



## **COMERAGH COLLEGE**

### **ANTI-BULLYING POLICY**

Semper ad meliora

Always moving towards better things



|                                                          |                                                                    |
|----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Policy Area                                              | Schools                                                            |
| Document Reference number                                | COM/AN-B/002/4                                                     |
| Version                                                  | 1                                                                  |
| Document Drafted by                                      | Comeragh College                                                   |
| Date previous version<br>adopted by SLT<br>noted by TETB | 22 September 2023<br>17 October 2023                               |
| Date Reviewed/Amended by School                          | April 2025                                                         |
| Date Reviewed and Ratified by BOM                        | 03 April 2025                                                      |
| Date noted/to be noted by TETB                           | 20 May 2025                                                        |
| Date of Withdrawal of Obsolete Document                  | 03 April 2025<br>Document Ref. No. COM/AN-B/002/3<br>Version No. 1 |

## **Mission Statement**

At Comeragh College we aim to provide a quality education for life in an innovative responsive and caring learning environment.

In our school, students can attain the highest standards of excellence, academically and in all other aspects of their school activities.

## **Vision of the School**

Comeragh College is a college of the Tipperary ETB. The school is a multi-denominational school.

- We have the highest ambitions and expectations in all aspects of school life and strive to nurture these qualities in every student.
- Our young people are treated as individuals, and we are strongly committed to equality of opportunity.
- We want all students to fulfil their potential both academically and socially so that they leave here with the widest range of choices open to them in a changing society.

## **Key Words**

### **Definition of Bullying**

Behaviour that is Deliberate, Hurtful and Repeated.

### **Relevant teacher**

This is the teacher to whom the report is made.

### **No Blame/Shared Concern Approach**

Please see Appendix 5(a): Procedures to deal with alleged or confirmed instances of bullying. This includes an understanding by all parties of the impact caused by certain behaviour. These steps aim to bring young people through a process which leads to improved understanding of events and an acknowledgement of any impact that may have occurred as a result of the experience/s.

### **Restorative Practice/Actions/Justice**

Restorative practice approach involves the application of principles of repair in the management of conflict with the aim to restore good relationships. The approach invites members of the school community to consider the impact of their behaviour and how it may affect other members. In addition, the approach invites members to consider how they may restore any negative impact that may have resulted from their behaviour.

**Restorative justice** offers members of the school community an opportunity to explain how they are experiencing events. Empowering members of the school community to speak is embedded as a principle of the approach. It also offers members an opportunity to take responsibility for any acknowledged bullying behaviour. Engaging with the qualities of empowerment and responsibility is how the restorative justice process encourages repair between members. When members are ready a face-to-face meeting facilitates this process to occur.

## Introduction

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

This policy comprehends bullying that is either perpetrated by students or experienced by students in the School/College. The matter of intra-staff bullying is addressed in the following ETB policies. (See Appendix 1 and 2)

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

The Board of Management of Comeragh College adopts the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (See Appendix 3) issued by the Department of Education & Skills (September 2013) as the basis for the way in which the Comeragh College community addresses the issue of bullying.

The Board of Management recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of students or staff and is therefore fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour.

- A positive school culture and climate which:
  - is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity;
  - encourages students and staff to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment; and
  - promotes respectful relationships across the school community.
- Effective leadership.
- A school-wide approach.
- A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact.
- Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that:
  - build empathy, respect and resilience in students;
  - Explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying, including in particular homophobic and transphobic bullying.
- Effective supervision and monitoring of students.
- Supports for staff.
- Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies).
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

## Definitions of Bullying Behaviour

In accordance with the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools bullying is defined as follows.

*Bullying is unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time.*

The following types of bullying behaviour are included in the definition of bullying:

- Deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying.
- Cyber-bullying.
- Identity-based bullying such as homophobic bullying, racist bullying, bullying based on a person's membership of the Traveller community and bullying of those with disabilities or special educational needs.

Isolated or once-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour, including a once-off offensive or hurtful text message or other private messaging, do not fall within the definition of bullying and should be dealt with, as appropriate, in accordance with the school's code of behaviour.

However, in the context of this policy, placing a once-off offensive or hurtful public message, image or statement on a social network site or other public forum where that message, image or statement can be viewed and/or repeated by other people will be regarded as bullying behaviour.

Negative behaviour that does not meet this definition of bullying will be dealt with in accordance with the school's code of behaviour. Additional information on different types of bullying is set out in Section 2 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Those convicted on indictment under this provision may be sentenced to a maximum of two years imprisonment and/or a fine of up to £10,000.00.

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

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

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

### **Procedure to be followed in Incidents of Bullying**

To whom should a concern about a student being bullied be reported to?

- Students, parents, non-teaching staff or members of the wider community should feel welcome to report their concerns to the members of the Anti-Bullying team.
- The school's Anti Bullying Team will take a full account of the incident and refer this to the schools Guidance Counsellor for restorative practice.
- Director, Tutor and parents are informed.
- Senior Management will be advised where appropriate.

### **Education and prevention strategies to combat bullying – Section 6.5 of DES Procedures**

1. Comeragh College makes it clear to all members of the school community that bullying of any kind is unacceptable, irrespective of whether it is a student a staff member or any other person that is the subject of such behaviour. In this context, all members of the school community have a duty to bring to the attention of the Anti-Bullying Team any incident of cyberbullying or harassment that they know about or suspect.
2. A monthly Anti bullying survey is carried out by the class tutor for each class group. The students get the opportunity to report if they themselves are being bullied or if they know someone who is being bullied. This is then reviewed by the anti-bullying team.
3. 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), Comeragh College nevertheless reserves the right to take

disciplinary action (up to and including suspension and expulsion), where such is warranted, in accordance with the Comeragh College Student Code of Behaviour, against those who bully others.

4. 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.
5. Comeragh 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. Comeragh College will make every reasonable effort to ensure that the full potential of these programmes to combat bullying is exploited.

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

6. 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. Invited speakers present to the student body, parents and staff on this topic.
7. Comeragh College will, in all its communications with students and their parents, commencing with the induction of the student into Comeragh 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 school management. All teaching staff will reinforce this point to students on an ongoing basis.

8. Comeragh College will adopt a school-wide approach (involving management, staff, parents, students and members of the wider community with a connection to Comeragh College) to prevent and combat bullying. In this regard, it is important that parents realise that **anyone can be a bully and anyone can be a target of bullying**. It is not just other people's sons and daughters that can bully. Here, also, it is important to realise that disagreements between young people are part and parcel of negotiating the road to adulthood and that **every youthful disagreement should not be treated as a full-blown bullying episode**.
9. In accordance with 6.8.9 of the DES Procedures 'parents and students are expected to co-operate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving any issues and restoring, as far as is practicable,

the relationships of the parties involved as quickly as possible’.

10. Where necessary Comeragh College will seek the assistance of and work with NEPS, the HSE and the Gardaí, as appropriate, to combat bullying – identify the perpetrators and support the victims.
11. In combating bullying, Comeragh College will take particular account of the needs of pupils with disabilities or with SEN. This will involve improving inclusion, focusing on developing social skills, paying particular attention to student induction and cultivating a school culture that respects everyone and values helping one another.
12. Comeragh College RSE and SPHE programme will specifically address the issue of bullying with each year group, each school year.

**Procedures for investigating, following up and recording of bullying behaviour, and intervention strategies used by Comeragh College for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour - see Section 6.8 of DES Procedures.**

1. Where a member of the teaching staff has a concern about a student being bullied, as a result of a personal observation or as a result of receiving a report from a third party. The teacher will refer the matter to the Anti-Bullying Team. They will meet with the student and establish the facts using the anti-bullying report template (see Appendix 1) from the parties involved. A file relating to the issue will be created.
2. If the incident is deemed to be of a very serious nature or a repeated incident of similar the code of behaviour may be applied immediately.
3. Director to be informed and consulted with.
4. Tutor to be informed.
5. Parents to be informed.
6. The incident will then be referred to the Student Support team so restorative practice can be completed with the parties involved where deemed appropriate.
7. Parties must agree that this behaviour will cease. Signed document confirming this.
8. Comeragh College reserves the right to investigate allegations of bullying (and to take disciplinary action where necessary) where bullying is perpetrated by a member of the school community and it impinges on the work or well-being of a student in the school, even where the bullying acts are committed outside of Comeragh College.
9. When a breach of the signed agreement is found to have occurred, this is a very serious matter and is referred to the Director and the code is applied. Parents informed.
10. Comeragh College reserves the right, in accordance with Section 6.3.5 of the DES Procedures to seek the assistance of agencies such as NEPS, the HSE, and the Gardaí, where it deems such assistance is necessary to dealing effectively with bullying behaviour. In any case, where Comeragh College deems bullying behaviour to be potentially abusive (see sections 6.8.12, 6.8.13 and 6.8.14 of the DES Procedures) it will consult with the HSE’s Children

and Family Services to assist it in drawing up an appropriate response or to obtain advice or to make a formal child protection report to the HSE or the Gardaí (as appropriate) in accordance with the DES Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools.

11. Concerns about or allegations of bullying will be investigated and addressed in accordance with Section 6.8.9 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools. These are summarised as follows:

- (a) In investigating and dealing with bullying the focus will be on resolving the interpersonal issues and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved - rather than apportioning blame.
- (b) The school's Anti Bullying Team will be responsible for investigation of bullying issues that have been disclosed by any member of the school community and are the referral point for any member of the whole school community.
- (c) In investigating and dealing with bullying, the team will exercise their professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved.
- (d) All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying are investigated and dealt with by the Anti Bullying Team. All non-teaching staff such as clerical and administrative, study supervisors, special needs assistants (SNAs), caretakers, cleaners, sports' coaches, those taking extracurricular activities and those driving school buses will be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to either a teacher or the principal or deputy principal.
- (e) It will be made clear to students in all years that when they report bullying behaviour they are not considered to be 'telling tales' but are behaving responsibly and that the well-being of other students is dependent on them reporting such behaviour to a teacher.
- (f) Incidents of bullying will be investigated in a calm, unemotional problem-solving manner.
- (g) Incidents of bullying will generally be investigated outside of the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.
- (h) All interviews will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard for the rights of students, irrespective of whether they are allegedly involved in bullying behaviour or in a position to provide information about the behaviour being investigated.
- (i) Those investigating bullying behaviour will calmly seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why.
- (j) Where a group is allegedly involved in bullying behaviour, each student will be interviewed individually in the first instance. Thereafter, where appropriate, all involved may be met as a group or individually and, at this meeting, each member will be asked for his/her account to ensure that all are clear about what each individual is saying.
- (k) Each student will be supported through the possible pressures that s/he may face from the other members of the group after being interviewed.
- (l) Where deemed appropriate, those being interviewed may be asked to write down their account of what happened.
- (m) Where the teacher investigating a bullying issue determines that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved will be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and to explain the actions being taken (by reference to the school policy). The school will give parents an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school.

- (n) Where the relevant teacher determines that a student has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it will be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's/college's anti-bullying policy and **every reasonable effort** will be made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the student/s being bullied.
- (o) Where Comeragh College deems it necessary to impose disciplinary sanctions, it will be made clear to all involved (both the bullied and those doing the bullying) and their parents) that this is a private matter between the student being disciplined, his/her parents and Comeragh College.
- (p) As a follow up to a bullying issue being resolved, the relevant team should meet separately with the relevant parties to review progress. Subsequently, but only if the student who has been bullied is ready and agreeable, consideration should be given to meeting with both parties simultaneously as this can have a therapeutic effect.
- (q) Where the relevant team considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, the bullying incident must be recorded by the relevant team in the recording template at [Annexure 1](#).
- (r) 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 school Principal or Deputy Principal.
- (s) Where a parent/guardian or a student who is more than 18 years old is not satisfied that Comeragh College has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, s/he will be **referred to the school's [complaints procedures](#) – see Section 6.8.9 (xx) of [Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools](#)**.

Where a parent/guardian or a student who is more than 18 years, having exhausted the school's complaints procedures, is still not satisfied s/he will be advised of his/her right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children - **see Section 6.8.9 (xxi) of [Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools](#)**.

**Programme of support for working with students affected by bullying - see Sections 6.8.15, 6.8.16 and 6.8.17 of [DES Procedures](#).**

Comeragh College will put in place a programme of supports for students who have been bullied. This programme will involve the following elements:

- Students who have been bullied will be:
  - ✓ offered appropriate counselling; and
  - ✓ provided with opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop their social skills and to build their resilience.
- Students who have been involved in bullying behaviour will be:

- ✓ provided with counselling to help them to learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others; and
  - ✓ provided with appropriate opportunities to build their self-esteem and feelings of self-worth.
- Students who observe incidents of bullying behaviour will be encouraged to discuss them with their teachers and their parents and to avail of counselling where they feel it may assist them to cope effectively with what they have experienced.
- There is a formal Student Care' referral system in place in the school comprising of a Year Head for each year group and then the Deputy Principal and Principal as part of the Senior Management structure in the school.
- There are additional support personnel in the school, namely, the Guidance Counsellor and the Home School Liaison Officer, School Completion Officer, Junior Certificate Schools Coordinator, Special Needs Coordinator who can provide further support, advice and guidance to any student experiencing troubling or difficult times.
- Concerns about the welfare of students may arise at any time and in the course of the teaching of any subject but issues generally regarded as being sensitive for students are specifically addressed at the weekly meeting of the 'Student Support Team'. This comprises the Principal/ Deputy Principal, Guidance Counsellor, Home School Community officer, School Completion Programme (SCP), Special Needs Coordinator, Student Support Coordinator.
- The school also has a 'Student Council' comprising students, elected by their peers, from each of the year groups and this body meets on a regular basis to discuss issues of particular relevance to the lives of students in the school.
- The school also avails of the services of external agencies such as CAMHS, the HSE, NCSE, NBSS, NEPS and An Garda Síochána in order to provide additional support services for students involved in bullying.

### **Supervision and Monitoring of Anti-Bullying in School/College**

- The Board of Management confirms that appropriate supervision and monitoring policies and practices are in place to both prevent and deal with bullying behaviour and to facilitate early intervention where possible.
- Data gathered through the reporting templates will be collated and analysed annually with a view to monitoring levels of bullying behaviour and identifying issues requiring attention. This analysis will complement the information gathered through the bullying surveys – see Section 6.9.
- At least once in every school term, The Principal will provide a report to the Board of Management setting out the following.
  - ✓ the overall number of bullying cases reported since the previous report to the Board.
  - ✓ confirmation that all cases referred have been or are being dealt with in accordance with the school's anti-bullying policy and the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools. The minutes of Board of Management' meetings will record the

Principal's report but in doing so will not include any identifying details of the students involved.

- Storage of records will be held by the Anti Bullying Team in the Principal's Office.
- The Board of Management confirms that Comeragh College will, in accordance with its obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the sexual harassment of students or staff or the harassment of students or staff on any of the nine grounds specified i.e., gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.

#### Policy Adoption and Review

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on [date      ].

#### Policy Dissemination and Publication

This policy will be made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parent School Association.

#### Policy Review

- The Board of Management will undertake an annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation in accordance with the procedures set out in Section 7.2 of the [Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools](#) using the checklist (Appendix 4)
- The Board of Management will ensure that an action plan is put in place to address any areas for improvement identified by the annual review.
- 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 School Association.
- Details of the review will be recorded in the minutes of the Board of Management' meeting that adopted the review and a record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, will be made available to the Patron and the DES. In the case of the DE, it is appreciated that the Inspectorate will place a strong focus on the actions the School/College takes to create a positive school culture and to prevent and tackle bullying.

Signed:

(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Date:

Date:

Date of next review:

Signed:

(Principal)

Date:

Date:

## Appendix

**1. Bullying Prevention Policy – Complaint Procedure for ETB Staff**

<http://tipperary.etb.ie/wp-content/uploads/sites/23/2019/06/Bullying-Prevention-Policy-Complaint-Procedure-for-ETB-Staff.pdf>

**2. Harassment/Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy – Complaint Procedure for ETB Staff**

[http://tipperary.etb.ie/wp-content/uploads/sites/23/2019/06/Harassment Sexual-Harassment-Prevention-Policy-Complaint-Procedure-for-ETB-Staff.pdf](http://tipperary.etb.ie/wp-content/uploads/sites/23/2019/06/Harassment_Sexual-Harassment-Prevention-Policy-Complaint-Procedure-for-ETB-Staff.pdf)

**3. Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools**

<https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/Anti-Bullying-Procedures-for-Primary-and-Post-Primary-Schools.pdf>

**4. <http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/Anti-Bullying-Procedures-for-Primary-and-Post-Primary-Schools.pdf> - checklist**

**5. Reporting Template Page 43 of DE document - [Anti-Bullying-Procedures-for-Primary-and-Post-Primary-Schools.pdf \(education.ie\)](#)**