



Our Lady of Mercy National School  
Stradbally, Co. Waterford  
Telephone/Fax: 051 293336  
Roll No. 13020 D  
[www.ourladyofmercyns.ie](http://www.ourladyofmercyns.ie)  
E-mail: [ourladyofmercyns@gmail.com](mailto:ourladyofmercyns@gmail.com)

## **Our Lady of Mercy Anti-Bullying Policy**

### **Introduction**

In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the code of behaviour guidelines issued by the NEWB, the Board of Management of Our Lady of Mercy School has adopted the following anti-bullying policy within the framework of the school's overall code of behavior. This policy fully complies with the requirements of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools which were published in September 2013.

### **Rationale**

The Board of Management recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of pupils and is therefore fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour:

- A positive school culture and climate which –
  - Is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity;
  - Encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment;
  - Promotes respectful relationships across the school community;
- Effective leadership;
- A school-wide approach;
- A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact;
- Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that
  - Build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and
  - Explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.
- Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils;
- Supports for staff
- Consistent recording, investigation and follow up (including use of established intervention strategies); and
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy

### **Definition**

In accordance with the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools bullying is defined as follows:

Bullying is unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical conducted, by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time.

The following types of bullying behaviour are included in the definition of bullying:

- Deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying,
- Cyber-bullying and Identity-based bullying such as homophobic bullying, racist bullying, bullying based on a person's membership of the Traveller community and bullying of those with disabilities or special educational needs.

Isolated or once-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour, including a once-off offensive or hurtful text message or other private messaging, do not fall within the definition of bullying and should be dealt with, as appropriate, in accordance with the school's code of behavior.

However, in the context of this policy, placing a once-off offensive or hurtful public message, image or statement on a social network site or other public forum where that message, image or statement can be viewed and/or repeated by other people will be regarded as bullying behaviour.

Negative behaviour that does not meet this definition of bullying will be dealt with in accordance with the school's code of behaviour.

Additional information on different types of bullying is set out in Section 2 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.

### **Responsibility**

The relevant teacher that has responsibility for investigating and dealing with bullying amongst pupils will normally be the class teacher.

### **Education and Prevention Strategies**

The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying) that will be used by the school are as follows.

- i. Education will include prevention and awareness raising measures across all aspects of bullying and involve strategies to engage pupils in addressing problems when they arise. In particular, strategies that build empathy, respect and resilience and self-esteem in pupils will be explored.
- ii. The SPHE curriculum makes specific provision for exploring bullying as well as the inter-related areas of belonging and integrating, communication, conflict, friendship, personal safety and relationships. The Stay Safe Programme is a personal safety skills programme which seeks to enhance children's self-protection skills including their ability to recognise and cope with bullying.
- iii. In order to prevent cyber bullying in particular, no phones will be allowed to be used by pupils in school. All areas where pupils have access to technology will be supervised and filtered for inappropriate activity. Pupil's awareness of safe practice and responsible behaviour when using cyber technologies' will be included in all anti-bullying lessons. Some of these will be conducted by outside agencies such as the Garda Síochána. Parents will also be alerted to this issue and will be encouraged to monitor their children's use of technology.
- iv. Education to combat identity based bullying will be part of the overall approach to diversity education as part of the SPHE programme in the school.

### **Anti-Bullying Procedures**

The school's procedures for investigation, follow-up and recording of bullying behaviour and the established intervention strategies used by the school for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour are as follows:

1. The primary aim for the relevant teacher in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame);
2. In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved;
3. All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. In that way pupils will gain confidence in "telling". This confidence factor is of vital importance. It should be made clear to all pupils that when they report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly;
4. Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs) , bus escorts, caretakers, cleaners will be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher;
5. Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents. Incidents are generally best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved;
6. When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher should seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This should be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner;
7. If a group is involved, each member should be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved should be met as a group. At a group meeting, each member should be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements;
8. Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that they may face them from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher. It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s).
9. In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved may be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken (by reference to the school policy). The school should give parents an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports of their pupils;
10. Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts should be made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied.
11. It must also be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parents) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined , his or her parent and the school;

12. In cases where the relevant teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, it must be recorded by the relevant teacher in the recording template at Appendix 3.
13. In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant teacher must, as part of his/her professional judgement, take the following factors into account:
  - Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased;
  - Whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable
  - Whether the relationships between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable, and any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the school Principal or Deputy Principal;
14. Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents must be referred as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures. In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

### **Programme of Support**

The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows

- Pupils who are the victims of bullying need support to raise their self-esteem, develop their social skills and build resilience. This will be done within the class through SPHE lessons with the class as a whole based on role playing scenarios and situations.
- A dedicated peer support structure can be organised within the class and for playground situations
- Activities carried out by the learning support team as part of social group activities can also be offered.

Pupils who might have carried out bullying activities need support around areas such as empathy and sympathy and recognising the rights of others. This can be done through discussion with their teacher or a member of the learning support team.

If school personnel are concerned about the welfare of pupils they should refer to the Child protection Guidelines for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.

### **Supervision and Monitoring of Pupils**

The Board of Management confirms that appropriate supervision and monitoring policies and practices are in place to both prevent and deal with bullying behavior and to facilitate early intervention where possible.

### **Prevention of Harassment**

The Board of Management confirms that the school will, in accordance with its obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the sexual harassment of pupils or staff or the harassment of pupils or staff on any of the nine grounds specified i.e. gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.

## **Protection of Adults from Bullying Behaviour**

Our Lady of Mercy as a workplace will comply with the Code of Practice for Employers and Employees (HAS 2007) in the prevention of bullying in the workplace. To this end, behaviours that involve repeated verbal abuse, insults, intimidation, aggression or other bullying behaviour will not be tolerated from any adult whether working in or visiting Our Lady of Mercy. Bullying at work can involve people in many different work situations and at all levels:

- Management to staff
- Staff to management
- Parents to staff
- Staff to parents.

To facilitate child protection and to organise secure visits to the school a buzzer system will operate at the front door whereby all visitors must report to the office and be buzzed in to the school.

Where bullying is deemed to be taking place the Board of Management will initially seek to resolve any issues using an informal problem solving approach. The first step in any informal resolution of a complaint should be to get the facts of the complaint and to judge whether or not they fall within the definition of bullying. Using agreed procedures and an unbiased approach the aim should be to promote the restoration of harmony over the medium to long term.

## **Board of Management**

At least once a term the principal will provide a report to the Board of Management outlining the overall number of bullying cases reported using Appendix 3 and confirming that all cases are being dealt with using the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools. The Board of Management must also undertake an annual review of the Anti-Bullying Policy using the checklist in Appendix 4.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on \_\_\_\_\_

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal)