



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 is/are as follows:

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

SPHE Programme

CSPE Programme

Class Prefect System

Student Council

Big Sister/Little Sister programme

Health Promoting School

Friendship Week

Positive Optimistic Thinking Week

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, webwise.ie, promed.ie

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 and a brief account of details is recorded in writing.
3. Student is given the opportunity to complete Official First Step Report (See Appendix 1 – Blue Form), to be countersigned by parents. If this opportunity is availed of, initial records are attached.
4. Report is passed to Form Teacher and Year Head.

5. Form Teacher and Year Head conduct clarification interview(s) with student(s) and witnesses (if applicable) based on completed Official First Step Report. Further details are recorded.
6. Parents are contacted and all relevant people are alerted. A record is kept.

Remaining steps are included in the Action box of Official First Step Report

7. Next steps action box is completed by the Year Head.
8. Copy of First Step Report is shared with other Year Head(s) if various year groups are involved.
9. Alleged bully is invited by her Year Head to complete an account of her relationship with the reportee in the blue form entitled “My relationship with...” This documentation is copied and sent to parents of alleged bully.
10. Alleged bully is interviewed by relevant Year Head and Form Teacher. Parent/Guardian is invited to attend.
11. It is then determined whether or not an incident of bullying has occurred.
12. Parents of both parties are notified of the outcome of the investigation by letter on that date.
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 as it has been established that a student is engaging in bullying.

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 / 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 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 Principal and Principal

School Chaplain

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

NEPS

Partnership with ASPEN

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 _____ [date].

6. This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website (or where none exists, is otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parents' Association (where one exists). 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.

Signed: _____
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: _____
(Principal)

Date: _____

Date: _____

Date of next review: _____