



Oaklands Community College

Anti-bullying 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 Oaklands Community 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 College. The matter of intra-staff bullying is addressed in the following Laois/ Offaly ETB policies:

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

2. The Board of Management of Oaklands Community College adopts the [Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools](#) issued by the Department of Education and Skills (September 2013) as the basis for the way in which the College community addresses the issue of bullying.

3. The Board of Management recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of students or staff 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 students and staff 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 students;
 - ✓ Explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying;

- ✓ including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.
- Effective supervision and monitoring of students.
- Supports 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.

4. 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.
- ✓ 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](#).

Those who bully others in a non-physical way often do not realise that their actions may have serious legal consequences for them. **The reality, however, is that bullying may constitute a criminal offence.**

For example, bullying may constitute a criminal offence under **Section 10 of the Non-Fatal Offences against the Person Act 1997.**

Section 10 of this act deals with harassment and provides that a person may be guilty of this crime if s/he:

'... without lawful authority or reasonable excuse, by any means including by use of the telephone, harasses another by persistently following, watching, pestering, besetting or communicating with him or her.

'For the purpose of this section, a person harasses another where-

- (a) *he or she, by his or her acts intentionally or recklessly, seriously interferes with the other's peace and privacy or causes alarm, distress or harm to the other, and*

- (b) his or her acts are such that a reasonable person would realise that the acts would seriously interfere with the other's peace and privacy or cause alarm, distress or harm to the other'.

Section 10 harassment is an arrestable offence and, if convicted on indictment, carries a jail term not exceeding 7 years. On conviction also, a court may make an order that the guilty party may not, for a specified period, communicate by any means, or come within a specified distance of a person's home or workplace.

Section 2 of the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act (1989) makes it a criminal offence for a person *to publish or distribute written material, to use words, behave or display written material ... or to distribute, show or play a recording of visual images or sounds, if the written material, words, behaviour, visual images or sounds, as the case may be, are threatening, abusive or insulting and are intended or, having regard to all the circumstances, are likely to stir up hatred.*

Even where bullying does not amount to a criminal offence, the perpetrator may be held liable for damages in civil court proceedings. For example, **statements made on social media sites are covered by the provisions of the Defamation Act 2009**, which at Section 2 defines a defamatory statement as 'one which tends to injure a person's reputation in the eyes of reasonable members of society'.

Many, young and not so young, seem to feel that by posting anonymously on social networking sites, they can guarantee that their identity is protected. This, however, is not the case. Indeed, in many cases the content of messages makes it easy to identify the perpetrator. In any case, where the Gardaí have grounds for believing that criminal activity may be occurring, applications can be made to the courts requiring the internet service provider or others in possession of relevant information to divulge a perpetrator's identity.

Where it is felt that bullying may amount to a criminal act, the College may seek legal advice and the matter will be reported to the Gardaí.

5. Reporting procedure for bullying incidents

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 Principals. 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](#).

6. Education and prevention strategies to combat bullying – Section 6.5 of [DES Procedures](#)

- 6.1 The 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.
- 6.2 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), the College nevertheless reserves the right to take disciplinary action (up to and including suspension and

expulsion), where such is warranted, in accordance with the School's Student Behaviour Management Plan, against those who bully others.

- 6.3 The prevention and awareness of bullying is integral to this policy and students will, through an extensive range of extra - curricular and co-curricular activities be given further opportunities to develop their self esteem, resilience and a positive sense of self-worth.
- 6.4 The focus of the College's prevention strategy will be to build empathy, respect and resilience in students. Positive recognition of good behaviour is encouraged through the use of the positive behaviour tab on the school's VS Ware System.
- 6.5 Students will be provided with opportunities to understand the causes and effects of bullying, the issue of identity-based bullying and in particular homophobic and trans-phobic bullying. This will include the display of LGBT posters (as appropriate) and discussions with parents about statements of welcome and respect for LGBT members of the school community, teaching the Social, Personal, Health Education (SPHE) resource, Growing Up LGBT and (as appropriate) participating in LGBT awareness events during 'Stand Up Awareness Week'.

The 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 school will make every reasonable effort to ensure that the full potential of these programmes to combat bullying is exploited.

Furthermore, it is recognised that there is potential within the teaching of all subjects and within extracurricular activities to foster an attitude of respect for all: to promote the value of diversity; to address prejudice and stereotyping and to highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour.

- 6.6 The 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. All First Year Students study 'Think Before You Click', all second year students study 'Lockers' and 'Be in Control' and 3rd Year students study 'Connect'.
- 6.7 Oakland's Community College 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 when a student draws concerns about bullying to the attention of a member of staff, every effort will be made to ensure that his / her identity divulged in any way that might result in those against whom allegations are being made identifying the source of the report.

More than anything else, the combating of bullying will depend on the extent to which students note and report bullying. In this context, the well-being of students is very much dependent on the vigilance of their fellow students and their preparedness to report concerns about bullying to the teaching staff and/or school management. All teaching staff

- will reinforce this point to students on an ongoing basis. An Anti-Bullying week will be organised on a yearly basis and an Anti-Bullying charter will be displayed in each classroom and other public areas.
- 6.8 The School will adopt a school-wide approach (involving management, staff, parents, students and members of the wider community with a connection to the School) to prevent and combat bullying. In this context, Oaklands Community College is committed to engaging with parents. Firstly, the School will involve them in the development of policies and practices to combat bullying. Secondly the School will hold **annual information evenings for parents** to ensure that they understand the way the School deals with bullying, and to provide them with reliable information on how they may contribute towards combating bullying. In this regard, it is important that parents realise that anyone can be a bully and anyone can be a target of bullying. It is not just other people's sons and daughters that can bully. In this regard, it is important to realise that disagreements between young people are part and parcel of negotiating the road to adulthood and that every youthful disagreement should not be treated as a full-blown bullying episode.
 - 6.9 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.
 - 6.10 Oakland's Community College will establish links with school bus drivers and others who come in daily contact with its students in order to enlist them in countering bullying behaviour by reporting it to parents and/or the School.
 - 6.11 Where necessary the School will seek the assistance of and work with NEPS, the HSE and the Gardaí, as appropriate, to combat bullying – identify the perpetrators and support the victims.
 - 6.12 In combating bullying, the School will take particular account of the needs of pupils with disabilities or with SEN. This will involve improving inclusion, focusing on developing social skills, paying particular attention to student induction and cultivating a school culture that respects everyone and values helping one another.
 - 6.13 The School is committed to surveying the student body twice yearly to identify the extent of bullying and, in so far as is possible, the students that are affected by it (Appendix 1).
 - 6.14 The School's RSE, RE and SPHE programme will specifically address the issue of bullying with each year group, each school year.
 - 6.15 The School's senior students will have a specific responsibility for recognising bullying behaviour, for bringing concerns about bullying behaviour to the attention of the teacher and for supporting vulnerable students in relation to bullying. The senior students will be provided with training to assist them in this regard within the Cairde mentoring programme.
 - 6.16 The College will each year hold a Safe Internet Awareness Day and an Anti-Bullying Awareness Week to highlight the whole issue of bullying and staying safe using modern technology.
 - 6.17 Our Anti-Bullying Charter was formulated by students as part of our Anti Bullying Policy and is displayed in all classrooms and in other prominent areas in the school.

7.0 Procedures for investigating, following up and recording of bullying behaviour, and intervention strategies used by the School for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour - see Section 6.8 of [DES Procedures](#)

- 7.1 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, he /she should bring it to the attention of the relevant year head at the earliest possible opportunity for further investigation. The year head will initially investigate the incident and Appendix 2 will be completed. This documents the source of the information and the nature of the alleged incident, and the actions taken by the year head. The student will be invited to write down any relevant details (Appendix 3 – Student Account of Incident) and a report will be compiled.
- 7.2 In investigating bullying behaviour or addressing bullying behaviour in any way, year heads are welcome to seek the assistance and support of the principal, the deputy principals 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 Year heads to check in with either of them before taking any action in relation to bullying behaviour.
- 7.3 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 Year head the Principal or Deputy Principals at the earliest possible opportunity.
- 7.4 Oakland’s Community College reserves the right to investigate allegations of bullying (and to take disciplinary action where necessary) where bullying is perpetrated by a member of the school community and it impinges on the work or well-being of a student in the school, even where the bullying acts are committed outside of the school.
- 7.5 The School reserves the right, in accordance with Section 6.3.5 of the [DES Procedures](#) to seek the assistance of agencies such as NEPS, the HSE, and the Gardaí, where it deems such assistance is necessary to dealing effectively with bullying behaviour. In any case, where the School deems bullying behaviour to be potentially abusive (see sections 6.8.12, 6.8.13 and 6.8.14 of the [DES Procedures](#)) it will consult with the HSE’s Children and Family Services to assist it in drawing up an appropriate response or to obtain advice or to make a formal child protection report to the HSE or the Gardaí (as appropriate) in accordance with the DES [Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools](#).
- 7.6 Concerns about or allegations of bullying will be investigated and addressed in accordance with Section 6.8 9 of the [Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools](#). These are summarised as follows.
 - a. In investigating and dealing with bullying the focus will be on resolving the interpersonal issues and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved - rather than apportioning blame.
 - b. In investigating and dealing with bullying, the Year head will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved.
 - c. All reports of bullying, including anonymous reports, will be investigated and dealt with either by the Year head, Principal and/or Deputy Principal. In this regard, it is incumbent on each teacher who becomes aware of bullying

behaviour to bring such behaviour to the attention of the Year head, Principal or Deputy Principals at the earliest possible opportunity.

- d. It will be made clear to students in all years that when they report bullying behaviour they are not considered to be 'telling tales' but are behaving responsibly and that the well-being of other students is dependent on them reporting such behaviour to a teacher or to a senior student.
- e. All non-teaching staff such as clerical and administrative, study supervisors, special needs assistants (SNAs), caretakers, cleaners, sports' coaches, those taking extracurricular activities and those driving school buses will be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to either a teacher or the principal or deputy principals.
- f. Incidents of bullying will be investigated in a calm, unemotional problem-solving manner.
- g. Incidents of bullying will generally be investigated outside of the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.
- h. All interviews will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard for the rights of students, irrespective of whether they are allegedly involved in bullying behaviour or in a position to provide information about the behaviour being investigated.
- i. Those investigating bullying behaviour will calmly seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why.
- j. Where a group is allegedly involved in bullying behaviour, each student will be interviewed individually in the first instance. Thereafter, where appropriate, all involved will be met as a group and, at this meeting; each member will be asked for his/her account to ensure that all are clear about what each individual is saying.
- k. Each member of a group will be supported through the possible pressures that s/he may face from the other members of the group after being interviewed.
- l. Where deemed appropriate, those being interviewed may be asked to write down their account of what happened on the *Student Account of Incident Form*
- m. Where the year head investigating a bullying issue determines that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved will be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and to explain the actions being taken. The school will give parents an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school.
- n. Where the Year head determines that a student has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it will be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and **every reasonable effort** will be made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the student/s being bullied.
- o. Where the School deems it necessary to impose disciplinary sanctions, it will be made clear to all involved (both the bullied and those doing the bullying) and their parents) that this is a private matter between the student being disciplined, his/her parents and the School.

- p. As a follow up to a bullying issue being resolved, the Year head should meet separately with the relevant parties to review progress. Subsequently, but only if the student who has been bullied is ready and agreeable, consideration should be given to meeting with both parties simultaneously as this can have a therapeutic effect.
- q. Where the Year head considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, the bullying incident must be recorded by Year head in the recording template (Appendix 4)
- r. In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant Year head must, as part of his/her professional judgement, take the following factors into account.
 - ⇒ Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased.
 - ⇒ Whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable.
 - ⇒ Whether the relationships between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable; and
 - ⇒ Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the school Principal or Deputy Principal.
- s. Where a parent/guardian or a student who is more than 18 years old is not satisfied that the School has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, s/he will be advised of his/her right to make an appeal to the Board of Management of Oaklands Community College. Such appeals shall be submitted, in writing setting out the grounds for the appeal, to the Chairperson of the Board within 15 school days of the parent/guardian informing the School Principal that s/he is of the opinion that the School/College has not dealt with the bullying case in accordance with the [Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools](#).
 Where a parent/guardian, having exercised his/her appeal to the Board of Management, is still not satisfied s/he will be advised of his/her right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

8.0 Programme of support for working with students affected by bullying - see Sections 6.8 15, 6.8.16 and 6.8.17 of [DES Procedures](#)

- 8.1** Oakland's Community College will put in place a programme of supports for students who have been bullied in so far as resources allow. This programme may involve the following elements.
- ✓ Offering appropriate counselling from members of the Pastoral Care Team.
 - ✓ Provision of counselling to help them to learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others;
 - ✓ Provision of appropriate opportunities to build their self esteem and feelings of self-worth.

8.1 Supervision and Monitoring of Anti-Bullying in Oakland's Community College

- 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.
- The implementation and effectiveness of the School's anti-bullying policy will be an agenda item for all staff meetings – so the concerns about the policy and/or the welfare of individual students can be shared and effectively addressed.
- Data gathered through the reporting templates (Appendix 4) will be collated and analysed annually with a view to monitoring levels of bullying behaviour and identifying issues requiring attention. This analysis will complement the information gathered through the bullying surveys.
- At least once in every school term, The Principal will provide a report to the Board of Management setting out the following:
 - ✓ The overall number of bullying cases reported (by means of the bullying recording template (see Appendix 1) since the previous report to the Board.
 - ✓ confirmation that all cases referred via the recording template (Appendix 4) have been or are being, dealt with in accordance with the school's anti-bullying policy and the [Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools](#). The minutes of Board of Management' meetings will record the Principal's report but in doing so will not include any identifying details of the students involved.

9.0 Prevention of Harassment

The Board of Management confirms that the Oaklands Community College will, in accordance with its obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the sexual harassment of students or staff or the harassment of students 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.

10.0 Policy Adoption and Review

This policy was reviewed by the Board of Management on 12th of September 2024

11.0 Policy Dissemination and Publication

This policy will be made available to school personnel electronically published on the school website and provided to the Parents Association.

11.0 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](#) using the checklist included with these procedures.
- 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 takes to create a positive school culture and to prevent and tackle bullying.

Signed: Robert McDermott
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Date: 12th September 2024 Date of next review: Annually each
September.

Signed: Suwan Kelwe
(Principal)

Date: 12th September 2024

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

To: Parents Association + Parents / Guardians

The Board of Management of Oaklands CC wishes to inform you that:

- The Board of Management's annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation was completed at the Board meeting of 12/09/24 [date].
- 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 Collet Mc Dermott
Chairperson, Board of Management

Date 12/9/24

Signed Brian Kehoe
Principal

Date 12/9/24

ANTI-BULLYING QUESTIONNAIRE

It is the policy of our school to prevent bullying and to help anyone who is being bullied. This questionnaire gives you an opportunity to get help if you are being bullied or help anyone else who needs it.

Name: _____

Class: _____

Are you being bullied? Yes _____ No _____

Would you like to talk to someone about it? Yes _____ No _____

Appendix 2

Incident Report Form

Name: _____

Tutor Class: _____

Date: _____

Details of Incident

—

Actions Taken in Response to Incident Report (Phone calls, consultations with students, parents, teachers etc, warning, mediation, sanctions, Referral, SMT notified, other, including outcomes).

Name of Year head: _____

Date: _____

Signature of Pupil: _____

If I do not feel that the situation has improved, I will bring the matter to the attention of my Year head.

Signature of Pupil: _____

Oaklands Community College Appendix 4

Recording Bullying Behaviour

1. Name of student being bullied and class group

Name _____ Class _____

2. Name(s) and class(es) of student(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 of person(s) who reported the bullying concern

--

6. Type of Bullying Behaviour (tick relevant box(es))

*

Physical Aggression	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cyber-bullying	<input type="checkbox"/>
Damage to Property	<input type="checkbox"/>	Intimidation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Isolation/Exclusion	<input type="checkbox"/>	Malicious Gossip	<input type="checkbox"/>
Name Calling	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

Homophobic	Disability/SEN related	Racist	Membership of Traveller community

8. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact

9. Details of actions taken

Signed _____ (Year head) Date _____

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal _____