



# Coláiste Achadh an Iúir

Virginia, Co. Cavan

Principal: Niall M. Lynch

Tel: 049 8547050

Email: [info@virginiacollege.ie](mailto:info@virginiacollege.ie)

Deputy Principal: Seamus Greene

Deputy Principal: Kaye Duffy

## Virginia College – Anti Bullying Policy

### 1. The Policy

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 Virginia College has adopted the following anti-bullying policy within the framework of the college's overall code of behaviour. This policy fully complies with the requirements of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Colleges, which were published in September 2013.

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

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

### 2. Key Principles of Best Practice

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 college 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 college community.
- Effective leadership.
- A college-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 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.

### 3. Definition of Bullying

In accordance with the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Colleges, 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:

- **Physical aggression:** This behaviour includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping people. It may also take the form of severe physical assault. While pupils sometimes engage in 'mess fights' or 'messaging', they can sometimes be used as a disguise for physical harassment or inflicting pain.
- **Intimidation:** Some bullying behaviour takes the form of intimidation. It may be based on the use of very aggressive body language with the voice being used as a weapon. Particularly upsetting can be a facial expression which conveys aggression and/or dislike.
- **Isolation and exclusion:** This occurs where a certain person is deliberately isolated, excluded or ignored by some or all of the class group. It may include deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying. It may be accompanied by writing insulting remarks about the pupil in public places, by passing around notes about or drawings of the pupil or by whispering insults about them loud enough to be heard.
- **Relational bullying:** This occurs when a person's attempts to socialise and form relationships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined.
- **Cyber-bullying:** It is bullying carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as text, social network sites, e-mail, instant messaging (IM), apps, gaming sites, chatrooms and other online technologies. Being the target of inappropriate or hurtful messages is the most common form of online bullying.
- **Name-calling:** Persistent name-calling directed at the same individual(s) which hurts, insults or humiliates should be regarded as a form of bullying behaviour. Often name-calling of this type refers to physical appearance. Accent or distinctive voice characteristics may attract negative attention. Academic ability can also provoke name-calling.
- **Damage to property:** Personal property can be the focus of attention for bullying behaviour. This may result in damage to clothing, mobile phone or other devices, college books and other learning material or interference with a pupil's locker or bicycle. The contents of college bags and pencil cases may be scattered on the floor. Items of personal property may be defaced, broken, stolen or hidden.
- **Extortion:** Demands for money may be made, often accompanied by threats. A pupil may also be forced into theft of property for delivery to another who is engaged in bullying behaviour.
- **Identity-based bullying:** 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 college'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 college's code of behaviour.

#### **4. To whom should concerns about a student being bullied be reported – relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying?**

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, Deputy Principals and/or the Personal Safety Committee. 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 Colleges](#).

#### **5. Education and prevention strategies**

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 Virginia College are as follows:

- Virginia College makes it clear to all members of the college 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 College community have a duty to bring to the attention of the Principal, Deputy Principals and/or the Personal Safety Committee any incident of bullying including 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), Virginia College nevertheless reserves the right to take disciplinary action (up to and including suspension and expulsion), where such is warranted, in accordance with the College's Code of Behaviour and the CMETB Suspensions and Expulsions Policy, 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.
- The focus of Virginia College's prevention strategy will be to build empathy, respect and resilience in students.
- 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 college community, teaching the Social,

Personal, Health Education (SPHE) resource, Growing Up LGBT and (as appropriate) participating in LGBT awareness events.

- Virginia 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 College's SPHE programme will specifically address the issue of bullying with annually.
- 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. We promote co-operation and group enterprise through team sports, college clubs and societies as well as through practical subjects. Sporting activities in particular can provide excellent opportunities for channelling and learning how to control aggression.
- 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 in line with Virginia College Social Media Policy.
- Virginia College will, in all its communications with students and their parents, commencing with the induction of the student into the College, 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.
- 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 college management. All teaching staff will reinforce this point to students on an ongoing basis.
- Virginia College will adopt a college-wide approach (involving management, staff, parents and students) to prevent and combat bullying. In this context, the College is committed to engaging with parents. Firstly, Virginia College will involve them in the development of policies and practices to combat bullying. Secondly, Virginia College will hold information evenings for parents to ensure that they understand the way the College deals with bullying, and to provide them with reliable information on how they may contribute towards combating bullying.
- In accordance with 6.8.9 of the [DES Procedures](#) 'parents and students are expected to co-operate with any investigation and assist the college in resolving any issues and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved as quickly as possible'.
- In combating bullying, the Virginia College will take particular account of the needs of students with disabilities or with SEN. This will involve improving inclusion, focusing on developing social skills, paying particular attention to student induction and cultivating a college culture that respects everyone and values helping one another.
- Virginia College is committed to devoting a continuous professional development session each year to building the capacity of the College to combat bullying.
- Virginia College is committed to surveying the student body regularly to identify the extent of bullying and, in so far as is possible, the students that are affected by it.
- Virginia 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.

- Virginia College's senior students will have a specific responsibility for recognising bullying behaviour and for bringing concerns about bullying behaviour to the attention of a teacher. The senior prefects will deliver a number of lessons to First Year students on the topic of bullying awareness.

## **6. Procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying**

Virginia College's procedures for investigation, follow up and recording of bullying behaviour and the established intervention strategies used by the college for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour are as follows:

- The primary aim for the relevant teacher in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame). In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and may refer the matter to the Principal/Deputy Principals, Year Head or a member of the Personal Safety Committee.
- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. In that way pupils will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It is made clear to all pupils that when they report incidents of bullying, they are not considered to be telling tales, but are behaving responsibly.
- Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), bus escorts, caretakers and cleaners are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the Class Tutor or Year Head.
- Parents and pupils are required to co-operate with any investigation and assist the college in resolving any issues and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved as quickly as possible. Teachers take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents.
- Incidents are generally best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved. All interviews are conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved also provide very useful information in this way. When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher seeks answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This is done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner.
- If a group is involved, each member is interviewed individually at first and thereafter, all those involved may be met as a group with at least one member of staff present. At the group meeting, each member is asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statement. Each member of a group is supported through the possible pressures that may face them from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher. It may also be appropriate or helpful sometimes to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident.
- In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved are contacted at an early stage, if deemed necessary, to inform them of the matter and to explain the actions being taken (by reference to the college policy). The college gives parents an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the college and the supports available for their child. Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in

bullying behaviour, it is made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the college's anti-bullying policy and efforts are made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied.

- It is made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parents) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parents and the college. Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved are arranged separately with a view to possibly bringing them together, at a later date, if the pupil who has been bullied is ready and agreeable. This can have a therapeutic effect.
- In cases where the relevant teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 college days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, it must be recorded by the relevant teacher on the 'Form for recording bullying behaviour'. In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant teacher 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 has any feedback been received from the parties involved, their parents or the college Principal or Deputy Principals.
- Where a parent is not satisfied that the college has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents must be referred, as appropriate, to the college's complaints procedures. In the event that a parent has exhausted the college's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the college must advise the parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

## **7. Procedures for recording bullying behaviour**

The Board of Management of Virginia College has ensured that the school has clear procedures for the formal noting and reporting of bullying behaviour and these must be documented in the school's antibullying policy. All records must be maintained in accordance with relevant data protection legislation. The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour must adhere to the following:

- While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the relevant teacher will use his/her professional judgement in relation to the records to be kept of these reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same.
- If it is established by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher must keep appropriate written records which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.
- The relevant teacher must use the 'form for recording bullying behaviour' to record the bullying behaviour in the following circumstances: in cases where he/she considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour occurred; and where the school has decided that in certain circumstances bullying behaviour must be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principals.

## **8. Supports for pupils affected by bullying**

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

- A programme of support for pupils who have been bullied is in place in Virginia College. Such pupils may need 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. We adopt a method of shared concern. We use restorative practice, mediation or reconciliation where appropriate. We maintain open communications between school, parents and outside agencies. We work together to resolve the situation and protect the victim.
- A programme of support for those pupils involved in bullying behaviour is also part of the school's intervention process. Pupils involved in bullying behaviour need assistance on an ongoing basis. For those with low self-esteem, opportunities are developed to increase feelings of self-worth. Therefore, we recognise that it is important that the learning strategies applied within the school allow for the enhancement of the pupil's self-worth. Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour may need counselling to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others.

## **9. Referral of serious cases to TUSLA**

In relation to bullying in schools, Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011 (Children First) and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools provide that in situations where "the incident is serious and where the behaviour is regarded as potentially abusive, the school must consult the HSE Children and Family Social Services with a view to drawing up an appropriate response, such as a management plan".

Serious instances of bullying behaviour are, in accordance with the Children First and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, referred to the HSE Children and Family Services and/or Gardaí as appropriate.

The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools also provide that where school personnel have concerns about a child but are not sure whether to report the matter to the HSE, the Designated Liaison Person must seek advice from the HSE Children and Family Social Services.

## **10. Bullying as part of a continuum of behaviour**

Bullying behaviour can be part of a continuum of behaviour rather than a stand-alone issue and, in some cases, behaviour may escalate beyond that which can be described as bullying to serious physical or sexual assault or harassment. To ensure that any such cases are dealt with appropriately, the school's anti-bullying policy provides for appropriate linkages with the overall code of behaviour and referrals will be made to relevant external agencies and authorities where appropriate. In cases where we have serious concerns in relation to managing the behaviour of a pupil, the advice of the National Education Psychological Service (NEPS) should be sought.

## **11. 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.

## **12. 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 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.

## **13. Policy Dissemination and Publication**

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

## **14. Policy Review**

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 and provided to the Parents' Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management of Virginia College on the 21<sup>st</sup> October 2020

Date of next review: October 2021



## Appendix 1 – Template for Recording Bullying Behaviour

### Name of pupil being bullied and class group

1. Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_

2. Name(s) and class(es) of pupil(s) engaged in bullying behaviour

--

3. Source of bullying concern/report

Pupil Concerned	
Other Pupil	
Parent	
Teacher	
Other	

4. Location of incidents

School Yard	
Classroom	
Corridor	
Toilets	
Other	

5. Type of Bullying Behaviour

Physical Aggression		Cyber Bullying	
Damage to Property		Intimidation	
Isolation/Exclusion		Malicious Gossip	
Name Calling		Other	

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

Gender	Disability/SEN	Racist	Other

8. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact

--

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Reporting Teacher)      Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date received by PSC: \_\_\_\_\_      PSC Member: \_\_\_\_\_

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 Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools?	
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: \_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson, Board of Management

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

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

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