



ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Before all else live together in harmony, being of one mind and one heart on the way to God. For is it not precisely for this reason that you have come to live together.

Do not quarrel. But if you do have a quarrel put it to an end as soon as possible, otherwise an isolated moment of anger grows into hatred. If you have hurt a person be careful to make amends for the harm as quickly as possible, by apologising.

The Rule of St Augustine

Preamble

As per Safeguarding Children in our Schools Guidelines & Procedures, issued by the Secretariat for Catholic Education in May 2019:

- The School must have an Anti-Bullying Policy which reflects the core values of the National Policy: Addressing Bullying Behaviour in Schools; Respect for All Framework 2014.
- The Behaviour Policy including challenging and/or inappropriate behaviour **should be distinctively separate** from the Anti-Bullying Policy.
- The Anti-Bullying Policy, must include clear guidelines for students, parents, teaching staff, SLT and helping professionals supporting the school on procedures to follow in different scenarios.

The policy must include the following:

- Reporting system of bullying behaviour by different stakeholders: learners, parents, teaching staff, SLT and helping professionals supporting the school.
- Designated Safeguarding Officer to receive reports and take action without prejudice.
- Parents' Involvement of both parties throughout the cycle; from reporting stage to actions taken ensuring a safe environment, provision of support and restorative justice.
- SLT's initiatives to ensure safe environment for all learners; upgrading of measures taken following specific reports.
- Support system for both alleged victim and perpetrator.
- Clear indication of restorative justice for perpetrator.
- The role of helping professionals allocated to the school including members of the Anti-Bullying Team from the NSSS.
- The Anti-Bullying Policy, **as with all other College policies must be accessible to all stakeholders; parents, learners and members of staff.**

Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all years at St Augustine College.

Statement of intent

- Bullying of any kind is unacceptable and all students must be made aware that bullying may cause psychological damage to the person being bullied. Bullying hurts, threatens and frightens. Everyone has the right to be treated with respect.
- When bullying does occur, all students should be able to tell someone and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively.
- Students who are bullying need to learn different ways of behaving.
- The College is committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment so that all students can enjoy and achieve during their time here.
- Bullying in all its forms will not be tolerated, these include peer to peer, teacher to student or student to teacher.

Definition of bullying

Bullying is any behaviour that is repeated over time and intentionally hurts another student or group physically or emotionally and is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example on the grounds of race, religion, culture, sex, gender, homophobia, special educational needs and disability, or because the child is adopted or is a carer – it may occur directly or through cyber-technology (social networks, phone calls, text messages, photographs and e-mail).

'Banter' can constitute bullying when it is targeted and the person at the receiving end feels threatened and upset by the exchange. Poor behaviour towards another student, as a one-off, is clearly not desirable, but does not necessarily constitute bullying.

Bullying can be:

- Emotional being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding books, threatening gestures)
- Physical pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence
- Racist racial taunts, graffiti, gestures
- Sexual unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments. Homophobic because of, or focusing on, the issue of sexuality
- Verbal name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing
- Cyber all areas of the internet – email, misuse of chat rooms; threats by texting, social media generally and, telephone calls; misuse of technology, i.e. camera and video facilities.

Objectives of this policy

- Bullying will not be tolerated. Students and parents should be assured that they will be supported when bullying is reported.
- Staff and students should have an understanding of what bullying is, and the effect it can have on our young people.
- Staff and students should know what the College policy is on bullying, and follow it when bullying is reported.
- Staff, students and parents should be aware that Article 82A of the Criminal Code identifies certain types of bullying behaviours as constituting a criminal offence. These include harassment behaviours or communications or violence, hate crime and hate messages on the grounds of gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, colour, language, ethnic origin, religion or belief or political or other opinion.
- St Augustine College may need to seek the advice of the police should they have any difficulties in this regard.
- Staff and students should have an understanding of the Behaviour and Discipline Policy.

Signs and symptoms of bullying

A student may indicate by signs or behaviour that he is being bullied. Adults should be aware of these possible signs and symptoms and they should investigate if a young person:

- Is unwilling to go to College
- Is frightened of walking to or from College
- Doesn't want to go on the bus provided
- Asks to be driven to College, rather than use the 'College' transport
- Changes their usual routine
- Begins to play truant
- Becomes withdrawn, anxious, or lacking in confidence
- Attempts or threatens suicide, self-harming or runs away
- Cries themselves to sleep at night or has nightmares
- Feels ill in the morning
- Begins to do poorly in school work
- Comes home with clothes torn/muddy clothes
- Has possessions which are damaged or 'go missing'
- Asks for money or starts stealing money (to pay the bully)
- Has unexplained cuts or bruises
- Becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- Is bullying other children or siblings
- Stops eating
- Is frightened to say what is wrong

- Is afraid to use the internet or mobile phone
- Is nervy and jumpy when a cyber-message is received

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

Procedures

All bullying behaviour or threats of bullying must be investigated and the bullying stopped quickly.

- If a student is being bullied or knows of someone else who is being bullied they **must tell someone**. Students who are bullied should not blame themselves.
- If a parent finds out about bullying of their child or any other child, they should inform the College **immediately**.
- The College can only do something if we know there is a problem.
- Report bullying incidents to any member of staff. It is best to inform the tutor/class teacher, or DSO (Designated Safeguarding Officer). Students can communicate incidents of bullying in a number of ways:
 - Speak to a member of staff – preferably your tutor/class teacher, Head of campus or Assistant Head
 - Write a short note to the teacher, Head of campus or Assistant Head and be passed to the DSO.

Students who are being bullied will be helped in the following ways:

- Being given an immediate opportunity to discuss the experience with a form tutor/class teacher, or Head or Assistant Head, informing the DSO.
- The bullied student will be offered reassurance and support as the tutor/class teacher, Head or Assistant Head begins an investigation.
- The bullied student will be asked to provide a written statement which identifies the bully/bullies and nature of the bullying, notes will be made by the member of staff.
- Witnesses to bullying will also be asked to produce a written statement.
- Parents will be informed by the DSO.
- Should the bullying be deemed to be severe the DSO with the Head will invite the parents to refer the incident to the police where there is a reasonable cause to believe that a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm.

1. Students who have bullied will be helped by:

- Discussing what happened
- Discovering why the student became involved
- Establishing the wrong doing and the need to change

- The bully / bullies will be asked to provide a written statement of the bullying incident(s). Notes will be made by the member of staff
 - Witnesses to bullying will also be asked to provide a written statement. Notes will be made by the member of staff
 - Parents will be informed by the Head or Assistant Head.
2. The DSO will make a judgement, based on the evidence, to take any one or more of the following courses of action:
- Mediation between the bullied and bully
 - Disciplinary action against the bully and mediation with the bullied and bullying student(s). If possible, the student will be reconciled.
 - In extreme cases, upon receiving consultation from the DSO, the Head may take the decision to exclude a student for a fixed term or, in more extreme cases, recommend permanent exclusion. (*Refer to the Exclusion Policy*)
 - If necessary, the police will be consulted.
 - An attempt will be made to help the bully to understand and change their behaviour.
 - Support will be given to the bullied student.
 - A record of the bullying incident will be made which identifies the student involved and the nature of the bullying.
 - Parents of the bullied child will be informed by the DSO of the outcome of the investigation as soon as possible.
3. After the incident has been investigated, it is the responsibility of the form tutor/class tutor, Head /Assistant Head and student, to monitor the situation to try to prevent any further bullying from taking place.
4. As part of the Year 7 Information Evening, the DSO will outline to parents, the College's policy on bullying, and in particular cyber bullying.

Restorative Justice

As stated in the Rule of St Augustine: "*If you have hurt a person be careful to make amends for the harm as quickly as possible, by apologising*". The College is to create a learning environment in which students acquire the necessary skills to regulate their behaviour which enables them to function properly in the school community. When their behaviour becomes unacceptable students must be allowed to take responsibility for their behaviour, change their behaviour to a manner that is acceptable, and be required to make proper amends. All this can be facilitated in a context where restorative justice is promoted; where the needs of victims and bullies are addressed.

Bullying outside the College's premises

No student should suffer in silence. Where a student or a parent report bullying off the College premises, a range of steps may be taken:

- Talk to the police about problems on local streets
- Talk to the transport company about bullying on buses
- Talk to the head of another school if their students are thought to be bullying St Augustine College students
- Remind students of the safe route to College

Prevention of bullying

The College promotes a culture of zero tolerance towards bullying. This will be achieved by:

- School assemblies that address bullying issues.
- All new students, in the Primary and the Secondary, and their parents will receive a copy of the anti-bullying policy and advice on how to prevent bullying using materials from appropriate and relevant websites.
- Students will be directed to avoid any forms of language which could be seen as Prejudiced Based Language e.g. homophobic or racist.
- As part of their induction programme all new staff to the school will be made aware of the College anti-bullying policy, its procedures and their role in dealing with incidents of bullying and their prevention. The College will also actively seek to train staff on a regular basis with regard to preventing bullying in school as noted below.
- The College will ensure that staff are regularly trained in bullying.
- The College promotes its core values of love, care, improve & excel to help reinforce positive behaviour and cooperation. Through encouraging inclusion events students can learn the value of being part of the College community.
- Cyberbullying is tackled in a variety of ways including:
 - Covered extensively in the ICT programme of study
 - Year 7 parents will receive it at the appropriate Information Evening
 - Visits/talks and presentations from the local Police re 'Diversity and Tolerance' as well as Drama productions delivered in conjunction with the local police force.
 - E-safety courses.

The role of helping professionals allocated to the College including members of the Anti-Bullying Team from the SfCE.

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