



## ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

### Our Vision

To create a progressive learning environment of the highest quality where our students grow to become independent, respectful and caring women of integrity who live by Christian values and Dominican principles.

### Our Mission

The mission statement of Dominican College Wicklow is:

*Finding 'Truth' through the education of the Whole Person.*

### This Policy

1. In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the code of behaviour guidelines issued by the NEWB, the Board of Management of Dominican College Wicklow 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.
2. 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.
3. In accordance with the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* bullying is defined as follows:

**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:

- 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 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.

**4. The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows:**

- **The Year Head**
- The Guidance Counsellor
- The Deputy Principal
- The Principal

It is the responsibility of a pupil or parent to bring a bullying concern to any teacher in the school. The Year Head is the usual point of contact for all issues pertaining to pupils' welfare and plays a key role as the relevant teacher in investigating a report of bullying. The Year Head may consult with the Deputy Principal and/or Principal, as appropriate.

An individual teacher / adult who receives a complaint of bullying will document the complaint and give a copy of same to the relevant Year Head for investigation.

5. Dominican education is concerned with the education of the whole person emotional, social, spiritual, intellectual and personal within a caring and committed environment. The values of justice, peace, reconciliation and mutual respect are paramount in the school's ethos. The school environment is characterised by a sense of belonging and inclusion of students of all nationalities, religious and cultural backgrounds. High standards of behavior and respect are expected and positive relationships prevail. Parents and pupils share a responsibility in helping the school to prevent and address school-based bullying behavior and to deal with the negative impact within school of bullying behavior that occurs elsewhere.

**The education and prevention strategies** (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber-bullying, homophobic and transphobic bullying) that will be used by the school are as follows:

- endeavoring to provide a safe environment for pupils
- cultivating a positive school culture which promotes respect for all and helping one another
- cultivating a school-wide understanding and approach to dealing with bullying through discussion at staff meetings, regular Care Team meetings, attendance at CPD events and awareness-raising events
- building empathy, respect and resilience in pupils by availing of relevant opportunities across the curriculum, especially in subjects such as SPHE, the RSE Programme, RE, CSPE and PE. The curriculum promotes a strong culture of respect for diversity and inclusiveness
- teaching the Social, Personal, Health Education (SPHE) resource, *Growing Up LGBT*
- incorporating relevant input from guest speakers to raise awareness of cyber-bullying and homophobic bullying
- ensuring a positive Pastoral Care system involving school Management, Year Heads, Tutors, Guidance Counsellor, class teachers, Prefects, Mentors, Peer-Mediators and 'Buddies' is in place
- encouraging an atmosphere where pupils are comfortable about reporting bullying behavior experienced or observed and including those not directly involved to report bullying
- providing opportunities for pupils to develop a positive sense of self-worth both in curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities
- providing weekly assemblies for each Year Group where pupils are affirmed for their positive behaviour and achievements and where themes in keeping with the school ethos and code of behaviour are addressed
- profiling the existence of the pupil Anti-Bullying Charter by drawing attention to it at Assemblies
- implementing and providing a Positive Affirmation Awards scheme each term to encourage good behaviour,

generosity, regard for others and overall positivity

- displaying posters throughout the school to encourage friendship, support, self-esteem and conflict management
- availability of a Peer-Mediation programme to help them negotiate minor disputes and conflicts
- availability of mentors to junior pupils to provide support in the school and help develop positive social skills
- provision of leadership initiatives such as Student Council, Prefects, Mentors, Ember Leaders and Class Captains to help foster leadership, communication and cooperation skills among pupils
- the operation of a 'Buddy System' to facilitate peer support for individual pupils who may for any reason feel down, vulnerable or alone
- initiatives such as the 'Friendship' (Anti-Bullying) Week focusing on developing pupils' awareness and understanding of bullying, including its causes and effects, dealing explicitly with the issue of identity-based bullying and in particular homophobic and transphobic bullying
- prevention and awareness raising of cyber-bullying by teaching appropriate online behaviour, how to stay safe while on-line and also on developing a culture of reporting any concerns about cyber-bullying
- ensuring the school's Information & Communications Technology (ICT) and Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) and MDMP complement the Anti-Bullying Policy and are drawn up in a consultative manner. Their implementation is designed to help prevent bullying and in particular, cyber-bullying
- availability of I.T. prefects to supervise computer access during lunchtimes. Use of iPads and other forms of technology are permitted under the direction and supervision of a responsible adult, usually a member of staff, in accordance with the school's ICT Acceptable Use Policy
- availability of the school library to students during lunch-break - supervised by Library Prefects. This facilitates the quieter environment preferred by some pupils
- providing regular communication with parents and positive regard for them as the primary educators of their children
- providing anti-bullying awareness presentation to parents, in conjunction with the Parents' Association,
- building a shared understanding with parents of the school's approach to preventing and dealing with bullying
- providing access to group and one-to-one meetings between pupils and the Guidance Counsellor where bullying-related concerns may be addressed and followed up on
- monitoring of pupil behaviour by Year Heads
- providing academic tracking which should help identify pupils who are of concern to the staff
- providing lunch-time activities (e.g. Green Schools Committee, library, etc.)
- inclusion of pupils with Special Educational Needs in school activities
- engaging pupils in addressing problems when they arise
- the extension of School Self Evaluation surveys to evaluate the effectiveness of anti-bullying measures in place and ideas for improvement
- encouraging a culture of telling, with particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders. In that way pupils will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It should be made clear to all pupils that when they report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly
- ensuring that pupils know who to tell and how to tell, e.g.:
  - *Direct approach to teacher at an appropriate time, for example after class*
  - *Hand note up with homework*
  - *Make a phone call to the school or to a trusted teacher in the school*
  - *Approach to Year Head, Prefect or Mentor*
  - *Get a parent(s)/guardian(s) or friend to tell on your behalf*
  - *Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place*
- making all pupils, parents, teaching and non-teaching staff aware of this policy
- evaluating this policy regularly

Dominican College Wicklow's Anti-Bullying Policy is adopted in conjunction with the school's Code of Behaviour which clearly states that bullying and harassment are unacceptable. The approach to developing positive

behavior and procedures for addressing serious misconduct as outlined in the Code of Behaviour will be implemented.

6. The Board of Management recognises that no single intervention strategy is effective in all situations. In investigating and dealing with bullying behavior, the primary aim of the school will be to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as practicable, the relationship of the parties involved, rather than to apportion blame. Parents, staff and pupils need to be aware that the investigation of any bullying allegation takes time. Parents and pupils are required to co-operate with any investigation and to assist the school in resolving the matter as quickly as possible. The school offers parents an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports for their pupils.

**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:

**Level 1**

- An individual teacher who receives a complaint of bullying will document the complaint and give a copy of same to the relevant Year Head for investigation
- all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying are initially investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher (Year Head)
- Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), bus escorts, caretakers, cleaners are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the Year Head
- The primary aim for the Year Head / Deputy Principal in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame)
- the pupil(s) who has(have) allegedly been bullied, and the pupil(s) who has(have) allegedly bullied her, will be interviewed by the Year Head
- When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher should seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This should be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner
- the Year Head systematically documents the pupils' reports
- the Year Head may ask the pupil who is allegedly being bullied and the pupil(s) who are allegedly bullying to write down their accounts of the incident(s)
- Where the Year Head / Deputy Principal has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it will be made clear to her how she is in breach of the school's Anti-Bullying policy and efforts will be made to try to get her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil(s) being bullied
- if a group is involved, each member will be interviewed individually in the first instance and then if necessary, be met as a group, to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements
- Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved should 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. This can have a therapeutic effect
- the written accounts (referred to above) will be maintained in the Year Head's Anti-Bullying folder and a copy given to the Deputy Principal
- the Year Head will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved
- the Year Head informs the relevant class tutor, the teacher who received the initial report of bullying and the Deputy Principal how he/she will proceed in investigating the matter and helping to resolve the issue
- Where the Year Head uses his/her professional judgment to determine that bullying has occurred, he / she will keep appropriate written records and will complete the Template for Recording Bullying Behaviour (DES Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools, 2013, Appendix 3) and will submit a copy of the documentation to the Deputy Principal

- In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved should be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken (by reference to the school policy). The school should give parents an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports for their pupils. Parents may be contacted at an earlier stage in the investigation if deemed necessary. In any situation where a disciplinary sanction is required, it is a private matter between the pupil(s) being disciplined, her parents and the school. There is no entitlement to this information by any other pupil or parent
- The Principal will, at least once a term, provide a report to the Board of Management setting out the total number of bullying cases reported (Appendix 3) and confirming that all cases have been or are being dealt with in accordance with the school's Anti-Bullying policy and the DES Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools. The Principal's Report will not include any identifying details of the pupils involved
- If the Year Head considers that it is of a relatively minor nature he / she may issue a verbal warning and continue to monitor the situation
- Pupils involved will be informed of the availability of supports that they may avail of e.g. Guidance Counsellor, Peer Mediation, Mentoring, Buddy System
- **The majority of incidents can be dealt with at this level.**

### Level 2

- If the Year Head considers that the incident is of a more serious nature or is repeated bullying behavior subsequent to the above procedures he / she will consult with the Guidance Counsellor who may arrange appointments, as appropriate, for all pupils involved. The Guidance Counsellor may be involved at a pastoral/guidance level, if deemed necessary
- The Year Head informs the Deputy Principal of more serious or repeated incidents of bullying. The Deputy Principal informs the Principal
- In consultation with the Deputy Principal, (and Guidance Counsellor, if necessary) the Year Head informs the parents / guardians of those involved. The school may contact parents at an earlier stage of the investigation where necessary
- the Year Head will, if necessary, request them to come into the school to discuss the situation
- The Year head will have the discretion to ask the Deputy Principal to accompany him/her to such a meeting to outline appropriate steps / strategies for dealing with bullying behavior
- The Deputy Principal is briefed on the meeting by the Year Head
- The Guidance Counsellor continues to be involved in a pastoral / guidance role with the pupil(s) if deemed necessary
- The Year Head maintains contact with the Deputy Principal until (s)he is satisfied that the bullying has stopped and the pupil who was bullied feels safe
- If a punishment / sanction is considered necessary, it will be given by the Year Head / Deputy Principal,
- The situation will continue to be monitored. The objective is to change the attitudes of those responsible towards those who were hurt by the behavior, and to assume responsibility for more appropriate, respectful behaviour
- Due cognisance must be taken of the fact that the use of punishment is often ineffective. It may breed resentment, increase group solidarity, further endanger the subject and challenge the offenders to discover ways of bullying which are harder to detect. It is counter-productive to humiliate or set out to make an example of a pupil who has engaged in bullying behaviour. A restorative approach will be taken where possible.
- It is unacceptable for a pupil or parent to accost, threaten or place an offensive comment on a social network site about any pupil who may be involved or allegedly involved in a bullying matter

### Level 3

- Any further / additional bullying behaviour will result in the Deputy Principal / Principal arranging a meeting with the relevant parents / guardians in the school. The Principal / Deputy Principal will be given all the relevant information by the Year Head with regard to the case before this meeting

- a Behaviour Contract may be drawn up at this point, if deemed appropriate
- pupils may be referred to the Board of Management as the discretion of the Principal
- continued bullying behaviour may result in suspension or expulsion

#### **Additional circumstances and information**

- In the event of a physical assault, the incident will be referred immediately to the Deputy Principal / Principal. Clear Sanctions as per the Code of Behaviour will be applied
- The Guidance Counsellor may be involved subsequently if deemed necessary or appropriate
- In the case of assault, if the suspension is to be immediate the parents / guardians will be contacted by the Principal and asked to remove the pupil from the school pending an investigation of the matter, as per Code of Behaviour.
- The matter will then be referred, with the relevant information, to the Guidance Counsellor for appropriate guidance to help prevent recurrence
- Where the Principal / Deputy Principal has serious concerns about managing the behavior of a pupil in relation to bullying, the advice of the National Education Psychological Service (NEPS) will be sought.
- Serious incidents of bullying behavior that are deemed to be potentially abusive, will in accordance with 'Children First' and the 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools' be referred to the HSE Children and Family Services and/or Gardaí as appropriate.
- In cases where the Year Head / Deputy Principal considers that the bullying behavior has not been adequately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behavior has occurred, it will be recorded in the Appendix 3 template. In making this determination, the Year Head / Deputy Principal will make a professional judgement based on the following criteria:
  - Whether the bullying behavior has ceased
  - Whether the issues between the parties have been resolved as far as practicable
  - Whether the relationships between the parties have been restored as far as practicable, and
  - Any feedback received from the parties involved (pupils, their parents, Principal or Deputy Principal)
- Where parents are not satisfied that the school has dealt with the matter in accordance with these procedures, they will be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures. In the event that, having exhausted the complaints procedures parents are still not satisfied, they will be advised of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

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

- All pupils and staff are encouraged to take responsibility for helping to create a safe learning environment which promotes respect for difference and inclusivity. To this effect, pupils are actively encouraged to report instances of bullying that they have experienced or witnessed
- Counselling will be offered to both the pupil(s) who perpetrated the bullying behavior and the pupil(s) who experienced the bullying directly, from the Guidance Counsellor, within the resources available to the school. Pupils will be informed of other supports (e.g. Peer Mediation / Mentors / Buddy System) that may be of help. The relevant teacher may otherwise make a recommendation for counselling external to the school
- Where appropriate, the Guidance Counsellor may be available to meet with parents, where necessary
- The Year Head / Deputy Principal (as relevant) will be available to meet with parents by appointment at the request of a parent
- Pupils are encouraged to develop their self-esteem, self-confidence, resilience and positive mental health by becoming actively involved in extra-curricular activities, thereby affording themselves opportunities to extend their circle of friends.

***Reference: Section 5 for list of supports and strategies available***

#### **8. 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.

#### **9. 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.

10. This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2016.
11. 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 Le Chéile if requested.
12. This policy and its implementations 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 Le Cheile and the Department.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

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

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

Date: 6<sup>th</sup> October 2016

Date of next Review: October 2017

## 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


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))

Classroom	
Corridor	
Toilets	
Locker room	
Dining area	
School grounds (external)	
School Bus	
Other	

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

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5. Type of Bullying behaviour (tick relevant box(es))

Physical Aggression		Cyber-bullying	
Damage to property		Intimidation	
Isolation/ Exclusion		Malicious Gossip	
Name Calling		Other(specify)	

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

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

7. Brief description of bullying behaviour and its impact

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8. Details of action taken

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Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Relevant teacher); Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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