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Anti-Cyber Bullying Policy

Our Lady of Mercy N.S. Aims to ensure that children are safe and feel from bullying, harassment and discrimination. This school is committed to teaching children the knowledge and skills to be able to use ICT effectively, safely and responsibly.

What is cyber-bullying? The more common types are:

1. Text messages – can be threatening or cause discomfort. Also included here is “Bluejacking” (the sending of anonymous text messages over short distances using Bluetooth wireless technology).
2. Picture/video-clips via mobile phone cameras – images sent to others to make the victim feel threatened or embarrassed
3. Mobile phone calls – silent calls, abusive messages or stealing the victim’s phone and using it to harass others, to make them believe the victim is responsible.
4. Emails – threatening or bullying emails, often sent using a pseudonym or somebody else’s name.
5. Chat room bullying – menacing or upsetting responses to children or young people when they are in a web-based chat room.
6. Instant messaging (IM) – unpleasant messages sent while children conduct real-time conversations online using MSM (Microsoft Messenger), Yahoo Chat or similar tools.
7. Bullying via websites – use of defamatory blogs (web logs), personal websites and online personal “own web space” sites such as You Tube, Facebook, Ask.fm, Bebo, (which works by signing on in one’s school, therefore making it easy to find a victim) and Myspace – although there are others.

Aims of the Policy:

- To ensure that pupils, staff and parents understand what cyber bullying is and how it can be combated
- To ensure that practices and procedures are agreed to prevent incidents of cyber bullying
- To ensure that reported incidents of cyber bullying are dealt with effectively and quickly

Understanding Cyber bullying:

- Cyber bullying is the use of ICT (usually a mobile phone and or the internet) to abuse another person.
- It can take place anywhere and involve many people.
- Anybody can be targeted including pupils and school staff.
- It can include threats, intimidation, harassment, cyber-stalking, vilification, defamation, exclusion, peer rejection, impersonation, unauthorized publication of private information or images etc.

Procedures to prevent Cyber bullying:

- Staff, pupil, parents and Board of Management (BoM) to be made aware of issues surrounding cyber bullying.
- Pupils and parents will be urged to report all incidents of cyber bullying to the school.

Anti-Cyber Bullying Policy at Our Lady of Mercy N.S.

- Staff CPD (Continuous Professional Development) may assist in learning about current technologies.
- Pupils will learn about cyber bullying through Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), assemblies, anti-bullying week activities and other curriculum project.
- Parents will be provided with information and advice on how to combat cyber bullying.
- Pupils, parents and staff will be involved in reviewing and revising this policy and school procedure.
- All reports of cyber bullying will be investigated, recorded, stored in the Principal's office and monitored regularly.
- The school will engage a speaker to facilitate a workshop on cyber bullying for 5th & 6th classes annually (Community Gardaí). Classes 3rd to 6th will participate in the "Anti Bullying" programme.
- Procedures in our school Anti-bullying Policy shall apply.
- The police will be contacted in cases of actual or suspected illegal content.
- This policy will be reviewed bi-annually.

Information for pupils

If you're being bullied by phone or the Internet:

- Remember, bullying is never your fault. It can be stopped and it can usually be traced.
- Don't ignore the bullying. Tell someone you trust, such as a teacher or parent or call an advice line.
- Try to keep calm. If you are frightened, try to show it as little as possible. Don't get angry, it will only make the person bullying you more likely to continue.
- Don't give out your personal details online – if you're in a chat room, watch what you say about where you live, the school you go to, your email address etc. All these things can help someone who wants to harm you to build up a picture about you.
- Keep and save any bullying emails, text messages or images. Then you can show them to a parent or teacher as evidence.
- If you can, make a note of the time and date bullying messages or images were sent, and note any details about the sender
- There's plenty of online advice on how to react to cyber bullying. For example, i.e. reachout.com and wiredsaety.org have some useful tips.

Text/video messaging

- You can easily stop receiving text messages for a while by turning – off incoming messages for a couple of days. This might stop the person texting you by making them believe you've changed your phone number.
- If the bullying persists, you can change your phone number. Ask your mobile provider about this.
- Don't reply to abusive or worrying text or video messages. Your mobile service provider will have a number for you to ring or text to report phone bullying.
- Visit their website for details.

- Don't delete messages from cyber bullies. You don't have to read them, but you should keep them as evidence.

Useful websites:

www.spunout.ie

www.childnet.int.org

www.antibullying.net

www./kidsmart.org.uk/beingsmart

www.bbc.co.uk./schools/bullying

www.childline.ie/index.php/support/bullying/1395

www.chatdanger.com

<http://ie.reachout.ocm>

www.kidpower.org

www.sticksandstones.ie

www.abc.tcd.ie

Compiled in consultation with teachers, pupils and parents/guardians (PA).