**Youthreach Sligo**

**Anti -Bullying Policy (as incorporated into the Code  
of Behaviour)**

**Ethos Statement**

Mayo Sligo Leitrim ETB is a community of learners with an historic and unique tradition as a provider of Education and Training. In responding to the needs of the community it delivers the highest standards of teaching and learning.

Mayo Sligo Leitrim ETB’s Colleges, Schools and Centres of Education are democratic, co-educational and multi-denominational in character where policies, practices and attitudes are underpinned by the core values of Respect, Equity and Fairness.

**Mission Statement**

To unlock potential in a safe learning environment and to encourage development of Personal well-being, abilities and interests.

The Advisory Committee of Youthreach Sligo is publishing this document as the official Anti-Bullying Policy. The ETB as patron of the centre has approved this publication. Copies of the policy are available at the centre and on our web site and are furnished to each person who applies to be admitted to the centre**.**

**Scope of policy:** *This policy applies to the whole centre community in their relationships with learners – learners, teachers, Advisory Committee, Parents / Guardians and all ancillary staff.*

**Aims of policy**

* *To create ‘a telling centre’, where learners who are not themselves being bullied have enough of a social conscience to report the case of someone who is.*
* *To promote an understanding of bullying as a health and safety issue for learners and staff.*
* *To have a system of structures set up in the centre to deal with bullying incidents; to have this system well established, discreet and known to those who may need to use it.*
* *To make it clear that bullying will be tackled on two fronts: as a discipline issue and a pastoral care issue.*
* *To have an appropriate list of responses, including punishments, drawn up, and ready for use.*

**Rationale:**

1. *Department of Education and Science requires centres to have a written policy on bullying*
2. *The Advisory Committee have a statutory obligation to ensure that a policy is in place that reflects the principles and educational philosophy of the centre.*
3. *Involving and encouraging all members of the centre community in developing, formulating and reviewing this policy on bullying promotes partnership, ownership, and implementation of a living policy.*
4. *Youthreach Sligo considers bulling as a health and safety issue and a discipline issue and will address issues of bullying under each of these headings.*

**Links to Mission Statement*:*** *“Youthreach Sligo is a Partnership of Staff, Learners, and Parents enabling each learner to achieve his or her full potential.”*

**Links to Ethos*:*** *“We aim to inspire a Love of Learning in all our learners, irrespective of ability, and through personable and enthusiastic encouragement to lead all on to develop as Caring, Respectful Individuals in a challenging world.”*

**Objective:** *“We aspire to fulfil this commitment by fostering an atmosphere of respect, understanding, and encouragement between all who teach, work and learn in the Centre, so that the development and contribution of every individual can be acknowledged, and all can work together to benefit personal growth and the common good.”*

**Content:**

***Definition: “****Bullying is repeated aggression, verbal, psychological, or physical, conducted by an individual or group against others. Isolated incidents of aggressive behaviour should not be condoned, can scarcely be described as bullying. However when the behaviour is systemic and on-going it is bullying” (DES, Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post-Primary Centres)*

***Types of behaviour deemed to be inappropriate:***

* *Humiliation; including name-calling, reference to academic ability etc.*
* *Intimidation; including aggressive use of body language.*
* *Verbal abuse, anonymous or otherwise.*
* *Physical abuse or threatened abuse.*
* *Aggressive or obscene language.*
* *Offensive joke; whether spoken or by email, text messaging etc.*
* *Silent telephone/mobile phone calls*
* *Abusive telephone/mobile phone calls/text messages/ e-mails/website messages.*
* *Victimisation; including very personal remarks.*
* *Exclusion and isolation.*
* *Intrusion through interfering with personal possessions or locker.*
* *Repeated unreasonable assignment to duties that are obviously unfavourable.*
* *Repeated unreasonable deadlines or tasks.*
* *Threats, including demands for money.*
* *Harassment based on any the 9 grounds in the Equality Legislation.*
* *An attack by rumour, gossip, innuendo, or ridicule on any individual’s reputation.*
* *Coercion of sexual favours.*
* *Emotional and/or physical abuse is intolerable and therefore a report may have to be sent to the HSE / TUSLA and/or Gardaí.*
* *Any substantiated incident of bullying, in whatever form, in centre, on a centre –related activity or on the way to or from centre, will be treated as a breach of the centre code of behaviour, and dealt with as such; the precise sanction will depend on the seriousness of the breach.*
* *The above list is not intended to be exhaustive and the centre will respond to bullying in any form whenever it arises.*

***Indications of Bullying/Behaviour – Signs and Symptoms***

* *Anxiety about travelling to and from centre-requesting parents to drive or collect them, changing their route of travel, avoiding regular times for travelling to and from centre.*
* *Unwillingness to go to centre, refusal to attend, mitching.*
* *Avoiding certain days or lessons.*
* *Uncharacteristic nervousness in class*
* *Punctuality problems.*
* *A reluctance to take part in previously enjoyed activities.*
* *Deterioration in educational performance, loss of concentration and loss of enthusiasm and interest in centre.*
* *Unexplained changes in mood or behaviour; it may be particularly noticeable before returning to centre after weekends or more specifically after longer centre holidays.*
* *Visible signs of anxiety – stammering, withdrawing, nightmares, difficulty in sleeping, crying, not eating, vomiting, bed wetting.*
* *Spontaneous out-of-character comments about either learners or teachers.*
* *Possessions missing or damaged.*
* *Increased requests for money or stealing money.*
* *Unexplained bruising or damaged clothing.*
* *Reluctance and/or refusal to say what is troubling him/her.*

**Statement on Bullying:**

* *Every person in the Centre is entitled to respect and to be free of any type of bullying.*
* *The Centre will work proactively, as far as it can, to ensure that bullying does not take place.*
* *Reporting incidents of bullying is responsible behaviour.*
* *A record will be kept of all reported incidents of bullying.*
* *The matter will be dealt with seriously.*
* *The Centre has a programme of support for both the bully and the bullied.*
* *Appropriate action will be taken to ensure that it does not continue.*

***Anti-Bullying Policy - Learners:***

***Consultation*** *with education partners through:*

* *Discussion and agreement with learners through group meetings.*
* *Contribution from parents.*
* *Input from staff as agreed at Staff Meetings.*

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

* *All year groups are facilitated through the S.P.H.E. (Social, Personal, and Health Education) programme which incorporates bullying information and learning.*
* *The centre promotes qualities of social responsibility, tolerance, and understanding among all its members, both in centre and out of centre.*
* *New learners, who join the Centre at other times, are allocated a buddy – ideally, this is another learner from within the same year group.*
* *Positive reinforcement of behaviour for the better good of the community is encouraged through the merit system.*

*The centre has a pastoral care system in place, and reports of all incidents (wherever they may have been reported) will be filtered through the mentoring system, who is the primary person for pastoral care of the learner.*

***Pastoral Care Team:***

*Chain of support: Learner / Subject Tutor / Mentor /Counsellor /Principal / AEO / Advisory Committee.*

**Procedures for Noting and Reporting Incidents of Bullying:**

* *Learners should discuss any incident of bullying with a teacher or another trusted adult within the centre system; this is responsible behaviour rather than “telling tales.”*
* *Parents/guardians should contact the centre regarding incidents of bullying behaviour which they might suspect or that have come to their attention through their children or other parents.*

*Incidents of bullying behaviour, no matter how trivial, which are drawn to the attention of a teacher, will be dealt with in the following manner:*

* *Appropriate personnel will interview all of the learners involved in a bullying incident.* 
  + *The alleged victim and alleged perpetrators of the incident will be spoken to and encouraged to solve the problem.*
  + *The alleged victim and perpetrators will be invited to write down any relevant details and a “Bullying Report Form” will be completed. Written statements from all involved in the incident will be attached to the Report Form.*
  + *All interviews will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils involved.*
  + *Records will be kept of all incidents and of the procedures that were followed.*
* *The teaching staff will be kept informed of all incidents and have access to relevant written records.*
* *The teaching staff will monitor progress of learners involved in a bullying incident by liaising with teachers and learners involved (separately) at follow-up meetings.*
* *Where the incident is deemed to be minor, a step in the warning system will be given to the bully to stop the inappropriate behaviour, pointing out how she/he is in breach of the Code of Behaviour and trying to get her/him to see the situation from the victim’s point of view. If deemed appropriate, parents may be contacted. The incident will no longer be considered if there is no recurrence within that academic term.*
* *If the behaviour persists, the Coordinator and the parents/guardians of the victims and bullies will be informed. Thus, they will be given the opportunity of discussing the matter and are in a position to help and support their children before a crisis occurs. Appropriate sanctions will be imposed. The incident will no longer be considered if there is no recurrence within that academic year.*
* *If there is a serious incident, perhaps repeated verbal assault, or coercion, the matter should be reported to the teaching staff and Coordinator, parents will be involved and appropriate sanctions applied.*
* *Where the incident is deemed to be more serious (e.g. gross misbehaviour or physical assault), the Coordinator should be informed immediately and she/he will inform the AEO and / or Advisory committee, if necessary.*
* *Offenders and victims of bullying may be referred for counselling.*
* *Sanctions may include:* 
  + *A contract of good behaviour*
  + *Centre community service*
  + *Withdrawal of privileges*
  + *Other sanctions as may be deemed appropriate*
  + *Suspension*
  + *Expulsion.*
* *In the case of a complaint regarding a staff member, this should be referred immediately to the Coordinator.*
* *Where cases, relating to either learner or teacher, remain  
  unresolved at centre level, the matter should be referred to  
  the AEO and / or Advisory Committee.*
* *In order to appeal a decision, a parent/learner may request a review by writing to the Coordinator.*

***Serial Bullying***

*If a learner persists in bullying despite correction, the following steps will be taken:*

1. *Arrangements will be made to advice and council the bully*
2. *Parents will be required to call to the centre to discuss the matter.*
3. *Suspension*

*If bullying continues we must consider the right of other learners to a safe learning environment, free from harassment, it may not be possible to retain the bullying learner in the centre.*

*Parents will be informed of this, and may be asked for permission to refer the learner to a psychologist from the Department of Education or the HSE / TUSLA. However they must understand the centre’s primary obligation is to protect the victims of the bullies, and this must mean permanent exclusion for persistent bullies.*

***Bullying of Teachers***

*The centre will support teachers were they are subject to bullying by a learner or colleague. Youthreach Sligo will work to ensure that a climate of respect is maintained at all times*.

***Roles and Responsibilities:***

*The centre staff team are responsible for ensuring that the policy is implemented.*

***Success Criteria:***

*Well-being and happiness of the whole centre community in the light of incidents of bullying behaviour encountered.*

***Monitoring implementation:***

*Parents/guardians and all members of staff; include on agenda for teaching staff meetings at least once a year.*

***Review and evaluation:***

*The centre staff team will monitor, review, and evaluate this Policy and all related work and procedures on an ongoing basis to ensure legal compliance and maintenance of best practices*

***Legislation/equality proofing:***

* + [Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour, 1993.](http://www.education.ie/servlet/blobservlet/school_bullying.doc)
  + [Circular M33/91:](http://www.education.ie/servlet/blobservlet/m33_91.doc) Guidelines towards a positive policy for centre behaviour and discipline
  + The Education Act, 1998
  + The Education (Welfare) Act, 2000
  + The Equal Status Acts, 2000 to 2004
  + Equality Legislation In The Republic Of Ireland - The Employment Equality Act 1998

*Approved by Mayo Sligo Leitrim ETB before being passed to the Advisory Committee for approval.*

Date of approval

Bullying Incident Report Form

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Name of learner** | **Behaviour** | **Directed towards** | **Observed by** |
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**Caught you caring report form**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Learner Name** | **Details of caring incident** | **Teacher Signature** | **Date** |
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