OUR LADY OF MERCY SECONDARY SCHOOL, WATERFORD.

Anti-bullying policy

Ratified by the Board of Management, 23rd January, 2024

Signed: _[signature]_   Date: 5/3/24

Chairperson, Board of Management

Anti-bullying policy

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 Our Lady of Mercy Secondary 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.

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, verbal abuse 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.
- unwanted physical contact or use of aggressive body language

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.

Additional information on different types of bullying is set out in Section 2 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.*

The Anti-Bullying Policy applies to all students while in school and while attending or participating in any activities organised by the school, such as open days, outings, trips or sporting events.

4. The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying is (are) as follows: (see Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):

Each case of alleged bullying is unique and often complex. Investigations of allegations of bullying can take a considerable amount of time and may involve all or a combination of the following:

Subject teacher, Year Head, Guidance Counsellor, Deputy Principal, Principal and outside agencies.

A teacher or staff member who notes or has a bullying incident reported to her/him will refer it to the relevant Tutor and/or Year Head.

Examples of bullying behaviours

(This list of examples below is not exhaustive)

General behaviours which apply to all types of bullying	• Harassment based on any of the nine grounds in the equality legislation eg sexual harassment, homophobic bullying, racist bullying etc • Physical aggression • Damage to property • Name calling • Slagging • The production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other material aimed at intimidating another person • Offensive graffiti • Extortion • Intimidation • Insulting or offensive gestures • The 'look' showing disdain, anger, mocking, dismissive etc • Invasion of personal space • Snide comments with intention to hurt • A combination of any of the types listed
Cyber	• 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 • Using inflammatory or vulgar words to provoke an online conflict • Cloning: Creating a fake profile and using it to get someone else in trouble • Catfishing: Using a fake profile to entrap someone

	• Trickery: Fooling someone into sharing personal information which is then posted online • Outing: Posting or sharing confidential or compromising information or images • Photoshopping images with intent to harm or cause disruption to peace of mind • Doxing: Publishing personal information on line with a view to threaten or harass • Cyberstalking: Breaching GDPR guidelines on data for example adding people to groups using private details without their consent; ongoing harassment and denigration that causes a person fear for his/her safety • Taking screen shots of replies to messages and posting them online • Exclusion: Purposefully excluding someone from an online group • Silent telephone/mobile phone calls • Abusive telephone/mobile phone calls • Abusive text messages • Abusive email • Abusive communication on social networks eg Facebook, Twitter, Tiktok, Snapchat, Instagram, online games etc • Abusive website comments, blogs, pictures • Abusive posts on any form of communication technology

Identity Based Behaviours
Including any of the nine discriminatory grounds mentioned in Equality Legislation (gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and 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 eg 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 a 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 'weirdo', 'autistic', 'spastic' 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 students' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to recognise and defend themselves against bullying • Mimicking a person's disability • Setting others up for ridicule

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

STRATEGIES

- Bullying Prevention & Awareness Raising at assemblies, talks and induction
- School journal contains relevant information on bullying and building resilience and the code of behaviour
- School rules will be explained to students eg at assemblies, in classes, at induction etc
- Signing off on the code of behaviour each year
- Outlining our expectations as a school community at information evenings/events for parents and students eg Open night, Welcome night etc
- Information transfer from primary school
- Other supporting school policies
- Induction programmes
- Supporting curriculum (SPHE, CSPE, RSE, RE)
- Co-curriculum programmes
- Peer mentoring structures eg Meitheal programme
- Pastoral Care/Student Support Team (Year Heads, Tutors, Guidance Counsellor, Special Educational Needs Coordinator, Deputy Principal, Principal)
- All teachers to raise awareness and understanding of bullying and its causes and effects
- All staff to promote a school culture based on respect and consideration for all in the school community.
- Subject teachers should use opportunities that arise in their programmes of work to foster an attitude of respect for all: to promote the value of diversity; to address prejudice and stereotyping and to highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour.
- Prevention and Awareness Raising of cyber-bullying
- Teachers of SPHE to raise awareness and understanding of bullying (including identity-based bullying and in particular homophobic and transphobic bullying) and its causes and effects
- The SPHE curriculum makes specific provision for exploring bullying as well as the inter-related areas of belonging and integrating, communication, conflict, friendship, personal safety and relationships.
- The Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) programme at post-primary provides opportunities to explore and discuss areas such as human sexuality and relationships, which has particular relevance to identity-based bullying
- ECA e.g. sports teams help to promote co-operation and group enterprise
- Staff training as appropriate
- Inform parents as to supports available eg NPCpp, webwise etc via evolving school website
- LGBTI awareness, BeLong Club and Stand Up to bullying activities
- Module re: Sharing of explicit images on social media (called the 'Lockers' programme)
- Input from external sources eg SPHE talks, 'Connect with Respect' Garda programme, Promoting positive internet behaviour with Zeeko etc
- Students led activities to raise awareness about effects of bullying behaviour eg poster campaign, Acts of Kindness awards etc
- Additional advice and guidance provided re safety online with a strong focus on wellbeing during remote teaching and learning

- Effective supervision and monitoring
- Behaviour support programmes
- Liaising with external organisations and agencies
- Students are advised that they can report bullying to a staff member that they trust at assemblies, information meetings etc
- Parents are encouraged, at information evenings/meetings, to report concerns about bullying to the Tutor, Year Head, Deputy Principal or Principal as early as possible
- FUSE anti-bullying programme delivered to 1st and 2nd years by SPHE teachers
- Restorative practices are being introduced and used in the school
- Ensuring students know who to tell and how to tell eg
  - Direct approach to a teacher for example after class
  - Direct approach to other trusted school staff member at an appropriate time
  - Speak to their Tutor, Year Head, Guidance Counsellor or any member of staff that they feel comfortable with
  - Hand a note up with their written work
  - Make a phone call to the school or to a Tutor or trusted teacher in the school
  - Get a parent/guardian or friend to tell on your behalf
  - Use a dedicated email address that is provided by the school on a pilot basis
  - Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place

And any other appropriate means.

Initiatives are periodically reviewed and are in line with current best practice and available resources.

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 Code of Behaviour, the Anti-Bullying Policy and the principles of the Anti-Bullying Charter will inform and guide the disciplinary and pastoral response to incidents of bullying.

The 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.

In investigating and dealing with alleged bullying incidents, the teacher will exercise her/his professional judgement to determine whether the alleged incident of bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved.

Parents and students are required to cooperate with any investigation and assist us in resolving any issues and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved as quickly as possible.

In cases of alleged bullying:

- Each case of alleged bullying behaviour should be considered by the teacher, Tutor or Year Head
- Informal investigations are used to elicit the facts of the incident. In this way it is hoped that students will gain confidence in reporting incidents, and the instilling of such confidence is regarded as vitally important.

- Professional judgment is used to decide if the incident is a case of bullying behaviour.
- In the case of more complex incidents consultation with the year head team and senior management may be necessary to decide if the incident is a case of bullying behaviour.

In cases where it has been determined that bullying behaviour has occurred:

- The reported incident of bullying will be recorded by the teacher on the Bullying Behaviour Record available on the school's management information system
- The teacher will refer the bullying report to the relevant Year Head
- All such bullying incidents will be investigated by the Year Head with assistance, if necessary, from another teacher or member of the senior management team
- The victim(s) and perpetrator(s) will be interviewed separately
- The interview will be conducted in a fair and non-judgemental manner
- Factual notes of the investigation/interview will be recorded
- Any student (for example victim, perpetrator, witnesses, onlookers) may be requested to give a written account of a bullying incident
- The victim will be assured that she is entitled to a school environment that is free from bullying and will be encouraged to report any further incidents if they should occur
- Where bullying behaviour is determined, the perpetrator(s) will be informed that their behaviour is unacceptable and in breach of the code of behaviour/school rules
- The parents/guardians of the perpetrator may be informed and/or invited to a meeting in the school
- The parents/guardians of the victim may be informed and/or invited to a meeting in the school and where it is deemed necessary, may be offered further help from the school and/or outside agencies
- Following investigation and consideration, sanctions may be imposed in line with the school's discipline procedures up to an including suspension
- In-school support will be made available to both the victim(s) and the perpetrator(s); counselling and remediation may be recommended if deemed appropriate.
- Post intervention monitoring of the relevant parties will occur.

Students involved in bullying behaviour will be dealt with as follows:

1. They will be warned to stop immediately and may be required to sign an undertaking to stop all such behaviour in the future. They will be offered counselling and/or remediation if appropriate.
2. Parents/guardians may be informed if a bullying incident occurs and will be informed if bullying behaviour continues after a warning has been issued.
3. In addition to a verbal warning, a student who bullies another student may be liable to sanctions, which include
   * A written warning
   * Detention
   * Suspension

The school may seek advice from NEPS (the National Educational Psychologist Service) and/or TUSLA.
4. In very serious cases, a student who engages in bullying may be excluded (expelled) from the school. The school may refer such very serious cases to TUSLA and/or Gardai as appropriate as per the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.

7. The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows (see Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):

Initially pastoral care support measures will be carried out e.g. a tutor or year head may attempt to mediate between the alleged perpetrator and the victim.

If necessary, students who have been bullied or have engaged in bullying behaviour may be advised to make an appointment with the school guidance counsellor, or, if they prefer, with a counsellor outside the school.

- In-school supports (eg counselling, remediation) where appropriate
- Referrals to outside agencies where deemed appropriate
- Post intervention monitoring
- Periodic review of initiatives
- Promoting self-esteem and self-confidence through curricular and cocurricular activities

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. Adoption of policy

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 5th March 2024.

11. Availability/Communication of policy

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Association (where one exists). This policy will be made available in hardcopy, on request, to any person who requests it. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

12. Implementation, Monitoring, Evaluation and Review of policy

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year. The principal will provide a report on the implementation and effectiveness of education and prevention strategies used in the school. Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, published on the school website 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: _____ Signed: _MMeade_

(Chairperson of Board of Management) (Principal)

Date: 5 March 2024 Date: 5 March 2024

Date of next review: March 2025

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 ignored.
- 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.
    - o Hot spots tend to be in the playground/school yard/outdoor areas, changing rooms, corridors and other areas of unstructured supervision.
    - o 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 between classrooms.
- Support the establishment and work of student councils.

Bullying Behaviour Record
(This is a confidential document)

1. Name of pupil being bullied and class group

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	

4. Location of incidents

(tick relevant box(es))*

School grounds	
Classroom	
Corridor	
Toilets	
Other	

5. Name the 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	
Verbal Abuse			

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

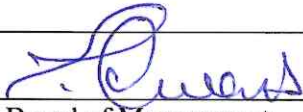## 10. Any other comment

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.

Appendix 4 of the Department's *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*: Checklist for annual review of the anti-bullying policy and its implementation

The Board of Management (the Board) must undertake an annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation. The following checklist must be used for this purpose. The checklist is an aid to conducting this review and is not intended as an exhaustive list. In order to complete the checklist, an examination and review involving both quantitative and qualitative analysis, as appropriate across the various elements of the implementation of the school's anti-bullying policy will be required.

	Yes/No
Has the Board formally adopted an anti-bullying policy that fully complies with the requirements of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*?	Yes
Has the Board published the policy on the school website and provided a copy to the parents' association?	Yes
Has the Board ensured that the policy has been made available to school staff (including new staff)?	Yes
Is the Board satisfied that school staff is sufficiently familiar with the policy and procedures to enable them to effectively and consistently apply the policy and procedures in their day to day work?	Yes
Has the Board ensured that the policy has been adequately communicated to all pupils?	Yes
Has the policy documented the prevention and education strategies that the school applies?	Yes
Have all of the prevention and education strategies been implemented?	Yes
Has the effectiveness of the prevention and education strategies that have been implemented been examined?	Yes
Is the Board satisfied that all teachers are recording and dealing with incidents in accordance with the policy?	Yes
Has the Board received and minuted the periodic summary reports of the Principal?	Yes
Has the Board discussed how well the school is handling all reports of bullying including those addressed at an early stage and not therefore included in the Principal's periodic report to the Board?	Yes
Has the Board received any complaints from parents regarding the school's handling of bullying incidents?	No
Have any parents withdrawn their child from the school citing dissatisfaction with the school's handling of a bullying situation?	No
Have any Ombudsman for Children investigations into the school's handling of a bullying case been initiated or completed?	No
Has the data available from cases reported to the Principal (by the bullying recording template) been analysed to identify any issues, trends or patterns in bullying behaviour?	Yes
Has the Board identified any aspects of the school's policy and/or its implementation that require further improvement?	More support needed re bullying especially cyberbullying
Has the Board put in place an action plan to address any areas for improvement?	Continue to deliver FUSE programmes to 1st and 2nd years Computer classes introduced for all 1st, 2nd and 3rd years in which information and advice re cyberbullying will be disseminated

Signed _____ Date __6/3/24__
Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed __mmeade_____ Date __6/3/24__
Principal

Notification regarding the Board of Management's annual review of the anti-bullying policy

To: Students, Staff, Parents and Parents Association of Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School

The Board of Management of Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School, Ozanam Street, Waterford wishes to inform you that:

o The Board of Management's annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation was completed at the Board meeting of 5th March 2024.

o This review was conducted in accordance with the checklist set out in **Appendix 4** of the Department's *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.*

Signed _____ Date 6/3/24
Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed _____ Date 6/3/24
Principal