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CLONKEEN COLLEGE POLICY ON BULLYING

INTRODUCTION

The following policy was developed through a collaborative approach involving the teaching staff, the Parent Association, the Student Council, the student body, and the Board of Management of Clonkeen College.

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 Clonkeen 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.

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
- 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
- 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)
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

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*.

Anti-Bullying Statement.

- The school position is that the students of Clonkeen College play a vital role in their own education.
- The relationship which each class group establishes amongst its members is one of the most important factors in their social and educational development.
- The **Student Council and Class Representatives** have a formal role to play in establishing a positive environment, in cooperation with **the teaching staff, parents and school management**. It is important that there should be mutual respect and a cooperative approach amongst these groups.
- This respect will define the tenor of whole school relationships and have a positive impact on the school community's efforts to establish a safe, secure learning and teaching environment.

- This environment is a living thing and must be constantly renewed in the actions of all the participants.
- The **Mission Statement** expresses this organic nature of the school community.

Mission Statement.

Clonkeen College is a voluntary Catholic secondary school, where each individual and group within the school community is encouraged and facilitated to contribute to the creation of a caring, supportive, and inclusive educational environment, conducive to developing the diverse talents of all the participants.

- The aim of this policy is to address the issue of bullying in so far as it constitutes behaviour which is directly opposed to the achievement of the school mission statement.
- We wish to ensure that there is no ambivalence about the right of each student and staff member to a safe, secure learning and working environment.

Definition.

Bullying is repeated inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, by one or more persons against another or others, which could be reasonably regarded as undermining the latter's right to personal dignity.

Types of Bullying

- Gender
- Family status
- Disability
- Race/Ethnicity (including membership of the Travelling community)
- Sexual orientation
- Religious belief

The school recognises that the above categories are particularly pertinent issues which can often give rise to bullying. While the above list is not exhaustive, and bullying may constitute abuse or harassment about other issues, bullying based on these issues will not be tolerated.

Examples of Bullying:

- **Physical** aggression – pushing – shoving – punching – tripping, etc.
- **Damage** to, or theft of, a student's property
- **Extortion** – demands for money etc.
- **"Slagging"**. This usually refers to good-natured banter. When it descends to very personal, frequently repeated, remarks about appearance, clothing, personal hygiene, or members of one's family it is regarded as bullying

- **Sarcasm**, humiliation, verbal abuse, intimidating behaviour, degrading physical contact
- **Cyberbullying** repeated, intentionally aggressive abuse, mockery or harassment using electronic forms of communication eg: text messaging, messaging apps, social networking websites, videos, camera phones etc.
- **Online Bullying.** The 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.
- **Intimidation**
 - phone calls or text messaging. **Parents are asked to be particularly vigilant in this area.**
 - misuse of camera phones. **Parents' attention is drawn to the school policy on mobile phones and camera phones.**
 - mockery, e.g. of work in class, physical characteristics, accent, social or racial origins
 - writing insulting remarks/graffiti about another person
 - passing around notes about another person
 - passing around drawings of another person
 - whispering insults about another person loud enough to be heard
 - spreading rumours
 - name calling which hurts, insults, or humiliates
 - ostracising another person from games or group activities
 - surrounding and pointing mockingly at an individual
 - excluding someone from the social or class group
 - threats, demands, invitations or coercion to fight
 - using any type of equipment to cause fear in another person
 - using computers, mobile phones, or other electronic devices to cause fear in another person whether inside or outside of school

Note: This list is not exhaustive. What constitutes bullying is effectively defined by the experience of the target of bullying.

Effects of Bullying

- Insecurity
- Anxiety
- Loss of confidence
- Lowering of self-esteem
- Changes of mood and behaviour
- Self-harm
- Suicide.

Signs and Symptoms of Bullying

Parents and teachers are particularly asked to be observant in this regard

- Reluctance to go to school
- Truancy
- Deterioration in educational performance
- Pattern of physical illness – headaches, stomach aches
- Loss of interest, lack of concentration
- Changes in mood and behaviour, especially before returning to school after holidays
- Signs of anxiety/distress – stammering, nightmares, loss of appetite, poor sleep patterns
- Property missing or damaged
- Increased demands for money or stealing
- Unexplained bruising, cuts, damage to clothing
- Reluctance to say what is wrong
- In cases of cyberbullying, indications also may include:
 - Sudden cease of use of the computer or mobile phone
 - Avoiding the computer or mobile phone
 - Appearing upset after using the computer or mobile phone
 - Secrecy around online activities or mobile phone use

PROCEDURES

A. Prevention

The school will endeavour to prevent bullying in general by encouraging an open, proactive, and relatively informal relationship between staff and students and specifically by:

- displaying the **Anti-Bullying Charter** prominently throughout the school
- raising awareness in the **SPHE, R.E, and CSPE** classes,
- frequent contact with individual students by **Tutors** and **Year Heads** to establish good personal relationships,
- surveys of students by **Tutors**, especially in First Year, about their sense of well-being in Clonkeen College,
- encouragement of the role of the **Student Council and Class Representatives** in promoting the general well-being of the students,
- sustaining and developing the **school culture** of students, management, parents, and staff operating together in the development of the school culture and infrastructure

B. Dealing with Incidents and Suspicions of Bullying

B.1 Reporting

All incidents or suspicions of bullying should be brought to the attention of the Year Head, the Class Tutor, the Principal, the Deputy Principal, a member of the Student Council or any adult the person trusts who will report the complaint to the Principal or Deputy Principal for investigation

- Incidents should be recorded on an Incident Report Form (Appendix 1) and suspicions on a Bullying Alert Form (Appendix 2) by the alleged target of bullying or the person to whom it is reported as soon as practicable, but within two days of receiving the report. The form should be given to the Year Head. These forms are available from the school office.
- All such reports will be treated as confidential and stored in a secure place.
- Any notes, records produced because of actions taken will be stored with the original report and kept as confidential material in a secure place.

NB. All reports should be entirely factual. No personal opinions or conjecture should be included.

B.2.1 Actions

Dealing with Complaints, Disclosures, Suspicions of Bullying

The best course of action will be decided through consultation between some, or all, of the following: reporting teacher, Tutor, Year Head, Principal, Deputy Principal, and parent(s). The following are some of the principles and possible approaches.

- The Tutor and/or Year Head, with other staff where necessary, will conduct an initial investigation, following a report or incident
- The target(s) of bullying, witness(es) and alleged perpetrator(s) will be interviewed
- The Year Head must retain any written records in a secure place. Depending on the outcome of the investigation action taken could be to:
 - Obtain an undertaking (written or oral) from the parties involved and keep the situation under observation and review
 - Inform the Deputy Principal/Principal
 - Contact parents
 - Initiate pastoral strategies in the interests of the target(s) of bullying and/or perpetrator(s), including contact with outside agencies
 - Impose disciplinary sanctions

B.2.2 Principles

- Initial steps taken to deal with an incident will be pastoral and non-judgemental
- The Year Head will consult with other staff about the best approach
- The aim of intervention is to protect the target(s) of bullying by modifying the behaviour of the alleged perpetrator(s) and, where necessary, the target(s) of bullying
- All actions taken will have the safety of the target(s) of bullying and the well-being of both the victim(s) and the alleged perpetrator(s) as their primary aim
- The rights of both the target(s) of bullying and the alleged perpetrator(s) will be respected
- Parents of both the target(s) of bullying and the alleged perpetrator(s) will be informed and involved at the earliest appropriate moment of all bullying incidents
- Parents are expected to conform to, and help with, the school's approach.
- Where necessary the school will seek the help of outside agencies to deal with counselling, behaviour management/adjustment or other difficulties
- In severe cases, where pastoral efforts prove ineffectual, disciplinary action under the Code of Behaviour will be taken to protect the target(s) of bullying.

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.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on **27/09/2024**

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 ERST if requested.

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 ERST and the Department.

Signed: _____ (Principal) Date: _____

Signed: _____ (Chairperson of BOM) Date: _____

Date of next review: _____

Appendix 1. Incident Report Form.

How you became aware of the incident.

What happened.

Other witnesses.

Signed: _____

Date:

Appendix 2. Bullying Alert Form.

Student(s): _____

Class: _____

Nature of activity.

Reasons for concern.

Possible witnesses/friends of target(s) of bullying.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Clonkeen college anti-bullying charter

- We want Clonkeen College to be free from bullying
 - Every student is expected to make a positive contribution to the life of the school
 - The school culture should be one of mutual support, especially when in difficulty
 - There should be no name calling
 - There should be no physical abuse
 - There should be no verbal abuse
 - There should be no threatening behaviour
 - There should be no ganging up on people
 - There should be no hurtful “slagging”
 - There should be no cyberbullying
 - Every student should respect others’
 - Right to be themselves
 - Right to self-expression.
 - Right to participate fully in school life
 - Right to personal property
 - When one of us makes a mistake, they should not be laughed at or mocked
 - Problems should be shared
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- **We all share responsibility to ensure that Bullying is not tolerated**
 - **All school staff, the student council, the parent association and the board of management are united in their opposition to all forms of bullying**
 - **Verbal, psychological or physical bullying will not be tolerated**