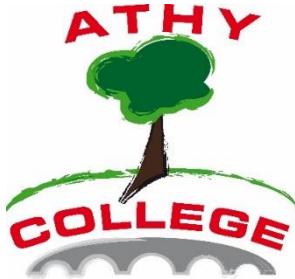


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# Athy College Kildare

## Anti- Bullying Policy

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

Chairperson of Board of Management

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

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

Principal

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



BORD OIDEACHAIS AGUS OILIÚNA  
CHILL DARÁ AGUS CHILL MHAINTÁIN  
KILDARE AND WICKLOW  
EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARD

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

In a caring school we are dedicated to fostering educational excellence empowering all students to reach their full potential – academic and social, physical and spiritual. Through partnership and cooperation, we openly respect and nurture the dignity and uniqueness of each individual’.

## **ETHOS**

Athy College is a caring school. The staff are dedicated to fostering educational excellence and earnestly endeavour to empower all students to reach their full potential – academic and social, physical and spiritual. Through partnership and cooperation, the staff of Athy College respect and nurture the dignity and uniqueness of everyone.

Athy College defines education as the on-going development of all students so that they may realise their true and best selves. The college motto is “Fas agus Foghlaim” (Lifelong Learning). From the outset students are taught they are partners in their own education. The school aims to prepare students for public examinations, in an age when academic qualifications are indispensable for admission to further education and entry into employment. The school recognises that its students are of varying cultural and social backgrounds and have a wide variety of aspirations and abilities.

The school embraces the vital role that parents, and guardians play in the overall education for their children. The school also recognises the importance of the community in which the student lives. For this reason, every effort is made to ensure that the student is aware of his/her role in the community and is encouraged to be positively involved in the wider community.

## **SCOPE**

This policy applies to the entire school community – students, parents and staff.

## **RATIONALE**

Athy College aims to protect the wellbeing of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times.

Through its Mission Statement promoting a secure and caring community the Board of Management has drawn up and approved the Anti Bully Policy.

The Anti- Bully Policy takes cognisance of and operates in conjunction with other Athy College Policies

The Anti Bully Policy has been developed in line with best practice, with guidance from Department of Education and Skills (DES) and the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) documents underpinned by relevant legislation and documents including;

- Education Act 1998
- Suicide Prevention in Schools: Best Practice Guidelines (IAS, National Suicide Review Group (2002)
- Suicide Prevention in the Community - A Practical Guide (HSE 2011)
- Anti-bullying Procedures 2013 for Primary and Post Primary Schools
- Wellbeing in Post-Primary Schools 2013
- Wellbeing in Post-Primary Schools: Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention 2013
- Student Support Teams in Post-Primary Schools 2014
- Framework for Junior Cycle 2015
- Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017
- Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017
- Guidelines for Well-Being in Junior Cycle 2017
- Responding to Critical Incidents. NEPS Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools 2017
- Circular M11/03 timetabling of SPHE
- Circular 22/2010: Best Practice Guidelines for SPHE in Post Primary School
- Circular 0037/2010 Implementation of Relationship and Sexuality Education
- Circular 0015/2017 Introduction of the new area of learning entitled Wellbeing SPHE a key element of this
- Circular 0043/2018: Best practice guidance for post primary schools in the use of programmes and/or external facilitators in promoting wellbeing consistent with the Department of Education and Skills' Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice
- Circular 55/2019: Arrangements for the Implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle with particular reference to school year 2019/20
- Circular 0076/2020 From September 2021 onwards, the use of the Junior Certificate syllabuses for SPHE and CSPE should be discontinued.

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 Athy 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. This policy comprehends bullying that is either perpetrated by students or experienced by students in the School/College. The matter of intra-staff bullying is addressed in the following ETB policies.

- **Bullying Prevention Policy – Compliant Procedure for ETB Staff.**
- **Harassment/Sexual Harassment prevention policy – complaint procedure for ETB staff.**

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;
    - promotes respectful relationships across the school community;
  - Effective leadership;
  - A school-wide approach;
  - A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact;
  - Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that –
    - Build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils;
    - Explicitly addresses the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular homophobic and transphobic bullying.
  - Effective supervision and management of pupils;
  - Support for staff;
  - Consistent recording, investigation and follow-up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies);
  - On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

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 or 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.

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.

Additional information on different types of bullying is set out in Section 2 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.

4. To whom should concerns about a student being bullied be reported to?

Students, parents, non-teaching staff or members of the wider community should feel welcome to report their concerns to any member of the teaching staff. The relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying in Athy College are as follows:

- The Class Tutor
- The Year Head
- Serious incidents of bullying referred immediately to Deputy Principal and Principal

5. Education and prevention strategies to combat bullying (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying) that will be used by the school are as follows:

**Education Strategies:**

- Athy College makes it clear to all members of the school community that bullying of any kind is unacceptable, irrespective of whether it is a student a staff member or any other person that is the subject of such behaviour. In this context, all members of the school community have a duty to bring to the attention of the Principal or Deputy Principals any incident of cyberbullying or harassment that they know about or suspect.
- While, when investigating and dealing with bullying the primary focus is on resolving differences and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than apportioning blame), Athy College nevertheless reserves the right to take disciplinary action (up to and including suspension and expulsion), where such is warranted, in accordance with the Code of Behaviour, against those who bully others.
- The prevention and awareness of bullying is integral to this policy and students will, through both their curricular and extra-curricular programmes, be provided with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth.
- SPHE & RSE classes (incorporating education on sexual identity and orientation) Athy College recognises that the SPHE curriculum makes specific provision for exploring bullying as well as the inter-related areas of belonging and integrating, communication, conflict, friendship, personal safety and relationships. Also, that the Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) programme provides opportunities to explore and discuss areas such as human sexuality and relationships, which has particular relevance to identity-based bullying.
- The focus of the Athy College's prevention strategy will be to build empathy, respect and resilience in students
- Prevention and awareness raising measures will also deal explicitly with cyber-bullying through educating students about appropriate online behaviour, how to stay safe while on-line and also through developing a culture of reporting any concerns about or incidents of bullying to a member of the teaching staff.
- Athy College will, in all its communications with students and their parents, commencing with the induction of the student into the school, make every effort to highlight the importance of students reporting incidents of or concerns about bullying to a member of the teaching staff on the clear understanding that these matters are being reported in confidence. This means that a student who draws concerns about

bullying to the attention of a member of staff will not have his/her identity divulged in any way that might result in those against whom allegations are being made identifying the source of the report.

- School charter in all students' journals for positive behaviour Prevention Strategies:
    - Referral to Care Team
    - Referral to School Completion Programme Anger Management Support
    - Referral in consultation with parents to specialist agencies outside school setting:
      - Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
      - HALO
      - Pieta House
      - Kildare Youth Services Adolescent Counselling
      - HSE Social Services
  - In accordance with 6.8.9 of the DES Procedures 'parents and students are expected to co-operate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving any issues and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved as quickly as possible'.
  - Athy College is committed to devoting a continuous professional development session each year to building the capacity of the Tyndall College to combat bullying.
6. Procedures for investigating, following up and recording of bullying behaviour, and intervention strategies used by the Athy College for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour are as follows:
- Where a member of the teaching staff has a concern about a student being bullied, either as a result of a personal observation or as a result of receiving a report from a third party, s/he may investigate and deal with the matter in accordance with the procedures set out in Section 6.8 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools. Alternatively, the teacher may refer the matter to the Principal or Deputy Principal.
  - In investigating bullying behaviour or addressing bullying behaviour in any way, teachers are welcome to seek the assistance and support of the principal, the deputy principals or the Student Support Team at any time. Indeed, given the extent to which the principal and deputy principals are privy to all kinds of personal information about students, it would be prudent for teachers to check in with either of them before taking any action in relation to bullying behaviour.

- Where a teacher is concerned that a particular bullying episode is causing serious upset to a student, staff member or other person, s/he should bring it to the attention of either the Principal or Deputy Principals at the earliest possible opportunity.

If bullying occurs, the victim, the bully and any witnesses will be interviewed. A calm, problem-solving approach will be adopted when dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.

### **The Victim**

- Victim is listened to by tutor/ year head/ HSCL and/or other teacher and allowed tell their story.
- Student is asked to write own account. Teacher reassures victim that nobody deserves to be bullied and works with them to plan for a solution to the problem.
- Teacher assures victim of continued support and continued security - through the limited hours of the Guidance Counsellor, HSCL coordinator, year head and possible outside agency.
- Teacher explains to the victim that the incident will be fully investigated with help from others present at the incident, i.e. witnesses. Other people may have to be informed, i.e. Principal, parents, year heads.
- Victim will be kept informed of how the matter is proceeding.
- If ready, the victim may get an apology from the bully.

### **The Bully**

- Bully will be helped to see how their actions are damaging. They will be constantly reminded that bullying behaviour is not acceptable in Athy College.
- Disciplinary sanction will be imposed on the bully.
- Tutor and year head will make an agreement with the Bully on how to stop the bullying behaviour.
- In time, when the victim is ready and when the bully has come to an understanding of their actions, the bully may apologise to the victim.
- Tutor/year head will seek the support of the parents of the bully to reinforce the sanctions imposed.
- Principal/deputy Principal may be involved if the incident is found to be very serious or if the parents of the bully do not offer their support.



- If no agreement is reached, the incident may be referred to the Board of Management.
- Failing agreement again, the incident may be referred further to the ETB committee.

### **The Witness**

- Tutor /year head/ HSCL/ Guidance Counsellor will interview witnesses to help get a full account of an incident.
- Witnesses will be asked to write their account.
- Witnesses will be encouraged to always come forward and to stand up for the victims.

### **Procedures for Noting and Reporting an incident of Bullying Behaviour**

- Students, parents, non-teaching staff or members of the wider community should feel welcome to report their concerns to any member of the teaching staff – including the Principal, the Deputy Principal.
- In this regard, any member of the teaching staff is deemed to be a relevant teacher in the context of Section 6.8.3 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.gov.ie - Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-primary Schools ([www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie))
- Students are to be supported and encouraged to report all incidents of bullying which then must be investigated. In this way students will gain confidence in reporting. A teacher who witnesses bullying will also report the incident to the class tutor.
- All incidents of bullying behaviour are recorded on the template set out in Appendix 3 of the Department of Education and Skills Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools
- The teacher who witnesses or to whom the bullying incident is reported, in conjunction with the tutor, will inform the year head in writing.
- The year head will investigate and deal with the incident in accordance with the school's Code of Discipline.
- A serious bullying incident will be referred to the Principal or Deputy-principal. The expertise of outside agencies may be sought where needed.
- Parents/guardians of victims and bullies will be informed by the year head/ HSCL coordinator at the earliest opportunity to allow for discussion of the matter.
- Non-teaching staff members are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them.

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

### **(In accordance with Code of Discipline)**

- All parties are interviewed separately (victim/bully) by tutor and year head.
- If a group is involved, each person will be interviewed separately and asked for their account of the incident.
- Interview will be conducted in a non-leading and non-confrontational manner.
- The school personnel will keep a written record of the interview. Students involved will be asked to write down their account of the alleged incident.
- After investigation, if behaviour is considered to be a bullying situation, the year head may inform parents/guardians of the individuals involved.
- Students involved in bullying behaviour will be informed that they are in breach of the Code of Discipline.
- Victim will be offered continuing support, as deemed necessary, in consultation with parents. e.g. via the tutor, year head, principal, HSCL Co-ordinator.
- As well as being disciplined, the bully will be supported in developing awareness of the effects of their behaviour on others and of the necessity to stop this behaviour.
- Support may be sought from:
  - Kildare Youth Services
  - Health Board
  - Child and Adolescent Guidance Service
  - Garda Juvenile Liaison Officer

### **Disciplinary Measures against the Bully**

- The student who has engaged in bullying behaviour will be disciplined with an appropriate sanction, as detailed in the Code of Behaviour
- This student will be asked to look at the situation from the victim's point of view.
- The parents of a student involved in bullying behaviour may be invited to come to the school to discuss ways in which they can reinforce or support the action being taken by the school.

7. The school's programme of support for working with students affected by bullying are as follows:

- Support from Class Tutor and Year Head
- Referral to Care Team
- School Completion Programme Anger Management Supports
- HSCL linking with the parents / guardians of the student
- Referral in consultation with parents to specialist agencies outside school setting:
  - Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
  - HALO
  - Pieta House
  - Kildare Youth Services Adolescent Counselling
  - HSE Social Services

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. Policy Review

The Board of Management will undertake an annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation in accordance with the procedures set out in Section 7.2 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools

The Board of Management will ensure that an action plan is put in place to address any areas for improvement identified by the annual review.

Details of the review will be recorded in the minutes of the Board of Management' meeting that adopted the review and a record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, will be made available to the Patron and the DES. In the case of the DES, it is appreciated that the Inspectorate will place a strong focus on the actions the School/College takes to create a positive school culture and to prevent and tackle bullying.