

RICE COLLEGE CYBER BULLYING POLICY

Introduction

Laos 2016, Domain 1: Leading Learning and Teaching, states that “highly effective practice occurs with the establishment of clear principles of inclusion and social justice to deliver equality of opportunity for students throughout all aspects of school life. They do so in collaboration with all staff.”

The **Wellbeing Principle of Junior Cycle Education** promotes students being **Responsible, Connected, Respected** and **Resilient**. It is the aim of this policy to ensure that these descriptors are relevant to all students in Rice College.

Social Media provide a dynamic and rapidly evolving means of communication. Mobile phones, chat rooms, websites and social networks, such as Facebook, play a significant role in many young people’s lives as they interact with their peers and search for a social identity.

Inappropriate use of social media may lead to what is commonly known as Cyber Bullying.

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, the Anti-Bullying Policy, the Child Protection Policy, the Health and Safety Statement and the Policies on Dignity in the Workplace, the Principle for Wellbeing in Junior Cycle, recent Child Protection legislation, the Child Safeguarding Statement, and other relevant policies.

The staff of Rice College acknowledge the Children First Act, 2015, and Circular 0081/2017 from the Department of Education and Science, and strives to deal with all matters of child protection “sensitively and professionally”, and in accordance with the Child Safeguarding Statement. The requirements of this statement have been met – all staff have completed Children First Training Courses, facilitated by Tusla and the PDST.

The Designated Liaison Person is Mr. Louis Mulqueen (Principal).

The Deputy Designated Liaison Person is Mr. John Burns (Deputy Principal).

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.

The school has a duty of care toward its pupils and its staff. A safe and respectful environment in school is necessary so that teaching and learning can take place, and so that students develop a sense of responsibility, “being able to take action to protect and promote their wellbeing and that of others” (JC Wellbeing descriptor).

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.

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.

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, and the wellbeing, 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.

(This procedure may be subject to change over the course of 2018/10119 due to the involvement of Rice College in the NEPS Support Team initiative.)

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 an 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.

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. 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 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. Students in particular are encouraged to be "aware of their personal values and able to think through their decisions" (JC descriptor for the Wellbeing indicator 'Aware') with regard to behaviour on social media, and other forms of digital communication, and to know "when and where their safety is at risk and enabling them to make the right choices"(JC descriptor for the Wellbeing indicator 'Responsible').

All allegations of, and investigations into, cyberbullying will be dealt with in the strictest of confidence, and in compliance with GDPR 2018.

All paperwork arising from such allegations and investigations will be securely stored by the Principal.

(The following is a set of Online Code of Conduct Guidelines for all students.)

Online Code of Conduct Guidelines

Talk with my parents to learn the rules for Internet use, which includes where I can go, what I can do, when I can go online, and how long I can be online (minutes or _____ hours).

Never give out personal information such as my home address, telephone number, my parents' work address or telephone number, credit card numbers, or the name and location of my school without my parents' permission.

Always tell my parents immediately if I see or receive anything on the Internet that makes me feel uncomfortable or threatened; this includes Email messages, Web sites or even anything in the regular mail from Internet friends.

Never agree to meet anyone in person that I have met online, without my parents' permission.

Never send pictures of myself or other family members to other people through the Internet or regular mail without my parents' permission.

Never give out my Internet passwords to anyone (even my best friends) other than my parents.

I understand that anything I post on the Internet is viewed as a Publication and therefore is subject to the laws of slander and libel. Likewise, I understand that 'Liking', 'Sharing' or 'Retweeting' another person's post is viewed as my endorsement or affirmation of the original post and any consequences can be extended to me.

Be good while online and not do anything that could hurt or anger other people or that is against the law.

Never download, install, or copy anything from disks or the Internet without proper permission.

Never do anything on the Internet that costs money without my parents' permission.

Reviewed by Subcommittee: 7/11/18

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Reviewed by Student Council: 18/12/18

Ratified by BOM: