

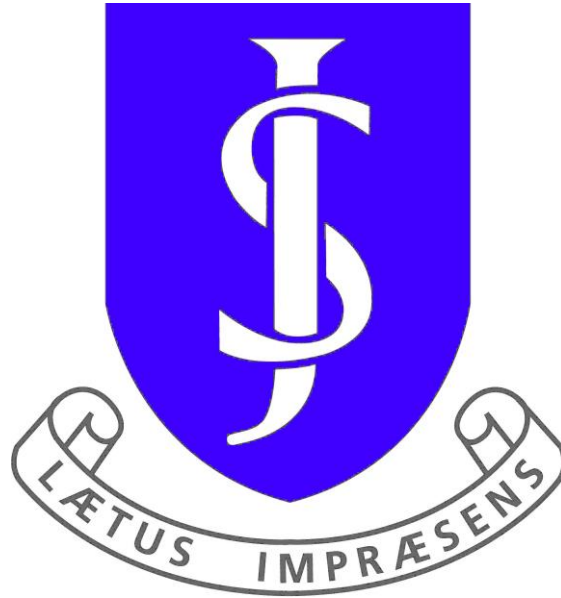


JOHN SCOTTUS SECONDARY SCHOOL

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Anti-Bullying Policy

Approved April 15, 2024

John Scottus school offers a vision of education that gives young people the self-mastery, strength of character and compassion to contribute meaningfully to the world around them. It is an education based on the belief that each child can come to discover and express their innate gifts, that each child can come to contribute something unique and exceptional, that each child has at their heart a limitless potential.

Central to the ethos of the school is character development through cultivating the life skills of stillness, attention and enquiry. This takes place by emphasising the importance of coming to know your true self, of discovering your true limitless essence and coming to know that we are united in oneness through this essence.

Mindfulness, philosophy, and meditation are considered the three key aspects in the journey of self-discovery. The school invites each child to develop life skills of stillness, attention, and enquiry. The mindful motto of the school is "Delight in the present", and the belief is that when a child comes to know their true self, it is possible to delight in the present every moment of every day.

Introduction

This policy applies to the whole school community in their relationships with students and each other - students, teachers, management, Board of Management, Board of Trustee, parents, office and all ancillary staff.

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 Scottus Secondary school 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.

The Board of Management recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of pupils 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 pupils 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 pupils; and
 - explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying, including, in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.
- Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils
- Supports for staff;
- Consistent recording, investigation, and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies); and
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy

Policy link to ethos:

At John Scottus Secondary School we strive to create the best environment for learning and for the healthy growth and development of each student. As a caring school community, we hold that all harmful and hurtful behaviour is unacceptable and repugnant to the ethos of our school. Bullying behaviour, by its very nature, may cause deep psychological harm and can damage the whole process of education. The aim of this policy is to ensure John Scottus Secondary School is an environment where:

1. Students, staff and parents treat each other fairly and with respect.
2. Bullying behaviour is not tolerated; this includes verbal, physical, psychological, damage to property, extortion, intimidation, racist or sexist abuse.
3. Students, staff and parents feel safe and are able to report bullying without being afraid.
4. People support each other, and problems are resolved.

What is Bullying?

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

Department of Education guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post Primary Schools' (Dublin: 2013)

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.

Types of bullying behaviour that are deemed inappropriate:

- **VERBAL BULLYING:** This can include abusive language, spiteful teasing or making cruel remarks and spreading false and malicious rumours. It can be directed at the individual's family, culture, race, sexual orientation or religion. It can leave individuals feeling angry, frightened and powerless. Their powers of concentration can suffer, adversely affecting their capacity for learning.
- **PHYSICAL BULLYING:** is the most obvious form of bullying and occurs when a person is physically harmed, through being bitten, hit, kicked, punched, scratched, spat at, tripped up, having his or her hair pulled, or any other form of physical attack.
- **GESTURE BULLYING:** there are many different forms of nonverbal threatening gestures which can convey intimidating and frightening messages. E.g. insulting or threatening someone using hand gestures.
- **EXCLUSION BULLYING:** this is particularly hurtful because it isolates the individual from his/her peer group and is very hard for the individual to combat
- **EXTORTION BULLYING:** this type of bullying includes demands for money, possessions or equipment, lunch or food and is often accompanied by threats. Individuals may also be dared or forced to steal.
- **BULLYING THROUGH SEXUAL DISCRIMINATION:** this includes homophobic bullying, alienation and instigating unremitting misery for LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual & transgender).
- **E-BULLYING:** utilises web pages, social networking sites, email and text messaging to abuse, intimidate and attack others, either directly or indirectly.
- **DAMAGE TO PROPERTY:** this can include ripping clothes, damaging books, destroying property and taking property.
- **IDENTITY-BASED BULLYING:** 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.

Signs that an individual may be being bullied

- Unexplained bruising, cuts or damage to clothes
- Visible signs of anxiety or distress, refusal to say what is wrong
- Unexplained mood swings or behaviour
- Becoming withdrawn
- Becoming clingy
- Attention seeking
- Aggressive behaviour
- Out of character behaviour in class.
- Deterioration in educational achievements.
- Erratic attendance.
- Avoiding school without permission from parent/guardian
- Lingered behind in school after classes are over.
- Increased requests for pocket money or stealing money
- Loss or damage to personal possessions or equipment
- Artwork expressing inner turmoil.

Education and Prevention Strategies:

It is School policy to provide education on bullying in the following manner:

- All year groups are facilitated through the Wellbeing Education programme, which incorporates bullying information and learning.
- Regular assembly themes help develop strategies for developing empathy, compassion, respect and resilience
- Theme weeks that promote inclusivity, tolerance and compassion
- Using the Well-being curriculum to deliver cultural change workshops
- A Well-being co-ordinator who promotes well-being activities
- The development of self-esteem is supported through both curricular and extracurricular activities
- Extensive support through our class tutor system
- Extensive support through our learning support and care teams help develop positive communication and social skills
- Fostering an attitude of respect for all through the teaching of all subjects
- Positive reinforcement of behaviour for the better good of the community is encouraged through the student administration system, the House team system, individual prizes for good behaviour, the annual Inclusiveness Award and most importantly, sincere verbal praise from a teacher
- Promoting an environment of speaking up when any bullying behaviour is witnessed

Procedures for Dealing with Bullying Behaviour

Bullying behaviour may come to the attention of a staff member in a variety of ways:

- Subjects of bullying behaviour may gain confidence by sharing with a teacher and talking about what has happened to them. Building confidence may be a vital factor in making progress. A pupil may simply wish to:
 - Discuss what is happening to him/her
 - Seek advice
 - Express how he/she feels in relation to perceived incidents of bullying
- Parents may contact the school with concerns that their child is suffering from bullying behaviour

Handling a Disclosure with Sensitivity

In handling disclosure of bullying behaviour, a staff member should:

- Listen sympathetically.
- Reassure the child that bullying does not mean that there is something wrong with him/her
- Reassure him/her that the school wishes to provide an atmosphere for him/her that is free from intimidation/harassment.
- Make clear to the child that he/she is not telling tales but behaving responsibly.
- Do not interrogate the subject in a detailed and persistent way, as this usually makes him/her feel worse
- Do not give the impression that the problem is minor or that he/she has easy solutions. To the child being bullied, the problem usually appears to be of major proportions.

Recording incidents

While there may be different levels of severity of bullying behaviour, all incidents deemed to be bullying will be recorded and investigated. This will be done in accordance with the John Scottus guidelines for investigating such behaviour.

A teacher who receives a complaint/disclosure that a pupil is the subject of bullying behaviour will complete a Serious Incident Report form detailing the date, time, individuals involved and precise details of what you saw or heard happening. This will be passed on to the relevant Class Teacher(s) as soon as possible.

In assessing the situation, the Class Teacher(s) will decide on a course of action and complete the Serious Incident form and send it to the Deputy Principal for record-keeping.

The Principal, Deputy Principal or Junior Cycle Head may become involved in solving the problem depending on the severity of the case.

The Class Teacher/Principal/Deputy Principal/Junior Cycle Head will investigate the incident and deal with it according to school policy. The preferred mode in dealing with bullying is to use a restorative process. In certain instances, sanctions and referrals may be required.

The parent/student who reported the issue will be informed of the actions undertaken by the school to deal with the matter.

Sanctions

According to our Code of Behaviour in John Scottus School there are certain procedures that must be adhered to in dealing with incidents of bullying and gross misbehaviour. All students should be aware that the school does not tolerate bullying and should be aware of the consequences and punishments should one be involved in such behaviour.

Such sanctions might include:

- An apology to the subject of the bullying behaviour
- Detention or withdrawal of privileges
- A written assurance that the bullying will not be repeated
- Exclusion from certain school activities for a certain period of time
- Being escorted to or from school by a parent (e.g. where bullying occurs on the way to or from school)
- A written account of the bullying incident and the student's plans to put things right with the subject.
- Reports on the Student Administration system
- Penalty points
- In severe cases or where the offender continues to re-offend, the Principal will become directly involved, and the offending student may be suspended for an appropriate period of time. In extreme cases, the student may be expelled.

Support System

The subject of bullying behaviour

The student should be offered regular and consistent pastoral support by the Care Team, which includes the Guidance Teacher and School Counsellor, and the Class Teacher.

Help for the offender

Interventions such as time with the school counsellor should be offered to the student involved in bullying behaviour to enable him/her to make necessary attitudinal and behavioural changes. It would be useful to find out why the student is involved in bullying behaviour. However, the first step is to get the offender to realise that his/her behaviour is unacceptable and is causing distress.

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.

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 pupils or staff or the harassment of pupils 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.

Review

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website (or where none exists, is otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parents' Association (where one exists). A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron 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, published on the school website 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