

## 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. This Policy should be read in conjunction with the Safeguarding Policy, Behaviour, Rewards and Sanctions Policy and Acceptable Use Policies.*

Marymount London 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, because a student is adopted or is a carer 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 be bullied
- 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 either physically or emotionally. It may be difficult for the victims to defend themselves. Single incidents that suggest bullying may occur will be recorded to assist the School in identifying patterns to help avoid single incidents becoming a series of bullying behaviour.

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.

**PEER-ON-PEER ABUSE WHICH MAY INCLUDE:**

- **Emotional abuse** (e.g. being unfriendly, general unkindness, exclusionary: 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, sarcasm, spreading rumours.
- **Verbal or mobile telephone / online** (internet) message abuse through any electronic means of communication, e.g. internet chat rooms, blogs, email, networking sites, live streaming, etc. – this type of non-physical bullying may include sexual harassment.
- 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 or consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images.
- **Prejudiced-based bullying** 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 protected characteristic.
- **Child on Child Sexual Violence or Harassment:** Sexual violence and harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex. It is not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up. Under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, sexual violence refers to: rape, assault by penetration, sexual assault. Sexual harassment refers to ‘unwanted conduct of a sexual nature’ that can occur online and offline. (DfE guidance: [Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges, 2018](#) and Part 5 of KCSIE.)

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. It can go further than face-to-face bullying as it can invade home and personal space and involve a greater number of people as people forward on content with a click.

**Cyber-bullying** is the use of technologies to upset someone else. It includes threats and intimidation; harassment or ‘trolling’; vilification/defamation; humiliation; manipulation; whether open or anonymous; exclusion or peer rejection; impersonation; unauthorized use of personal information or images; posting without consent.

**Sexting** or consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos is the term used to describe the sending of explicit images electronically. Under the Sexual Offences Act (2003) taking an indecent image of a child (someone under the age of 18) is illegal. It is also illegal to send or be in the possession of such an image. The law applied to a young person taking an image of themselves, and applies to anyone receiving such an image if they do not delete it immediately. They should also advise someone appropriate (an adult) of their actions. Any sharing of such images is illegal. There may also be further legal implications if an older student requests such pictures of a younger students. This could be viewed as ‘grooming’. (See UKCIS guidance: [Sharing nudes and semi-nudes advice for education settings](#).)

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 and further information in regards to online distance learning can be found in the Covid-19 Addenda to the Safeguarding and Behaviour, Rewards and Sanctions Policy.

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 UKCIS guidance: '[Sharing nudes and semi-nudes advice for education settings](#)'. (Please click on the links 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. The signs may include some or any of the list below, although this is not intended to be exhaustive:

- Becoming shy and nervous, lacks confidence
- Asking for money or starts stealing money (to pay the bully)
- Frightened of travelling to and from school or does not want to go on the school/public transport
- Feigning illness
- Taking unusual absences or truancy
- There may be changes in work patterns or routines
- Attempts or threatens self-harm or suicide
- Has unexplained cuts or bruises
- Cries herself to sleep or has nightmares
- Becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- Starts stammering
- Is bullying other girls or siblings
- Comes home with clothes or books damaged
- Stops eating
- Is frightened to say what is wrong
- Seeks out the company of / clings to adults
- A lack of concentration

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.
- As a Catholic school, each person is considered to have intrinsic value and should be treated with dignity and respect.

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, LGBT+ students, the legal responsibilities of the School and how to resolve problems and seek support.

Students are encouraged to tell a member of staff at once if they know that bullying is taking place. The Pastoral Team will offer support and guidance to other staff on handling and reporting incidents, and on the follow up work with both victims and bullies. Students are reminded who they can turn to for help through the Advisory curriculum, PSHEE, in Boarding and through the posters displayed around the campus. Worry boxes are also available in the Gailhac bathrooms and Infirmary corridor should a student wish to disclose bullying confidentially or anonymously. Students may also use the Chat function on Teams to make a disclosure.

Safeguarding training for students in positions of leadership also covers the importance of offering support and assistance to younger and to vulnerable students.

Initiation or similar ceremonies would never be permitted at Marymount.

### Preventing Cyber-bullying:

Staff will receive training on online safety helping them to understand the social media that is currently being used and appropriate pastoral responses.

Students will be educated about cyber-bullying through the curriculum as noted below. Students and staff agree to an Acceptable Use of Technology Policy when they join the School.

### Education in the Curriculum

Respect for the individual is at the heart of all curriculum programmes, especially the Religious Studies curriculum. Central to this is the dignity of each human being and their God given responsibility to protect and support one another. The School will raise the awareness of the anti-social nature of bullying and the importance of kindness through the PSHEE programme, school assemblies, liturgies, student 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. This programme also deals with related issues such as self-esteem, friendship issues, communication skills, mental and physical health issues, mutual respect, cultural difference, relationship and sex education etc.
- Bullying is also tackled through the Advisory Curriculum. During Kindness Week, students focus on positive behaviour and expectations and consider how their actions can impact each other. Protected Characteristics weeks are also included in the school calendar. Assemblies and homerooms enable students to engage in each of the protected characteristics to help consider what these mean more fully in order to create dialogue, openness and understanding.

## 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.

Prejudiced-based bullying on the basis of protected characteristics will be taken very seriously.

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.

The School reserves the right to investigate incidents involving our students, that take place outside school hours, on school visits and trips and that can occur in the vicinity of the School.

## 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/DSL 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, Deputy Heads) 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 cases of cyber-bullying, staff and students should be advised to preserve evidence and a record of abuse; save phone messages, record or save and print screen shots of conversations or images or social network pages; save and forward emails to staff. If necessary, confiscate devices to protect the victim and retain evidence. If hurtful or embarrassing content is being distributed, try to get it removed from the web. If the person who posted it is known, ensure they understand why it is wrong and ask them to remove it. Ask the student to delete the offending content and say who they have sent it on to. Alternatively, contact the host provider and make a report to get the content taken down. The DSL will contact the police in cases of actual/suspected illegal content. The person who is being bullied may be able to block the bully from their sites.

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 Kingston and Richmond Safeguarding Partnership. 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 Deputy Head Pastoral & Safeguarding. Students, staff or parents may contact them to discuss any pastoral issue. This team is also supported by the Deputy Head Pastoral, Spiritual Life Coordinator, Counsellor/Life Coach and School Nurses.

## **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. It is expected that parents will encourage co-operative behaviour and be quick to discourage aggressive and/or manipulative ways of resolving difficulties. If a student is to be found to be bullying others, it is expected that parents will work with the School to resolve the problem and effect a change in the student's behaviour. The School will always act in the best interest of the individuals involved and expect parents to support them in this.

Any kind of bullying is unacceptable. We treat all of our students and their parents fairly and with consideration and we expect them to reciprocate towards each other, the staff and the School.

Intimidation and unkindness is often caused by unhappiness and poor self-image, and situations where trust between people breaks down. It can have a complex and profound emotional impact for all involved. Parents and girls must feel that any suggestion of bullying is thoroughly investigated and that no one should apportion blame without proper evidence.

## **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 perpetrator must be made to see the antisocial nature of her behaviour and appreciate the hurt she is causing.

## **THE ROLE OF STAFF**

Staff will be alert to signs of bullying behaviour. Staff play a pivotal role and are expected to set an example, both in their dealings with each other and the students. In the classroom, in extra-curricular activities, in Boarding or anywhere else in the school, staff should be aware of students being pressurised or teased by their peers. It is vital that staff pick up on these kinds of incidents and do not leave them unchallenged. As well as challenging the bullying behaviour themselves, staff can support students in responding to this incident. Staff may also detect behavioural changes in a student that might be the result of bullying.

In a boarding school, where students live together for long periods of uninterrupted time, it is particularly important that there is vigilance by the boarding staff to ensure that positive relationships are fostered and bullying deterred.

## **TRAINING**

This policy will be brought to the attention of all staff at the start of each academic year as part of the annual Safeguarding Children update, or on Induction for staff joining mid-year.

## **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 and Safeguarding Governor.

## **RELATED POLICIES:**

*Safeguarding Policy*

*Acceptable Use Policy*

*Whistleblowing Policies for Staff and Students*

*Equal Opportunities Policies for Staff and Students*

*SENDA Policy*

*Behaviour, Rewards and Sanctions Policy*

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## APPENDIX:

### PROCEDURE SHOULD YOU SUSPECT BULLYING IS TAKING PLACE

Marymount London seeks to ensure that students feel safe and have someone to speak to should they find they are having any difficulty. Faculty and Staff all have a duty to ensure that students have a happy cohesive environment in which to thrive. As students try to forge new friendships groups or deal with group dynamics independently, it may be that behaviour that is less favourable may arise. Should any negative or disrespectful behaviour to another student or students occur, please follow the procedure below:

Staff observation /Student/Parent Disclosure

#### INFORM ADVISOR

Speak to parties to investigate and notify DSL if bullying has taken place. (Please refer to the definition in the Anti- Bullying Policy). The DSL or Deputy DSLs can advise on how best to do this.

#### Yes, bullying has taken place.

Notify DSL who will speak to students. If agreed that bullying has taken place, the DSL will notify the Headmistress and a course of action will be decided upon and students will be informed.

Parents involved will be notified.

DSL will add the incident to the bullying log in order to identify patterns of behaviour.

#### No, bullying has not taken place.

Should it be a ‘falling out’ between friends that is not persistent, it will be logged by the Advisor. Any notes will be handed to the DSL should any future issues arise with the same student/s. Parents may be informed if student/s are upset by the incident. Students may be advised to see the Life Coach to help them deal with any arguments that have arisen. The Advisor should check with the students involved to ensure the issue has been resolved and offer counsel where needed.

Faculty to closely monitor lessons and free time.  
Advisor to remind students of rules on social media (AUP).

Consequences may include:

- Group work with students involved
- Life Coach / Spiritual Life Coordinator mediation
- Recommendation for external counselling (for victim and/or bully)
- Buddying up with other girls in the class
- New seating plans / Rooming if in boarding
- Disciplinary sanctions (See Behaviour, Rewards and Sanctions Policy)

If bullying continues, the DSL and Headmistress will refer to the Anti-Bullying and Behaviour, Rewards and Sanctions Policies to inform further consequences which may include suspension and/or permanent exclusion.