



St. Mary's Diocesan School

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Principal: Catherina McNicholas

Deputy Principals: Carrie Byrne, Lorraine Noone, Nicola Oglesby.

Anti-bullying policy 2025-2026

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 St. Mary's Diocesan School 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 all of the bullying behaviours outlined in point 3.
 - 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,
- Name calling, Teasing, deliberate inappropriate behaviour to cause insult
- cyber-bullying including sharing and liking of material on social media posted by a third party about a student
- identity-based bullying such as social class bullying, 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.
- This list is not exhaustive

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 teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows:

All members of the school community have an obligation to report incidents of bullying. Students may report an incident of bullying in the following ways:

- Direct approach to a Subject Teacher, Tutor, Year Head, Guidance Counsellors, Deputy Principals and Principal
- A note from a student or parent/guardian handed to a teacher e.g. with homework
- A phone call by a parent/guardian to the school
- An appointment with the guidance counsellor(s)

Incidents of bullying behavior, no matter how trivial, which are drawn to the attention of a teacher, will be dealt with by the relevant member of staff e.g. Principal, Deputy Principals, Year Head, Tutor or Subject Teacher.

Non-teaching staff are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behavior witnessed by them, to the appropriate member of staff.

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 (see Section 6.5 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):

5.1 *Publicising and Promoting the Anti-Bullying Policy*

5.1 (i) Staff

- All staff share a collegiate responsibility, under the direction of the Principal to act in preventing bullying and harassment by any member of the school community. Teachers will regularly emphasise the importance of raising issues of concern with their Subject Teacher/Tutor/Year Head/Guidance Counsellors/Deputy Principals/Principal
- Staff will model respectful behaviour promoting respectful language and modeling what respectful behaviour looks like.
- Provision of guidelines for staff in dealing with reports of bullying
- A Care Team is in place which meets regularly to discuss:
 - The welfare of students
 - Strategies of support
 - Communication to relevant staff members
- Teachers encourage students to be inclusive in their activities
- Staff, students and parents are made aware of expectations through the inclusion of information around conduct and respect in the School Journal
- The Anti-Bullying Policy is available on the school website
- Regular reminders of the Anti-Bullying Policy are given in assemblies
- Some teachers have received specialised training on dealing with reported bullying incidences, restorative practice and the check and connect programme.

5.1 (ii) Students

- Prominent presence of materials throughout the school highlighting the importance of fostering a warm, inclusive and bullying-free school environment
- Students are asked to sign the school's Code of Behaviour which promotes respect for self, others and other people's property
- Staff, students and parents are made aware of expectations through the inclusion of information around conduct and respect in the School Journal
- **The Anti-Bullying Policy is available on the school website**
- Regular reminders of the Anti-Bullying Policy are given at School Assembly
- Provision of support for students by Tutors, Year Heads, Guidance Counsellor, SPHE Teachers, Subject Teachers
- Involvement of students in decision-making processes through development of the Student Council and prefect system

- Prefects are vigilant in their monitoring of students' relationships and report unacceptable behaviour to the appropriate teacher.

5.1 (iii) *Parents/Guardians Parents' Council*

- Provision of information about bullying at meetings of incoming First Year Parents evening, First Year Parents Coffee Morning and other suitable opportunities during the academic year
- Staff, students and parents are made aware of expectations through the inclusion of information around conduct and respect in the School Journal
- The Anti-Bullying Policy is available on the school website
- Parents/guardians and the wider community are invited to assist in promoting a consistent message against bullying across home, school and community through:
 - o their involvement in the formulation of the school's Anti-Bullying Policy through the parents' council
 - o their involvement in the parents'/guardians' meetings during the first term of First Year. These meetings provide an opportunity for First Year parents/guardians engage with the Principal, the Tutor, Year Head and the Guidance Counsellor in order to develop and maintain supportive practices for students which are endorsed by both the school and parents/guardians.
 - o Parents/guardians are invited to information evenings on issues that have at their core the aim of promoting students wellbeing and healthy development throughout the school year e.g. Open Evenings, Parent-Teacher Meetings, Incoming First Year Evening, Post Junior Certificate Options Evening etc.

5.2 *Inclusion of Anti-Bullying Education in the Curriculum*

- Social Personal and Health Education class and Well-Being are timetabled as part of the junior cycle core curriculum. They provide students with opportunities to develop the skills and competencies to care for themselves and others and to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives and social development. The issue of bullying is dealt with in each of the three years of the junior cycle programme. Tools such as 'The Cool School Programme' can be used to support teaching and learning, provided by the HSE.
- Materials from the FUSE antibullying programme led by the antibullying centre in DCU may be used with second year students and some or all of the programme may be included in SPHE lessons.
- Opportunities are taken to educate students on bullying when they arise in other subjects and activities e.g. SPHE, CSPE, Transition Year Programme, Guidance class, Well-being, Team building, WELL programme etc. The new Senior SPHE programme will incorporate anti-bullying education in the senior curriculum.
- The informal curriculum also provides opportunities to promote awareness of the unacceptable nature of bullying and they have at their core the aim of encouraging the development of responsible and caring attitudes in students and affirming diversity e.g. Sports Clubs, Music Club, Debating etc.

- Visiting speakers to the school with a view to promoting the mental health, relationship and confidence building and wellbeing of all students take place often throughout the school year.
- The Junior Cycle indicators are taught through the wellbeing programme and tutor roll period for Junior student through mottos for the week and other activities. Being RESPONSIBLE, CONNECTED, RESILIENT, AWARE and RESPECTED are focuses of the well-being curriculum taught in St. Mary's DS.
- Positivity week incorporates the opportunity to promote cross-curricular education in building strong relationships and education of anti-bullying practices across the curriculum.

5.3 Fostering a Positive School Culture and Climate:

- Modelling respectful behaviour to all members of the school community at all times.
- Explicitly teaching pupils what respectful language and respectful behaviour looks like, acts like, sounds like and feels like in class and around the school.
- Displaying key respect messages in classrooms, in assembly areas, on the wellbeing wall and around the school. Involve pupils in the development of these messages.
- Catching students being good - notice and acknowledge desired respectful behaviour by providing positive attention in class and assembly and through the awarding of green cards and positive vsware points.
- Consistently tackling the use of discriminatory and derogatory language in the school – this includes homophobic and racist language and language that is belittling of pupils with a disability or SEN. International week promotes positive links and relationships between students of different ethnic backgrounds and nationalities.
- Giving constructive feedback to pupils when respectful behaviour and respectful language are absent.
- Having a system of encouragement and awards to promote desired behaviour and compliance with the school rules and routines.
- Promoting the appropriate use of social media.
- Actively involving parents and/or the Parents' Council in awareness raising campaigns around social media.
- Actively promoting the right of every member of the school community to be safe and secure in school.
- Highlighting and explicitly teaching school rules in pupil friendly language in the classroom, during induction and during Assembly. Induction day of first year students includes activities to promote positive relationships and explanation of the code of behavior which does not tolerate bullying behavior. As part of the induction process, Transition year students are involved in a peer education project where they visit first year SPHE, organise a coffee morning with first year students and

transition year community care classes visit first year classes to promote and help first year students create positive relationships with their peers.

- All staff actively watching out for signs of bullying behaviour.
 - Ensuring there is adequate supervision.
 - Supporting the establishment and work of the Student Council and Prefect system
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*):

6.1 Procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying

- (i) The primary aim for the relevant teacher in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame);
- (ii) In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher will exercise their professional judgment to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved;
- (iii) All reports will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. In that way students will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It is made clear to all pupils that when they report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly;
- (iv) Parents and students 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;
- (v) It is very important that all involved (including each set of students and parents) understand the above approach from the outset;
- (vi) Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by students, staff or parents;
- (vii) Incidents are generally best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved;
- (viii) All interviews should be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all students concerned. Students who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this way;
- (ix) When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher should seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This should be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner;
- (x) Where a group of students is affected by a bullying incident, each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that they may face from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher;

(xi) It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s);

(xii) In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved should be contacted as soon as is practicably possible to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken (by reference to the school policy). The school should give parents an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports for their students;

(xiii) Where the relevant teacher has determined that a student has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to the student how he is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts should be made to try to get him to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied;

(xiv) Where the relevant teacher has determined that bullying has taken place, a verbal warning and/or other sanctions will be given to the perpetrator to stop the inappropriate behaviour, pointing out how he is in breach of the Code of Behaviour and helping him to see the situation from the victim's point of view. This may involve a meeting between both or all parties if they are willing

(xv) It must also be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parents) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his parents and the school;

(xvi) Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved should be arranged separately with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date if the pupil who has been bullied is ready and agreeable. This can have a therapeutic effect;

(xvii) In cases where the relevant teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, it must be recorded by the relevant teacher in the recording template at **Appendix 1** and **appropriate sanctions will be imposed.**

(xviii) In line with the Code of Behaviour sanctions may include:

- An agreement of good behaviour
- Withdrawal of privileges e.g. participation in school trips, events
- Other sanctions as may be deemed appropriate e.g. lunchtime detention, blue card, after school detention.
- Suspension
- Expulsion

(xix) In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant teacher must, as part of their professional judgment, 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 the relationships between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable; and

- Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the school Principal or Deputy Principals;
- (xx) Those affected by bullying may be referred to the Guidance Counsellor and/or relevant external agencies for counselling or other supports/interventions.
- (xxi) 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, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures;
- (xxii) In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.
- (xxiii) In the case of a complaint regarding a staff member, this should be referred immediately to the Principal.

6.2 Procedures for recording bullying behaviour

The Board of Management ensures that the school has clear procedures for the formal noting and reporting of bullying behaviour and these must be documented in the school's anti-bullying policy. All records must be maintained in accordance with relevant data protection legislation. The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour must adhere to the following:

- (i) While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying are investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the relevant teacher will use their professional judgment in relation to the records to be kept of these reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same;
- (ii) If it is established by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher must keep appropriate written records which will assist their efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.
- (iii) The relevant teacher can use VShare or Schoolwise to record any suspected cases of bullying
- (iv) The relevant teacher must use the recording template at Appendix 1 to record the potential case of bullying behaviour and/or Appendix 1 to record a case of 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; and
 - b) where the relevant member of staff deems a particular incident or repetition of an incident(s) to be of such a serious nature that it merits the immediate completion of a on VShare or Schoolwise and reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principals as applicable.

In each of the circumstances at (a) and (b) above, the recording template at Appendix 1 must be completed in full and retained by the teacher in question and a copy provided to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable. It should also be noted that the timeline for recording bullying behaviour in the recording template at Appendix 1 does not in any way preclude the relevant teacher from consulting the Principal or Deputy Principal at an earlier stage in relation to a case.

6.3 Referral of serious cases to TUSLA

6.3.1 In relation to bullying in schools, *Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017* (Children First) and the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* provide that in situations where “the incident is serious and where the behaviour is regarded as potentially abusive, the school must consult TUSLA with a view to drawing up an appropriate response, such as a management plan”.

6.3.2 Serious instances of bullying behaviour should, in accordance with the Children First and *the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017*, be referred to TUSLA and/or Gardaí as appropriate.

6.3.3 The schools safeguarding statement also provides that where school personnel have concerns about a child but are not sure whether to report the matter to TUSLA, the Designated Liaison Person must seek advice from TUSLA.

7. The school’s programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows (see Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):

The Guidance Counsellor is available to support all parties affected by bullying. Students may access support in rebuilding relationships, developing self-esteem, resilience and implementing positive coping strategies.

In cases where the school has serious concerns in relation to managing the behaviour of a pupil, the advice of the National Education Psychological Service (NEPS) will be sought.

Throughout the academic year, opportunities are provided in which students may develop self-esteem, resilience and positive relationships in both the informal and formal curriculum (see Section 5).

Oversight

7.1 Periodic summary reports to the Board of Management

7.1.1 At least once in every school term, the Principal must provide a report to the Board of Management setting out:

- (i) the overall number of bullying cases reported (by means of the bullying recording template at Appendix 1) since the previous report to the Board and
- (ii) confirmation that all cases referred to at (i) above have been or are being, dealt with in accordance with the school’s anti-bullying policy and the *Anti-bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary schools*.

7.1.2 The minutes of the Board of Management meeting must record the above but in doing so must not include any identifying details of the pupils involved.

7.2 Annual Review by the Board of Management

7.2.1 The Board of Management must undertake an annual review of the school’s anti- bullying policy and its implementation by the school.

7.2.2 A standardised checklist to be used in undertaking the review is included in Appendix 3 to these procedures. It should be noted that in order to complete the checklist, an examination and review involving both quantitative and qualitative analysis as appropriate across the various elements of the implementation of the school’s anti-bullying policy will be required.

7.2.3 The school must put in place an action plan to address any areas for improvement identified by the review.

7.2.4 Written notification that the review has been completed must be made available to school personnel,

published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Council. A standardised notification which must be used for this purpose is included in Appendix 4. A record of the review and its outcome must be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

7.3 Department Inspectorate

7.3.1 The Department's Inspectorate conducts a programme of school evaluations in primary and post-primary schools. Inspectors evaluate aspects of the school's work, including policies and procedures to support pupils' well-being. Arising from commitments made in the Action Plan on Bullying, the Inspectorate will be placing a stronger focus on the actions schools take to create a positive school culture and to prevent and tackle bullying.

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.

10. This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 13/02/2025

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

12. 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' Council. 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)

Date: 13/02/2025

Date of next review: February 2026

Signed: 
(Principal)

Appendix 1

Recording bullying behaviour

1. Name of pupil being bullied and class group

Name _____ Class _____

2. Name(s) and class(es) of pupil(s) engaged in bullying behaviour

3. Source of bullying concern/report (tick relevant box(es))*

Pupil concerned	
Other Pupil	
Parent	
Teacher	
Other	

4. Location of incidents (tick relevant box(es))*

School Yard	
Classroom	
Corridor	
Toilets	
School Bus	
Other	

5. Name of person(s) who reported the bullying concern

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6. Type of Bullying Behaviour (tick relevant box(es)) *

Physical Aggression		Cyber-bullying	
Damage to Property		Intimidation	
Isolation/Exclusion		Malicious Gossip	
Name Calling		Other (specify)	

7. Where behaviour is regarded as identity-based bullying, indicate the relevant category:

Homophobic	Disability/SEN related	Racist	Membership of Traveller community	Other (specify)

8. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact

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9. Details of actions taken

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Signed _____ (Relevant Teacher) Date _____

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal _____

Appendix 2

Checklist for annual review of the anti-bullying policy and its implementation

The Board of Management (the Board) must undertake an annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation. The following checklist must be used for this purpose. The checklist is an aid to conducting this review and is not intended as an exhaustive list. In order to complete the checklist, an examination and review involving both quantitative and qualitative analysis, as appropriate across the various elements of the implementation of the school's anti-bullying policy will be required.

	Yes /No
Has the Board formally adopted an anti-bullying policy that fully complies with the requirements of the <i>Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools</i> ?	Yes
Has the Board published the policy on the school website and provided a copy to the parents' council?	Yes
Has the Board ensured that the policy has been made available to school staff (including new staff)?	Yes
Is the Board satisfied that school staff are sufficiently familiar with the policy and procedures to enable them to effectively and consistently apply the policy and procedures in their day to day work?	Yes
Has the Board ensured that the policy has been adequately communicated to all pupils?	Yes
Has the policy documented the prevention and education strategies that the school applies?	Yes
Have all of the prevention and education strategies been implemented?	Yes
Has the effectiveness of the prevention and education strategies that have been implemented been examined?	Yes
Is the Board satisfied that all teachers are recording and dealing with incidents in accordance with the policy?	Yes
Has the Board received and minuted the periodic summary reports of the Principal?	Yes
Has the Board discussed how well the school is handling all reports of bullying including those addressed at an early stage and not therefore included in the Principal's periodic report to the Board?	Yes
Has the Board received any complaints from parents regarding the school's handling of bullying incidents?	No
Have any parents withdrawn their child from the school citing dissatisfaction with the school's handling of a bullying situation?	No
Have any Ombudsman for Children investigations into the school's handling of a bullying case been initiated or completed?	No
Has the data available from cases reported to the Principal (by the bullying recording template) been analysed to identify any issues, trends or patterns in bullying behaviour?	Yes
Has the Board identified any aspects of the school's policy and/or its implementation that require further improvement?	No
Has the Board put in place an action plan to address any areas for improvement?	Yes

Signed 
Chairperson, Board of Management

Date: 13/02/2025

Signed 
Principal

Date: 13/02/2025

Appendix 3

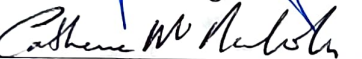
Notification regarding the Board of Management's annual review of the anti-bullying policy

To: _____

The Board of Management of St. Mary's Diocesan School wishes to inform you that:

- The Board of Management's annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation was completed at the Board meeting of 13/02/2025
- This review was conducted in accordance with the checklist set out in **4** of the Department's *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*. (**Appendix 2 of our school policy**)

Signed:  Date: 13/02/2025
Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed:  Date: 13/02/2025
Principal