

Cyber Bullying Policy

Introduction

1. Social Media networks provide a dynamic and rapidly evolving means of communication. Mobile phones, chat rooms, websites and social networks, such as Facebook, play a significant role in many young people's lives as they interact with their peers and search for a social identity.
2. Inappropriate use of social media may lead to what is commonly known as Cyber Bullying.
3. Cyber Bullying, like any other form of bullying, is the abuse of one person or a group of people by another person or group of people. It is an affront to human dignity and will be treated in accordance with the principles and procedures of this Cyber Bullying Policy, the school's Code of Behaviour, the Anti-Bullying Policy, the Child Protection Policy, and the Internet Acceptable Usage Policy, the Health and Safety Statement and the Policies of Dignity in the Workplace and other relevant policies.
4. Due to the instant, public, open and potentially permanent nature of the access to material posted on social media and its capacity to multiply exponentially, a single inappropriate and offensive posting may constitute Cyber Bullying.
5. The school has a duty of care towards its pupils and its staff. A safe and respectful environment in school is necessary so that teaching and learning can take place.
6. The school, together with other relevant parties (parents and/or guardians, social media providers, Gardaí etc.) has a responsibility for the promotion of the responsible use of social media and the prevention of their misuse, with special reference to Cyber Bullying.
7. This Cyber Bullying Policy applies even when a student engages in inappropriate use of social media, when not under the direct supervision of the school; when there is a clear connection with the school and/or a demonstrable impact on its aims; work reputation and/or personnel.

Definitions

Social Media Technologies are defined as Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), such as the internet, digital media or the mobile phone (e.g. text messaging, group messaging services, instant messaging, personal websites and social media networks etc.).

Cyber Bullying means the usage of Social Media Technologies that seeks to undermine or humiliate a member, or members, of the school community. This includes circulating or publishing through ICT, material recorded without consent for the purpose of undermining, or causing damage to, the professional or the personal reputation of another person, whether considered a “joke” or not.

Policy

Cyber bullying will be deemed a serious breach of the school’s Code of Behaviour and Anti Bullying Policies, as well as other relevant policies, and will attract serious sanctions, up to and including suspension and expulsion. Allegations of Cyber Bullying may also be reported to the Gardaí or other outside agencies, as appropriate.

Any misbehavior, including inappropriate use of social media, impacting on the health and safety of any member of the school community, will be treated with the utmost seriousness by the Principal and the Board of Management.

Reporting Procedure and Investigation

1. Any student or staff member who believes s/he has, or is being subjected to Cyber Bullying, as well as any person who has reason to believe a student or staff member is being subjected to (or has been subjected to Cyber Bullying) shall immediately report the matter to the Principal, Deputy Principal or Class Tutor.
2. The Principal, Deputy Principal or Class Tutor shall investigate all reports of such conduct in line with agreed school procedures. Cyber Bullying will be the subject to appropriate discipline and sanctions, to be decided the Principal and/or Board of Management. The seriousness of the violation will determine the sanction to be applied. These may include suspension or expulsion.
3. All involved parties will be informed of the results of the investigations into Cyber Bullying.

Consequences for False Accusation

1. The consequences and the appropriate remedial action for a student found to have falsely accused another member of the school community of the act of Cyber Bullying range from positive behavioural interventions up to and including suspension or expulsion.
2. The consequences and the appropriate remedial action for a school employee found to have maliciously accused another employee of an act of Cyber Bullying is that s/he may be disciplined. Such discipline will be in accordance with the relevant legislation and the school's Dignity and Work Policy.
3. In circumstances where an investigation of Cyber Bullying is not proven, but the Board are satisfied that a genuine and reasonable complaint was made, no action will be taken against the complainant.

Discipline and Consequences

1. Some acts of Cyber Bullying may be isolated incidents requiring the school authorities to respond appropriately to the individual committing the acts. Other acts may be so serious, or part of a larger pattern of Cyber Bullying, that they will require a response from outside agencies such as the Gardai.
2. Sanctions will be decided by the Principal and/or Board of Management and the seriousness of the violation will determine the sanction to be applied. This may range from positive behavioural interventions, up to and including suspension and expulsion. It should be further noted that Cyber Bullying using school technologies, is in violation of the school's Acceptable Internet Use Policy.

Appeals

Section 20 of the Education Act 1998 gives parents and students (aged 18 and over) the right to appeal certain decisions made by the Board of Management or by a person acting on behalf of the Board – expulsion, cumulative suspension of 20 days, refusal to enroll etc. In general, appeals must be made within 42 calendar days from the date that the parents/guardians were notified of the decision.

Reprisal or Retaliation Prohibited

The Board of Management will not tolerate reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an act of Cyber Bullying. The consequence and appropriate remedial action for any person who engages in reprisal or retaliation shall be determined by the Board or Principal after consideration of the nature and circumstances of the act, in accordance with the principles of natural justice and DES regulations and procedures.

The Board of Management and the Principal wish to encourage active reporting of all cases of Cyber Bullying and will support aggrieved persons throughout the process.