

OUR LADY'S SECONDARY SCHOOL
ANTI-BULLYING POLICY



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's 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) 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;
 - 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; and
 - explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, 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); and
 - i) 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.

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*.

(See Appendix 1 for examples of bullying behaviour)

4. The **Relevant Teachers** for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows:

- Year Heads, Deputy Principal, Principal.
- Any teacher may act as a relevant teacher if circumstances warrant it.
(see section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, as above)

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 may be used by the school are as follows:

- a) **SPHE/RSE Programme:** Anti-Bullying curricular requirements are met within these classes. These classes aim to help students to build empathy, respect and resilience and enable students to develop a sense of self-worth. These classes provide initiatives and programmes focused on developing understanding and awareness of bullying and address identity-based bullying. Bystanders or "Silent Witnesses", are encouraged and supported through the programme to report incidents of bullying.
- b) **Digital Citizenship Programme:** First year students are taught "Netiquette" which focuses on responsibility and safety when using the internet. Students are given the skills to protect themselves from cyber-bullying, and are taught how to manage themselves if they are a victim of cyber-bullying.
- c) **Anti-Bullying Workshops:** workshops delivered by outside agencies are dependent on funding being available. When possible, the school avails of any opportunity and assigns workshops to relevant year groups.
- d) **Anti-Bullying Week:** an assigned week dedicated to the promotion of our Anti-Bullying policy and the promotion of good friendships. The expectation is that this is a cross-curricular initiative and involves all students and all teachers. Typically, awareness around the issue of bullying is raised, and the message that "We Are a Listening

School” is reinforced throughout the week. The aim is that students will be more aware of what bullying is and that it is not acceptable.

- e) **Anti-Bullying Policy:** This anti-bullying policy is published in the school journal and discussed with students at the beginning of each academic year.
- f) **HSCL** organises information talks from time to time for parents on Anti-Bullying and Internet Safety.
- g) **Year Head Assemblies:** at the start of each school year and during the year the Year Head emphasises the need for mutual respect at student assemblies. The attention of students is drawn to the school’s Anti-Bullying Policy. This message is reinforced by Management, Year Head, Tutor, and Class Teachers throughout the year.
- h) **Promoting Self Esteem:** all teachers endeavour to build up the self-esteem of each student in their care. A student with high self-esteem is less likely to be bullied and if bullied will be better equipped to deal appropriately with the issue.
- i) **Agreed Classroom Rules:** discussion and agreement of the Classroom Rules involving teachers and students in the classroom at the beginning of the school year reinforces the importance of mutual respect between all members of the school community.
- j) **Adequate Supervision** is provided by staff before school, during morning break and at lunch time.
- k) **Extra-Curricular Activities:** Students are strongly encouraged to join in extra-curricular activities particularly in First Year to help foster friendship and integration
- l) **Buddy System:** New students who join the school in year groups other than first, are allocated a buddy from the same year group to facilitate integration into the new school and prevent them being targeted by bullies.
- m) **Student Council:** The Student Council promote friendship, and work to support the anti-bullying policy.
- n) **Pastoral Care:** The pastoral care structure provides a network of support for pupils.

6.1 Procedures for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying:

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:

- a) All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be noted, investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. 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;
- b) Students or other individuals shall report incidents to any teacher. This teacher will use his/her professional judgement to determine whether a bullying incident has occurred in which case he/she will pass the concern to the relevant teacher.
- c) Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), bus escorts, caretakers, cleaners must be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the Principal/Deputy Principal
- d) The relevant teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to and how best the situation might be resolved.
- e) The primary aim for the relevant teacher in investigating and dealing with bullying will be to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame).
- f) The relevant teacher will take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by students, staff or Parent(s)/Guardian(s).
- g) Incidents are generally best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved;
- h) 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;
- i) 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;
- j) 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 statements;
- k) Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that they may face them from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher;
- l) It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s);
- m) Parent(s)/Guardian(s) and students 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.
- n) Where the relevant teacher has determined that a student 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 student being bullied.
- o)** 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 will be contacted as soon as is practicable, to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken (by reference to the school policy). The school should 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;
 - p)** It is very important that all involved (including each set of pupils and parents) understand the above approach from the outset;
 - q)** It will be made clear to all involved (each set of students and Parent(s)/Guardian(s)) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the student being disciplined, his or her Parent(s)/Guardian(s) and the school.
 - r)** In cases where the relevant teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed by the parties involved within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, it must be recorded by the relevant teacher in the school's official recording sheet.
 - s)** The relevant teacher needs to make a professional judgement whether the bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed. In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant teacher will, 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; and
 - Any feedback received from the parties involved, their Parent(s)/Guardian(s) or the school Principal or Deputy Principal.
 - t)** Bullying behaviour which is deemed to be very serious or bullying behaviour which persists will be referred to the Principal who will take any necessary action which may include suspension and/or referral to the Board of Management as per the school's Code of Behaviour. The Board may impose further sanctions up to and including expulsion.
 - u)** In certain circumstances where it is deemed appropriate referral will be made to relevant external agencies and authorities.
 - v)** Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the Parent(s)/Guardian(s) will be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures.
 - w)** In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school will advise the Parent(s)/Guardian(s) of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.
 - x)** In the case of a complaint regarding a staff member, this will normally be dealt with by the Principal
 - y)** In the case of a complaint regarding the Principal, the matter will be dealt with by the Board of Management through the agreed complaints procedure
 - z)** Where cases remain unresolved at school level, the matter will be referred to the Board of Management

6.2 Procedures for Recording Bullying Behaviour:

The Board of Management must ensure that the school has clear procedures for the formal noting and reporting of bullying behaviour and these must be documented in the school's anti-bullying policy. All records must be maintained in accordance with relevant data protection legislation. The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour must adhere to the following:

- While all reports including anonymous reports of bullying will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the relevant teacher will use his/her professional judgement in relation to the records to be kept of these reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same.
- If it is established by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher will 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.
- The relevant teacher will use the school's official recording sheet (Appendix 2) to record the bullying behaviour in the following circumstances:
 - (i) in cases where he/she considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed by the parties involved within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour occurred; and
 - (ii) where an incident is deemed by the teacher to be significantly serious to warrant immediate recording and reporting to the Principal or Deputy Principal.
- In each of the circumstances at (i) and (ii) above, the school's official recording sheet must be completed in full and retained by the teacher in question and a copy provided to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable.
- It should also be noted that the timeline for recording bullying behaviour in the school's official recording sheet does not in any way preclude the relevant teacher from consulting the Principal or Deputy Principal at an earlier stage in relation to a case.
- All records will be maintained in accordance with relevant data protection legislation.

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

- **Year Head/ Tutor** may engage with students involved in bullying incidents in a supportive role and also encourage students who observe bullying behaviour to report it. The relevant teacher will also check that the bullying behaviour has discontinued.
- **SPHE Programme:** gives students an opportunity to discuss and reflect on the topic of bullying through several SPHE modules including Belonging and Integrating, Communication Skills, Friendship, Emotional Health and Influences and Decisions. These topics help students to learn coping strategies for dealing with bullying. The coping strategies applied give students an opportunity to develop their self-esteem, friendship and social skills along with feelings of self-worth. A student involved in bullying behaviour has an opportunity to reflect on their communication skills and how her behaviour impacts on other students.
- **Prefect System:** The prefect acts as a class representative. If students are unhappy with a class situation they can report this to the prefect, who in turn can discuss the situation with a teacher.
- **Guidance Counsellors:** the relevant teacher, student or parent can refer to the Guidance Counsellors. It is recognised that students affected by bullying or who engage in bullying behaviour may need counselling to raise their self-esteem, to develop their friendship and social skills and thereby build resilience whenever this is needed. Students who engage in bullying behaviour may also need counselling to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others. These students may need ongoing assistance and may be referred to outside agencies/services as appropriate.
- **Outside referrals** may be made to relevant professionals, when deemed appropriate, in consultation with parents.

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 has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and is also 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 Trustees if requested.
11. 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 and readily accessible to parents and pupils on request and provided to the Parents' Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the Trustees and the Department of Education and Skills.

Note:

- a) The school reserves the right to apply its anti-bullying policy in respect of bullying that occurs at a location, activity, function or program that is not school related if in the opinion of the Principal and /or the Board of Management the alleged bullying has created a hostile environment at school for the victim, has infringed on the rights of the victim at the school and/or has materially or substantially disrupted the education process or the orderly operation of the school.
- b) This document should be read in conjunction with the school's Code of Behaviour.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 25/09/2023

Signed: Leo Golder
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: Kathleen Holmes
(Principal)

Date: 25/9/23

Date: 25/09/2023

Date of next review: September 2024

Reviewed by:

Student Council:

Staff:

Parents Association:

Board of Management:

Appendix 1 Examples of bullying behaviours

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

General behaviours which apply to all

- 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
- Slagging
- 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.

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
- **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 call
 - 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

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 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
- Talking loud enough so that the victim can hear

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

Appendix 2 Official School Record of Bullying Behaviour

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
- Other

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

- School Grounds
- Classroom
- Corridor
- Toilets
- School Bus
- Social/Digital Media
- Other

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

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

- | | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| Physical Aggression | <input type="checkbox"/> | Cyber-bullying | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Damage to Property | <input type="checkbox"/> | Intimidation | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Isolation/Exclusion | <input type="checkbox"/> | Malicious Gossip | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Name Calling | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other (Specify) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
-

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

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Homophobic | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Disability/SEN related | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Racist | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Membership of Traveller community | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (specify) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
-

8. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact:

9. Details of Actions taken:

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____
(Relevant Teacher)

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal: _____

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____
(Principal / Deputy Principal)

Appendix 3 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 No

- Has the Board published the policy on the school website and provided a copy to the parents' association?

Yes No

- Has the Board ensured that the policy has been made available to school staff (including new staff)?

Yes No (*In Staff Handbook*)

- Is the Board satisfied that school staff are 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 No (*In Staff Handbook*)

- Has the Board ensured that the policy has been adequately communicated to all pupils?

Yes No (*In School Journal*)

- Has the policy documented the prevention and education strategies that the school applies?

Yes No

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- Have all of the prevention and education strategies been implemented?

Yes No

- Has the effectiveness of the prevention and education strategies that have been implemented been examined?

Yes No *(not formally but, incidents of bullying have reduced in recent years so it's difficult to say which strategies have been most effective)*

- Is the Board satisfied that all teachers are recording and dealing with incidents in accordance with the policy?

Yes No

- Has the Board received and minuted the periodic summary reports of the Principal?

Yes No

- 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 No

- Has the Board received any complaints from parents regarding the school's handling of bullying incidents?

Yes No

- Have any parents withdrawn their child from the school citing dissatisfaction with the school's handling of a bullying situation?

Yes No

- Have any Ombudsman for Children investigations into the school's handling of a bullying case been initiated or completed?

Yes No

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- 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 No (No incidents reported in the last year)

- Has the Board identified any aspects of the school's policy and/or its implementation that require further improvement?

Yes No

- Has the Board put in place an action plan to address any areas for improvement?

Yes No more staff training in the area of Anti Bullying

Signed: Leo Golden
Chairperson, Board of Management

Date: 25/9/23

Signed: Kenneth Hughes
Principal

Date: 25/09/2023

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

To: WHOM IT CONCERNS

The Board of Management of Our Lady's Secondary School wishes to inform you that:

- The Board of Management's annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation was completed at the Board meeting on 25/09/2023
- 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: Leo Goldie
Chairperson, Board of Management

Date: 25/9/23

Signed: Richard Holmes
Principal

Date: 25/09/2023

