Anti-Cyberbullying Policy and Anti-Cyber Incident Policy

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1 Introductory Statement

This Anti-Cyber-Bullying Policy is an expanded expression of the policies contained in the Anti-Bullying Policy, The Dignity in the Workplace Policy and the Code of Positive Behaviour and the Internet Acceptable Use Policy of Coláiste Chríost Rí and should be read in conjunction with those documents.

2 Scope of this Policy

This policy applies to the whole school community in their relationships with each other – students, teachers, management, board of management, parents, office and all ancillary staff. While this policy addresses issues related to cyber-bullying of students (i.e. situations in which one or more students are the victim(s) of cyber-bullying), the policy applies to teaching and other school staff and others insofar as measures under the policy relate to them. It is important that all members of the school community are aware that cyber-bullying is unacceptable and should not be tolerated.

The school reserves the right to apply its bullying policy in respect of bullying that occurs at a location, activity, function or program that is not school related if in the opinion of the Principal and/or the Board of Management the alleged bullying has created a hostile environment at school for the victim, has infringed on the rights of the victim at the school and/or has materially or substantially disrupted the education process or the orderly operation of the school.

3 Rationale for this Policy

(a) The Department of Education and Skills requires schools to have a written policy on bullying.

(b) Schools also have obligations under the Equal Status Acts, 2000, which relates to discrimination based on nine grounds: gender, marital status, family status, age, race, Religious Belief, disability, sexual orientation, membership of the Traveller community.

(c) Our Trustees, the Presentation Brothers Schools Trust (PBST), have a statutory obligation to ensure that a policy is in place that reflects the principles and values of the religious and educational philosophy of the school.

(d) Involving and encouraging all members of the school community in developing, formulating and reviewing this policy on cyber-bullying promotes partnership, ownership and implementation of a living policy.

4 Relationship of this Policy to the Characteristic Spirit of the School

This policy is consistent with the Mission Statement of Coláiste Chríost Rí which states the following:

Coláiste Chríost Rí is an evolving inclusive Christian community committed to Catholic education in the Presentation Brothers' tradition; we pursue academic and sporting excellence within a unique Gaelic culture and tradition. Our Curriculum maintains a creative balance between preparation for the workplace and development of the person.

5 Objectives of this Policy

5.1 General Goals

(a) To fulfil our mission commitment as outlined in the previous paragraph.

(b) To promote each student's right to enjoy his learning and leisure free from cyber-bullying, both in the school and while engaged in school-related activities.

(c) To ensure every member of staff has the right to enjoy his/her work and association with Coláiste Chríost Rí.

(d) To enable students and staff alike to support each other by reporting all instances of cyber-bullying.

(e) To offer help, advice and support to victims of cyber-bullying.

(f) To confront perpetrators of cyber-bullying and give them realistic, firm and consistent guidelines to help control their behaviour.

(g) To work with, and through, the various local agencies in countering all forms of cyber-bullying.

5.2 When will the policy apply?

In relation to students, this policy applies throughout the school year, for all school activities, both in the building and in the grounds of Coláiste Chríost Rí, and anywhere our students are under supervision of staff (trips, tours, sports outings, etc). Students on the way to the school or going home from the school are entitled to the protection of this policy. It should also be kept in mind that the school may take a view upon any items published, by any means, if those items could bring the name of the school or any person working in the school into disrepute. This last consideration is not confined to term-time only.

5.3 Where will the policy apply?

The school draws a distinction between incidents which originate from within the school environs and those which occur outside. While the same standards apply at all times and in all places, it needs to be recognised that the school cannot be held responsible for students' actions when not in the care of the school or its agents. The school will inform students about internet protocol and best practice in the area of internet usage, including the concept of "public domain". The school values parents' support in reinforcing best practice in this area. Any cyber-bullying incident involving a student, as perpetrator or victim, is of concern, but especially when both perpetrator and victim are students. Equally, social comment about a member of staff which falls under the categories listed above will not be tolerated.

The policy applies:

• During school time (including breaks)

• Going to and from school

• During school tours

• During extra-curricular activities

• In respect of bullying that occurs at a location, activity, function, or programme that is not school related if it is in the opinion of the principal and/or Board of Management that alleged bullying has created a hostile environment at school for the victim, has infringed on the rights of the victim at the school and/or has materially or substantially disrupted the education process or the orderly operation of the school."

6 Key Measures

6.1 Definition of cyber bullying

Cyber-bullying is defined as using Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), including mobile phones, social network sites, internet, email, etc to demean, humiliate, exclude, or otherwise undervalue or upset another person through direct or indirect methods.

It can be an extension of face-to-face bullying, with technology providing the bully with another route to harass their target. In many ways features of cyber-bullying replicate aspects of bullying behaviour. However, it does differ in several significant ways from other types of bullying: the potential invasion of home and personal space, the difficulty in controlling electronically circulated messages, the potential size of the audience and the perceived anonymity which is often involved.

6.2 Examples of cyber-bullying

(a) Threats and intimidations,

(b) Harassments or 'cyber-stalking'

(e.g., repeatedly sending unwanted texts, instant messages or emails),

(c) Vilification / defamation, ("flaming")

(d) Exclusion or peer rejection,

(e) Impersonation ("masquerading")

(f) Unauthorised publication of private information or images ("outing")

(g) Sending videos/pictures to humiliate or hurt someone or cause offence.

(h) Use of electronic media to encourage, promote or provoke behaviours which would bring the school in disrepute.

6.3 Media used in cyber-bullying

(a) Mobile phones

(b) Instant Messenger and Voice over Internet Protocols

(c) Chat rooms and message boards

(d) Email

(e) Webcam

(f) Social networking sites

(g) Video hosting sites

(h) Virtual learning environments

(i) Gaming sites, consoles and virtual worlds

(j) Blogs and Wikis

(h) Any variant or capacity of such media yet to become available

6.4 Differences between cyber-bullying and other forms of bullying behaviour

(a) Impact: the scale and scope of cyber-bullying can be greater than other forms of bullying.

(b) Targets and perpetrators: the people involved may have a different profile from traditional bullies and their targets.

(c) Location: cyber-bullying may take place anytime and, given the nature of electronic communication, its effects may be felt in any location.

(d) Anonymity: the person being bullied will not always know who is attacking them.

(e) Evidence: unlike some other forms of bullying, the target of the bullying is likely to have evidence of its occurrence.

6.5 Education on the impact of Cyber-bullying

(a) Education on cyber-bullying is an important part of the Social Personal & Health Education (SPHE) programme, and may also be dealt with in the Religion and Civic Social & Political Education (CSPE) programmes. Awareness of cyber-bullying and bullying in general is also covered in the Transition Year (TY) programme. The benefits of availing of outside expertise, when available and appropriate, to highlight the issue of cyber-bullying to pupils, parents and staff is also recognised.

(b) Some cyber-bullying is clearly deliberate and aggressive, but it is important to recognise that some incidents of cyber-bullying may well be unintentional and the result of simply not thinking about the consequences. What may be sent as a joke may not be received as one, and indeed the distance that technology allows means the sender may not see the impact of the message on the receiver. There is also less opportunity for either party to resolve any misunderstanding or to feel empathy. Students need to be aware of the effects of their actions.

(c) In many cases of cyber-bullying, bystanders can easily become perpetrators, e.g. by passing on or showing to others images designed to humiliate, or by taking part in online polls or discussion groups. Such people may not recognise themselves as participating in bullying, but their involvement has the potential to compound the unhappiness for the person being targeted.

(d) 'Bystanders' or 'accessories' who actively support cyber-bullying are liable to face sanctions themselves. Pupils who become involved in this respect need to be aware that their actions may have severe and distressing consequences, and that participating in such activity will not be tolerated.

6.6 Advice to students

(a) Respect other people. Remember that when you send a message to someone, you cannot see the impact that your words or images may have on the other person. That is why it is important to always show respect to people and be careful what you say online or what images you send. What you think is a joke may really hurt someone else. Always ask permission before you take a photo of someone. Please bear in mind that (except with the expressed permission of a teacher) the taking of, and/or subsequent dissemination of, still or video images is strictly prohibited in Coláiste Chríost Rí. Breaches of this rule will be subject to sanction up to and including detention, suspension or expulsion.

(b) If you receive a rude or offensive message or picture about someone else, do not forward it. You could be assisting a bully and even be accused, yourself, of cyber-bullying. You might also be breaking the law.

(c) Think first before you send. It is important to think before you send any images or text about yourself or someone else by email or mobile phone, or before you post information on a website

Remember that what you send can be made public very quickly and could stay online forever. Parents, teachers, friends or future employers may be able to evaluate your character on the basis of your online footprint.

(d) Protect your password. It is good practice to change your password on a regular basis and not to disclose it to other people. Choosing hard-to-guess passwords with symbols or numbers will help stop people hacking into your account and pretending to be you. It is also sensible to give your mobile phone number only to trusted friends.

(e) Block the bully. Most responsible websites and services allow you to block or report someone who is behaving badly.

(f) Don't retaliate or reply. Replying to bullying messages, particularly in anger, may well be what the bully wants and can easily escalate matters very quickly.

(g) Save the evidence. It is important to keep records of offending messages, pictures or online conversations. If you are intending to make a complaint, they will help you demonstrate what is happening and can be used by the school, Internet service provider, mobile phone company, or even the Gardai to investigate the cyber-bullying.

(h) Make sure you report incidents of cyber-bullying. You have the right not to be harassed and/or bullied online and you should report incidents of cyber-bullying which take place.

7 Links to Other Policies

The Anti-cyber bullying Policy of Coláiste Chríost Rí outlines in detail provisions contained in the Antibullying Policy and the school's Code of Positive Behaviour. Other relevant policies include the Child Protection Policy, and Policy Relating to Alcohol, Tobacco, Volatile Substances and Drugs, Dignity in the Workplace Policy and the Internet Acceptable Use Policy

8 Implementation Arrangements, Roles and Responsibilities

8.1 Procedures for Noting and Reporting Incidents of Cyber-bullying:

(a) If a student receives an abusive email or text (or any other form of unacceptable electronic communication) from another student, he should report the matter to a member of staff (usually a teacher/SNA) as soon as possible. A copy of the email with full headers, plus dates and times, should be saved wherever possible.

(b) Depending on the nature of the allegation, the case will usually be recorded and addressed initially by the class teacher, year head or Deputy Principal (and, where possible, by two of these working together). For more serious allegations, the incident will certainly involve the Deputy Principal and, in extreme cases, could involve the Gardai and/or other external agencies.

(c) As soon as reasonably possible after the allegations is made, the student(s) involved will be interviewed by the investigating teacher(s) and given the opportunity to state their case, in order to establish the truth.

(d) At the conclusion of the investigation, the outcome will be communicated to the staff and students involved and to their parents/guardians.

(e) In the case of a complaint regarding a staff member, this should be referred immediately to the Principal.

(f) Where cases, relating to either student or teacher, remain unresolved at school level, the matter should be referred to the Board of Management.

(g) In order to appeal a decision, a parent/student may request a review by writing to the Board.

8.2 Sanctions

The aim of a sanction is to:

(a) Help the person harmed to feel safe again and be assured that the bullying will stop.

(b) Hold the perpetrator to account by getting him to recognise the harm caused and to deter him from repeating the behaviour.

(c) Demonstrate to the school community that cyber-bullying is unacceptable and that the school has effective ways of dealing with it, so deterring others from behaving similarly.

(d) Offenders and victims of bullying may be referred to counselling.

8.3 Roles and Responsibilities

The school management team is responsible for ensuring that this policy is implemented. It is the responsibility of all members of the community to take action if they are aware of cyber-bullying taking place; to remain silent could be seen as condoning the action of the bully.

8.4 Success Criteria

The success of this anti-cyber-bullying policy will be evident in the wellbeing and happiness of the whole school community as reflected in fewer incidents of cyber-bullying behaviour being encountered.

9 Drafting

This Anti-cyber-bullying Policy was drafted by an in-house committee in Coláiste Chríost Rí and involved consultation members of the Parents' Association, members of the Student Council and members of the Board of Management

10 Ratification and Implementation Date

The policy will be ratified by the Board of Management. This policy comes into effect from the date of that ratification by the Board.

11 Monitoring the Implementation of the Policy

Parents/guardians and all members of staff will be involved in monitoring the implementation of this policy.

12 Reviewing the Policy

It is envisaged that, as is the case with all school policies, there will be a periodic review of this policy.

Notes

- The teaching Council's Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers (June 2012) states:

'staff should ensure that any communication with students, colleagues, parents, school management and others is appropriate including communication via electronic media, such as e-mail, texting, and social networking sites'

- Use school phone/ not private mobiles. in organising events

This policy was reviewed and accepted by the Board of Management - 2021

Chairperson of the Board of Management - Maria Walk