

## Anti-Bullying Policy

*This policy is made available to parents of all girls, day and boarding, on the School website, in the Student/Parent Handbook and on request from the School Office. It is available to the Staff at the School from the School website, in the Staff Handbook and on request from the School Office. Content of this policy is directly discussed with new staff upon induction into the School.*

Marymount International School is committed to maintaining an environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. Harassment/bullying at Marymount is not acceptable and it is important that all members of the community know this and that a culture is established which reinforces this principle. The School strictly prohibits harassment or bullying of or by any member of the school community. This includes harassment or bullying based on race, ethnic identity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, sexist, age, homophobic, special education needs and disability, disability, national origin, citizenship, marital status, or any other basis protected by law. The guidelines below have been developed in accordance with the Department for Education advice “Preventing and Tackling Bullying” (July 2017) and “Cyberbullying: Advice for headteachers and school staff (2014)”.

The School is committed to maintaining an environment that is free from violence or intimidation. All members of the community, therefore, are expected to refrain from violence or intimidation of others at all times.

### AIMS

- To demonstrate that the School takes bullying seriously and it will not be tolerated
- To take measures to prevent all forms of bullying in the School and on off- site activities
- To support everyone to identify and protect those who might bebullied
- To demonstrate to all that the safety and happiness of students is enhanced by dealing positively with bullying
- To encourage members to tell someone that they are being bullied and not suffer in silence

### DEFINITION OF HARASSMENT/BULLYING

Bullying is deliberately hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time and intentionally hurts another student or group. It may be difficult for the victims to defend themselves.

The damage inflicted by bullying is often underestimated. It can cause considerable distress and psychological damage affecting health and development, and can be a source of significant harm. The School recognises that there are criminal laws, which apply to harassment and threatening behaviour.

Many experts say that bullying involves an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim. This could involve perpetrators of bullying having control over the relationship which makes it difficult for those they bully to defend themselves. The imbalance of power can manifest itself in several ways, it may be physical, psychological (knowing what upsets someone), derive from an intellectual imbalance, or by having access to the support of a group, or the capacity to socially isolate. It can result in the intimidation of a person or persons through the threat of violence or by isolating them either physically or online. Low level disruption and the use of offensive language can itself have a significant impact on its target. If left unchallenged, or dismissed as ‘banter’ or ‘horseplay’, it can also lead to reluctance to support other behaviour. Early intervention can help to set clear expectations of the behaviour that is or isn’t acceptable and help stop negative behaviours escalating.

## TYPES OF BULLYING INCLUDE:

- Emotional abuse (e.g. shunning and isolating an individual from the group or emotional blackmail).
- Threatening, intimidating or hostile acts.
- Verbal or written epithets, slurs, quips or negative stereotyping.
- Denigrating or hostile written or graphic material (including graffiti).
- Jokes, pranks, or other forms of supposed humour that are in fact demeaning or hostile.
- Physical abuse (e.g. hitting, kicking, pushing, etc.).
- Verbal or mobile telephone / online (internet) message abuse through any electronic means of communication, e.g. internet chat rooms, blogs, email, networking sites, etc – this type of non-physical bullying may include sexual harassment.
- Cyber-bullying through any electronic means of communication e.g. mobile phones, videos, cameras, internet sites, social networking sites, etc – these can include real or manipulated images, and sexting.
- Unwanted conduct affecting the dignity of others related to age, ethnicity, sex, religion, nationality, race, sexist, age, homophobic, special education needs and disability, disability, sexual orientation or any other personal characteristic.

This list is not all-inclusive. Other unwelcome acts or comments of an offensive nature also may constitute harassment/bullying.

This policy applies to members of our community whilst at school and in their communications with other community members, and at school sponsored events and activities.

## CYBER-BULLYING

The rapid development of, and widespread access to, technology has provided a new medium for ‘virtual’ bullying, which can occur in or outside school. Cyber-bullying is a different form of bullying and can happen at all times of the day, with a potentially bigger audience, and more accessories as people forward on content at a click.

The wider search powers included in the Education Act 2011 provide teachers with the power to tackle cyber-bullying by allowing them to search for and, if necessary, retain or delete inappropriate images (or files) as appropriate on electronic devices, including mobile phones. There is no need to obtain parental consent to search through a student’s mobile phone.

If an electronic device, that is prohibited by the school rules, has been seized and the member of staff has reasonable grounds to suspect that it contains evidence in relation to an offence, they must give the device to the DSL who will inform the police as soon as is reasonably practicable. Material on the device that is suspected to be evidence relevant to an offence, or that is a pornographic image of a child or an extreme pornographic image, should not be deleted prior to giving the device to the police. If a staff member finds material that they do not suspect contains evidence in relation to an offence, but is still concerning, they should decide, along with the Headmistress, whether it is appropriate to delete or retain the material as evidence of a breach of the School’s rules.

Staff are required to be vigilant when students are using computers in a learning context. The Acceptable Use Policy gives more details of expected behaviour when using technology.

For more information on cyberbullying or sexting incidents please consult the Department for Education’s 2014 document: [‘Cyberbullying: Advice for head teachers and school staff’](#) and the UK Council for Internet Safety (UKCCIS) Education Group: [‘Advice for schools and colleges on responding to sexting incidents’](#). (Please click on the link in order to be directed to the information).

## Measures to Prevent Bullying and Harassment Signs of Harassment/Bullying

Students who are being harassed/bullied may show changes in behaviour, e.g. becoming shy and nervous, feigning illness, taking unusual absences or clinging to adults. There may be changes in work patterns, a lack of concentration, or truancy. All members of the community should be aware of these possibilities and must promptly report any suspicions of bullying to the student's Advisor, the Designated Safeguarding Lead or another member of the Pastoral Life Team. Students will be encouraged to report incidents of bullying through a positive programme of awareness and action.

## Strategies for Dealing with Harassment/Bullying

There are essentially two strands to our policy:

1. **Prevention** – the whole school approach to awareness and prevention through an understanding of the School's Mission and Goals and the cultivation of a positive community culture.
2. **Dealing with specific incidents** in a careful and swift manner.

### 1. PREVENTION

#### Create an Ethos of Respect

- Our ethos must be one in which all students are valued by all staff members and by their peers.
- The way in which all members of the community treat each other must reflect this ethos.

It is the responsibility of the staff to be vigilant, observant and to speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or another member of the Pastoral Life Team over issues of concern. Staff are given training to ensure that they understand the purpose of the 'Anti-Bullying Policy', including where necessary in understanding the needs of students with special learning needs, the legal responsibilities of the School and how to resolve problems and seek support.

#### Education in the Curriculum

Respect for the individual is at the heart of all curriculum programmes, especially the Religious Studies curriculum. The School will raise the awareness of the anti-social nature of bullying and the importance of kindness through the PSHEE programme, school assemblies, school leadership teams and advisory groups.

- The PSHEE Department Chair is responsible for initiating and developing with the Designated Safeguarding Lead and other members of the Pastoral Life Team an Anti-Bullying programme as part of the PSHEE programme.
- Department Chairs/subject teachers are responsible for raising anti-bullying issues as appropriate through discussion of differences between people, as evidenced in the subject content.

### 2. DEALING WITH INCIDENTS

#### Disciplinary Action for Violating this Policy

If the School determines that this policy has been violated, the violator will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, which may include referral to appropriate counselling, temporary or permanent exclusion.

The School recognises that false accusations of harassment and/or bullying can cause serious harm to innocent persons. If any investigation results in a finding that the complainant knowingly and falsely accused another person of harassment and/or bullying, the complainant will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including permanent exclusion.

## PROCEDURES

### What can you do if you are being bullied?

- Remember that silence is the bully's greatest weapon!
- Tell yourself that you do not deserve to be bullied, and that it is **WRONG!**
- Seek help from your advisor/houseparent/school nurse or any other adult whom you feel comfortable talking to.
- Be proud of who you are. It is good to be individual.
- Try not to show you are upset. It is hard but a bully thrives on someone's fear.
- Stay with a group of friends/people. There is safety in numbers.
- Be assertive – shout "No!" Walk confidently away.
- Teachers/Staff will take you seriously and will support you

### If you know someone is being bullied:

- **TAKE ACTION!** Watching and doing nothing looks as if you are on the side of the bully. It makes the victim more unhappy and on their own.
- If you feel you cannot get involved, tell an adult **IMMEDIATELY**. Teachers have ways of dealing with the bully without getting you into trouble.
- Do not be, or pretend to be, friends with a bully.

### What can adults do to stop bullying?

- Give support to those who are bullied
- Help those who bully to change their behaviour
- Investigate the facts
- Meet the bullies and their victims individually
- Inform parents of the victim and of the bully

When a bullying incident is reported it should be taken seriously and dealt with immediately. The DSL will advise how the incident will be investigated and work with other members of the pastoral team (Advisors, Heads of Year, Assistant Head, Chair of Pastoral Life) to speak to those involved. Staff (especially Year Heads and SLT) must ensure that the Behaviour, Rewards and Sanctions policy is followed with regard to implementing sanctions reflecting the seriousness of an incident.

In the event of severe and persistent bullying it may be necessary to consider exclusion from the school. A severe bullying incident may be addressed as a child protection concern when there is 'reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm'. Where this is the case, the school staff should report their concerns to the DSL who will contact the local authority children's social care. Even where safeguarding is not considered to be an issue, schools may need to draw on a range of external services to support the student who is experiencing bullying, or to tackle any underlying issue which has contributed to a student engaging in bullying.

Pastoral care is a priority provided by the Pastoral Team of Heads of Year and Advisors, led by the Chair of Pastoral Life. Students, staff or parents may contact them to discuss any pastoral issue. This team is also supported by the Deputy Head (Safeguarding), Assistant Head, Spiritual Life Coordinator, Counsellor/Life Coach and School Nurse.

## **INVOLVEMENT OF PARENTS AND STUDENTS**

Parents, as well as all staff and students, should know that the School will not tolerate harassment/bullying, and that it takes a positive approach to educating students to combat it. Parents of students who are being bullied and parents of the bullies will be involved in the solution to the problem as deemed appropriate.

Students will be involved in the positive strategies both through the Student Leadership groups and Advisor groups. Students will have an input into the PSHEE anti-bullying programme and will be consulted on how it could be developed.

## **COUNSELLING**

The School supports counselling for all parties in a bullying incident. The victim must be helped to see that it is not her fault that she is being bullied. She must be assured that she is safe and that someone is dealing with her problem. Moreover the bully must be made to see the antisocial nature of her behaviour and appreciate the hurt she is causing.

## **REPORTING AND RECORDING**

The School will maintain records of complaints of harassment and/or bullying, as well as records of subsequent investigation of such matters. The DSL will keep a copy of the record of incidents so that patterns or further incidents can be identified and dealt with immediately. These records will be kept confidential to the extent practicable and appropriate under the circumstances. Any staff dealing with students involved should have a clear picture of events so that they can be aware of how best to support the victim, and indeed the bully.

## **MONITORING AND REVIEW**

The DSL will review and keep records of all reports and serious incidents, to enable patterns to be identified. The DSL will then report to the Headmistress.

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