

ST NESSAN'S COMMUNITY COLLEGE
(Pobal Choláiste Neasáin Naofa)



ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

December 2007

ST NESSAN'S COMMUNITY COLLEGE

SCHOOL PHILOSOPHY/MISSION STATEMENT

St Nessan's Community College is a co-educational school. It is comprehensive in its intake and in its curricular provision.

St Nessan's Community College is committed to maintaining an educational environment where the growth, learning and development (Fás, Foghalim, Forbairt – school motto) of our students can flourish.

To further the aims of St Nessan's as expressed in the Mission Statement:

- The pursuit of high standards in all endeavours will be expected and every effort will be directed towards the attainment of such standards.
- The school will do its utmost within its resources to provide appropriate opportunities so that every individual has the opportunity to gain maximum benefit from their experience in St Nessan's.
- The rights, responsibilities and dignity of all individuals within the school community will be respected. However, the Common Good takes precedence where there is a conflict between individuals.

RATIONALE

The role of the school is to provide the highest possible standard of education for all its pupils. A stable, secure learning environment is an essential requirement to achieve this goal. Bullying behaviour, by its very nature, undermines and dilutes the quality of education and imposes psychological damage. As such, it is an issue which must be positively and firmly addressed through a range of school-based measures and strategies through which all members of the school community are enabled to act effectively in dealing with this behaviour.

CONSULTATION PROCESS

A policy group was set up following a staff meeting in January 2002. It consisted of the Principal, First Year – Year Head, Guidance Counsellor, School Chaplain and Head of Social, Personal and Health Education. Parents were consulted through the Parents' Association, senior students were consulted in SPHE and Religious Education Classes. Staff were consulted through a staff meeting.

POLICY AIMS:

1. To create a school ethos which encourages children to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.
2. To raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with school management, teachers, pupils, parents/guardians.
3. To ensure comprehensive supervision and monitoring measures through which All areas of school activity are kept under observation.
4. To develop procedures for noting and reporting incidents of bullying behaviour.
5. To develop procedures for investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.
6. To develop a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and for those involved in bullying behaviour.
7. To work with and through the various local agencies in countering all forms of bullying and anti-social behaviour.
8. To evaluate the effectiveness of school policy on anti-bullying behaviour.

DEFINITION OF BULLYING

Bullying is repeated aggression, verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against others.

Isolated incidents of aggressive behaviour will be dealt with under the Code of Behaviour. However, when the behaviour is systematic and ongoing it is bullying.

TYPES OF BULLYING

Physical Aggression:

This behaviour is more common among boys than girls. It includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping people up. It may also take the form of severe physical assault. While boys commonly engage in 'mess fights', they can often be used as a disguise for physical harassment or inflicting pain.

Damage to Property:

Personal property can be the focus of attention for the bully; this may result in damage to clothing, school books and other learning material or interference with a pupil's locker or bicycle. The contents of school bags and pencil cases may be scattered on the floor. Items of personal property may be defaced, broken, stolen or hidden.

Extortion:

Demands for money may be made, often accompanied by threats (sometimes carried out) in the event of the victim not promptly 'paying up'. Victims' lunches, lunch vouchers or lunch money may be taken. Victims may also be forced into theft of property for delivery to the bully. Sometimes, this tactic is used with the sole purpose of incriminating the victim.

Intimidation:

Some bullying behaviour takes the form of intimidation: it is based on the use of very aggressive body language with the voice being used as a weapon. Particularly upsetting to victims can be the so-called 'look' – a facial expression which conveys aggression and/or dislike. Coercion is forcing somebody to do something through intimidation.

Abusive Telephone Calls/Text Messages/E-mails:

The abusive anonymous telephone call, text message or e-mail is a form of verbal intimidation or bullying. The anonymous phone call is very prevalent where teachers are the victims of bullying.

Isolation:

This form of bullying behaviour seems to be more prevalent among girls. A certain person is deliberately isolated, excluded or ignored by some or all of the class group. This practice is usually initiated by the person engaged in bullying behaviour. It may be accompanied by writing insulting remarks about the victim on blackboards or in public places, by passing around notes about or drawings of the victim or by whispering insults about them loud enough to be heard.

Name Calling/Graffiti:

Persistent name-calling/graffiti directed at the same individual(s) which hurts, insults or humiliates should be regarded as a form of bullying behaviour; most name-calling of this type refers to physical appearance, e.g. 'big ears', size or clothes worn.

Accent or distinctive voice characteristics may attract negative attention. Academic ability can also provoke name calling. This tends to operate at two extremes; first, there are those who are singled out for attention because of race, religious beliefs, home circumstances or because they are perceived to be slow, or weak academically. These pupils are often referred to as 'dummies', 'dopes' or 'donkeys' or at the other extreme are those who, because they are perceived as high achievers, are labelled 'swots', 'brain boxes', 'licks', 'teachers pets', etc.

Slagging:

This behaviour usually refers to the good-natured banter which goes on as part of the normal social interchange between people. However, when this slagging extends to very personal remarks aimed again and again at the one individual about race, religion, home circumstances, appearance, clothing, personal hygiene or involves references of any uncomplimentary nature to members of one's family, particularly if couched in sexual innuendo, then it assumes the form of bullying. It may take the form of suggestive remarks about a pupil's sexual orientation.

Bullying of School Personnel:

Bullying of school personnel by means of physical assault, damage to property, verbal abuse, threats to people's families etc.

Staff Behaviour:

A staff member may, unwittingly or otherwise, engage in, instigate or reinforce bullying behaviour in a number of ways:-

- Using sarcasm or other insulting or demeaning form of language when addressing pupils; making negative comments about a pupil's appearance or background;
- Humiliating directly or indirectly, a pupil who is particularly academically weak or outstanding, or vulnerable in other ways;
- Using any gesture or expression of a threatening or intimidatory nature, or any form of degrading physical contact or exercise.

EDUCATION PROGRAMME

The aim of the education programme is to develop a school ethos that prevents bullying by ensuring that all adults and students in St Nessan's school community realise that they have a responsibility for the safety and welfare of others. This in turn should in particular encourage students to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour and empower members of staff to deal effectively with any incidents that they encounter.

METHODOLOGIES

Class discussion, guest speakers, staff training, parent information evenings and the use of mentors, etc.

The course content endeavours to insure that the presentation of information matches the age and maturity of the students. It is intended that in Junior Cycle that the anti-bullying programme be covered in the first term through SPHE classes. Five classes in all (the Principal will have class plans of the agreed programme which will also be available to parents) on request.

It is intended in Senior Cycle that the programme would be covered through Class Tutor or Religious Education classes. It is intended that a mentoring system for junior classes would be developed, in particular first year.

STAFF TRAINING AND SUPPORT ISSUES

All staff will have access to a basic level of information, Code of Behaviour, Anti-Bullying Policy, Department of Education and Science Guidelines and a background reading piece on bullying. This will be distributed with the teachers hand book and the Health and Safety Policy to all new members of staff. The material will be visited at the beginning of each school year and the procedures for dealing with bullying revised. Resources will be available from the SPHE Department head. Any useful articles, writing, etc. may be given to the SPHE head and will be available to all teachers.

PARENTS

Parents will be provided with the Code of Behaviour and the Anti-Bullying Policy when their child enrolls in St Nessan's Community College. Copies of the material covered in classes with students will be available to parents on request.

SCHOOL POLICY FOR DEALING WITH BULLYING RELATED INCIDENTS

Any and every form of bullying is unacceptable/forbidden by St Nessan's Community College. Should an incident relating to bullying occur, it is the policy of the school to respond in a firm but fair manner with due regard for the safety and welfare of the individual or individuals involved, other students of this school and the wider school community. The school will endeavour to treat any such incident in a sensitive manner and to fulfil any legal obligations that apply.

REPORTING AND RECORDING INCIDENTS

Incidents of bullying should be reported by students to a teacher. Teachers, parents, staff and students who are concerned that bullying is taking place (See Appendix 1 for Indications of Bullying Behaviour) should contact the appropriate Year Head, Principal or Counsellor. Teachers who deal with behaviour which comes under the definition of bullying should complete a Referral Form (Appendix 2) identifying the incident as a bullying incident for the Year Head. The Year Head may, in conjunction with the Chaplain/Guidance Counsellor, request the students concerned (victims and bullies) to complete a Bullying Report Form (See Appendix 3). This will involve the parents of the child/children involved. Parents/students will have access to written records involving their child/children. However, certain information may be withheld in the interest of students. Students will be encouraged to report bullying of others in person or anonymously. It must be stressed that this is not 'snitching'.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed to students regarding information relating to incidents in breach of this policy. Information may need to be shared for example with one or more staff members, with parents of those involved in the incident or with the appropriate external agency. However, discretion within these limits will be observed. The limits of confidentiality will be explained to students prior to disclosure where possible.

INFORMING/INVOLVING PARENTS

Parents will be notified at the earliest opportunity if their son/daughter is involved in a bullying related incident as parental involvement is seen as essential in the resolution of these difficulties. Parents may be invited to the school to discuss the incident and the course of action to be taken. The students will be informed that their parents are being notified.

INFORMING/INVOLVING GARDAÍ

The school has a positive working relationship with the local Gardaí and together they have the welfare of the individual student, other students and the wider school community to consider.

In incidents where the health and safety of individual(s) in the school community has been compromised, it is the policy of the school to inform the Gardaí. Garda advice may also be sought about other incidents on a case by case basis. This decision will rest with the Principal and other key staff.

SANCTIONS/DISCIPLINARY ISSUES

As per the Code of Behaviour of St Nessan's Community College a graded system of firm and consistent sanctions will apply to those involved in bullying incidents. Sanctions up to and including suspension and expulsion may be imposed depending on the seriousness of the incident. The normal appeals procedures will apply.

COUNSELLING/SUPPORT FOR THOSE INVOLVED

The school Guidance Counsellor/Chaplain will visit all First Year classes within the month of September to introduce themselves and inform students of the services available in the event of bullying or any other concern they may have.

Counselling will be available for those involved in a bullying incident. Students involved may be requested to seek help from the Guidance Counsellor or an external agency/expert prior to returning to school (where suspension has been imposed).

Parents will be provided with contact addresses for the appropriate external agency should they wish to seek further support.

Staff involved in dealing with such incidents will be offered support through internal support systems and/or with external agencies if appropriate.

WHEN AND TO WHOM POLICY APPLIES

Except where otherwise stated, this policy applies to all students, staff and other users of the school premises (including parents, visitors and those attending evening classes). It is in force at all times on the school premises, prior to, during and after school time and during school related activities (including school outings).

MONITORING, REVIEW AND EVALUATION OF POLICY

All staff are responsible for the effective implementation of this policy. A staff induction will form part of the school's dissemination process.

The policy will be monitored by the staff on an annual basis at a general staff meeting. The Assistant Principal assigned to School Development will be responsible for ensuring that evaluation takes place on an annual basis. Based on feedback from the above, updating the policy may be necessary on a regular basis to maintain its focus and effectiveness.

SUGGESTED READING MATERIAL

1. 'Coping with Bullying in Schools' by Brendan Byrne.
2. 'Bullying in Our Schools' by David Fitzgerald.

APPENDIX I

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

GUIDELINES ON COUNTERING BULLYING BEHAVIOUR IN PRIMARY AND POST PRIMARY SCHOOLS:

The following signs/symptoms may suggest that a pupil is being bullied:-

- anxiety about travelling to and from school – requesting parents to drive or collect them, changing route of travel, avoiding regular times for travelling to and from school;
- unwillingness to go to school, refusal to attend, missing;
- deterioration in educational performance, loss of concentration and loss of enthusiasm and interest in school;
- pattern of physical illnesses (e.g. headaches, stomach aches);
- unexplained changes either in mood or behaviour; it may be particularly noticeable before returning to school after weekends or more especially after longer school holidays;
- visible signs of anxiety or distress – stammering, withdrawing, nightmare, difficulty in sleeping, crying, not eating, vomiting, bedwetting;
- spontaneous out-of-character comments about either pupils or teachers;
- possessions missing or damaged;
- increased requests for money or stealing money;
- unexplained bruising or cuts or damaged clothing;
- reluctance and/or refusal to say what is troubling him/her;

Those signs do not necessarily mean that a pupil is being bullied. If repeated or occurring in combination those signs do warrant investigation in order to establish what is affecting the pupil.

APPENDIX 2

BULLYING

INCIDENT REPORT FORM

1. Student's account of the incident giving full details to date, time, location of the incident, name(s) of alleged bully/bullies, name(s) of any teacher(s) in the vicinity who may have observed the incident and any other relevant details.

Date: _____ Time: _____

Location: _____

Nature of Incident: _____

Name of Alleged Bully/Bullies: _____

Name(s) of Teachers in Vicinity: _____

Name(s) of Other Witnesses: _____

Any Other Relevant Details: _____

2. Was this a once-off incident or has the student been bullied before? Give details.

3. Have you, the victim, informed your parent(s)/guardian(s)?

Yes

No

