

St. Michael's College C.S.Sp.



ANTI – BULLYING POLICY

Scope of Policy:

This Policy Document applies to the student population of the College and its purpose is to provide and guarantee the care and protection of all students in accordance with the mission statement of the College.

Definition:

The Department of Education and Skills in their guidelines on anti-bullying procedures for primary and post-primary schools issued in September 2013 defines bullying 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.

Bullying is in essence any repeated aggressive behaviour whether it be by physical action, gesture, word, online or otherwise, be it directly or indirectly applied by one or more persons against another person or persons with the result that the individual definitive right to personal dignity is eradicated.

There are many different forms that bullying can take and while no list can be totally definitive the Department of Education and Skills outlines some examples of what forms bullying can take:

- **Deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying.**
- **Cyber-bullying**
- **Identity based bullying such as homophobic bullying, racist bullying, bullying based on a person's membership of the Traveller Community and bullying of those with disabilities or special educational needs.**

- Once off offensive or hurtful public messages, images or statement on any social network site or other public forum where that message, image or statement can be viewed and / or repeated by other people.
- Harassment in any form of unwanted conduct that is prohibited. Equality Legislation and in particular if same is prohibited as being one of the nine stated discriminatory grounds – gender (including transgender), civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race, membership of the travelling community.

Types of Behaviour deemed to be inappropriate:

- An attack by gossip, rumour, innuendo or ridicule on the reputation of a person.
- An attack by gossip, rumour, innuendo or ridicule on the reputation of the family of any person.
- Exclusion and isolation.
- Aggressive or obscene language.
- Physical abuse or threatened physical abuse.
- Written abuse, anonymous or otherwise.
- Name calling and / or derogatory comments regarding sexual orientation, academic ability or similar.
- Theft.
- Racist comment.
- Any form of verbal abuse.
- Cyber bullying which is the wrongful use of technology with the aim of intimidating or frightening or threatening another student. The use of social networking sites, email, text messaging, digital postings can form part of this type of bullying.
- Slagging.
- Damaging the property of another student.
- Extortio.

Please note that the above list ***is not*** exhaustive.

To Whom and When does the Anti-Bullying Policy of St. Michael's College Apply?

- All students of St. Michael's College Secondary School.
- During the school day
- On the school premises
- Whenever in school uniform both inside and outside the school grounds
- On all school based activities – rugby matches, tennis, basketball, table tennis etc., and on all trips both national and international.
- Whenever representing the school at any event.
- To any behaviour that is deemed not to be in accordance with the school code of conduct and / or any behaviour that is, in the view of the school Principal likely to adversely affect the reputation of St. Michael's College. Please note that the above list is not exhaustive.

Bullying – What will St. Michael's College aim for?

St. Michael's will do as much as possible to try and ensure that bullying does not take place and as a consequence ensure that all students can be educated in a harmonious and hardworking environment.

All incidents of bullying that are reported will be noted and records kept.

Students as the main stakeholders in the school community will be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour and the Student Council will be encouraged, in conjunction with teachers in relevant subject areas, to run campaigns throughout the college to highlight the fact that reporting incidents of bullying is responsible behaviour.

The College will have a programme of support for both the bully and the bullied.

All incidents of bullying will be dealt with seriously.

All members of staff of the college will work in harmony to eradicate incidents of bullying.

Appropriate action will be taken to ensure that bullying does not continue:

The College will provide education for all students on bullying through SPHE (Social, Personal and Health Education).

Student mentoring where 6th Year students are paired with first year students will aim to help educate and eradicate bullying.

Anti-bullying awareness will be encouraged.

Dealing with a case of bullying in St. Michael's College:

If a case of bullying is noticed or a report of bullying received by a teacher or any auxiliary member of staff the following procedures can be put into action:

- Speak separately to the person who appears to be bullying, the person who appears to be the victim and if possible any independent witness to incidents of bullying.
- Should the incident be considered serious, it should be immediately reported to the relevant Year Head and / or the Principal / Deputy Principal.

Any incident of bullying must be recorded, in accordance with the Department of Education and Skills Guidelines (2013). The Year Head will complete the appropriate form in the absence of a relevant teacher being appointed to keep such records.

The Year Head / Principal / Deputy Principal should make contact with the parents where appropriate and deemed necessary.

The victim of bullying will be offered reassurance and ongoing support and in particular the Care Team will review the student's progress over the weeks following the first reporting of an incidence of bullying.

Support will be offered to the bully who will be told that the behaviour will not be tolerated. Contact may be made with the parents / guardians of the bully in the context of reacquainting the bully with the college's anti-bullying policy.

The victim of bullying and his parent(s) / guardian(s) will be kept informed of the action that has been taken by the college authorities in relation to the matter as well as any further action that may be necessitated.

The Annual Year meetings will include an address on the topic of bullying and this address will include an outline of any changes to the policy that may have taken place after a review of the anti-bullying policy has been conducted on a yearly basis in line with the directions outlined by the Department of Education and Skills.

The Student Council will be consulted on a regular basis regarding bullying and given statistics on incidents of bullying in the College.

A report on all cases of bullying will be prepared and this can include written notes from both the alleged victim and perpetrator.

Dealing with Bullying – Guidelines for Parents / Guardians

St. Michael's College secondary school aspires to creating a bullying free environment for all students and indeed teachers and all auxiliary staff. In line with this aspiration the College community works together to support one another. However there is a realisation that unfortunately it is impossible to guarantee that no bullying is happening and there are some signs and / or symptoms that parent(s) / guardian(s) must be mindful of to ensure that if any incidence of bullying occurs it will be confronted and stopped as soon as possible. The following list makes parent(s) / guardian(s) aware of some signs and / or symptoms that could indicate a student is being bullied. These signs and / or symptoms do not necessarily mean that a student is being bullied. However, if repeated or occurring in combination it is recommended that parent(s) / guardian(s) investigate further.

- A student who has been happy at school losing interest and enthusiasm for school. This can manifest itself through a decrease in grades and overall performance in school.
- Anxiety about travelling to and from school – requesting parent(s) / guardian(s) to drive or collect them from school.
- Unwillingness to attend school.
- Damage to bicycles or personal property, for example damage to clothes, books or loss of same.
- A student who returns home from school in a very bad humour without explanation.
- Mood changes, in particular before the recommencement of school, at the end of the weekend or school holidays.
- Frequent minor illnesses, especially headaches and stomach aches, (difficulty in sleeping and / or not eating). These symptoms are often accompanied by mood changes that are mentioned above.
- An increase in requests for money or stealing money.
- Unexplained cuts and / or bruises.
- Recurrent nightmares
- Truancy

- Enuresis
- Visible signs of anxiety or distress, e.g. stammering, withdrawing, (difficult sleeping, vomiting).
- Reluctance and / or refusal to say what is troubling him.

FIRST STEPS (If a parent / guardian / friend notices any signs / symptoms that could indicate a possibility of bullying), it is important that investigating same does not put pressure on the student. It is recommended that the school be contacted by telephone and / or email at first. A meeting can follow this up, where necessary.

DEALING WITH BULLYING: GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS

Students should discuss any incident of bullying with their parent(s) / guardian(s) / siblings / family where possible. This can then lead to contact being made with the College. It is often the case that students prefer to talk to a teacher / Year Head about any bullying they may experience and it is important to educate all students of St. Michael's College that talking with a teacher or another trusted adult within the College is responsible behaviour.

It is not responsible behaviour to ignore the problem. It is important that all students of the College realise that they each have a responsibility towards their fellow students and as such they too must speak out if they see any bullying behaviour happening towards one of their fellow students. A culture of silence around this issue is not responsible behaviour.

The Chaplaincy Team and the Care Team of the College are further points of contact for any students or parent(s) / guardian(s) who have concerns around the issue of bullying.

WHO TO TELL: RESPONSIBLE ADULT / TEACHER / YEAR HEAD / DEPUTY PRINCIPAL / PRINCIPAL.

HOW TO TELL?

Talk to a teacher after class/on corridor. Hand up a note with your work to the teacher. Tell your parent(s) / guardian(s) at home. Make a phone call to the school or to a teacher you get on with. Talk to a senior member of the Student Council. Get a parent / guardian / friend to tell on your behalf.

The College, in accordance with the Code of Behaviour will have sanctions in place for incidents of bullying and these will include if necessary expulsion / suspension / detention / verbal warning / referral to a child psychologist / referral to the local Garda Juvenile Liaison Officer.

The above list contains merely examples of sanctions that can be imposed by the College authorities.

Records of incidents of bullying can have a major impact on the reference that the College will provide to students when leaving the College or if requested during the years one spends as a student in the college. Further all records of incidents of bullying will be kept in St. Michael's College for a period not to exceed five years after all involved in any incidents of bullying have left St. Michael's College.

If there is a complaint of bullying of a student from a staff member the Principal of the College must be immediately informed.

Conclusion

St. Michael's College commits to continuously working towards having an atmosphere of respect, encouragement and understanding prevail throughout the College community. The development and contribution that each individual makes to the College will be acknowledged and the core values of the Spiritan Order will be followed.

An environment where there is strong resistance to any form of bullying exists in St. Michael's College so that all can achieve their potential and so that all can work in a harmonious manner to benefit growth and the common good.