St Joseph's Secondary School

Anti-Bullying Policy & Procedures

Mercy philosophy of Education

Inspired by the vision of Catherine McAuley, Mercy Education is committed to holistic development and to the achievement of the full potential of each student, particularly those who are disadvantaged or marginalised. It is a process informed and influenced by the teaching and example of Jesus Christ and is conducted in an atmosphere of care, respect and joy. Mercy Education is committed to ongoing whole school development in collaboration and partnership with the Board of Management, Staff, Parents/Guardians and the wider community.

CEIST Core Values

The Core Values of CEIST are:
- Promoting Spiritual & Human Development
- Achieving Quality in Teaching and Learning
- Showing Respect for Every Person
- Being Just and Responsible

Mission Statement

St. Joseph's Secondary School Castlebar, Co.Mayo is a voluntary Catholic Secondary School for girls under the trusteeship of CEIST (Catholic Education an Irish Schools' Trust). We aim to provide a holistic Christian Education in co-operation with staff, students, parents/guardians, Board of Management and the Community. We work to create equality for all in an atmosphere of mutual respect. We strive to excellence in learning and endeavour to help each student to reach her full potential in a positive, caring and happy environment.

School Ethos

The characteristic spirit of St. Joseph's Secondary School, Castlebar is based on the Mercy Philosophy of Education which espouses the core values of respect, justice, care and joy. The School's Ethos is holistic and person centred. The school encourages students to use and share their talents to their full potential, to recognise God's presence in their lives, to celebrate their Christian faith and to show respect to all persons in all areas of life and work. Students are encouraged by school staff to strive for excellence in learning and to participate to the best of their ability in all aspects of school life.

Rationale:

The rationale behind our anti-bullying policy is:

- To acknowledge the right of each student to enjoy learning in a safe, caring and ordered environment
- To foster such values as mutual respect, inclusion, courtesy and an awareness of the interdependence of all members of the school community
- To develop a confident, positive self-image and sense of responsibility in each student
- To comply with the statutory obligations of the Education Act 1998, the Education Welfare Act 2000, The Health and Safety Act, The Equality Act

Scope of the policy:

The policy applies -

- During school time (including breaks)
- During school tours and outings
- During school based activities
- To any behaviour of a bullying nature conducted by any member of the school community (outside school) which seriously impacts on a students' participation in school, and / or where the matter relates to the school's duty of care to a student.

1. In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the code of behaviour guidelines issued by TUSLA, the **Board of Management of St. Joseph's Secondary School, Castlebar** 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-
  o is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity;
  o encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment; and
  o 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-
  o build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and

- o 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.

Bullying is not an isolated incident of aggression between students.

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 the following is set out in *Section 2 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools:*

- Different forms of bullying
- The impact of bullying behaviour
- The Indicators of Bullying Behaviour
- Characteristics associated with bullying

4. The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows:

- Any teacher with whom the student feels comfortable.
- Class Tutor
- Year Head
- Guidance Counsellor
- School Chaplain
- Student Support Team
- Deputy Principal
- Principal

The Education and prevention strategies (including strategies aimed at cyber bullying and identity bullying in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying) that will be used by the school are as follows:

5. The education and prevention strategies may include the following:
- Promoting a positive school climate and environment where bullying is not acceptable
- Promoting positive student behaviour and role modelling (student council , senior prefects)
- Creating a whole school approach to the prevention of bullying behaviour
- Promoting home, school and community links
- Displaying the anti-bullying Charter in every classroom in the school
- The inclusion of the school's Anti –bullying Charter in the student's journal Including guidelines for students and parents on the procedures for the reporting of bullying behaviour to be included in the student's journal
- Publishing of the school's Anti-Bullying Policy on the school's Website and the school's Acceptable Use Policy (Internet Usage)
- Displaying Anti –bullying posters on the school corridors
- A student mentoring programme for 1st Year students
- Workshops for students and parents on the appropriate use of social media and cyber bullying, homophobic and transphobic bullying
- Curricular programmes such as R.E., SPHE, and CSPE
- Cross curricular programmes that promote positive student relationships (e.g. Friendship week, Positive Mental Health Awareness Week)
- Parent Information evenings
- Training of staff
- Availing of outside support agencies such as the NYP (Neighbourhood Project)

- Ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the school's anti bullying policy and procedures

6. The school's procedure for investigating, 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:

What should a student do if she is being bullied by another student(s) or is she is aware of incidents of bullying behaviour between other students?

A student should feel comfortable reporting a bullying incident by using one, or any, of the following approaches:

- Directly approaching a teacher
- Telling a friend
- Telling a parent/guardian or family member
- Telling a responsible adult in whom she can trust
- Asking their parent/guardian to contact the school

What should a parent/Guardian do if he/she becomes aware that a student is being bullied by another student(s) or is involved in an incident of bullying behaviour towards a student(s)

- Listen calmly and note details of the incident(s)
- Assess the situation and refer to the school's policy on anti-bullying
- Inform the school (Year Head, Guidance Counsellor, Deputy Principal or Principal)
- It is important to advise the student(s) not to retaliate.
- Encourage the student to accept help and support offered by the school if appropriate

We acknowledge that incidents of bullying behaviour are and can be very upsetting for all students and families involved. It is advisable in the interests of all to remain calm and to be as objective as possible and allow the school authorities to investigate and deal with the incident as per school procedures. While the school will follow its procedures for investigating it is important to be aware that the management and the outcome of the incident may be different from case to case.

What should a student do if they witness an incident of bullying or are aware that a student is being bullied?

Inform a member of the school staff

- Support and encourage the student to report what is happening to them
- Do not retaliate on behalf of the student

- Reporting instances of bullying is not 'telling'

What should a member of staff do when a student(s) report an incident(s) of bullying behaviour between students?

- Listen and note details of the incident(s)
- Remain calm and objective
- Reassure the student(s) that support
- is available
- Record the factual detail of the incident on the Anti-bullying incident report form and give to either the Year Head/Deputy Principal/Principal
- Non-teaching staff should report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed or mentioned to them to the relevant Year head/Deputy Principal/Principal
- **Procedures for investigating incidents of bullying behaviour**

Investigating Reported Incidents.

- In accordance with our policy, all allegations of bullying will be investigated thoroughly.
- The investigation of incidents of bullying behaviour will be conducted by the relevant teachers as per section 4
- Separate interviews are advised with both parties and any witnesses.
- Students may be requested to write an account of the incident(s)
- In the case of group/gang bullying, each member may be interviewed separately, taking a written account of the individual versions.
- An account of all interviews should be kept
- All records relating to the investigated incident should be given to the Deputy Principal

All efforts will be made to expedite the investigation, but account must be taken of the complexity of some incidents. In our experience, it may take several days or more to properly reveal the complexity of some entrenched situations.

Responding to the Incident

It will be made clear to a student that has been involved in bullying behaviour that she is in beach of the school's code of behaviour

Sanctions may be imposed as per schools code of behaviour

In each case the student involved in bullying should acknowledge their role and the hurtful nature of the behaviour and apologise to the victim. The format of this apology may change from situation to situation.

The student who has been hurt by the bullying behaviour should be informed of the action to be taken in relation to those who have bullied.

In general we take the pastoral approach first, giving the help and understanding to both parties in order to establish positive relations between both parties. Both parties may be seen separately by different members of the Pastoral Care team or the Year Heads to help mediate the situation. If it is agreeable to both parties, a meeting may be organised where the students can meet with each other. The purpose of this meeting will be to facilitate and mediate issues which have arisen between the students. This approach has been found to be an effective approach in resolving incidents of bullying behaviour.

If incidents of bullying behaviour reoccur the parents/guardians of both parties will be informed and further investigations will be conducted and sanctions applied

In extreme cases where incidents of bullying behaviour remain unresolved, the matter will be referred to the Board of management and outside mediation services may be involved

The school may issue suspensions or expulsions in such cases depending on the seriousness of the incident

We work with all students engaged in a bullying incident, establishing for all that such behaviour is unacceptable. It is important for the student who has been hurt by the negative behaviour that their hurt and suffering is acknowledged. It is important also that the student who engages in such behaviour is brought to understand the hurtful nature of their behaviour and the necessity to change it.

The response strategy is determined by the seriousness of the situation. If bullying behaviour is identified early enough, a resolution may be arrived at quite easily and quickly. However if the incident is very serious or the pattern is well established by the time it is unearthed or reported, it takes longer to unravel and to move to a resolution.

Involvement of Parents

The school believes that it is essential to involve parents of students involved in a bullying incident. Parents will be contacted by the Year Head, Principal or the Deputy Principal.

It is important that parents are made aware of developments so that they can be given an opportunity to discuss the strategies being considered.

Parents/guardians are encouraged to monitor their own daughter/daughters social media accounts (facebook, twitter etc.) in the interest of their daughters personal safety.

Parents themselves are encouraged to be proactive in contacting the school to report bullying behaviour

7. **The schools Programme of support for working with students affected by bullying are as follows**

- Support will be offered by their year head on an ongoing basis
- The school chaplain/guidance counsellor may meet with both students over a period of time.
- Counselling may be recommended if deemed appropriate
- It may be necessary in some situations to refer students to outside agencies for ongoing support(NYP, NEP's)

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 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.

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.

> This policy was adopted by the Board of Management at its meeting on 21st September 2017. This policy is operational from 22nd September 2017.
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> Mr. John Caulfield   Ms. Marie Mac Cabe
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> Chairperson of Board of Management   Principal