

# ANTI BULLYING POLICY

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## **Introductory Statement**

This policy was drawn up as part of the revision of the code of conduct during the school year 2010-2011. It was finalised in October 2011. Bullying is dealt with in PCS as part of the management of student behaviour and involves educational steps, pastoral interventions and disciplinary action if needed.

Portumna Community School seeks to promote the full development of each individual and therefore rejects bullying as an attack on the dignity of the person which can undermine development and growth, both that of the person who suffers bullying and the perpetrator. Every person in Portumna Community School has the right to enjoy her/his learning and leisure free from bullying.

The policy was drafted by the Principal, the Guidance Counsellor and the Chaplain, circulated to staff, made available to parents, students' council and ratified by the Board of Management on the 19<sup>th</sup> of October 2011.

## **Scope**

This policy applies to the school student community in their relationships. Particular national policies apply to staff - student relations and this policy applies only to student-student conflict.

## **Rationale**

- This policy was developed as part of the review of the code of conduct
- Department of Education and Skills requires schools to have a written policy on anti bullying
- The Trustees have a statutory obligation to ensure that all necessary policies are in place or are being developed.
- Given the commitment of Portumna Community School to the highest standard of education we recognize that a stable, secure learning environment is necessary and that bullying undermines the quality of education and results in harm to the person; therefore bullying will be positively and firmly addressed.
- The entire school community has co-developed this policy in the belief that the resulting solidarity will be the best way to ensure the policy is implemented.

## **Relationship to Mission and Ethos**

The Mission Statement of the school states that the school will seek to develop the potential of the students in their social, physical, intellectual and spiritual development. Such development demands that students be supported appropriately, challenged effectively and learn to respect the differences between them. The revised code of conduct accepts the equality of students and the need for a variety of responses to situations that may arise from time to time. This anti bullying policy seeks to provide students with a secure foundation so that their potential may be realised.

## Goals

- To create a positive and respectful environment.
- To establish definitions, roles and procedures so that all staff, students and parents may be aware of the steps of investigation and imposition of sanction if deemed appropriate.
- To deal with allegations of bullying promptly and to resolve them as far as possible for the school to do so.

## Key Measures

Creating a positive and respectful environment will be achieved through the following:

Social Personal and Health Education classes; Assemblies; Religious Education classes; Buddy system for First Years, anti-bullying week.

Information will be gathered proactively in the following manner:

Anti-bullying box, elements of the “kool skool” i.e. invite students to write names of those possibly having a difficult time, having a “reporting school” culture; a special email address where students can access the pastoral care team and school management at an appropriate level.

## Definition of bullying:

Any repeated aggression, verbal, physical or psychological conducted by an individual or group toward others.

## Harassment

It should be noted that while bullying is defined as ‘repeated’ incidents, one incident of harassment and/or sexual harassment is considered a breach of the Equal Status Acts (2000 and 2004). Harassment is defined as “unwanted conduct” under the Equal Status Acts (2000 and 2004). Allegations of harassment will be dealt with under the revised Code of Conduct.

Portumna Community School rejects harassment and regards it as unacceptable behaviour.

## Definitions of types of bullying

- **Physical Aggression:** this includes but is not limited to pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping people up.
- **Damage to property,**
- **Extortion** (demands for money),
- **Intimidation,**
- **Abusive telephone calls and /or texts (See also cyber bullying below),**
- **Isolation** (a person is isolated, excluded or ignored by a group),

- **Name Calling,**
- **Slagging** (this includes but is not limited to: repeated personal remarks about a person, their appearance, their family or sexual orientation).
- **Cyber bullying:** this includes bullying by means of electronic devices or networks (internet and internal school network). Refer also to the school's Acceptable Use Policy in relation to Information Technology.
- **Homophobic bullying:** this is bullying that is motivated by a dislike or fear of someone because of the real or perceived lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender identity of the individual being targeted.

## **Interventions:**

In common with the revised Code of Conduct there will be pastoral, disciplinary and educational interventions.

**Pastoral interventions** may include but are not limited to:

One to one counselling; professionally directed meetings between alleged bully and those suffering bullying; Anti bullying box; outside agencies (Health Service Executive, Youth Advocacy Program, National Educational Psychological Service); elements of the "kool skool" programme in random checks on class groups; a special email address will offer students an opportunity to alert the school to difficulties they or another student may be having.

**Disciplinary interventions** may include but are not limited to;

In keeping with the revised CODE OF CONDUCT sanctions may include apology, contract of good behaviour, restorative actions including community service to the school, withdrawal of privileges, other sanctions as may be deemed appropriate, suspension and permanent exclusion from school. Referral to outside agencies may include: Gardai.

**Educational interventions** may include but are not limited to:

Tutor system, Referral to outside agencies (National Educational Psychological Service), Health Service Executive, private counselling for anger management, parent meetings to give information on the topic.

## **Links to other policies**

The acceptable use policy for the internet and computer use (AUP) governs the usage of the school's computers, networks and internet facilities in conjunction with the revised Code of Conduct.

The revised Code of Conduct with its emphasis on the need for respect for all, may be used to uphold the dignity of the person.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

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

Parents / Guardians have a role in being vigilant, stopping bullying behaviour by their own children, reporting instances of bullying they witness or suspect.

All staff are to be vigilant and intervene professionally and appropriately if needed in situations where bullying is suspected. All staff will report instances of suspected bullying to the appropriate Year Head. The Year Head will apply this policy and its interventions, inform the Pastoral Care team and refer to senior management if needed in keeping with the revised Code of Conduct.

The role of every student is to make Portumna Community School a school where human dignity is respected at all times. In keeping with this the responsibility of every student is to report instances of suspected bullying.

## **Review and Evaluation**

This policy will be reviewed in May and June 2012 and thereafter every three years. A member of the Pastoral care team will present a statistical report of bullying and /or alleged bullying cases at each end of year staff meeting. This report will form the basis for a report by the Principal to the Board of Management. A random survey of students will be done at the end of each anti bullying week to establish the effectiveness of the week and how it can be improved.