



# **ST. TIERNAN'S COLLEGE**

*Coláiste Thiarnáin Naofa*

## **St Tiernan's College Anti-Bullying Policy**

## **Introduction:**

One of the values that St. Tiernan's College have at its core is that it endeavours to provide a safe environment for everyone within the school community so they can enjoy school within a secure setting. This policy complies with the requirements of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for primary and post primary schools which were published in September 2013.

We recognise the very serious nature of Bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of pupils and staff and are therefore fully committed to preventing and tackling any bullying behavior that may occur.

It is everybody's responsibility to ensure that Bullying does not happen and everyone has the responsibility to tell. Students who are aware of Bullying or witness the incident of bullying must be encouraged to tell someone. We hope to create a "telling school" where students feel free to speak to those in authority without the fear of the stigma of "telling tales".

The St. Tiernan's College Anti Bullying Policy outlines clearly what Bullying is and the procedures that are to be followed in accordance with the Department of Education Guidelines. Education and prevention is the key part of this policy along with giving support to anyone who is affected by bullying.

This Policy will be subject to regular review and there will be regular consultation between Management, Staff, Students, and Parents/ Guardians to ensure that this Policy meets the needs of all parties involved.

## **Scope**

This policy applies to the whole school community – students, teachers, other staff, Parents/Guardians/guardians and other relevant personnel as measures under the policy relate to them. The anti-bullying policy addresses bullying behaviour and harassment.

Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim ETB must comply with the requirements of the Employment Equality Acts 1998 and 2004 and, in this regard, also has an anti-bullying and anti-harassment policy in place for staff (a statutory Code of Practice applies to harassment and sexual harassment in the workplace). The 'Dignity in the Workplace' policy covers interactions among staff only.

The proliferation of technology in schools and across all age-groups in society has resulted in possibilities for anti-social and bullying behaviour beyond the normal school day. Therefore, it is necessary for this policy to cover activities that happen during the regular school day, including breaks, on school tours or activities arranged by the school and at any other time where the behaviour impacts negatively on any other member of the school community or where it is deemed appropriate or necessary.

## **Relationship to Mission Statement of the School**

This policy promotes the essence of our mission statement:

St. Tiernan's College is committed to providing an education where each student is encouraged and supported in reaching their full potential.

This is provided in a caring, safe and happy environment and in partnership with parents and guardians.

Our philosophy of co-education aspires to a holistic education encompassing an ethos of mutual respect for one another and a strong emphasis on high quality educational achievements.

We will work with all our stakeholders to ensure this.

## **Objectives of the policy**

- To create a school ethos which encourages students to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To raise awareness of bullying as an unacceptable form of behaviour with school management, personnel, teachers, students, Parents/ Guardians/guardians.
- To create a school ethos that acknowledges, accommodates and respects a diversity of students and staff across the nine grounds covered by the equality legislation.
- To ensure that the school's Social, Personal and Health Education programme raises awareness of the factors associated with bullying behaviour and develops appropriate knowledge, skills and behaviours.
- To take practical actions to prevent incidents of bullying behaviour e.g. to ensure comprehensive supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of school activity are kept under observation.
- To develop procedures for reporting and recording incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To develop procedures for investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To develop a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and those involved in bullying behaviour.
- To work with, and through, the various local agencies in countering all forms of bullying and anti-social behaviour.
- These agencies include the HSE, An Garda Síochána, Mayo Youth Services, and NEPS.

## **Definition of Bullying**

In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the code of behaviour guidelines issued by Túsla, the Board of Management of St Tiernan's College has adopted the following anti-bullying policy within the framework of the school's overall code of behaviour. This policy fully complies with the requirements of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* which were published in September 2013.

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; and
  - 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; and
  - 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; and

On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy

Bullying is 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:

- Physical Aggression
- Intimidation
- Name calling
- Deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip
- Cyber-bullying
- Bullying based on a person's identity 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
- Damage to property
- Extortion

For the purposes of this policy, the term bullying also encompasses harassment and sexual harassment, defined as follows:

- Harassment: any form of unwanted conduct in relation to any of the nine grounds named in the equality legislation that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading or offensive environment for the victim.
- Sexual harassment: any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading or offensive environment for the victim.

The nine grounds are gender, marital status, family status, age, disability, sexual orientation, race, religion, and membership of the Traveller community.

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 Cyber bullying behaviour.

### **Cyber-bullying:**

Cyber- Bullying has been defined as "an aggressive, intentional act, carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself". It is bullying carried out through the use of

information and communication technologies such as text, social network sites, e-mail, instant messaging (IM), apps, gaming sites, chat-rooms and other online technologies. Being the target of inappropriate or hurtful messages is the most common form of online bullying.

Cyber-bullying can include any or more of the following;

- Posting harsh messages or threats on a social network, profile or blog that belongs to either the victim or the perpetrator.
- Uploading manipulated images or other images taken without the victim's knowledge or consent.
- Using personal information disclosed by the victim against them in a different and damaging context.
- Using the public forum to damage the victim's reputation.
- Setting up a profile page or blog, posing as the victim, and posting provocative messages or humiliating posts.
- Sending offensive, threatening or hate SMS messages.

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/Guardians is of importance in this regard. Our prevention and awareness-raising measures also take into account the scope for cyber-bullying to occur outside of school. If this occurs and is affecting school life for any students, steps will be followed to resolve the issue. Staff will endeavour to identify signs of cyber bullying and to keep informed about the technologies that children commonly use. Negative behaviour that does not meet these definitions of bullying will be dealt with in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour.

A comprehensive explanation of the types of bullying is set out above can be found in Section 2 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post- Primary Schools. This can be viewed at <http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/Anti-Bullying-Procedures-for-Primary-and-Post-Primary-Schools.pdf>.

Encouraging other people to engage in any of these types of behaviour is also bullying, even if you do not directly do any of them yourself. In fact, in some ways it is even worse because it affects the people you persuade to do these things as well as the victim.

Similarly, sitting idly by and by-standing, while bullying of another student takes place, is also unacceptable. Inform someone who is in a position to intervene and stop this behaviour, e.g., a teacher or your Parents/ Guardians etc.

More than anything else, the combating of bullying will depend on the extent to which students note and report bullying. In this context, the well-being of students is very much dependent on the vigilance of their fellow students and their preparedness to report concerns about bullying to the teaching staff and/or school management. All teaching staff will reinforce this point to students on an ongoing basis.

The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying is (are) as follows: (see Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):

At first instance the matter will be referred to the relevant Tutor who will liaise with the Year Head. The matter will be brought to the Deputy Principal or Principal. All staff will follow the policy guidelines.

### **Education and prevention.**

#### **Roles of staff, students, ancillary staff, Parents/ Guardians and any visitors to the school in the prevention of bullying:**

Each member of the school community has a role in the prevention of bullying. It is important that all members of the school community feel that they can bring an incident of bullying to the notice of a staff member and that they will be dealt with compassionately and without animosity. To suffer in silence is only to make the situation worse and help is there. Your problem is important to the staff of St Tiernans. If you see others being bullied you should come forward and make somebody aware of the incident. Most importantly everybody should know that it is ok to tell others, help will be given.

Students will be provided with opportunities to understand the causes and effects of bullying, the issue of identity-based bullying and in particular homophobic and trans-phobic

bullying. This will include the display of LGBTQI+ posters (as appropriate) and discussions with Parents/ Guardians about statements of welcome and respect for LGBTQI+ members of the school community, teaching the Social, Personal, Health Education (SPHE) resource, Growing Up LGBTQI+ and participating in LGBTQI+ awareness events.

St Tiernan's College will adopt a school-wide approach involving management, staff, Parents/ Guardians, students and members of the wider community with a connection to St Tiernan's College to prevent and combat bullying. In this context, St Tiernan's College is committed to engaging with Parents/ Guardians. Firstly, St Tiernan's College will involve them in the development of policies and practices to combat bullying. Secondly St Tiernan's College will hold regular information evenings for Parents/ Guardians to ensure that they understand the way St Tiernan's College deals with bullying, and to provide them with reliable information on how they may contribute towards combating bullying. In this regard, it is important that Parents/ Guardians realise that anyone can be a bully and anyone can be a target of bullying. It is not just other people's sons and daughters that can bully. Here, also, it is important to realise that disagreements between young people are part and parcel of negotiating the road to adulthood and that every youthful disagreement should not be treated as a full-blown bullying episode.

Where necessary St Tiernan's College will seek the assistance of and work with NEPS, the HSE and the Gardaí, as appropriate, to combat bullying – identify the perpetrators and support the victims.

In combating bullying, St Tiernan's College will take particular account of the needs of pupils with disabilities or with SEN. This will involve improving inclusion, focusing on developing social skills, paying particular attention to student induction and cultivating a school culture that respects everyone and values helping one another.

St Tiernan's College will, each year, hold a Safe Internet Awareness day and an Anti-bullying awareness/ friendship week, within our Well-Being Week, to highlight the whole issue of bullying and staying safe using modern technology.

### **Student's role in anti-bullying:**

Bullying cannot be dealt with unless the staff are aware of the problem. If another student's behaviour is having a negative impact on your day to day school life it is important to make somebody that you feel comfortable talking to aware of the problem. Also if you see bullying taking place do not ignore the situation not everybody is strong enough to stand up for themselves. We all need help sometimes. It is important that you know that:

1. All reports will be taken seriously and appropriate action will be taken.

2. Investigations will be anonymous and kept private.
3. All information will be retained and kept on file in the event of any further incidents taking place.
4. Help and support is always available.

### **Staff Behaviour:**

All members of staff should be aware that their actions may be willingly or otherwise perceived as bullying. It is important to be aware of the types of behaviour that could cause these feelings.

1. Use of negative or personal comments when dealing with students.
2. Sarcasm or insulting language is not a form of discipline and it can hurt feelings.
3. Threatening behaviour in any form is not acceptable.

### **The role of staff:**

All staff should be aware of the anti-bullying policy and it should become part of the everyday running of the school. We are all in partnership in the implementation of this policy. It is a school policy that we must all adhere to and endeavour to improve and implement to the best of our ability. In doing this some of the tools that staff can use to help are:

1. Tutors can talk to their groups and instil the importance of us all being part of the school community and the impact bullying can have on an individual or groups.
2. They can make sure that students feel comfortable seeking help and know that they will be dealt with fairly and with compassion.
3. Develop a relationship with Parents/ Guardians and guardians so that they feel they can approach the school with any problems that they might have happy in the knowledge that their problems will be dealt with quickly and fairly. This will be done through our pastoral care system, which incorporates; home school liaison officer, year heads and class tutors.
4. Note changes in student behaviour and friendships. This often indicates that there could be a problem

### **Subject Teacher:**

The subject teacher is often the first to notice a change in the behaviour of a student. This can be seen by the student becoming withdrawn, a change in grades for no apparent reason, missing classes, or a change in interaction between other students could be noted. If a staff member notices anything it is important to take action as deemed necessary. School

Principal, Deputy Principal, Year Head and any other members of staff should be made aware of the situation as soon as possible.

### **Role of Parents/ Guardians:**

If Parents /Guardians feel that there is a bullying incident taking place, we as a school hope you would feel that you could come to us and that any worries that you might have will be dealt with in a suitable manner. The management will deal with incidences of alleged bullying on a case-by-case policy. Each bullying incident is different and different issues may need to be treated differently.

It should be noted that all information will be treated with discretion and handled with the utmost consideration for all parties involved.

### **The school's procedures for investigation, follow-up and recording of bullying behaviour and the established intervention strategies used by the school for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour are as follows:**

Incidents of alleged bullying behaviour, no matter how trivial, which are drawn to the attention of a teacher, will be dealt with in the following manner:

Appropriate personnel will speak and listen to all of the students involved in the incident, namely, the Year Head, Deputy Principal and Principal.

- The alleged victim and alleged perpetrators of the incident will be spoken to and encouraged to solve the problem.
- If the situation is not resolved, the alleged victim and perpetrators will be invited to write down any relevant details on to a "Bullying Report Form", (See *Appendix 1*). Written statements from all involved in the incident may be requested and if so attached to the Report Form. Also at this stage Parents /guardians will be informed. They will be given the opportunity of discussing the matter and are in a position to help and support their children before a crisis occurs. Appropriate sanctions **may** be imposed in accordance with the sanctions in the school's code of behaviour.
- All meetings will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils involved.
- Records will be kept of all incidents and of the procedures that were followed.

The Deputy Principal and Principal will be kept informed of all incidents and have access to relevant written records. The Year Head will monitor progress of students involved in a bullying incident by liaising with tutor and students involved (separately) at follow-up meetings.

Where the incident is deemed to be minor, a verbal warning will be given by management to the bully to stop the inappropriate behaviour, pointing out how she/he is in breach of the Code of Behaviour and to try to get her/him to see the situation from the victim's point of view. If deemed appropriate, Parents/ Guardians **may** be contacted. The incident will no longer be considered if there is no recurrence within that academic term. A record will be kept of this incident.

Where the incident is deemed to be more serious (e.g. gross misbehaviour or physical assault or repeated verbal assault or coercion), the Principal or Deputy Principal should be informed immediately and he/she will inform the Board of Management, if necessary. Offenders and victims of bullying may be referred to Counselling/Guidance/Conflict coaching.

Where sanctions are deemed appropriate they may include: (in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour)

- ✓ A contract of good behaviour is signed by the parties involved, students and Parents/ Guardians.
- ✓ Withdrawal of privileges
- ✓ Other sanctions as may be deemed appropriate e.g. Detention
- ✓ Suspension
- ✓ Expulsion.

In the case of a complaint regarding a staff member, this should be referred immediately to the Principal or other appropriate management if the case arises. This will be treated with dignity and referred to the code of professional conduct for teachers, as published by the Teaching Council of Ireland, which provides the terms of reference for teachers in their daily interactions with students.

Where cases, relating to either student or teacher, remain unresolved at school level, the matter should be referred to the Board of Management/ relevant supporting bodies, for example, Unions and The Teaching Council etc.

## **Supervision and Monitoring of Pupils:**

A programme of support for those pupils involved in bullying behaviour must also be part of the school's intervention process. The school's procedures for investigation, follow-up and recording of bullying behaviour and the established strategies used by the school for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour are outlined below. Pupils involved in bullying behaviour will be given assistance on an ongoing basis. The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows:

In investigating and dealing with bullying, the (relevant) teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved.

The school's programme of support for working with pupils involves a whole school approach. Given the complexity of bullying behaviour, no one intervention/ support programme works in all situations. Therefore, various approaches and intervention strategies may be used including suggesting that parent(s)/ Guardian(s) seek referrals so that appropriate outside agencies can assist in order to receive further support for pupils and their families if needed.

## **The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows:**

- Offering an immediate opportunity to discuss the experience with the Year Head, Deputy Principal, Principal or member of staff of their choice.
- Reassuring the pupil, using the support systems in the school (Principal, Deputy Principal, Class Tutor, Year Head, Guidance Counsellor, Teacher etc.)
- Offering continuous support in attempting to restore self-esteem and confidence.
- Students will also be given key skills in order to deal with any further incidents of bullying,
- Pastoral support, coping skills and developing resilience will be provided to the pupil
- Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved will be arranged separately with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date if the pupil who has been bullied is ready and agreeable.

### **Students involved in the bullying incident will be given the opportunity of :**

- Discussing what happened.
- Discovering why the pupil became involved.

- Finding an alternative way of dealing with their issues.
- Establishing the wrongdoing and need to change.
- Informing Parents/ Guardians to help change the attitude of the pupil.
- Support on a continuous basis will be provided to the pupil in question.
- Efforts will be made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied.
- Education strategies such as our S.P.H.E programme and our anti-bullying week will be utilised.

Where a parent/ guardian is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parent/ guardians must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures, which would be the schools Board of Management.

### **Links to other policies:**

This policy is linked to several other policies. This policy is linked with school policies, practices and activities relevant to bullying. The associated policies include:

- The Code of Behaviour
- Child protection policy
- Children First- National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children
- St.Tiernan's College-Acceptable Use of the Internet
- St.Tiernan's College- Health & Safety Policy
- Use of mobile phones, as per the schools' code of behaviour
- SPHE Policy

**If you are looking for further information in relation to this topic, here are some helpful links:**

- <https://sites.google.com/site/costis0801/guideline>
- <https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbmNxsYXdIZHVjYXRpb25jb21wbGlhbmNlfGd4OmZhNDBkODI3MDZiZjVkyQ>
- <http://www.internetsafety.ie/>
- <http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/Action-Plan-On-Bullying-2013.pdf>
- <http://www.fuzion.ie/index.cfm/page/cyberbullying>
- <http://www.facebook.com/help/325807937506242/>

## **Implementation and Evaluation:**

### **Roles and Responsibilities:**

- The Board of Management the Principal and the Management team are responsible for ensuring that the policy is implemented.
- All students will be listened to in an empathetic manner. Teachers will take a calm, professional problem-solving approach to bullying.
- A whole-school approach will be adopted in order to ensure effective implementation of this policy.
- Parent(s)/ guardian(s) and pupils are required to co-operate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving any issues and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationship of the parties involved as quickly as possible.

### **Success Criteria:**

- The well-being of the whole school community, in the light of incidents of bullying behaviour encountered, will be the chief indicator of success.
- The number of reports of incidences over the course of the year along with identifying incidents and follow up interviews with these students will show the level of satisfaction of perpetrators and targets of bullying with the school's policy and procedures.
- Questionnaires will be distributed to all students to investigate bullying behaviour on a continuous basis in order to measure the success criteria of a whole school approach in dealing with bullying.

### **Evaluation:**

The policy will be reviewed and evaluated annually, as required by Circular 045/2013. The review will be done by

- Random surveying of students, Parents/ Guardians and staff by questionnaire.
- Examining the reports on bullying made during the year.
- Regular check in discussions with the class tutor and year head.
- Referral to useful resources through the SPHE, RE and CSPE programmes.
- Providing a forum through the Student Council for feedback from students as to how the policy is working
- Modelling respectful behaviour to all members of the school community at all times

## **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.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on

This policy has been made available to school personnel, and is readily accessible to Parents/ Guardians and pupils on request. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Parents/ Guardians' Association, the DES and the ETB if requested.

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the school management team once in every school year. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested available to the Parents/ Guardians' Association the DES and the ETB if requested.

Finally, St.Tiernan's College is a school which does not condone any form of bullying. St.Tiernan's College creates a school climate which is open, supportive and encourages pupils to disclose and discuss bullying behavior. We create a school culture and climate that celebrates difference. We are all different. That's what makes us special. The people in this school have the right to be themselves. They also have a responsibility to treat others as they would like to be treated. In our school, everybody is valued

**This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on**

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **(Principal)**

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**(Chairperson of Board of Management)**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix 1 Template for recording bullying behaviour

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

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

### 2. Name(s) and class(es) of pupil(s) 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	

### 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

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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 (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 \_\_\_\_\_

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal \_\_\_\_\_

