted, however, that there is a limit to personal counselling that can be offered within a school context and it is not school policy to offer a programme of on-going counselling regarding issues which are outside the skills or time constraints of the Guidance Counsellor. Sometimes it may be necessary to recommend further, outside help.⁴

The Principal, Deputy Principal and Guidance Counsellors will be made aware of the situation at regular meetings of Year Heads and Management of the College.

The Year Head will formally record incidents of bullying on the standard form Appendix 3 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, as required by these procedures when:

- s/he considers that the bullying behaviour has not been appropriately addressed by the student(s) or parent(s) within 20 days of the determination that bullying has occurred,
- where it is considered, in the judgement of the Year Head or Deputy Principal, that the bullying must be reported to the Principal immediately.

In these cases the Board of Management will be informed of the situation.

³ Please also refer to the Confidentiality section of the College Guidance Policy which outlines the importance of maintaining pupil confidentiality and the conditions where this cannot be maintained for Child Protection purposes. It is the aim of the College that pupils feel comfortable when disclosing information regarding bullying or other issues to a Counsellor or other teacher.

⁴ Refer also to the School Guidance Policy.

Where a parent is not satisfied that the College has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with this policy and good practice, they should write to the Principal detailing their complaint.

Sanctions

Following final investigations and consideration, sanctions will be imposed as considered appropriate. These may include:

- a verbal warning,
- requirement from a student to confirm in writing their commitment to the College Code of Behaviour and acceptance of this Anti-Bullying Policy,
- detention or community service,
- meeting with parents/guardians,
- suspension,
- expulsion from the College.

Persistent or Serious Bullying or Intimidating Behaviour

When the Year Head or Principal/Deputy Principal deems that serious or persistent bullying/intimidation has occurred parents/guardians will be invited to an interview with the Year Head, Deputy Principal or Principal. In particular, attention may be drawn to the section on sanctions in the Code of Behaviour. Note should be taken of the following which is drawn from the Code of Behaviour:

...Suspension...may be imposed where the Principal is satisfied that this is warranted by serious offences such as bullying, theft, damage to persons or property or where a pupil has failed to respond to other forms of sanction for repeated misbehaviour. The Board of Management reserves the right to remove from the school register any student who puts the health and welfare of other students or staff at risk, or any student who engages in persistent or serious misbehaviour which undermines the ethos of the school, undermines the education of other students or the work of the school staff.⁵

Wesley College is committed to meeting its obligation to protect all the students in its care from intimidating or bullying behaviour.

⁵ Reference should be made to the College Code of Behaviour, copies of which are available in the College Office and on the College Website.

Intervention Strategies: - Approaches used when dealing with bullying in Wesley College

Prevention is always considered the best approach to bullying. Wesley College adopts a proactive Bullying Awareness approach at all times using the strategies outlined in Section 5 of this policy. The fostering of a positive environment, inclusive of all pupils with effective class discipline is the foundation upon which good relationships will thrive.

It is recognised, however, that bullying will arise in schools. No one approach to resolving bullying will work in all situations. The professional judgement of the relevant Year Head or Deputy Principal will decide on the approach to be taken in each case, taking into consideration the past history of individuals concerned and the nature of the bullying.

In general, Wesley College will use one, or a combination of elements of restorative practice and sanctions as deemed appropriate.⁶ It is noted that a positive environment and culture is likely to be a firm foundation for successful restorative practice.

When dealing with bullying the Year Head, Deputy Principal and Principal will also be mindful of staff time constraints and the effect any such approach may have on other students. At all times it will be made clear that bullying is never acceptable in Wesley College.

Assisting Pupils affected by Bullying

Wesley College will assist all pupils who have been affected by bullying, both victims and perpetrators. The aim will be to raise self-esteem and address specific areas of concern as appropriate.

This may be achieved through counselling and targeted interaction with individual pupils.

⁶ Ref: *Bullying Interventions in Schools: Six major approaches*, Ken Rigby, University of South Australia; 2010 Camberwell; *Action Plan on Bullying*, published on Department of Education and Skills Website. Please note that Wesley College may use other approaches, or a combination of approaches, as the Year Head deems appropriate given the nature of the bullying and the individuals involved.

In addition, pupils are encouraged, as a matter of course to engage in extra-curricular activities that may facilitate greater inclusion. Those affected by bullying will be particularly encouraged to avail of such opportunities. The College offers an extensive range of such activities and views participation as particularly effective in the creation of a positive, inclusive community.

7. The College programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows:

Wesley College has a whole-school approach to appropriate behaviour towards others and when dealing with bullying. A pupil or parent may bring a bullying concern to any teacher in the College. Any such concerns will be forwarded to the Year Head who is the relevant teacher for the purposes of any investigation to be carried out. All concerns, including those submitted anonymously will be investigated.

When dealing with allegations of bullying Wesley College adheres to the principles outlined in Section 5 of this Policy. A positive, open, “telling” environment is fostered and encouraged at all times. A culture of pupil confidence is promoted by the Principal and all teachers. Non-teaching staff are encouraged to report any incidents of possible bullying behaviour. Formal meetings of the Pastoral Care Team of Chaplain, Guidance Counsellors and Co-ordinator of Nursing take place each week. Regular formal meetings of Year Heads, Principal, Deputy Principal and Guidance Counsellor also occur. At these meetings any possible bullying allegations or suspicions are discussed and strategies determined.

At all times a calm professional approach will be taken to resolving issues of bullying. It will always be the aim to resolve bullying issues amicably and positively where this is possible.

However, Wesley College is very clear in its duty of care to victims of bullying and will impose sanctions outlined in Section 6 of this Policy as considered appropriate or necessary for the safety and welfare of pupils.

Wesley College has approved and will implement Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools which states: “where ... behaviour is regarded as potentially abusive, the school must consult the HSE Children and Family Social Services...”

8. Supervision and Monitoring of Pupils

Wesley College confirms that appropriate (as far as practical and reasonable) 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 Wesley College 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 23rd January 2014.
11. This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and is provided to the Parent-Teacher Association.
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 Teacher Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Approved by the Board of Management
January 2014