

# **Woodbrook College Bray, Co. Wicklow**



## **Anti-Bullying Policy**

This policy was drafted in consultation with the education partners at Woodbrook College, Bray, Co. Wicklow and in accordance with best educational practice, the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the code of behaviour guidelines issued by the NEWB and fully complies with the requirements of relevant Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools published by the Department of Education and Skills. It was ratified by the Board of Management on March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2014.

## **Introduction**

The Code of Behaviour of Woodbrook College seeks to promote positive behaviour at all times among all members of the school community and with that in mind the code's foremost principle is respect for all. As a direct consequence of this, bullying of any kind or in any form, is totally unacceptable and any incidence of bullying, either inside or outside the school involving members of the school community will be taken very seriously.

This anti-bullying policy was developed through a collaborative approach involving the staff, the Parents Council, the Student Council, the student body and the Board of Management of Woodbrook College. The policy is divided into three main sections:

- Definition of bullying
- Type of behaviour deemed inappropriate
- Steps open to the school authorities when dealing with any incident of bullying

## **Scope of policy**

This policy applies to the whole school community in their relationships with students including students, teachers, management, board of management, parents, office and all ancillary staff of Woodbrook College.

## **Rationale**

This policy has been drawn up for the following reasons:

- In keeping with our ethos and school mission statement, respect for each individual is a key principle underlying how we conduct our business within and outside the school environment and as a consequence, bullying of any kind is completely unacceptable.
- The Department of Education and Skills requires schools to have a written policy on bullying.
- The Trustees have a statutory obligation to ensure that a policy is in place that reflects the principles and values of the religious and educational philosophy of the school.
- Involving and encouraging all members of the school community in developing, formulating and reviewing a policy on bullying promotes partnership, ownership and implementation of a living policy.

## **Aims**

The main aims of this policy are:

1. To create a school ethos which encourages students to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour
2. To raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour among the students body, teaching staff, management and parents/guardians
3. To establish procedures for reporting and recording incidents of bullying
4. To establish procedures for investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour
5. To evaluate the effectiveness of the policy on a regular basis

## **Definition of Bullying**

Bullying is defined as 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, bullying based on a person's religious faith 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.

## **Anti-Bullying Statement**

The staff of Woodbrook College believes that the school is a place for learning and teaching where all students have the right to learn and develop in a supportive environment with people who are caring and co-operative.

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.

Woodbrook college is continually striving for the establishment of a cohesive supportive and inclusive environment with a zero tolerance of bullying. The implementation of anti-bullying programmes and procedures at all year levels provides students with strategies to develop positive relationship and contributes to the creation of a caring, pro-social school environment.

The elimination of bullying in Woodbrook College is everyone's responsibility. A person who is bullied does not have the problem alone because bullying adversely affects everyone in the community in one way or another.

## **Examples of bullying**

Bullying can be exhibited in many forms including:

- 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.
- Intimidation
  - phone calls or text messaging. Parents are asked to be particularly vigilant in this area.
  - misuse of mobile phones. Please see school policy on Mobile Phones
  - mockery of work in class, physical characteristics, accent, social or racial origins etc
  - 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
  - excluding 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

This list is not exhaustive. What constitutes bullying is effectively defined by the experience of the victim.

## **Cyber Bullying and Identity Based Bullying**

At Woodbrook College, we believe that the best way to address cyber-bullying is to prevent it happening in the first place. Our prevention and awareness raising measures focus on educating pupils on appropriate online behaviour, how to stay safe while on-line and also on developing a culture of reporting any concerns about cyber-bullying. The school-wide approach and the role of parents are of importance in this regard. Furthermore the scope for cyber-bullying to occur as a result of access to technology from within the school is recognised and teachers who facilitate access to computers during class time are asked to be particularly vigilant in this regard.

Homophobic bullying is bullying that is motivated by a dislike or fear of someone because of real or perceived lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender identity of the individual being targeted.

Homophobic bullying is not tolerated in Woodbrook College, nor is sexual harassment or harassment of any sort. Whereas bullying is defined as “repeated” incidents, one incident of harassment and/or sexual harassment amounts to a breach of the Equal Status Acts (2000 and 2004).

Name calling and the use of gay related words or phrases (e.g. that coat is gay) is totally unacceptable behaviour and will be treated as a breach of the school’s anti-bullying policy and code of behaviour.

## **Effects and Signs of Bullying**

Bullying can affect people in many different ways including:

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

Everyone, particularly parents and teachers, are asked to be observant of any signs or symptoms of bullying which can include:

- Reluctance to go to school or truancy from school
- 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 or weekends
- Signs of anxiety/distress – stammering, nightmares, loss of appetite, poor sleep patterns
- Missing or damaged property
- Increased demands for money or stealing
- Unexplained bruising, cuts, damage to clothing
- Reluctance to say or talk about what is wrong

## Procedures for Dealing with Bullying

### 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:

- A questionnaire to be handed out to all Junior and senior Cycle Students (Appendix 3) twice each year during Assembly. The Year Head will have covered what constitutes bullying as outlined in this policy and what students should do if they feel they are being bullied at the start of every academic school year.
- Students at Junior Cycle will receive talks on Bullying and watch an educational DVD in this area. Students at Senior Cycle will receive talks on “Social Skills and Bullying Awareness”
- A “Buddy System” will be put in place between 5<sup>th</sup> year and 1<sup>st</sup> year students and also within years where there are transfer students. It will be emphasised to the “buddy” to inform the student of our Anti-Bullying Policy.
- Displaying the Anti-Bullying Charter prominently throughout the school and ensuring that every student’s signs their name to it.
- Frequent contact with individual students by Year Heads to establish good personal relationships,
- 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 working together for the benefit of all.

### B) Dealing with incidents and suspicions of bullying

#### i) Reporting.

*All incidents of bullying, no matter how trivial, are noted, investigated and dealt with by the school*

- All incidents or suspicions of bullying must be brought to the attention of the Year Head, 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)***. These should be filled out by the victim or the person to whom it is reported as soon as possible (but no later than two days after the incident is reported). These forms are available in the front office and in the Staff Handbook. All such reports will be treated as confidential and stored in a secure place.
- Any notes, records produced as a result of actions taken will be stored with the original report and kept as confidential material in a secure place.

#### **Important**

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

## ii) 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, Year Head, Principal, Deputy Principal and Parent(s).

- 1) Following a report or incident, The Principal, Deputy Principal and/or Year Head, with other staff where necessary, will conduct an initial investigation.
- 2) The victim(s), witness(es) and perpetrator(s) will be interviewed
- 3) The Year Head/Principal must retain all written records in a secure place.

Depending on the outcome of the investigation some or all of the following actions may be taken:

- Obtain an undertaking (written or oral) from the parties involved and keep the situation under observation and review.
- Contact is made with the parents by the Year Head/Principal/Deputy Principal to keep them informed and to give them the opportunity of discussing the matter
- Initiate pastoral strategies in the interests of the victim(s) and/or perpetrator(s) including contact with outside agencies. This may include counselling for the victim or the perpetrator.
- Impose disciplinary sanctions as outlined in the code of behaviour

### iii) Underlying Principles

Initial steps taken to deal with an incident will be pastoral and non-judgemental. The Year Head/Principal/Deputy Principal will consult with other staff about the best approach. The main principles underlying the approach are:

- The aim of intervention is to protect the victim(s) by modifying the behaviour of the perpetrator(s) and, where necessary, the victim(s).
- All actions taken will have the safety of the victim(s) and the well-being of both the victim(s) and the perpetrator(s) as their primary aim.
- It is made clear to all pupils that when they report incidents of bullying they are not telling tales but are behaving responsibly.
- The rights of both the victim(s) and the perpetrator(s) will be respected.
- Parents of both the victim(s) and the 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 certain cases, where pastoral efforts prove ineffectual, disciplinary action under the Code of Behaviour will be taken to protect the victim(s).

### iv) Bullying by Staff

In the case of a complaint regarding a staff member, this should normally in the first instance be raised with the staff member in question and then, if necessary, with the Principal. In cases where the complaint relates to the Principal, this complaint should be referred to the chairperson of the Board of Management.

### v) Appeals

Where cases relating to bullying remain unresolved or where either party is unhappy with the actions taken by the school, the matter may be referred to the school's Board of Management.

### **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.

### **General**

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 of Education and Skills and the patron 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 the patron and the Department of Education and Skills.

### **Anti-Bullying Charter**

The school's "Anti-Bullying" Charter can be found at the end of this policy. The charter is displayed prominently in the school assembly area and all students are asked to sign below to indicate their knowledge, understanding and acceptance of the points stated in the charter.

# Appendix 1

## Bullying Behaviour Report Form

**1. Name of pupil being bullied and class group**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Name(s) and class(es) of pupils engaged in bullying behaviour**

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**3. Source of bullying concern/report**  
(tick relevant box(es))

Pupil concerned	
Other Pupil	
Parent	
Teacher	
Other (Please specify)	

**4. Location of incidents**  
(tick relevant box(es))

Playground	
Classroom	
Corridor	
Toilets	
School Bus	
Other (Please specify)	

**5. Name of person(s) (witnesses) who reported the bullying concern**

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**6. Type of Bullying Behaviour** (tick relevant box(es))

Physical Aggression		Cyber-bullying	
Damage to Property		Intimidation	
Isolation/Exclusion		Malicious Gossip	
Name Calling		Other (Please Specify)	

**7. Where behaviour is regarded as identity-based bullying, indicate the relevant category:**

Homophobic	Disability/	Racist	Membership of	Other
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# Appendix 3

## Anti-Bullying Class Survey

November .....   
March .....

Year Group \_\_\_\_\_  
Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Please answer all questions as honestly as you can**

1. Are you being bullied at school?  
Yes  No
2. Are you being bullied online i.e. Facebook; Twitter or other social media  
Yes  No
3. Are you being bullied on your mobile phone?  
Yes  No
4. Do you know of any student in your year group or another year group who is being bullied in any of the above ways?  
Yes  No

If you answered yes to question 4, it is very important that you provide enough information to allow us to help the student concerned. We guarantee that your name will not be disclosed to any other person including the student being bullied or the student accused of bullying.

Name of student being bullied \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) of students carrying out the bullying:

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5. Do you know of any student in your year group or any other year group who is being excluded from the rest of the group?

Yes  No

Name of student(s) being isolated \_\_\_\_\_

6. Please write down anything else you would like to say:

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## Woodbrook College Anti Bullying Charter

- We want Woodbrook College to be free from all forms of 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 in times of difficulty
- There should be no name calling
- There should be no physical abuse
- There should be no ganging up on people
- There should be no hurtful “slagging”
- 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
- Problems should be shared
- We all share responsibility to ensure that bullying is not tolerated
- All school staff, the Student Council, the Parent’s Council and the Board of Management are united in their opposition to all forms of bullying
- Verbal, psychological, physical or homophobic bullying will not be tolerated

**Review**

Review Date:..... \_\_\_\_\_