



VIRGIN MARY GIRLS' NATIONAL SCHOOL

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2021/2022

Anti-Cyber Bullying Policy

The Virgin Mary Girls' School aims to ensure that children are safe and feel safe from bullying, harassment and discrimination. This school is committed to teaching children the knowledge and skills to be able to use ICT effectively, safely and responsibly.

WHAT IS CYBER-BULLYING?

There are many types of cyber-bullying. The more common types are:

1. **Text messages** – can be threatening or cause discomfort. Also included here is.
2. **Picture/video-clips via devices** – images sent to others to make the victim feel threatened or embarrassed.
3. **Mobile phone calls** – silent calls, abusive messages or stealing the victim's phone and using it to harass others, to make them believe the victim is responsible.
4. **Emails** – threatening or bullying emails, often sent using a pseudonym or somebody else's name.
5. **Chat room group messaging/forum/app bullying** – menacing or upsetting responses to children or young people when they are in a web-based chat room.
6. **Instant messaging (IM)** – unpleasant messages sent while children conduct real-time conversations online.
7. **Bullying via websites** – use of defamatory blogs (web logs), personal websites and online personal 'own web space' sites such as You Tube, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat etc.
8. **Apps** – Bullying on group apps or any other social media such as Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, Viber, Musically, Twitter, Tik-Tok etc.

Aims of Policy:

- To ensure that pupils, staff and parents understand what cyber bullying is and how it can be combated.
- To ensure that practices and procedures are agreed to prevent incidents of cyber Bullying.
- To ensure that reported incidents of cyber bullying are dealt with effectively and quickly.
- To ensure that pupils, staff and parents are up-to-date with best practice while online.

Cyber Bullying / Harassment

- While Virgin Mary GNS values the right of parents and other member of the school community to voice their concerns we encourage that the Grievance Procedure is followed.
- We as a school will always aim to have an open honest and fair communication with the school community. Where there are concerns regarding any school activity, please speak to the School Principal or arrange an appropriate time to speak to the class teacher.
- Members of staff will not engage directly with any negative social media activity in relation to themselves, their position or the school.
- Procedures
 1. Bring issue to attention of Principal.
 2. Principal will decide if and when any appropriate action will be taken i.e. seek advice from (CPSMA).
 3. Each case will be assessed on an individual basis.

Understanding Cyber bullying:

- Cyber bullying is the use of ICT (usually a mobile phone and or the internet) to abuse another person
- It can take place anywhere and involve many people.
- Anybody can be targeted including pupils and school staff.
- It can include threats, intimidation, harassment, cyber-stalking, vilification, defamation, exclusion, peer rejection, impersonation, unauthorized publication of private information or images or media etc.

Procedures to prevent Cyber bullying:

- All staff computers and device are behind Firewall to prevent use of Social Apps.
- Any class social platform should be moderated by relevant teacher(s).
- Staff, pupils, parents and Board of Management (BoM) to be made aware of issues surrounding cyber bullying.
- Pupils and parents will be urged to report all incidents of cyber bullying to the school.
- Staff CPD (Continuous Professional Development) will assist in learning about current technologies.
- Pupils will learn about cyber bullying through Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), **Stay Safe Programme**, and other curriculum projects.

- Pupils will sign an Acceptable Use of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) contract.
- Parents will be provided with information and advice on how to combat cyber bullying.
- Parents will be expected to sign an Acceptable Use of ICT contract prior to enrolment and to discuss its meaning with their children.
- Pupils, parents and staff will be involved in reviewing and revising this policy and school procedure.
- All reports of cyber bullying will be investigated, recorded, stored in the Principal's office and monitored regularly.
- The school will engage a speaker to facilitate a workshop on cyber bullying for 5th and 6th classes annually. Programmes change and vary.
- Procedures in our school Anti-bullying Policy shall apply.
- The Gardaí will be contacted in cases of actual or suspected illegal content.
- This policy will be reviewed annually.

Parents are reminded that they have the primary role in keeping their children safe online. They are also reminded of the ages that children are legally allowed to access the following social media sites and apps:

- | | | |
|-------------|---|-----------------|
| • Snapchat | - | 13 years of age |
| • Instagram | - | 13 years of age |
| • Facebook | - | 13 years of age |
| • Tik-Tok | - | 13 years of age |

Where bullying has occurred teaching staff will:

- Fill out the standardised recording template issued by DES in Circular 045/2013.
- Keep appropriate records which will assist him/her to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved inform parents of the matter at an early stage and explain the actions being taken.

Information for Pupils

If you're being bullied by phone or the Internet:

- Remember, bullying is never your fault. It can be stopped and it can usually be traced.
- Don't ignore the bullying. Tell someone you trust, such as a teacher or parent or call an advice line.
- Try to keep calm. If you are frightened, try to show it as little as possible. Don't get angry, it will only make the person bullying you more likely to continue.
- Don't give out your personal details online – if you're in a chat room, watch what you say about where you live, the school you go to, your email address etc. All these things can help someone who wants to harm you to build up a picture about you.

- Keep and save any bullying emails, text messages or images. Then you can show them to a parent or teacher as evidence.
- If you can, make a note of the time and date bullying messages or images were sent, and note any details about the sender.
- There's plenty of online advice on how to react to cyber bullying. For example, www.webwise.ie have some useful tips.

Text/video messaging

- Don't reply to abusive or worrying text or video messages. Your mobile service provider will have a number for you to ring or text to report phone bullying.
- Visit their website for details.
- Don't delete messages from cyber bullies. You don't have to read them, but you should keep them as evidence.
- Children will be encouraged to use template **STOP, BLOCK, TELL**.

Teachers do not have permission to communicate with present or past pupils of the school on any type of social media, this includes Facebook, Twitter and any form of email.

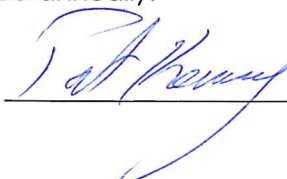
All staff of the Virgin Mary Girls' School have the right to privacy out of school hours and are not to be contacted by pupils either present or past on any type of social media, this includes blogs, forums tagging posts on Facebook, Twitter and any form of email.

Useful Websites

www.webwise.ie
www.spunout.ie
www.childnet.int.org
www.antibullying.net
www.kidsmart.org.uk/beingsmart
www.bbc.co.uk/schools/bullying
www.childline.ie/index.php/support/bullying/1395
www.chatdanger.com
<http://ie.reachout.com>
www.kidpower.org
www.sticksandstones.ie
www.abc.tcd.ie

Reviewed in line with Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary & Post – Primary Schools, Department of Education & Skills September 2013.

Reviewed annually.

Signed: 

Date: 19th Oct 2020