



## **1. INTRODUCTION**

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, Maryfield College has adopted the following anti-bullying policy within the framework of the school's Code of Behaviour. The policy fully complies with the requirements of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-primary schools which were published by the Department of Education and Skills in September 2013.

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

## **2. DEFINITION OF BULLYING**

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

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

Deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying  
Cyber bullying and identity based bullying such as homophobic bullying, racist bullying, bullying based on a person's membership of the traveller community, bullying of those with disabilities or special educational needs. (This list is not exhaustive.)

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

However, 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.

## **TIMES AND PLACES WHERE BULLYING MAY OCCUR**

Bullying can take place anywhere and at any time but there are certain times and places which particularly facilitate bullying behaviour.

## **CYBER-BULLYING**

Access to technology means that cyber-bullying can take place around the clock. A student's home may not be a safe haven from such bullying. Students are increasingly communicating in ways often unknown to adults and free from supervision. The nature of these technologies means digital content can be shared and seen by a very wide audience almost instantly and is almost impossible to delete permanently. While cyber-bullying often takes place outside school, at home and at night the impact can be felt in school.

### **3. KEY PRINCIPLES FOR BEST PRACTICE TO COUNTER BULLYING BEHAVIOUR**

#### **(a) A POSITIVE SCHOOL CULTURE**

The school endeavours to create a positive school culture which:

- I. is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity and respect
- II. encourages students to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment
- III. promotes respectful relationships

#### **(b) EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP**

Leadership within the school must ensure that:

- I. it operates a school wide approach
- II. there is shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact
- III. the implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that build empathy, respect and resilience in students
- IV. it explicitly addresses the issues of cyber and identity based bullying which includes homophobic and transphobic bullying
- V. the effective supervision and monitoring of students
- VI. there is support for staff
- VII. there is consistent recording, investigation and follow-up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies)
- VIII. there is on-going evaluation of the anti-bullying policy

#### **(c) PREVENTION STRATEGIES**

##### **i. AWARENESS RAISING**

Teachers will foster:

- a climate of respect for others
- a sense of the dignity of each human person
- a respect and appreciation of difference

##### **ii. A 'TELLING SCHOOL' CULTURE**

Students are reminded that it is their responsibility to tell a teacher if they witness or feel that someone is being bullied. Students who feel they are being bullied are encouraged to tell an appropriate adult.

##### **iii. ANTI-BULLYING WORKSHOPS**

The following are delivered annually:

- Two workshops for First Year
- One workshop for Second Year
- One workshop for Third Year
- One SPAD Anti-Bullying workshop for Transition Year
- One workshop for Fifth Year

- One whole school workshop on identity based bullying, including homophobic and transphobic bullying.

(Some workshops are delivered by outside facilitators)

#### **iv. COLLECTING AND ANALYSING DATA**

Questionnaires are used to establish student understanding of bullying

#### **v. MODELLING RESPECTFUL BEHAVIOUR**

Through positive, respectful relationships throughout the school

Affirming good behaviour at all times

Building self-esteem and confidence

#### **vi. RESPONSIBLE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA /INETRNET**

The school's Acceptable Usage Policy is published in the school journal

Responsible awareness is heightened throughout internet safety week

Link on school web-site to [www.webwise.ie](http://www.webwise.ie)

Students are encouraged to protect their identity on social media and on internet

#### **vii. PASTORAL CARE**

- The Pastoral Care Team comprising Principal, Deputy Principal, Year Heads, Form Tutors, members of the Student Council promotes the ethos of a 'Telling School'

#### **viii. NEW FIRST YEARS**

- During the induction programme the Pastoral Care system is explained to First Years. Particular attention is given to SEN students by the Special Needs Teacher in relation to the Anti-Bullying Policy
- Knowledge of bullying behaviour in Sixth Class may be utilised in order to put preventative measures in place.
- The importance of sharing information that can assist the school in applying this policy will be emphasised at Information Evenings

#### **xi. ACCESSING OUTSIDE AGENCIES**

- Available resources are explored
- Students participate in appropriate national anti-bullying campaigns

### **4. PROCEDURES**

#### **(a) ALLEGATIONS OF BULLYING**

Allegations of bullying should be reported to the relevant teacher i.e. the Year Head in each specific year.

Investigation of the alleged bullying will be undertaken by the most appropriate person in each case: class teacher; class tutor; year head and/or school counsellor.

The primary aims for the relevant teacher in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve the issue(s) and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships between the parties involved rather than apportion blame. It is hoped to resolve the issues at the lowest possible level of the Ladder of Referral. The teacher also aims to resolve the issue(s) as quickly as possible. These procedures are in line with the culture in Maryfield College as a 'Telling School' and also in line with best practice as laid down in DES Anti-Bullying guidelines.

In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred.

All reports, including anonymous reports are investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher.

When a student reports an incident of bullying she is not considered to be telling tales, rather she is acting responsibly.

All staff, including non-teaching staff are encouraged to report incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them.

Parents and students are required to co-operate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving the issues and restoring harmonious relationships as far as is practicable.

All interviews will be conducted sensitively and with due regard to the rights of all concerned. Students who are not directly involved may provide useful information. When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour the teacher will seek answers to questions such as: what, when, who and why.

Interviews will be carried out in a calm manner, setting an example of dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive way.

If a group is involved each member will be interviewed individually. Thereafter, all involved may be met as a group. At the group meeting each member will be asked for her account of the event(s). Each participant will be supported throughout the process.

Those involved may be asked to write their individual account or the teacher may record the verbal accounts and ask each student to verify her account with a signature.

In cases where it has been determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved will be informed of the matter and of the actions being taken by the school (by reference to the school policy). The school will give parents opportunity to suggest ways in which they can reinforce and support the actions being taken by the school.

Where the teacher has determined that the student has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it will be made clear that she is in breach of the school's Anti-Bullying Policy. Efforts will be made to try to resolve the situation from the perspective of the student being bullied.

It will be made clear to all involved, students and parents, that where disciplinary sanctions are required they will be dealt with under the school's Code of Behaviour.

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.

In cases where the teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour has occurred it must be recorded by the recording teacher.

In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the 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 relationships between parties have been restored as far as is practicable
- Any feedback received from the parties, 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 to the Agreed Complaints Procedure for Voluntary Secondary Schools.

In the event that a parent has exhausted the Agreed Complaints Procedure and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

## **5. PROCEDURES FOR RECORDING BULLYING BEHAVIOUR**

The Board of Management has clear procedures for the formal noting and reporting of bullying behaviour. These are documented in the school's anti-bullying policy. All records are maintained in accordance with relevant data protection legislation.

### **PROCEDURES FOR NOTING AND RECORDING BULLYING BEHAVIOUR ARE AS FOLLOWS**

When it is established by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred, he/she keeps appropriate written records which assist him/her efforts to resolve the issue(s) and to restore, as far as possible, the relationships between the parties involved.

The relevant teacher uses the recording template (Appendix 5) 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.
- (b) In certain circumstances, when it is deemed necessary, bullying behaviour may be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable.

In each of the circumstances (a) and (b) above the recording template at Appendix 5 is to be completed in full and retained by the teacher in question and a copy provided to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable. The time-line for recording bullying behaviour in the recording template Appendix 3 does not preclude the relevant teacher from consulting the Principal or Deputy Principal at an earlier stage of the investigation of the case.

## **6. BULLYING AS PART OF A CONTINUUM OF BEHAVIOUR**

Bullying behaviour may be part of a continuum of behaviour rather than a stand-alone issue and in some cases behaviour may escalate beyond that which can be described as 'bullying' to more serious physical or sexual assault or harassment.

This anti-bullying policy has links to the school's Code of Behaviour and Child Protection Policy and Procedures. In some cases the school may refer to or seek advice from other agencies and authorities.

## **7. MARYFIELD COLLEGE'S PROGRAMME OF SUPPORT FOR WORKING WITH STUDENTS AFFECTED BY BULLYING**

Students who have been bullied may be offered counselling and/or opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise self-esteem. They are encouraged and assisted to enhance their friendship and social skills and thereby build up resilience.

## **8. SUPERVISION AND MONITORING OF STUDENTS**

Appropriate supervision and monitoring policies are in place.

## **9. PREVENTION AND HARASSMENT**

The Board of Management confirms that Maryfield College, in accordance with its obligations under equality legislation, takes all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent sexual harassment of students or staff, or the harassment of students or staff on any of the nine grounds specified: .e gender, including transgender; civil status; family status; sexual orientation; religion; age; disability; race and membership of the Travelling Community.

## **10. THIS POLICY WAS ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT ON:**

**25/03/2014**

## **11. PUBLICATION**

This policy is made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the parents' association committee. Copy will be made available to the department of education and skills and to the school patron on request.

## **12. IMPLEMENTATION**

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 will be made available to the Department of Education and Skills and to the School Patron on request.

## **APPENDIX 1 -Advice for Staff**

### **Impacts of Bullying Behaviour**

Students who are being bullied may develop feelings of insecurity, humiliation and extreme anxiety. 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. It is, therefore, essential to be alert to changes in behaviour as early intervention can be very effective.

Students who witness bullying may also be affected and may suffer in similar ways to those who are bullied. For example, students who witness identity-based bullying and share that identity can experience anxiety and feel under threat themselves. Students can also feel guilt or distress at not being able to help the person being bullied.

There are also consequences for individuals who engage in bullying behaviour. Students 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.

### **Indicators of Bullying Behaviour**

The following signs and symptoms may suggest that a Student 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 Students 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 student is being bullied but if repeated or occurring in combination, these signs do warrant investigation in order to establish what is affecting the student.

## **Appendix Two – Advice for Students**

- It is essential to tell a teacher, your parents/guardians or any significant adult of any bullying. It is the only way it will be stopped.
- Always be aware of your online behaviour and how to protect yourself from cyber-bullies.
- Save messages or take a screen shot of abusive messages.
- Keep passwords private.
- Do not put too much personal information about yourself online.
- Do not reply to abusive messages/posts.
- If the bully is a “friend or follower” on Facebook or other social networking site, remove them. You should block unwelcome messages, videos, photos etc.
- Report the issue to the mobile phone or website provider. If sufficiently serious report the matter to the Gardaí.
- If cyber bullying is impacting on your school life, tell a teacher.
- Always keep a detailed record of the bullying as evidence for the teacher.

### **Appendix Three – Advice for Parents**

- Control the use of mobile phones/social media during homework and at bed time.
- Stress the importance of online responsibility and check social media.
- Prepare them for the possibility of bullying and should it occur the importance of speaking about it to you.
- Continue to work on their self-esteem in order to build emotional resilience.
- Be aware of signs and indicators of bullying.
- Encourage them to include others in their social group and be generally inclusive.
- Take time to understand the social networking sites they use.
- Use trusted websites for advice on keeping them safe i.e., [www.barnardos.ie](http://www.barnardos.ie)
- Encourage them to tell if they are being bullied and report incidents to the school.