**Anti-Bullying Policy for Virgin Mary Boys School**

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 Virgin Mary Boys 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) 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;

**(b) Effective leadership**

**(c) A school-wide approach**

* in addition to the role of management and staff, parents and pupils have a role and responsibility in helping the school to prevent and address school based bullying behaviour and to deal with any negative impact within the school of bullying behaviour that occurs elsewhere.

**(d) A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact**

**(e) 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;

**(f) Supports for staff**

**(g) Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies); and**

**(h) 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,
* cyber-bullying and
* 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.

Additional information on different types of bullying is set out in Section 2 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.*

* **The following types of bullying behaviour are included in the definition of bullying ( this list contains examples of bullying and is not to be seen as definitive.)**

**Examples of bullying behaviours**

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| **General behaviours which apply to all types of bullying** | * Harassment based on any of the nine grounds in the equality legislation e.g. sexual harassment, homophobic bullying, racist bullying etc. * Physical aggression * Damage to property * Name calling * Slagging * The production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other materials aimed at intimidating another person * Offensive graffiti * Extortion * Intimidation * Insulting or offensive gestures * The “look” * Invasion of personal space * A combination of any of the types listed. |
| **Cyber** | * **Denigration**: Spreading rumors, lies or gossip to hurt a person’s reputation * **Harassment**: Continually sending vicious, mean or disturbing messages to an individual * **Impersonation**: Posting offensive or aggressive messages under another person’s name * **Flaming**: Using inflammatory or vulgar words to provoke an online fight * **Trickery**: Fooling someone into sharing personal information which you then post online * **Outing**: Posting or sharing confidential or compromising information or images * **Exclusion**: Purposefully excluding someone from an online group * **Cyber stalking**: Ongoing harassment and denigration that causes a person considerable fear for his/her safety * Silent telephone/mobile phone call * Abusive telephone/mobile phone calls * Abusive text messages * Abusive email * Abusive communication on social networks e.g. Facebook/Ask.fm/ Twitter/You Tube or on games consoles * Abusive website comments/Blogs/Pictures * Abusive posts on any form of communication technology |
| **Identity Based Behaviours**  **Including any of the nine discriminatory grounds mentioned in Equality Legislation**  (gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community). | |
| **Homophobic and Transgender** | * Spreading rumours about a person’s sexual orientation * Taunting a person of a different sexual orientation * Name calling e.g. Gay, queer, lesbian...used in a specific and   derogatory manner   * Physical intimidation or attacks * Threats |
| **Race, nationality, ethnic background and membership of the Traveller community** | * Discrimination, prejudice, comments or insults about colour, nationality, culture, social class, religious beliefs, ethnic or traveller background * Exclusion on the basis of any of the above |
| **Relational** | This involves manipulating relationships as a means of bullying. Behaviours include:   * Malicious gossip * Isolation & exclusion * Ignoring * Excluding from the group * Taking someone’s friends away * “Bitching” * Spreading rumours * Breaking confidence * Talking loud enough so that the victim can hear * The “look” * Use or terminology such as ‘nerd’ in a derogatory way |
| **Sexual** | * Unwelcome or inappropriate sexual comments or touching * Harassment |
| **Special Educational Needs,**  **Disability** | * Name calling * Taunting others because of their disability or learning needs * Taking advantage of some pupils’ vulnerabilities and limited capacity to recognise and defend themselves against bullying * Taking advantage of some pupils’ vulnerabilities and limited capacity to understand social situations and social cues. * Mimicking a person’s disability * Setting others up for ridicule |

4. The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows: (see Section 6.8 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools):

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| The Relevant Teachers in this school are: as determined by school management   |  | | --- | | Principal  Deputy Principal  All class teachers |   **Any teacher may act as a relevant teacher if circumstances warrant it.** |

5. The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber-

bullying, 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*):

**Intervention and prevention strategies**

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| **School-wide approach**   * Our school Mission Statement and Golden Rule promote a healthy, inclusive school culture and environment which has respect for all and promotes helping one and other as central to the school ethos. The modelling of positive behaviour and good social interaction by all members of staff is key to the promotion of a positive school culture and environment. * A school-wide approach to the fostering of respect for all members of the school   community.   * The promotion of the value of diversity to address issues of prejudice and stereotyping, and highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour. * The fostering and enhancing of the self-esteem of all our pupils through both curricular and extracurricular activities. Pupils will be provided with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth through formal and informal interactions. * Whole staff professional development on bullying to ensure that all staff develops an awareness of what bullying is, how it impacts on pupils’ lives and the need to respond to   it-prevention and intervention.   * An annual audit of professional development needs with a view to assessing staff   requirements through internal staff knowledge/expertise and external sources   * Professional development with specific focus on the training of the relevant teacher(s) * School wide awareness raising and training on all aspects of bullying, to include pupils,   parent(s)/guardian(s) and the wider school community.   * Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extra- curricular activities. Non-teaching and ancillary staff will be encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers. Supervision will also apply to monitoring student use of communication technology within the school. * Development and promotion of an Anti-Bullying code for the school-to be displayed publicly in classrooms and in common areas of the school. * The school’s anti-bullying policy is discussed with pupils and all parent(s)/guardian(s) are given a copy as part of the Code of Behaviour of the school (every year). * The implementation of regular whole school awareness measures e.g. a dedicated notice board in the school and classrooms on the promotion of friendship, and bullying prevention; annual Friendship Week and parent(s)/guardian(s); student surveys; regular assemblies by principal/deputy principal. * Encourage a culture of telling, with particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders. 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. * Ensuring that pupils know who to tell and how to tell, e.g.: * Direct approach to teacher at an appropriate time, for example after class. * Hand note up with homework. * Make a phone call to the school or to a trusted teacher in the school. * Get a parent(s)/guardian(s) or friend to tell on your behalf. * Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place. * Identify clear protocols to encourage parent(s)/guardian(s) to approach the school if they suspect that their child is being bullied. The protocol should be developed in consultation with parents. * The development of an Acceptable Use Policy in the school to include the necessary steps to ensure that the access to technology within the school is strictly monitored, as is the pupils’ use of mobile phones. * The special Education Team promote a policy of inclusion of pupils with Special Education needs, focus on developing social skills and the importance of transition from primary to post primary school. The SET ensure that support and differentiated learning programmes are provided to accommodate the needs of pupils with disabilities or SEN and that all   relevant services/ agencies are involved. The provision of S.N.A support for pupils with specific with health and behavioural problems, through liaison with C.A.M.H.S, N.E.P.S. and the school S.E.N.O. is also vital for providing full access to the curriculum to particular pupils.   * The Incredible Years Programme provides pupils with a language and a framework to   discuss feelings, positive commutation and conflict resolution. It also provides a basis for a whole school approach to classroom management structures.   * Peer mediation provides a forum and a framework through which pupils can discuss and   resolve conflict.   * The S.A.L.T. programme promotes discussion and understanding of one’s own behaviour. It also highlights the consequences of poor behaviour and helps the pupil to take responsibility for his own actions. * B.E.S.T. (School Completion Programme) helps run the Incredible Years Programme, Transitions programme, Lunch Time Playgroups and also works with pupils who are in danger of dropping out of school-thus promoting positive interactions in school. * The Aisling Project is an afterschool club that helps pupils with homework, extra-curricular activities, social interaction and positive engagement with the wider community through excursions and field trips. * The I.S.M.T. provides pastoral care to pupils and staff. It organises curricular/extra-curricular activities designed to engage all pupils in positive interaction in school. It also organises and provides In-Service for staff. * The Board of Management provides continual professional development and support for staff and pupils. * Talks on safe internet for both parents and pupils by experts/ community Gardi are organised annually. * Class meetings for parents and individual parent-teacher meetings are used to inform parents of key policies and procedures. * H/S/C/L has continual contact with parents and agencies in the wider community and provides and promotes courses for parents on Child Protection, Cyber Bullying and Multi Culturalism. * The Attendance promoter rewards and praises good attendance and liaises with families where attendance is poor. * The Care Team meets regularly and provides support for pupils and staff. * The listing of supports currently being used in the school and the identification of other supports available to the school e.g. GLEN [www.glen.ie](http://www.glen.ie), BeLonGTo [www.belongto.org](http://www.belongto.org) (see appendix)   **Implementation of curricula**   * The full implementation of the SPHE, RSE and Stay Safe Programmes. * Continuous Professional Development for staff in delivering these programmes. * School wide delivery of lessons on bullying from evidence based programmes, e.g. Stay Safe Programme and The Walk Tall Programme. * Delivery of the Garda SPHE Programmes at primary level. These lessons, delivered by Community Gardai, cover issues around personal safety and cyber-bullying * The school will specifically consider the additional needs of SEN pupils with regard to programme implementation and the development of skills and strategies to enable all pupils to respond appropriately. * Lessons on Multiculturalism/cultural diversity/racism and an integral part of the school curriculum through subjects such as religion, geography, history and English. * Use of a range of curriculum subjects to foster an attitude of respect for all, to promote the value of diversity, to address prejudice and stereotyping and to highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour, e.g.   → In English through novel, short stories, and extracts from writings and plays.  → in drama: children can gain an insight into how others feel/empathy for others  → in history through references to colonisation, dictatorship, different types of governments.    **Links to other policies**   * This Anti Bullying Policy will be implemented in accordance with our Discipline Policy, Child Protection Policy, Acceptable Use Policy, Anti Cyber Bullying Policy and our Attendance Policy. |

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):

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| **6.8.9. Procedures for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying**  **The primary aim 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);**  **The school’s procedures will be consistent with the following approach.**  Every effort will be made to ensure that all involved (including pupils, parent(s)/guardian(s)) understand this approach from the outset.  **Reporting bullying behaviour**   * Any pupil or parent(s)/guardian(s) may bring a bullying incident to any teacher in the school. * All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying, will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. * Teaching and non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), caretakers etc. must report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher;   **Investigating and dealing with incidents: Style of approach (see section 6.8.9)**   * In investigating and dealing with bullying, the (relevant)teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved; * Parent(s)/guardian(s) 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; * Teachers will take a calm, unemotional, problem-solving approach. * Where possible incidents will be investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved; * All interviews will 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; * When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher will seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This will be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner; * If a group is involved, each member will be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved will be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member will be asked for his account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other’s statements; * Each member of a group will be supported through the possible pressures that may face them from the other members of the group after the interview by the teacher;   It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s)   * In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the parties involved will be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken (with reference to the school policy). The school will give parent(s)/guardian(s) an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports provided to the pupils; * Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it will be made clear to him how he is in breach of the school’s anti-bullying policy and efforts will be made to try to get him to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied; * It must also be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parent(s)/guardian(s) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school;   **Follow up and recording**   * In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant teacher will, 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;  -Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parent(s)/guardian(s)s or the school Principal or Deputy Principal   * Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved will 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. * Where a parent(s)/guardian(s) is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parent(s)/guardian(s) must be referred, as appropriate, to the school’s complaints procedures. * In the event that a parent(s)/guardian(s) has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school will advise the parent(s)/guardian(s) of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.   **Recording of bullying behaviour**  All recording of bullying incidents will be done in an objective and factual manner.  The school’s procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour are as follows:  **Informal- pre-determination that bullying has occurred**   * All staff will keep a written record of any incidents witnessed by them or notified to them. This written record will be kept in a class incident book in a locked filing cabinet in the class room. All incidents will be reported to the relevant teacher. * While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the relevant teacher will keep a written record of the reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same * The relevant teacher will inform the principal informally of all incidents being investigated.   **Formal Stage 1-determination that bullying has occurred**   * If it is established by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher will 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.   **Formal Stage 2-Appendix 3 (From DES Procedures)**  The relevant teacher will use the recording template at **Appendix 3** 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.  c) When the recording template is used, it will be retained by the relevant teacher in question with the incident book in a secure filing cabinet and a copy will be maintained by the principal in a secure location in the office. How long? Who has access?  **Established intervention strategies**   * Teacher interviews with all pupils * Negotiating agreements between pupils and following these up by monitoring progress. This can be on an informal basis or implemented through a more structured mediation process * Working with parent(s)/guardian(s)s to support school interventions * No Blame Approach * Circle Time * Restorative interviews * Restorative conferencing * Implementing sociogram questionnaires * Peer mediation where suitable training has been given * Incredible Years Programme * S.A.L.T. |

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

(see Section 6.8.16 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools) :

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| * All in-school supports and opportunities will be provided for the pupils affected by bullying to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop friendships and social skills and build resilience e.g.   - Pastoral care system  - Buddy system  - Resource teacher/Special Education Team  - Care team  - Group work such as circle time  - School Completion Programme(B.E.S.T.)   * If pupils require counselling or further supports the school will endeavour to liaise with the appropriate agencies to organise same. This may be for the pupil affected by bullying or involved in the bullying behaviour. * Pupils should understand that there are no innocent bystanders and that all incidents of bullying behaviour must be reported to a teacher. |

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 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ [date].

11. This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and is readily accessible to parents and pupils on request. 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, parents and pupils and published on the school website. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

(Chairperson of Board of Management) (Principal)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date of next review: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_