

Marymount Girls National School

Anti-Bullying Policy

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 Marymount Girls National 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.

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) 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

See Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 for key elements of a positive school culture and climate and practical tips for building this climate.

(b) Effective leadership

(c) A school-wide approach

(d) A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact

(e) Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness-raising measures) that:

- build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils
- explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including homophobic and transphobic bullying

(f) Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils

(g) Supports for staff

(h) Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies)

(i) Ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy

In accordance with the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* **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
- 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 one-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour, including a one-off offensive or hurtful text message or other private messaging, do not fall within the definition of bullying and will be dealt with, as appropriate, in accordance with the school's code of behaviour.

However, in the context of this policy, placing a one-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*.

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 e.g. sexual harassment, homophobic bullying, racist bullying etc.
- Physical aggression
- Damage to property
- Name calling
- Teasing
- The production, display or circulation of written words, 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
- Denigration: Spreading rumours, lies or gossip to hurt a person's reputation
- Cyber
- 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 is then posted 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 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/YouTube or on games consoles
- Abusive website comments/blogs/pictures
- Abusive posts on any form of communication technology

Identity Based Behaviours

Bullying based on:

- gender including transgender
- civil status
- family status
- sexual orientation
- religion
- age
- disability
- race
- membership of the Traveller community

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 & exclusion

- Ignoring
 - Excluding from the group
 - Taking someone’s friends away
 - “Bitching”
 - Spreading rumours
 - Breaking confidence
 - Speaking loud enough so that the victim can hear
 - The “look”
 - Use or 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 others up for ridicule

Initially the Relevant Teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying will normally be the class teacher.

The Relevant Teachers in Marymount GNS are:

- Principal
- Deputy Principal
- All teachers

Any teacher may act as a Relevant Teacher if circumstances warrant it.

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

Education and prevention strategies

School-wide approach

- A school-wide approach to the fostering of respect for all members of the school community
- The promotion of the value of diversity to address issues of prejudice and stereotyping and highlighting the unacceptability of bullying behaviour
- The fostering and enhancing of the self-esteem of all pupils through both curricular and extracurricular activities. Pupils will be provided with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth through formal and informal interactions
- Whole staff professional development on bullying to ensure that all staff develop an awareness of what bullying is, how it impacts on pupils’ lives and the need to respond to it through prevention and intervention
- An annual audit of professional development needs with a view to assessing staff

requirements through internal staff knowledge/expertise and external sources

- Professional development with specific focus on the training of the relevant teacher(s)
- School wide awareness-raising and training on all aspects of bullying, to include pupils, parent(s)/guardian(s) and the wider school community
- Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extracurricular activities. Non-teaching and ancillary staff will be encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers. Supervision will also apply to monitoring student use of communication technology within the school
- Development and promotion of an Anti-bullying code for the school - to be included in student journals and displayed publicly
- The school's Anti-bullying policy is to be discussed with pupils and all parent(s)/guardian(s) to be given a copy as part of the Code of Behaviour of the school
- The implementation of regular whole school awareness measures
- Encourage a culture of telling, with particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders. 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
- Ensuring that pupils know who to tell and how to tell, e.g.:
 - Direct approach to teacher at an appropriate time, for example after class
 - Hand note up with homework
 - Make a phone call to the school or to a trusted teacher in the school
 - Get a parent(s)/guardian(s) or friend to tell on your behalf
 - Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place
- Identify clear protocols to encourage parent(s)/guardian(s) to approach the school if they suspect that their child is being bullied. The protocol should be developed in consultation with parents
- The development of an Acceptable Internet Use Policy in the school to include the necessary steps to ensure that the access to technology within the school is strictly monitored, as is the pupils' use of mobile phones
- Supports currently being used in the school include HSCL, School Completion Programme, Community Garda Scheme, The Incredible Years Programme, Friends for Life, Socially Speaking

Implementation of curricula

- The full implementation of the SPHE curriculum and the RSE and Stay Safe Programmes
- Continuous Professional Development for staff in delivering these programmes
- Whole School delivery of lessons on bullying from evidence-based programmes, e.g. Cool School Lessons, Stay Safe Programme, The Walk Tall Programme
- The school will specifically consider the additional needs of SEN pupils with regard to programme implementation and the development of skills and strategies to enable all pupils to respond appropriately
- The school will implement the advice in "Sexual orientation advice for schools" (RSE Primary). As a school we will respond to children who have questions about sexual orientation or who are taunting others about being gay in the context of the school's ethos and RSE policy and with the awareness that primary school children are probably too young to engage in any detailed discussion of sexual identity

Links to other policies

School policies, practices and activities that are particularly relevant to bullying include the Code of Behaviour, Child Protection Policy, Acceptable Internet Usage Policy and Mobile Phone and Media Device Policy

Procedures for Investigating, follow-up and recording of behaviour.

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).

Reporting bullying behaviour

- Any pupil or parent(s)/guardian(s) may report a bullying incident to any teacher in the school
- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying, will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher
- Teaching and non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), caretakers and cleaners must report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher

Investigating and dealing with incidents:

- In investigating and dealing with bullying, the relevant teacher 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 non-aggressive manner
- If a group is involved, each member should be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved should be met as a group. At the 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 statement
- 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 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 her how she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying

policy and efforts should be made to try to get her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied

- 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, her parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school

Follow up and recording

- 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
 - any feedback received from the parties involved, their parent(s)/guardian(s) or the school Principal or Deputy Principal
- 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
- Where a parent(s)/guardian(s) is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parent(s)/guardian(s) must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedure

Recording of bullying behaviour

It is imperative that all recording of bullying incidents must be done in an objective and factual manner.

The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour are as follows:

Informal pre-determination that bullying has occurred

- All staff must keep a written record of any incidents witnessed by them or notified to them. All incidents must be reported to the relevant teacher
- While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the relevant teacher must keep a written record of the reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same
- The relevant teacher must inform the principal of all incidents being investigated

Formal Stage 1 Determination that bullying has occurred

- If it is established by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher 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
- All records retained by the relevant teacher will be passed onto the principal and stored in the office

Formal Stage 2

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

- a) In cases where she considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after she has determined that bullying

behaviour occurred

b) As part of its *Anti-Bullying Policy* and in line with its *Code Of Behaviour*, where the relevant teacher has decided that bullying has occurred, it will be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal

When the recording template is used, a copy will be kept by the relevant teacher and the original will be filed by the Principal. Due consideration needs to be given to where these records are kept, and how long they will be retained. Access will be in consultation with the Principal.

Established intervention strategies

- Teacher interviews with all pupils
- Negotiating agreements between pupils and following these up by monitoring progress. This can be on an informal basis or implemented through a more structured mediation process
- Working with parent(s)/guardian(s) to support school interventions
- No blame approach
- Circle Time
- Restorative interviews
- Restorative conferencing
- Implementing sociogram questionnaires

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

- All in-school supports and opportunities will be provided for the pupils affected by bullying to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop friendships and social skills and build resilience e.g.
 - Class Teacher
 - Pastoral Care System
 - Buddy
 - Group work such as circle time
 - Socially Speaking, The Incredible Years, Friends for Life
- If pupils require counselling or further supports the school will endeavour to liaise with the appropriate agencies to organise same. This may be for the pupil affected by bullying or the pupil involved in the bullying behaviour
- Pupils should understand that there are no innocent bystanders and that all incidents of bullying behaviour must be reported to a teacher

Supervision and Monitoring of Pupils

The Board of Management confirms that appropriate supervision and monitoring policies and practice are in place to both prevent and deal with bullying behaviour 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.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 27 May 2014.

This policy has been made available to school personnel, is readily accessible to parents and pupils on request and provided to the Parents' Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

Review and Monitoring

This policy will be monitored and reviewed by the Board of Management on an annual basis and when the need arises. The Board of Management will ensure that adequate training and support is provided for all staff.

Appendix 1: Key elements of a positive school culture and climate

- The school acknowledges the right of each member of the school community to enjoy school in a secure environment
- The school acknowledges the uniqueness of each individual and his/her worth as a human being
- The school promotes positive habits of self-respect, self-discipline and responsibility among all its members
- The school prohibits vulgar, offensive, sectarian or other aggressive behaviour or language by any of its members
- The school has a clear commitment to promoting equality in general and gender equality in particular in all aspects of its functioning
- The school has the capacity to change in response to pupils' needs
- The school identifies aspects of curriculum through which positive and lasting influences can be exerted towards forming pupils' attitudes and values
- The school takes particular care of "at risk" pupils and uses its monitoring systems to facilitate early intervention where necessary and it responds to the needs, fears or anxieties of individual members in a sensitive manner
- The school recognises the need to work in partnership with and keep parents informed on procedures to improve relationships on a school-wide basis
- The school recognises the role of parents in equipping the pupil with a range of life-skills
- The school recognises the role of other community agencies in preventing and dealing with bullying
- The school promotes habits of mutual respect, courtesy and an awareness of the interdependence of people in groups and communities
- The school promotes qualities of social responsibility, tolerance and understanding among all its members both in school and out of school
- Staff members share a collegiate responsibility, under the direction of the Principal, to act in preventing bullying/aggressive behaviour by any member of the school community

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
- 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

