



# LAGAN COLLEGE BELFAST

## Anti-Bullying Policy

Document Reviewed:	June 2024 by D Collins, VP Pastoral
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This policy has been developed, including the legislative and policy/guidance framework applicable. This includes:

### Related Legislation:

- Health and Safety at Work NI Order 1978
- The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 Article 3 – see DE 1998/25
- Welfare and Protection of Pupils Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 2003
- The Education (2006 Order) (Commencement No.2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2007
- The Education (School Development Plans) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010
- United Nations Convention for the Rights of Children
- Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016

### Related DE Guidance:

- Pastoral Care in Schools: PROMOTING POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR DE, 2001
- Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools. A Guide for Schools, DE 2017
- Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland, Dept. of Health, Social Services and Public Safety 2016
- Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland's (SBNI) Policies and Procedures 2017
- NIABF- Effective Responses to Bullying Behaviour
- Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 Statutory Guidance for Schools and Boards of Governors 2019
- [Circular 2024/12 - Addressing Bullying in Schools Act \(NI\) 2016: Responsibilities of Schools and Boards of Governors](#)

### Related LCB Documents and Policies

- Acceptable Use of ICT and E- Safety
- Additional Education Needs (AEN)
- Community Relations, Equality and Diversity Policy
- Pastoral Care Policy
- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Relationship and Sexuality Education Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Inclusive LGBTAI+ Community Policy.
- Use of Restraint and Seclusion in Educational Settings Policy

## Section 1 - Introduction

This policy was developed in line with guidance set out by Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016, DENI and the Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forum (NIABF). Its overall purpose is to promote an anti-bullying culture in Lagan College and to help staff provide support to pupils who have been bullied and pupils who engage in bullying behaviour.

Pastoral Care in Schools; Promoting Positive Behaviour (DE, 2001) Paragraph 125 states the following:

“As well as ensuring that pupils who are bullying are dealt with in accordance with accepted school policy and procedures, it will be necessary to work with these pupils to try to help them change their unacceptable behaviour.”

This policy provides examples of anti-bullying strategies within 4 levels of intervention and provides staff and parents with practical suggestions on how bullying can be addressed.

At Lagan College we recognise the right of every individual to develop his/her full potential within a supportive Christian community. Our Christian ethos is expressed in the commitment to be one community who learns and worships together based on the principles of equality, respect, reconciliation and service to others. Our vision, ‘to educate to the highest standards Catholics, Protestants and others of goodwill, of all abilities, together’ is embedded within the aims of the Anti-Bullying policy. We believe all forms of bullying behaviour are unacceptable. We believe that all pupils have the right to learn in a safe and supported environment.

This policy links with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) by taking into consideration the below articles of the UNCRC:

- Article 2: children have the right to be protected from discrimination.
- Article 3: All organisations concerned with children should work towards what is best for each child.
- Article 19: The government should ensure that children are properly cared for, and protect them from violence, abuse and neglect by their parents, or anyone else who looks after them.
- Article 12: Children have the right to express their views, in a supported and accessible way, on issues that affect them, and to have their opinions taken seriously
- Article 36: Children should be protected from any activities that could harm their development.

The Anti-Bullying policy has been developed in consultation with all stakeholders of the school community including students, parents, staff and Governors. The roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders are made explicit. The policy is intended to ensure an inclusive, productive, consistent approach is adopted in the promotion and development of an Anti-Bullying environment for students by detailing the existing and proposed practices and strategies implemented throughout the College. It is intended as a working document, used to inform teaching and learning.

## **Section 2 – Ethos & Principles**

Lagan College will:

- create and maintain a calm and supportive school environment where effective learning and teaching can take place;
- support all parties in a situation where bullying behaviour has been displayed;
- clarify for students, staff and parents that bullying is always unacceptable and is regarded by Lagan College as a serious offence that in extreme case can have legal consequences;
- ensure that preventative measures are in place;
- emphasise the importance of close cooperation between school and parents and the parents’ role in the prevention of bullying;
- foster a rigorous anti-bullying environment and will be committed to a preventative, responsive and restorative anti-bullying ethos across the whole school.
- ensure that all pupils, parents and staff are aware of this policy and their roles and responsibilities in contributing to its success; and
- demonstrate that no form of bullying will be tolerated in Lagan College as stated in our Code of Conduct and will be dealt with in line with the College Positive Behaviour Policy.

## **Section 3 – Consultation and Participation**

This policy has been developed in consultation with registered students, their parents/carers, staff and the Board of Governors in compliance with the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016.

The College will consult with all stakeholders by:

- Undertaken focus group sessions with the Student Council, Vice –Prefect and Sixth Form Prefect Teams.
- Engagement with the Parents’ Council
- Staff survey for all staff, teaching and non-teaching
- Engagement activity for all staff, teaching and non-teaching during August INSET
- Representative members of staff involved in writing anti-bullying policy
- Engagement event, or questionnaires, for those connected to the school (eg. local clergy, local supporters, external agencies that regularly provide input, etc.)

## **Section 4 – What is Bullying?**

### **4.1 Defining Bullying**

Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 defines bullying as,

**“(1) The act (but not limited to) the repeated use of:**

**(a) any verbal, written or electronic communication,**

**(b) any other act, or**

**(c) any combination of those, by a pupil or a group of pupils against another pupil or group of pupils, with the intention of causing physical or emotional harm to that pupil or group of pupils.**

**For the purposes of subsection (1), “act” includes omission”.**

The College will use the below statement to support student’s understanding:

***“Bullying is behaviour that is usually repeated, which is carried out intentionally to cause hurt, harm or to adversely affect the rights and needs of another or others.”***

Socially unacceptable behaviours **BECOME BULLYING BEHAVIOURS** when the information gathered clearly demonstrates that the unacceptable behaviour DOES MEET THE CRITERIA LISTED BELOW i.e. on the basis of the evidence gathered the behaviour is/was:

- intentional,
- targeted at a specific pupil or group of pupils
- repeated – e.g. 3 or more repetitious incidents involving the same target/s
- causing physical or emotional harm
- omission - intentionally choosing not to mention, (failure to act) arising from a desire to cause harm

### **4.2 One-off Incidents**

While bullying is usually repeated behaviour, there are instances of one-off incidents that the College will consider as bullying. When assessing a one-off incident, to make a decision on whether to classify it as bullying, the College shall consider the following criteria:

- severity and significance of the incident
- evidence of pre-meditation
- impact of the incident on individuals (physical/emotional)

- impact of the incidents on wider school community
- previous relationships between those involved
- any previous incidents involving the individuals

Any incidents which are not considered bullying behaviour will be addressed under the Positive Behaviour Policy.

### 4.3 Socially Unacceptable Behaviours

Understanding bullying and the different forms it can take is the starting point for preventing and responding to socially unacceptable behaviours effectively. The College recognises that there is a continuum of unacceptable anti-social behaviours that infringe on everyone's right to be safe. The following unacceptable behaviours, when repeated, targeted and intentionally hurtful, may be considered a bullying behaviour. They include:

#### 1. Physical Act

Physical harm is defined as intentionally causing injuries. It can include:

- Hitting, punching, kicking causing bruises, broken bones or burns.
- Pushing, shoving, jostling or physical intimidation
- Any other physical contact which may include use of weapons
- Material harm, such as taking/stealing money or possessions or causing damage to possessions

#### 2. Verbal or Written Acts

Unacceptable verbal behaviours include:

- saying mean and hurtful things to, or about, others
- making fun of others
- calling another pupil mean and hurtful names
- telling lies or spread false rumours about others
- try to make other pupils dislike another pupil/s

#### 3. Indirect

Unacceptable indirect behaviours include:

- Omission (Exclusion)
- Leaving someone out of a game
- Refusing to include someone in group work
- Isolation
- Refusal to work with/talk to/play with/help others

#### 4. Electronic Acts

Unacceptable electronic acts include:

- Using online platforms or other electronic communication to carry out many of the written acts noted above
- Impersonating someone online to cause hurt
- Sharing images (eg. photographs or videos) online to embarrass someone
- Misuse of mobile phones and internet programmes to humiliate, threaten and/or isolate another.

It should be noted that the above list is not exhaustive and that other behaviours which fit with the definition may be considered bullying behaviour.

Bullying type behaviour can occur due to a variety of motivations. These include, but are not limited to:

- |                                   |                      |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|
| • Age                             | • Gender identity    |
| • Appearance                      | • Sexual orientation |
| • Breakdown in peer relationships | • Pregnancy          |

- Community background
- Political affiliation
- Ability
- Looked After Child status
- Young Carer status
- Marital status
- Race
- Religion
- Disability / SEN

#### 4.4 Use of Language

Bullying is an emotive issue, therefore it is essential that we ensure we use supportive, understanding language when discussing these matters. For that reason, we will not refer to a child as 'a bully', nor will we refer to a child as 'a victim'. Instead, we will refer to the child by describing the situation surrounding that child, for example:

- A child displaying bullying behaviours
- A child experiencing bullying behaviours

We encourage all members of the school community to use this language when discussing bullying incidents.

The College will use the following definitions of emotional and physical harm which are set out in the DE Guidance. In determining 'harm' the College defines:

- Emotional or psychological harm as intentionally causing distress or anxiety by scaring, humiliating or affecting adversely a pupil's self-esteem.
- Physical harm as intentionally hurting a pupil by causing injuries such as bruises, broken bones, burns or cuts.

### Section 5: Addressing Bullying in Lagan College

Everyone in the school community, including pupils, their parents/carers and the staff of the school are expected to respect the rights of others to be safe. All stakeholders of Lagan College have a responsibility to ensure the protection and welfare of children is paramount. This also extends to any volunteers accepted to work in the school during school hours when pupils are on the premises.

#### 5.1. Responsibilities of Board of Governors

Members of the Board of Governors are required to:

- secure measures to prevent bullying
- to keep a record of incidents of all incidents of bullying or alleged bullying involving a registered pupil at the school
- safeguard and promote the welfare of all registered pupils whether they are on the school premises or elsewhere while in the lawful control or charge of a member of staff of the school
- consult with registered pupils on the general principles which will be reflected in the school's Positive Behaviour policy
- ensure that policies and procedures designed to promote good behaviour and discipline are pursued at school
- ensure that student welfare embraces all aspects of pastoral care, child protection, pupil behaviour, health and well-being, safety and security

#### 5.2. Responsibilities of Principal

The Principal:

- when deciding on measures which will be used to encourage good behaviour in the school **must specifically include measures to prevent bullying among pupils**

- before deciding on measures to encourage good behaviour **must consult with pupils registered at the school and their parents**
- safeguard and promote the welfare of all registered pupils whether they are on the school premises or elsewhere while in the lawful control or charge of a member of staff of the school

### 5.3. Responsibilities of Staff (teaching and non-teaching)

Staff will:

- Model high standards of personal pro-social behaviour
- Be alert to signs of distress\* and other possible indications of bullying behaviour
- Emphasise the importance for students to seek help from a trusted adult about bullying behaviour when it happens or is observed
- Explain the implications to students of allowing the bullying behaviour to continue unchecked
- Listen sensitively to anyone who has been bullied, take what is said seriously, and provide reassurance that appropriate action will be taken
- Ensure students know how to seek support – internal and external
- Resolve difficulties in restorative ways to prevent recurring bullying behaviour and meet the needs of all parties
- When dealing with allegations of bullying behaviour staff will use the Bullying Concern Assessment Form (BCAF) and respond using the guidance set out in Section 8 – Responding to a Bullying Concern

Bullying is often reported to staff by parents/carers. Such complaints will be met openly and sympathetically.

When meeting with the parents/carers of pupils bullying others the staff need to:

- Acknowledge that the parent/carer may be under stress as a result of having to come into school to discuss an incident with a member of staff.
- Remain understanding if the parent/carer expresses anger directed at the school. It is important to understand that sometimes a parent's perception of a situation can be one sided and dependent on the child's subjective perspective. In cases of alleged bullying it is important to be open minded as often there is a complicated build-up of events and tit for tat behaviour. Children who bully will often dismiss their behaviour as banter or 'messing about'
- Try to get clear facts from the parent/carer but don't cross-examine or emphasise inconsistencies in their version of events.
- Ensure that you have already gathered as much reliable information as possible and be clear that the behaviour does represent bullying.
- Ensure that the parents/carers understand how their child's behaviour conforms to the Lagan College's agreed definition of bullying.
- Share your concern about what has been happening to the child experiencing bullying.
- Avoid suggesting that it is the character of their child that is at fault. Emphasise that it is aspects of their child's behaviour that must change. Try to refer to their child's positive qualities.
- Be understanding but firm.
- Make it clear that you care and will do what you can and will act in accordance with the College's anti-bullying policy.
- Tell the parent/carer that you will need time (be specific) to gather information and that you will keep them informed.
- Avoid getting into an argument. Try to avoid blaming the parent/carer for their child's behaviour.

## 5.4. Responsibilities of Parents/Carers

Parents/carers will:

- Participate in the development of the school's Anti-Bullying policy.
- Inform the school of any concerns relating to bullying behaviour
- Report or express a concern about their child's involvement in a bullying incident/situation, particularly if their child has experienced bullying type behaviours. Remember, schools must take immediate action if a child's personal safety is at threat. It is clearly advised in the Student Learning Planner that parents make early contact with the school to discuss any matters which might have a bearing on the student's education.
- Work collaboratively with the College to resolve an incident of bullying type behaviours
- Reinforce anti-bullying messages at home that bullying is morally wrong and potentially damaging. We expect the parents of young people who have been bullying others to support the College in terms of sanctions.

## 5.5. Responsibilities of Students

Bullying is a secret, insidious form of behaviour and targets of bullying often fear that reporting it will make the situation worse. If a child feels he/she is being bullied it must be taken seriously by staff and parents.

Within the College's Student Learning Planner advice is offered to children who are anxious or worried. Students are regularly reminded to report bullying to class teachers, Form Tutors, Year Heads, Heads of School or the Pastoral Assistant.

Students are encouraged to:

- Talk to a member of staff if they have a concern of bullying type behaviour
- Keep evidence of any bullying type behaviour such as cyber bullying remarks
- Behave towards others in a mutually respectful way
- Refrain from becoming involved in any kind of bullying behaviour, even at the risk of incurring temporary unpopularity.
- Refrain from retaliating to any form of bullying behaviour
- Intervene to support any person who is being bullied, unless it is unsafe to do so.

## Section 6: Working Towards an Anti-Bullying Environment

Staff, students and parents have a shared responsibility to have a proactive attitude to bullying. Prevention is as important as the action taken to address reports of bullying. All adults in the school play a vital part as role models as reflected in their dealings with each other and their treatment of the young people. Playgrounds, corridors, toilets and other hidden corners are well supervised during the early morning, break time and lunch time. Lunch time supervisors, caretakers, classroom assistants and all staff who come in contact with young people are trained to watch for signs of bullying and report them to appropriate staff.

### 6.1 Preventive Curriculum

The Personal Development Programme for each year group includes work to help students improve their self-esteem, resilience and social skills and to encourage them to have the self-confidence to reject bullying behaviour from other people. The issue of bullying and what to do about it is continually emphasised through the assembly programme.

The College works effectively with over 35 outside agencies to support the appropriate care and welfare of all students. Students are able to access counselling via the Familyworks Counselling service and are informed about support services through the PD Programme and useful websites such as Childline and the Samaritans. Anti-bullying posters

are on display around the College. A CaraFriend Workshop is delivered to Year10 to address the issue of homophobic bullying.

The College marks Anti Bullying Week every November with whole school assemblies, and typical themes are cyber bullying, homophobia and racism. The message is always clear, that bullying is not tolerated and must be reported. Additionally, a group of sixth formers are trained as mediators and are available to help younger students who may be experiencing bullying from their peers.

Sixth Form students are trained to monitor behaviour on buses and to report incidences of bullying to the relevant Head of Year or Head of School. Students are regularly reminded of the positive behaviour expectations whilst travelling to and from school. The Vice –Principal (Pastoral) has regular engagement with transport providers (eg. Translink, EA Transport, etc.) to ensure effective communication and the early identification of any concerns.

The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act gives schools the authority to take steps to prevent bullying through the use of electronic communication amongst students at any time during term, where that behaviour is likely to have a detrimental effect on the student’s education at school. To this regard, the College uses the PD and Assembly programme to raise awareness of the nature and impact of online bullying and will support students to make use of the internet in a safe, responsible and respectful way.

## **6.2 Student Voice**

The College actively promotes an open, inclusive and mutually respectful working environment and ensures high levels of pupil participation through promotion of an active School Council. Students are regularly consulted on their viewpoints using surveys and questionnaires.

## **6.3 Shared Education**

Involvement in meaningful and supportive shared education projects, supporting pupils to explore, understand and respond to difference and diversity.

## **Section 7 – Reporting a Bullying Concern**

### **7.1 How Students Can Report a Concern**

Students are encouraged to raise concerns or to ‘get help’ if they have a concern about bullying that they experience or is experienced by another student with any member of staff, including teaching and non-teaching staff. Students can raise concerns to a trusted member of staff, by:

- Verbally- talking to a member of staff
- By writing a note to a member of staff (eg. in a homework diary)
- By sending an email via the safeguarding email.
- By posting a comment in a ‘worry box’ located outside the Chaplaincy.

### **7.2 Parents/Carers Reporting a Concern**

It is the responsibility of parents and carers to raise concerns about alleged bullying behaviour at the earliest opportunity. It is also important to encourage parents/carers of the need to encourage their children to react appropriately to bullying behaviour and to not do anything to retaliate or to ‘hit back’.

Within Lagan College, the process of parents/carers reporting bullying concerns is:

- In the first instance, all bullying concerns should be reported to the Head of Year

- Where the parent is not satisfied that appropriate action has been taken to prevent further incidents, or where further incidents have taken place, the concern should be reported to Head of School.
- Where the parent is not satisfied that appropriate action has been taken by the Head of School to prevent further incidents, or where further incidents have taken place, the concern should be reported to the Vice-Principal.
- Where the parent is not satisfied that appropriate action has been taken by the Vice Principal to prevent further incidents, or where further incidents have taken place, the concern should be reported to the Principal.

If the parent/carer remains unsatisfied that the concern has not been appropriately responded to, the school's complaints procedure should be followed. This usually involves making a formal, written complaint, to the Chair of the Board of Governors.

It is important to note that all reports of bullying concerns received from pupils and/or parents/carers will be responded to in line with the Parental Complaints policy and that feedback will be made to the person who made the report. However, it must be noted that no information about action taken in relation to a student can be disclosed to anyone other than the student and his/her parents/carers.

## **Section 8 – Responding to a Bullying Concern**

*The processes outlined below provide a framework for how the school will respond to any bullying concerns identified.*

Using the NIABF Effective Responses to Bullying Behaviour resource, the member of staff responsible shall...

- Clarify facts and perceptions
- Check records (SIMS)
- Assess the incident against the criteria for bullying behaviour
- Identify any themes or motivating factors
- Identify the type of bullying behaviour being displayed
- Identify intervention level
- Select and implement appropriate interventions for all pupils involved, including appropriate interventions, consequences and sanctions not listed in the Effective Responses to Bullying Behaviour resource
- Track, monitor and record effectiveness of interventions
- Review outcome of interventions
- Select and implement further intentions as necessary

**(Reference: Staff Anti-Bullying Resource Booklet)**

Lagan College in line with NIABF advocates a restorative approach to responding to bullying behaviour.

Interventions will focus on responding to the behaviour, resolving the concern and restoring the wellbeing of those involved. **(Reference: Bullying Levels and Targeted Interventions).**

When responding to a bullying concern, staff shall implement interventions aimed at responding to the behaviour, resolving the concern and restoring the wellbeing of those involved. Where appropriate, school staff may implement sanctions for those displaying bullying behaviour.

## **Section 9 – Recording**

In accordance to the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016, Lagan College will keep a written record of all relevant information related to reports of bullying concerns using a BCAF (Bullying Concern Assessment Form), including:

- how the bullying behaviour was displayed (the method)
- the motivation for the behaviour
- how each incident was addressed by the school
- the outcome of the interventions employed.

Records will be kept on the online SIMS Behaviour Management Module, which is part of the C2k system in schools. Access to these records will be restricted and only provided to those members of school staff with a legitimate need to have access.

All records will be maintained in line with relevant data protection legislation and guidance and will be disposed of in line with the school's Retention and Disposal of Documents Policy. Collated information regarding incidents of bullying and alleged bullying behaviour will be used to inform the future development of anti-bullying policy and practice within the school.

## **Section 10 – Professional Development of Staff**

Lagan College is committed to ensuring that staff are provided with appropriate opportunities for professional development as part of the school's ongoing CPD/PRSD provisions.

## **Section 11 – Monitoring and Review of Policy**

To appropriately monitor the effectiveness of the Anti-Bullying Policy, the Board of Governors shall:

- maintain a standing item on the agenda of each meeting of the Board where a report on recorded incidents of bullying will be noted
- identify trends and priorities for action
- assess the effectiveness of strategies aimed at preventing bullying behaviour
- assess the effectiveness of strategies aimed at responding to bullying behaviour

This Anti-Bullying Policy shall be reviewed as required, in consultation with staff, students and their parents/carers, on or before the August 2025.

# Effective responses to bullying behaviour...



**Keep Children and Young People Safe**

Access full resource at [www.niabf.org.uk](http://www.niabf.org.uk)

