

# ST. KEVIN'S COMMUNITY COLLEGE SAFETY POLICY



	DATE.
RATIFIED BY THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT:	DAY OF 201 .
REVIEW DATE:	DAY OF 201 .

## **Core Professional Purpose**

EXPECT THE BEST

We the community of St. Kevin's Community College believe in:

- Dedication to learning
- Reaching full potential
- Pride in achievements
- Mutual respect
- Caring for all

In a welcoming and safe environment

## **Principles**

1. If it works do more of it, if not do something different
2. No sign up, no change
3. Sometimes we need to take a step back to go forward
4. Consultation leads to co-operation
5. Focus on the problem not the person
6. Understanding differences can build relationships
7. Teamwork achieves more
8. Learning can be fun

## **(A) AIM**

To formulate a policy on safety which can deal with any issue of violent behaviour arising within, or in the vicinity of the school with the intention of protecting staff, students and anyone under the care of the employer. This policy will be in accordance with the stated legal requirements contained in the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 1989.

## **(B) Goals**

- To develop and maintain a safe and violence-free school environment.
- To enable students to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to prevent violence and to deal with violence and potentially violent situations.
- To ensure that staff develop the skills and knowledge necessary to recognize and handle violent or potentially violent incidents.
- To ensure that victims, potential victims, witnesses and perpetrators know that the school will act to stop or prevent violence or harassment.
- To encourage the whole school community – students, staff, parents/guardians to support violence prevention initiatives and to play an active role in promoting violence prevention.

### **(C) Definition of Violence**

Violence may be defined as a deliberate act of aggression by one person on another designed to hurt that person or with reckless disregard for his/her safety. This violence may be either physical or non-physical.

Non-physical violence may take the form of threats or verbal intimidation and this falls with the accepted meaning of the term “bullying”. This issue is dealt with in the Anti-Bullying Policy.

Physical violence is effectively assault. It manifests itself on two levels:

1. Pushing, shoving, kicking etc.
2. The use of weapons such as knives, hammers etc.

### **Subject of Violence**

Violence may be between:

- (A) Student and student
- (B) Student and staff member
- (C) Staff member and staff member
- (D) Parent/Guardian and staff member
- (E) “Outsider” and either student or staff member

### **(D) The Legal Framework**

The safety, Health and Welfare Act 1989 provides the legal framework for any policy on safety in schools. The purpose of this Act is to secure the safety, health and welfare of people at work – including employees and all others in the care of the employer. Potential risks must be identified and protected against.

Both employers and employees have duties and responsibilities in relation to safety.

Section 6 of the Act imposes a duty of care on employers towards their employees. This duty is not absolute but is limited to what is considered to be “reasonable practicable”. An employer, therefore, is obliged only to do what is “reasonable” in the circumstances to prevent an accident.

An employee has a corresponding responsibility to take reasonable care of his/her own safety and that of others. He/she must insure that actions endangering the safety of others are not carried out.

Both employers and employees have a duty not to inflict personal injury on another person. Personal injury is defined as any impairment of a person’s physical or mental condition.

### **(E) Preventative Measures**

These measures or steps are taken by the school to reduce the threat of violence to employees/pupils and others present in the school. Already in place are the preventative measures contained in the Discipline and Anti-Bullying Codes.

### **(1) Meeting with Parents**

These should be by appointment only. The Principal and/or Deputy Principal should be notified of all such appointments. In certain circumstances the Principal or Deputy Principal may use his/her discretion on whether to allow the meeting.

Once the meeting has been arranged, the parent/guardian should report to Reception. Under no circumstances should he/she approach a classroom. An appropriate venue must be chosen for the meeting. It is advisable for the relevant members of staff to attend. If conflict is envisaged or if it arises during the meeting, the teacher must immediately request the presence of Senior Management.

### **(2) Other Visitors**

Other visitors to the school must report to the main office as indicated on the sign outside the main entrance.

Where an unwanted visitor arrives in or near a classroom, a teacher should try to adopt a calm, non-confrontational approach and seek help as soon as possible.

### **(3) School Trips**

When arranging any trips, parental consent must be obtained. Before embarking on a trip, brief students thoroughly on appropriate behaviour. Always carry a mobile phone. Ensure that students are adequately supervised at all times.

### **(4) Home Visits**

Consult with other members of staff and the Principal or Deputy Principal to ascertain potentially difficult situations. Never make home visits to these people. Always carry a mobile phone.

### **(5) Students with Behavioural Difficulties**

When working with students with behavioural difficulties, always aware and alert. If a potential problem is identified, have a student removed from class.

### **(6) Counselling / Support Services**

These services can be used to identify and assist those with behavioural difficulties.

### **(7) Supervision**

There must be adequate supervision outside classrooms. Students must be actively supervised before and after school and at lunchtime. Trips and ECA's must also be adequately supervised. It is essential to make at least one more person aware when out-of-class activities are taking place.

### **(8) Security**

There are a number of security measures already in place. These include security cameras, special locks on doors which can be opened from the inside only and a sign at the main entrance directing visitors to the main office. The presence of the Principal, Deputy Principal and caretakers on the corridors is a further aid to security. So too is the active supervision provided by a staff member, specifically assigned to this task; However, a number of improvements could be made, some of which are being considered for their feasibility. These include:

1. Prominent signs
2. Windows allowing visitors to clearly identify the office
3. Always have an appointment
4. Beep system
5. Central locking linked to fire alarm
6. A waiting room
7. Extension of the security cameras
8. Entrances to be checked
9. Additional staff training

To facilitate No. 3, parents to be made aware in writing that a prior appointment is necessary before approaching the school.

### **(9) Handling Cash**

When handling cash, a sensible approach is called for. Always make another person aware that cash is being handled. If possible, arrange to another person in the vicinity, for example: security, the caretaker, Principal or Deputy Principal.

- It is important to remain discreet when handling cash.
- It is preferable to have two (2) teachers involved.
- Do not keep large amounts of cash on the school premises.
- Do not keep cash in lockers
- If working alone, alert security personnel.

**(10) Training**

Staff need training in the area of violent behaviour, so that they will be better equipped to deal with it if and when it arises.

Students must be educated on the dangers of physical violence providing them with the knowledge and skills necessary to prevent it. This can be dealt with in tutorial and Social Personal Health Education (SPHE).

**(F) Response to Violent Incidents**

In circumstances where there is the risk of physical violence, the following procedures must be followed to lessen the risk.

**FIGHTS****(1) The Threat of a Fight**

Where a teacher believes that there is a threat of a fight in a classroom, for example: A reliable student should be sent to get the Principal or Deputy Principal or other person in charge. The teacher should brief this person who will then remove the students from the room.

If a teacher believes that a fight is “brewing” after school the Principal or Deputy Principal should be informed. The students may be removed from the premises before “home” time.

**(2) Fight in Class**

If a fight breaks out in class or in a corridor, a teacher is not expected to place him/herself in danger by attempting to break it up. A teacher must exercise judgement as to the danger involved to him/her self in attempting to break it up. The teacher should send a responsible student for the Principal, Deputy Principal or other staff member.

Where a fight has occurred the procedure is that the students are separated, that is, sent to different locations. Parents are contacted and the students involved are either brought or sent home. This is a safety measure and not necessarily suspensions. The students will then be interviewed in the presence of a parent/guardian before sanctions are imposed.

The same procedure applies, where possible, when a fight occurs in the vicinity of the school. A record of all actual and/or potential violent incidents is to be kept.

**(G) Sanctions**

In imposing sanctions, all the circumstances of the incident must be taken into account including the severity of the injury. In the case of a physical assault occasioning injury it is the employer’s duty to immediately inform the Gardaí. It is also imperative that the relevant parents or legal guardians be informed. Under no circumstances must a student under the legal age be questioned by the Gardaí unless a parent/guardian is present. The victim may then wish to proceed with a prosecution.

**RE: Staff**

Where a staff member perpetrates an act of physical violence on another member of staff or student, the matter should be immediately referred to the Gardaí and the employer.

**RE: Outsiders**

Where an outsider is involved in an assault on a staff member or student, then the Gardaí must be informed. The employer may wish to take steps to prevent that person from entering the building by means of Injunction.

**Re: Student**

Depending on the severity of the injury inflicted and taking into account all the circumstances immediate suspension may be necessary. The student should sign a Contract in the presence of his/her parents or legal guardian and the school management. This Contract must be strictly enforced. Where any breach does occur, the matter must be referred on to the Board of Management for a possible recommendation for expulsion.

**(H) Support Measures**

When a violent incident has taken place, it is necessary for the management to provide effective and adequate support measures for victims. The degree of seriousness of the incident will determine the nature of the response and the personnel to deal with supportive measures. Each staff member in his/her pastoral role may provide comfort, understanding and reassurance required. Currently, a number of structures operate both formally and informally.

**Student Victim**

Where the victim is a student, the relevant tutor and year head may be able to provide the necessary support. Should more specialized support be necessary, the expertise of the Anti-Bullying Co-Ordinator and/or Chaplain may be called upon. If the victim needs to take time out, then the Principal, Deputy Principal, Home School Liaison Officer should maintain constant contact to monitor the victim's progress. In circumstances where the victim is traumatized by the incident, then the school Counsellor or the Psychological Support Services should be contacted.

**Staff Victim**

The informal support of a colleague is vital in relation to the abuse of, or assault on a staff member. Each incident must be judged on its merits. Where the assault is of a serious nature, in school counselling may be necessary. The victim may opt for out-of-school counselling. An office should be set aside to allow the victim privacy.