Anti Bullying Policy

Our Lady's Secondary School values teaching as one of the most important of all human activities.

Our school seeks to
Promote Spiritual and Human Development
Achieve Quality in Teaching and Learning
Show Respect for Every Person
Create Community
Be Just and Responsible

Anti Bullying Policy

Reviewed	Ratified by the Board of Management	Review Date
September 2023	4th October 2023	September 2024

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 positive 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 and the Cinealtas: Action Plan on Bullying published in December 2022

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. These principles are framed in the themes highlighted in Cinealtas: Action Plan on Bullying Dec 2022.

Culture and Environment
A positive school culture and climate which:

- o is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity
- o encourages students to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment
- o promotes respectful relationships across the school community
- o Includes effective supervision and monitoring of students

Curriculum(Teaching and Learning)

An inclusive and supportive curriculum with training and development for school staff to provide consistent support and opportunities for inclusive learning. This includes the implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that-

- o build empathy, respect and resilience in students; and
- o addresses all issues of bullying, including cyber-bullying, identity-based bullying homophobic and transphobic bullying.

Policy and Planning

At Our Lady's we develop adaptive and responsive policies where all stakeholders play active roles in preventing bullying. This includes

- o A school-wide approach to developing and implementing of policies.
- o Distributive leadership amongst all stakeholders
- o A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact;
- o On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of all school policies and procedures including the anti-bullying policy

Relationships and Partnership

At Our Lady's we value the importance of positive relationships to promote empathy, understanding and respect across the whole school community. This includes the following -

- o Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies)
- o Supports for students, staff and Parents/Guardians

3. In accordance with the Cinealtas: Action Plan on Bullying published in December 2022 bullying is defined as

"Bullying is targeted behaviour, online or offline, that causes harm. The harm caused can be physical, social and or emotional in nature. Bullying behaviour is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power in relationships between two people or groups of people in society"

The core elements of bullying behaviour can be divided into the following:

- o Targeted Behaviour
- o Repeated Behaviour
- o Imbalance of power

Additional information on the above elements of bullying is available on page 20-21 in Cinealtas: Action Plan on Bullying published in December 2022.   Different types of bullying are also set out in Section 2 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*. Please see Appendix 1 for details.

Behaviour that does not meet this definition of bullying will be dealt with in accordance with the school's code of Positive behaviour.

3. **The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows:**
   - ➢ Principal
   - ➢ Deputy Principal
   - ➢ Yearheads
   - ➢ Guidance Counsellor
   - ➢ Tutors
   - ➢ First Year Mentor
   - ➢ Any teacher may act as a relevant teacher if circumstances warrant it.

Culture and Environment

- A school-wide approach to the fostering of respect for all members of the school community.
- The promotion of the value of diversity to address issues of prejudice and stereotyping highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour.
- School wide awareness raising and training on all aspects of bullying, to support students, parent(s)/guardian(s) and the wider school community.
- Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extra-curricular activities. Non-teaching and ancillary staff are encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers.
- There is a strong emphasis on pastoral care in the school and the system is supported by teachers, class tutors, yearheads, guidance counsellor, subject teachers, ancillary staff, the deputy principal and principal.

Curriculum

- The fostering and enhancing of the self-esteem of all our students through both curricular and extracurricular activities. Students are provided with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth through formal and informal interactions.
- Student engagement with the topic of bullying is facilitated through the SED and Wellbeing Programme (PE, SPHE, CSPE, Guidance and other curricular programmes).
- The Care Team including year heads, tutors and mentor create awareness of student welfare and provide ongoing support to students at individual and class level throughout the school year.

- Invited speakers make presentations on bullying and students engage in various anti bullying workshops.

<u>Policy and Planning</u>
- ➢ Whole staff professional development on bullying to ensure that staff develop an awareness of what bullying is, how it impacts on students' lives and the need to respond in order to prevent and intervene
- ➢ Anti-bullying guidelines are included in the student journal and the anti-bullying charter is displayed in classrooms and common areas of the school.
- ➢ The school's anti-bullying policy is discussed with students and is available on the school website or on request from the school office.
- ➢ The implementation of whole school awareness measures e.g. Awareness Days, Wellbeing Week, Anti-Bullying Awareness events and students' surveys. Surveys of all year groups are conducted and the results are analysed by the Guidance Counsellor and Year head. Reported incidents are followed up.
- ➢ Implementation of the Acceptable Use Policy.
- ➢ General observations by teachers and referrals are made to the appropriate personnel.
- ➢ Bullying is included on the agenda for staff meetings at least once a year

<u>Relationships and Partnership</u>

- ➢ Involvement of the student body in contributing to a safe school environment e.g. Cairdeas system and other student support activities that can help to support students and encourage a culture of peer respect and support.

- ➢ Strategies for coping with bullying are made available to students as required.
- ➢ Encourage a culture of telling, with particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders. In that way students will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It should 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.
  - ➢ Ensuring that students know who to tell and how to tell, e.g.:
    - o Direct approach to teacher at an appropriate time, for example after class.
    - o Email/message to teacher
    - o Phone call to the school or to a trusted teacher in the school.
    - o Get a parent(s)/guardian(s) or friend to tell on the student's behalf.
    - o Administer a confidential questionnaire to all students
  - ➢ Parent(s)/guardian(s) are encouraged to approach the school if they suspect that any child is being bullied.
  - ➢ **Cairdeas** (mentor/buddy system) is in place, where senior students are paired with first year students at the start of the new academic year. Training is provided for senior students on how to be a good mentor/buddy. The group play a significant role in the induction of first years during orientation. Activities (e.g. badminton, soccer, basketball and a table quiz) are organised for first years by the Cairdeas group.
  - ➢ The student council play a key role in the development of positive relationships amongst the school community. Training is provided for student council members.
  - ➢ New students who join the school at other times are allocated a buddy. This is usually another student from the same year group.

Implementation of curricula

➢ The full implementation of the Wellbeing Programme to include; SPHE, RSE, CSPE, PE, Guidance and other relevant curricular areas.
➢ Continuous Professional Development is available for staff in delivering these programmes.
➢ School wide delivery of lessons on bullying from evidence based programmes, e.g. Classroom Guidance and FUSE Anti-Bullying and Online Safety Programme.

Links to other policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with relevant school policies, for example; Code of Positive Behaviour, Child Protection policy, Acceptable User policy, Attendance and Participation policy, Whole School Guidance and Dignity in the Workplace.

4. **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:**

Reporting bullying behaviour

➢ Students should discuss any incident of bullying or suspected bullying with a teacher or another trusted adult within the school system; this is responsible behaviour rather than "telling tales".
➢ Parents/guardians should contact the school regarding incidents of bullying behaviour which they might suspect or that have come to their attention through their children or other parents/guardians.
➢ Any student or parent(s)/guardian(s) may bring a bullying incident to any teacher in the school.
➢ All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying, will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher.
➢ Teaching and non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), caretakers, cleaners must report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher.

Investigating and dealing with incidents:

The following procedures will be employed to resolve issues of bullying.

➢ In dealing with an incident, the (relevant) teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred.
➢ The (relevant) teacher will report any concern to the yearhead/guidance counsellor/deputy principal/principal. The year head/guidance counsellor/deputy/principal will follow procedure as outlined.
➢ 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;
➢ All interviews should be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all students concerned. Students who are not directly involved can sometimes provide very

useful information. A written report of the incident(s) may be requested by the relevant teacher.

➢ The relevant teacher will interview the student(s) to ascertain specific details of the incident(s). The school will also liaise with relevant personnel when bullying behaviour is reported during off-site school activities.

➢ A "Bullying Report Form" will be completed.

➢ In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the parties involved should be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken (by reference to the school policy). The school should give parent(s)/guardian(s) an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports provided to the students.

➢ Where the relevant teacher has determined that a student has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts should be made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the student being bullied.

➢ It must also 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/ her parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school.

➢ Where deemed appropriate a verbal warning will be given to the perpetrator to stop the inappropriate behaviour, pointing out how he/she is in breach of the Code of Behaviour and trying to get him/her to see the situation from the victim's point of view. Support is offered to the victim through meetings with staff members (tutor, yearhead, mentor, guidance counsellor, subject teacher, principal/deputy principal).

➢ Bullying can lead to the imposition of sanctions in line with the Code of Behaviour (e.g. detention, withdrawal of privileges, verbal reprimand from yearhead/deputy principal/principal).

➢ If the behaviour persists, offenders and victims of bullying may be referred to counselling services.

➢ If there is a serious incident, the matter should be reported to the Deputy Principal/Principal. Sanctions up to and including suspension will be considered by the Principal.

➢ Where the incident is deemed more serious the Principal will refer the matter to the Board of Management. Sanctions up to and including expulsion will be considered by the Board of Management.

➢ In the case of a complaint regarding a staff member, this should be referred immediately to the Principal.

➢ Bullying of a teacher by a student or group of students will be dealt with in line with the Code of Positive Behaviour.

Follow up and recording

➢ Incidents of bullying should be recorded on a "Bullying Report Form".

➢ In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant teacher must, as part of his/her professional judgement, take the following factors into account:

  ➢ Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased;
  ➢ Whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable;
  ➢ Whether the relationships between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable;
  ➢ Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parent(s)/guardian(s)s or the school Principal or Deputy Principal.

➢ Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved may be arranged separately with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date if the student who has been bullied is ready and agreeable.

➢ Where a parent(s)/guardian(s) is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parent(s)/guardian(s) should:
   o Make a complaint in writing to the school Principal. A meeting will be arranged to discuss the issue.
   o If the parent(s)/guardian(s) remains dissatisfied with the response from senior management at the school a complaint should be submitted in writing to the Board of Management.

➢ In the event that a parent(s)/guardian(s) 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.

Recording of bullying behaviour

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

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

➢ All staff must keep a record of any incidents witnessed by them or notified to them. This record should be submitted to the Yearhead/Guidance Counsellor/Deputy Principal/Principal.

➢ While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the relevant teacher must keep a written record of the reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same.

➢ The relevant teacher must inform the principal/deputy principal of all incidents being investigated.

➢ If it is established that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher must keep appropriate written records which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.

➢ The relevant teacher must use the recording template at **Appendix 3** to record the bullying behaviour in the following circumstances:
   a) 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 occurred; and
   b) 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 or Deputy Principal as applicable.

When the recording template is used, it must be retained by the relevant teacher in question and a copy maintained by the principal. Completed Appendix 3 forms will be maintained in the Deputy Principal's office.

Anti –Bullying is on the agenda for all Board of Management meetings. An update based on the Appendix 3 reports received will be provided at each meeting.

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

➢ All in-school supports and opportunities will be provided for students affected by bullying to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop friendships and social skills and build resilience; for example, the Pastoral Care System (tutors, yearheads, guidance counsellor, first year mentor), Cairdeas (buddy system), senior management (deputy principal and principal).

➢ If pupils require counselling or further supports the school will endeavour to liaise with the appropriate agencies to organise same. This may be for the student(s) affected by bullying or for the student(s) involved in the bullying behaviour.

➢ Pupils should understand that there are no innocent bystanders and that all incidents of bullying behaviour must be reported to a teacher.

6. **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 behaviour and to facilitate early intervention where possible.

7. **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 staff or the harassment of students 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.

8. This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on_____.

9. This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

10. 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 provided to the Parents' Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Signed: *Willie Bulter*   *Paul Fogarty*
            (Chairperson of Board of Management)   (Principal)

Date: 4th October 2023

Date of next review: September 2024

Appendix 1   Examples of bullying behaviours

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 rumors, 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/Snapchat/Instagram/ Twitter/You Tube or on games consoles • Abusive website comments/Blogs/Pictures • Abusive posts on any form of communication technology • Sexting

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 • The "look"
Sexual	• Unwelcome or inappropriate sexual comments or touching • Harassment • Sexting
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 • Taking advantage of some students' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to understand social situations and social cues. • Mimicking a person's disability • Setting others up for ridicule
Gifted Students	• Name calling • Taunting others because of their ability or talents • Setting others up for ridicule