



## **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.
  
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 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 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.

Additional information on different types of bullying is set out in Section 2 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

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

Form Teacher(s)

Year Head(s)

Guidance Counsellors

Deputy Principals

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 posted on school website with agreement signed annually in Student Journal by students and parents.

SPHE Programme

CSPE Programme

Wellbeing Programme

Class Prefect System

Student Council

Big Sister/Little Sister programme

Health Promoting School

Friendship Week

Culture Day

Guest speakers for parents, organised by the Parents' Advisory Council

Guest speakers for students

Continuous Professional Development for staff

One-to-one counselling

Referrals to outside agencies

Programmes: [watchyourspace.ie](http://watchyourspace.ie), [webwise.ie](http://webwise.ie), [promed.ie](http://promed.ie) Mind Out.

***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:

### **School Procedures for Investigation and Follow-up**

*In so far as is reasonably practicable and conditional on the complexity of the issue, the following investigatory steps and intervention strategies will take place in a timely and proactive manner:*

1. An incident of alleged bullying is reported to a teacher.

2. Teacher explores the issue; a brief account of details is recorded in writing and shared with Year Head and Form Teacher as appropriate.
3. If deemed necessary, the Year Head gives the student the opportunity to complete Official First Step Report (See Appendix 1), to be countersigned by parents. If this opportunity is availed of, initial records are attached.
4. Year Head conducts a full investigation based on completed Official First Step Report.
5. In investigating and dealing with an allegation of bullying the Year Head will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved.
6. Parents of both parties are notified of the outcome of the investigation.  
In cases where bullying has occurred, the parties are informed that the behaviour must be adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days of the date.

**Note:** In the event of immediate health and safety concern, all possible precautions are taken and parents are contacted immediately.

### **Intervention Strategies/Action Taken**

Immediate action will take place when it has been established that a student is engaging in bullying behaviour.

Depending on the severity of the incident, **any or all** of the following remedial actions will follow:

- An informal reprimand may be issued by the relevant staff member to the student(s) against whom the complaints have been made.
- The student may be asked, as an initial measure aimed at reforming her behaviour, to sign a contract (countersigned by parent/guardian), promising that she will not continue such behaviour. In return for such a pledge an amnesty may be offered to the student whereby no further disciplinary measures would be taken against her if her bullying were to cease.
- If further action is deemed necessary, a formal reprimand and sanction may be issued by the Year Head or Principal/Deputy Principal (see School Code of Behaviour)\*.

#### ***To be used in addition to the above in more complex situations:***

- Parties involved are encouraged to provide feedback to the relevant teacher in order for the situation to be monitored.
- Feedback from parents and/or students to the Year Head is to take place as frequently as necessary. In the absence of feedback, the relevant teacher will verify that the bullying issue has been resolved within 20 days.
- Students involved may be interviewed individually or collectively by the Year Head/Chaplain/Guidance Counsellor/Deputy Principal/Principal/Form Teacher etc.
- The final decision on relevant sanction(s) is at the discretion of school management.

Students may be encouraged to visit the Chaplain, a member of the Pastoral Care Team or the Guidance Counsellor for follow-up.

\* The School Code of Behaviour is a pledge signed by both parents and students on enrolment and on an annual basis thereafter 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

Pastoral Care Team

Year Head, Deputy Principals and Principal

School Chaplain

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

NEPS

Partnership with ASPEN Counselling Services

An Garda Síochána

*All students are reminded of the support systems in place*

3. 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.

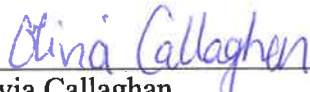
4. Prevention of Harassment

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.

5. This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on June 8<sup>th</sup> 2023.

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

  
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Anne Lordan Shaw  
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

  
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Olivia Callaghan  
(Acting Principal)

Date: 8<sup>th</sup> June 2023

Date: 8<sup>th</sup> June 2023

Date of next review: June 2024