ST. MARY'S *Catholic High School, Dubai*
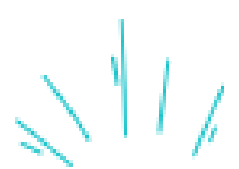
CYBER BULLYING

POLICY

St. Mary's Catholic High School, Dubai

At St. Mary's Catholic High School, Dubai, we believe that every child has the right to learn in a safe and caring environment without fear of being bullied. By having a written policy outlining the definition of Cyber-Bullying in all its forms, we believe that we are taking the first and most essential steps to tackling bullying and ensuring the school creates a safe learning environment where risk of harm is minimized, and students feel socially and emotionally secure.

As with all the policies of the school, we believe that our stated mission and vision for the next five years underlies the ethos of the school and underpins everything that the school stands for.

MISSION STATEMENT

We serve with compassion to develop a deep sense of integrity, mutual respect and tolerance within the Marian family so that the uniqueness of each person is celebrated, allowing them to holistically develop as successful learners and responsible citizens.
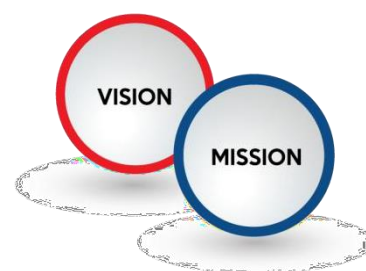
VISION:

Within the next 5 years, we envision ourselves as a school community that consistently strives to develop highly independent learners who confidently showcase innovation through meaningful reflection and purposeful collaboration. We aim to achieve this by ensuring every teacher inspires students through effective questioning and feedback to reach their highest potential in a culturally diverse society.

Objectives:

This policy has been developed in order to ensure that all stake holders including the students, teachers, senior leadership team and other members are well versed and aware of how to report cyber-bullying and what to do in the event that cyber- bullying is reported.

The school also makes it clear that cyber-bullying is not tolerated and when dealing with cyber-bullying, there is a clear message that the offender will be firmly dealt with.

Definition:

Cyber-Bullying is an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or an individual, using electronic forms of contact repeatedly, sometimes anonymously against a victim who cannot easily defend himself/herself.

Cyber bullying:

- Sending mean text messages
- Posting statements online that are unkind or not true.
- Sending or posting pictures that are not yours to share.
- Making negative comments online about someone
- Agreeing with someone who posts something hurtful.
- Cyber-bullying includes sending or posting harmful or upsetting text, images or other messages using the Internet, mobile phone or any other communication technology. It can take many forms but can go even further than face to face bullying by invading home and personal space and can target one or more people.
- It can take place across age groups and target pupils, staff and others.
- It includes threats, intimidation, harassment, defamation, exclusion or peer rejection, impersonation and unauthorized publication of private information or images. It can include messages that were intended as a joke, but which have a harmful or upsetting effect.

Cyber-Bullying may be carried out in many ways, including:

- Threatening, intimidating or upsetting text messages.
- Threatening or embarrassing pictures and video clips via mobile phone cameras.
- Silent or abusive phone calls or using the victim's phone to harass others, to make them think the victim is responsible.
- Threatening or bullying emails, messages, possibly sent by a pseudonym or someone else's name.
- Harassment or upsetting responses to someone in a chatroom
- Unpleasant or defamatory information posted to blogs, personal websites & social networking sites (Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Whatsapp etc.).

In some cases, this type of bullying can be a criminal offence.

The school follows the guidelines to the local laws are reflected in Federal Law 5 of 2012 on combating cybercrimes. The law highlights a number of computer and online-related activities and how they would be dealt with under the law. It addresses subjects such as IT security, invasion of privacy, malicious and illegal activities including hacking, fraud, improper system use, defamation, threats to security, terrorism, insult to religions and many more. (See Appendix 1)

SIGNS TO LOOK OUT FOR SUSPECTED BULLYING (SCHOOL/PARENTS)

- Does not want to come to school.

- Finds it difficult to talk with other people and appears anxious or withdrawn.

- Spending excessive time with an electronic gadget

- Eating difficulties

- Notable to confide as before regarding what is troubling them.

- Frequent crying and seems upset often.

- Poor concentration during lessons; appears easily distracted.

- Does not enjoy break times and prefers secure company of adults.

- Lack of confidence when reporting difficulties- body languages low or poor self-esteem

- Unexplained drop in grades and work that is not completed.

- Appears to be socially isolated.

- Responses of a larger group in class towards a particular student (exclusion from group activities for example).

Reporting:

Anti-Bullying Champions, Senior Prefects, Teachers, Counsellor, and Child Protection Officer (Vice Principal)

Anti-Bullying Champions

Each class from year 5-10 has an appointed Anti-bullying champion who will help stamp out bullying from the classroom situation.

When choosing an anti-bullying champion, care is taken that the student exhibits qualities of:

- Be a compassionate individual who is concerned with student problems.

- Be a willing and patient listener.

- Be trustworthy and able to maintain absolute confidentiality.

- Be someone who is friendly and approachable.

- Be someone who can liaise well with teachers and students.

- Be someone who will constantly promote kindness and speak out against bullying.

Roles and Responsibilities:

- Have a clear idea on what constitutes bullying and be able to communicate the same to their peers.

- Provide active, ongoing support along with adult staff members for victims of bullying

- Be a positive link between the student community and adult staff members to report any concerns of bullying.

- Innovative plan for reducing or dealing with bullying / fights during breaks.

- Creative ideas for reporting bullying

- Peer-support strategies for tackling bullying

- Provide ideas and assist in promoting Anti-Bullying assemblies.

These students are trained and provided with a written set of instructions on how to follow upon incidents that are reported. They are an integral part of the support system to ensure that any incidents of bullying are dealt with immediately. Peer support is primary to ensuring that all students feel safe in the school.

They also become the first point of reporting for students who are in danger.

Incidents of cyber-bullying are reported to adult staff members. [Class teachers or subject teachers or even directly to the Counselor or Child Protection Officer (Vice Principal)].

Guidelines and Outcomes

Each reported incident of bullying is taken seriously, and the staff follow these guidelines:

- In cases where a student or parent makes a complaint regarding cyber-bullying via a mobile phone (social media).
- Ask the student to show you the messages.
- Screen shots are taken, and relevant information noted down regarding content, time, dates and names.
- Screen shots are saved.
- This is immediately taken to the Counselor or Child Protection Officer (both handle these cases together).
- The offender will be asked to remove the offensive message, post, etc. from where it has been posted.
- A thorough investigation follows.
- The child is made to write a personal reflection on what he/she has done and reflect on possible consequences to the victim, to allow for a greater deal of introspection.
- Opportunity to reconcile with and sincerely apologise to the bullied student is made available.
- In particularly serious cases, parents of the offender are asked to come to the school before the end of the day for a meeting with the Counselor and Child Protection Officer.
- Parents are given an insight into the case and also some advice on how to deal with it.
- The parents of the victim are intimated about the due process that has been undertaken.
- The child who has been bullied as well as the offender are both given counseling support.
- Restorative justice is usually the priority and in some cases some community service work may be given to the offender.
- In more serious cases, some reflective time away from school will be prescribed or exclusion from break to undertake some restorative work with the counseling team.
- Reflective pieces outlining the incident & resulting disciplinary letters are all kept on file.
- Following the incident and subsequent handling of it, each case will be monitored to ensure that there is no repetition.

Support for the student who has been bullied.

- Assurance that their concerns are taken seriously.

- Help, support and counselling will be given to both the victim and the bully as appropriate.

- The victim will be offered an opportunity to talk about the experience with a trusted adult as soon as possible.

- Parents/guardians will be informed.

- Continuing support will be offered should he/she feel it is needed.

- If required, members of the prefect body are assigned to keep a regular watch over the group of students during the break in addition to the staff assigned for break duty.

The student involved in the bullying; the following helpful measures are in place:

- By talking about what happened, to discover why they became involved.

- Apology to the victim (written/verbal as appropriate)

- Informing the bully's parent/guardian

- By continuing to work with the bully in order to do away with prejudiced attitudes as far as possible

- By taking disciplinary steps to prevent more bullying

- Counselling to reflect on reasons for this behavior and behavior management to deal with similar impulses in the future.

Prevention of Cyber-Bullying

- The Child Protection Officer and the Senior Counselor will oversee practices and procedures outlined in this policy and monitor their effectiveness.

- They will ensure that details are maintained with regard to agencies and resources that may assist in preventing and addressing bullying.

- Staff will undergo CPD to identify the signs of Cyber-Bullying and will be kept up to date about the technologies that children commonly use.

- Students will be frequently advised about protecting themselves from being caught up in Cyber-Bullying as well as reporting incidents of the same.

- Regular curricular activities in ICT lessons, Moral Education, student orientations, and sessions from reputed speakers and professionals in the field will be used to reiterate information on Cyber-Bullying to students.

- Parents will also be updated with timely advice.

- The school rules pertaining to cyber-bullying are clearly mentioned in the school diary and both students and parents sign to acknowledge that they have understood and agree to the school rules.

Character and Values Management in the Online World

Right at the onset, the core values that the school stands for will always be stressed as the guiding factor for all behaviour. Students will be advised on the 'permanence factor' of the online world- the fact that even after something has been deleted, it will have been cached, it could be stored on other devices and further transmitted at a later date, lay dormant and once again re-surface, thereby affecting not only the victim but also the reputation of the offender and his/her cohorts. The importance of one's character and values are always stressed when advising students about their use of social media.

Practices and Procedures

The responsibilities of the school and of students as set out in the Anti-Bullying Policy apply also to this policy. Positive use of ICT will be promoted, and the ICT Policy will be regularly reviewed as technologies develop.

The school will encourage the safe use of ICT, emphasizing, for example, the importance of password security and the need to log out of all accounts and most importantly, the importance of **NEVER SHARING PASSWORDS**.

The school will promote the message that asking for help is the right thing to do and students will be reminded about reporting incidents of bullying.

September 2023
Date for Review: June 2024

Relationship to other policies, guidelines, statements
- Behaviour for Learning Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- ICT Policy
- PSHE and Moral Education topics