St. Mary's Secondary School Macroom
Phone: 026 41544
Email: admin@stmarysmacroom.ie
stmarysmacroom.ie

# Anti Bullying Policy

## Introduction

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 Secondary School, Macroom 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.

## Principles governing the policy

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.

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# Whole School Education and Prevention Strategies

The school endeavours to teach the student body on a continual basis what is considered to be appropriate respectful and courteous behaviour which underlines the school's Code of Behaviour in the following ways:

1. By creating a positive, caring atmosphere where respect for all underlines every interaction in the school community to minimise all forms of bullying behaviour.
2. By having a shared understanding in the whole school community on what constitutes bullying behaviour (including cyber bullying) and the mental and emotional affects accompanying it. The FUSE Anti Bullying and Online Safety Programme (devised by the National Anti- Bullying Research and Resource Centre in DCU) will be used for this purpose. It will be delivered to all year groups in the first term on an annual basis or when the need arises, with all second years completing an action project on one aspect of bullying behaviour in preparation for the Safer Internet Day in February every year.
3. By asking all students to sign a Student Charter (devised by the Students Council) in September each year (Appendix 1).
4. By further developing an awareness of bullying and its consequences through the junior and senior curricula, particularly through subjects such as SPHE, CSPE and Religion.
5. By helping students to develop assertiveness skills through the school's Well Being programme.
6. By using weekly assemblies to demonstrate what constitutes boundaries, reinforce positive behaviour and teach year groups to support students who are isolated.
7. By developing a culture of respect for different academic strengths among the student body.
8. By facilitating a range of programmes which increase students' sensitivity towards others.
9. By inviting guest speakers to make presentations to students on the topic of bullying behaviour.
10. By aiming through co curricular and extra curricular programmes to develop a positive sense of self worth and high self esteem among our students.
11. By supporting parents to inform and educate their daughters on respectful behaviour for all (Appendix 4).

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## People and Situations which this policy applies to

This policy applies to all school activities. It also applies to any situation that leads to a student of St Mary's being adversely affected in school.

## Definitions of Bullying

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, transphobic 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.

See "Anti Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools" for additional information on different types of bullying.

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## Referrals of alleged /confirmed bullying behaviour

St Mary's Secondary School condemns all forms of bullying behaviour and commits itself to dealing proactively and fairly with all reported instances of alleged bullying. The school actively encourages students to speak to a trusted adult at home or in school if they experience bullying, witness bullying or are engaged in bullying behaviour.

A student, parent or any member of the non-teaching staff may bring a bullying concern to any teacher in the school. This teacher will then report to the "relevant teacher" in compliance with Anti Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools.

## Relevant teacher for investigating and dealing with bullying behaviour

The "relevant teacher" for investigating and dealing with bullying incidents in the school as laid out by the "Anti Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools" is the Year Head of the students involved together in conjunction with the Deputy Principal if required.

## Procedures for investigation, follow up and recording of alleged/confirmed bullying behaviour

Alleged bullying behaviour should be reported by the victim, the victim's parent/guardian, a bystander or non-teaching staff member to a teacher who will report to the "relevant teacher" (Year Head).

**Step 1**

This teacher will then pass the written notes to the Year Head, who will investigate the incident(s) by meeting with all students involved in the case. Other students may on occasion also be consulted. The Year Head will endeavour to resolve the issue as effectively as possible in consultation with the parties involved.

The Year Head's primary aim at this stage will be to resolve the issues and to restore, as far as is practicable the relationships between the parties involved on a no blame basis. The perpetrator will be made aware of the hurt caused by her behaviour and the need for it to stop immediately.

If disciplinary action is necessary, a sanction may be imposed which will be communicated to parents by the Year Head/Principal.

If it is decided that bullying has not occurred, this will be explained to all parties involved and the relevant teachers will assist the students in restoring their relationship, as far as is practicable. Follow up sessions will be scheduled in order to ensure that all parties are feeling safe and secure in their school environment.

Actions will be recorded in an Incident Record Form ( Appendix 2).

Should a resolution not be possible, or if the incident(s) are to be considered of sufficient magnitude, the relevant teachers will bring the matter to the attention of the Anti Bullying Team as outlined in Step 2.

**Step 2**

The Anti Bullying Team (ABT) is comprised of the Principal, Deputy Principal, Guidance Counsellor and the Year Head involved.

Two designated members of the team will be asked to investigate the alleged bullying case. These team members will then be considered to be the "relevant teachers" as defined by the Anti Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools.

Students may be asked to give an accurate account of their own behaviour and the behaviour of others during the investigation. They may also be asked to write down their account of the incident(s).

If a group is involved, each member may be interviewed separately first or all those involved may be met as a group. Each individual student may be asked to give their account of what happened in order to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each others' statements. Every effort will be made to ensure that all students involved will be supported from undue influence either within /outside the group at this time.

Parents of the students involved will be contacted by a member of the Anti Bullying Team at an early stage to inform them of the matter and to outline the procedure which will be undertaken.

The relevant teachers will report back to the Anti Bullying Team who will determine if bullying has occurred. If the Anti Bullying Team establishes that a student has engaged in bullying behaviour, she will be informed of how she is in breach of the school's Anti Bullying policy. Her parents will also be informed. Disciplinary sanctions may be deemed appropriate.

Follow up meetings with the relevant students and/or parents may be arranged by a designated member of the Anti Bullying Team, with a view to possibly bringing students involved together, if all parties and their parents are in agreement.

A number of weekly meetings may be scheduled with students involved to monitor the situation and to ensure that all parties feel safe and secure within their school environment.

The actions of the Anti Bullying Team will be recorded in the Anti Bullying Team Report (Appendix 3 ).

In the case where the relevant teachers within the Anti Bullying Team consider that bullying behaviour has not been resolved after it has been determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, it must then be referred to the Principal in writing as outlined in Step 3.

**Step 3**

The Principal is empowered to formally question students, take written statements, notify parents and impose sanctions upon perpetrators. Following investigation and due process, the Principal may impose further sanctions up to and including suspension.

***Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011 and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools empowers the Principal to refer particularly serious cases to the immediate attention of the Gardai and HSE.***

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## The established intervention strategies used by the school for dealing with bullying behaviour

The school, through the Principal and the Anti Bullying Team may use any one or a combination of sanctions as laid down in the school's Code of Behaviour. It is also at their discretion to deem another sanction more appropriate in specific situations.

## The School's programme of support for students affected by bullying

Consistent with the school's high degree of care for its students, a programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows:

1. The Year Head will monitor the situation closely and "check in" regularly with students involved.
2. Students who have been the victims of bullying behaviour will be offered support and opportunities to raise their self esteem and build their resilience.
3. Students who have engaged in bullying behaviour will also be offered support and opportunities to learn constructive ways of expressing their feelings and meeting their needs, without violating the rights of others.
4. Students who acted as bystanders may also be offered support, if deemed necessary.
5. Parents of those involved may also seek guidance and direction from the school at any time.

### 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.

### 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 was adopted by the Board of Management on 13-9-21.

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.

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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' Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department of Education and Skills.

Signed: _____
Mary Keane
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Date: 1-10-24

Signed: _____
Stephen McLaughlin
(Principal)

Date: 1-10-24

Date of next review: October 2025

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## Appendix 1 Student Charter

1. Each student should be kind, welcoming and inclusive to all in our school community.
2. To be respectful of the differences and the uniqueness of everybody in our school, regardless of race, culture, religion, identity, sexuality, physical needs, academic ability and /or emotional needs.
3. To be mindful of our verbal interactions with others, always sensitive to the needs and situations of other students.
4. Never to create or engage with intimidation, use racist/ homophobic language, participate in name calling or create misleading information in person or on social media.
5. To be respectful of the property of others, taking care never to damage, deface or steal other people's belongings.
6. Never to partake in any action which may undermine the self esteem of another student.
7. Never to engage in physical abuse or set out to intentionally hurt another.
8. To encourage any student who has suffered at the hands of others to have the confidence to report unwanted behaviour.
9. Ensure open communication is had when a problem arises in a friendship group. "If in doubt, talk it out".

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**Appendix 2**

## Incident Record Form

(To be completed by Year Head )
Names of students involved

_____

Details of Incident(s)

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Date/Time of Incident(s) _____

Action taken by Year Head

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Signature of Year Head _____

Date _____

Statements made by those involved should be attached to this document.

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**Appendix 3**

## Anti Bullying Team Report

Name of student(s) being bullied

_____

Name of student (s) involved in Bullying Behaviour

_____

_____

Details of Incident(s)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Date /Time of Incident(s) _____

Actions taken by Anti Bullying Team

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Signatures of Anti Bullying Team

_____

_____

Date _____

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## Appendix 4 Resources for Parents

1. www.webwise.ie

2. https://www2.hse.ie/coping-with-difficult-situations/bullying-and-harassment/

3. https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Teenagers_coping_with_bullying_d5.pdf