



# RCS Anti-Bullying Policy

# 2020

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**Amended by the BOM on May 26<sup>th</sup> 2020**

## **Mission Statement**

Ramsgrange Community School is a welcoming, open and inclusive school. Our aim is to develop each of our students as a whole person by promoting an atmosphere of respect, honesty and fairness in which all of the school community can achieve their full potential.

RCS Vision: Respect, Community, Success

## **Anti-Bullying Policy (2019)**

Note: This policy has been amended in accordance with Circular 0045/2013, January 2013.

This Bullying Policy is reviewed annually by the Student Support Team and brought to the BOM each December.

Bullying will not be tolerated in Ramsgrange Community School. All staff, students and parents will know what the school policy on bullying is and what they should do if bullying arises. There is a whole school/community approach to bullying behaviour in our school.

The school community includes Parents, Students, Staff and Board of Management.

### **Definition of bullying**

Bullying is defined as (CC 0045/2013) ‘unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time’. In addition, in the context of Circular 0045/2013 ‘placing a once off offensive or hurtful public message, image or statement on a social network site or other forum where that message, image or statement can be viewed and/or repeated by other people will be regarded as bullying behaviour’.

Every student has a right to an education free from fear and intimidation. The purpose of this policy is to protect that right.

### **Types of Bullying**

#### **(a) Student Behaviour**

A students’ behaviour is intimidating and/or of a bullying nature when:

- .. someone deliberately excludes or isolates another student by writing insulting remarks about them anywhere on the students personal or school property or any communal student area e.g. toilets, notice boards. This is also done through texts, nasty web postings, emails, and instant messages.
- .. someone says/writes unpleasant comments to/about another person e.g. name calling, being sarcastic, spreading rumours, teasing, making sexually abusive comments or gestures
- .. someone may push, hit, kick and/or threaten another student, trip another student, make any physical contact or use any form of violence, severe or in any other way, against another student
- .. someone takes or damages another student’s property, demand or extort another student’s money; or coerce another student into doing the same.
- .. someone uses very aggressive body language toward another student. This could take the form of a particular tone of voice or a facial expression, which conveys aggression and/or dislike towards another student

- .. someone openly/anonymouslly engages in abusive or inappropriate behaviour through any social media including telephone messages, internet websites, text messages, MMS messages etc. in order to bully/intimidate another person.
- .. someone uses persistent name-calling or you ‘slag’ another student by making very personal remarks about them, which are hurtful, insulting or humiliating e.g. another student’s physical appearance, accent, distinctive voice character, academic ability, sexual orientation, race, religion, where they live, social background or nationality.
- .. someone attempts to intimidate or abuse any school personnel. This includes teachers, substitutes, Special Needs assistants, cleaning staff, office staff and visitors.
- .. someone prevents another person from participating fully in any school activity

### **b)Teacher Behaviour**

A teacher may engage in, instigate or unwittingly reinforce bullying behaviour in a number of ways as recognised by the Department of Education and Skills.

- .. Using sarcasm or other insulting or demeaning form of language when addressing students
- .. Making negative comments about a student’s appearance or background
- .. Humiliating or intimidating a student directly or indirectly
- .. Using any form of inappropriate physical contact

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

In accordance with Circular 0045/2013 the following procedures reflect that the primary aim in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and restore as far as is practicable the relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame.)

- All reports of bullying will be noted, investigated and dealt with by our teachers. In that way it is hoped that students will gain confidence in ‘telling’.
- When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, teachers will refer cases to the School Chaplain or Guidance Counsellor and the Year Head.
- The Chaplain and/or Guidance Counsellor will meet both parties individually to discuss the matter and to seek possible solutions. An attempt will be made to get the perpetrator to see the situation from the target’s point of view.
- A written record of the incident will be placed in the files of all students involved. This will be done by the Year Head or whoever dealt with it. (If a group is involved, each member will be interviewed individually and then will be met as a group.)

- If the perpetrator is involved in a further incident it will be referred to the Year Head, Deputy Principal or Principal for further consideration.
- If it is concluded that he/she has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it will be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the Code of Behaviour and Discipline. His/her parents or guardians will be informed, and a meeting arranged.
- The parents of the target will be informed in the first instance and kept informed during the process. This will be done by the person investigating the incident i.e. Chaplain, Guidance Counsellor, Yearhead, Deputy Principal or Principal. A record of this will be kept on VSware with the code ABP-T-date.
- Follow up meetings by the School Chaplain/Guidance Counsellor will be arranged with the two parties involved separately with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date if the target is ready and agreeable. This can have a therapeutic effect.
- Where possible the necessary Counselling provision will be made within our school for both parties. Referrals will be made when appropriate.
- In certain cases, however, it may be necessary to invite the assistance of other local persons and formal agencies such as general medical practitioners, Gardaí, health boards with their social workers and community workers.

Our anti-bullying school policy also embraces those members of the wider school community. They are encouraged to play a positive role in assisting our school to counter bullying behaviour by reporting such behaviour to parents and/or schools as appropriate.

In accordance with Circular 0045/2013 the Principal will provide a report to the **Board of Management** setting out:

1. The overall number of bullying cases reported.
2. Confirmation that these cases have been, or are being dealt with in accordance with school policy
3. The Board will do an annual review of the policy and make a written statement that the review has been completed. This will be published on the school website and made readily available on request.

### **Sanctions**

Students are aware that if they are involved in bullying the following will happen:

- They will be warned to stop immediately.
- A record will be placed in their file by the Year Head or investigator.
- If a further incident occurs involving the perpetrator the student will be referred to the Year Head and Deputy Principal as a Discipline Matter.

- Their parents will be informed and the student will be sent home until a meeting with the Parents and the Year Head is arranged.
- More serious sanctions ranging from suspension to exclusion will apply to students who engage in continual serious bullying incidences

Evaluation of effectiveness of school policy on bullying behaviour

All Ramsgrange Community School policies are subject to regular review.

### **Preventative Strategies:**

The following preventative strategies are now in place in our school:

- The whole school, including pupils, parents / guardians and teachers are involved in the ongoing formation of the school's Anti-Bullying Ethos.
- After admission to the school students sign an anti-bullying agreement in their journal and are informed about the School's Anti-Bullying Programme.
- The open and easy access to the Chaplain and Guidance Counsellor play a significant role in preventing bullying in the school
- The Anti Bullying Workshop (first given by Dr. Stephen Minton) is given to all years by the Tutors during Tutor time.
- Parents will be invited to an Anti-Bullying information evening that will be organised bi-annually and this will happen before Christmas each year.
- The school's Anti-Bullying Policy will be circulated to new staff members in Ramsgrange Community School and training in procedures given periodically.
- Our Anti-Bullying Policy is given in the Student Journal and is repeated by the class tutor at the beginning of every year.
- All Parents are informed of our policy and procedures during the Induction and Transition Programme into 1<sup>st</sup> year and at Parent information evenings.
- Discussion in SPHE and R.E. Classes (Anti-Bullying Programme – STOP is delivered).
- It is addressed as part of the Pastoral Care system in the school (e.g. Guidance Counsellor, Chaplain, Class Teachers, Tutors, Year Heads, Home School Community Liaison Officer).

OUR STAFF MEMBERS SHARE A COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY, UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE PRINCIPAL, TO ACT IN PREVENTING BULLYING/AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR BY ANY MEMBER OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY.

## **Appendix 1 – Effects of Bullying**

### **Signs and Symptoms of Bullying**

A student may indicate by signs or behaviour that he/she is being bullied. Staff and parents must be aware of these possible signs and they should make enquiries if a student:

Is frightened or walking/taking the bus to or from school

Begs to be driven to school

Changes his/her usual routine

Is unwilling to go to school

Begins truanting or educational performance declines

Becomes withdrawn, anxious or lacking in confidence

All of a sudden start stammering, withdrawing, has nightmares, has difficulty in sleeping, cries frequently, is not eating, is vomiting or bedwetting.

Attempts or threatens suicide or runs away or unexplained changes either in mood or behaviour. It may be particularly noticeable before returning to school after weekends or more especially after longer school holidays.

Cries himself/herself to sleep at night or has nightmares.

Feels ill in the morning or patterns of physical illnesses (e.g. headaches, stomach aches) develop.

Begins to do poorly in schoolwork.

Comes home with clothes torn and /or books damaged.

Has possessions to 'missing' or spontaneous out-of-character comments about either other student's or teacher's possessions missing or damaged.

Asks for money or starts stealing money.

Has lunch or other monies continually 'lost'

Has unexplained cuts or bruises

Comes home starving (lunch money stolen)

Becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable

Is bullying other students or siblings

Is frightened to say what's wrong

Gives improbable excuses for any of the above

These signs and behaviour could indicate other problems, but bullying will be considered a possibility and will be investigated.

## **Appendix 2 – Effects of bullying**

### **Effects of Bullying**

Students who are being bullied may develop feelings of insecurity and extreme anxiety and thus may become more vulnerable. Self-confidence may be damaged with a consequent lowering of their self-esteem. While they may not talk about what is happening to them, their suffering is indicated through changes in mood and behaviour. Bullying may occasionally result in feelings of hopelessness, loneliness and isolation in victims. It is, therefore, important to be alert to changes in behaviour as early intervention is desirable.

## **Appendix 3 – Programme for Work with Victim and Bullies**

### **Programme for work with victims and bullies**

Students who engage in bullying behaviour may need counselling to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others. Victims may need counselling and opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem and to develop their friendship and social skills whenever this is needed. The learning strategies applied within our school will allow for the enhancement of the student's self-worth. Students who observe incidents of bullying behaviour will be encouraged to discuss them with their teachers. Counselling provision will be made within our school for bullies and their victims.

## **Appendix 4 – Community**

### **Community networking to counteract bullying in our school**

In Ramsgrange Community School there is a whole community approach to the problem of bullying behaviour. Our school as a community is made up of management, teachers, non-teaching staff, students and parents/guardians. However, incidents of bullying behaviour may extend beyond our school gates. It is known that they can occur on the journey to and from school. Therefore, our anti-bullying school policy also embraces those members of the wider school community who come directly in daily contact with our students. School bus drivers, school wardens and local shopkeepers are encouraged to play a positive role in assisting our school to counter bullying behaviour by reporting such behaviour to parents and/or schools as appropriate.

## **Monitoring, Reviewing and Evaluating**

The school will monitor, review and evaluate the policy and all related work and procedures on an ongoing basis to ensure legal compliance and the maintenance of best practice.