

## Anti-Bullying Policy

Bullying is contrary to the ethos of Jesus and Mary College as expressed in our Mission Statement. Everyone in our school community has a right to a safe, inclusive, learning and working environment and we are all responsible for ensuring that each person is valued, listened to and protected. Bullying undermines and is detrimental to the well-being of the whole school community, we do not accept it and we take action if bullying occurs. Our school atmosphere is characterised by understanding, respect, inclusiveness and equality

### **The Definition of Bullying**

Bullying is repeated inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, whether verbal, psychological, physical or otherwise, conducted by an individual or group against another or others. When behaviour is systematic and ongoing it is bullying. Isolated incidents of aggressive behaviour while not bullying will not be condoned in our school.

### **Types of Bullying**

#### Student behaviour

*Physical Aggression* – this includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping people up. It may also take the form of physical assault.

*Damage to property* – personal property can be the focus of attention for a bully; this may result in damage to clothing, school books and other learning material or interference with a student's locker or property. Items of personal property may be broken, stolen, hidden or defaced.

*Extortion*-demands for money may be made, often accompanied by threats in the event of the victim not "paying up". Victims' food, phone, homework, books or money may be taken.

*Intimidation* – some bullying behaviour takes the form of intimidation: it is based on the use of very aggressive body language or a "look" - a facial expression which conveys aggression and or/dislike.

*Abusive Telephone calls* – the abusive anonymous telephone call is a form of verbal intimidation or bullying.

*Isolation*- a student is deliberately isolated, excluded or ignored by some, or all, of the class group. This is a form of emotional/psychological bullying. It may be accompanied by writing insulting remarks about the victim, by passing around notes about or drawings of the victim or by whispering insults about them loud enough to be heard.

*Name Calling* – Persistent name calling, directed at the same individual that hurts, insults, or humiliates is regarded as a form of bullying.

*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 appearance, clothing, personal hygiene etc then it assumes the form of bullying. In addition homophobia, racism and sexism are contrary to our ethos and unacceptable in our school.

*Cyberbullying* - this generally happens outside of school. It is the use of the internet or mobile phones to send hurtful messages or post information to damage people's reputation and friendships. It takes place online and through text messages sent to mobile phones.

If a student encounters cyberbullying the following are the steps to take:

- Inform your parents or a trusted adult.
- Do not retaliate. This feeds into cyberbullying and could make other people think you are part of the problem.
- Block the bully from your site. Change your password and contact details.
- Save the evidence. Keep a record of every message but do not reply to any bullying messages.
- Show or give the record of the bullying messages to your parents.

If the cyberbullying persists or gets worse, your parents can:

- File a complaint with the website, ISP, or mobile phone company. There is generally a link on the website's homepage for reporting concerns.
- Contact the Gardai if the cyberbullying includes any threats.

#### Teacher Behaviour

A teacher 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 a student; making negative comments about a student's appearance or background;
- Humiliating directly or indirectly, a student who is vulnerable.

- Neglecting the need to be vigilant to any change in class atmosphere or behaviour

### **Our Positive School Policy on Countering Bullying**

Staff Members share a joint responsibility, under the direction of the Principal to act in preventing bullying/aggressive behaviour by any member of the school community. Comprehensive supervision and monitoring measures, through which all areas of school activity are kept under observation, are in place to ensure a safe and secure environment for our students. A high degree of collective vigilance is needed throughout the school community if bullying behaviour is to be identified and dealt with in a fair and equitable manner. Bullying is a form of unacceptable behaviour which will not be tolerated within Jesus and Mary College.

The following are some of the main tenets of our policy:

- Our school promotes qualities of social responsibility, tolerance and understanding among all its members, both in school and out of school
- The school acknowledges the right of each member of the school community to enjoy school in a secure environment and it is our intention to prevent rather than control bullying
- Each class takes place in an atmosphere of respect and teachers are aware of maintaining vigilance for any sign of a change to this respectful atmosphere. Derogatory comments or snide remarks made about classmates are discouraged by all teachers
- The school promotes positive habits of self-respect, mutual respect, self-discipline, responsibility and courtesy within the school community
- Students are made aware of Bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour during their induction programme in first year and through programmes such as SPHE and in their pastoral care classes
- Our school recognises the right of parents/guardians to share in the task of equipping the students with a range of life skills
- Our school recognises the need to promote cooperation and communication between school and home to consolidate relationships within the school community and to keep parents/guardians informed and where necessary involved in procedures
- The school acknowledges the uniqueness of each individual
- The school identifies aspects of curriculum through which positive and lasting influences can be exerted towards forming students' attitudes and values. As self-esteem is the single most influential factor in determining behaviour, teachers provide students with opportunities to develop a positive sense of worth
- The school disapproves of offensive or other aggressive behaviour by any of its members

### **Procedures for reporting an incident of Bullying Behaviour**

- The student who is being bullied **must** tell someone. She should talk to someone she feels comfortable in telling i.e. her Dean, Year Head, Class Tutor, a Staff member, her Parents, a Prefect or a senior student
- The person to whom the incident has been reported should refer to the relevant Dean/Year Head as the Dean/Year Head should be informed
- The staff member who has been informed, may talk to the student(s) involved and document the incident. All reports of bullying, no matter how trivial, will be noted, investigated and dealt with by teachers
- All students involved will provide a written report of the incident
- The Deputy Principal will be informed
- Parents may be requested to sign a photocopy of their daughters' report
- The Deputy Principal /Dean will make contact with the parents of both the student who has bullied and the victim as quickly as possible
- Appropriate sanctions will then be implemented
- The Guidance Counsellor may act as a support for all involved at any of the above stages
- The student or person who reports the incident will be notified that the situation has been investigated
- A record will be kept of all bullying incidents
- In cases of a complaint regarding a staff member, this should be raised with the staff member in the first instance and if necessary with the Principal.

### **Procedures for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying**

- Teachers will take a calm, unemotional, problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour reported by students, staff or parents/ guardians. When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour answers to questions of what, where, when, who, why, will be sought. This will be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict, in a non-aggressive manner
- These incidents will be investigated outside the classroom situation
- The teacher will speak separately to the students involved, in an attempt to get both sides of the story. If a group of students are involved each member will be interviewed individually and asked to give a written account of what happened.
- All interviews will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all students concerned
- Students who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this way
- If it is concluded that a student has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it will be made clear to her how she is in breach of our Code of Behaviour and she will be asked to try to see the situation from the victim's point of view. She will be instructed to cease this unacceptable behaviour immediately
- Parents of both parties involved will be informed of the situation and the actions taken by the school will be explained to them. They will be asked to reinforce or support the actions taken by the school
- If the incidents continue parents will be asked to come to the school to discuss the situation with the Year Head/ Deputy Principal. At this meeting counselling or other intervention will be suggested to bring about a resolution to the situation
- If there are any further incidents after parents have met with the Year Head/ Deputy then further meetings will take place with the Principal where suspension or in exceptional circumstances expulsion may be discussed
- In the case of cyberbullying that may happen in the school, if the person responsible for the content is known, she will be asked to remove it and her parents will be informed. If it continues it will be reported to the social networking site. A record of the cyberbullying will be kept as evidence and may ultimately be reported to the Gardai.

### **Sanctions**

Our aim is to bring about a change in behaviour so bullying does not re occur. The wellbeing of our students is of paramount importance to us.

1. Any student involved in bullying behaviour will be warned to stop and her parents will be contacted.
2. If the student continues to be involved in the bullying behaviour, her parents will be required to come to the school to meet with the Dean/Deputy Principal. At this meeting counselling or other intervention to change the behaviour may be suggested. Both parents and student will be informed that if the unacceptable behaviour continues any further meeting will take place with the Principal
3. If the incident is particularly serious or if the bullying behaviour continues after parents have met with the Deputy Principal any further meetings will take place with the Principal where suspension may be imposed.
4. The Guidance Counsellor will meet with the students after a period of time to ensure that bullying has ceased.
5. Records will be kept of all bullying incidents
6. In certain exceptional instances expulsion may be the sanction, if all other interventions have failed

### **Parental Involvement**

- Parents of a student who is a victim of bullying must have the confidence to inform the school
- Parents of a student who is engaged in bullying behaviour have a major responsibility in changing their child's behaviour both parents and school can work together to bring about the desired change
- Parents should monitor their daughter's use of the internet and educate them in the importance of appropriate content regarding social networking sites. Parents should be aware of the potential for cyber-bullying and should be vigilant in this regard. As this generally happens outside of school, external agencies e.g. police may need to be contacted
- Parents should ensure that bullying outside of school must be addressed by them and reinforce in their children the unacceptable nature of this behaviour

- Parents are involved in the drafting of our anti-bullying policy and should familiarise themselves with the procedures
- Home factors play a substantial role in the prevention of bullying and working in cooperation with the school is of great importance in changing unacceptable behaviour
- In conjunction with the school, Parents should remind their children that the internet is not a private place and remind them of the four characteristics of Digital Media-

1. It is searchable: Anyone, anytime, anywhere can find it

2. It is forever: Anyone can find it today, tomorrow, thirty years from now

3. It is copyable: once they find it they can copy it, share it and change it

4. It has a global invisible audience: You cannot tell who is sharing your pages. Even if your page is private you have no control over what "friends" will do with it. (From Integrating Internet Safety into Teaching + Learning, NCTE)

### **Student Involvement**

Bullying is not accepted or tolerated in our school. Students are a powerful channel of change and learning not to accept bullying and how to deal with bullying, if it occurs, is a life skill. Students have a duty to make school and class a safe and happy place, which is inclusive of all.

#### *The Bully*

It is generally accepted that bullying is a learned behaviour. It is also of note that many bullies suffer from a lack of confidence and have low self-esteem. It is not uncommon to find that students who engage in bullying behaviour have been bullied themselves.

#### *The Victim*

Students are most at risk of becoming victims if they react in a vulnerable and distressed manner. The seriousness and duration of the bullying behaviour is directly related to the victims continuing response to the verbal, physical or psychological aggression. It is imperative that any incident of bullying is reported as soon as possible so that it may be addressed quickly.

### The Rights of Students with Respect to Bullying

- The right not to be bullied
- The right to report if bullied
- The right of a student to report that she feels another/others is/are being bullied
- The right to be listened to in a sensitive and discreet way
- The right to expect a response
- The right to know about, understand and have access to a clear, defined procedure for dealing with bullying
- The right of both the alleged bully and victim to be heard

### The responsibilities of Students who witness incidents of bullying

Students should realise that they have a responsibility for the safety and welfare of fellow students. If any student is aware that bullying is taking place she/they have a responsibility to tell someone who is in a position to help e.g. Dean, Year Head, Class Tutor, staff member Parents, Prefects or senior students. Every student has the right to feel secure and safe for having the initiative to report, even if what she reports turns out not to be bullying, she has acted correctly.

### **School Involvement**

A classroom atmosphere of discipline, based on mutual respect, courtesy and cooperation is created by teachers in all classes. Teachers are also aware of the importance of vigilance and monitoring, not only in class, but also going to or from classrooms and during breaks. Teachers have collective responsibility for ensuring our environment is a safe place for our students. In addition school based initiatives will reinforce positive behaviour and certain programmes such as SPHE and pastoral care reinforce appropriate behaviour.

### **Conclusion**

At the centre of our whole school response to bullying is the creation of a positive school climate which focuses on respect for the individual. We all have a responsibility for the safety and welfare of each other. It is important that we have a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and those involved in bullying behaviour if this occurs. Our school policy on anti-bullying is an influential measure in countering inappropriate or bullying behaviour as all partners in education i.e. students, teachers and parents have cooperated in its formulation.

# Template for recording bullying behaviour

1. Name of student being bullied and class group

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

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

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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

Student concerned	
Other Student	
Parent	
Teacher	
Other	

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

Playground	
Classroom	
Corridor	
Toilets	
School Bus	
Other	

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

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

Physical Aggression	
Damage to Property	
Isolation/Exclusion	
Name Calling	

Cyber-bullying	
Intimidation	
Malicious Gossip	
Other (specify)	

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

Homophobic	Disability/SEN Related	Racist	Membership of Traveller community	Other (specify)

8. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact

9. Details of actions taken

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ ( Relevant Teacher) Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Parents' Charter on Anti-bullying

We as Parents/Guardians:

- Accept that there are multiple perspectives to a bullying situation.
- Accept that our strategy in a bullying situation is formative and restorative, rather than punitive.
- Accept that as adults we must assist the school in restoring calm to the situation.
- Will concentrate on co-operation with the school authorities in seeking a solution to the bullying problem.
- Will, as far as is practicable, supervise our daughters' use of cyber platforms which can facilitate bullying. (For younger girls Jesus and Mary College strongly urges parents not to permit them access to social networking sites.)
- Will, as far as is practicable, record cyber material relating to a bullying incident.
- Will work to inform/educate our daughters about behaviour that could be interpreted by others as being of a bullying nature.

## Cyber-bullying and inappropriate messaging Policy

Bullying is contrary to the ethos of Jesus and Mary College as expressed in our Mission Statement

This Anti-Cyber-bullying Policy is an expanded expression of the sentiments contained in the Anti-Bullying Policy of Jesus and Mary College and should be read in conjunction with that document.

### Definitions

**Cyber-bullying** is said to occur when a student is tormented, threatened, harassed, humiliated, embarrassed or otherwise targeted by another student using, internet, interactive and digital technologies or mobile phones.

**Inappropriate messaging** occurs when students willingly send and receive material of an inappropriate nature to each other and while this may not be classified as cyber-bullying it is against school policy and will be dealt with accordingly.

Due to the instant, public, and potentially permanent nature of access to material posted on social media and its capacity to multiply exponentially, a single inappropriate or offensive posting may constitute cyber-bullying.

In many ways features of cyber-bullying replicate aspects of bullying behaviour. However, there are several significant differences in that cyber-bullying allows for:

- The potential for invasion of home and personal space
- difficulty in controlling electronically circulated messages
- a large unlimited size of audience
- perceived anonymity

### Methods by which young people may bully online:

- Sending someone mean or threatening emails, instant messages, or text messages.
- Sending photos without permission being sought or granted
- Excluding someone from an instant messenger friends/buddy list or blocking her email for no reason
- Tricking someone into revealing personal or embarrassing information and sending it to others
- Using someone's password or breaking into someone's email or instant message account to send cruel or untrue messages while posing as that person
- Creating websites to make fun of another person
- Uploading photos to social networking sites without permission being sought or granted
- Using websites to rate peers
- Leaving hurtful comments on social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter etc.

### Jesus and Mary College Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) ensures the following:

- Supervision is always in place when students are online
- Websites are previewed and evaluated
- Impero system monitors and filters students' computer use
- Students' internet usage will be monitored by checking user files, temporary files and history files
- Students do not have access to MSN or social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter

*(see Acceptable Use Policy for full details)*

Jesus and Mary College educates students to understand that bullying of any nature is hurtful and wrong. The school community is encouraged to behave in a respectful manner both on and offline. The entire school community is informed and educated with regard to the school's Acceptable Use Policy. All members are fully aware of the sanctions which will be imposed for the misuse of school computers used to cause hurt and distress to anyone.

Students are made aware of their rights and responsibilities online and offline as part of the implementation of the school's AUP. They are taught that the Internet is not a private place and they must guard their private information online.

The AUP Policy promotes the positive use of technology, discusses etiquette and personal safety issues. The school encourages a "telling" atmosphere including the reporting of cyber bullying. The ethos of the school encourages friendship and the promotion of positive well-being within a supportive environment.

### **Parental Responsibility and Involvement**

Parents must take full responsibility for their daughter's use of the Internet or mobile phones outside school. Parents should monitor both the sites accessed by their daughters and the time spent on the Internet. All incidents of cyber bullying that have their origins in school will be fully investigated, recorded, and dealt with under the procedures laid down in our Code of Behaviour, the Anti-Bullying Policy and Acceptable Use Policy. Sanctions laid down in these policies will be adhered to in response to inappropriate use of media and information technology.

Incidents of cyber bullying which take place outside and affect a student in school will be brought to the attention of parents/guardians. In regard to serious incidents of this type of bullying behaviour it may be appropriate to inform outside agencies such as the Gardai.

Responding to cyber bullying

- Offer support and reassurance to your daughter if she has been a victim of cyber bullying
- Assist your daughter in keeping relevant evidence for investigation by printing Web pages and not deleting mobile messages
- Show your daughter how to prevent it happening again by changing password and contact details, blocking contacts, reporting abuse on site.
- Ensure that the victim knows not to retaliate or return the message
- Personal information should be kept private online
- Insist that your daughter never gives her personal password to an acquaintance or friend
- Insist that your daughter never accepts as an "online friend" a stranger whom she does not know in real life

If your daughter has been the perpetrator of cyber-bullying it is important that her wrong doing is discussed with her and the potential impact her behaviour and actions may have on other people. If the school has been responsible in identifying her actions both school and home should work together in bringing about a change in behaviour. In the first instance support will be provided in the form of counselling, if needed, but if the negative behaviour continues sanctions will be imposed.

While we must provide the highest protection possible for students using new technologies, families must also foster a balance between protecting children and teaching them to be aware of potential dangers and assessing threats for themselves. Encouraging students to talk about issues they come across online is a step towards building trust in the ability of young people to use the Internet and mobile phones responsibly and to safeguard themselves and their peers against those who use the Internet to threaten their welfare. (Bernados, 2009)

### **Procedures for Noting and Reporting Incidents of Cyber bullying**

- a) If a student receives an abusive email or text (or any other form of unacceptable electronic communication) from another student, she should report the matter to class tutor/year head as soon as possible. A copy of the offensive communication with full headers, plus dates and times, should be saved wherever possible.
- b) Depending on the nature of the allegation, the case will usually be addressed initially by the class tutor or year head. Bullying report forms will normally be completed by one of the investigating teachers. A copy of the Bullying Report Form will be kept in the Student File of both/all parties. For

more serious allegations, the incident may involve the Deputy Principal and in extreme cases could involve the Gardai / other external agencies.

- c) As soon as reasonably possible after the allegation is made, the student(s) involved will be interviewed by the investigating teacher(s) and given the opportunity to state the case in order to establish the truth.
- d) At the conclusion of the investigation, and in light of what has been concluded, a decision will be made. This will be communicated to the staff and students involved and to parents.
- e) In the case of a complaint regarding a staff member, this should be referred to the Principal
- f) Where a case relating to a student remains unresolved the matter should be referred to the Principal in the first instance.
- g) In order to appeal a decision a parent/student may request a review by the Board of Management. A request for such a review must be submitted in writing to the Principal.

### **Sanctions**

In the first instance our aim is to bring about a change in behaviour and this may be attained by support and counselling for all parties. However if the perpetrator continues to engage in the offensive behaviour punitive sanctions may be imposed

The aim of a sanction is to:

- Help the person harmed feel safe again and be assured that the bullying will stop
- Hold the perpetrator to account by getting her to recognise the harm caused and to deter her from repeating the behaviour
- Demonstrate to the school community that cyber bullying is unacceptable and that the school has effective ways of dealing with it, so deterring others from behaving similarly.

Sanctions may include

- A contract of good behaviour
- School community service
- Withdrawal of privileges
- Written assignments (focusing on the behaviour where appropriate)
- Detention
- Other sanctions as may be deemed appropriate
- Suspension
- Expulsion

Note 1: The seriousness of the violation will determine the sanction to be applied

Note 2: Offenders found to have falsely accused another member of the school community of an act of cyber bullying will also be subject to the sanctions listed.

Note 3: In circumstances where an investigation of cyber-bullying is not proven but the school is satisfied that a genuine and reasonable complaint has been made, no action will be taken against the complainant.

### **Staff Members**

Any case involving a staff member will be referred to the Principal or in the case of the Principal to the Board of Management.

In circumstances where a teacher may be involved in cyber-bullying the Code of Professional Conduct will apply with appropriate disciplinary procedures. Other staff members will be subject to appropriate disciplinary procedures.

### **Parent Body**

The Parents' Council has drawn up a Charter to emphasise the part they will play in supporting the school's Anti-bullying policy.