



## Anti- Bullying Policy

### 1. Introduction

This policy sets out the framework within which the whole school community manages issues relating to bullying and the school's strategy to prevent bullying behaviour.

This policy is based on a review of the current policy that was formulated and ratified by the Board of Management on April 22<sup>nd</sup> 2013, 5<sup>th</sup> January 2015, 16<sup>th</sup> February 2017 and 2022

### 2. Scope

This policy addresses bullying behaviour, harassment, sexual harassment and cyber-bullying. While the policy addresses issues related to bullying of students, the policy applies to teaching and other school staff, parents/guardians and others insofar as measures under the policy relate to them. The policy applies to all school related activities, school tours and trips and extra-curricular activities.

### 3. Rationale

In keeping with our mission statement, all members of our school community belong to a learning community that is Catholic in ethos and founded on the CEIST values of mutual respect and trust in the pursuit of excellence. This policy sets out to ensure that these values are upheld in all our relationships.

- a) The school is obliged under the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 to include in its Code of Behaviour an anti- bullying policy.
- b) The school has obligations in relation to harassment and sexual harassment under the Equal Status Acts, 2000 to 2004.
- c) The school has obligations to include its Child Safeguarding Statement and procedures in its Anti-Bullying Policy. This obligation is fulfilled in their incorporation in this policy.

### 4. Goals

- d) To create a school ethos which encourages students to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.
- e) To make it clear that bullying behaviour is not tolerated in at St. Mary's College and to raise awareness of bullying as an unacceptable form of behaviour with school management, teachers, support staff, students, and parents/guardians.
- f) To create a school ethos that acknowledges accommodates and respects diversity of students and staff across the nine grounds covered by the equality legislation specifically gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.
- g) To ensure that the school's Wellbeing programme raises awareness of the factors associated with bullying behaviour and develops appropriate knowledge, skills and behaviour.
- h) To take practical action to prevent incidents of bullying behaviour by ensuring comprehensive supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of school activity are kept under observation.
- i) To develop procedures for reporting and recording incidents of bullying.
- j) To develop procedures for investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying.
- k) To develop support structures for those affected by bullying behaviour and those involved in bullying behaviour.
- l) To work with and through the various local agencies in countering all forms of bullying and anti-social behaviour.



## 5. Definition of bullying

- a) Bullying is defined as unwanted negative behaviour verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against another person(persons) and which is repeated over time. The term bullying also encompasses harassment or sexual harassment defined as follows:
- i. Harassment: Any form of unwanted conduct in relation to any of the nine grounds in the equality legislation described above, that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile degrading or offensive environment for the victim.
  - ii. Sexual harassment: Any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile degrading or offensive environment for the victim.
- b) Different types of cyber-bullying include:
- i. Personal intimidation: This may involve receiving SMS messages, posting abusive and threatening comments on a student's social media profile or sending threatening messages via instant messaging.
  - ii. Impersonation: This may involve setting up fake profiles and web pages that are attributed to a person. It can also involve gaining access to a person's profile or instant messaging account and using it to contact others while impersonating the account or profile owner.
  - iii. Exclusion: This may involve blocking an individual from a popular group or community such as a class group, deleting them from friendship lists and/or using 'ignore functions' on a continuous and concerted way.
  - iv. Personal humiliation: This may involve posting images of videos intended to embarrass someone. It can involve users sharing and posting images or videos of victims being abused or humiliated or users sharing personal communications such as e-mails or social media messages with a wider audience than was intended by the sender.
  - v. False reporting: This may involve false reports to the service provider or reporting other users for a range of behaviours with a view to having the user's social media account or website deleted.

## 6. Types of behaviour involved

- a. The means of bullying are constantly changing. The following list includes typical behaviours that constitute bullying. It is not exhaustive and a combination of factors may be involved.
- Physical aggression
  - Damage to property
  - Extortion
  - Intimidation
  - Gestures
  - Silent telephone/mobile phone calls
  - Abusive telephone/mobile phone calls
  - Abusive text messages
  - Abusive email/website messages
  - The production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other materials aimed at intimidating another person
  - Isolation and exclusion
  - Harassment based on any of the nine grounds in the equality legislation
  - Name calling
  - "Slagging": Engaging in unsolicited banter in an aggressive manner.



## 7. Actions to prevent bullying behaviour

- a) This policy identifies the need to prevent bullying and to control bullying. This school raises awareness of bullying behaviour through its Wellbeing programme, at assemblies, by conducting regular surveys, through its pastoral care system, by communicating with the Student Council and Parents' Association, at meetings held by the Anti-bullying team of teachers and at general staff meetings.
- b) The anti-bullying policy is referred to in the school's Code of Behaviour.
- c) Students are under the supervision of teachers during all school related activities.
- d) A Student Mentor programme is in place to enable the integration of first year students.
- e) Online activities that occur in the school are conducted under the supervision of teachers.
- f) The school has developed an Acceptable Usage Policy to link with this policy and information for parents/guardians on supports are included in that policy.

## 8. Prevention of Harassment

- a) 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 travelling community.

## 9. Steps to be taken in dealing with incidents of bullying.

- a) Reporting: Any incident of bullying behaviour witnessed by someone or which they have been made aware of may be reported to:
  - i. A teacher
  - ii. Support staff
  - iii. Junior School Coordinator
  - iv. Senior School Coordinator
  - v. Deputy Principal (DDL)
  - vi. Principal (DLP)

The Deputy Principal/Principal will be made aware of all such reports. Where safeguarding issues arise these will be dealt with according to procedure.

- b) All reported incidents are treated seriously, recorded, investigated and dealt with by:
  - i. The "Anti-Bullying" Team
  - ii. Deputy Principal/Principal.
- c) The "Anti-Bullying" Team deals with:
  - i. Initial reporting of incidents.
  - ii. Resolution of lower-level incidents.
  - iii. Incidents which do not involve the Code of Behaviour. Where matters pertaining to the Code of Behaviour are identified, these are referred to the Deputy Principal/Principal.
- d) Investigation:
  - i. Reports are investigated through surveys, interviews and by examining available materials. Investigations occur outside the classroom situation to avoid public humiliation of the students concerned and in order to get all perspectives.



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- ii. It is made clear to students that when they report incidents of bullying they are not “telling tales” or “ratting” but are behaving responsibly.
  - iii. It is made clear to students reporting incidents of bullying that while a student’s name may need to be passed on, anonymity will be respected as far as possible.
  - iv. Investigating staff take a calm, unemotional, problem-solving approach to any report of bullying behaviour. They make notes of reports and of their investigations and to ensure that they are kept safely a designated secure file.
  - v. Investigating staff may approach other students who may not be the reporting student in order to ascertain the facts of the incident.
  - vi. Students may be expected to answer questions such as what happened, when did the incident happen, where did it happen, who was involved and why did it happen.
  - vii. If a group of students is involved in the bullying behaviour, each member will be interviewed individually.
- e) Parents/Guardians are informed by the Principal/Deputy Principal of an incident of bullying once it has been established that bullying has occurred and the facts are available.
  - f) If it is confirmed that a student has been the victim of bullying behaviour, support will be provided to enable them to deal with the situation. This support will be dependent on the needs of the student, the resources of the school and the links with outside agencies.
  - g) If it is discovered that a student has engaged in bullying behaviour, appropriate sanctions will apply as described in the Code of Behaviour. Pastoral support will also apply to this situation.
  - h) Follow up meetings will occur with the students. Reconciliation will be advised and may occur. This process will be followed under the supervision of the Deputy-Principal/ Principal.

## 10. Implementation Arrangements, Roles and Responsibilities

- a) Board of Management to ensure that:
  - i. the Anti-Bullying Policy is developed in consultation with teachers, students, parents/Guardians
  - ii. the policy is implemented.
- b) Principal/ Deputy-Principal
  - i. To develop the policy in consultation with teachers, students, parents/guardians
  - ii. To implement the policy
  - iii. To facilitate programmes which help to eliminate bullying behaviour
  - iv. To follow the procedures of the policy
- c) Teaching Staff
  - i. To develop the policy in consultation with the Principal, Deputy-Principal, students, parents/guardians
  - ii. To implement the policy
  - iii. To follow procedures
  - iv. To educate students on the policy
- d) Non-teaching staff
  - i. To report to any Year Head, Deputy-Principal or Principal any incident of bullying witnessed by them or reported to them
  - ii. To implement the policy
  - iii. To help in the creation of a respectful learning school
- e) Students
  - i. To support the Board of Management in the development of the policy



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- ii. To behave at all times in a respectful manner towards others
  - iii. To report to the Deputy-Principal or Principal any incident of bullying witnessed by them or reported to them.
- f) Parents/Guardians
- a) To support the Board of Management in the development of the policy
  - b) To report to the Deputy-Principal or Principal any incident of bullying witnessed by them or reported to them
  - c) To support the school in the creation of a respectful learning environment.

## 11. Ratification and Communication

Ratification date by the Board of Management 13/9/22

## 12. Communication

Parents/guardians will be informed of the revised policy through its publication on the school's website and via email following its ratification. It will be available in hard copy via the School Office.

Parents/guardians of incoming students will be informed of the policy on the enrolment of the student.

## 13. Monitoring the implementation of the policy

The Principal/Deputy-Principal, with the assistance of the "Anti-Bullying" (care) Team, will monitor this policy at team meetings.

## 14. Reviewing and evaluating the policy

The policy will be reviewed annually on the anniversary of its ratification by the Board of Management. On-going review will be welcomed taking due regard to changing information and or guidelines by the Department of Education and Science.

The policy will be evaluated on the basis of the following:

- a) The level of awareness of the school community of the policy
- b) Actions taken to prevent bullying
- c) Initiatives taken to promote equality diversity and affirm diversity
- d) Procedures for recording, investigating and dealing with reported incidents have been implemented
- e) Positive feedback from parents/guardians, students and staff
- f) Bullying behaviour has reduced.

Chairperson Sr. M. Forde Secretary of BOM M. Horkan

PROPOSED P. Sweeney SECONDED J. McGuinness