MERCY COLLEGE WOODFORD

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 Mercy College Woodford 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 was first 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. 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.
   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 students; and
      - Explicitly addresses 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 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.

Examples of bullying behaviour – this list of examples is non-exhaustive:

General behaviours which apply to all	- Harassment based on any of the nine grounds in the equality legislation eg. sexual, harassment, homophobic bullying, racist bullying etc. - Physical aggression - Damage to property - Name calling - Slagging - The production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other 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 calls

	• Abusive telephone/mobile calls • Abusive text messages • Abusive email • Abusive communication on social networks eg. Facebook/Ask.fm/Twitter/You Tube 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 eg. gay, queer, lesbian... used in a derogatory manner • Physical intimidation or attacks • Threats
Race, nationality, ethnic background and membership of the Traveller community	• Discrimination, prejudice, comments or insults about colour, nationality, culture, social class, religious beliefs, ethnic or traveller background • Exclusion on the basis of any of the above
Relational	This involves manipulating relationships as a means of bullying. Behaviours include: • Malicious gossip • Isolation & exclusion • Ignoring • Excluding from 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
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 up others for ridicule

4. **The relevant Teachers in this school are:**
   - Principal
   - Deputy Principal
   - Year Heads
   - Guidance Counsellor
   - Any class teacher

5. The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber-bullying, homophobic and transphobic bulling) that will be used by the school are as follows:

School-wide approach:

- 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, and highlighting the unacceptability of bullying behaviour
- The fostering and enhancing of the self-esteem of all our students through both curricular and extracurricular activities. Students will be provided with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth through formal and informal interactions
- Whole staff professional development on bullying to ensure that all staff develops an awareness of what bullying is, how it impacts on students' lives and the need to respond to it – prevention and intervention
- Professional development with specific focus on the training of the relevant teachers
- School-wide awareness raising and training on all aspects of bullying, to include students, parents/guardians and the wider school community
- Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extracurricular activities. Non-teaching staff will be encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers. Supervision will also apply to monitoring student use of communication technology within the school
- Involvement of the school council in contributing to a safe school environment eg. the prefects buddy system and other student support activities that can help to support students and encourage a culture of peer respect and support
- Development and promotion of an Anti-Bullying Code for the school – to be included in student journals and displayed publicly in classrooms and in common areas of the school
- Encourage a culture of telling, with particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders. 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
- Identify clear protocols to encourage parents/guardians to approach the school if they suspect that their child is being bullied. This protocol will be developed in consultation with the Parent Association

- Application of the Acceptable Use Policy in the school and updating it in-line with new technologies. Acceptable Use Policy should include the necessary steps to ensure that the access to technology within the school is strictly monitored, as is the students' use of mobile phones

Implementation of Curricula:

- The full implementation of the SPHE and CSPE curricula and the RSE Programmes
- Continuous Professional Development for staff in delivering these programmes
- School-wide delivery of lessons on bullying from evidence based programmes eg. On My Own, The Trust Pack, Stand Up, RSE
- The school will specifically consider the additional needs of SEN students with regard to programme implementation and the development of skills and strategies to enable all students to respond appropriately

Links to other policies:

- Code of Behaviour
- Child Protection Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Tours and Outings Policy
- Pastoral Care Policy
- Special Needs Policy

6. The school's procedure 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 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);
   The school's procedures must be consistent with the following approach and every effort will be made to ensure that all involved (including students, parents/guardians understand this approach from the outset:

Reporting Bullying Behaviour
- Any student or parent/guardian 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, bus escorts, caretakers must report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher

Investigating and dealing with incidents: Style of Approach

- In investigating and dealing with bullying, the (relevant) teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved;
- Parents/guardians 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;
- Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach;
- Where possible incidents should be investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved;
- 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 also provide very useful information in this way;
- When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher should seek answers to questions of what, 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;
- 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
- Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that may face them from the other members of the group after the interview by the teacher. It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident;
- In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parent/guardian 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 parents/guardians 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 students being bullied;
- It must also be made clear to all involved (each set of students and parents/guardians) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the students being disciplined, his or her parents/guardians and the school;

Follow up and Recording

- 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 parents/guardians or the school Principal or Deputy Principal
- Follow up meetings with the relevant parties 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
- Where a parent/guardian is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents/guardians must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures
- In the event that a parent/guardian has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parents/guardians of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for students.

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:

1. **Informal : pre-determination that bullying has occurred**
   - All staff must keep a written record of any incidents witnessed by them or notified to them. All incidents must be reported to the relevant teacher
   - 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 of all incidents being investigated

2. **Informal: determination that bullying has occurred**
   - If it is established by the relevant teacher 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

- In the event that the relevant teacher is no longer employed by the school, all written records relating to bullying incidents will be handed over to the Principal for storage.

3. **Formal**

The relevant teacher must use the recording template 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 has 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.

c) Incidents of the following behaviours must be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal:
- Physical assaults
- Restraint of one student by others
- Locking students in sheds/confined spaces against their will
- Deliberate damage to student's property
- Cyberbully
- Incidents deemed serious by relevant teacher
- (This list is not exhaustive)

d) All records will be kept in the school for a period of no less than seven years.

Established intervention strategies
- Teacher interviews with all students
- Negotiating agreements between students and following these up by monitoring progress. This can be of an informal basis or implemented through a more structured mediation process
- Working with parents/guardians to support school interventions
- No blame approach
- Circle time
- Restorative interviews
- Restorative conferencing
- Peer mediation where suitable training has been given
- Strengthening the victim

7. 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 the students affected by bullying to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop friendships and social skills and build resilience eg.

- o Pastoral Care system
- o Buddy system
- o Year Head system
- o Group work such as circle time
- If students require counselling or further supports the school will endeavour to liaise with the appropriate agencies to organise same. This may be for the students 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.

8. 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.

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 students or staff or the harassment of students or staff on any of the nine grounds specified ie. gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership ot the Traveller community.

10. This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on April 7th 2014
11. This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parent association. A copy of this policy will be 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 and provided to the Parent association. A record of the review and its outcomes will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

This policy is reviewed annually