



# Counter Bullying Policy 2020/21

John the Baptist Community School

## Counter-Bullying Policy

1. 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 John the Baptist Community School has adopted the following counter-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 and Child Protection legislation and guidelines.

Everyone within the school community has a responsibility to:

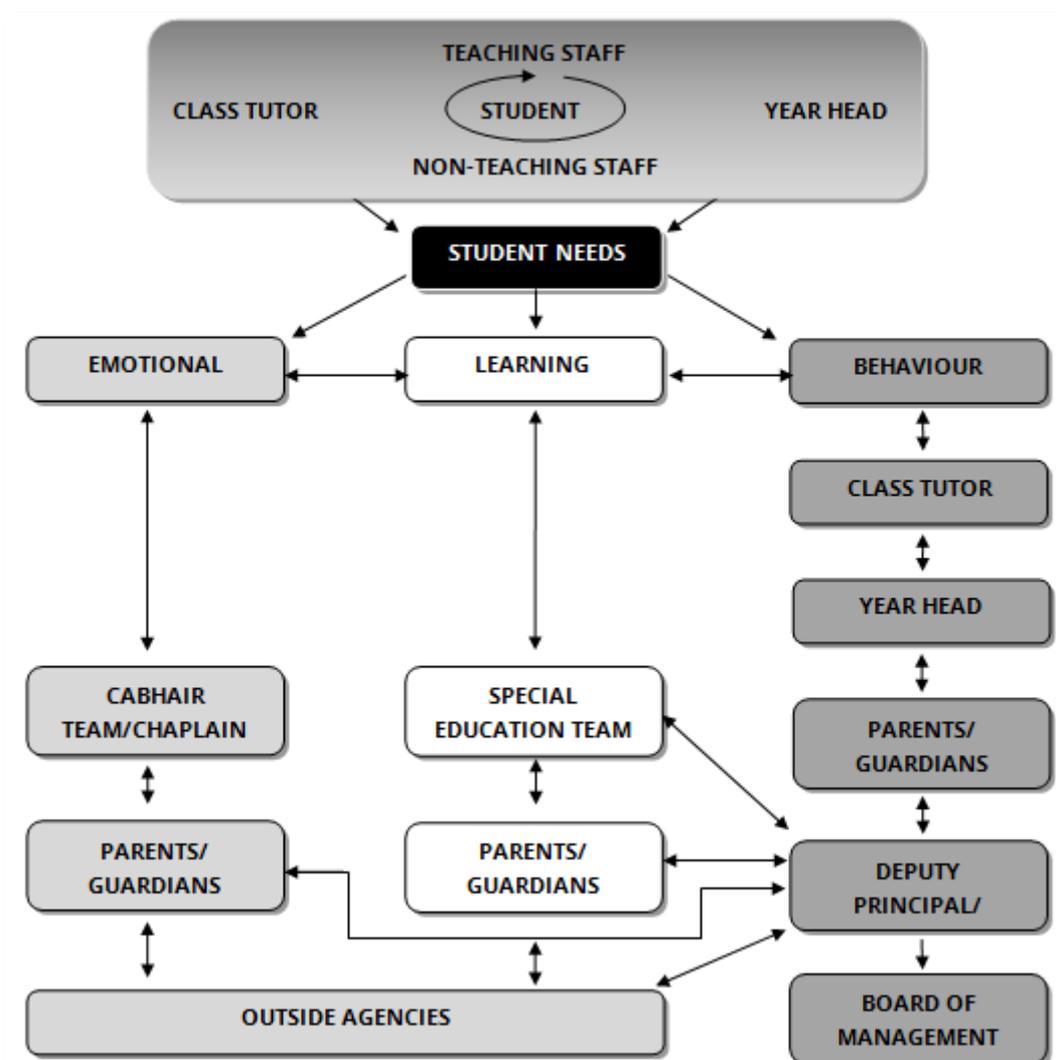
- Avoid engaging in bullying behaviour.
- Discourage and intervene when you witness bullying behaviour.
- Assist and give support to those who are targeted.
- Report bullying-related incidents.

**2. Reform not Blame Approach:** The Board of Management recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives and wellbeing of students. JTBCS always aims to take a holistic and mindful view of the student and the events in question, mediated through the lens of restorative practice. A Restorative Practise Team was formed in September 2020 and all members are receiving ongoing training, including members of the Senior Management Team, while a number of Assistant Principals received training in recent years.

The school is fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and addressing bullying behaviour;

1. Creating a positive school culture and climate, which welcomes difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity through the promotion of the following;
  - Encouraging students to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment.
  - Promoting respectful relationships and wellbeing across all the members of the school community.
2. A 'whole school community approach' facilitated through effective leadership of all members of the school support system aimed at prevention and intervention that can help reduce bullying. (See figure 1.1)
3. A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact on the school Community.
4. Implementation of awareness raising and prevention strategies that build awareness, empathy, respect and resilience in students;

- Implementation of a range of curricular initiatives that promote respect for diversity and inclusiveness.
- Explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying e.g. gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of any ethnic minority in a number of subjects.
- Supervision and monitoring of students.
- Internal and external supports for staff when dealing with bullying incidents
- Consistent recording/documentation, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies and restorative practice approaches);
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the Counter Bullying Policy.



**Fig1.1. School Support System**

**Definition of Bullying:** 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 gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, colour, race and membership of any ethnic minority;
- 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 message through phone calls, text messages, emails, instant messaging (IMs), and direct messaging (DMSs), using text, picture or video on any social media platform e.g. Instagram, Facebook, Tiktok, Snapchat, WhatsApp, Twitter etc., are dealt with, as appropriate, in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour. Please use the following link to view types of cyberbullying <https://tacklebullying.ie/cyberbullying/what-is-cyberbullying/>

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. There is a legal obligation on the part of the school to report any incidents or suspicion of sexting immediately to the Gardaí.

Additional information on different types of bullying is set out in Section 2 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

**4. Investigation and Dealing with Bullying:** The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying in John the Baptist Community School is (are) as follows:

- All staff should be aware and mindful of bullying in the school and should be familiar in detail with the procedures and signs.
- **Year Heads** are the **designated 'relevant teachers'** in John the Baptist Community School responsible for allegations of bullying.
- All incidents of bullying observed/suspected/reported in school environs must be recorded and emailed to the relevant **designated person**. -i.e. the relevant Year Head

- Year Heads will liaise with class tutors, subject teachers, Sports/P.E. Department, extra-curricular activities, field work leaders, areas of unstructured activities.
- The relevant persons will also liaise with the co-ordinator of new staff.
- Principal and Deputy Principals will be the relevant designated person for reports by parents/guardians, Inclusion Support Assistants and ancillary staff and others who perform duties pertaining to the school e.g. school shop staff, bus drivers, cleaners, caretakers and secretaries. This list is not exhaustive.
- If the chaplain or those working in Guidance and the student support team (Cabhair) become aware of alleged bullying because of the nature of their work, they must report it to the relevant person i.e the relevant year head.
- The Board of Management is informed about all serious incidents of Bullying at scheduled board meetings.
- It must be noted that incidents of bullying can also be reported to TUSLA, on the Board's Child Protection Oversight Report and/or to the State Claims Agency as necessary.

**5. Educational Approach to Prevent Bullying:** The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, colour, race and membership of any ethnic minority) that will be used by the school are as follows (see Section 6.5 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*).

Teachers can influence attitudes to alleged bullying behaviour in a positive manner through a range of curricular initiatives that promote respect for diversity and inclusiveness. This is in line with the caring and inclusive mission statement of the school and the constant striving to address the wellbeing of every member of our school community.

- S.P.H.E makes specific provision for defining and exploring bullying and the interrelated areas of belonging, integration, communication, conflict, friendship, personal safety and relationships.
- The Relationship and Sexuality Education Programme provides opportunity to explore and discuss areas such as human sexuality and relationships which have particular relevance to identity-based bullying.
- In C.S.P.E., interdependence of people at community, national and international levels is emphasised.
- In 2018/2019, a separate Wellbeing class was introduced as a curricular element in First Year, Second Year and Transition Year. In this class, students are taught the importance of self-care but also positive interactions with others.

- In the promotion of physical, mental health and wellbeing, various other social, health and media education programmes will provide guidance on developing a physical and mental health promoting school.
- There is an opportunity in all subjects 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 e.g. English literature.
- In Geography/History colonisation, exploitation and dictatorships can be used to illustrate the abuse of power.
- Art, Drama, P.E., Dance and Music can be used to promote through teamwork an awareness of nature and impacts of bullying.
- Business Studies incorporates legislation and best practices regarding employment equality and unfair dismissal.
- Wellbeing is embedded in Junior Cycle and Transition Year, and to this end all subject department plans, and schemes of work incorporate reference to wellbeing, developing positive self-image, coping strategies and positive peer interactions.

## **6. The Prevention Strategies Aim to:**

- (1) Build empathy, respect and resilience in students.
- (2) Enhance and develop self-esteem.
- (3) Provide students with opportunities to develop a positive self-worth.
- (4) Encourage students to respect themselves and others in the school community.

### **(i) Awareness Raising Initiatives**

<https://tacklebullying.ie/>

A national website to counter bullying and cyberbullying for young people, parents and teachers. Funded by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) under the 2013 Action Plan in Bullying (2013). The site provides a single point of contact for those raising awareness, those affected or concerned about Bullying and Cyberbullying-related incidents.

Awareness raising initiatives are in place in John the Baptist Community School to deal explicitly with any form of bullying to include identity-based bullying and in particular homophobic and transphobic bullying by placing posters on the notice boards e.g. LGBTQI+, discussions with parents/guardians and the use of appropriate resources e.g. SPHE.

Prevention and any awareness raising will also focus on educating students on appropriate online behaviour, on how to stay safe online and on the development of a culture of reporting any concern about cyber bullying. Students will be repeatedly reminded that the placing of a once off offensive or hurtful public message, image or statement on a social

network site or other public forum where it can be viewed or repeated by other people will be regarded as bullying behaviour.

Approaches to decreasing the likelihood of bullying for students with special educational needs include improving inclusion, focusing on developing social skills and paying attention to key moments such as the transition from Primary to Post Primary level. It also includes cultivating a good school culture, which has respect for all members of the school community, through a broadly based curriculum and Pastoral Care structures e.g. Wellbeing classes, SPHE, RSE, the Links Programme, the school line of referral system, Guidance Counsellors, Cabhair and the Chaplain.

## **(ii) Parent/Guardian Involvement**

Parents/guardians must recognise that they have a responsibility to work with the school and their child to prevent or resolve such issues. Experience has shown that when parents actively engaged with the school, there is a greater likelihood of a successful resolution for all involved. Parents contribution has proven to be invaluable in the resolution of issues. Parents/guardians should also recognise that a school that openly discusses bullying is acting positively and that they need to work with their school to ensure there is a collaborative school wide approach to addressing and preventing the bullying behaviour.

Access to social media sites is blocked across John the Baptist Community School. Parents/guardians and students have a role and responsibility in helping the school to prevent and address school-based bullying behaviour and to deal with any negative impact within the school of bullying behaviour that occurs elsewhere.

We would encourage parents and guardians to refrain from uploading, commenting on or discussing behavioural incidences that occur in school/on the way to/from school/ during school outings or during extra-curricular activities. The comments on social media may give rise to a narrative that could be misleading, false or counterproductive. Social media commentary may be extremely damaging to the wellbeing of the student(s).

## **4. Procedures for Investigating and Resolving issues.**

The school's procedures for investigation, follow-up and recording of bullying behaviour and the established intervention strategies used by the school for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour are as follows:

- A student or parent/guardian may bring a bullying concern to any teacher in the school. Individual teachers will take appropriate measures regarding reports of bullying behaviour in accordance with the school's Counter Bullying Policy. The member of staff dealing with bullying is referred to as "the relevant teacher" i.e. The Year Head.
- The school's procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows:
  - 1) To resolve any issues and to restore the relationship of the parties involved.
  - 2) The relevant teacher will use their professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved.
  - 3) All reports including anonymous reports of bullying will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. In that way students will gain confidence in "telling". It will be made clear that when a student reports incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly. The Department of Education and Skills encourages schools to deal with bullying in a new way which involves a "no blame" approach, subject to investigation. This approach of "reform not blame" has been found to be effective. A number of Year Heads and Assistant Principals 1 have attended training, while Senior Management and the Restorative Team are currently completing training in Restorative Practice.
  - 4) Ancillary staff such as secretaries, Inclusion Support Assistants, bus drivers, caretakers, cleaners and any other ancillary staff are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying to the Principal or Deputy Principals.
  - 5) Parents/guardians and students are required to co-operate with any investigations and assist the school in resolving any issues and restoring the relationships of the parties. Incidents will be investigated outside the classroom.
  - 6) All investigations will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of the students. Great care will be given to sensitively working with the alleged bully and the victim in all cases.
  - 7) If a group is involved, each member will be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved may be met as a group by the relevant person. At the group meeting each student will be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements. Students may be asked to write down their account of the incident(s), which will be documented and filed for future reference.
  - 8) In cases where it has been determined that bullying has occurred, every effort will be made to contact the parents/guardians of the parties involved at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken by the school.
  - 9) Effort will be made to try to get the alleged bully to see the situation from the perspective of the person being bullied.

- 10)** It will be made clear to the alleged victims and parents/ guardians of the alleged victim, that where disciplinary sanctions are required, it is a private matter between the student being disciplined, the parents/guardians and the school.
- 11)** Follow up meetings will be arranged separately with the relevant parties in an effort to resolve the issues.
- 12)** If a bullying behaviour is not adequately addressed within 20 days after the relevant teacher has determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, it will be recorded by the relevant teacher in the recording template (See **Appendix 1**).
- 13)** If a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents/guardians must be referred to the school's complaints procedures. (c.f. Complaints Procedure)
- 14)** The parent has the right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children. All records will be maintained in accordance with relevant data protection legislation, including General Data Protection Regulations 2018.
- 15)** The relevant person i.e. Year Head will use his/her professional judgement in relation to the records to be kept. The Year Head will keep written records which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issue and restore the relationship of the parties involved. The recorded material will be retained by the Year Head and a copy given to the Principal or Deputy Principals. These records will be retained in the school in line with the school's data retention policy (see Data Protection Policy).
- 16)** Any material that relates to bullying or a bullying incident should be submitted by the class teacher or staff member to the relevant Year Head without intervention or delay. The Counter-bullying Policy will provide for appropriate linkage with the overall code of behaviour and provide for referrals to relevant outside agencies. The advice of NEPS (National Educational Psychological service) will be sought if deemed necessary.

## **7. Programme of Support**

John the Baptist Community School's programme of support for working with students affected by bullying is as follows (see Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):

- A programme of support for students who have been bullied is in place. This programme includes the availability of the Chaplain, Guidance Counsellors and opportunities to participate in self-esteem enhancing activities are encouraged. These are designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop their self-worth and social skills and thereby build resilience whenever this is needed.
- A programme of support for everyone involved in bullying behaviour is also part of the school's intervention programme. Support is also available for students involved

in bullying behaviour, through the Cabhair team to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others. Students who observe incidents of bullying are encouraged to discuss them with teachers.

## **9. Ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the Counter-bullying policy**

The effectiveness of the school's Counter-bullying Policy will be subject to continuous review in the light of incidents of bullying behaviour encountered. John the Baptist Community School will have periodic examinations of the prevention and intervention strategies. Parents/guardians, students and staff will be consulted, and information gathered about the effectiveness of the counter-bullying measures and behavioural trends. The Record of Bullying form (see Appendix) will be a valuable and accessible source of data in relation to bullying behaviour in the school.

- Once per year data from the reports will be collated and analysed.
- Levels and nature of bullying behaviour will be identified.
- Actions and responses will be assessed.
- Input will be provided to staff at the beginning of the school year. Counter-bullying will be on the agenda to outline strategies to address such issues and procedures involved in dealing with an incident of bullying behaviour. This will ensure that concerns are dealt with and the welfare of individual students are safeguarded and effectively addressed.

## **10. Supervision and Monitoring of Students**

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

## **11. Prevention of Harassment**

The Board of Management confirms that the school 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 any ethnic minority.

This policy has been made available to school personnel and provided to the Parents' Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the Patrons of John the Baptist Community School if requested.

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year. Written notification that the review has been completed will be made

available to school personnel and will be readily accessible to parents/guardians and students on request and provided to the Parents' Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the Patron and the Department OF Education and Skills.

**Signed:**

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\_\_\_\_\_

**Chairperson**

**Principal**

**Board of Management**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date of next review:** \_\_\_\_\_

# Appendix



## Appendix 1: Template for Recording Bullying Behaviour

**1. Name of pupil being bullied and class group**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Name(s) and class(es) of pupil(s) engaged in bullying behaviour**


**3. Source of bullying concern/report (tick relevant box(es))\***

Pupil concerned	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Pupil	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parent	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

**4. Location of incidents (tick relevant box(es))\***

Playground	<input type="checkbox"/>
Classroom	<input type="checkbox"/>
Corridor	<input type="checkbox"/>
Toilets	<input type="checkbox"/>
School Bus	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

**5. Name of person(s) who reported the bullying concern**

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**6. Type of Bullying Behaviour (tick relevant box(es)) \***

Physical Aggression	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cyber-bullying	<input type="checkbox"/>
Damage to Property	<input type="checkbox"/>	Intimidation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Isolation/Exclusion	<input type="checkbox"/>	Malicious Gossip	<input type="checkbox"/>
Name Calling	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

**7. Where behaviour is regarded as identity-based bullying, indicate the relevant category:**

Homophobic	Disability/SEN related	Racist	Membership of Traveller community	Other (specify)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**8. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact**

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**9. Details of actions taken**

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Signed \_\_\_\_\_ (Relevant Teacher) Date \_\_\_\_\_

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal \_\_\_\_\_

**\* Note:** The categories listed in the tables 3, 4 & 6 are suggested and schools may add to or amend these to suit their own circumstances.



## Counter-Bullying Policy

### Reviewed by:

- Assistant Principals
- Parent Association
- Teachers
- Student Council Members
- Presented to the Parent Association

**Ratified by the B.O.M on:** 30<sup>th</sup> November 2020

**Review Date:** September 2021

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Chairperson, Board of Management**

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Principal**