Our Lady of Mercy Convent School

Rosemount Terrace, Booterstown, Co. Dublin

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Administrative Policy: ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Introduction:

The Board of Management (BoM) of Our Lady of Mercy Convent School is setting out, in this statement, the anti-bullying policy of the school, in accordance with the provisions of the Education Act, 1998. The Board trusts that this statement of policy will be of assistance to staff, parents and guardians. The Board also wishes to state that the Chairperson and Principal of the school will be willing to clarify any matters arising from this policy statement.

The Mission Statement of Our Lady of Mercy Convent School, Booterstown is as follows:
To educate, encourage and celebrate our children and the wider school community as together we grow in body, mind and spirit.
Tá ár dTiarna linn.

1. Introductory Statement

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 Convent School has adopted the following anti-bullying policy within the framework of the school's overall code of behaviour. This policy fully complies with the requirements of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* which were published in September 2013.This policy also reflects the DES September 2021 requirement for all schools to prioritise the monitoring and gathering of information on the implementation of anti bullying measures in schools.Circular 0032/2021

2. Key Principles

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-**
    o is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity;
    o encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment; and
    o 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-**
    o build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and
    o explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying and in particular bullying based on racial or religious prejudice, gender,

disability, sexual orientation and belonging to a non-traditional family
unit.
- **Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils;**
- **Supports for staff;**
- **Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies); and**
- **On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.**

3. Definition of Bullying

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:
  i. deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying;
  ii. cyber-bullying; and
  i. 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 behaviour. 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. In particular, where there may have been significant intentional physical hurt, parents/guardians are advised.

Additional information on different types of bullying is set out in Section 2 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* (www.education.ie) and appears as **Appendix 1 of this document.**

4. The relevant teacher(s)
The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows:
- initially, the class teacher and the staff member who witnesses the incident or to whom the incident is reported

- the principal teacher thereafter if necessary. This duty may be delegated by the principal to the deputy principal when he/she cannot deal with allegations made in a timely manner.

However, all members of staff in Our Lady of Mercy Convent School are responsible for the implementation of this policy. Any member of staff who becomes aware of bullying, or to whom an allegation of bullying is made, has the duty to report the behaviour to the child's class teacher.

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). Records of all significant incidents are maintained. The class teacher will ensure (in so far as is practicable) that the principal teacher is informed with regard to significant issues.

5. Education and prevention strategies (see also Appendix 2)

The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at identity based bullying and cyber-bullying) that will be used by the school are as follows: -

- A school-wide approach to the fostering of respect for all members of the school community, thereby cultivating a good school culture which has respect for all, and helping one another, as central;

-Use surveys to gather information from pupils and parents regarding issues around anti-bullying practices and safety measures within the school. Data elicited from these surveys are used to inform our practise on an ongoing basis.

- The promotion of the value of diversity to address issues of prejudice and highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour. At this time staff are developing a Wellbeing Statement and devising a policy on Interculturalism. We foster and aim to enhance the self-esteem of all our pupils through both curricular and extracurricular activities. Pupils are provided with many opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth through formal and informal interactions.

- Social skills such as the making and maintaining of friendships are developed through the wide use of cooperative learning strategies and cooperative games.

- Whole school initiatives on the promotion of friendship, inclusion and bullying prevention include our weekly assemblies and our annual 'Being Kind and Caring Week' every September, incorporating a Bullying Awareness Day (ready-to-use awareness raising exercises available on the Anti-Bullying website: www.antibullyingcampaign.ie – worksheets, video clips, competitions).

- There are a number of curriculum components and programmes which are particularly relevant to the prevention of bullying and the promotion of respect for diversity and inclusiveness. The Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum makes specific provisions for exploring bullying as well as the inter-related areas of belonging and integrating, communication, conflict, friendship, personal safety and relationships.

The Stay Safe & Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) programmes at primary level are personal safety skills programmes which seek to enhance children's self-protection skills including their ability to recognise and cope with bullying. Circle Time is an integral and valuable methodology in the implementation of these programmes. The BoM is committed to

the full implementation of the SPHE curriculum, the Walk Tall, RSE, Weaving Well-being (Friends for Life Programme) used as a teacher resource and Stay Safe Programmes as directed by the DES. Various other social, health and media education programmes can further help to address the problem of bullying behaviour. Furthermore, this work can be extended into many other areas such as Art, Drama, the Grow in Love programme and Physical Education. Co-operation and group enterprise are also promoted through team sports and school committees eg. Student Council, Green Schools Committees and Active School initiatives.

- The school welcomes visitors from relevant external agencies with expertise to cover issues around bullying, personal safety and online safety.
- Our Code of Behaviour is implemented consistently and reviewed regularly
- Effective supervision and monitoring of students within the school building/school grounds, on school tours etc. Non-teaching and ancillary staff will be encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers.
- Use of ICT is always monitored carefully: please also refer to the school's policy on 'Internet Acceptable Use' (AUP). Furthermore, pupils are educated on appropriate online behaviour and on how to stay safe while online.
- The school communicates a shared understanding of what bullying is to all adult members of the school community by publishing and displaying the Anti-Bullying policy (including definition) and making it available to all parents and guardians.
- Parents/Guardians are advised regarding the need to inform the class teacher about any issues of concern with respect to bullying; as the school can only deal with issues about which it has been informed.
- The school's anti-bullying policy is discussed with pupils.
- The Student Council is involved in contributing to developing a school environment where bullying is neither accepted nor tolerated.
-Survey of pupils, parents and staff on their attitudes and awareness of anti bullying practices and general Child Safeguarding measures in place throughout the school.
- Raising pupils' awareness and understanding about the nature and unacceptability of bullying, enabling them to Recognise, Reject and Report (3Rs) bullying when they see it.
- Staff members encourage a culture of telling and let pupils know that 'telling' (or disclosing incidents of bullying behaviour) is a positive act of kindness and friendship. We educate the children to understand that there are no innocent bystanders where bullying is concerned.
- Staff members will ensure that pupils know who to tell and how to tell.
- All allegations of bullying behaviour are investigated.

6. Procedures for investigation

In Our Lady of Mercy Convent School, the main aim 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).

With this in mind the schools procedures for the 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 : -

(i) In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher(s) will exercise his/her/their professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred, what type of bullying it is if it has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved;

(ii) All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher(s). 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.

(iii) In order to deal effectively with alleged/suspected bullying situations, A 'Reform, not Blame' approach is used. This replaces the biggest obstacle to reporting i.e. punishment, with a more effective and acceptable alternative – keeping a solemn promise. This approach overcomes the 'no ratting' culture, empowering pupils to report bullying without fear of any backlash, as well as empowering teachers to deal with the bullying situations to achieve the desired win-win outcome.

(iv) Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), caretakers, cleaners will be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher;

(v) Parents and pupils are required to cooperate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving any issues and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved as quickly as possible;

(vi) It is very important that all involved (including each set of pupils and parents) understand the above approach from the outset;

(vii) Teachers will take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents;

(viii) Initial investigations of bullying will be done in class where possible but some incidents might be best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved;

(ix) All interviews will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this way;

(x) When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher(s) will seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This will be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner;

(xi) If a group is involved, each member will be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved will be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member will be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements;

(xii) It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s);

(xiii) Each member of a group will be supported through the possible pressures that they may face from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher;

(xiv) Where the relevant teacher(s) has/have determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it will be made clear to her how she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts will be made to try to get her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied;

(xv) When a pupil cooperates with the process of restoring the relationship damaged by the bullying behaviour and undertakes to and in fact does not engage in further bullying behaviours, sanctions need not be applied. Only if the 'promise' is broken do parents/guardians and the principal teacher need to be informed/involved;

(xvi) The sanctions applied shall be those from our Code of Behaviour

(xvii) In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher(s) that bullying behaviour has occurred, and where efforts to use the 'Reform not Blame' approach have failed, the parents of the parties involved are contacted to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken. The school will give parents an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports for their pupils;

(xviii) It must also be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and guardians/parents) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parents/guardians and the school;

(xix) Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved may be arranged separately with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date if the pupil who has been bullied is ready and agreeable;

(xx) An additional follow-up meeting with parents/guardians of the children involved may take place after an appropriate time to ensure that the matter has been resolved satisfactorily;

(xxi) In cases where the relevant teacher(s) consider that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that the bullying behaviour has occurred, it must be recorded in the bullying behaviour recording template (Appendix 3);

(xxii) In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately addressed the relevant teacher will, as part of his/her professional judgement take the following factors into account:
(a) Whether the bullying behaviours have ceased;
(b) Whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable;
(c) Whether the relationships between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable;

(d) Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents/guardians and any other teachers involved in investigating and dealing with the bullying behaviour;

(xxiii) Where a parent/guardian is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents will be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures;

(xxiv) In the event that a parent/guardian has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school will advise the parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

7. Record Keeping:

Noting and reporting of bullying behaviour is documented. All records are maintained in accordance with relevant data protection legislation. The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour are as follows:

(i) While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher(s), the relevant teacher(s) will use his/her/their professional judgement in relation to records to be kept of these reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding the same.

(ii) If it is established by the relevant teacher(s) that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher(s) must keep appropriate written records which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.

(iii) As previously stated, in cases where the relevant teacher(s) consider that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that the bullying behaviour has occurred, it must be recorded in the bullying behaviour recording template **(Appendix 3).**

This template is available from the principal's office at all times. The relevant teacher will record the dates and means of communicating with the parents/guardians of the pupils involved in section 8 of the *'Bullying Behaviour Record Form'*.

(iv) Completed *'Bullying Behaviour Record Forms'* will be submitted to the principal teacher to be stored centrally in the office. These forms will be sent to the office when the issue has been resolved or at such time when the relevant teacher deems that the issue cannot be resolved without the further intervention of the principal teacher.

8. The school's programme of support

The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying involves a whole school approach which is broadly similar to the strategies outlined in section 5 of this policy. The school will regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the procedures adopted to address bullying behaviours. The school recognises the complexity of bullying behaviour and that no one intervention/support programme works in all situations. Therefore, various approaches and intervention strategies may be used including suggesting that parents seek referrals, so that appropriate outside agencies are contacted, in order to access further support for the pupils and their families, if needed.

9. 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 behaviour and to facilitate early intervention where possible

10. Oversight:
At least once in every school term the principal will provide a report to the board of management setting out:

(a) the overall number of bullying cases reported since the previous report to the BoM; and

(b) confirmation that all cases have been or are being dealt with in accordance with the school's anti-bullying policy and the DES publication: *'Anti-bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools'*, (Sept. 2013)

11. 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. The Board of Management recognises, welcomes and values diversity in our school community.

12. Ratification

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management (see date below).

13. Communication

This policy is made available to school personnel, is published on the school website (and is available for inspection by parents/guardians and pupils in the school office, on request) and is provided to the Parents' Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

14. Review

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year (see Appendix 4). Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, published to the school community and provided to the Parents' Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

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Signed: _Máire Uí Hugh_   26-09-'23

(Chairperson, Board of Management)

Signed: _John O' Boyle_

(Principal Teacher)

Dated: _26-09-23_

Proposed date of review: Annually

Appendix 1

Examples of bullying behaviours

General behaviours which apply to all types of bullying	• Harassment based on any of the nine grounds in the equality legislation i.e. gender (including transgender), civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community • Physical aggression • Damage to property • Name calling • Slagging • The production, display or circulation of written work, pictures or other materials aimed at intimidating another person • Offensive graffiti • Extortion • Intimidation • Insulting or offensive gestures • The "look" • Invasion of personal space • A combination of any of the types listed
Cyber bullying	• Denigration: Spreading rumours, lies or gossip to hurt a person's reputation • Harassment: Continually sending vicious, mean or disturbing messages to an individual • Impersonation: Posting offensive or aggressive messages under another person's name • Flaming: Using inflammatory or vulgar words to provoke an online fight • Trickery: Fooling someone into sharing personal information which you then post online. • Outing: Posting or sharing confidential or compromising information or images • Exclusion: Purposefully excluding someone from an online group • Cyber-stalking: Ongoing harassment and denigration that causes a person considerable fear for his/her safety. • Silent telephone/mobile phone calls • Abusive telephone/mobile phone calls • Abusive text messages • Abusive email • Abusive communication on social networks e.g. facebook, Ask.fm, Twitter, You Tube or on game consoles • Abusive website comments/blogs/pictures • Abusive posts on any form of communication technology
Homophobic and Transgender	• Spreading rumours about a person's sexual orientation • Taunting a person of a different sexual orientation • Name calling e.g. gay, queer, lesbian: used in a derogatory manner • Physical intimidation or attacks • Threats
Race, nationality, ethnic background and membership of the Traveller community	• Discrimination, prejudice, comments or insults about colour, nationality, culture, social class, religious beliefs, ethnic or traveller background • Exclusion on the basis of any of the above
Relational	This involves manipulating relationships as a means of bullying. Behaviours include: • Malicious gossip • Isolation and Exclusion • Ignoring • Excluding from the group • Taking someone's friends away • "Bitching" • Spreading rumours • Breaking confidence • Talking loud enough so that the victim can hear • The "look" • Use of terminology such as 'nerd' in a derogatory way
Sexual	• Unwelcome or inappropriate sexual comments or touching • Harassment
Special Educational Needs, Disability	• Name calling • Taunting others because of their disability or learning needs

	• Taking advantage of some pupils' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to recognise and defend themselves against bullying • Taking advantage of some pupils' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to understand social situations and social cues. • Mimicking a person's disability • Setting up others for ridicule

Appendix 2 Practical tips for building a positive school culture and climate

The following are some practical tips for immediate actions that can be taken to help build a positive school culture and climate and to help prevent and tackle bullying behaviour.

- Model respectful behaviour to all members of the school community at all times.
- Explicitly teach pupils what respectful language and respectful behaviour looks like, acts like, sounds like and feels like in class and around the school.
- Display key respect messages in classrooms, in assembly areas and around the school. Involve pupils in the development of these messages.
- Catch them being good - notice and acknowledge desired respectful behaviour by providing positive attention.
- Consistently tackle the use of discriminatory and derogatory language in the school – this includes homophobic and racist language and language that is belittling of pupils with a disability or SEN.
- Survey of Parents and Pupils to gather information on their feelings towards anti bullying practices and safety measures in our school. Surveys carried out in March 2022.
- Give constructive feedback to pupils when respectful behaviour and respectful language are absent.
- Have a system of encouragement and rewards to promote desired behaviour and compliance with the school rules and routines.
- Explicitly teach pupils about the appropriate use of social media.
- Positively encourage pupils to comply with the school rules on mobile phone and internet use.
- Follow up and follow through with pupils who ignore the rules.
- Actively involve parents and/or the Parents' Association in awareness raising campaigns around social media.
- Actively promote the right of every member of the school community to be safe and secure in school.
- Highlight and explicitly teach school rules in pupil friendly language in the classroom and in common areas.

- All staff can actively watch out for signs of bullying behaviour.
- Ensure there is adequate playground/school yard/outdoor supervision.
- School staff can get pupils to help them to identify bullying "hot spots" and "hot times" for bullying in the school.
    - Hot spots tend to be in the playground/school yard/outdoor areas, changing rooms, corridors and other areas of unstructured supervision.
    - Hot times again tend to be times where there is less structured supervision such as when pupils are in the playground/school yard or moving classrooms.
- Support the establishment and work of student council

Appendix 3 Template for recording bullying behaviour

1. Name of pupil being bullied and class group

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Name _____ Class_____

2. Name(s) and class(es) of pupil(s) engaged in bullying behaviour

| |
| |

3. Source of bullying concern/report (tick relevant box(es))*

Pupil concerned	
Other Pupil	
Parent	
Teacher	
Other	

4. Location of incidents (tick relevant box(es))*

Playground	
Classroom	
Corridor	
Toilets	
School Bus	
Other	

5. Name of person(s) who reported the bullying concern

| |
| |

6. Type of Bullying Behaviour (tick relevant box(es)) *

Physical Aggression		Cyber-bullying	
Damage to Property		Intimidation	
Isolation/Exclusion		Malicious Gossip	
Name Calling		Other (specify)	

7. Where behaviour is regarded as identity-based bullying, indicate the relevant category:

Homophobic	Disability/SEN related	Racist	Membership of Traveller community	Other (specify)

8. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact

| |
| |

9. Details of actions taken

| |
| |

Signed _____ (Relevant Teacher)   Date _____

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal _____
* **Note:** The categories listed in the tables 3, 4 & 6 are suggested and schools may add to or amend these to suit their own circumstances.