

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Reviewed 18th May 2021



St Mary's CBS, Portlaoise

Anti-bullying Policy

St. Mary's CBS is committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe learning environment for all our students, staff, parents/guardians and visitors.

Bullying, in any form, is unacceptable and will not be tolerated in our school community.

All students are obliged to respect the rights of others and to uphold the school's commitment on harassment and discrimination at all times.

Students shall not infringe upon the rights of others by engaging in any conduct which causes harassment or discrimination.

1. In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the Code of Behaviour guidelines issued by Tusla, the Board of Management of Mary's C.B.S. 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 students 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 students 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 students; and
 - explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.
 - Effective supervision and monitoring of students;
 - 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. Bullying is any form of repeated action or words intended to cause anguish, discomfort or hurt in any form to others.
- It can be carried out by an individual or a group
 - It can be subtle and therefore difficult for others to recognise
 - The victim is often perceived as vulnerable in some way
 - The person/s who bullies is perceived as being in a position of power

Bullying can take many forms:

- It can include physical, verbal, emotional, racist, homophobic or sexual abuse
- It can use exclusion, gestures, humiliation or threats
- It can take the form of cyber bullying by phone or via the internet
- It is always threatening for the victim.
- It is always personal
- The person who bullies has his/her own issues which need to be addressed
- 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.

Bullying is never acceptable. Bullying thrives in a climate of fear and secrecy. Positive anti-bullying strategies help us to break the code of silence.

Our Code of Behaviour is based on

- **Respect for self**
- **Respect for others**
- **Respect for diversity**

Any member of the school community who excludes, threatens, intimidates or hurts another person in any way disrespects this code.

As a school community

- We believe that all partners in education, parents, teaching staff, ancillary staff, management and students share responsibility for creating and maintaining a safe school.
- Informed by our school Mission Statement, we as management, teachers/workers, parents and students commit to maintaining a

respectful attitude in our communication and relationships with each other.

- We continually raise awareness of bullying and its effects and reinforce our policy on bullying in S.P.H.E., Religion and Wellbeing classes, at assemblies and at parents' nights.
- The RSE Programme provides opportunities to explore and discuss areas such as human sexuality and relationships which has particular relevance to identity-based bullying, including homophobic and transgender bullying.
- We encourage students to educate each other about the dangers of bullying. Support will be sought from the Student Council and Meitheal in helping school personnel deal with bullying behaviour.
- We encourage students to reject bullying behaviour in their own social groups and to recognise and challenge those who engage in bullying behaviour. We encourage them to report bullying of themselves or others so as to create a supportive school atmosphere.
- In all our formal and informal interactions with students, but explicitly in our Wellbeing programme, we seek to foster self-confidence and resilience in our students which will enable them to face challenges they may encounter in life.
- We supervise and monitor students in out of class time as far as is practicable.
- All students are encouraged to develop a positive sense of self-worth and self-esteem during their time at the school.
- All anti-bullying programmes, initiatives and strategies strive to build empathy, respect and resilience in students.
- Prevention and awareness raising measures will be sensitive to the type of bullying and take into account the age of the students involved.
- Procedures will be such that all members of staff understand what bullying is and how the school deals with bullying behaviour.
- Students are encouraged to recognise, reject and report bullying behaviour.
- Parents are encouraged to be vigilant in watching out for the signs of bullying and to report any suspicion of bullying they may have to the school.
- In order to raise awareness of bullying and its effects, the school will run an Anti-Bullying week each year.
- Anti-Bullying posters will be placed in key areas around the school.
- Highlight and explicitly teach school rules in student friendly language in the classroom and in common areas.

As teachers and school staff:

- We commit to the protection of our students from anti-social, negative or intimidating behaviour.

- We commit to being alert for bullying behaviour and to be vigilant for “out of character” behaviour shown by students which could be indicative of bullying.
- We commit to speaking to and treating our students with respect and courtesy and will expect our students to speak to and treat their teachers with respect and courtesy also.
- We will not accept actions or words which have a destructive or hurtful influence on our students or which interfere with other student’s rights.
- We commit to making ourselves available for our students should they wish to approach us to talk about a bullying incident or pattern of behaviour.

As Parents

What parents should be alert for:

- Signs of distress, change in sleeping patterns, anxiety, unexplained illness, reluctance to go to school, change in route to school, change in friends, changes in patterns of behaviour
- Unexplained bruises or scratches or damage to clothes, books or property
- Any increases in demands for money or money “lost”

What parents should do:

Find out whatever facts you can - names, places, witnesses etc.

- If friends are also being bullied, consider contacting other parents
- Advise your child to report the incident and if they do not wish to inform the school yourself
- Contact your child’s class teacher, tutor or year-head if you have any concerns
- Support your child in implementing strategies to challenge bullying behaviour such as remaining calm and confident in a challenging situation, walking away, and saying “I don’t want to”. Practice/role-play these strategies with your child and encourage them to implement them. Do not encourage them to retaliate.

As Students

What students should do:

- Tell a trusted adult about the bullying. Do not keep silent. Remember bullying thrives on secrecy
- Your parent/guardian, teachers, tutor, year-head, deputy principals, principal, school counsellors, SNA’s and supervisors are all available to you. If you are uncomfortable telling an adult on your own ask a friend to accompany you or to tell the adult for you.
- Provide as many details as you can about the incidents including times, places, dates, circumstances and names. Include the names of any witnesses.
- Tell a trusted adult if you witness bullying of another student.

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

- At the outset, any staff member either teaching or on supervision in whose presence a suspected bullying incident has occurred must firstly investigate the incident to establish if bullying has actually occurred.
- Following the initial investigation and if the staff member feels that a bullying incident has occurred it is then reported up the chain of referral as appropriate.
- Principal, Deputy Principals, Year Heads, Guidance Counsellor, Tutors and class teachers also have a vital role in any effective anti-bullying strategy and will be kept informed at all times as to the progress of any investigation.

5. Process & Procedures

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:

- The primary aim in 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); Circular 45/2013
- In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved;
- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the Relevant Teacher. In that way students will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It will be made clear to all students that when they report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly; Class Teachers/Tutors may also request statements be taken from the class as a whole.
- Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), caretakers, cleaners will be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to subject teachers, the Year Head or the relevant teacher.
- Parents 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.

The Investigation:

- The primary 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 (rather than to apportion blame).
- Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by students, staff or parents.

- Incidents are generally best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved;
- All interviews will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all students concerned. Students who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this way;
- When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the Relevant Teacher will seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This will be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner; it may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s);
- If a group is involved, each member will be interviewed individually at first. Each member may be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements; Statements are usually read back to each member.
- Each member of a group shall be supported through the possible pressures that they may face from the other members of the group after interview by the teaching community;

Action to be taken:

- If an incident of bullying is reported to any staff member or if any staff member observes an incident of bullying they must fill out the 'Bullying Record Form'. See Appendix 1.
- If a member of staff observes the bullying incident they must carry out the initial investigation.
- The staff member passes their report onto the Year Head.
- In cases where it has been determined by the Relevant Teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the offender may be asked to sign a promise that the bullying behaviour will stop. If that promise is forthcoming and is honoured, there will be no sanction and that will be the end of the matter.
- It should be made clear to him how he is in breach of the school's Anti-Bullying Policy and efforts should be made to try to get him to see the situation from the perspective of the student being bullied.
- If a student has signed such a promise but then chooses to break that promise and continue the bullying behaviour, the parents of the parties involved will be contacted at this stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken (by reference to the school policy).
- Then the parents will be requested to countersign the promise. Breach of this additional promise by further bullying behaviour is regarded as a very grave matter and a serious sanction will be imposed by the school authorities, the student may be suspended from school or the case may be referred to the Board of Management who may consider more serious sanctions up to and including expulsion.
- In serious cases the school's Code of Behaviour may be invoked immediately.

- It shall be made clear to all involved (each set of students and parents) that in any situation every effort will be made to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved. Where disciplinary sanctions are required, it will be within the context of the Code of Behaviour, or if very serious, the student(s) will be referred to the Board of Management for sanctions up to, and including, expulsion.

Follow-up:

- Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved should be arranged separately with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date if the student who has been bullied is ready and agreeable. The Guidance Counsellor may be asked to become involved in this process by the Relevant Teacher or Year Head for support for the parties involved.
- Pastoral care team may also be informed for extra support.
- The Tutor and Year Heads will provide support for all parties.
- Those who have been found to have engaged in bullying will be encouraged to recognise the inappropriateness of such behaviour and the seriousness of its effects on others.
- Further intervention may be deemed appropriate when instances of bullying occur. This may involve counselling by outside professionals. The objective of such intervention will be the restoration of confidence and self-esteem in both perpetrator and victim.
- In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the Relevant Teacher and Year Head must, as part of their 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 parents or the school Principal, Deputy Principal or Year Head.
- If it is established by the Relevant Teacher that bullying has occurred, the Relevant Teacher must use the recording template at **Appendix 1** to record the bullying behavior in the following circumstances:
 - 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 has occurred; and
 - 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, Deputy Principal or Year Head, as applicable.

Appeals:

- Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures;
- In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

Serious instances of bullying behaviour will, in accordance with the Children First and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, be referred to Tusla and/or the Gardaí as appropriate.

6. Support

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

- All teachers of students affected by bullying will be briefed by the Deputy Principal/Year Head and asked to keep a watching eye on the student. Any sanctions given will be included in the briefing.
- The Relevant Teacher and the Year Head and Guidance Counsellor will maintain contact with all students affected by bullying and their parents, until satisfied that the situation has returned to normal.
- If students require counselling or further supports, the school will endeavor to liaise with the appropriate agencies to organise same. This may be for the student affected by bullying or involved in the bullying behaviour.
- Students should understand that there are no innocent bystanders and that all incidents of bullying behaviour must be reported to a teacher.

7. Supervision and Monitoring of Students:

The Board of Management confirms that appropriate supervision and monitoring policies and practices are in place to both prevent and deal with bullying behavior and to facilitate early intervention where possible.

8. 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 students or the harassment of students 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 Traveler community.

This policy is implemented in conjunction with the following school policies:

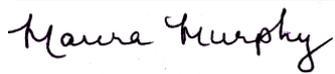
- The Code of Behaviour
- Health and Safety Policy
- Child Protection Guidelines
- Acceptable Use of ICT Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- CCTV Policy

This policy was informed by

- The Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2013
<https://www.education.ie/en/publications/policy-reports/anti-bullying-procedures-for-primary-and-post-primary-schools.pdf>
- Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children July 2017 <https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/children-first-guidance-and-legislation/>
- DE Circular 45/2013 https://www.education.ie/en/circulars-and-forms/active-circulars/cl0045_2013.pdf

This policy was reviewed by the Board of Management of St Mary's CBS

Signed:  (Chairperson of BOM)

Signed:  (Principal)

Date: 18th May 2021

Appendix 1 Template for recording bullying behaviour

1. Name of student being bullied and class group

Name _____ Class _____

2. Name(s) and class(es) of student(s) engaged in bullying behaviour

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3. Source of bullying concern/report (tick relevant box(es))*

Student concerned	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Student	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parent	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

Yard	<input type="checkbox"/>
Classroom	<input type="checkbox"/>
Corridor	<input type="checkbox"/>
Toilets	<input type="checkbox"/>
School Bus	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

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

7. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact

9. Details of actions taken

Signed _____ Date _____
(Relevant Teacher)

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal/Year Head _____

Appendix 2 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 <i>Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools</i> ?	
Has the Board published the policy on the school website and provided a copy to the parents' association?	
Has the Board ensured that the policy has been made available to school staff (including new staff)?	
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?	
Has the Board ensured that the policy has been adequately communicated to all students?	
Has the policy documented the prevention and education strategies that the school applies?	
Have all of the prevention and education strategies been implemented?	
Has the effectiveness of the prevention and education strategies that have been implemented been examined?	
Is the Board satisfied that all teachers are recording and dealing with incidents in accordance with the policy?	
Has the Board received and minuted the periodic summary reports of the Principal?	
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?	
Has the Board received any complaints from parents regarding the school's handling of bullying incidents?	
Have any parents withdrawn their child from the school citing dissatisfaction with the school's handling of a bullying situation?	

Have any Ombudsman for Children investigations into the school's handling of a bullying case been initiated or completed?	
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?	
Has the Board identified any aspects of the school's policy and/or its implementation that require further improvement?	
Has the Board put in place an action plan to address any areas for improvement?	

Signed _____ Date _____
Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed _____ Date _____
Principal

Appendix 3

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

To: _____

The Board of Management of _____ 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 of _____ [date].
- 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 _____
Chairperson, Board of Management

Date _____

Signed _____
Principal

Date _____

Appendix 4

Anti Bullying Links

<https://tacklebullying.ie/>

<https://antibullyingcentre.ie/>

<https://www.webwise.ie/>

<https://antibullyingcentre.ie/fuse/>

<https://tacklebullying.ie/additional-support/>

<https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Bullying/Anti-Bullying-Procedures-in-Schools.html>

<https://www.hotline.ie/library/documents/Cyberbullying.pdf>

https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Child-Protection/child_protection_guidelines.pdf

<https://www.EnglishTeacherHandbook-UP2US->