

West Cork Sudbury School
ANTI-BULLYING POLICY FOR STUDENTS



WEST CORK SUDBURY SCHOOL

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY FOR STUDENTS

INTRODUCTION

This anti-bullying policy operates in conjunction with the WCSS Record of Agreements¹ and Child Protection and Safeguarding Statement, which is used to address instances of harmful behaviour.

As a democratic school all members of the school community have a commitment to uphold the school's agreements, found in the school's *Record of Agreements* (see Appendix Part A).

Generally, WCSS will encourage students to resolve conflict amongst themselves, with the help of a facilitator or peers or through 'TP'². Please see '5. WCSS GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE for STUDENTS' below.

The following sets out formal steps to be taken if the matter is more serious or cannot be resolved informally.

1. AIMS OF THE POLICY

To foster a school ethos of mutual and self-respect that encourages students to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.

To raise awareness with school management, facilitators, volunteers, students and their parents that bullying is a form of unacceptable behaviour.

To outline, promote and raise awareness of preventative approaches that can be used in response to reported incidences of bullying.

To develop and implement a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and for those involved in bullying behaviour.

To outline procedures for noting, investigating and reporting instances of bullying behaviour.

¹See appendix Part A.

² See Appendix Part B for description of the school's TP process.

2. DEFINITION OF BULLYING

The Department of Education and Science guidelines define bullying as:

- ... repeated aggression, verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against others. Isolated incidents of aggressive behaviour, which should not be condoned, can scarcely be described as bullying. However, when the behaviour is systematic and ongoing it is bullying. (Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post-Primary Schools, 1993)
- At WCSS, we understand that bullying is the systematic acts of overt and covert negative behaviour. Bullying results in untold pain and distress to its victims.

Bullying can be:

Emotional - being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding books, threatening gestures)

Physical - pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence

Racist - racial taunts, graffiti, gestures

Sexual - unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments

Homophobic - because of, or focusing on the issue of sexuality and identity

Verbal - name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing

Cyber - All areas of online activity, such as email & social media, gaming chats misuse

Mobile - threats by text messaging & calls, misuse of associated technology, i.e. camera & video

Involvement

WCSS acknowledges that there are three parties involved in bullying -

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those who bully, those who are bullied and those who witness the bullying. Staff and students will bear this in mind when dealing with bullying incidents and try to support and work with all parties involved using restorative practices and mediation through the school's 'TP'.

Indications of Bullying

- changes their usual routine
- is unwilling to go to school (school phobic)
- begins to truant
- becomes withdrawn anxious, or lacking in confidence
- starts stammering or unable to describe incidents because too upset
- attempts or threatens suicide or runs away
- cries them/him/herself to sleep at night or has nightmares
- feels ill in the morning
- begins to do poorly in school work
- comes home with clothes torn or books damaged
- has possessions which are damaged or "go missing"
- asks for money or starts stealing money (to pay bully)
- has monies continually "lost"
- has unexplained cuts or bruises
- becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- is bullying other children or siblings
- stops eating
- is frightened to say what's wrong
- gives improbable excuses for any of the above
- is afraid to use the internet or mobile phone
- is nervous & jumpy when a cyber message is received

It is important to note that these descriptors are used as a guide. They are also signs of a variety of problems (possibly relating to anxiety, depression or other issues in the child's life) as well as bullying.

3. INTERNET SAFETY AND CYBER BULLYING

This area of bullying and, more generally, internet use demands a dedicated section as children are more and more likely to be exposed to negative online interactions. Since December 2020 cyber-bullying is now a criminal offence in Ireland and instances of this behaviour, involving WCSS's students will be taken very seriously. In the first instance, it is

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parents who have primary responsibility to keep their child safe online and to prevent such interactions. Parents are recommended to install parental controls in place on all devices. Older students are reminded that they are responsible for who is looking over their shoulder at all times whilst using technology at school, and must look at appropriate content. Students are made aware of these issues via the WCSS's *Record of Agreements*.

Any incidents of cyber-bullying between WCSS's students will be dealt with through the school's processes, regardless of when they have happened (i.e. out of school time).

Aims

To ensure that students, staff and parents understand what cyber-bullying is and how it can be combatted.

To ensure that practices and procedures are agreed to prevent incidents of cyber-bullying.

To ensure that reported incidents of cyber-bullying are dealt with effectively and quickly.

Understanding Cyber-Bullying

Cyber-bullying is the use of ICT (*Information and Communication Technology*) - usually a mobile phone and or the internet - to abuse another person.

- It can take place anywhere and involve many people.
- Anybody can be targeted including students and school staff.
- It can include threats, intimidation, harassment, cyber-stalking, vilification, defamation, exclusion, peer rejection, impersonation, unauthorized publication of private information or images etc.

While bullying involves a repetition of unwelcome behaviour the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools, September 2013*, (Department of Education and Skills) states:

"2.1.3. In addition, in the context of these procedures 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."

What is Cyber-Bullying?

There are many types of cyber-bullying. This list below is not exhaustive and the terms used continue to change. The more common types are:

Text messages - can be threatening or cause discomfort. Also, included here is 'Bluejacking' (the sending of anonymous text messages over short distances using bluetooth wireless technology) Picture/video-clips via mobile phone cameras - images sent to others to make the victim feel threatened or embarrassed.

Mobile phone calls - silent calls, abusive messages or stealing the victim's phone and using it to harass others, to make them believe the victim is responsible.

Emails - threatening or bullying emails, often sent using a pseudonym or somebody else's name.

Chat room bullying - menacing or upsetting responses to children or young people when they are in a web-based chat room.

Instant messaging (IM) - unpleasant messages sent while children conduct real-time conversations online using MSM (Microsoft Messenger), Yahoo Chat or similar tools.

Bullying via websites - use of defamatory blogs (web logs), personal websites and online personal 'own web space' sites such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and RoadBlox - although there are others.

Explanation of slang terms used when referring to cyber-bullying activity:

'Flaming': Online fights using electronic messages with angry and vulgar language.

'Harassment': Repeatedly sending offensive, rude, and insulting messages.

'Cyber Stalking': Repeatedly sending messages that include threats of harm or are highly intimidating or engaging in other on-line activities that make a person afraid for his or her own safety.

'Denigration': 'Dissing' someone online. Sending or posting cruel gossip or rumors about a person to damage his or her reputation or friendships.

'Impersonation': Pretending to be someone else and sending or posting material online that makes someone look bad, gets them/her/him in trouble or danger, or damages their/her/his reputation or friendships.

‘Outing and Trickery’: Tricking someone into revealing secret or embarrassing information which is then shared online.

‘Exclusion’: Intentionally excluding someone from an on-line group, like a ‘buddy list’.

Procedures to prevent Cyber-Bullying

Staff, students, parents and Board of Management (BoM) will be made aware of issues regarding cyber-bullying through the use of appropriate awareness-raising exercises.

Students will learn about cyber-bullying and online dangers through workshops, peer education and awareness posters in the school.

Parents will be informed of incidents of cyber-bullying involving WCSS’s students that come to our attention.

Instances of cyber-bullying between WCSS’s students that come to the attention of the WCSS’s staff will be brought to the TP, staff will then pass the information on to the parents of the children involved.

Please note: If the incident is deemed disruptive to the school community by staff, the students involved will be asked to attend TP before they can come back to school.

The Garda will be contacted in cases of actual or suspected illegal content, this is especially serious now given the recent change in the law (12/2020).

4. REVIEW

IMPORTANT NOTE: This Internet Safety & Cyber Bullying section of this policy will be reviewed annually. Students, parents and staff will be involved in reviewing and revising this policy and any related school procedure. Parents are welcome to inform the staff of the types of issues that they may be aware of that will help to inform and up-date any section of this policy.

5. WCSS GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE FOR STUDENTS

A grievance is a complaint someone carries when they feel they have been treated unfairly or when someone has done something that bothers them. WCSS has a way a student can make a formal complaint. This 'bother' may be triggered by another student or a staff member.

This is how you can make a formal complaint:

If for any reason, a student cannot solve the conflict on their own:

1. Talk to a facilitator or a friend. Your friend may be able to help you bring it to a facilitator or to the TP (Transformative Practise).
2. Bring it to TP where it will be dealt with in a fair, gentle and safe manner. (Please see [Appendix Part B 'TP EXPLAINED for STUDENTS'](#) below for reference.)

Talking to a facilitator or friend may very well lead to TP.

A student may choose one or both depending on which they feel most comfortable with.

In the case of an incident that is in conflict with WCSS's Policies or the Record of Agreements, it may be necessary for parents and/or the Board of Management to be involved in reaching a resolution to the conflict.

Please contact the TP Committee at info@westcorksudburyschool.ie with any questions about this grievance procedure.

6. DUTY OF CARE

It is the duty of WCSS to provide a safe environment for all the students.

7. BULLYING WITHIN STAFF

Please see *WCSS Bullying & Anti-Harassment Procedures*.

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Ratified by the Board of Management on 24/08/2021.

- Chairperson -

- Secretary -

APPENDIX

Part A

WCSS's
RECORD OF AGREEMENTS
(as of 31/03/2021)

NON-NEGOTIABLES

- Everyone has the right to be free from harm, harrasment and discrimination.
- Everyone is free and equal, with their own thoughts and ideas and will be treated the same.
- Everyone has the right to self determintation and to follow their own path, so long as this does not harm anyone or keep others from doing the same.
- Everyone is aked to respect and accept other people's boundaries, and has the right to respect and accept their own.

WCSS SUBSTANCE POLICY 08/12/2020

- Smoking and Tobacco are prohibited on School Grounds.
- Alcohol is prohibited on School Grounds.
- Illegal drugs are prohibited on School Grounds.
- The open usage of very smelly cheese in closed rooms is strongly discouraged.

AGREEMENTS

1. No slamming doors - 08/09/2020
2. No locking doors when in rooms - 08/09/2020
3. Be quiet in the quiet room - 15/09/2020
4. Pause rough play on stairs - 15/09/2020
5. No drawing on walls in Blue Pool school - 15/09/2020
- ~~6. Clerks are responsible for their romms/area—21/09/2020~~
 - ~~• they think about chores and make lists~~
 - ~~• they put this chore list up in room/area~~
 - ~~• they keep an eye on wishlist and bring it to the School Meeting~~
 - they gently remind others of chores - **changed for Nr. 10**
7. The kitchen can be booked for cooking/baking - 21/09/2020
8. The quiet room cannot be booked - 21/09/2020
9. Do not use TP as a threat - 13/10/202010.
10. Everyone cleans up after themselves - 17/11/2020
11. Borrowing things from school: When you want something that belongs to the school (not people ;-)
 1. ask if someone else needs it/needs to use it - **If no:**
 2. You can borrow it or buy it - 08/12/2020
12. Art work left in art room: Artworks and craftprojects that were left behind will be put in front of the upstairs showers. If they are not taken home by Friday, they will be taken apart and re-used - 08/12/2020
13. Tech related agreements - 15/12/2020
 - Tech Cert is gone.
 - Age rating if games are played in communal spaces is maximum 12.

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- Everyone is responsible for the content they are watching /playing and who is looking over their shoulder.
 - Get consent if you would like to play loud and/or vulgar music.
 - Students who are 15 years can book a room to play games which are rated 15.
 - For specific 15 rated games students may bring a proposal to the School Meeting to review if it is suitable for under 15 users. Additional parental consent will be necessary.
 - If under 16, you can set up an online account **only** with parental consent.
 - Laptops, Computers, Tablets and Consoles are turned off during School Meeting time, with a maximum of 90 minutes.
 - To use the school Laptops and Computers you need to book them.
 - You can book a device for a maximum of 3 hours at a time.#
 - Everyone turns off their Laptops, Computers, Tablets and Consoles by 3pm and is self-responsible for cleaning and tidying up after themselves
14. People's Privacy in School Meeting: Do not single out other people when talking about something at the School Meeting. If you have a grievance – an issue with one person or more people – please talk to them directly, or to a facilitator or bring it to TP.

Part B

TP EXPLAINED FOR STUDENTS

TP stands for 'Transformative Practise'.

Where does it come from? The TP Process we use at WCSS was developed by WCSS founders using the 'Transformative Justice' movement* in America as inspiration.

TP is a space WCSS has created for dealing with things that bother either a student or a staff member.

Sometimes in a community where the same people come together on a regular basis, there can be disagreements and complaints. You may also hear these disagreement and complaints referred to as :

1. Grievances
2. Botherers
3. Conflict

TP is made to deal with these things. Conflict can be used constructively** to build better, more enjoyable relationships and places for us to enjoy.

TP is a safe space and is led, or facilitated, by a staff member (a facilitator) and some of WCSS students.

The staff and students together form something called the 'TP Committee'. This committee has learned to be fair and gentle, and to hear all sides of the story(ies).

If a student has a grievance, or a complaint about a person(s) then TP is the way to put their complaint into writing on paper and drop it into the TP letter box. The box is locked but has a slot you can slip a piece of paper into. No one needs to see what you have written except the staff and the TP Committee.

The piece of paper you put in will have your:

- Written complaint and name of person(s) you are writing about
- Your name

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- TP is every Thursday at 11 am.
- Anyone in the school may be invited to TP.
- You may have somebody come to TP with you to help you feel more comfortable if you choose.
- TP can be very quick (10 minutes) or it can last up to an hour.
- TP is a safe and gentle place.
- TP aims to be fair.
- TP aims to hear all sides.
- TP gives people the time they need.
- In TP you can have as much help as you need.

TP can also be used as a space for sharing a secret that has been bothering you. Maybe no one is bothering you. Maybe it's just life. Maybe it's something in life.

A lot of times people feel better when they share something that is bothering them. It may be bothering them so much that they worry about it at night or all day and they don't know why....

You may bring this to TP and ask for a private meeting with a staff member of your choice. Maybe you want two staff. This kind of thing may also be written on a piece of paper and slipped into the TP letter box. You may also tell a staff member you want to talk instead of putting anything into the TP box.

The TP Process

1. In TP we take turns talking and listening. We use a talking piece so no one talks over each other.

2. In TP we ask fair questions to try and get the best understanding of what has happened and why you are bothered. We give you as much time to talk as you want or need.

3. Then we give the person who was complained about the same chance to talk and explain.

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4. The TP committee may ask some fair questions as well, also to get a better understanding of what has happened.

5. The TP committee may have some suggestions or ideas for helping. You may have some new ideas too.

6. The person who made the complaint and the other person who was invited will be thanked for their time and attention.

7. The TP committee aims to make sure all people feel listened to. They will also ask if the people think it's fair.

Please contact the TP Committee at info@westcorksudburyschool.ie with any questions about the TP process.

* *movement*: a group of people working together to advance their shared political, social, or artistic ideas.

** helping to develop or improve something