

Anti-Bullying Policy

Holy Cross Mercy School

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Anti-Bullying Policy

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 Holy Cross Mercy 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 recognizes 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 involving management, parents teaching and support staff and pupils;
 - 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

What is Bullying?

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:

- **Physical aggression:** This behaviour includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping people. It may also take the form of severe physical assault. While pupils often engage in 'mess fights', they can sometimes be used as a disguise for physical harassment or inflicting pain.

- **Intimidation:** Some bullying behaviour takes the form of intimidation: it may be based on the use of very aggressive body language with the voice being used as a weapon. Particularly upsetting can be a facial expression which conveys aggression and/or dislike.

- **Extortion:** Demands for money may be made, often accompanied by threats (sometimes carried out in the event of the targeted pupil not delivering on the demand). A pupil may also be forced into theft of property for delivery to another who is engaged in bullying behaviour.

- **Isolation/deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other relational bullying:** This occurs where a certain person is deliberately isolated, excluded or ignored by some or all of the class group. This practice is usually initiated by the person engaged in bullying behaviour and can be difficult to detect. It may be accompanied by writing insulting remarks about the pupil in public places, by passing around notes about or drawings of the pupil or by whispering insults about them loud enough to be heard. Relational bullying occurs when a person's attempts to socialise and form relationships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined. One of the most common forms includes control: "Do this or I won't be your friend anymore"(implied or stated); a group ganging up against one person (girl or boy); non-verbal gesturing; malicious gossip; spreading rumours about a person or giving them the "silent treatment".

- **Name calling:** Persistent name-calling directed at the same individual(s) which hurts, insults or humiliates should be regarded as a form of bullying behaviour. Often name-calling of this type refers to physical appearance, e.g., size or clothes worn. Accent or distinctive voice characteristics may attract negative attention. Academic ability can also provoke name calling. This tends to operate at two extremes. There are those who are singled out for attention because they are perceived to be weak academically. At the other extreme there are those who, because they are perceived as high achievers, are also targeted.

- **Damage to property:** Personal property can be the focus of attention for bullying behaviour. This may result in damage to clothing, mobile phone or other devices, school books and other learning material or interference with a pupil's locker or bicycle. The contents of school bags and pencil cases may be scattered on the floor. Items of personal property may be defaced, broken, stolen or hidden.

- **Cyber-bullying:** This type of bullying is increasingly common and is continuously evolving. It is bullying carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as text, social network sites, e-mail, instant messaging (IM), apps, gaming sites, chat-rooms and other online technologies. Being the target of inappropriate or hurtful messages is the most common form of online bullying. As cyber-bullying uses technology to perpetrate bullying behaviour and does not require face to face contact, cyber-bullying can occur at any time (day or night). Many forms of bullying

can be facilitated through cyber-bullying. For example, a target may be sent homophobic text messages or pictures may be posted with negative comments about a person's sexuality, appearance etc.

- **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.

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.

This definition includes a wide range of behaviour whether verbal or written, physical or social, targeting a person or their property, carried out directly or indirectly or through any electronic or other medium, which could harm a pupil or undermine her/his self-esteem or self-confidence.

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 in this school is/are as follows:

A pupil or parent may bring a bullying concern to any teacher in the school. Individual teachers must take appropriate measures regarding reports of bullying behaviour in accordance with the school's Anti-Bullying Policy.

The relevant teacher responsible for investigating and dealing with/resolving bullying incidents will be the class teacher and/or the Special Education Teachers (working in the classroom of the pupils involved). The relevant teacher or teachers should keep the Principal Teacher/Deputy Principal informed of incidents and of progress being made to resolve these.

Where the relevant teacher is concerned that the gravity of the situation warrants immediate action from the Principal, he/she should initially consult with the Principal/Deputy Principal.

If it is agreed that the seriousness of the bullying behaviour warrants it, the Principal/Deputy Principal will assume the role of relevant teacher to investigate the bullying behaviour.

5. The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber-bullying and identity based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying) used by the school are as follows:

- Prior to starting school parents/guardians of all new entrants will be directed to the school's Code of Behaviour which includes the Anti-Bullying Policy. It is also available on the school's website.

- Pupils are helped to examine the issue of bullying in a calm rational age appropriate way, outside of the tense context of particular bullying incidents. In the process, they are made more aware of the nature of bullying and the various forms that it can take.
- Pupils are made aware that the consequences of bullying behaviour are always bad for those who are targeted, even if this is not always obvious at the time.
- Pupils are encouraged to recognise, reject and report bullying behaviour, either spontaneously or through Child Safeguarding questionnaires that are regularly used in the school.
- This will be explored through the Stay Safe Programme in classes where it must be taught. The children will also engage with the theme in the ABI Programme. This is taught in each class on a monthly basis, with a different theme designed to prevent bullying.
- Prevention strategies are also taught as part of the SPHE Curriculum, 'Grow in Love' Religion Programme. We organise Anti-Bullying/Friendship and Safer Internet Weeks (using resources from Webwise etc.) which teach the children to recognise, reject and report bullying.
- School Poster competition which teaches children conflict resolution strategies. This is reinforced with school and class assemblies during Friendship Week.
- Intercultural events: celebrating difference through Music, Art and Drama.
- Code of Behaviour revision each September.
- The anti-bullying module of the SPHE programme as it applies during each school year,
- Awareness-raising exercises every school year for each class group, with particular emphasis in Third to Sixth Classes during Friendship Week (*e.g. from the "Awareness-Raising" strand of the Anti-Bullying Campaign, via its website*), pro-actively explaining the nature and variety, causes, consequences and unacceptability of bullying.
- Through presentations or other exercises, the school staff and parents/guardians are made aware of the nature of bullying and the signs that might indicate that a pupil is being bullied. They are encouraged to be vigilant in watching out for signs of bullying and to report any suspicion of bullying they may have to the "Relevant Teacher" (in the case of staff members) or any staff member (in the case of parents/guardians).
- Ensuring that pupils know who to tell and how to tell e.g.
 - Direct approach to the teacher at an appropriate time
 - Hand note up with homework
 - Get parent/friend to tell on their behalf
 - Ensure that bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place
 - Explicitly teach the difference **between "telling tales" and "reporting"**. People tell tales to get someone into trouble while reporting gets help for someone.
- Through communications at meetings with parent/guardian groups.

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:

- (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 his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved;

(iii) All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. In that way pupils will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It should be 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) Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), bus escorts, caretakers, cleaners are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher;

(v) Parents and pupils 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;

(vi) We ensure that all involved (including each set of pupils and parents) understand the above approach from the outset;

(vii) Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents;

(viii) Incidents are generally best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved;

(ix) All interviews should be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this way;

(x) 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;

(xi) If a group is involved, each member should be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved should be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member should be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements;

(xii) Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that they may face them from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher;

(xiii) 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 at an early stage 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 pupils;

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

(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 or her 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 standardised recording template (See Appendix 2) .

(xviii) In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant teacher must, as part of his/her professional judgement, 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 Principal;

(xix) 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;

(xx) 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.

Procedures for recording bullying behaviour:

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 must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the relevant teacher will use his/her professional judgement 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 his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.
 - (iii) The relevant teacher must use the standardised recording template to record the 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 school has decided as part of its anti-bullying policy that in certain circumstances bullying behaviour must be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable.

In each of the circumstances at (a) and (b) above, the standardised recording template (See Appendix 2) 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 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.

All documentation regarding bullying incidents and their resolution is retained securely in the school.

7. The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows:

- Bullied pupils:
 - Ending the bullying behaviour,
 - Fostering a school culture of respect for bullied pupils and all pupils,
 - Fostering greater empathy towards and support for bullied pupils,
 - Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through the awareness-raising programme,
 - Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through the speedy identification of those responsible and speedy resolution of bullying situations,
 - After resolution, enabling bullied pupils to complete a victim-impact statement,
 - Helping bullied pupils raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that help develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school).
 - If necessary contacting NEPS for advice.
- Bullying pupils:
 - Making it clear that bullying pupils can change their behaviour pattern
 - If necessary contacting NEPS for advice
 - Helping those who need to raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school),
 - Using learning strategies throughout the school and the curriculum to help enhance pupils' feelings of self-worth,
 - In dealing with negative behaviour in general, encouraging teachers and parents to focus on, challenge and correct the behaviour while supporting the child.

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 as 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.

1. This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on February 13th, 2025.
2. This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Representatives/Parents' Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department of Education and Skills and to the patron if requested.
3. 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' Representatives/Parents' Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available to the Department of Education and Skills and to the patron if requested.

Signed: _____

(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: _____

Alice Davern

(Principal)

Date: 13th February 2025

Date: 13th February 2025

Date of next review: Bí Cineálta Policy to be ratified in June 2025.

Appendix 1


Bullying can take a number of forms. These may include any of the following (this list is not exhaustive):

- **Repeated aggressive behaviour/attitude/body language, for example:**
 - Shouting and uncontrolled anger,
 - Personal insults,
 - Verbal abuse,
 - Offensive language directed at an individual,
 - Continually shouting or dismissing others,
 - Public verbal attacks/criticism,
 - Domineering behaviour,
 - Open aggression,
 - Offensive gestures and unwanted physical contact.

- **Intimidation, either physical, psychological or emotional, for example:**
 - Treating in a dictatorial manner,
 - The “Look”
 - Invasion of personal space
 - Ridicule,
 - Persistent slagging,
 - Deliberate staring with the intent to discomfort.
 - Persistent rudeness in behaviour and attitude toward a particular individual.
 - Asking inappropriate questions/making inappropriate comments re. personal life/family
 - Asking inappropriate questions/making inappropriate comments re. social life or schoolwork.

- **Interference with property, for example:**
 - Stealing/damaging books or equipment
 - Stealing/damaging clothing or other property
 - Demanding money with menaces
 - Persistently moving, hiding or interfering with property
 - Marking/defacing property

- **Undermining/Public or Private Humiliation, for example:**
 - Condescending tone,
 - Deliberately withholding significant information and resources,
 - Writing of anonymous notes,
 - Malicious, disparaging or demeaning comments,
 - Malicious tricks/derogatory jokes,
 - Knowingly spreading rumours,
 - Belittling others' efforts, their enthusiasm or their new ideas,
 - Derogatory or offensive nicknames (name-calling),



Using electronic or other media for any of the above (cyber bullying),
Disrespectfully mimicking a particular individual in his/her absence,
Deliberately refusing to address issues focusing instead on the person.

- **Ostracising or isolating, for example:**

Deliberately marginalising an individual

Deliberately preventing a person from joining a group,

Deliberately preventing from joining in an activity, schoolwork-related or recreational

Blaming a pupil for things s/he did not do.

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	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Pupil	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parent	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

Playground	<input type="checkbox"/>
Classroom	<input type="checkbox"/>
Corridor	<input type="checkbox"/>
Toilets	<input type="checkbox"/>
School Bus	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

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

Physical Aggression	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cyber-bullying	<input type="checkbox"/>
Damage to Property	<input type="checkbox"/>	Intimidation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Isolation/Exclusion	<input type="checkbox"/>	Malicious Gossip	<input type="checkbox"/>
Name Calling	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

Homophobic	Disability/SEN related	Racist	Membership of Traveller community	Other (specify)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact

9. Details of actions taken

[Empty rectangular box]

Signed _____ (Relevant Teacher) Date


Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal _____

*** Note:** The categories listed in the tables 3, 4 & 6 are suggested and schools may add to or amend these to suit their own circumstances.

Appendix 4 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' association?	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? <i>In addition → A child-friendly 'Bí lineálta' Policy will be made available in Term 3.</i>	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?	N/A

Signed 
Chairperson, Board of Management

Date 13/12/25

Signed Alice Davern
Principal

Date 13/12/25

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

To: The Patron of Holy Cross Mercy School

The Board of Management of Holy Cross Mercy 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 13/12/25 [date].
- This review was conducted in accordance with the checklist set out in **Appendix 4** of the Department's *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

Signed [Signature]
Chairperson, Board of Management

Date 13/12/25

Signed Alice Davern
Principal

Date 13/12/25

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

To: The Parents and Staff of Holy Cross Mercy School.

The Board of Management of Holy Cross Mercy 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 13/21/25 [date].
- This review was conducted in accordance with the checklist set out in **Appendix 4** of the Department's *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

Signed [Signature]
Chairperson, Board of Management

Date 13/21/25

Signed Alice Dawson
Principal

Date 13/21/25