

Our Lady of Mercy College Beaumont



Anti-Bullying Policy

Approved by the Board of Management on 9th December 2021

Anti-bullying Policy

Mission Statement

The core value of Our Lady of Mercy College Beaumont is respect for all and the nurturing of individual potential, academically, spiritually and culturally as a member of the school community and in the spirit of the Mercy Ethos.

Introductory Statement:

We in Our Lady of Mercy College, Beaumont believe that a whole school approach is needed in managing bullying. The school prides itself in creating a positive school culture and climate which encourages respect, trust, care, consideration and support for others (appendix 1). This is seen in the respectful relationships across the entire school community. A collegial atmosphere is supported both in the classroom and outside the classroom through allowing time for tutor classes, encouragement and support for Student Council, Prefects and through activities which form part of school life such as sporting events, cultural day, market day, musical events, retreats, assemblies, bonding and peer activities. Our school is an inclusive place where the voice of all is heard.

1. In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the code of behaviour guidelines issued by the National Education Welfare Board (NEWB), the Board of Management of Our Lady of Mercy College 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 the Board is 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. 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. Once off incidents can also be seen as bullying, see below.

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
- identity-based bullying such as homophobic bullying, racist bullying, sectarian 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 code of behaviour of Our Lady of Mercy College.

Additional information on different types of bullying is set out in Section 2 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* (appendix 2) and information on the indicators & impact of bullying behaviour is set out in section 3.2 (appendix 4).

4. The relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows:

The Year Heads in the first instance with progression to Deputy Principal and Principal as necessary. However all members of the school community have an obligation to report incidents of bullying.

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:

Publishing and publicising the Anti-Bullying Policy and an Anti-Bullying Code. The Anti Bullying Policy is available to all parents on the school website. There is a link to the policy in the online Information Booklet for First Year Students published initially in 2021. An abridged version is published in the school journal.

Supervision and Monitoring takes place at appropriate times during the school day including before school, after school and at breaks. Adequate supervision is also provided for extra-curricular and co-curricular activities.

All teaching and non teaching staff are aware of the importance of noting any unacceptable behaviour.

Student Leadership plays an important role in our school and we operate a Prefect System where each class is assigned a prefect. Each class also has a Student Council representative.

Inclusion in the Curriculum/SPHE/Tutor Class Cool School JC Lessons.

Involving Parents/Guardians and the wider community. Parents are involved in the drawing up of all policies and are kept informed of events through the school app

Friendship Week, Culture Week, Stand Up Awareness Week, Mental Health Awareness Week and Wellbeing Week in addition to subject-based weeks (Maths Week, Science Week, Seachtain na Gaeilge etc) are all important events on the school calendar.

The school has a Mobile Phone/Electronic Equipment Policy, Internet Usage Policy, Pastoral Care Policy, RSE Policy, SPHE Policy and Remote Learning Policy.

Each class has a module in ICT which covers areas such as Digital Citizenship & Internet Safety. Safer Internet Day is celebrated annually in the school.

Guest Speakers / Talks / Workshops are held throughout the year.

Tutor Class is held once a month and this is a time when Year Heads and tutors can focus on issues such as respect for all, kindness, cyber safety etc

Year Group Assemblies, intercom announcements, Google Classrooms are all means of communicating a positive message to students.

We have a Merit System which includes awards for positive behaviour.

The School Journal contains information on anti-bullying, who to tell, how to tell, cyber-bullying and internet safety sites and links.

The online code of conduct contract which must be signed by parents and students is also available in the school journal.

Staff members have attended FUSE training and the school is signed up to the FUSE Programme

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

Reporting incidents

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 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

Who to Tell?

Year Head

Tutor

Tell any staff member with whom the student feels comfortable.

Class Prefect.

Student Council Representative

How to Tell?

Direct approach to teacher or student at an appropriate time, eg. after class.

Hand note up with homework.

Make a phone call to the school or to a trusted teacher in the school.

Get a parent or friend to tell on your behalf by phoning the school and asking to speak to the Principal, Deputy Principal or Year Head.

All incidents of bullying will then be reported to the Year Head who is the 'relevant teacher'

Investigating a report of bullying

The investigation into alleged bullying will be led by the Year Head, who will consult with the DP/P as necessary

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)

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.

It is very important that all involved (including each set of students and parents) understand the above approach from the outset.

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;

If a group is involved, each member will be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those may be met as a group.

Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that they may face from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher;

It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s);

In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents 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 an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports for their 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 parents) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the student being disciplined, his or her parents and the school;

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. This can have a therapeutic effect;

In cases where the relevant teacher 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, it must be recorded by the relevant teacher in the recording template at Appendix 3

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;
- and Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the school Principal or Deputy Principal;

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.

Investigating disclosures of bullying behaviour

- The Year Head ('relevant teacher') will speak to the students involved individually and try to resolve the issue.
- The students involved and/or bystanders may be asked to write their own account.
- The Year Head will keep a record, using the template provided.
- The Year Head may bring the students together to find a resolution.
- When appropriate, students will be reminded of our ethos 'respect for all' in assemblies, intercom announcements, on Google Classroom and in Tutor Class.
- The Year Head will liaise with parents.
- The Year Head will follow up progress with victim and bully, bystanders or others involved.
- If sanctions are recommended the Year Head will liaise with the DP/Principal and the matter will be dealt with in line with the Code of Behaviour.

If the issue is not resolved at this stage:

- The issue will be referred to the DP/Principal
- Parents may be asked to attend a meeting
- The student(s) may be referred to the Guidance Counsellor.
- Sanctions may be imposed in line with the Code of Behaviour.

- A referral to external support agencies may be made eg NEPS, Tusla as appropriate.

Where the relevant teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she determined that bullying behaviour occurred, a report must be written up using form in Appendix 5. This is then reported to the Board of Management.

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

Monitoring by Teachers/Tutor/Year Head.
 Speaking with school counsellor.
 Dealing with issues through Tutor Class
 Referral to NEPS/ child psychology services.
 Contact with other support agencies e.g. re anger management.

8.

(i) Procedures for Student to Staff Bullying or Staff to Student Bullying

Where there are disclosures of student to staff (or staff to student) bullying, these will be dealt with by the Principal or Deputy Principal.

(ii) Procedures for Staff to Staff Bullying

Where there are disclosures of staff to staff bullying, these will be dealt with as per union agreed guidelines and /or the Dignity in the Workplace policy.

(iii) Procedures for Parent to Staff Bullying.

The school has a Dignity in the Workplace Policy and parents/guardians are expected to treat all staff with dignity. Staff will also treat parents likewise.

9. Links to other Policies and Curriculum.

This policy is drawn up and operated in conjunction with other policies ratified by the Board of Management. These are;

- Code of Behaviour Policy
- Mobile Phone/Electronic Equipment Policy
- Expulsion Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Internet Safety: Acceptable Use Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Critical Incident Policy
- Guidance and Counselling Programme
- Admissions Policy
- Dignity in the Workplace
- Pastoral Care Policy.
- Substance Use Policy
- Relationships & Sexuality Education Policy
- SPHE Policy
- Faith Formation Policy
- Remote Learning Policy

10. 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.

11. Prevention of Harassment

Dignity at Work Charter

We commit ourselves to working together to maintain a workplace environment that encourages and supports the right to dignity at work for all staff. All who work here and have contact with the school are expected to respect the right of each individual to dignity in their working life. All will be treated equally and respected for their individuality and diversity. Bullying in any form is not accepted by us and will not be tolerated. Our policies and procedures underpin the principles and objectives of this Charter. Individuals who have contact with the school, parents, guardians, visitors have a duty and a responsibility to uphold this Dignity at Work Charter.

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.

12. This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 9th December 2021

13. 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 Trustee if requested.

14. 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, readily available from school office on request and provided to the Parents' Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the Trustee and the Department.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Gerard Lambe, Chairperson, Board of Management

Appendix 1

Table A: Key elements of a positive school culture and climate

- The school acknowledges the right of each member of the school community to enjoy school in a secure environment.
- The school acknowledges the uniqueness of each individual and his/her worth as a human being.
- The school promotes positive habits of self-respect, self-discipline and responsibility among all its members.
- The school prohibits vulgar, offensive, sectarian or other aggressive behaviour or language by any of its members.
- The school has a clear commitment to promoting equity in general and gender equity in particular in all aspects of its functioning.
- The school has the capacity to change in response to pupils' needs.
- The school identifies aspects of curriculum through which positive and lasting influences can be exerted towards forming pupils' attitudes and values.
- The school takes particular care of "at risk" pupils and uses its monitoring systems to facilitate early intervention where necessary and it responds to the needs, fears or anxieties of individual members in a sensitive manner.
- The school recognises the need to work in partnership with and keep parents informed on procedures to improve relationships on a school-wide basis.
- The school recognises the role of parents in equipping the pupil with a range of life-skills.
- The school recognises the role of other community agencies in preventing and dealing with bullying.
- The school promotes habits of mutual respect, courtesy and an awareness of the interdependence of people in groups and communities.
- The school promotes qualities of social responsibility, tolerance and understanding among all its members both in school and out of school.

- Staff members share a collegiate responsibility, under the direction of the Principal, to act in preventing bullying/aggressive behaviour by any member of the school community.

Appendix 2

Section 2 Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.

Types of bullying

The following are some of the types of bullying behaviour that can occur amongst pupils:

Physical aggression: This behaviour includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping people. It may also take the form of severe physical assault. While pupils often engage in 'mess fights', they can sometimes be used as a disguise for physical harassment or inflicting pain.

Intimidation: Some bullying behaviour takes the form of intimidation: it may be based on the use of very aggressive body language with the voice being used as a weapon. Particularly upsetting can be a facial expression which conveys aggression and/or dislike.

Isolation/exclusion and other relational bullying: This occurs where a certain person is deliberately isolated, excluded or ignored by some or all of the class group. This practice is usually initiated by the person engaged in bullying behaviour and can be difficult to detect. It may be accompanied by writing insulting remarks about the pupil in public places, by passing around notes about or drawings of the pupil or by whispering insults about them loud enough to be heard. Relational bullying occurs when a person's attempts to socialise and form relationships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined. One of the most common forms includes control: "Do this or I won't be your friend anymore" (implied or stated); a group ganging up against one person (girl or boy); non-verbal gesturing; malicious gossip; spreading rumours about a person or giving them the "silent treatment".

Cyber-bullying: This type of bullying is increasingly common and is continuously evolving. It is bullying carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as text, social network sites, e-mail, instant messaging (IM), apps, gaming sites, chat-rooms and other online technologies. Being the target of inappropriate or hurtful messages is the most common form of online bullying. As cyber-bullying uses technology to perpetrate bullying behaviour and does not require face to face contact, cyber-bullying can occur at any time (day or night). Many forms of bullying can be facilitated through cyber-bullying. For example, a target may be sent homophobic text messages or pictures may be posted with negative comments about a person's sexuality, appearance etc.

Name calling: Persistent name-calling directed at the same individual(s) which hurts, insults or humiliates should be regarded as a form of bullying behaviour. Often name-calling of this type refers to physical appearance, e.g., size or clothes worn. Accent or distinctive voice characteristics may attract negative attention. Academic ability can also provoke name calling. This tends to operate at two extremes. There are those who are singled out for attention because they are perceived to be weak academically. At the other extreme there are those who, because they are perceived as high achievers, are also targeted.

Damage to property: Personal property can be the focus of attention for bullying behaviour. This may result in damage to clothing, mobile phone or other devices, school books and other learning material or interference with a pupil's locker or bicycle. The contents of school bags and pencil cases may be scattered on the floor. Items of personal property may be defaced, broken, stolen or hidden.

Extortion: Demands for money may be made, often accompanied by threats (sometimes carried out in the event of the targeted pupil not delivering on the demand). A pupil may also be forced into theft of property for delivery to another who is engaged in bullying behaviour.

Appendix 3 Relevant Teacher Record of Bullying Incident

Date	Students	Class

Reported by: _____ Reported to: _____

Details:

Use overleaf if extra space needed

Action Taken:

Use overleaf if extra space needed

Signed: _____
Relevant Teacher

Date: _____

Monitoring:

Use overleaf if extra space needed

Signed : _____
Relevant Teacher

Date: _____

Appendix 4

Section 3.2 Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.

IMPACT AND INDICATORS OF BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

Impacts of bullying behaviour

1. Pupils who are being bullied may develop feelings of insecurity, humiliation and extreme anxiety and thus may become more vulnerable. Self-confidence may be damaged with a consequent lowering of self-esteem. While they may not talk about what is happening to them, their suffering is indicated through changes in mood and behaviour. Extreme cases of bullying may result in suicide. It is, therefore, essential to be alert to changes in behaviour as early intervention can be very effective.
2. Pupils who witness bullying may also be affected and may suffer in similar ways to those who are bullied. For example, pupils who witness identity-based bullying and share that identity can experience anxiety and feel under threat themselves. Pupils can also feel guilt or distress at not being able to help the person being bullied.
3. There are also consequences for individuals who engage in bullying behaviour. Pupils who become involved in such behaviour can be at higher risk of depression. Other possible long-term consequences may include an increased risk of developing an anti-social personality, anxiety disorders, a likelihood of substance abuse and law-breaking behaviour in adulthood and decreased educational and occupational attainment.

The following signs and symptoms may suggest that a pupil is being bullied:

- (i) Anxiety about travelling to and from school e.g. requesting parents to drive or collect him/her, changing travel routes, avoiding regular times for travelling to and from school;
- (ii) Unwillingness to go to school, refusal to attend, truancy;
- (iii) Deterioration in educational performance, loss of concentration and loss of enthusiasm and interest in school;
- (iv) Pattern of physical illnesses e.g. headaches, stomach aches;
- (v) Unexplained changes either in mood or behaviour which may be particularly noticeable before returning to school after weekends or more especially after longer school holidays;
- (vi) Visible signs of anxiety or distress e.g. stammering, withdrawing, nightmares, difficulty in sleeping, crying, not eating, vomiting, bedwetting;
- (vii) Spontaneous out-of-character comments about either pupils or teachers;
- (viii) Possessions missing or damaged;
- (ix) Increased requests for money or stealing money;

(x) Unexplained bruising or cuts or damaged clothing; and

(xi) Reluctance and/or refusal to say what is troubling him/her.

There may be other signs depending on the individual and his/her circumstances. The above signs do not necessarily mean that a pupil is being bullied but if repeated or occurring in combination, these signs do warrant investigation in order to establish what is affecting the pupil.



Template for recording bullying behaviour (report to the BOM)

1. Name of student being bullied and class group

Name _____ Class _____

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

3. Source of Bullying concern/report
Tick relevant box(es)

4. Location of incidents.
Tick relevant box(es)

Student concerned		Classroom	
Other student		Corridor	
Parent		Bathroom areas	
Teacher		On the school grounds	
Other		School Bus	
		Other	

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	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

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9. Details of action taken

Signed _____ (Relevant Teacher) Date _____

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal _____