MercySecondary School Kilbeggan Anti-Bullying Policy

October 2019

1. In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the code of behaviour guidelines issued by the NEWB, **the Board of Management of Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan** has adopted the following anti-bullying policy within the framework of the school's overall code of behaviour. This policy fully complies with the requirements of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* which were published in September 2013.

2. The Board of Management recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of pupils and is therefore fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour:

    - A positive school culture and climate which-
        - is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity;
        - encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment; and
        - promotes respectful relationships across the school community;
    - Effective leadership;
    - A school-wide approach;
    - A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact;
    - Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that-
        - build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and
        - explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.
    - Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils;
    - Supports for staff;
    - Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies); and
    - On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

3. In accordance with the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* bullying is defined as follows:

Bullying is unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical conducted, by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time.

The following types of bullying behaviour are included in the definition of bullying:

- deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying,
- cyber-bullying and
- identity-based bullying such as homophobic bullying, racist bullying, bullying based on a person's membership of the Traveller community and bullying of those with disabilities or special educational needs.

Isolated or once-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour, including a once-off offensive or hurtful text message or other private messaging, do not fall within the definition of bullying and should be dealt with, as appropriate, in accordance with the school's code of behaviour.

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*.

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):

- Any member of staff with whom the student feels comfortable.
- Class Tutor
- Year Head
- Guidance Counsellor.
- Principal or Deputy Principal.
- Any member of the Pastoral Care team.

A student should feel comfortable reporting a bullying incident by using one, or any, of the following approaches:

- Directly approaching a teacher at an appropriate time. e.g. after class, break/lunch time.
- Handing up a note with homework or to any member of the Pastoral Care team,
- Getting a parent to contact the school by ringing a Pastoral Care team member.

5. The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber- bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying) that will be used by the school are as follows (see Section 6.5 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):

The policy addresses bullying behaviour, harassment and sexual harassment. While it primarily addresses issues related to bullying of students, it applies also to teaching and other school staff, parents/guardians and others insofar as measures under the policy relate to them.

The policy applies -

- During school time (including breaks)
- Going to and from school
- During school tours
- During extra-curricular activities
- To any behaviour of a bullying nature conducted by any member of the school community (outside school) which seriously impacts on a students' participation in school, and / or where the matter relates to the school's duty of care to a student.

Actions to prevent bullying -

- Our Anti-Bullying Policy is an integral part of Mercy Secondary School's Code of Behaviour that all students are obliged to sign up.
- Supervision and monitoring of students behaviour, including lockers, yard, corridors and areas with access to computers.
- All partners of the wider school community – parents, staff and students are encouraged to undertake a shared responsibility to be aware and assist in the reporting and prevention of bullying
- Cross-curricular approach to bullying eg. English, Religion, PE, SPHE classes in Junior Cert and again in Senior Cycle to include topics such as assertiveness, conflict resolution and anger management.
- Class teachers can write a set of school/classroom rules
- Class teachers can facilitate the reading or writing of stories or poems, or the drawing of pictures about bullying in classes.
- Class teachers can make up role-plays and have discussions about bullying and why it matters.
- Anti – Bullying awareness campaigns constantly in the life of the school. This would include a full school Anti-Bullying Awareness Week, surveys across the student population and guest speakers from Mental Health Ireland.
- Development of the Anti-Bullying Charter for all classrooms.

Teacher Awareness

- To help recognise victims of bullying, teachers should have a heightened awareness of "out of character" behaviour
- Teachers should protect students and challenge ALL forms of anti-social or negative behaviour and regard it as totally unacceptable.
- As teachers, we do not tolerate any actions or words which have a destructive influence, or interfere with other students rights in any way.
- As teachers, we should not accept cheek, rudeness, sexual comments etc.
- We also need to be aware of and appreciate the hurt and anger which teachers can cause pupils by sarcasm, personal remarks, unnecessary negative comments, unjust treatments.
- Bullying should not be confused with inter-personal conflicts.

Links to Other Policies and to Curriculum Delivery.
This policy is consistent with other policies Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan;

- Code of Behaviour
- Child Protection Policy
- Internet Safety: Acceptable Use Policy
- Health and Safety
- SPHE/RSE
- Guidance Plan
- Learning Support
- Admissions Policy
- Induction for New Staff
- Dignity in the Workplace

This policy links to the following Curriculum areas

- SPHE/Religion : the issue of bullying is dealt with in each of three years of Junior Cycle SPHE & Religion, and then at Senior Cycle through YSI & Religion Classes
- CSPE (Human Rights),
- English (personal accounts)
- Other links could include -Transition Year ; LCVP ; Class Tutor time; Assemblies; Incident Report Form & the Code of Behaviour.

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) :

Noting and Recording Incidents of Bullying.

- All reported incidents of bullying are to be noted on the Bullying Incident Report Form.
- Bullying Incident Report forms are to be filled in by the teacher to whom it was reported.
- These forms are to be presented to the Principal or Deputy Principal or Year Head who will deal with the matter, and file these forms away.
- Files are to be kept on file for 5 years after the student leaves the school**.**

Dealing with reported Incidents of bullying

The principle of consultation applies across all measures here.
The procedures for noting and recording as outlined above will apply.
The rights of all students will be respected and a fair hearing will be given to all students.
Staff will be aware that allegations of bullying need to be fully investigated before action is taken.

1. Initial steps to be taken following a report or disclosure of alleged bullying behaviour

Action taken by	Procedure	Support and/or sanction may include
Any class or subject teacher Any teacher or member of the Pastoral Care team	Speak to the student(s) involved Speak to relevant student(s) and/or interview the class. Keep a record Follow up progress with all parties involved and monitor the situation.	Serious talk with the student(s) Verbal warning. Any issues at this stage should be followed up in a compassionate and non-confrontational way. Outline a fair and mutually agreed outcome Possibity of promotion to Level 2 with immediate effect.

2. Subsequent incidents/reports of bullying

Action taken by	Procedure	Support and/or sanction may include
Any teacher Member of the Pastoral Care team and/or Deputy Principal/Principal may be involved.	Incident should be investigated by the Pastoral Care team using the Restorative model. Principal / Deputy Principal informed Parents of students involved should be contacted. Keep a record (Bullying Incident Report) Year Head and Pastoral Care Team to monitor progress with all parties	Serious talk with the student(s) Second verbal warning Any sanctions imposed are the responsibility of the Year Head / Deputy Principal/Principal and will be applied as per the Code of Behaviour. Year Head &Pastoral Care Team to monitor behaviour

3. Where bullying behaviour persists / serious incidents of bullying

Action taken by	Procedure	Support and/or sanction may include
Principal / Deputy Principal involved Year Head and Pastoral Care Team may be involved Board of Management will be notified at the discretion of the Principal, once a term or in the case of Suspension.	Parents to meet the Deputy Principal / Principal Use Restorative approach where possible and appropriate Feedback to Year Head and Pastoral Care Team Keep a Record (Bullying Incident Report) Follow up progress to be monitored by the Pastoral Care Team and / or the Year Head / Deputy Principal / Principal.	Detention / Suspension as per the Code of Behaviour Parents to agree to a set of conditions for behaviour Counselling suggested Referral to external supports e.g. Child Psycologist may be suggested The future of the student in the school may be considered.

- Any reported allegations of bullying/harassment between students and staff should be dealt with directly by the Principal.

- In relation to staff to staff incidents, the matter should be referred directly to the Principal where an Incident report is to be filled out. Refer also to the ASTI / TUI Grievance procedure and the school's Dignity in the Workplace Policy.

Guidelines when investigating an Incident

- Accept what students say rather than believe initially. It is possible that some or all could be fabricated.
- Seek answers to the questions – What? When? Where? Who? Why? Using a calm non-aggressive style
- If a gang is involved each member should be interviewed individually and give a written report of the incident.
- Any witness should be interviewed and give a report of the incident. It is essential to assure their anonymity, and be watchful of bias.

Outcomes

- The parties involved will be asked to apologise in a sincere manner. There must be a definite commitment not to be involved in bullying behaviour again.
- Reconciliation and restoration of relationships should always be the desired outcome in any investigation.
- All cases will be dealt with in accordance with the Code of Behaviour
- After the incident(s) have been investigated and dealt with, each case will be monitored to ensure that repeated bullying behaviour does not take place.
- Records should be kept on file for five years.

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) :

- The victim will receive the utmost privacy and confidentiality in the initial, and subsequent, investigations.
- A series of events will be organised, relating to raising awareness of bullying, during Anti-Bullying week.
- Bullying will be incorporated into SPHE and Religion lessons.
- In a case were sanctions need to be imposed, they will be enforced, as per the school's Code of Behaviour, by the Year Heads, the Deputy Principal or the Principal.
- Following an investigated incident of bullying, Class Tutors, Year Heads, members of the Pastoral Care Team and break-time Supervisors will monitor the behaviour of the students involved.
- Staff will be informed of necessary developments in bullying incidents, at regular intervals They will be asked to monitor and observe the students or classes involved in specific incidents and to pass on these observations to a member of the PastoralCare Team.
- Parents or guardians will be informed of bullying incidents in accordance with this policy, and if necessary they may be required to join in the restorative based approach to resolving the issue.
- A referral system will be in place to ensure that all incidents will be dealt with. If those investigating can't resolve issue it will then be referred onto the following people.
    - Year Head
    - Deputy Principal
    - Principal
    - Outside Agencies

8. Supervision and Monitoring of Pupils

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

9. Prevention of Harassment

The Board of Management confirms that the school will, in accordance with its obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the sexual harassment of pupils or staff or the harassment of pupils or staff on any of the nine grounds specified i.e. gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.

10. This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on **16th October 2019**

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

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

Signed: ***Paul Daly*** Signed : ***Garrett Farrell***

(Chairperson of Board of Management) (Principal)

Date: **16th October 2019** Date: **16th October 2019**

Date of next review: **16th October 2020**

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.
- Support the establishment and work of student councils.

Appendix 3 Bullying Incident Report Form

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))*

Playground	
Classroom	
Corridor	
Toilets	
School Bus	
Other	

5. Name of 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 (specify)	

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

Signed _____ (Relevant Teacher) Date _____

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal/Year Head _____

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Appendix 4 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 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
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?	No
Has the Board put in place an action plan to address any areas for improvement?	N/A

Signed : ***Paul Daly*** Date : **16th October 2019**
Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed : ***Garrett Farrell*** Date : **16th October 2019**
Principal

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

To: The Parent's Association

The Board of Management of Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan 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 17th May 2018

- 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 : ***Paul Daly*** Date **16th October 2019**
Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed : ***Garrett Farrell*** Date **16th October 2019**
Principal