

Anti Bullying Policy

Ballinode Community College/Sligo College of Further Education (SCFE)

Ethos Statement

Co. Sligo VEC is a community of learners with an historic and unique tradition as a provider of education and training. In responding to the needs of the community it delivers the highest standards of teaching and learning.

Co. Sligo VEC Colleges, Schools and Centres of Education are democratic, co-educational and multi-denominational in character where policies, practices and attitudes are underpinned by the core values of Respect, Equity and Fairness.

The Board of Management of Ballinode Community College/SCFE is publishing this document as the official Anti-Bullying Policy. The VEC as patron of the school has approved this publication. Copies of the policy are available at the school and are furnished to each person who applies to be admitted to the school.

Link to Mission statement

Our Colleges provide a safe, healthy environment in which all students are nurtured and encouraged to achieve their full potential

The Anti-Bullying Policy helps to set the standards that the school community aspires to; students and staff work together to continue to develop the school and maintain an atmosphere in which all individuals feel safe.

Scope of policy:

This policy applies to the whole school community in their relationships with students – students, teachers, Board of Management, parents and all ancillary staff.

Aims of policy

- To create 'a telling school', where students who are not themselves being bullied have enough of a social conscience to report the case of someone who is.
- To promote an understanding of bullying as a health and safety issue for students and staff.
- To have a system of structures set up in the school to deal with bullying incidents; to have this system well established, discreet and known to those who may need to use it.
- To make it clear that bullying will be tackled on two fronts: as a discipline issue and a pastoral care issue.
- To have an appropriate list of responses, including punishments, drawn up and ready for use.

Rationale:

- Department of Education and Science requires schools to have a written policy on bullying
- The Board of Management have a statutory obligation to ensure that a policy is in place that reflects the principles and educational philosophy of the college.
- Involving and encouraging all members of the school community in developing, formulating and reviewing this policy on bullying promotes partnership, ownership, and implementation of a living policy.
- Ballinode Community College/SCFE considers bullying as a health and safety issue and a discipline issue and will address issues of bullying under each of these headings.

Objective:

We aspire to fulfil this commitment by fostering an atmosphere of respect, understanding, and encouragement between all who teach, work and learn in the college, so that the development and contribution of every individual can be acknowledged, and all can work together to benefit personal growth and the common good.

Definition:

“Bullying is repeated aggression, verbal, psychological, or physical, conducted by an individual or group against others. Isolated incidents of aggressive behaviour should not be condoned, [nonetheless, they] can scarcely be described as bullying. However when the behaviour is systemic and on-going it is bullying” (DES, Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post-Primary Schools)

Types of behaviour deemed to be inappropriate:

- Humiliation; including name-calling, reference to academic ability etc.
- Intimidation; including aggressive use of body language.
- Verbal abuse, anonymous or otherwise.
- Physical abuse or threatened abuse.
- Aggressive or obscene language.
- Offensive joke; whether spoken or by email, text messaging etc.
- Silent telephone/mobile phone calls
- Abusive telephone/mobile phone calls/text messages/e-mails/website messages.
- Victimisation; including very personal remarks.
- Exclusion and isolation.
- Intrusion through interfering with personal possessions or locker.
- Repeated unreasonable assignment to duties that are obviously unfavourable.
- Repeated unreasonable deadlines or tasks.

- Threats, including demands for money.
- Harassment based on any the 9 grounds in the Equality Legislation.
- An attack by rumour, gossip, innuendo, or ridicule on any individual's reputation.
- Coercion of sexual favours.

Emotional and/or physical abuse is intolerable and therefore a report may have to be sent to the HSE and/or Gardai.

Any substantiated incident of bullying, in whatever form, in school, on a school-related activity or on the way to or from school, will be treated as a breach of the school code of behaviour, and dealt with as such; the precise sanction will depend on the seriousness of the breach.

The above list is not intended to be exhaustive and the school will respond to bullying in any form whenever it arises.

Indications of Bullying/Behaviour – Signs and Symptoms

- Anxiety about travelling to and from school - requesting parents to drive or collect them, changing their route of travel, avoiding regular times for travelling to and from school.
- Unwillingness to go to school, refusal to attend, missing.
- Avoiding certain days or lessons.
- Uncharacteristic nervousness in class
- Punctuality problems.
- A reluctance to take part in previously enjoyed activities.
- Deterioration in educational performance, loss of concentration and loss of enthusiasm and interest in school.
- Unexplained changes in mood or behaviour; it may be particularly noticeable before returning to school after weekends or more specifically after longer school holidays.
- Visible signs of anxiety – stammering, withdrawing, nightmares, difficulty in sleeping, crying, not eating, vomiting, bed wetting.
- Spontaneous out-of-character comments about either students or teachers.
- Possessions missing or damaged.
- Increased requests for money or stealing money.
- Unexplained bruising or damaged clothing.
- Reluctance and/or refusal to say what is troubling him/her.

Statement on Bullying:

Every person in the college is entitled to respect and to be free of any type of bullying.

The college will work proactively, as far as it can, to ensure that bullying does not take place.

Reporting incidents of bullying is responsible behaviour.

A record will be kept of all reported incidents of bullying.

The matter will be dealt with seriously.

The college has a programme of support for both the bully and the bullied.

Appropriate action will be taken to ensure that it does not continue.

Anti-Bullying Policy - Education:

Consultation with education partners through:

- Discussion and agreement with students through Staff/Student Forum.
- Contribution from parents.
- Input from staff as agreed at Staff Meetings.

It is college policy to provide education on bullying in the following manner:

- All year groups are facilitated through the S.P.H.E. (Social, Personal, and Health Education) programme which incorporates bullying information and learning.
- Anti – Bullying Charter will be displayed in each classroom and included in student diary.
- The school promotes qualities of social responsibility, tolerance, and understanding among all its members, both in school and out of school.
- New students, who join the School at other times, are allocated a buddy – ideally, this is another student from within the same year group.
- Positive reinforcement of behaviour for the better good of the community is encouraged through the merit system.

Pastoral Care Team:

The college has a pastoral care system in place, and reports of all incidents (wherever they may have been reported) will be filtered through the Class Tutor, who is the primary person for pastoral care of the student in her/his form class.

Chain of support: Student / Class Tutor / Deputy Principal / Principal / Board of Management.

Procedures for Noting and Reporting Incidents of Bullying:

Students should discuss any incident of bullying with a teacher or another trusted adult within the college system; this is responsible behaviour rather than “telling tales.”

Parents/guardians should contact the Class Tutor or Principal regarding incidents of bullying behaviour which they might suspect or that have come to their attention through their children or other parents.

Incidents of bullying behaviour, no matter how trivial, which are drawn to the attention of a teacher, will be dealt with in the following manner:

- Appropriate personnel will interview all of the students involved in a bullying incident.
- The alleged victim and alleged perpetrators of the incident will be spoken to and encouraged to solve the problem.
- The alleged victim and perpetrators will be invited to write down any relevant details and a "Bullying Report Form" will be completed. Written statements from all involved in the incident will be attached to the Report Form.
- All interviews will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all students involved.
- Records will be kept of all incidents and of the procedures that were followed.

The Class Tutor(s) will be kept informed of all incidents and have access to relevant written records.

Class Tutors will monitor progress of students involved in a bullying incident by liaising with teachers and students involved (separately) at follow-up meetings.

Where the incident is deemed to be minor, a verbal warning will be given to the bully to stop the inappropriate behaviour, pointing out how she/he is in breach of the Code of Behaviour and trying to get her/him to see the situation from the victim's point of view. If deemed appropriate, parents may be contacted. The incident will no longer be considered if there is no recurrence within that academic term.

If the behaviour persists, the Class Tutor and the parents/guardians of the victims and bullies will be informed. Thus, they will be given the opportunity of discussing the matter and are in a position to help and support their children before a crisis occurs. Appropriate sanctions will be imposed. The incident will no longer be considered if there is no recurrence within that academic year.

If there is a serious incident, perhaps repeated verbal assault, or coercion, the matter should be reported to the Deputy Principal or Principal, parents will be involved and appropriate sanctions applied.

Where the incident is deemed to be more serious (e.g. gross misbehaviour or physical assault), the Principal should be informed immediately and she/he will inform the Board of Management, if necessary.

Offenders and victims of bullying may be referred for counselling.

Sanctions may include:

- A contract of good behaviour
- School community service
- Withdrawal of privileges
- Other sanctions as may be deemed appropriate
- Suspension
- Expulsion.

In the case of a complaint regarding a staff member, this should be referred immediately to the Principal.

Where cases, relating to either student or teacher, remain unresolved at school level, the matter should be referred to the Board of Management.

In order to appeal a decision, a parent/student may request a review by writing to the Principal.

Serial Bullying

If a student persists in bullying despite correction, the following steps will be taken:

- Arrangements will be made to advise and counsel the bully
- Parents will be required to call to the school to discuss the matter.
- Suspension

If bullying continues we must consider the right of other students to a safe learning environment, free from harassment; in these circumstances it may be not be possible to retain the bullying student in the school.

Parents will be informed of this, and may be asked for permission to refer the student to a psychologist from the Department of Education of the HSE. However they must understand the school's primary obligation is to protect the victims of the bullies, and this must mean permanent exclusion for persistent bullies.

Bullying of Teachers

The school will support teachers where they are subject to bullying by a student or colleague. Ballinode College/SCFE will work to ensure that a climate of respect is maintained at all times.

Roles and Responsibilities:

The school management team are responsible for ensuring that the policy is implemented.

Success Criteria:

Well-being and happiness of the whole school community in the light of incidents of bullying behaviour encountered.

Monitoring implementation:

Parents/guardians and all members of staff; include on agenda for teaching staff meetings at least once a year.

Review and evaluation:

The college will monitor, review, and evaluate this policy and all related work and procedures on an ongoing basis to ensure legal compliance and maintenance of best practices

Relevant Legislation

Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour, 1993. (Circular M33/91): 'Guidelines towards a positive policy for school behaviour and discipline'

The Education Act, 1998

The Education (Welfare) Act, 2000

The Equal Status Acts, 2000 to 2004

Equality Legislation in the Republic Of Ireland - The Employment Equality Act 1998

This version of the Anti-Bullying Policy was created in September 2006

Most recent review: September 2013