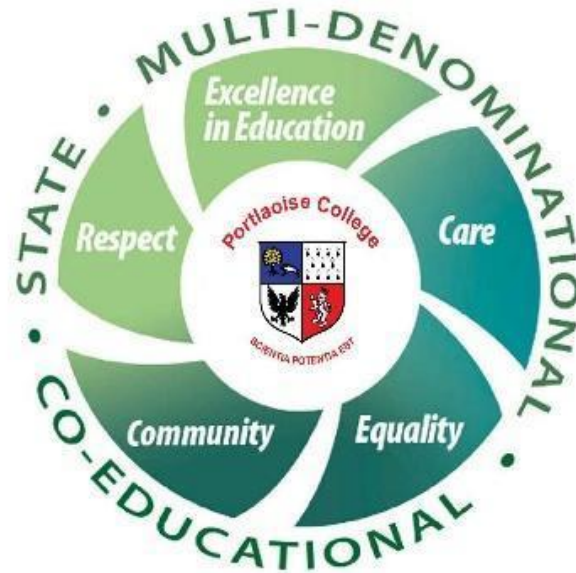


Portlaoise College



Anti-Bullying Policy

June 2023

Documents Included:

Mandatory Template 1: Anti-Bullying Policy

Mandatory Template 2: Template for Recording Bullying Behaviour

Mandatory Template 3: Checklist For Annual Review

Mandatory Template 4: Notification of Review to BOM

We Are a Listening School

Introduction

Bullying behaviour, by its very nature, undermines and dilutes the quality of education. Research shows that bullying can have short and long-term effects on the physical and mental well-being of pupils, on engagement with school, on self-confidence and on the ability to pursue ambitions and interests.

Bullying is targeted behaviour, online or offline, that causes harm. The harm caused can be physical, social and/or emotional in nature. Bullying behaviour is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power in relationships between two people or groups of people in society (CINEALTÁS, 2022).

School-based bullying can be positively and firmly addressed through a range of school-based measures and strategies through which *all members of the school community* are enabled to act effectively in dealing with this behaviour. School-based initiatives, included in this policy, can either reinforce positive efforts or help counteract unsuccessful attempts of parents to change unacceptable behaviour.

Parents and pupils have a particularly important role and responsibility in helping the school to prevent and address school-based bullying behaviour and to deal with any negative impact within the school of bullying that occurs elsewhere.

Policy Context and Rationale

It is a requirement for all schools to have an Anti-Bullying Policy within the framework of their overall Code of Conduct. This Anti-Bullying Policy has been drawn up in consultation with all the school partners, including the Board of Management, school staff, students and parents/guardians. It takes cognisance of the responsibility of the school to ensure that all of its students are educated in a happy, safe, respectful and optimal learning environment. This policy is founded on the following documents:

- *Education Welfare Act (2000)*
- *Equal Status Acts (2000-2004)*
- *Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools* as published by the National Educational Welfare Board (hereafter referred to as the NEWB) (2008)
- *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013)* as published by the

Department of Education and Skills

- *DES² Circular Letter 045/2013*
- *Cineáltas, 2022*

This Anti-Bullying Policy complies with the provisions of all relevant legislation and with the *Anti-Bullying Guidelines for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* (DES, 2013), hereafter referred to as the DES procedures.

Portlaoise College School ETHOS

Just like people have values, so do schools. A school's ethos reflects what is important to it and what type of an environment it wants to create for its students/community. The school's core values inform its ethos.

Portlaoise College is a state, co-educational, multi-denominational school underpinned by five core values.

§ Excellence in Education

§ Care

§ Equality

§ Community

§ Respect

Our School Ethos helps us to ensure.....

§ That all of you reach your potential and that all of you realise your talents

§ That you are supported in your learning

§ That all of you feel confident in your abilities and enjoy success

§ That all of you feel like you belong and are treated fairly and equally

§ That you are respected

§ That you are cared for

§ That you feel part of a community

§ That you understand the immense potential that you have

Mission Statement:

Portlaoise College is committed to providing all students with a high quality holistic education that enables them to achieve their maximum potential in an engaging, challenging and student centred environment that celebrates diversity in partnership with all stakeholders.

Our school aims to provide each student with a holistic education built on respect. We have a strong commitment to the excellence required for each student to reach their full potential.

Scope

‘‘It is important to recognise that any pupil can be bullied or can engage in bullying behaviour’’ (DES, 2013).

This policy applies to all students, parents and staff of Portlaoise College. The care and wellbeing of students is the responsibility of all members of the school community. All members of the school community have an important role and responsibility in helping the school to prevent and address *school-based* bullying behaviour and to deal with any negative impact *within the school* of bullying behaviour that occurs elsewhere. Bullying behaviour that occurs outside of the school and does not have an impact in school is outside the scope of this policy e.g. in neighbourhoods, sports clubs, within families...etc.

The matter of intra-staff bullying is addressed in the following ETB policies:

- *Bullying Prevention Policy – Compliant Procedure for ETB Staff*
- *Harassment/Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy – Complaint Procedure for ETB Staff*

Policy Aims

‘‘An Anti-Bullying Policy, when developed and implemented across the school community can be the cornerstone in countering bullying behaviour in schools’’ (DES, 2013). The main aims of this Anti-Bullying Policy are as follows:

1. To create a positive school culture and climate that is inclusive and welcoming of difference
2. To create a school climate that is open, supportive and encourages pupils to disclose and discuss bullying behaviour
3. To raise awareness amongst the entire school community that bullying is unacceptable behaviour
4. To provide procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying behaviour
5. To provide procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour
6. To develop a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and for those involved in bullying behaviour (considering the new school context)
7. To work with and through external agencies in countering all forms of bullying and anti-social behaviour; and to facilitate ongoing reflection and evaluation of the effectiveness of Portlaoise College's Anti-Bullying Policy

Commitment to 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/staff and learning. The Board of Management of Portlaoise College is therefore fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour:

1. A positive school culture and climate which:
 - a. Is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity
 - b. Encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment; and
 - c. Promotes respectful relationships across the school community
2. Effective leadership
3. A school-wide approach
4. A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact
5. Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness-raising measures) that:
 - a. Build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and
 - b. Explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.
6. Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils

7. Supports for staff
8. Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies) and
9. On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the Anti-Bullying Policy.

Prevention of Harassment

The Board of Management confirms that Portlaoise 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 Traveler community.

Please note that Bullying and Harassment will not be tolerated in Portlaoise College. Under the Anti-Bullying Policy, breaches may be referred to be dealt with under the Code of Conduct. This will include the full range of sanctions of the Code of Conduct, up to and including Suspension and Exclusion. In situations where an incident (bullying or misconduct) is serious and where the behaviour is regarded as potentially abusive, the matter will be referred to the Designated Liaison Person (DLP).

Communication of the Anti-Bullying Policy and the key messages associated with it

Portlaoise College's Anti-Bullying Policy must be made available to the Board of Management, Parent-Teacher Association, students and all school personnel. It must be published on the school website (PDF version). The policy must also be provided to LOETB for ratification purposes and to the DES on request. A hard copy of the policy will be provided to students and parents on request.

The school rules and any information on bullying are communicated to students in pupil friendly, age-appropriate, visual formats. For example, highly colored and clear posters, containing the key messages regarding bullying, are displayed around the school. The policy content (definition, types, and impacts) is explicitly taught to students at least once per year

E.g. during Friendship Week or on an Anti-Bullying focus day. The school rules/expectations of

students are clearly written and individually explained in the school journal.

Related Policies

Portlaoise College recognises that child protection and welfare considerations permeate all aspects of school life and must be reflected in all policies, practices and activities. The Anti-Bullying Policy is a central policy in Portlaoise College. It is one of the most important policies concerning how the school provides for the care and well-being of students. However, it does not operate in isolation. **All other school policies** relate to the school’s Anti-Bullying Policy. It is the interdependence and cooperation of these policies in an organic way that ensures their effectiveness. Some of the policies that are most relevant to anti-bullying are shown in the graphic below. This list is not exhaustive and all school policies interrelate.



Policy Content

Definition of Bullying

In accordance with the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013) bullying is defined as follows: *“Bullying is an unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time.”*

Types of Bullying

Deliberate Exclusion: This includes malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying.

Identity-Based Bullying: This includes 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.

- Spreading rumours about a person's sexual orientation.
- Name-calling e.g., gay, queer, lesbian, trans...used in a derogatory manner.
- Physical intimidation or attacks.
- Taunting a person of a different sexual orientation.
- Threats.

Race, nationality, ethnic background, and membership of the Traveller community

- Discrimination, prejudice, comments or insults about colour, nationality, culture, social class, religious beliefs, ethnic or traveller background.
- Exclusion on the basis of any of the above.

Cyber Bullying: Using mobile phones (text messages, WhatsApp groups etc.), e-mail or picture messages, social networking sites, e.g. (Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook etc.) as follows:

- **Denigration:** Spreading rumours, lies or gossip to hurt a 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 or vulgar words to provoke an online fight.
- **Trickery:** Fooling someone into sharing personal information which you then post online.
- **Outing:** Posting or 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 call.
- Abusive telephone/mobile phone calls.
- Abusive text messages.
- Abusive emails.
- Abusive communication on social networks e.g., Facebook/Ask.fm/Twitter/YouTube, TikTok or on games consoles.
- Abusive comments on another student's blog and /or pictures.
- Abusive posts on any form of communication technology.

If an incident of cyberbullying is being investigated, Portlaoise College reserves the right to ask a student to show their phone/electronic devices to the Year Head/Deputy Principal/Principal. If the student refuses to co-operate with this request, sanctions as per the Code of Conduct will be imposed.

Physical Aggression: This includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking or tripping people up.

Damage to Property: This may result in damage to clothing, schoolbooks and other learning material or interference with a student's locker or bicycle etc. Items of personal property may be effaced, broken, stolen or hidden.

Extortion: Demands for money may be made, victims' lunches or lunch money taken. Victims may also be forced into theft of property for delivery to the bully. Sometimes, this tactic is used with the sole purpose of incriminating the victim.

Intimidation: This is based on the use of very aggressive body language with the voice being used as a weapon.

Abusive Phone Calls and Text Messages: These are a form of verbal intimidation, and the anonymous phone call is often used where teachers are the victims of bullying.

Isolation: A particular person is deliberately isolated, excluded or ignored by some or the entire class group. This practice is usually started by the person engaged in bullying behaviour and is more common among girls than boys. Passing notes, whispering insults, drawing on whiteboards may also form part of this bullying behaviour.

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, e.g. 'dummy', 'dope', 'retard', 'swot', 'lick', 'teacher's pet', etc.

Slagging: This behaviour usually refers to the good-natured banter which goes on as part of the normal social interchange between people. However, when it extends to very personal remarks aimed repeatedly at one individual about appearance, clothing, personal hygiene etc., then it assumes the form of bullying. It may take the form of suggestive remarks about a student's sexual orientation.

Invasion of personal space:

Sexual:

- Unwelcome or inappropriate sexual comments or touching
- Harassment

Special Educational Needs, Disability:

- Name-calling.
- Taunting others because of their disability or learning needs.
- Taking advantage of some students' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to recognise and defend themselves against bullying.
- Taking advantage of some students' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to understand social situations and social cues.
- Mimicking a person's disability.

Bullying of School Personnel: using physical assault, damage to property, verbal abuse, threats to people's families etc...

A combination of any of the types listed:

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, a once-off, offensive or hurtful public message, image or statement on a social network site or another 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 Conduct. Negative behaviour that does not meet this definition of bullying will be dealt with in accordance with the school's Code of Conduct. Where it is felt that bullying may amount to a criminal act, the Portlaoise College will seek legal advice and the matter will be reported to the Gardaí.

Policy Implementation

This policy addresses the responsibilities of Portlaoise College in the following areas:

1. The Role of Staff
2. Education and prevention strategies (whole school approach)
3. Procedures for reporting bullying behaviour
4. Procedures for investigating allegations of bullying behaviour
5. Procedures and strategies for dealing with bullying behaviour:
 - a. Procedure for dealing with bullying behaviour
 - b. Evidence-based intervention strategies
 - c. Referral of serious cases to the HSE
 - d. Programme of supports for students

1. The Role of Staff

Portlaoise College adopts a whole school approach to prevent bullying. All teachers have a responsibility to report any concerns in relation to bullying.

The Relevant Teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows: Year Heads, Deputy Principal, and Principal.

Any teacher may act as a relevant teacher if circumstances warrant it. (See section 6.8 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, as above). All communication will be recorded in line with the school procedures and records of communications will be documented.

2. Education and Prevention Strategies

The Education and Prevention Strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyberbullying and

identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying) that will be used by the school are as follows:

- **SPHE/RSE Programme:** Anti-Bullying curricular requirements are met within these classes. These classes aim to help students to build empathy, respect and resilience and enable students to develop a sense of self-worth. These classes provide initiatives and programmes focused on developing understanding and awareness of bullying and address identity-based bullying. Bystanders or “Silent Witnesses” are encouraged and supported through the programme to report incidents of bullying.
- **Digital Citizenship Programme:** First-year students are taught “Netiquette” which focuses on responsibility and safety when using the internet.
- **The “Meitheal” Mentoring Programme and the Prefect System:** Help to foster mutual respect among students. Students who are successful in gaining a place on either of these programs will typically model respect in their dealings with fellow students.
- **Anti-Bullying workshops:** Workshops delivered by the Pastoral Care team and other outside agencies dependent on funding being available
- **Anti-Bullying Week:** An assigned week dedicated to the promotion of our Anti-Bullying policy and the promotion of good friendships. The expectation is that this is a cross-curricular initiative and involves all students and all teachers. Typically, awareness around the issue of bullying is raised, and the message that “We Are a Listening School” is reinforced throughout the week. The aim is that students will be more aware of what bullying is and that it is not acceptable.
- **LGBT+, Stand Up Week:** An assigned week dedicated to the promotion of inclusivity and the promotion of good friendships. The expectation is that this is a cross-curricular initiative and involves all students and all teachers. Typically, awareness around the issue of LGBT+ is raised, and the message that “We Are a Listening School” is reinforced throughout the week.
- **Anti-Bullying Policy:** Our policy is published in our school journal and on our website. Attention is drawn to this section of our website at Parent Information nights. The Anti-Bullying Policy is included on the agenda for the start of year staff meetings. Time is allowed to discuss any specific aspects of bullying when needed or in the course of the annual review.
- **Year Head Assemblies:** At the start of each school year and during the year, the Year Head emphasises the need for mutual respect at student assemblies. The attention of students is drawn to the school’s Anti-Bullying Policy. This message is reinforced by Management, Year Head, Tutor, and Class Teachers throughout the year.

- **Promoting Self Esteem:** All teachers endeavour to build up the self-esteem of each student in their care. A student with high self-esteem is less likely to be bullied and if bullied will be better equipped to deal appropriately with the issue.
- **Promoting wellness and good friendship:** Ideas and initiatives to promote wellness and good friendships are promoted and encouraged during the year.
- **Agreed Classroom Rules:** Discussion and agreement of the Classroom Rules involving teachers and students in the classroom at the beginning of the school year reinforce the importance of mutual respect between all members of the school community.
- **Students with Additional Education Needs:** Concerning students identified with Additional Needs, it is the responsibility of each teacher to differentiate and to make information on Anti-Bullying accessible. If a teacher is concerned that a student with a diagnosed SEN needs further help in accessing such information, they must make a referral in writing to the Resource Dept, briefly outlining the areas of difficulty for the student.

3. Procedures for Reporting of Bullying Behaviour

Students, parents, non-teaching staff, visitors or members of the wider community should feel welcome to report any concerns regarding bullying behaviour to any member of school staff. The member of staff should inform the appropriate member of the Anti-Bullying team at the earliest opportunity. The Anti-Bullying team in Portlaoise College is comprised of the Principal, the Deputy Principal and Year Heads. Students can also report any concerns regarding bullying behaviour via email to antibullying@portlaoisecollege.ie. This email address is open and available to students to email their bullying concerns to during term time only. It will be monitored for responses during each term on a weekly basis by a member of the care team. Any bullying concerns reported to this email will then be passed to the relevant member of the anti bullying team for further investigation.

4. Procedures for Investigating Allegations of Bullying Behaviour

All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying, must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. The following procedure serves to guide relevant teachers through the process of investigating allegations of bullying behaviour. Investigations can take a considerable amount of time.

- Initially, the relevant teacher will gather as much information as possible regarding the allegation of bullying behaviour. This usually involves speaking directly with the student who alleges the bullying behaviour. The student(s) will be requested to give a verbal and written account of the incident(s).
- The relevant teacher will also speak with the student(s) against whom the allegation of bullying behaviour has been made. The relevant teacher may speak to students individually or in groups depending on the nature of the allegation. The student(s) will be requested to give a verbal and/or written account of the incident(s).
- Where possible, allegations/incidents are investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved. However, considering the fact that all students and teachers are fully timetabled, the student(s) will usually have to leave a lesson or to be excused from a lesson to meet/speak with a relevant teacher. This will be facilitated, as discretely as possible but total discretion is very difficult to realise in a live school environment.
- All investigations will be conducted with sensitivity and due regard to all the students concerned.
- When investigating allegations of bullying behaviour or incidents, the relevant teacher should seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This should be done calmly, setting an example in dealing with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner.
- It will be made clear to students that when they provide information, 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.
- The relevant teacher may consult with any staff member or other persons during the course of their investigation in order to seek guidance or further relevant information.
- Where the relevant teacher is concerned that a particular allegation of bullying is causing serious upset to a student, staff member or another person, then they should bring it to the attention of the Principal or Deputy Principal at the earliest opportunity.
- The relevant teacher should complete a record of the investigation form (see FORM AB1: Appendix 1).
- The relevant teacher will exercise their professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved.
- If the relevant teacher determines that bullying has not occurred, then they will consult with the Year Head/ tutor of the student(s) involved in order to provide support and guidance.
- The relevant teacher (Year Head) will report on their investigation and decision at a meeting with the

relevant Deputy Principal.

- If the relevant teacher determines that bullying behaviour has occurred, then they will also complete the recording template form (see FORM AB2: Appendix 2).
- In the case of physical aggression or assault, the relevant teacher will inform the Principal or Deputy Principal immediately.
- All forms must be completed in full and maintained in accordance with the relevant data protection legislation.

5. Procedures and Strategies for Dealing with Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Portlaoise 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 how the school addresses the issue of bullying. The primary aim in 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). Portlaoise 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 the school (see the section on the scope of the policy).

a Procedure for dealing with bullying behaviour

In any case where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred:

- The relevant teacher will record the bullying behaviour and any actions taken using the standardised recording template FORM AB2: see Appendix 2.
- The relevant teacher(s) will immediately report any incidents of serious physical assault, sexual assault or harassment to the Principal or Deputy Principal. They will complete and submit FORM AB3: see Appendix 3.
- The parents of the parties involved should be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and to explain the actions being taken (by reference to the policy)
- The relevant teacher(s) will make it clear to the relevant student(s) engaged in bullying behaviour, that they have breached the Anti-Bullying Policy. The relevant teacher(s) will also make

reasonable efforts to get the student(s) who have engaged in the bullying behaviour to try to see the situation from the perspective of the student who is being bullied.

- The relevant teacher will use their professional judgement to select the most appropriate evidence-based intervention strategy in order to resolve issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.
- The relevant teacher (Year Head) may seek guidance or assistance from the Senior Leadership Team at any stage.
- The relevant teacher(s) will implement the chosen intervention strategy. It will be made clear to all involved (each set of students and parents) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the student being disciplined, his/her parents and the school.
- As a follow-up to the implementation of an intervention strategy, the relevant teacher (s) will meet separately with the relevant parties to review progress.
- Subsequently, but only if the student who has been bullied is ready and agreeable, the Anti-Bullying team will consider organising further follow-up meetings between both parties as this can have a therapeutic effect.
- 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
 - ✓ Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the Principal or Deputy Principal

In cases where the relevant teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after they determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, it must be recorded by the relevant teacher in the standardised recording template (see FORM AB3: Appendix 3 and referred to the Anti-Bullying team for further consideration and follow-up. This may involve trying a different intervention, application of the school's Code of Conduct (up to and including suspension and exclusion), or referral of the case to the HSE or an

Gardaí.

- In any cases where the school has serious concerns in relation to managing the behaviour of a student, the advice of the National Education Psychological Service (NEPS) may be sought.
- Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with the DES procedures, they must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedure
- If a parent has exhausted the complaints procedure and is still not satisfied, the parents have a right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children

b Evidence-based Strategies for dealing with Bullying Behaviour

There are a variety of approaches and intervention strategies that might be used in any given situation. The *Action Plan on Bullying* published by the DES in 2013, highlighted the importance of schools' identifying and consistently implementing evidence-based intervention strategies for dealing with cases of bullying. Given the complexity of bullying behaviour, it is generally acknowledged that no one intervention works in all situations (DES, 2013). The relevant teacher will decide on the intervention method(s) that are best suited to each specific case. The methods of intervention that will be used by Portlaoise College include:

1. The traditional disciplinary approach
2. Strengthening the victim
3. Mediation
4. Restorative Practice
5. The Support Group Method
6. The Method of Shared Concern.

c Referral of Serious Cases to the HSE

Portlaoise College reserves the right, in accordance with Section 6.3.5 of the DES procedures to seek the assistance of agencies such as the National Education Psychological Service (NEPS), the HSE, and the Gardaí, where it deems such assistance is necessary to dealing effectively with bullying. In any case where the schools deem 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 *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

6. Programme of Supports for working with students affected by bullying

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

- **Restorative Practice Model:** the relevant teacher will engage with those involved using this support structure (See Appendix 6).
- **Year Head/ Tutor** may engage with students involved in bullying incidents in a supportive role and encourage students who observe bullying behaviour to report it. The relevant teacher will also check that the bullying behaviour has been discontinued.
- **SPHE Programme:** gives students an opportunity to discuss and reflect on the topic of bullying through several SPHE modules including Belonging and Integrating, Communication Skills, Friendship, Emotional Health and Influences and Decisions. These topics help students to learn coping strategies for dealing with bullying. The coping strategies are applied to give students an opportunity to develop their self-esteem, friendship and social skills along with feelings of self-worth. A student involved in bullying behaviour has an opportunity to reflect on their communication skills and how their behaviour affects other students.
- **Meitheal leaders/ Prefect system:** the Meitheal programme offers peer support by older to younger students. Meitheal leaders check in regularly with their assigned classes allowing younger students to seek advice or help. The prefect acts as a class representative. If students are unhappy with a class situation, they can report this to the prefect, who in turn can discuss the situation with a teacher.
- **Pastoral Care Team:** the relevant teacher, student or parent can refer to the Guidance Counsellor or School Counsellor. It is recognised that students affected by bullying or who engage in bullying behaviour may need counselling to raise their self-esteem, to develop their friendship and social skills and thereby build resilience whenever this is needed. Students who engage in bullying behaviour may also need counselling to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others. These students may need ongoing assistance and may be referred to outside agencies/services as appropriate. Outside referrals may be made to relevant professionals, when deemed appropriate, in consultation with parents.

- **The Parents' Council** may also be a means of support by running workshops for parents to offer support and advice.
- **Websites:** links for support documentation are available on the school website: www.portlaoisecollege.ie.

For students

<http://www.barnardos.ie/resources-advice/young-people/teen-help/bullying.html>

<https://www.childline.ie/index.php/support/bullying/1395>

http://www.letsomeoneknow.ie/common_problems/bullying/

<http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/Publications/services/Children/Cool%20School%20Bullying%20Project%20Tips%20for%20Teens.pdf>

For parents

<http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/Publications/services/Children/whatparentsneedtoknow.pdf>

<http://www.webwise.ie>

7. Policy Monitoring & Review

a. Supervision and Monitoring of the Anti-Bullying Policy

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 Portlaoise College's Anti-Bullying Policy is discussed at the weekly meetings of all Year Heads and the Senior Leadership team. Anti-Bullying will also be an agenda item for all staff meetings (going forward) so that concerns about the policy and/or the welfare of individual students can be shared and effectively addressed.

Data gathered through the reporting templates (see FORM AB3: Appendix 3) will be collated and analysed annually with a view to monitoring levels of bullying behaviour and identifying issues requiring attention. This analysis will complement other information gathered, e.g. bullying surveys.

At least once in every school term, the Principal must provide a report to the Board of Management setting out:

- i. The overall number of bullying cases reported (by means of the bullying recording template at (Appendix 1) since the previous report to the Board and
- ii. Confirmation that all cases referred to at (i) above 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.
- iii. The minutes of the Board of Management meeting must record the above but in doing so must not include any identifying details of the students involved

b. Policy Review

The Board of Management will undertake an annual review of the Portlaoise College’s Anti-Bullying policy and its implementation in accordance with the procedures set out in Section 7.2 of the DES Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, using the checklist included as Appendix 4.

The Board of Management will ensure that an action plan is put in place to address any areas of improvement identified by the annual review. Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parent-Teacher Association (see Notification of Policy Review, Appendix 5).

Details of the review will be recorded in the minutes of the Board of Management meeting that adopted the review and a record and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to LOETB and the DES.

8. Adoption of policy

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management of Portlaoise College on
Date of next review: June 2024

9. Communication of policy

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 has been forwarded to the LOETB and will be made available to the Department of Education if requested.

Signed: _____

Damian Bowe
Chairperson of BOM

Signed _____

Noel Daly
Principal/Secretary to the BOM

Date: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 1: Template for recording Bullying Behaviour (FORM AB1)

1. Name of student being bullied and class group.

Name _____

Class _____

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

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3. Source of bullying concern/report (tick relevant box(es))	4. Location of incidents (tick relevant box(es))
Student concerned	Playground
Other student	Classroom
Parent	Toilets
Teacher	Corridor
Other	Other

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

6. Type of Bullying Behaviour (tick the 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/AEN related	Racist	Membership of Traveller community	Other (specify)

8. Brief description of bullying behaviour and its impact.

9. Details of actions taken.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 2: Template for dealing with bullying behaviour (FORM AB2)

AB2 FORM

Form to be used for dealing with and following up on bullying behaviour .

Please attach to the record of initial investigation (AB1 FORM)

Name of student being bullied:			
Name:		Class:	

Name(s) of the student(s) engaged in bullying behaviour			
Name:		Class:	
Name:		Class:	
Name:		Class:	
Name:		Class:	
Name:		Class:	
Name:		Class:	

Name(s) of the person(s) who reported the bullying concern: <i>(if a student then please include class)</i>	
Name:	

Communication with Parent/Guardian of a student being bullied:	
Date:	
Signed:	

Communication with Parent/Guardian of the student(s) engaged in bullying behaviour:	
Date:	
Signed:	

Details of Bullying Behaviour:		
Type:	Tick:	Brief description: <i>(Please attach any additional information/statements)</i>
Physical Aggression		
Intimidation		
Isolation/Exclusion		
Relational Bullying		
Cyber-bullying		
Name-Calling		
Damage to property		
Extortion		
Identity-based <i>(specify)</i>		

Impact of Bullying Behaviour:

Details of Actions taken:		
Evidence-based strategy:	Tick:	Brief description: <i>(Please attach any additional information)</i>
Traditional Disciplinary Approach	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Strengthening the Victim	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Mediation	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Restorative Practice	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Support-Group Method	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Support-Group Method	<input type="checkbox"/>	
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Method of Shared Concern	<input type="checkbox"/>	
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Monitoring of Progress:			
<i>Date:</i>	<i>Action:</i>	<i>Response:</i>	<i>Signed:</i>

Signed: _____ (*Relevant Teacher*) *Date:* _____

Appendix 3: Template for reporting bullying behaviour (FORM AB3)

AB3 FORM

Form to be used for reporting bullying behaviour to Principal/Deputy
Principal Please attach the AB1 and AB2 forms to this form when reporting

Name of student being bullied:			
Name:		Class:	

Name(s) of the student(s) engaged in bullying behaviour			
Name:		Class:	
Name:		Class:	
Name:		Class:	
Name:		Class:	
Name:		Class:	
Name:		Class:	

Name(s) of person(s) who reported the bullying concern: <i>(if a student then please include class)</i>	
Name:	

Reason for Reporting (please tick):	
Bullying behaviour has not ceased within 20 school days since completion of investigation	
Serious case of bullying requiring immediate referral e.g. physical assault/sexual assault	

Details of Bullying Behaviour:		
Type:	Tick:	Brief description: <i>(Please attach any additional information/statements)</i>
Physical Aggression		
Intimidation		
Isolation/Exclusion		
Relational Bullying		
Cyber-bullying		
Name-Calling		
Damage to property		
Extortion		
Identity-based <i>(Specify)</i>		

Location of Bullying Behaviour: <i>(Please tick relevant box(es))</i>	
Type:	Tick:
Playground	
Classroom	
Corridor	
Halla	
Toilets	
School Bus	
Other	

Impact of Bullying Behaviour:

Details of Actions taken:		
Evidence-based strategy:	Tick:	Brief description: <i>(Please attach any additional information)</i>
Traditional Disciplinary Approach		
Strengthening the Victim		
Mediation		
Restorative Practice		
Support-Group Method		
Method of Shared Concern		

Signed: _____ (Relevant Teacher) Date: _____

DATE SUBMITTED TO PRINCIPAL/DEPUTY PRINCIPAL:

Appendix 4: 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 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 _____
Principa

Date _____

Appendix 5: 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:

- 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].
- 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

Appendix 6: Restorative Practice Process:

Restorative Practices is a process to restore and build relationships. The Restorative Practices (RP) concept focuses on repairing the harm done to people and relationships. RP involves bringing parties together in a circle with the aim of resolving any issues and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved rather than apportioning blame (although restorative practices does not preclude the applying of sanctions when and where appropriate). Restorative Practices makes use of two sets of restorative questions: one for addressing challenging behaviour, the other for addressing someone who has been harmed by another. Where two parties have mutually hurt each other, both sets of questions may be drawn on interchangeably. Restorative questions separate people's behaviour from their intrinsic worth as a person, allowing them to admit their mistakes, take responsibility for righting their wrongs and be given an opportunity to change.

The use of restorative practices to address bullying behaviour serves the function of restoring and building relationships. It helps an offender to come to an understanding of the effect of the bullying behaviour and in promoting the expression of positive emotions, encourages him or her to make positive changes and to make up for any harm done. Similarly, RP gives the person harmed an opportunity to express their feelings and to indicate their need for bullying behaviour to stop. It supports them to express positive emotions and to request that bullying behaviour be stopped, thus empowering him or her and building self-esteem.

Restorative Practices makes a crucial distinction between punishment and natural consequences. A punishment is a response to wrongdoing that is intended to inflict some kind of suffering or inconvenience and is done to someone in the hope of changing behaviour. A natural consequence, on the other hand, is a response to wrongdoing that follows logically from what has occurred and works with students who may come up with the natural consequence themselves. Natural consequences may also come from teachers or management. The difference is that students are helped to understand why it follows logically from the behaviour to which it is a response.

Appendix 7: Advice for Students on Bullying including cyber Bullying

- It is essential to tell a teacher and your parents of any bullying. It is the only way it will be stopped.
- Always be aware of your online behaviour and how to protect yourself from cyberbullying.
- Save messages or take a screenshot of abusive messages.
- Keep passwords private. • Do not put too much personal information about yourself online.
- Do not reply to abusive messages/posts.
- If the bully is a “friend or follower” on Facebook or other social networking site, remove them. You should block unwelcome messages, videos, photos etc.
- Report the issue to the mobile phone or website provider. If sufficiently serious, report the matter to the Gardaí.
- If cyberbullying is affecting your school life, tell a teacher.
- Always keep a detailed record of the bullying as evidence for the teacher.

Appendix 8: Advice for Parents on Bullying including cyber Bullying

- Control the use of mobile phones/social media during homework and at bedtime.

- Stress the importance of online responsibility and check her social media.
- Prepare your son or daughter for the possibility of bullying and should it occur the importance of speaking about it to you.
- Continue to work on your son or daughter's self-esteem in order to build emotional resilience.
- Be aware of signs and indicators of bullying.
- Encourage your son or daughter to include others in her social group and be generally inclusive.
- Take time to understand the social networking sites your son or daughter uses.
- Use trusted websites for advice on keeping your son or daughter safe i.e., webwise.ie
- Encourage your son or daughter to tell if they are being bullied.

Reference list of documents used when creating policy:

- *Cineáltas (2022)*
- *Education Welfare Act (2000)*

- *Equal Status Acts (2000-2004)*
- *Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools* as published by the National Educational Welfare Board (hereafter referred to as the NEWB) (2008)
- *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013)* as published by the Department of Education and Skills
- *DES² Circular Letter 045/2013*
- *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2019)*

LOETB:

- *Bullying Prevention Policy – Compliant Procedure for ETB Staff*
- *Harassment/Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy – Complaint Procedure for ETB Staff*