



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

# **ANTI-BULLYING POLICY**

**2024-2025**

## **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 bullying in all its forms and what is and what is not bullying, 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 physically 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 stakeholders including the students, teachers, senior leadership team and other members are well versed and aware of how to report bullying and what to do in the event that bullying is reported.

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

All caregivers in the school are aware of signs to look out for to check if a child is being bullied.

### **Definition:**

Bullying refers to unwanted, aggressive behavior when someone is hurt either by words or actions on purpose. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, overtime.

In order to be considered bullying, the behavior must be aggressive and include:

- **An Imbalance of Power:** Kids who bully use their power—such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity—to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change overtime and in different situations, even if they involve the same people.
- **Repetition:** Bullying behaviors happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once.



### **It can take various forms:**

**Physical-** a child may be physically punched, kicked, hit, spat at etc.

**Verbal-** verbal abuse can take the form of name-calling. It may be directed towards gender, ethnic origin, physical or social disability or personality.

**Exclusion-** a child may be bullied simply by being excluded from, or left out of discussions/activities by those they believe to be their friends.

**Damage to property or theft-** pupils may have their property damaged or stolen. The bully may use physical threats in order that property is handed over to him or her.

### **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

**Guidelines:**

The school follows the guidelines to the local laws as reflected in Federal Law 5 of 2012 on combating Cyber crimes. 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 state security, terrorism, insult to religions and many more. (See Appendix 1)

**Caution to be noted:**

While stressing on helping, the student body understands what bullying is; the school also emphasizes on what does not constitute bullying.

Not liking someone-even though it is unpleasant, it does not constitute bullying.

Being excluded-it has to be understood that sometimes when a group of friends get together, it is natural to leave some others out of their group.

Accidentally bumping into someone.

Making a joke about another person; passing an unpleasant remark about another student.

Isolated acts of meanness- in order to be termed as bullying; the act has to be repetitive.

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

When these signs are observed over a period of time, it is important to investigate the underlying causes:

- Does not want to come to school
- Finds it difficult to talk with other people and appears anxious or withdrawn
- Trouble sleeping or has nightmares
- Books or other possessions such as clothes come home torn or spoiled
- Could also show signs of physical hurts, which they find difficult to explain
- Eating difficulties
- Not able 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 to secure company of adults
- Lack of confidence when reporting difficulties- body language shows poor self-esteem
- Unexplained drop in grades and work that is not completed
- Appears to be socially isolated

## **Reporting:**

### **Anti-Bullying Champions**

Each class from grade 5-10 have an appointed Anti-Bullying Champion who will help stamp out bullying from the class room 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.

Following this, if the situation is not resolved, the bullying incident is reported to adult staff members. (Class teachers or subject teachers)

Teachers and other staff members can further refer the matter to the counselor or Child Protection Officer (Vice Principal).

In serious instances, students may directly approach the Counselor or Child Protection Officer (Vice Principal).

### **Guidelines:**

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

- We listen to the child and reassure them that the school is meant to be a safe place and this is part of the right as a student.
- We remain calm when the student is narrating the incident and offer comfort if upset.
- We will verify the facts and make notes on what, when, where and who was involved in the bullying incident/s.
- We will also get feedback from other students who could be eyewitnesses.

### **Outcomes**

- Parents of the student involved in bullying will be informed and asked to attend a meeting to discuss the problem. A record is maintained and corrective measures are followed through. The parents are provided with guidance to assist the student in being restored. Similarly, the student is offered to have follow up sessions with the school counselor to help the bully change their behaviour.
- The bully (bullies) writes out a narrative of the incident and reflects on how his behavior could have been different.
- Opportunity to reconcile with & sincerely apologise to the bullied student is made available.
- Suspension or exclusion will be considered in serious cases.
- Following the incident and subsequent handling of it, each case will be monitored to ensure 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:**

At St. Mary's Catholic High School, we regularly revisit the themes of anti-bullying strategies and keeping the school as a bully-free zone. Zero periods are used for this when our school prefects present information to the younger students.

Bullying as a topic is explicitly referenced in PSHE and Moral Education lessons at Assemblies and at Student Council meetings.

Character development remarks as part of half term and term reports supplement feedback to students and parents on areas that require improvement. In addition, term reports carry an additional 'Character self-assessment and teacher assessment' conducted by Moral Education teachers as an additional reporting to parents.

The school ensures that there is adequate supervision at all times. Senior prefects are assigned to the younger classes and corridors to supplement adult supervision during break times and dispersal times.

All staff members are familiar with the principles of keeping the school free of bullying and this policy is disseminated to all of them.



September 2024

Date for Review: June 2025

Relationship to other policies, guidelines, statements

- Behaviour for Learning Policy
- Cyber-Bullying Policy
- PSHE and Moral Education topics