

Cyber Bullying Policy



St Aidan's Comprehensive School

Approved: _____

Chairperson Board of Management

Date: _____

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Appendices

<i>Appendix 1</i>	School Mission/Ethos/School Aims
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Cyber Bullying Policy

Introduction:

1. Social Media provides a dynamic and rapidly evolving means of communication. Mobile phones, chat rooms, websites and social networks, such as Facebook, Snap Chat, Tic Tok etc. play a significant role in many young people's lives as they interact with their peers and search for a social identity. This policy aligns with our School Ethos and Mission Statement (Appendix 1)

2. Inappropriate use of social media may lead to what is commonly known as Cyber Bullying. This includes the sending of angry, rude messages, online harassment, on-line threats, statements, photos of a personal/ private nature

3. Cyber Bullying, like any other form of bullying, is the abuse of one person or 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, Anti-Bullying Policy, Child Safeguarding Policy, Social Media, Internet Acceptable Usage Policy, Health and Safety Statement and the Policies on Dignity at Work and other relevant policies.

4. Due to the instant, public, open and potentially permanent nature of 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 toward its students 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, Gardai etc.) has a responsibility (though not the sole one) 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 messages, group messaging services, instant messaging, personal websites, online personal polling websites, social media networks etc.)

Cyber Bullying means any 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 personal reputation of another person, whether considered a “joke” or not.

ONLINE PRIVACY

Circulating, publishing or distributing (including on the internet) material (including photographic material) associated with school activities including but not limited to material in relation to staff and students where such circulation undermines, humiliates or causes damage to another person is considered a serious breach of school discipline and may result in disciplinary action. As part of such disciplinary action the Board of Management reserves the right to suspend or expel a student or students where it considers the actions to warrant such sanctions.

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 Gardai or other outside agencies as appropriate. Any misbehaviour, 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 Year Head.
2. The Principal/Deputy Principal or Year Head shall investigate all reports of such conduct in line with agreed school procedures. Cyber Bullying will be subject to appropriate discipline and sanctions, to be decided by the Board of Management. The seriousness of the violation will determine the sanction to be applied. This may include suspension or expulsion.
3. All involved parties will be informed of the results of investigations into Cyber Bullying.

Consequences for False Accusation

1. The consequences and appropriate remedial action for a student found to have falsely accused another member of the school community of an act of Cyber-Bullying range from positive behavioural interventions up to and including suspension or expulsion.
2. The consequences and 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 relevant legislation and the school's Dignity at Work Policy.

3. In circumstances where an investigation of Cyber-Bullying is not proven, but the Board is satisfied that a genuine and reasonable complaint is made, no action will be taken against the complainant.

* The Teaching Council's Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers (June 2012) states that "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".

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 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 or expulsion. It should be further noted that Cyber-Bullying using school technologies, is in violation of the school's Social Media and Acceptable Internet Use Policy.

3.. Intervention techniques to prevent Cyber-Bullying and to support and protect victims may include appropriate strategies and activities, as determined from time to time by the Board of Management and Principal.

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 enrol). 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 a 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 Department of Education and Skills 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.

Review Procedures

The policy will be reviewed on an on-going basis. Policies are developed/reviewed using a working party, then a consultation process takes place with the students' council, whole staff and parents where necessary. Following this the working party will review suggestions and comments before submitting the policy to the Board of Management for review and ratification