



Loreto College Mullingar

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 Loreto College Mullingar 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 and the Cinealtas : Action Plan on Bullying Implementation Plan 2023 -2027.
2. The Board of Management recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of pupils and is therefore 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 pupils 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 pupils; and
 - explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.
 - Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils;
 - 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 conduct, 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 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 may 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.

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 1 of this document*)

4. The relevant teachers for dealing with bullying is/are as follows: (see Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools*)

- Form Teacher(s)
- Year Head(s)
- Guidance Counsellor
- Deputy Principal
- Principal

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:

- School Mission Statement
- Anti-bullying Policy in student journal signed by students and parents, staff, pupils and parents are informed of expectations around conduct and respect in the student journal.
- SPHE Programme (supported by the Wellbeing Programme) delivered to every year group - the issue of bullying is addressed and classroom activities support student learning
- CSPE Programme- explores human rights and interdependence of communities globally.

- Student Leadership eg. Class Prefect, Student Council, Senior Prefects- involvement of student leadership in contributing to a safe school environment encourages a culture of peer respect and support.
- Big Sister/Little Sister programme
- Health Promoting School
- Friendship Week/ Bullying Awareness Week- helps our students to increase knowledge and raise awareness of various types of bullying.
- Welcome Week- activities are arranged to help new pupils to settle into our school community.
- Culture Day- fosters respect and promotes the value of diversity amongst our school community.
- Extra curricular activities- students are provided with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self worth. We strive to promote a positive inclusive school culture.
- Year Group Assemblies- the values of kindness and respect are reiterated throughout the year.
- Spirit of Generosity award (chosen by peers)
- Effective supervision and monitoring of all areas at break and lunch times.
- Internet Safety Information provides the school with and opportunity to reinforce Internet safety and the importance of our online digital footprint.
- LGBTQ+ awareness provides the school community with an opportunity to underpin our welcoming and accepting school ethos amongst all students.
- Ensuring pupils know how and who to tell if an issue arises. In each student journal, names of form teachers, year heads, guidance staff are available to guide students if an issue arises.
- Guest speakers for parents, organised by the Parents' Advisory Council
- Information / training for parents - webinars discussing various issues such as Webwise - opportunities and risks for children online., as stated in Cinealtas .
- Guest speakers for students
- SID Ambassador Programme and training
- Continuous Professional Development for staff
- Presence of posters and anti bullying art throughout the school fostering a warm, inclusive, bully-free school environment.
- Student Support Team as part of promoting Wellbeing , preventing and addressing bullying.
- One-to-one counselling
- Referrals to outside agencies
- Programmes: watchyourspace.ie, webwise.ie (Respect Effect resource available to teachers), promed.ie
- Registered FUSE school providing access to an anti bullying and online safety programme.

This list is not exhaustive as we continuously upgrade our resources and initiatives

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: (see Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools*)

School Procedures for Investigation and Follow-up

The primary aim in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationship of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame):

Every effort will be made to ensure that all involved (including pupils, parent(s)/guardian(s)) understand this approach from the outset.

While the principal focus is on the above approach, the school nevertheless reserves the right to take disciplinary action, where such is warranted, in accordance with the school's code of behaviour, against those who bully others.

- All members of the school community have an obligation to report incidents of bullying.
- Pupils may report an incident of bullying in the following ways:
 - Direct approach to a Teacher, Form Teacher, Guidance Counsellor, Year Head, Deputy Principal, or Principal.
 - A note from a pupil or parent/guardian
 - A phone call by a parent/guardian to the Form Teacher, Guidance Counsellor, Year Head, Deputy Principal, or Principal in the school.
- Teachers should report incidences and concerns to the Year Head. All staff must keep a written record of any incidents witnessed by them or notified to them. (*Appendix 3 of this document*)
- Incidents of bullying behaviour, which are drawn to the attention of a teacher, will be dealt with by the Year Head .
- All staff including, secretaries, caretakers and cleaners, are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) and pupils are required to co-operate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving any issues and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved as quickly as possible
- All interviews should be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this way
- If a group is involved, each member may be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved may be met as a group, if appropriate. At the group meeting, each member may be asked for her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements
- In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher / year head that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the parties involved should be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken . The school should give parent(s)/guardian(s) an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports provided to the pupils
- Where the relevant teacher and year head has determined that a pupil has engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to her how she is in breach of the school's anti- bullying policy and efforts should be made to try to get her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied.
- It must also be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parent(s)/guardian(s)) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, her parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school
- The situation is closely monitored and both parties involved are observed for a period of time following the claims.
- The School Code of Behaviour is a pledge signed by both parents and students on enrolment and is available in each student journal and on the school website.

NOTE: Where necessary, Loreto College Mullingar reserves the right to involve relevant outside agencies including An Garda Síochána.

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

Form Teachers/Tutors

Pastoral Care Team

Year Head, Deputy Principal and Principal

School Chaplain

Guidance Counsellor (with whom regular meetings can be arranged as required)

NEPS

Partnership with local counselling group

An Garda Síochána

All students are reminded of the support systems in place

8. 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.

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 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.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on June 18th 2024 .

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website, is readily available to parents and pupils on request and provided to the Parents' Advisory Council. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

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 (or where none exists, be otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parents' Association (where one exists). A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the DES.

Signed:



(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed:



(Principal)

Date: 18/6/24

Date of next review: June 2025

Date: 18/6/24

