



## Anti Bullying Policy

*This policy is rooted in the Mission Statement and aims of the school, fostering partnership between parents, teachers and the community in the interest of children's learning.*

**1. 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 Mercy Secondary School Ballymahon 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.**

**2. 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; and 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 of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies); and on-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.



### 3. 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 behaviour. Repeated behaviour over 20 days/3 weeks is when a report should be considered.

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*.

Additional useful websites are as follows:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/bullying-information-for-parents-and-students/>  
<http://bully4u.ie/?id=2> <https://www.webwise.ie/> <https://antibullyingcentre.ie/>

### 4. The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying is (are) as follows:

- **1<sup>st</sup> Year:** Ger O’ Gara
- **2<sup>nd</sup> Year:** Sean Bohan
- **3<sup>rd</sup> Year:** Ruth Gaffney
- **4<sup>th</sup> Year:** Julie O’ Donoghue
- **5<sup>th</sup> Year:** Olivia Casey
- **6<sup>th</sup> Year:** John Dromey
- **Guidance Counsellor:** Siobhán O’Neill & Alma Walshe
- **Deputy Principal:** Martha O’ Reilly
- **Deputy Principal:** Gary Kenny
- **Principal:** Josephine Donohue



Any teacher may act as a relevant teacher if circumstances warrant it. A Student should feel comfortable to report a bullying incident by using one or other of the following approaches:

- Speaking directly to their subject teacher at an appropriate time after class.
- Speaking to their Year Head.
- Getting a parent to contact the school to speak to the Year Head
- Handing up a note with homework to their teacher.
- Communicating with teachers/year head/tutors.
- Include AEN or appropriate groups

A false accusation of bullying against another member of the school community (e.g., parent, student, teacher, visitor etc) will be considered very serious and dealt with as part of the code of behaviour.

***5. 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 (see Section 6.5 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools):***

- This policy strives to address bullying behaviour. The policy applies:
- During School time
- Going to and from school
- During school tours
- During extra-curricular activities

## **Implementation of Curricula**

- SPHE Class is used as a tool to raise awareness of the issue of bullying.
- Cross curricular links exist within religion and CSPE
- Peer Education
- Guidance talks
- Year Head Assemblies
- Anti-Bullying Week
- Google Classroom updates/PPTs

## **Links to other policies**

This policy is consistent with other policies in Mercy Secondary School Ballymahon.



**6. 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 (see Section [6.8 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post- Primary Schools](#))**

The primary 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). The school's procedures must be consistent with the following approach. Every effort will be made to ensure that all involved (including pupils, parent(s)/guardian(s)) understand this approach from the outset. Reporting bullying behaviour

- Any pupil or parent(s)/guardian(s) may bring a bullying incident to any member of staff in the school.
- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying, must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher.
- Teaching and non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), bus escorts, caretakers, cleaners must report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher. Each person must acknowledge and act upon their duty of care.

**Investigating and dealing with incidents: Style of approach**

- In investigating and dealing with bullying, the relevant teacher eg: Year Head, Guidance, AEN, Deputy Principals or Principals will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved;
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) and pupils are required to co-operate 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;
- Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach;
- Where possible incidents should be investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved;
- All interviews should 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;
- 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 nonaggressive manner;



- If a group is involved, each member should be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved may meet as a group.
- Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that may face them from the other members of the group after the interview by the relevant teacher; It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s)
- In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the parties involved should 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 parent(s)/guardian(s) an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports provided to the pupils;
- 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; and
- It must also be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parent(s)/guardian(s)) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school;

## **Recording of Bullying Behaviour**

Formal recording: The relevant teacher must use the recording template at Appendix 3 to record the bullying behaviour in the following circumstances:

- a) In cases where he/she considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour occurred; and
- b) Where the school has decided as part of its anti-bullying policy that in certain circumstances bullying behaviour must be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable.

The following types of behaviour may be recorded formally on the Incident form: In serious cases of Cyberbullying, Exclusion, Physical Bullying, Relational Bullying. This list is not exhaustive and may be added to as the school sees fit.

When the recording template is used, it must be retained by the relevant teacher in question and a copy maintained by the principal in a central secure location. The confidentiality of the student will be respected at all times and all records will be stored in a secure location.



## Reporting to the BOM:

The Principal of Mercy Secondary School Ballymahon in accordance with recommendations will provide a report to the BOM at each meeting. This report will include:

1. The overall number of bullying cases reported by means of Appendix 3
2. Confirmation that all cases referred to (a) have been or are being dealt with in accordance with the Schools Anti –Bullying Policy

## 7. The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying topic each year at Junior Cycle and also at Senior Cycle is as follows (see Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*) :

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

- All cases of Bullying will be treated with the utmost confidence.
- All actions listed in Actions to Prevent Bullying are part of the school's programme to offer support to students, staff, and parents within Mercy Secondary School.
- Referral – students may be referred to the Guidance counsellor or if necessary to an external psychologist.
- This referral will apply both to the bully and the student who was bullied.
- Inform staff - staff will be informed where appropriate.
- SPHE programme - bullying is covered
- School Assemblies

## 8. 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.

## 9. 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.

10. This policy was adopted by the BOM on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2024

11. This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website (or where none exists, is otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parents' Association (where one exists). A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.



12. This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year. Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, published on the school website (or where none exists, be otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parents' Association (where one exists). A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Signed: Teresa Falk (Chairperson of the Board of Management)

Signed: J.A. O'R (Principal)

Date: 29/01/2024

Date of Next Review January 2025

