

# **DOMINICAN COLLEGE FORTWILLIAM**



## **Anti-Bullying Policy**

Revised December 2021  
Due for Review December 2025

## **1. Introduction**

The Anti-Bullying Policy of Dominican College has been developed in line with Education Authority guidelines on “The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016. It takes cognisance of the Ethos and Aims of our school and is intended as a ‘living document’ which will be reviewed every 4 years and adapted to meet the ever changing needs of the pupils in our care.

The safeguarding of pupils is paramount in Dominican College. It is therefore contrary to the ethos of the school to tolerate any incidents of bullying behaviour. This policy sets out the framework by which we will act to prevent bullying and deal with allegations of bullying behaviour if they arise.

*(References to parents throughout this document include those that have parental responsibility and carers.)*

## **2. Context**

This policy has been created by the Board of Governors, following consultation with pupils, parents and staff and takes account of the legislative and policy/guidance framework applicable. This includes:

### **The Legislative Context:**

[The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2016](#)

[The Education and Libraries Order \(Northern Ireland\) 2003 \(A17-19\)](#)

[The Education \(School Development Plans\) Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2010](#)

[The Children \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1995](#)

[The Human Rights Act 1998](#)

[The Health and Safety at Work Order \(Northern Ireland\) 1978](#)

### **The Policy & Guidance Context**

The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 Statutory Guidance for Schools and Boards of Governors (DE, 2019)

[Pastoral Care in School: 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 Policies and Procedures \(SBNI, 2017\)](#)

### **The International Context**

[United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(UNCRC\)](#)

## **Key points**

*The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016:*

- Provides a legal definition of bullying.
- Places a duty on the Board of Governors to put in place measures to prevent bullying behaviour, in consultation with pupils and parents.
- Requires schools to record all incidents of bullying behaviour and alleged bullying incidents.
- Sets out under which circumstances this policy should be applied, namely:
  - In school, during the school day
  - While travelling to and from school
  - When under control of school staff, but away from school (eg. school trip)
  - When receiving education organised by school but happening elsewhere (eg. in another school in the ALC)
- Requires that the policy be updated at least every four years.

*The Education and Libraries Order (NI) 2003, requires the Board of Governors to:*

- ‘Safeguard and promote the welfare of registered pupils’ (A.17)

*The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) sets out every child’s right to:*

- Be protected from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, maltreatment or exploitation. (A.19)
- Be protected from discrimination. (A.2)
- Express their views, in a supported and accessible way, on issues that affect them, and to have their opinions taken seriously. (A.12)
- Education. (A.28)

### 3. Ethos

As a Catholic school, the Christian ethos of Dominican College permeates the life of the school.

- *As a Catholic school we acknowledge the fundamental dignity of each person and aim to promote respect for self, for others, the school, the wider community and the environment.*
- *We aim to create a safe, stable and harmonious atmosphere within which the values of truth, trust, freedom and responsibility are honoured.*
- *Within the context of a purposeful learning community, and recognising the uniqueness of each individual, we aim to offer a curriculum which enables every student to reach her full potential; spiritually, academically, morally, socially and aesthetically.*
- *We aim to promote the school's traditional appreciation of culture and the arts.*
- *We endeavour to equip all our pupils with the self-confidence and skills which will enable them to make informed and responsible choices in life and appreciate the value of the contribution they can make to society.*
- *We encourage parental support in promoting the ethos and aims of the school and in building up the life of the school community.*

The safeguarding of our pupils is paramount and this policy supports our work in creating a secure and caring environment in our school. We believe that everyone in our school community has a role to play in taking a stand against bullying and creating a safe, inclusive and welcoming environment for all. We recognise the uniqueness of every pupil and believe in celebrating the diversity of all the young people in our school community. We value the views and contributions of our pupils, and actively seek these views, respecting and taking them into account.

All members of our school community have the right to work in a secure, supportive setting. It is therefore contrary to the ethos of the school to tolerate any incidents of bullying behaviour. We strive to create and maintain a school where bullying is unacceptable and where everyone feels safe and free from bullying behaviour of any kind. All members of our school have a responsibility to promote and maintain the safe environment, taking every opportunity to prevent bullying behaviour in any form.

#### Policy Aims

The specific aims of the Anti-Bullying Policy of Dominican College are:

- To create and maintain an environment where all our pupils feel happy, safe and free from bullying in all its forms.
- To ensure all governors, staff, pupils and parents are aware of what constitutes bullying behaviour and that it takes many forms: verbal, written or electronic.
- To educate pupils, staff and parents about what constitutes bullying.
- To ensure a preventative, responsive and restorative anti-bullying ethos across the whole school.
- To take all reasonable steps to prevent bullying behaviour.
- To ensure that pupils, parents and staff are aware of the symptoms, signs and effects of bullying behaviour.
- To clarify the roles and responsibilities of all pupils, staff and governors with regard to bullying.
- To set out clear procedures to be followed in the case of suspected bullying behaviour.
- To ensure that the dignity and well-being of anyone involved in the investigation of an incident or allegation of bullying behaviour are protected.
- To ensure the effective recording of all incidents of bullying or alleged bullying.

#### **4. Consultation and Participation**

This policy has been created by the Board of Governors, following consultation with pupils, parents/carers and staff, in compliance with the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016.

Pupil consultation involved:

- Discussion with student council  
(Draft policy was distributed to the student council and feedback invited. Students requested a student friendly version which is being worked on.)

Parents & carers consultation involved:

- All parents and carers received a copy of the draft policy via ParentMail and feedback was invited.

Staff consultation involved:

- Discussion with Heads of Year and Senior Teachers
- Representative members of staff were involved in writing the policy

#### **5. What is Bullying?**

The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016 provides schools with a legal definition which must be used.

### **Addressing Bullying in Schools Definition of “bullying”:**

**(1) In this Act “bullying” includes (but is 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.**

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

***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.***

While bullying is usually repeated behaviour, there are instances of one-off incidents that the school will consider as bullying.

When assessing a one-off incident and deciding whether to classify it as bullying, the school 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.*

The following are some examples of unacceptable behaviours, which, when repeated, targeted and intentionally hurtful, may be considered a bullying behaviour:

*(the list is not exhaustive and there are other behaviours which may be considered bullying behaviour)*

<b>Verbal or Written acts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• saying mean and hurtful things to, or about, others</li> <li>• making fun of others</li> <li>• calling another pupil mean and hurtful names</li> <li>• telling lies or spread false rumours about others</li> <li>• try to make other pupils dislike another pupil/s</li> </ul>
<b>Physical Acts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hitting</li> <li>• kicking</li> <li>• pushing</li> <li>• shoving</li> <li>• material harm, such as taking/stealing money or possessions or causing damage to possessions</li> </ul>
<b>Omission (Exclusion)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leaving someone out of a game or activity</li> <li>• Refusing to include someone in group work</li> </ul>
<b>Electronic Acts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using online platforms or other electronic communication to carry out many of the written acts noted above</li> <li>• Impersonating someone online to cause hurt</li> <li>• Sharing images (eg. photographs or videos) online to embarrass someone</li> </ul>

In determining 'harm' we define:

- **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.

(as set out in guidance from DE).

People who engage in bullying behaviour may have various motives. Some examples are, but not limited to:

- Age
- Appearance
- Breakdown in peer relationships
- Community background
- Political affiliation
- Gender identity
- Sexual orientation
- Pregnancy
- Marital status
- Race
- Religion
- Disability / SEN
- Ability
- Looked After Child status
- Young Carer status

Bullying is an emotive issue for everyone involved, and we in Dominican College will ensure that we use supportive, understanding language when addressing these matters. We will not refer to a pupil as 'a bully', or 'a victim'. Instead, we will refer to the child by describing the situation surrounding that child, for example:

- *A pupil displaying bullying behaviours*
- *A pupil experiencing bullying behaviours*

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

## 6. Preventative Measures

Under the anti-bullying legislation, a major focus is on the prevention of bullying. In Dominican College we aim to create and maintain a safe learning environment and will put in place measures to prevent bullying behaviour, as defined in the section above. We aim to promote a strong anti-bullying ethos within the school and the wider school community. There follows some of the key actions that will be taken forward, with the aim of preventing bullying and creating a safe learning environment. Examples of these include:

- Raising awareness and understanding of the positive behaviour expectations, as set out in the Positive Behaviour Policy and Pupil Code of Conduct
- Promotion of anti-bullying messages through the curriculum eg. inclusion of age-appropriate material specific to individual subject areas related to bullying, positive behaviour and inclusion
- Addressing issues such as the various forms of bullying, including how and why it can happen, through PD, LLW and Tutor Class lessons (eg. sectarian, racist, homophobic, transphobic, disablist, etc.)
- Involvement in meaningful and supportive shared education projects, supporting pupils to explore, understand and respond to difference and diversity.
- Through the preventative curriculum actively promote positive emotional health and wellbeing (eg. mindfulness training)
- Participation in the NIABF annual Anti-Bullying Week activities
- Engagement in key national and regional campaigns, eg Safer Internet Day, Good Relations Week, etc.
- Development of peer-led systems (eg. Sixth Form Mentors, Peer Mediators and School Council) to support the delivery and promotion of key anti-bullying messaging within the school
- Development of effective strategies for pupil supervision outside the classroom, eg. training for supervisors and provision of a variety of recreational options to meet the needs of all pupils.
- Focused assemblies to raise awareness and promote understanding of key issues related to bullying.
- Development of effective strategies for the management of unstructured times (eg. break time, lunch)
- Provision and promotion of extra-curricular activities, aimed at supporting the development of effective peer support relationships and networks. For example sporting activity, creative arts, leisure and games.

Under the new legislation, all schools must put measures in place, to prevent bullying behaviour on the way to and from school. To this end, we in Dominican College, aim to:

- Promote and develop a culture where our pupils take pride in our school and are viewed as ambassadors for Dominican College within the community. This includes regular reminders of the positive behaviour expectations of pupils whilst travelling to and from school.
- Empower all our pupils to challenge any inappropriate or unacceptable behaviour among their peers during the journey to and from school. This include the implementation of peer monitoring systems on buses and for those walking.
- Continue to engage with transport providers (eg. Translink, EA Transport, etc.) to ensure effective communication and the early identification of any concerns.
- Promote key anti-bullying messages and awareness of behaviour expectations of pupils amongst the local community including information on how to raise any concerns with the school.
- Deploy staff to support the transition from school day to journey home (eg. staff duty at school gate/bus stops, where appropriate)

The new legislation gives schools the authority to take steps to prevent bullying through the use of electronic communication amongst pupils at any time during term, where that behaviour is likely to have a detrimental effect on the pupil's education at school. We, in Dominican College, are committed to raising awareness of the nature and impact of online bullying and to supporting our pupils to make use of the internet in a safe, responsible and respectful way. We aim to:

- Address key themes of online behaviour and risk through PD, LLW, and Tutor Class lessons, including understanding how to respond to harm and the consequences of inappropriate use.
- Participate in Anti-Bullying Week activities.
- Engage with key statutory and voluntary sector agencies (eg. C2k, PSNI, Public Health Agency, Safeguarding Board for NI e-Safety Forum) to support the promotion of key messages.
- Participate in annual Safer Internet Day and the promotion of key messages throughout the year.
- Develop and implement robust and appropriate policies in related areas (BYOD Policy, E-Safety and Acceptable Use of the Internet Policy, Filtering and Blocking Policy, Mobile Phone Policy.)

The Anti-Bullying Policy is one of a number of policies in the wider pastoral care and safeguarding suite of policies. As such, it is essential that these policies align and provide a consistent message. The measures set out here, to prevent bullying behaviour through the use of electronic communication, will also be included in the school's, Filtering and Blocking Policy, Mobile Phone Policy, E-Safety and Acceptable Use of the Internet Policy and BYOD Policies. (See Section 12 of this policy). Given the nature of technology, as constantly changing and developing, we aim to monitor policies and make changes when necessary.

## **7. Responsibility**

We believe that all members of our school have a responsibility to promote a safe, supportive learning environment, taking every opportunity to prevent bullying behaviour in any form. Everyone in the school community, including pupils, parents/carers and the staff of the school are expected to respect the rights of others to be safe. Everyone has the responsibility to work together to:

- foster positive self-esteem among all members of our school community
- behave towards others in a mutually respectful way
- model high standards of personal pro-social behaviour
- be alert to signs of distress and other possible indications of bullying behaviour
- inform the school of any concerns relating to bullying behaviour
- 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.
- report any concerns or instances of bullying behaviour witnessed or suspected, to a member of staff.
- emphasise the importance of seeking help from a trusted adult about bullying behaviour when it happens or is observed
- explain the implications of allowing the bullying behaviour to continue unchecked, for themselves and/or others.
- listen sensitively to anyone who has been bullied, taking what is said seriously, and provide reassurance that appropriate action will be taken
- know how to seek support – internally, in school, and externally
- resolve difficulties in restorative ways to prevent recurring bullying behaviour and meeting the needs of all parties.

## **8. Reporting a Bullying Concern**

This section outlines the various ways in which pupils, parents and anyone else with concerns can make these known to the school.

### **Pupils Reporting a Concern**

We recognise that if children and young people have a concern about a potential bullying situation, they would like the opportunity to discuss this with a member of staff that they trust. While we have key staff with responsibility for dealing with incidents/allegations of bullying, in our pastoral team, pupils are encouraged to raise concerns with any member of staff, including teaching and non-teaching staff.

Pupils may report bullying concerns in the following ways:

- Verbally, talking to any member of staff.
- Verbally, talking to a sixth-form mentor, prefect or mediator.
- By writing a note to a member of staff (eg. in a homework diary).
- By sending an email to the school email address [info@dominican.belfast.ni.sch.uk](mailto:info@dominican.belfast.ni.sch.uk)
- By speaking to one of the school counsellors.
- By posting a comment in the counselling box at reception.

It should be noted that ANY pupil can raise a concern about bullying behaviour, not just the pupil who is experiencing this behaviour. Pupils should not view this as 'telling', the focus should be on 'getting help' with a bullying concern. All pupils are encouraged to 'get help' if they have a concern about bullying that they experience or is experienced by another.

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

It is essential that parents/carers raise any concerns about alleged bullying behaviour with the school at the earliest opportunity. We would remind 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'.

Parents/carers may report bullying concerns in the following ways:

- In the first instance, all bullying concerns should be reported to the Year Head.
- 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 the Key-Stage Leader (Senior Teacher) or Pastoral Vice-Principal.
- Where the parent is not satisfied that appropriate action has been taken by the Senior Teacher/Vice-Principal to prevent further incidents, or where further incidents have taken place, the concern should be reported to Principal.
- Where the parent/carer remains unhappy that the concern has not been appropriately responded to, the school's complaints policy and procedure should be followed. This usually involves making a formal, written complaint, to the Chair of the Board of Governors. This policy is available on the school website, or by contacting the principal's P.A. on 02890 370298.

While the majority of reports of bullying concerns will come from pupils and their parents/carers, the school is open to receiving such reports from anyone.

All reports of bullying concerns received from pupils and/or parents/carers will be responded to in line with this policy and 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 pupil can be disclosed to anyone other than the individual pupil and their parents/carers.**

## **9. Responding to a Bullying Concern**

This section provides the framework for how all reports of alleged bullying behaviour, or any concerns identified, will be responded to by the school. It must be remembered that the focus of any intervention will be on responding to the bullying concern and restoring the wellbeing of those involved. As such, any strategy for responding to bullying concerns will concentrate on the prevention of any further incidents.



Using the NIABF Effective Responses to Bullying Behaviour resource, the member of staff responsible will:

- 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 interventions as necessary

In Dominican College we follow guidelines published by the Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forum, for responding to incidents and allegations of bullying. NIABF advocates a restorative approach to responding to bullying behaviour. Interventions suggested in the Effective Responses to Bullying Behaviour resource focus on responding to the behaviour, resolving the concern and restoring the wellbeing of those involved. However, where appropriate, school staff may implement consequences and/or sanctions for those displaying bullying behaviour, in line with in the Positive Behaviour Policy and Pupil Code of Conduct.

***Note: Information regarding any action taken regarding a pupil cannot be disclosed to anyone other than that pupil and their parents/carers.***

#### **10. Recording**

There is a legal requirement, as set out in the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016, to maintain a record of all incidents of bullying and alleged bullying behaviour. The school will centrally record all relevant information related to reports of bullying concerns, 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. The Pastoral VP will have oversight of these records

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.

#### **11. Professional Development of Staff**

The school recognises the need for appropriate and adequate training for staff, including teaching and non-teaching school staff. The school is committed to:

- ensuring that staff are provided with appropriate opportunities for professional development as part of the school's ongoing CPD/PRSD provisions
- noting the impact of the training given on both the policy and its procedures - e.g. any amendments made, inclusions added etc.
- ensuring that opportunities for safeguarding training are afforded to Governors and all staff, teaching and non-teaching

Staff CPD records will be kept and updated regularly.

## **12. Monitoring and Review of Policy**

It is the responsibility of the Board of Governors, in liaison with the Principal, to monitor the effectiveness of the Anti-Bullying Policy. To this end, the Board of Governors will:

- 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

It is a legal requirement that the Anti-Bullying Policy be reviewed at intervals of no more than four years and following any incident which highlights the need for such a review. It must also be reviewed when directed to by the Department of Education and in light of new guidance. As such, the Anti-Bullying Policy will be reviewed as required, in consultation with pupils and their parents/carers, on or before **December 2025**.

## **13. Links to Other Policies**

This policy should be read in conjunction with the wider pastoral care and safeguarding suite of policies. In the development and implementation of this Anti-Bullying Policy, and to ensure consistency, the Board of Governors has been mindful of all the related policies, including:

- Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy
- Pastoral Care Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Pupil Code of Conduct
- Special Educational Needs Policy
- Pupil Attendance Policy
- CRED Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy
- E-Safety Policy & Acceptable Use of Internet Policy
- Mobile Phone Policy
- Educational Visits Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct/Staff Handbook

(These policies are available to view on the school website or by request from the secretary on 90 370298 or by e-mail at [info@dominican.belfast.ni.sch.uk](mailto:info@dominican.belfast.ni.sch.uk))

**Review date : December 2025**