



# Anti-Bullying Policy

*Sapientia et Virtute With Wisdom and Courage*

## Anti-Bullying Policy

<b>This Policy/Statement of Strategy was ratified by the Board of Directors</b>	<b>Date 19<sup>th</sup> April 2023</b>
<b>This Policy will be reviewed in:</b>	<b>April 2024</b>
<b>This policy was reviewed by:</b>	<b>The Board of Directors</b>



## **Anti-Bullying Policy**

This policy is in accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the Code of Behaviour guidelines issued by the NEWB. The Board of Directors of Regina Mundi College 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 2013.

### **Objectives of this Policy**

This policy outlines what Regina Mundi College will do to prevent and tackle bullying. The policy has been drawn up through the involvement of the whole school community and the Board of Directors are committed to developing an anti-bullying culture whereby no bullying, including between adults or adults and children and young people will be tolerated.

### **Mission Statement**

Regina Mundi College is a Voluntary Secondary School, founded by Miss Daisy Corrigan in 1961. It is under the supervision of a Board of Directors. The ethos of the school is Christian, based on the philosophy, official teaching and practice of the Roman Catholic Church, while respecting other traditions, values and beliefs. Our aims as educators are :

- To cherish excellence in each member of the school community
- To develop in each student a strong sense of responsibility
- To promote and encourage the potential of each student
- To accommodate and nurture the ability of all our students
- To prepare students for further education, the world of work and to become committed members of society

We aim to achieve these goals through the dynamic partnership that exists between students, parents' staff and management

### **Definition of Bullying**

In accordance with the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* bullying is defines as follows:

Bullying is unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, written, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time. It also includes any kind of aggressive behaviour/threats and interfering with anthers' property.

Bullying can include:

Name calling, taunting, mocking, making offensive comments, kicking, hitting, taking belongings, producing offensive graffiti, gossiping, excluding people from groups and spreading hurtful and untruthful rumours. This includes the same inappropriate and harmful behaviours expressed via digital devices (Cyber-bullying) such as the sending of inappropriate messages by phone, text, instant messenger, through websites and social media sites and apps, sending of offensive or degrading images by mobile phone or via the internet. This list is not exhaustive.

The Board of Directors are fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour:

**Promoting a positive school climate which**

- Is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity
  - Encourages students to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment
  - Promotes respectful relationships across the community
  - Builds empathy, resilience and respect in students
  - Explicitly addresses the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including, for example, homophobic and transphobic bullying, racial, sectarian and ethnic bullying, physical appearance, family background, special and exceptional educational needs, gender-identity and hobbies and interests bullying.
  - Encourage students to use social media responsibly
- This list is not exhaustive.

The school will investigate all alleged incidents of bullying that occur during the time the school is acting in loco parentis.

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.

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 others 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 school*.

The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying is (are) as follow

- Year Head, initially, with the option to include the Deputy Principal, in consultation with the Guidance Counsellor, as deemed appropriate. If this fails to resolve the issue, the Principal may be called upon at this stage. Any teacher may act as a relevant teacher if circumstances warrant it
- Where an adult member of the school community makes an allegation of bullying, other policies take effect, e.g., Dignity at Work Charter, etc

To ensure that any such cases are dealt with appropriately, the school's anti-bullying policy provides for appropriate linkages with the overall Code of Behaviour and provides for referral to be made to the relevant external agencies and authorities where appropriate. In the event that the school should have serious concerns in relation to managing the behaviour of a student, the advice of the National Education Psychological Service (NEPS) will be sought.

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

- Modelling respectful behaviour to all members of the school community at all times. This is done at assembly, in SPHE and Pastoral Care classes and in all our daily interactions
- Promoting the value of diversity to address issues of prejudice and stereotyping and, highlighting the unacceptability of bullying behaviour
- The Meitheal programme – mentoring and encouraging a culture of peer respect and support
- Explicitly teaching pupils what respectful language and respectful behaviour looks like, acts like, sounds like in class and around the school
- Displaying key respect messages in classrooms, in the Well Area and around the school. Involving students in the development of these messages. Each school year the Student Council promotes among the student population the holistic values of Care, Love, Respect, Kindness, Thoughtfulness, Protection, Generosity, Nurture, Encouragement and Praise
- A safe and secure environment is provided for all
- Acknowledging the desired respectful behaviour by providing positive attention and positive reinforcement
- Consistently tackling the use of discriminatory and derogatory language in the school
- Having a system of encouragement in the school, this is the norm for RMC, where the characteristic spirit of the school promotes and reinforces positive behaviour
- Teaching students about the appropriate use of social media- this is done through the curriculum, in assembly, visiting speakers are also invited into RMC to present on these issues
- Positively encouraging students to comply with all school rules (including rules on mobile phone and internet usage) in school and at all school events
- Actively involving parents and the Parents' Council in awareness campaigns concerning social media
- Actively promoting the right of every member of the school community to be safe and secure in school
- Staff observing and watching out for signs of bullying behaviour and following with appropriate procedures
- Ensuring that at times when required adequate supervision is provided
- Staff engaging with students to help them to identify places and times when bullying can occur. To minimise potential for occurrences of bullying, students eat lunch in their own classrooms and socialise in the Well Area and Outdoor Spaces.
- The implementation of regular whole school awareness measures, e.g. at assembly, notices in the classroom, promotion of friendship, and bullying prevention: annual Friendship Day, annual anti-bullying week, inserts in students' journals and Parent(s)Guardian(s) seminars
- Encourage a culture of telling, with particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders. It should be made clear to all students that when they report incidents of bullying, they are behaving responsibly
- Ensuring students know who to and how to report bullying incidents, e.g.
  - Direct approach to a teacher
  - Hand note up with homework

- Get a Parent/Guardian or friend to tell on one's behalf
  - Ensure witnesses to any bullying understand the importance of reporting bullying
- Identifying clear protocols to encourage parent(s)/guardian(s) to approach the school if they suspect their child is being bullied. The protocol should be developed in consultation with parents
  - The implantation 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 students' use of mobile phones
  - 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) BeLong [www.belongto.org](http://www.belongto.org)

### **Implementation of Anti-Bullying Awareness in the Curriculum**

- The full implantation of the SPHE and CSPE curricula and the RSE Programme
- Continuous Professional Development for staff in delivering these programmes
- School-wide delivery of lessons on bullying from evidenced based programmes, e.g. Cool School Lessons, The Walk Tall programme, On My Own Two Feet
- Delivery of the Garda SPHE programme – these lessons are delivered by the Community Gardai and cover issues relating to personal safety and cyber-bullying
- The school will also 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
- Other policies, practices and activities that are particularly relevant to bullying include the Code of Behaviour, Child Protection Policy, Substance Misuse Policy, Internet Use Policy, Attendance, Punctuality, Sporting Activities, Field Trips, School Tours, etc

### **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 practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame). Investigations will be treated discreetly at all times. The Confidentiality Policy will apply, as appropriate.

Regina Mundi College has clear procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying. Every effort is made to ensure that all involved (including pupils, parents/guardians) understand this approach from the outset.

### **Reporting bullying behaviour**

- I. Any pupil or parent(s)/guardian(s) may bring a bullying incident to any teacher in the school
- II. All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying are investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. In that way students gain confidence in 'reporting'. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It is made clear to all students that when they report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly

## **Investigating and dealing with incidents**

- i. When investigating and dealing with bullying, the relevant teacher will fill out the Bullying Investigation Form and will then exercise professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved
- ii. Parents/guardians and students are required to co-operate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving any issues and restoring, as far as practicable, the relationships of the parties involved as quickly as possible
- iii. Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by students, staff or parents
- iv. Incidents are generally best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved
- v. All interviews should be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all students concerned. Students who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this way
- vi. When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher should seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This is recorded using the Bullying Investigation Form. This should be done in a calm manner, setting an example of dealing effectively with conflict in a non-aggressive manner
- vii. If a group is involved, each member should be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved should be met as a group and each member of the group should be asked for her account of what happened. It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write their accounts of the incident(s)
- viii. Each member of the group should be supported through the possible pressures that may face her from members of the group after the interview by the teacher
- ix. In cases where it has been determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parent(s)/guardian(s) 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 parent(s)/guardian(s) an opportunity to discuss ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports provided to the pupils. The school's Code of Behaviour will take effect, should sanctions and disciplinary procedures be deemed necessary
- x. Where it has been determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to her how she is in breach of the school's Anti-Bullying policy and efforts should be made to try to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied
- xi. 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, her 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 must, as part of his/her professional judgement, take the following factors into account:

- i. Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased
- ii. Whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable
- iii. Whether the relationships between the parties has been restored as far as is practicable
- iv. Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parent(s)/guardian(s) or the school Principal or Deputy Principal

Follow – up meetings with the relevant parties involved should be arranged separately and discreetly with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date if the pupil has been bullied and is readily 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 – a formal complaint may be made to the Board of Directors via the Manager

In the event that a parent(s)/guardian(s) has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parent(s)/guardians(s) of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children

## **Recording of bullying behaviour**

It is imperative that all recording of bullying incidents must be done in an objective and factual.

The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour are as follows:

### **Informal-pre-determination that bullying has occurred**

- i. All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher using the Bullying Investigation Form.
- ii. Written records of the reports and actions taken must be filed in the Principal's office.
- iii. The relevant teacher must inform the Principal of all incidents being investigated

### **Informal-determination that bullying has occurred**

- i. If it is established 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
- ii. The school in consultation with the relevant teacher/s has developed the following protocol for the storage of all records retained by the relevant teacher. The report will be stored by the Principal in a specially designated filing cabinet.

## **Formal-recording the bullying behaviour**

The relevant teacher must use the recording template to record the bullying behaviour in the following circumstances:

- i. In cases where he/she considers the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour occurred  
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/and the Deputy Principal
- ii. In certain circumstances, it may be deemed appropriate to report an incident directly and immediately to the Principal

## **Established intervention strategies**

- Teacher Interviews with pupils
- **Bullying Investigation Form completed**
- Negotiating agreements between pupils and continuing to monitor
- Implementing disciplinary procedures
- Working with parent(s)/guardians(s) to support school interventions
- No blame approach
- Circle time
- Restorative Interviews
- Restorative Conferencing
- Mediation
- Peer mediation where suitable training is given
- The method of shared concern

## **Supports for students affected by bullying**

- I. 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, Year Head system, SPHE Programme and Counselling
- II. If students require further supports, the school will endeavour to liaise with the appropriate agencies
- III. A programme of support for those pupils involved in bullying behaviour, in line with the strategies outlines above, also forms part of the school's intervention process. Pupils involved in bullying behaviour need assistance on an on-going basis. For those with low self-esteem, opportunities are developed to increase feelings of self-worth. In line with the school's ethos, it is important that the learning strategies applied within the school allow for enhancement of the pupil's self-worth. Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour may need counselling to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others
- IV. Pupils should understand that there are no innocent bystanders and those who observe incidents of bullying behaviour are encouraged to discuss them with teachers



### **Supervision and Monitoring of Pupils**

The Board of Directors 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 Directors 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 Directors on -----

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Council. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department of Education and Skills, if requested.

The policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Directors 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' Council. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the Department of Education and Skills.

- **This policy is in place for all students**