

ABBHEY VOCATIONAL SCHOOL DONEGAL TOWN



Anti-Bullying

Policy

February 2014

MISSION STATEMENT

Abbey Vocational School is dedicated to the holistic development of students in a caring environment where tolerance and respect are nurtured and valued.

School Ethos

- The aim of the School is to allow the students to develop their spiritual, moral, intellectual, emotional and physical potential and become fully mature human persons.
- In all our activity in the School, the welfare of the individual students will take priority over administrative, bureaucratic and financial concerns.
- While respecting and acknowledging the rights of the students, our school also seeks to promote a safe and harmonious working environment for all our staff members.
- This spirit of cherishing the personal welfare of each individual will not take from the social and community development of the students and the importance of their becoming caring and responsible citizens.
- As reflected in the Motto and Mission Statement of the School, the School acknowledges and undertakes to cherish the Religious, Cultural and Historical Heritage of its students.
- A special interest of our School is to make our students aware of ecological and environmental concerns and to encourage in them a love for nature in all its aspects.
- In acknowledging the primary rights and duties of parents as educators of their children, the school will always seek to work in close partnership with parents. We also see the School as an integral part of the local community and will follow the educational programmes of the Dept. of Education & Science under the direction of County Donegal Vocational Education Committee.

Introduction:

The purpose of this policy is to protect our student body from being bullied.

In September 2013 the Dept. of Education & Skills issued “Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools”.

- 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 Abbey Vocational School 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.

What is Bullying?

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.

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

Examples of Bullying Behaviours

General

- Harassment based on any of the protected grounds in the equality legislation e.g. sexual harassment, homophobic bullying, racist bullying etc.
- Physical aggression
- Damage to property
- Name calling
- Slagging
- The production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other materials aimed at intimidating another person
- Graffiti
- Extortion
- Intimidation
- Gestures
- Invasion of personal space
- A combination of any of the types listed

Cyber	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Denigration: Spreading rumours, lies or gossip to hurt person's reputation • Harassment: Continually sending vicious, mean or disturbing messages to an individual • Impersonation: Posting offensive or aggressive messages under another person's name • Flaming: Using inflammatory of all the words to football and online fight • Trickery: Fooling someone into sharing personal information which are then post online • Outing: Posting for sharing confidential or compromising information or images • Exclusion: Purposefully excluding someone from an online group • Cyberstalking: Ongoing harassment and denigration that causes a person considerable fear for his/her safety • Silent telephone/mobile phone calls • Abusive telephone/mobile phone calls • Abusive text messages • Abusive email • Abuse of communication on social networks • Abusive website comments/blogs/pictures • False accusations • Abusive posts on any form of communication technology
Homophobic and Transgender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spreading rumours about a person's sexual orientation • Taunting a person of a different sexual orientation • Name calling e.g. gay, queer, lesbian • Physical intimidation or attacks • Threats
Racial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discrimination, prejudice, comments or insults about colour, nationality, culture, social class, religious beliefs, ethic for traveller background

Relational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This involves manipulating relationships as a means of bullying behaviours include: • Malicious gossip • Isolation and exclusion • Ignoring • Excluding from the group • Taking someone's friends away • Bitching • Spreading rumours • Breaking confidence • Talking loud enough so that the victim can hear • The “look”
Sexual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unwelcome and sexual comments or touching • Harassment

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

A pupil or parent may bring a bullying concern to any teacher in the school. Individual teachers must take appropriate measures regarding reports of bullying behaviour in accordance with the school’s anti-bullying policy.

*The relevant teachers in this school are: The principal, deputy principal, years heads, Class tutor, Pastoral Care Team.

Any teacher may act as a relevant teacher if circumstances are appropriate.

5. The education and prevention strategies (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:

Preventative Strategy:

The school will work proactively to ensure as far as it can that bullying does not take place. Bullying can be prevented by raising awareness of all in the school community about the reality of bullying and its detrimental effects. The school uses the following approaches:

- Discussion during form class on a regular basis
- Students encouraged to report matters of concern
- Pastoral Care team – available for students to speak to
- The school seeks opportunities to enhance the self-esteem of all pupils
- The school has leaflets for parents and students on bullying behaviour – these are available on request.

Principal

Principal/Deputy Principal addresses all incoming students on the first day of enrolment, or as soon as is practicable, on the need for good behaviour and the need for compliance with all school rules. (A copy of the School Code of Behaviour to be provided to each student.) School disciplinary procedures to be explained to students and the necessity for these emphasised so that an atmosphere conducive to learning is maintained and the highest possible standard of education provided for all pupils.

Bullying behaviour by any student undermines the quality of education and imposes psychological damage. Students at this meeting to be left in no doubt that bullying of any kind will not be tolerated in the school and the importance of reporting any bullying or abuse to the school authorities at an early stage should be emphasised. When dealing with bullying the code of behaviour will be applied.

Class Tutors

Under our Pastoral Care system each class group will be allocated a Class Tutor. As soon as possible after admission in September the teacher is to meet the designated class group in order to get to know each individual and to explain his/her role throughout the school year. The Class Tutor should be regarded as the students' friend and as the liaison between the class and the Principal/other teachers. Students should be encouraged to speak to the Class Tutor or any member of the Pastoral Care Team or any teacher whenever any difficulty may arise and especially with regard to any form of abuse, whether inside or outside of the school.

The Class Tutor should ensure that all students:

- Have a copy of the school's Code of Behaviour;
- Are familiar with what it contains;
- That new admissions after 1st September have the rules explained to them and the necessity for compliance by everyone. (Some students may be absent when the Principal/Deputy Principals address them early in September.)

Year Heads

This duty is to be allocated to an Assistant Principal. He/she holds regular meetings with the Class Tutors and the pastoral care team to discuss all aspects of discipline, especially bullying and to take action where necessary. He/she is responsible for the provision of resource material for the use of Class Tutors in dealing with bullying behaviour of any sort and also work closely with the Principal on all aspects of policy on bullying.

Year Heads should meet on a regular basis and formulate any necessary amendments to school policy for the Principal's consideration/approval.

A staff meeting to be held on the first day of the new school year to appoint Class Tutors and Year Heads for the session. Countering bullying of any kind will be an important part of their function.

Parents

Parents are strongly encouraged to contact the school as soon as they suspect their son/daughter is being subjected to bullying behaviour. A record should be kept of incidents. The matter will be dealt with seriously. Parents should be encouraged to keep a record of any incidences. (See Appendices 1, 2 & 3.)

Strategies that may be used by the school are as follows:

- Full implementation of SPHE, RSE, Stay Safe and CSPE programmes and curricula to ensure that school culture support a safe social and personal environment. Training for staff in delivering these programs.
- Whole school training on bullying (to include all schools personnel, students and parents and the wider community)
- Whole school delivery of lessons on bullying
- Whole school delivery of lessons on relational aggression, cyber bullying, homophobic and transforming bullying, diversity and inter culturalism
- Training for SPHE teachers on resolving bullying
- The implementation of regular whole school awareness measures - parents' seminars, monthly student surveys, regular school or group assemblies by principal, deputy principal or year heads
- Development and promotion of an anti-bullying code for the school to be included in student journals and displayed publicly in common areas of the school and in classrooms
- Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extracurricular activities. Non-teaching and ancillary staff will be encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers. Supervision will also apply to moderate student use of communication technology within the school
- Encouragement of the student council to become involved in contributing to receive school environment. Buddy, mentor and other student support activities can help to support first year students with their transition to post primary school and encourage a culture of peer support
- Ensuring that students know who to tell and how to tell: direct approach to teacher at an appropriate time, , hand a note up with homework, make a phone call to the school or to a trusted teacher in the school, anti-bullying box, get a parent or friend to tell on your behalf
- Administer a confidential questionnaire during the term to all students

6. 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:

Initial report/disclosure of bullying behaviour		
Action taken by	Procedure	Support and/or sanction may include
<p>Subject teacher, Class Tutor, or any teacher</p> <p>Members of the care team</p> <p>If the teacher feels they can resolve the situation.</p> <p>Always consult with an appropriate colleague or management</p>	<p>Challenge the behaviour as being unacceptable</p> <p>Speak to both students separately and try to resolve the issue using an established intervention technique e.g. Restorative Approach</p> <p>Keep a record (informal)</p> <p>Teacher will follow up progress with victim and bully, bystanders or others involved</p> <p>N.B. If the incident has not been resolved within 20 days, the relevant teacher must record the behaviour on the incident template</p>	<p>Serious talk with student(s) re effects of their behaviour</p> <p>Verbal warning. Student(s) involved warned to stop</p> <p>Seek verbal agreement regarding future behaviour</p> <p>Outline a fair outcome if appropriate e.g. an apology, return of property etc.</p>

Subsequent report/disclosure e.g. second incident by the same student

Action taken by	Procedure	Support and/or sanction may include:
<p>Relevant Teacher Tutor, year ahead involved</p> <p>Member of the pastoral care team may be involved</p>	<p>Incident investigated by the year ahead using restorative approach</p> <p>Principal/deputy principal informed</p> <p>Both sets of parents informed by the year head</p> <p>Keep a record</p> <p>Year head follows up progress with victim and bully, bystanders or others involved</p>	<p>Serious talk with the student regarding behaviour and future behaviour</p> <p>Parents sign written agreement regarding future behaviour</p> <p>Speak with school counsellor</p> <p>Detention/other agreed sanction from school's code of behaviour</p>

Where bullying behaviour persists/serious incident of bullying

Action taken by	Procedure	Support and/or sanction
<p>Relevant teacher</p> <p>Principal or deputy principal involved</p> <p>Year head</p> <p>Pastoral care committee may be involved</p> <p>The incident may be referred to the board of management at the discretion of the principal</p>	<p>Parents and student meet with principal/deputy principal</p> <p>Use established intervention strategies</p> <p>Feedback to year head</p> <p>Record kept</p> <p>Follow-up progress with the victim and bully, bystanders or others involved and continue to monitor the situation.</p>	<p>Detention/suspension/ other agreed sanction from the school's code of behaviour</p> <p>Parents are met and conditions set regarding students future behaviour</p> <p>Counselling offered</p> <p>Referral to child psychologist/Garda juvenile liaison officer</p> <p>Contact with other support agencies e.g. anger management</p> <p>The future of the student in the school maybe considered</p>

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

Our Structure of Support

- Class Tutor
- Year Head
- Pastoral Care Team
- Guidance Counsellors
- Principal/Deputy Principal

A programme of support for pupils who have been bullied will ensure that they receive counselling and/or opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop their friendship and social skills and thereby build resilience whenever this is needed.

A program of support for those pupils involved in bullying behaviour will also be part of the schools intervention process. Pupils involved in bullying behaviour will receive assistance on an ongoing basis when necessary. For those with low self esteem, opportunities will be developed to increase feelings of self-worth. Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour may need counselling to help them learn other ways of meeting the needs without violating the rights of others.

Pupils to observe incidents of bullying behaviour would be encouraged to discuss them with their teachers.

Practical tips for building a positive school culture and climate

The following are some practical tips for immediate actions that can be taken to help build a positive school culture and climate and to help prevent and tackle bullying behaviour:

- Model respectful behaviour to all members of the school community at all times.
- Explicitly teach pupils what respectful language and respectful behaviour looks like, acts like, sounds like and feels like in class and around the school.
- Display key respect messages in classrooms, in assembly areas and around the school. Involve pupils in the development of these messages.
- Catch them being good - notice and acknowledge desired respectful behaviour by providing positive attention.
- Consistently tackle the use of discriminatory and derogatory language in the school – this includes homophobic and racist language and language that is belittling of pupils with a disability or SEN.
- Give constructive feedback to pupils when respectful behaviour and respectful language are absent.
- Have a system of encouragement and rewards to promote desired behaviour and compliance with the school rules and routines.
- Explicitly teach pupils about the appropriate use of social media.
- Positively encourage pupils to comply with the school rules on mobile phone and internet use.
- Follow up and follow through with pupils who ignore the rules.
- Actively involve parents and/or the Parents' Association in awareness raising campaigns around social media.
- Actively promote the right of every member of the school community to be safe and secure in school.
- Highlight and explicitly teach school rules in pupil friendly language in the classroom and in common areas.
- All staff can actively watch out for signs of bullying behaviour.
- Ensure there is adequate playground/school yard/outdoor supervision.
- School staff can get pupils to help them to identify bullying “hot spots” and “hot times” for bullying in the school.
- Hot spots tend to be in the playground/school yard/outdoor areas, changing rooms, corridors and other areas of unstructured supervision.
 - Hot times again tend to be times where there is less structured supervision such as when pupils are in the playground/school yard or moving classrooms.
 - Support the establishment and work of student councils.

Recording of Bullying Behaviour can be found in Incident Form in Appendix 4

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 16/06/2014.

11. This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website (or where none exists, is otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parents' Association (where one exists). A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

12. This policy and its implementation 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 (or where none exists, be otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parents' Association (where one exists). A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Signed: _____
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: _____
(Principal)

Date of next review: _____

Evaluation

All school policies are subject to regular review. This policy will be reviewed in the light of experience.

This document has been drawn up in accordance with the Dept. of Education & Science ***“Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post-Primary Schools”*** published in September 1993.

Once finalised, the policy should be disseminated widely by means of booklets, newsletters, posters, notice boards and parent meetings.

Appendix 1

How can I tell if my child is Being Bullied?

There are some signs to look out for if you have suspicions. These can include:

- Unexplained bruises;
- Afraid and anxious when going to or coming from school or work;
- School performance getting steadily worse for no obvious reason;
- Being generally nervous, tense, unhappy;
- Not explaining suspicious incidents / vague explanations;
- Signs of being isolated from others of the same age;
- Signs of regular interference with personal property, books, etc;
- Frequently asking for (or perhaps stealing) money;

Although these can also indicate problems other than bullying, it's important that you don't ignore them. Try to encourage the child to talk about what's going on, either to you or to another trusted adult.

Appendix 2

How can I tell if my child is a bully?

Here are some indicators of bullying behaviour:

- A tendency to bully family members;
- Being a victim of bullying;
- Regularly witnessing bullying behaviour in their environment;
- Being frequently short-tempered and/or aggressive;
- Having past experiences which can still cause negative feelings;
- Bringing home items that you know weren't bought;
- Speaking of others in a negative way, perhaps on the basis of their appearance or beliefs or social status;
- Showing an interest in violent behaviour;
- Showing little sensitivity towards others;
- Having low self-esteem;
- Being the subject of previous complaints or suggestions of bullying behaviour.

Appendix 3

How do I Inform the School of my Concerns? (Parent)

- Contact the school.
- Make an appointment to meet with someone in authority in the school.
- Don't exaggerate. Be honest and stick to the facts as you understand them.
- Make some notes beforehand to make sure you don't forget to mention any important points.
- Recognise that you may be upset when you speak to the teacher.
- Accept that your child may not have told you all the facts and that there may be another side to the story.
- Ask for a copy of the school's policy on bullying.
- Find out what action the school intends to take.
- Arrange for a follow-up meeting with the teacher to measure any improvement in the situation.
- After the meeting you may wish to make a note of what was agreed and send a copy to the teacher.
- If you are not happy with the teacher's response, make an appointment to see the Principal.
- If you still feel dissatisfied having spoken to the Principal, contact members of the Board of Management who are there to represent your interests.
Remember to keep copies of all letters you send and receive.
- If your child is happy to have you attend you can request that all interviews with him or her on this issue are conducted in your presence.

Appendix 4 INCIDENT RECORD

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	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Pupil	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parent	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

Playground	<input type="checkbox"/>
Classroom	<input type="checkbox"/>
Corridor	<input type="checkbox"/>
Toilets	<input type="checkbox"/>
School Bus	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

Name: _____

Class: _____

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 _____

* **Note:** The categories listed in the tables 3, 4 & 6 are suggested and schools may add to or amend these to suit their own circumstances.

Appendix 5 Checklist for annual review of the anti-bullying policy and its implementation

The Board of Management (the Board) must undertake an annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation. The following checklist must be used for this purpose. The checklist is an aid to conducting this review and is not intended as an exhaustive list. In order to complete the checklist, an examination and review involving both quantitative and qualitative analysis, as appropriate across the various elements of the implementation of the school's anti-bullying policy will be required.

	Yes /No
Has the Board formally adopted an anti-bullying policy that fully complies with the requirements of the <i>Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools</i> ?	
Has the Board published the policy on the school website and provided a copy to the parents' association?	
Has the Board ensured that the policy has been made available to school staff (including new staff)?	
Is the Board satisfied that school staff are sufficiently familiar with the policy and procedures to enable them to effectively and consistently apply the policy and procedures in their day to day work?	
Has the Board ensured that the policy has been adequately communicated to all pupils?	
Has the policy documented the prevention and education strategies that the school applies?	
Have all of the prevention and education strategies been implemented?	
Has the effectiveness of the prevention and education strategies that have been implemented been examined?	
Is the Board satisfied that all teachers are recording and dealing with incidents in accordance with the policy?	
Has the Board received and minuted the periodic summary reports of the Principal?	
Has the Board discussed how well the school is handling all reports of bullying including those addressed at an early stage and not therefore included in the Principal's periodic report to the Board?	
Has the Board received any complaints from parents regarding the school's handling of bullying incidents?	
Have any parents withdrawn their child from the school citing dissatisfaction with the school's handling of a bullying situation?	
Have any Ombudsman for Children investigations into the school's handling of a bullying case been initiated or completed?	

Has the data available from cases reported to the Principal (by the bullying recording template) been analysed to identify any issues, trends or patterns in bullying behaviour?	
Has the Board identified any aspects of the school's policy and/or its implementation that require further improvement?	
Has the Board put in place an action plan to address any areas for improvement?	

Signed _____ Date _____
Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed _____ Date _____
Principal

Notification regarding the Board of Management's annual review of the anti-bullying policy

To: _____

The Board of Management of _____ wishes to inform you that:

- o The Board of Management's annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation was completed at the Board meeting of _____ [date].
- o This review was conducted in accordance with the checklist set out in **Appendix 4** of the Department's *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

Signed _____ Date _____
Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed _____ Date _____
Principal