OUR LADY OF MERCY SECONDARY SCHOOL

Anti-Bullying Policy and Procedures

2023-2024

This Anti-Bullying Policy is in line with The Education Act 1998, The Education Welfare Act 2000 and the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2013. The Board of Management has ultimate responsibility for the Code and the Principal is responsible for its implementation. The policy is a written document and visuals will be used to roll out the policy to all.

In this policy, the following terms have the following meaning:
- **Parent** refers to parent/parents or legal guardian/guardians.
- **Staff** refers to teachers, SNAs, examiners, supervisors, secretarial staff, support staff, caretaker, maintenance staff and other adults as inferred by the context.
- **Everyone** refers to the school community; management, teaching & non-teaching staff, parents/guardians, & students.
- **Abbreviations:** OLM (Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School), DES (Department of Education & Skills, AB Procedures (Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2013), BOM (Board of Management).

Where lists are given they are not intended to be exhaustive, instead they are indicative of the particular behaviour, sanction or item.

SCHOOL STATEMENT

In line with our mission statement and the school ethos, our school community wishes to ensure that everyone can live, work and play in an environment characterised by mutual respect which is totally free from bullying. We want everyone in our school community to feel safe, valued, listened to, and protected. We will not tolerate any form of bullying. We will raise awareness in the school of what bullying is, and that it is an unacceptable form of behaviour at all times. Measures will be put in place as part of our school systems to help prevent the occurrence of bullying, and every effort will be made to address any school-related bullying behaviour which may occur. We will also seek to deal with the negative impact on pupils within our school of bullying that occurs elsewhere.

MISSION STATEMENT
All of the school community will work with care, to develop mature young adults, who will achieve their full potential, who will be ready to deal with the challenges of the modern world.

SCHOOL ETHOS
The Sisters of Mercy opened their first school in Drimnagh in 1944. A girls' secondary school was established in 1956 and this became co-educational in 1973. The educational philosophy of the school is the full human development of the student in a Christian context.

CORE VALUES
Promoting Spiritual and Human Development
- *We believe knowledge of and a personal relationship with Jesus Christ gives meaning and purpose to our lives.*

Achieving Quality in Teaching and Learning
- *We are committed to excellence and to continually improving the quality of teaching and learning.*

Showing Respect for Every Person
- *We respect the unique and intrinsic value of each person.*

Creating Community
- *Our schools are faith communities of welcome and hospitality where Gospel values are lived and where there is special care for those most in need.*

Being Just and Responsible
- *We seek to act justly and responsibly in all our relationships.*

VISION- *Shaping a Brighter Future for Our Young People*

As a voluntary secondary school in the Mercy tradition we hope to achieve the holistic development of each student within the defined ethos of the school. We aim to maximize the potential of each student in our care. This is to be achieved in an atmosphere of respect and fairness. Through support and friendship we hope to affirm each person's self-worth and dignity in the school community. In co-operation with management, parents and staff our wish is that students will grow into happy, confident, responsible young adults.

OBJECTIVES:

- To provide a comprehensive definition of what bullying is.
- To clarify our school's position with regard to bullying in the school context. (see our School Statement)
- To promote an ethos of respect in our school which will encourage everyone to work together to prevent, and to deal effectively with, all reported incidents of bullying behaviour.
- Our approach will be a combination of:
  - Preventative strategies and
  - Procedures and guidelines to report, record, investigate and deal with any incidents of bullying behaviour which may occur.

DEFINITION OF BULLYING:

Bullying is intentional, unprovoked, and unwanted negative behaviour (can be physical, verbal or psychological), of a systematic and repeated nature, conducted by an individual or group, against a person who is relatively powerless in the situation. The grounds under which bullying can happen are as follows:

- **Gender:** this means male, female or transsexual
- **Civil status:** includes single, married, separated, divorced, widowed people, civil partners and former civil partners
- **Family status**: this refers to the parent of a person under 18 years or the resident primary carer or parent of a person with a disability
- **Sexual orientation:** includes gay, lesbian, bisexual and heterosexual
- **Religion:** means religious belief, background, outlook or none
- **Age:** this does not apply to a person aged under 16
- **Disability:** includes people with physical, intellectual, learning, cognitive or emotional disabilities and a range of medical conditions
- **Race:** includes race, skin colour, nationality or ethnic origin
- **Membership of the Traveller community**.

TYPES OF BULLYING:

There are a number of different types of bullying, including but not limited to:

- **Verbal** (eg, cruel teasing, unwelcome nicknames, threats & taunts, non-good-natured slagging).

- **Physical** (anything from repeated minor physical irritations to serious assaults).

- **Cyber-bullying** (via the internet, social networks, mobile phones, etc); Placing any offensive or hurtful public message, image or statement on a social network site or other public forum (including public graffiti) will be regarded as bullying behaviour by our school. The placing itself may be a once-off but, because of the context, the offensive item can be viewed and/or repeated by others, so it will be regarded as bullying*

- **Gestures** (including those gestures that most people might find offensive, but also more subtle threatening/dismissive glances and glares).

- **Extortion** (eg, stealing possessions, equipment or money).

- **Relational Bullying** (eg, manipulating friendship or social groups to exclude or isolate a person or ruin their reputation; leaving people out of games & conversations, spreading gossip, rumours or lies; circulating nasty notes or drawings; excluding people from social events).

- **Homophobic** (would include a range of negative attitudes, or taunting a person for their sexuality or perceived sexuality).

Bullying must not be confused with the good-natured banter that may go on as part of the normal social interaction between students, or between teachers and students. The key differences are the intention, and the effects.

Behaviour based on many forms of prejudice is actually illegal (age, gender, disability, religion, race, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, membership of the traveller community). This school will not tolerate prejudiced behaviour against a person simply because of their being seen as "different" in some way.

*SCHOOL STATEMENT ON THE INAPPROPRIATE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA:
The school will do its best to investigate any incidences of cyberbullying, i.e., when students in the school post something about another student or students in the school. This is difficult, as images or posts are often deleted before any investigation starts.

Under The Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act, 2020, it is a criminal offence to distribute, publish or threaten to publish or distribute an intimate image of another person without their consent. If this happens to a student, parents should be advised to report immediately to an Garda Síochána. It is also illegal to possess such images of students as this is classed as Child Pornography.

In OLM we strongly urge parents to monitor their children's phones and social media accounts, especially in relation to Snapchat. We also advise parents to attend our internet safety information session in August.

APPROACH TO BULLYING IN OLM:
- A zero-tolerance approach to bullying behaviour.
- A whole-school model, looking to everyone in the school community to play their part - all alert to the possibility of bullying taking place and raising concerns as needed.
- In dealing with incidents, we will generally seek to adopt a problem-solving approach in the first instance, with the aim of achieving learning and growth and a win-win outcome for all.
- While we look to everyone to contribute, we also maintain a small team with specific training to work with students, parents and staff in the area of prevention and support. Each Year Head will serve as the "relevant teacher" for her/his year group, while the Pastoral Care team will coordinate and ensure that more general actions are carried out.
- We work collaboratively with our feeder primary schools to ensure continuity of approach.

PREVENTATIVE STRATEGIES:

The school has a range of strategies built into the school system and the curriculum to prevent the occurrence of bullying behaviour by:

1. Raising awareness of the school's position on bullying behaviour and
2. Monitoring student behaviour.

1. Raising Awareness:

With Parents:

- Information meetings with parents of new students include discussion of bullying and the school's stance. Our documents are given to all parents as part of the transfer programme, and the role of parents and their expected contribution are discussed.
- Parents are involved in the school's annual anti-bullying awareness week (Friendship Week) through the HSCL Scheme.
- The Parent Representatives are consulted as part of our policy reviews.

With Students:

- Our primary transfer programme and student induction clarify our norms and expectations.
- Friendship Week is organised on an annual basis to highlight our policy and raise awareness of what is (and is not) acceptable behaviour towards others.
- Information is included in the student journal and highlighted regularly at assemblies.
- Anti-bullying materials are displayed in classrooms and on the corridors.
- Included as part of the normal curriculum, in SPHE and CSPE in particular, but also across other subjects.
- Section 6.5 of the AB-Procedures includes suggestions on education & prevention strategies. These will be studied closely by our own staff and an Action Plan prepared and put on file detailing the approaches which we use. That Action Plan will be included in the annual reviews led by the BOM.
- Extra inputs are organised if needed.

With Staff:

- The school endeavours to maintain a high level of awareness and vigilance among all staff.
- All new staff are given a copy of the policy and it is included on the school server for consultation.
- All staff are given guidelines on how to deal with reports of concern and/or alleged bullying incidents.
- Staff are updated on new developments through in-service and regular discussion, as part of our pastoral care system, staff meetings, and other care team meetings.
- Positive classroom management is promoted, which should minimize the opportunity for bullying behaviour to occur during class time.

2. Monitoring Student Behaviour:

The school system includes a range of measures:

- Classroom-based teachers ensure the presence of an adult in the classroom at all times.

- This reduces the opportunity for bullying behaviour to occur between classes.
- Supervision of the school yard, corridors etc. by staff is supplemented by CCTV throughout the campus, monitoring congregation areas and break times. Staff on break duty carry a notebook in which to record any issues arising.
- Student surveys will be conducted in each year-group annually, to check how students are getting on within their year group and generally, and to look for early indicators of any difficulties.
- All students and especially student leaders (e.g., Prefects, Student Council etc.) are asked to monitor situations and report concerns.
- Parents are encouraged to keep us informed of concerns they may have with regard to any bullying behaviour that may impact on student behaviour in school.

DEALING WITH INCIDENTS OR SUSPECTED INCIDENTS OF BULLYING:

1. **Reporting incidents:**

All members of the school community are encouraged to report incidents of bullying that they become aware of in the school context. Concerns or suspicions should also be reported, since our aim is to achieve early-stage recognition of a situation followed by a pro-active response. All such reports will be recorded on our Record of Possible Concern form by the staff member who hears it first. All such reports will be followed up by the Year Head, and there will be a report back in due course to the individual who first raised the issue.

We will seek to develop an ethos in which reporting will be regarded as responsible behaviour rather than "telling tales". However, recognising that this may not always be the case, the school will seek to guard the source of information given to us in relation to a possible bullying.

- **Students** should ideally report to their Year Head or Class Teacher, or whatever staff member they are most comfortable with.
- **Parents** should report incidents or concerns to their child's Year Head. However, they too may report to the staff member that they feel most comfortable with. A parent might first seek the advice of a Parent Representative on the Board of Management or on the Parents' Council, who would advise and support them with regard to informing the school.

2. **Investigating Reported Incidents**

All reported incidents of bullying will be investigated. Different levels of response will be used as appropriate to different situations. The starting level will depend on the severity of the alleged incident and the evidence available. The possible levels of response are:

Level-1   Record using our Record or Possible Concern Form and keep an eye on the situation. Usually relevant others would also be alerted as appropriate to the student (e.g., class teacher, other staff etc.). Possibly also make informal discreet enquiries (e.g., from school staff, non-involved students, etc.) to get a sense of what may be going on.

Level-2   If the view is taken that bullying behaviour has been occurring, that will raise the issue to level-2. Record using our Bullying-Report-Form. Directly approaching some or all of the parties involved would almost certainly be necessary at this level.

Level-3   If the issue is not resolved at level-2, then it is raised to level-3. Initiate a formal investigation and/or intervention within the school. Further investigation might include directly interviewing those alleged to be involved and those who may be in a position to have some knowledge of the situation. This might involve collecting formal written statements from a number of students and staff. Record findings on the Form.

Level-4   If appropriate, inform the Gardaí and turn the investigation over to them.

3. **Involvement of parents.**

Level-1   would generally remain within school and would not involve notifying any parents.

Level-2   would generally remain within school initially. If a student were to be challenged about his/her alleged bullying behaviour following enquiries, then that student's parent would generally be informed.

Level-3-4 would be in all cases be notified to all the parents concerned.

DEALING WITH CONFIRMED INCIDENTS OF BULLYING IN THE SCHOOL CONTEXT:

- Section 6.8.9 of the AB-Procedures gives general direction on procedures for investigating and dealing with incidents. These will be studied closely by our own staff and a Protocol prepared and put on file detailing the approaches which we use. That Protocol will be included in the annual BOM reviews.

  - We will do our utmost to ensure the safety of the person being bullied.

    Generally, we will first seek to implement a problem-solving approach based on the principles of Restorative Justice. The focus will be to help the parties involved to change behaviour, with the aim of achieving a win-win outcome for all. Support in the form of counselling will be offered to both parties. Support from outside agencies may also be sought if deemed appropriate to the particular situation. Perpetrators may be asked to sign a "behavioural agreement" as part of the resolution to the bullying situation.

  - Possible exceptions to implement a problem-solving approach based on the principles of Restorative Justice would be where:
    1. The incident reported is extreme in nature, or in the case of repeat serious incidents. Examples of reported incidents that are extreme in nature include:
       - Abuse reactive behaviour.
       - Sexually obsessive behaviour.
       - Sexually abusive behaviour.   *
       - Serious physical assault.
       - Sexual Harassment.
       - Sexual Assault.
    2. One of the parties and/or their parents are unwilling to engage in implementing a problem-solving approach based on the principles of Restorative Justice.

    *** Any of the above examples of extreme incidences will be reported to the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) and possibly an Garda Síochána under Children First Act 2015 and Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017.**

- With regard to the perpetrator/s, sanctions will be applied as laid down in the school's Code of Behaviour. The co-operation of the perpetrator with the school's effort to achieve a positive outcome for everyone will be taken into account when considering possible sanctions.
- If the perpetrator does not engage positively with the process, we may have to reluctantly conclude that a positive approach is no longer appropriate. In that case the full rigor of the Code of Behaviour will be applied up to and including expulsion. A particularly serious view will be taken if further incidents occur, including "revenge attacks" of any kind by the perpetrator or his/her associates against those who may have helped with the investigation. All concerned will be informed of this.

ROLE OF THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT:

The Principal's Report to each BOM meeting will contain a section under Anti-Bullying. Under the AB-Procedures published by the DES, the BOM is required to undertake an annual review of our policy and its implementation. The review is based on the checklist in Appendix-4 of the AB-Procedures, and a report from our own the Pastoral Care Team. A formal written notification that the annual BOM review has been completed will be circulated to as required in the AB-Procedures.

APPENDICES:
1. Record of Possible Concern form.
2. Bullying Report form.
3. 20-day Record Form.
4. Checklist for annual review of the anti-bullying policy and its implementation

List of school documents and policies that support the Anti Bullying Policy and Procedures:

- Code of Behaviour
- Admissions Policy
- Child Protection Procedures
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Distance Learning Policy
- Attendance Strategy
- Health & Safety Policy Statement
- Guidance Plan
- RSE/SPHE Policy
- HSCL Policy
- Dignity at Work Policy

Signed: Signed:

Chairperson of Board of Management   Principal/Secretary to the Board of Management

Date: 3rd October 2023   Date: 3rd October 2023

Record of Possible Concern
CONFIDENTIAL

OLM-Drimnagh Anti-Bullying programme

Please complete and give to relevant Year-Head

Name of person making this report:	Date of report:

	Pupil/s being bullied	**Pupil/s engaged**
Name/s		

These forms will be retained for statistical purposes. If the situation continues or develops, then this form will be attached to the later papers and retained on file, so that it will not be necessary to re-write the information.

Class group/s	**....... of pupil/s being bullied**	**......... of pupil/s engaged**

Please tick the relevant boxes (can be more than one per section)

Approx date/s of incident/s:

Source of concern/report			Location of incident/s			Type of bullying behaviour/s	
Pupil concerned			Classroom			Physical aggression	
Other pupil			Corridor			Property damage	
Parent			Toilets			Cyber bullying	
Teacher			Yard			Malicious gossip	
Support staff			Other in-school			Isolation/exclusion	
Other			Outside school			Name-calling	
Brief description:						Identity-based (eg, homophobic, traveller, racist, disability, etc)	

Please use the Record of Actions Taken Form for details of follow-up.

Decision by Year-Head on the Report of Possible Concern above

❑ No ground for concern found at this time following enquiries.
❑ Requires follow-up

❑ Report back made to the person who first raised the issue.

_____   _____
Signature   Date

APPENDIX 1: Bullying Report form

Report on Alleged Incident of Bullying, Harassment or Aggressive Behaviour

PART ONE – TO BE FILLED IN BY THE MEMBER OF STAFF

Date and time that the incident was reported: --

Name: --

Member of staff's name: --

Signature of reporting member of staff: --

*PART TWO – TO BE FILLED IN BY THE YOUNG PERSON
OR HIS / HER ADVOCATE*

This is what happened:

Please tick
❑ - alleged victim
❑ - alleged perpetrator
❑ - possible witness

All of the above is true to the best of my knowledge.

Signature of student: ------------------------------------

PART THREE – TO BE FILLED IN AT THE OFFICE

Signature/s of parent/guardian/s (if applicable): --

Signature of managing staff member: --

APPENDIX 3: 20-day Record Form

Bullying Report Form
CONFIDENTIAL

OLM-Drimnagh Anti-Bullying programme

To be completed when the view is taken that bullying behaviour <u>has been occurring</u> – our level-2.
Completed and kept by the relevant Year Head

Name of person making this report:	Date of report:

	Pupil/s being bullied	Pupil/s engaged
Name/s		

Attached ☐ Record of Concern form/s relating to the incident/s
(If none such yet written, please complete and attach one now with its tick-box tables)

☐ Bullying incident report form (Minton derived form)

The date on which I have determined that bullying behaviour has been occurring:

The date on which 20 school days will have elapsed and when I will review:

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please file and continue to keep the situation under review.

<u>20- day review</u>

☐ I am satisfied that the matters above have been adequately and appropriately addressed

☐ I am not so satisfied. *Please explain briefly.*

Signature: _____ Date:

The purpose of this form is to record and date the <u>formal assessment by the responsible teacher</u> that bullying behaviour has been occurring, and the follow-on steps required after that.

The idea of using attachments is to avoid the need for re-writing all the details again.
- *The tick-box Record-of-Concern form provides the analysis required by the "appendix-3 template"*
- *The Stephen Minton derived form is probably better suited to capture the details from the various parties.*

APPENDIX 4: Checklist for annual review of the anti-bullying policy and its implementation

The BOM 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.

	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?	Y	
Has the Board published the policy on the school website and provided a copy to the parents' council?	Y	
Has the Board ensured that the policy has been made available to school staff (including new staff)?	Y	
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?	Y	
Has the Board ensured that the policy has been adequately communicated to all students?	Y	
Has the policy documented the prevention and education strategies that the school applies?	Y	
Have all of the prevention and education strategies been implemented?	Y	
Has the effectiveness of the prevention and education strategies that have been implemented been examined?	Y	
Is the Board satisfied that all teachers are recording and dealing with incidents in accordance with the policy?	Y	
Has the Board received and minuted the periodic summary reports of the Principal?	Y	
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?	Y	
Has the Board received any complaints from parents regarding the school's handling of bullying incidents?		N
Have any parents withdrawn their child from the school citing dissatisfaction with the school's handling of a bullying situation?		N
Have any Ombudsman for Children investigations into the school's handling of a bullying case been initiated or completed?	Y	
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?	Y	
Has the Board identified any aspects of the school's policy and/or its implementation that require further improvement?		N
Has the Board put in place an action plan to address any areas for improvement?		N/A

The Board of Management's annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation was completed at the Board meeting of 3rd October 2023

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: Signed:

Johanne Lindsay

Chairperson of Board of Management   Principal/Secretary to the Board of Management

Date: 3rd October 2023   Date: 3rd October 2023