

Anti-Bullying Policy (Introduction)

School Ethos

‘The Loreto school is perceived as a community, with the student at its centre, where every effort is made to give practical expression to truth, freedom, justice, sincerity and joy. Relationships, structures and systems within the school are constantly evaluated against these core values.

Trustees, management, teaching and ancillary staff, students and parents value and affirm each other and work together in a collaborative fashion. The network of relationships must be underpinned by a deep respect for persons and characterised by courtesy, tolerance, loyalty and respect for the integrity of all as the school community works towards a common vision.’

(The Education Philosophy of Loreto Schools – Ireland 2001)

Introduction

The anti-bullying policy for Loreto College Crumlin is divided into two parts. Part 1 is the Anti-Bullying Policy for Students and Part 2 is the Dignity in the Workplace Policy for staff. The division of the policy into two parts recognises that different forms of bullying can take place in the school as a place of learning for young people and in the school as workplace for staff. For purposes of the policy, the definitions of bullying reflect the different experiences of bullying which research and anecdotal evidence would suggest take place among students and within workplaces.

Bullying of students by staff will be dealt with under the Anti-Bullying Policy for students and ultimately under the Disciplinary Procedures (ASTI/JMB). Bullying of staff by students will be dealt with under the Code of Behaviour for students.

Equality Legislation

The Equal Status Act (2000) sets down nine grounds on which discrimination is prohibited: gender; marital status; family status; sexual orientation; religion; age; disability; race and membership of the travelling community. The Employment Equality Act (1998), Equal Status Act (2000) and the Equality Act (2004) apply to schools generally and inform the Anti-Bullying Policy (students) and Dignity in the Workplace Policy (staff) in Loreto College Crumlin.

Part 1

Anti-Bullying Policy (Students)

Introduction

The Board of Management of Loreto College, Crumlin recognises that all students have the right to come to a school free from bullying and aims to ensure that every student will enjoy that right. Each and every member of the school community has a duty to uphold the right of every student to be protected from bullying or discrimination in school. Each student has the right to enjoy learning and recreation in a safe and happy environment.

Every student in the school has the right to be treated with respect and courtesy and to have her individuality valued. While we recognise that there may be personal differences and disagreements between students, these should not be brought into school from outside nor should they be the cause of conflict in school.

The uniqueness of each student is valued as are her particular talents, knowledge, skills and contribution to the school community.

No student or member of staff has the right to take away from the happiness and comfort of any student through words or actions which might cause harm or distress.

The school reserves the right to apply its bullying policy in respect of bullying that occurs at a location, activity, function or program that is not school related if in the opinion of the principal and/or Board of Management that alleged bullying has created a hostile environment at school for the victim, has infringed on the rights of the victim of the school and/or has materially or substantially disrupted the education process or the orderly operation of the school.

Definition of Bullying

Bullying can be defined as repeated aggression of a verbal, psychological or physical nature which is carried out by an individual or group against another person or persons.

It is behaviour which is intended to aggravate, intimidate, hurt or cause feelings of fear or powerlessness in another person or persons.

It can include teasing, taunting, name calling, threatening, hitting, making hurtful comments, talking about a person behind her back, spreading rumours about a person, text messaging, making threatening phonecalls, interfering with another person's belongings, *inappropriate use of social media* and many other actions which are designed to undermine or frighten another person in any way

Procedures for Dealing with Cases of Alleged Bullying for Students

Reporting

1. Students must report incidents of alleged bullying if they are to be dealt with in the school.
2. Students are strongly encouraged to report incidents of alleged bullying to their parent(s)/ guardian(s) at home. Parents are encouraged to come to the school to discuss the allegations so that they may be investigated and addressed.
3. Students are strongly encouraged to report incidents of alleged bullying in school to one or more of the following in school: senior student or prefect; teacher; member of the Care Team, Year Head; Deputy Principal; Principal or any other person whom a student would be comfortable talking to.
4. Students are strongly encouraged to report incidents of alleged bullying to their parent(s)/ guardian(s) at home. Parents are encouraged to come to the school to discuss the allegations so that they may be investigated and addressed.
5. If a student reports an incident to a person who is not the Year Head, then a formal report will be made to the Year Head or the Deputy Principal or Principal, by the person who has been told about the incident(s). This report will be dated and in writing and will contain all known dates and details about the incident(s) reported by the student. The student who has reported the incident(s) will be asked to keep a written record or log of any further incident(s) for a stated period of time. She will be asked to return to the Year Head, Deputy Principal or Principal with this log at the end of this period.

Action

1. The Year Head, Deputy Principal or Principal will speak to the student against whom the allegation has been made and give her the opportunity to respond. She will be informed that the situation is being monitored and informed that further incidents will be formally noted by the student who is alleging the bullying. At this stage both (all) parties involved will be invited to tell their own parents/guardians about the incidents/allegations informally. The Year Head, Deputy Principal or Principal may inform the parents immediately of both alleged victim(s) and perpetrator(s) depending on the circumstances of the particular case.
2. Following the report to the Year Head, Deputy Principal or Principal, the student who feels that she is being bullied will keep a record, to include times, dates and a description of any further incidents which may occur for a period of time agreed. The situation will be monitored by the Year Head in the interests of protecting all the students involved.
3. Should the student who made the allegations report that the incidents have stopped, this will be reported to the Year Head, Deputy Principal or Principal

after the period of time agreed. The student against whom the allegation was originally made will be spoken to by the Year Head, Deputy Principal or Principal and the matter closed. In the context of his/her normal duties, the Year Head, will continue to monitor the situation and to watch for a recurrence of any incident(s).

4. Should incidents continue or recur the parents of the alleged bully will be formally notified and invited to the school to meet the Year Head and Deputy Principal or Principal.
5. Parents of the alleged victim will be formally notified of the allegations brought by their daughter and given the opportunity to meet with the Year Head and the Deputy Principal or Principal also.

Sanctions

1. At the final stage, as above, appropriate sanctions will be put in place in accordance with the Code of Behaviour and at the discretion of the Year Head, Deputy Principal and Principal
2. Bullying or intimidation of a very serious nature, even if it is a once off occurrence, will be dealt with as under 'serious offences' in the Code of Behaviour.
3. Where there is evidence that a student has been bullied over a period of time (even if it stops as a result of reporting) a suitable sanction will be imposed upon the perpetrator and the procedures as outlined followed.

Note

- None of the students involved in the incidents has the right to discuss them with friends or other students in such a way as to make matters worse for any other student involved. Taking away a person's good name is itself a form of bullying and will be treated as such.

Pastoral Care

- Any student involved in incidents of bullying will be offered access to counselling by a member of the Care Team.
- Students will be made aware of the dangers of bullying as part of subjects such as CSPE, SPHE and RE or through approved outside agencies who may be invited to the school from time to time.

Dignity in the Workplace (Staff) Policy

The Policy includes the following:

- **Introduction**
- **School Ethos**
- **Dignity in the Workplace Charter**
- **Definition of Bullying**
- **Forms of bullying**
- **Effects of bullying**
- **Harrassment**
- **Procedures for dealing with forms of bullying among staff**

Introduction

The Board of Management of Loreto College Crumlin, recognises that all staff members have the right to a workplace free from bullying and sexual harassment or harassment at work and is fully committed to ensuring that every staff member will enjoy that right. Staff and students have a duty to uphold the right of every individual in the school to work in an environment which is free from bullying, discrimination or harassment of any kind.

The school reserves the right to apply its bullying policy in respect of bullying that occurs at a location, activity, function or program that is not school related if in the opinion of the principal and/or Board of Management that alleged bullying has created a hostile environment at school for the victim, has infringed on the rights of the victim of the school and/or has materially or substantially disrupted the education process or the orderly operation of the school.

Definition of Bullying

Workplace bullying is repeated inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another or others, at the place of work and/or in the course of employment, which could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individual's right to dignity at work. An isolated incident of the behaviour described in this definition may be an affront to dignity at work but as a once off incident is not considered to be bullying.

(Report of the Task Force on the Prevention of Workplace Bullying (2001))

Forms of Bullying

Bullying may take many forms. The following lists are not exhaustive but give examples of behaviour which is bullying by their nature.

Bullying by individuals or groups may manifest itself as various types of behaviour which may:-

- Humiliate
- Intimidate
- Verbally abuse
- Victimise
- Exclude and isolate
- Intrude through pestering, spying or stalking
- Give repeated unreasonable assignments to duties which are obviously unfavourable to one individual
- Give repeated impossible deadlines or impossible tasks
- Imply threats

Bullying may take the form of:-

- Physical contact
- Verbal abuse
- Implied threats
- Spreading true or untrue information in such a way as could lead to the undermining of that person's dignity.
- Talking or acting in such a way as might lead to the taking away of the good name and reputation of a person
- Denying a person or group the right to be heard or to reply by making negative comments in the absence of that person or group
- Jokes, offensive language, gossip, slander, offensive songs
- Posters, photographs, photocopied cartoons, graffiti, obscene gestures, flags, bunting, emblems or any materials which could give rise to provocation
- Isolation or non co-operation or exclusion from social activities
- Coercion for sexual favours
- Vandalism
- Removal of or interference with personal property without the knowledge or permission of the owner
- *Inappropriate use of social media*

(The above lists are extracted, in part, from the *Code of Practice for the Prevention of Workplace Bullying* –Health and Safety Authority)

Effects of Bullying

The effects of bullying on the individual can be:-

- Emotional
- Mental
- Physical
- Social

Examples of the manifestations of the effects of bullying include anxiety attacks, sleeplessness, reduced resistance to infection and increase in ill-health, lack of self esteem and suicide.

The effects of bullying on the organisation can result in:-

- Increased absenteeism
- Low motivation
- Poor timekeeping
- Reduced efficiency
- Hasty decision making
- Abuse of power and procedures
- Poor industrial relations
- Reluctance to speak out in public for fear of ridicule

Harassment

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is a form of discrimination on the gender ground in relation to conditions of employment. The definition of sexual harassment includes any:

- Act of physical intimacy
- Request for sexual favours
- Other act or conduct including spoken words, gestures or the production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other material that is unwelcome and could reasonably be regarded as sexually offensive, humiliating or intimidating. (Employment Equality Act 1998)

Harassment

- Harassment that is based on the following grounds – marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race or Traveller community ground – is a form of discrimination in relation to conditions of employment. (Employment Equality Act 1998)

Non workplace Sexual Harassment and Harassment

- The scope of the sexual harassment and the harassment provisions extend beyond the workplace for example to conferences and training that occur outside the workplace. It may also extend to workplace social events. (Employment Equality Act 1998)

Procedures for Dealing with Allegations of Bullying among Staff

Stage One: Informal

- If the behaviour of one or more members of staff towards another is found to be unacceptable by the latter, (s)he has the right to explain to the former that he is being made to feel uncomfortable at work or is being offended in some way. If as a result of this informal conversation, the offending words, behaviour or demeanour change so as to make the environment comfortable for the person who had experienced the unwelcome behaviour, the matter will be closed.
- Should the offended party feel unable to approach the person(s) who is (are) causing offence, (s)he may approach the Principal or a designated contact person who may be associated with the school but not working directly with staff but has been nominated by the school in agreement with the staff.
- The role of the contact person at this informal stage will be to support and advise the person who has contacted him/her as to what steps might be taken to resolve the situation informally. He or she will act as an impartial mediator but will have no direct role in the grievance procedure. He or she may be trained in counselling skills and will at no stage divulge any information about the particular case without the consent of the staff member who has sought advice from him or her.
- As soon as any member of staff is made to feel uncomfortable to the extent to which she or he feels bullied or harassed, she or he should keep detailed notes of incidents including times, dates and particulars of incidents. If other members of staff witness any of the incidents, they may be asked, without prejudice to themselves, to report on such incidents by the alleged victim.
- If despite the above actions, the issue is not resolved and the unacceptable conduct continues, the staff member who is a victim of it will bring the matter to Stage Two.

Stage Two: Formal

- Should the complainant find that the informal procedure outlined does not bring about a resolution of the problem, (s)he should approach the contact person, Principal or other person who can represent his or her case to either the Principal or representative of the Board of Management. The nature of the complaint may be outlined verbally or in writing.
- On receipt of the complaint, the Principal or person acting on behalf of the Board of Management will investigate the complaint in the following way:
 1. By interviewing the complainant to ascertain the details of the complaint, finding out who was involved; when the incident(s)

occurred; where the incident(s) occurred; whether there were witnesses to the event(s) and possible solutions to the problem. A written record of the meeting will be kept and a written statement provided by the complainant. Confidentiality of the complainant will be maintained at this stage in the investigation.

2. The alleged bully/harasser will now be advised of the complaints brought against them; given an opportunity to be heard ensuring that the hearing is unbiased; allowed representation if requested; be assured of confidentiality where possible. (S)he will be given the opportunity to read the written statement(s) of the complainant and will be offered the opportunity to reply in writing.
3. Copies of all written records will be kept in the school files.
4. If, following the investigation into the complaints, the latter are found to be valid, prompt action will be taken by the Principal or Board of Management to stop the bullying or harassment up to and including disciplinary action. (See *Disciplinary Procedure* JMB/ASTI) Action may involve some or all of the following:
 - A verbal warning
 - A written warning
 - Suspension with pay of the alleged harasser and in special circumstances the complainant to facilitate a full investigation
5. If it is found that the perpetrator's behaviour has been misinterpreted and that (s)he was genuinely unaware of the effects of his or her demeanour, words or actions but on being made aware, makes every effort to put the situation right for the complainant, no further action will be taken and the investigation will be closed.

This policy has been drawn up with reference to the following documents which may be used in conjunction with it where appropriate:

- *Code of Practice on the Prevention of Workplace Bullying* (Health and Safety Authority)
- *Code of Practice on Sexual Harassment and Harassment at Work* (The Equality Authority)
- *Sexual Harassment Policy for Schools* (JMB/ASTI)
- *Disciplinary Procedure* (JMB/ASTI)
- *Complaints Procedure* (JMB/ASTI)
- *Grievance Procedure* (JMB/ASTI)
- *Education Act (1998)*
- *Employment Equality Act (1998)*
- *Equality Act (2000)*
- *Equality Act (2004)*
