

# ***Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan***

## ***Mission Statement & Strategic Aims***

### **Introduction**

Mercy Secondary School, Kilbeggan is a voluntary secondary school established in 1964 by the Sisters of Mercy. In accordance with the foundress of Mercy School, Catherine McCauley, her gospel and legacy, we show a special interest in the poor and disadvantaged.

### **Mission Statement**

Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan is a Catholic co-educational school committed to the holistic education of all students, to ensure that individually, they each realise their full potential in a social and physical environment that is caring, supportive and joyful. We work in partnership with students, staff, parents and the community, and welcome all students from our multicultural society.

### **Strategic Aims**

- To educate all students to their full potential in every aspect - aesthetic, moral, academic, physical, spiritual, emotional, and social.
- To foster an awareness of the dignity, uniqueness, independence and interdependence of each individual person in a climate of respect and responsibility, with a view to enhancing each individual's self esteem.
- To provide challenges for all students in activities that are stimulating, constructive and rewarding
- To develop the social and physical infrastructure of the school in a positive and progressive manner.
- To build strong and trusting relations between the students, staff, parents and community to ensure that all resources available are used to their optimum
- To develop in students through the Catholic Ethos of the school a sense of stewardship, social responsibility and self that will stay with them beyond their years here to make them full participants in an ever changing world

Ratified by Board of Management on \_\_\_\_\_

Signed : \_\_\_\_\_  
Jerry Kearney (Chairperson)

Policy to be Reviewed on/before \_\_\_\_\_

# **Mercy Secondary School, Kilbeggan**

## **Admissions Policy – January 2010**

---

### **Introduction**

Mercy Secondary School, Kilbeggan is a voluntary secondary school established in 1964 by the Sisters of Mercy. In accordance with the foundress of Mercy School, Catherine McCauley, her gospel and legacy, we show a special interest in the poor and disadvantaged.

### **Mission Statement**

Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan is a Catholic co-educational school committed to the holistic education of all students, to ensure that individually, they each realise their full potential in a social and physical environment that is caring, supportive and joyful. We work in partnership with students, staff, parents and the community, and welcome all students from our multicultural society.

### **Strategic Aims**

- To educate all students to their full potential in every aspect - aesthetic, moral, academic, physical, spiritual, emotional, and social.
- To foster an awareness of the dignity, uniqueness, independence and interdependence of each individual person in a climate of respect and responsibility, with a view to enhancing each individual's self esteem.
- To provide challenges for all students in activities that are stimulating, constructive and rewarding
- To develop the social and physical infrastructure of the school in a positive and progressive manner.
- To build strong and trusting relations between the students, staff, parents and community to ensure that all resources available are used to their optimum
- To develop in students through the Catholic Ethos of the school a sense of stewardship, social responsibility and self that will stay with them beyond their years here to make them full participants in an ever changing world

## **Operating Context**

- Mercy Secondary School is a co-educational voluntary secondary school. Procedures for admission are set out having regard for the Education Act 1998, the Education Welfare Act 2000, the Equal Status Act 2000 and the Education for Persons with Special Needs Act 2004. This Admissions Policy is intended to reflect and give full effect to –
  1. The Mission Statement..
  2. The Religious and Educational Philosophy of the Mercy Order.
  3. The parameters of all guidelines, regulations and programmes currently available From the Department of Education and Science
  4. The funding and resources currently made available to the school by the DES and from any other sources.
- It is an objective of the school that it supports the principles of inclusiveness, equality of access and participation in the school, parental choice in relation to enrolment and applications for admission to the school. In this context the school expresses respect for diversity of traditions, values and beliefs within the community it serves today. It is an objective of the school to follow the curricular programmes furnished by the Department of Education and Science.
- Parent(s)/Guardian(s) seeking admission of their children to the school are invited to carefully read this Policy.

## **Decision Making Process**

- Mercy Secondary School, Kilbeggan draws the bulk of its student population from its immediate catchment area and primary feeder schools named below. Secondary school students must be aged 12 on the 1<sup>st</sup> January in the calendar year following the child's entry into 1<sup>st</sup> Year. Birth certificates must be provided.
- The number of new students to be accepted in any given year is based on the allocation of resources. Due to the Department of Education and Science class regulations size, our first year enrolment will not normally exceed 96 students.
- If the number of applications received in the period from the last Thursday in January to the first Wednesday in February inclusive, of the school year in question, exceeds the number of places available, then a set of ranked criteria shall apply. This ranked criteria, numbered 1 – 7, sets out the order of priority to be given to different categories of applicants.
- If at any stage in the process, the number of applicants in the category to whom priority is being given exceeds the number of places remaining, places shall be distributed on a lottery basis to the applicants in the category .
- When all the places have been filled, then a waiting list shall be created under the remaining ranked criteria, using a lottery to decide on the order of applicants within each category.

- The ranked criteria which sets out the order of priority to be applied are as follows
  1. Siblings of present or past students of the school.
  2. Sons and daughters of current staff members.
  3. Sons and daughters of past students
  4. Applicants attending the feeder schools named below
  5. Applicants resident in the catchment area as defined by the VEC Transport Scheme.
  6. Applicants resident in the catchment area, who have applied outside the specified enrolment time, up to and including the date of the lottery.
  7. Applicants who do not fall into any of the above categories
- Any applications received after the above shall be put on a supplementary waiting list in the order that they apply
- Siblings (ie. twins/triplets/siblings within a family group) – when a twin sibling is drawn in a lottery, then the other twin shall automatically be offered the next available place – up to and including the second last place. If a sibling is drawn for the last remaining place, then the other sibling shall be offered the first place on the waiting list.
- Parents/Guardians shall sign a statement confirming that all information supplied is true and accurate. Failure to do so may result in the offer of a place being rescinded. The Board of Management reserves the right to verify the information supplied.
- Applicants shall be notified in advance, as to the category of their application before any lottery may take place.
- Only applicants' parents/guardians shall attend the lottery.
- The lottery shall be conducted by means of a draw of numbers rather than names and these numbers will be drawn from a drum.

## **Enrolment Procedure**

- In December a letter is sent to the Principal of each of our feeder primary schools requesting the names of possible students due to enroll in the school for the following September.

## **Primary Feeder Schools:**

Ballinagore	Kilbeggan
Boher	Loughnavalley
Castletown-Geoghegan	Rahugh
Dalystown	Rosemount
Durrow	Streamstown
Dysart	Tyrrellspass
Horseleap	

## **Notification**

- In January the Principal visits each of the Primary schools above with details of Open Night & Enrolment /Assessment Day. These events normally take place in the last Thursday of January and the following Saturday, respectively. Enrolment forms and School Prospectus are available from the school office and are distributed on Open Night. Details of dates, etc. are notified to the local media, churches and to feeder primary schools.
- Parents/Guardians may enrol students in the period from the last Thursday in January to the first Wednesday in February inclusive of the school year in question. Any applications outside these dates will be subject to the terms of the School's Admissions Policy.
- The school operates a "mixed ability" class placement policy and student assessment details are only used to assist in the identification of possible learning difficulties and to indicate particular learning aptitudes which students may have. These subsequently inform parents, students and teachers when subject choices are being made. Composition of classes can be revised as class numbers allow. In March/April, primary school Principals and teachers of 6<sup>th</sup> class are visited and details regarding student needs and aptitudes are discussed in light of test results, application forms and previous details which parents/guardians have supplied.
- The Department of Education & Science is appraised of the potential educational needs of incoming students and appropriate resources are requested.
- In April/May a meeting of parents/guardians of incoming students is held. Members of the Care Team in the school attend this meeting, i.e. Learning Support, Guidance, and school Policies and Procedures are discussed.

## **Right of Board of Management to Refuse Application**

- The Board of Management reserves the right to refuse to enrol an applicant if it is of the opinion that the presence of the applicant in the school would be detrimental to the interests of other parties to the school. Among the grounds for such refusal might be:-
  - The lack of resources and /or capacity within the school to cater for the needs of the applicant.
  - The belief on the part of the BOM that the application will be a threat to the health and safety of others or the religious ethos of the school.
- The BOM, in making such a decision, will balance the rights and needs of the applicant with the rights and needs of the general school community.
- In the event of an application for enrolment being brought before the Board of Management its decision will be made in accordance with the school's Admissions Policy. Its decision will be communicated to parents within 21 days, as prescribed by the Minister under the Education Act. Parents have the right under Section 29 of the Education Act to appeal a refusal by the school to enrol a student. In the event of refusal, a letter is sent to parents/guardians refusing admission/enrolment. The right to appeal the refusal is restated and an application form is made available.
- Mercy Secondary School, Kilbeggan is guided by the Education Act 1998. The Education Welfare Act 2000 and the Equal Status Act 2000 and supports the principles of equality of access and participation contained in this legislation. Mercy Secondary School, Kilbeggan respects the concept of parental choice in relation to enrolments and respects the diversity of traditions, values, beliefs, languages and ways of life which exist in society.
- Subject to the above considerations, Mercy Secondary School, Kilbeggan accepts all applicants whose educational needs can be met within its' resources.

## **Special Educational Needs**

- Mercy Secondary School welcomes students with special needs and will use the resources, both financial and personnel, provided by the Department of Education and Science to make reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities or special educational needs up to a nominal cost so that these students are free to participate in the life in the school in so far as is reasonably practicable.
- While recognising and fully supporting parents' rights to have a school of their choice for their children, the School's ability to accept students with particular needs is dependent on the supply of resources, suitable to the needs of the individual student, being supplied by the Department of Education and Science.
- The school welcomes applications from students with special educational needs unless the nature and degree of those needs is such that to enrol the student concerned would be inconsistent with both the best interests of the student concerned and the effective provision of education for the other students with whom the student concerned is to be educated.

- The Board of Management must be made aware of any special needs as early as possible, so that these needs can be assessed and addressed where possible.
- Parents are requested to outline the details of a child's special educational needs on the Application Form
- The Board of Management, having gathered all relevant information and professional documentation, assesses how the needs of these students can be met. Contact will be made with the National Council for Special Educational Needs regarding special needs resources to which the student may be entitled e.g. Special Needs Assistant, specialised equipment/furniture transport etc.
- The Principal may request a meeting with the parents of the student to discuss the application and the student's needs. The parents of the student may request a meeting with the Principal to discuss the student's educational or other needs. N.B. It may take some time for the Department of Education and Science to process such applications. Parents are strongly advised to inform the School as early as possible and discuss their particular situation well in advance of making application.
- As soon as is practicable, but not later than 21 days, after a parent/guardian has provided all the relevant information, the Board of Management shall make a decision in respect of the application concerned and inform the parents/guardians in writing thereof. (Education Welfare Act (Section 19 (3))).
- The school reserves the right to refuse enrolment to any student in very exceptional situations. Such a very exceptional situation could include the following:
  1. The student has special needs such that, even with additional resources available from the Department of Education and Science, the school cannot meet such needs and/or provide the student with an appropriate education or
  2. In the opinion of the Board of Management, the student poses an unacceptable risk to other students, to school staff or to school property.

## **Transfers from Other Schools**

- Applications for enrolment involving transfer from another school may only be made at the start of the school year. Applications will be accepted subject to the following –
  1. The terms of the School's Admissions Policy.
  2. The school being satisfied with the reasons for transfer.
  3. The availability of places.
  4. Information being made available from the student's former/present school concerning attendance, discipline, educational progress, disabilities, special needs, etc
  5. Meeting with the pupil and their parents/guardians.
  6. Subject choice considerations.
  7. Health and Safety Considerations.
  8. Resources available for the student
  9. The completion of a special application form for students who wish to transfer.

10. Consultation with the Educational Welfare office where appropriate.

- The schools acceptance of an application will always have regard to a student's best interests, i.e. the consequences for the student of mid-year transfer, subject choices, available space and predefined class size.
- Subject to the above conditions Mercy Secondary School, Kilbeggan operates an open Admissions Policy based on the acceptance by parents/guardians and students of the school's Code of Discipline

### **Students who are Suspended or Expelled from Another Post Primary School**

A student who has either been suspended or expelled from another Post-Primary school and who wishes to be considered for a place at Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan shall prior to the consideration of any such application take the following steps:-

- a) Request an Application Form from the school.
- b) Complete the said Application Form fully and provide such details or documentation as may be requested by the school.
- c) Complete an interview in the company of the parent(s)/guardian(s).
- d) The parent(s)/guardian(s) shall be required to require and furnish to Mercy Secondary School a copy of the student's school records, psychological reports and any other relevant documentation and furnish same to Mercy Secondary School prior to any application being considered. Before the application is considered for enrolment of the student in the school the educational needs of the student's must be outlined to Mercy Secondary School
- e) A copy of all written communication between the school from which the student was either suspended or expelled. A copy of reports or decision as a consequence of any disciplinary hearing at the school from which the student was either suspended or expelled.

Further in respect of such application the following shall apply:-

1. The Board of Management reserves the right to refuse an application for admission. This decision shall be reached having considered the documentation and subsequent to the conclusion of the application procedures set out by the school.
2. Where the Board of Management is of the view that the student is a danger to the safety and welfare of other students or staff it may decline to accept the student.
3. The final decision to admit a student who has been expelled from another school shall rest with the Board of Management of Mercy Secondary School .The school shall be mindful in reaching this decision of the needs and requirements of existing students and staff together with the availability of resources. In reaching this conclusion the Board of Management shall be mindful of its legal obligations to maintain discipline and safety within the school. The Board shall also be mindful



in reaching this decision to consider and to ensure that good order and discipline are maintained in the school and that the safety of students and staff is secured.

4. Regarding students who are suspended or expelled from another school the Board of Management shall have regard to its obligation to enable each student within the school to learn well and develop his or her full potential as a student and as a citizen while having regard to the characteristic spirit of the school

### **Admission to Senior Cycle**

- Students who have completed the Junior Programme in Mercy Secondary School may progress to the Senior Cycle.
- A 5<sup>th</sup> Year Programme is available to all with Transition Year optional.

### **Transition Year Option available subject to the following criteria**

- Formal Application Process.
- School Attendance Record
- School Behaviour Record
- Places Available
- Students must contract to participate in all activities of the programme
- Students who do not actively and wholeheartedly engage in the programme may not be allowed to continue

### **Repeat Students for all Years**

- There are no reserved places for repeating
- Priority is given to past pupils of Mercy Secondary School who wish to repeat
- Selection criteria operates on a first come first served basis taking into account –
  - (i) subject choice considerations
  - (ii) reasons for repeating
  - (iii) places available
- The school will then decide on the application having consulted with staff
- Department of Education Constraints

This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management at its meeting of

\_\_\_\_\_ ( date)

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Chairperson

Next review date : \_\_\_\_\_

# ***Mercy Secondary School, Kilbeggan***

## ***Code of Behaviour - September 2010***

---

This Code of Behaviour was developed in partnership with all members of the Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan Community – students, teachers, parent, management and trustees. It follows the guidelines set out in the NEWB publication *Developing a Code of Behaviour : Guidelines for Schools*. The Code of Behaviour of Mercy Secondary School will be reviewed regularly, as directed by the Board of Management.

### **Aims of the Code of Behaviour:**

The Code of Behaviour of Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan aims to:

- Facilitate teaching and learning by positive, reflective and fair approaches
- Ensure the safety of all members of the school community on the school premises and when taking part in school activities
- Promote and help students develop excellent behaviour and encourage self discipline
- Put in place reflective structures to help staff deal with incidents of misbehaviour that may arise
- Deal fairly with students who are disruptive, affecting their own progress and/or the progress of other students using positive behaviour management planning
- Meet the statutory obligations re Code of Behaviour, in Section 23 of the Education Act 2000
- Inform students and their parents/guardians of the school's discipline procedures

### **Mission Statement & Strategic Aims**

Mercy Secondary School, Kilbeggan is a voluntary secondary school established in 1964 by the Sisters of Mercy. In accordance with the foundress of Mercy School, Catherine McCauley, her gospel and legacy, we show a special interest in the poor and disadvantaged.

Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan is a Catholic co-educational school committed to the holistic education of all students, to ensure that individually, they each realise their full potential in a social and physical environment that is caring, supportive and joyful. We work in partnership with students, staff, parents and the community, and welcome all students from our multicultural society.

At Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan it is our aim to -

- Educate all students to their full potential in every aspect - aesthetic, moral, academic, physical, spiritual, emotional, and social.
- Foster an awareness of the dignity, uniqueness, independence and interdependence of each individual person in a climate of respect and responsibility, with a view to enhancing each individual's self esteem.
- Provide challenges for all students in activities that are stimulating, constructive and rewarding
- Develop the social and physical infrastructure of the school in a positive and progressive manner.
- Build strong and trusting relations between the students, staff, parents and community to ensure that all resources available are used to their optimum
- Develop in students through the Catholic Ethos of the school a sense of stewardship, social responsibility and self that will stay with them beyond their years here to make them full participants in an ever changing world

## **Expectations and Respect for All**

- All members of the school community – students, teachers, staff members, parents and guardians - should show respect at all times for one another.
- A calm, trustful and respectful school environment facilitates positive teaching and learning for all.
- Students must be polite at all times and understand that aggressive, disrespectful and anti-social behaviour is not tolerated.
- Insulting/offensive remarks are unacceptable and are treated very seriously.
- Bullying will not be tolerated and will be dealt with in a fair, firm and understanding manner, in line with our Anti-Bullying Policy.
- Harassment at any level by any of the school partners will not be tolerated, and will be dealt with in line with the school's Combat Harassment Policy.
- There will be no tolerance of discrimination on grounds of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, age or ability.

## **Roles and Responsibilities of Staff Members in Relation to Behaviour/Relationships**

Mercy Secondary School is committed to providing a quality educational service to all its students within a safe and secure environment. Each staff member has a duty to act as an ordinary, prudent and reasonable person in his or her relationships with students. Professionalism is characterised by behaviour that shows respect for the interests and welfare of students, subject to the requirements of the law. It implies competence, responsibility, integrity, and impartiality. Consequently, members of Staff should not engage in *demeaning descriptions* of either students or colleagues, including remarks based on, for example, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, economic status, marital status, family status or other remarks which reflect adversely on the dignity of others. Mercy Secondary School aims to promote self-respect and positive self-image in its students. Staff by example, should promote positive attitudes to the worth of all persons, to social justice, and to equal opportunity. The principle of justice should precede all relationships. In this context, the student has the following legitimate expectations:

- To express himself / herself, to share ideas and to ask questions.
- To get respect from others and to be treated fairly and equally. Ridicule, sarcasm and remarks likely to undermine the dignity of the students should never be used.
- To be free from intimidation and bullying. Staff should refrain from any misuse of power that diminishes the integrity of the person.
- To a rational settlement of problems and to an opportunity to tell his/her own side of a story in a dispute.
- To learn without interference, at his/her own pace in a reasonable working environment.

## **How Students, Staff and Parents can help each other to meet the Standards expected in the school**

### **Staff:**

The successful education of all pupils depends on an active three-way partnership between pupils, parents and the school. Each has rights, responsibilities and expectations. Mercy Secondary School agrees to meet the expectations of parents and pupils by providing:

- A broad and balanced curriculum
- An education based on high expectations
- Work which is appropriate to a student's age and ability
- A secure, healthy and well disciplined working environment
- Regular homework and correction of same
- Written reports home twice per year
- A parent/teacher meeting once per year
- The opportunity to participate in a range of extracurricular activities

**Students:**

As a Mercy Secondary School pupil, I agree to meet the expectations of my parent(s) and the school by:

- Treating all members of the school community with understanding and respect
- Attending school regularly
- Being punctual at all times
- Working hard and meeting all course requirements
- Completing homework and assignments on time
- Keeping the school rules and behaving in a responsible way, both in school and when travelling to and from school
- Sharing responsibility for the school environment
- Respecting school property
- Remaining on the school site during school hours unless permitted otherwise by the school authority
- Wearing the school uniform at all times.

**Parents:**

As parent(s), I/We agree to meet the expectations of my/our child and school by:

- Ensuring excellent attendance and punctuality and informing the school promptly about any reason for absence
- Encouraging and supporting my/our daughter/son with school work
- Supporting the policies of the school including discipline and good order
- Attending Parent/Teacher meetings and school functions in which my daughter/son is involved, and attending any special appointments if requested
- Checking homework and signing any notes sent by teachers
- Providing her/him with the required textbooks and accessories

**Attendance and Punctuality.**

The school day is divided into nine class periods from Monday to Thursday and six class periods on Friday. School begins at 9am sharp and ends at 3:40pm, 1:10pm on Friday. Morning break is from 11am to 11:10am. Lunch break is from 1:10pm to 1:40pm, except for 1<sup>st</sup> years who begin lunch at 1.05pm.

Punctuality is essential for all members of the school community. It is a very important discipline that is vital to the teaching and learning environment in the school. If a student is late for first class in the morning, or for first class after lunch, they are required to collect a late slip from the office, and present this to the teacher of their class. If a student is late for any other class, this will be recorded by the class teacher, and dealt with through the appropriate disciplinary structures.

Regular attendance is essential for effective progress at school. Following any absence, students must supply a note of explanation signed by a parent/guardian to explain that absence. These notes will be kept on file within the school. The Education Welfare Board will be informed of the names of students who are absent 20 days in any school year or are absent for prolonged periods without explanation. (See School Attendance Policy)

Students must not leave school grounds during school hours without the permission of the Principal or Deputy Principal. If a student has to leave during school hours a written request is necessary. Students who wish to go home for lunch may do so provided they have fully completed, signed and returned to the school a special form available from the school for this purpose.

**School Rules****School Property and Personal Property.**

Any damage to school property must be reported immediately. Students may be requested to pay for such damage. Students are responsible for their own property at all times. Clothing and books should be clearly marked. The school is not responsible for loss of personal property. In everybody's interest, the school is kept clean and tidy at all times, with each students expected to play their part in keeping it so. Arising out of this, chewing gum is forbidden at all times.

### **Substance Abuse**

This school does not condone the misuse of **legal or illegal** substances on school premises or school activities but our policy is to put the young person's welfare first. Smoking in any part of the school building or its environs is banned; students should not smoke while in uniform. Smoking is also banned on any school-related activity (Public Health (Tobacco) Act 2004).

Alcohol may not be brought into the school or used while involved in school activities, except with the permission of the Principal. In the event of a student misusing alcohol the parents/guardians will be informed and appropriate action taken to promote the young person's welfare. Misuse of alcohol by any member of the school community in/on school grounds is prohibited.

The misuse of all other legal and illegal substances is strictly forbidden, and each case will be dealt with in line with the school's Substance Abuse Policy.

### **Mobile Phones/Internet Use**

Mobile phones and all other electronic devices must be switched off between 9am and 3:40pm with the exception of morning break and lunchtime. Any student needing to use a phone may report to the office for assistance. A student found using a mobile phone in class will have the phone and SIM card confiscated by the teacher and passed on the Principal or Deputy Principal. Phones will only be returned to parents who must collect them at the school. The use of picture or sound recording mobile phones is strictly forbidden.

As you are aware the use of internet and mobile phones can be invaluable. However, these technologies can also be misused causing offence and harm to others. Each student is required to sign up to the school's Acceptable Internet Use Policy. The making of nuisance phone calls, the sending of unwanted text messages/e-mails/or posting offensive messages is defined as harassment under the law. It is contrary to the school's Dignity in the Workplace Charter, it's Anti-Bullying Policy and Code of Behaviour. Inappropriate behaviour and breach of any of these policies will result in serious disciplinary action up to and including exclusion from school in accordance with procedure.

### **Uniform.**

Students are expected to be neat and tidy at all times. There is agreement between parents, pupils and teachers to have a school uniform. All students must wear the full school uniform throughout the school day and on the way to and from school. (See Details of School Uniform). Students may only wear their school hoodies or school jackets during classes if the weather dictates that it is appropriate to do so.

The wearing of facial jewellery/body piercing items will not be tolerated. Such jewellery poses a risk to the health and safety of our students. In the interests of safety, discreet earrings should be worn, and the wearing of larger earrings is not permitted.

Black shoes/black runners must be worn when in uniform.

All items of clothing and particularly sports wear must be clearly marked with owner's name. Primary responsibility for personal property rests with the student.

### **Learning and Teaching**

- Students must co-operate fully with teachers' guidance and together create a positive learning environment.
- Attention to class-work and homework is a very important part of learning.
- Students are expected to be prepared for class. They must have the appropriate texts and material with them at all times.
- They are expected to respect the opinions of others and be polite in expressing their own opinion.
- Homework must be carefully recorded in students' journals, which parents should sign on a weekly basis.

## Rewards and Sanctions:

### Rewards

Mercy Secondary School endeavours to reward good behaviour. Among the methods for rewarding good behaviour are

- Positive affirmation in the classroom from the teacher.
- Public affirmation by school management.
- A Student Award system has been developed in the school that rewards and promotes good behaviour.
- There is a Student of the Year Award for each year group, whereby teachers nominate a student in each year for this award. These nominations are based on a student's overall contribution to the class. Each nominated student receives a certificate. The Student of the Year Award goes to the student who receives the most nominations.
- There are awards for students who have excellent attendance records in each year.
- Awards are presented to students who are high academic achievers in the State Exams
- Students who have excelled in different sporting disciplines whilst representing the school receive awards. These awards take teamwork, leadership and commitment into account as well as natural sporting ability.

### Sanctions

The sanctions for unacceptable behaviour include the following -

- Reasoning with the student
- Reprimand (including advice on how to improve)
- Temporary physical separation from the classroom
- Loss of privileges (school trip for example)
- Detention
- Prescribing additional written homework
- Putting students on report
- Communication with parents
- Referral to the tutor
- Referral to the year head/deputy principal/principal
- Suspension
- Expulsion

### Inappropriate sanctions include:

- Physical punishment or the threat of physical punishment: physical chastisement of a student is illegal under section 24 of the *Non-Fatal Offences against the Person Act 1997*
- Ridicule, sarcasm or remarks likely to undermine a student's self confidence
- Public or private humiliation
- Applying sanctions to whole groups or classes in cases where an individual or small-group sanction is warranted.

## Disciplinary Procedure

The school disciplinary procedure is structured in a manner whereby students are given every chance and opportunity to address inappropriate behaviour and learn from their mistakes. The class teacher is responsible for preserving order in the classroom, and has a number of strategies available to them to do this, including, extra class work, penalty sheets, notes in journals to parents, extra homework, class report or verbal warnings.

If a student is uncooperative or disruptive in any way, the class teacher may record this on an Incident Report Form. If the teacher has recorded three such incidents in relation to this student's behaviour, then this student must be referred to their Year Head at this point. If any one particular incident is deemed by the teacher to be serious enough, then the teacher may refer the student directly to the Year Head, without waiting to record any further incidents. The following sets out the school's *Discipline Procedure* and the varying sanctions involved.

- Step 1:** Class Teacher.  
Classroom Sanctions.  
Class Report.
- Step 2:** 1<sup>st</sup> Referral Form to Year-head.  
Year-head meets with Student.  
Sanctions imposed.  
Student records the incident in their own words and signs in an effort to encourage personal responsibility.  
Student writes a signed apology and presents it to the Teacher
- Step 3:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Referral to Year-head.  
As Step 2.  
Year-head sends a letter to Parent/Guardian to indicate that student has been referred twice and should matters not improve a referral will be made to the Deputy Principal and the Student will be on full School Report.
- Step 4:** 3<sup>rd</sup> Referral to Year-head.  
Year-head indicates 3<sup>rd</sup> Referral on Green Form, therefore the matter is referred on to the Deputy Principal.  
The Deputy Principal meets with the Student and places him/her on School Report.  
Imposes Sanctions.  
A letter and copy of School Report are sent to Parent/Guardian at the end of the week.
- Step 5:** 4<sup>th</sup> Referral to Year-head.  
Referred on to Deputy Principal and then Principal immediately.  
Principal imposes severe sanction.  
Suspension for 2 days.  
Parent/Guardian is informed of suspension by a letter that indicates that they are free to make an appointment with the office and welcome to meet with the School Counsellor.  
Upon returning to school the student signs a Letter of Intent whereby they pledge to improve their behaviour.
- Step 6:** 5<sup>th</sup> Referral to Year-head.  
Year-head indicates 5<sup>th</sup> Referral on Green Form, therefore the matter is referred on to the Deputy Principal.  
The Deputy Principal meets with the Student and refers him/her immediately to Principal who places Student on School Report.  
A letter and copy of School Report are sent to Parent/Guardian at the end of the week.
- Step 7:** Further Referral to Year-head.  
Student meets Tribunal of Deputy and Year-head.  
A detailed report is supplied to the Principal and a copy to file.  
Subsequently the Principal suspends the student for a longer period of 3 to 4 days.  
Upon returning to school the student signs a new Letter of Intent.
- Step 8:** Further Referral to Year-head.  
The matter is directly passed on to the Principal.  
5 day suspension is imposed until Board of Management Meeting.  
Parents are informed of the date of that meeting and invited to attend.  
The Principal gives a full and detailed account of the Student's record to the Board and recommends sanctions up to and including exclusion to that meeting

**In keeping with our Code of Behaviour, Pastoral Care Policy and Mission Statement, our School Counsellor is available to any student who may require assistance.**

## **Detention**

Detention is held every Thursday between 1.20pm and 1.35pm in Room 3. Students may be placed on detention for a variety of reasons, including being late for class or not being in full school uniform. A letter is sent in advance of the detention to the Parents/Guardians of the student, to give them prior notice and to make them aware of the reasoning behind the detention. Detention may be held after school on a Friday between 1.30pm and 2.00pm when the need arises.

## **When and Where Behaviour will be subject to the Code of Behaviour.**

The standards and rules contained in the code of behaviour of Mercy Secondary School apply in any situation where the student, although outside the school, is still the responsibility of the school. Examples include school tours, games, extra curricular activities and attendance at events organised by the school. Where a student is alleged to have engaged in serious misbehaviour outside school, when not under the care and responsibility of the school, a judgement would have to be made that there is a clear connection with the school and a demonstrable impact on its work, before the code of behaviour applies. The school authorities may need to get legal advice where the situation is complex.

## **Where Parents or Students can get help when problems arise:**

Some students need more active intervention to help them to manage their behaviour. Without additional help, they may be at risk of failing, behaviourally, socially and educationally. Additional inputs or interventions at Mercy Secondary School include:

- Referral to another teacher or adult who can work with the student – year head/tutor/Guidance Counsellor
- Involving the Pastoral Care team.
- Setting targets for behaviour and monitoring them with the student in a supportive way
- Behaviour contracts.

## **Procedures for raising a concern or bringing a complaint about a behaviour matter**

The Board of Management of Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan is committed to following the Complaints Procedure for Voluntary Secondary Schools as established, whenever a parent or student may wish to make a complaint about a behaviour matter. ( See Complaints Procedure )



# Policies and Procedures for Suspension and Expulsion

## Suspension

The Board of Management holds the authority to suspend a student, and it has delegated this authority to suspend a student to the Principal, and in his/her absence to the Deputy Principal.

### Grounds for Suspending a Student

Suspension from school should always be a proportionate response to the behaviour that is causing concern, danger and/or disruption to learning. It is never an appropriate response to poor academic performance, poor attendance or minor breaches of the code of behaviour. Students may be recommended for suspension from school for: -

- Reaching that stage in the Disciplinary Procedure
- Ongoing poor behaviour.
- Being a threat to the Health & Safety of others
- Verbal abuse of any person in the school community.
- Physical abuse of any person in the school community.
- Theft of or deliberate damage of property.
- Fighting/bullying.
- Persistent punctuality problems.
- Smoking or consuming alcohol or the use of illegal substances/drugs on the school premises or grounds or while on a supervised school outing.

In addition to indicating which of the above reasons resulted in a particular exclusion, the suspension letter will contain a more precise description of the student's behaviour and the length of time of the suspension

### Factors to consider before suspending a student

Before a process is put in motion to suspend a student, the school management will

- Ensure that there is a precise, written record of the behaviour
- Consider how persistent the unacceptable behaviour has been
- Consider whether the behaviour has escalated, despite interventions
- Consider how other students and staff are affected by the student's behaviour, in particular the impact on teaching and learning in the student's class
- Review interventions already tried.
- Consider whether a referral to counselling is appropriate
- Consider whether the support of the Guidance counsellor would be of assistance

### Forms of Suspension

#### • **During the State Examination Period**

Serious misbehaviour during the state examination period which is referred by the examinations superintendent to the school authority is referred by the Principal to the State Examinations Commission. Every measure is taken to protect the integrity of the State Examinations and where appropriate a separate centre will be requested for a student who is disruptive during the state examination period.

#### • **Immediate Suspension**

In exceptional circumstances, where the continued presence of a student in the school at a particular time would represent a serious threat to the safety of students or staff or any other person in the school, the Principal may decide that an immediate suspension is warranted. In this, as in all exclusions, fair procedures will be applied. In such a situation a parent/guardian will be contacted by telephone to collect the student. The situation will be explained and written documentation will follow by post.

#### • **Automatic Expulsion**

Suspension is automatic for students who engage in physical fighting on the school premises or when attending a supervised school event outside the premises. The school authority will follow due process and fair procedures in all such situations.

### Procedures in Respect of Suspension:

The implementation of the process of suspension should always be fair and impartial. The Year Head may discuss the situation with the Principal and they will decide whether suspension is the most appropriate response. Should suspension of a student occur the following procedures are used:

- There will be a written account of the incident or behaviour
- The student will be informed verbally that he/she will be suspended and that his/her parents will be informed.
- The Principal will phone a parent and will give a formal account of the behaviour and the conditions of the suspension.
- The original letter of suspension will be posted to the parent/guardian.
- A photocopy of the original letter of suspension will be given to the student to be handed to his parent/guardian.
- A photocopy will be kept on the school's file..
- On occasions parents may be requested to attend a meeting with the Principal
- Parents/Guardians and students are given an opportunity to respond to proposed exclusion.
- Mercy Secondary School has due regard to its duty of care for the student and in no circumstances should a student be suspended without first notifying parents/guardians so that in the case of an immediate suspension parents/guardians may make arrangements for the student to be collected.

### **Periods of Suspension**

Except in exceptional circumstances a student should not be suspended for more than 3 days. Where cumulative periods of suspension through a single school year would bring the number of days for which a student has been suspended to 20 days or more the Education Welfare Officer will be informed as a matter of course by the school's Attendance Officer. This applies in the case of students under 16 years of age. The Principal is to ensure that the school Attendance Officer is supplied with a photocopy of each suspension form.

### **Appeals**

All suspensions may be appealed to the Board of Management of Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan, and when parents/guardians are being formally notified of an suspension they are also informed of this right to appeal. A Section 29 Appeal may be taken where the total number of days for which an individual student has been suspended in the current school year exceeds 20 days.

### **Implementing a Suspension:**

The Principal notifies the parents and the student in writing of the decision to suspend. The letter confirms:

- The period of the suspension and the dates on which it will begin and end
- The reasons for the suspension.
- The arrangements for returning to school, including any commitments to be entered into by the student and the parents
- The provision for an appeal to the Board of Management
- The right to appeal thereafter to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science.

### **Grounds for Removing a Suspension:**

An exclusion may be removed if the Board of Management or the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science directs that it be removed.

### **Reintegration of a student following a suspension**

A student is always to be given the opportunity for a fresh start. The school expects the same behaviour from the returning student as from all other students.

### **Records and Reports**

Formal written records are to be kept of

- Investigation prior to the decision to suspend a student
- The duration of the suspension and any conditions attached to the suspension.
- As the Principal is required to report suspensions in accordance with the NEWB reporting guidelines, a log of suspensions will be kept by the school attendance co-ordinator.

### **Review of the use of Suspension**

The In-School Management Team should monitor the use of suspension on an annual basis to ensure that its use is fair and consistent with school policies.

# Expulsion

The authority to expel - i.e. permanently exclude - a student from Mercy Secondary School, having complied with the provisions of section 24 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 belongs to the Board of Management.

## Grounds for Expulsion

Expulsion is a very grave step and one that is only taken

- (A) in extreme cases of unacceptable behaviour
- (B) in situations where a student's behaviour poses a real and significant threat to the health, safety or well-being of students or staff
- (C) when the student's behaviour is a persistent cause of significant disruption to the learning of others
- (D) in situations where the student is responsible for serious damage to school property

In the cases of A or B or C or D above the school will already have taken and recorded significant steps to address the misbehaviour, recognising that the decision to seek expulsion is a serious step. Such steps may include, as appropriate:

- Meeting with parents to try to find ways of helping the student to change his/her behaviour
- Explaining to the student the possible consequences of his/her behaviour, if it should persist
- Seeking the assistance of support agencies, as relevant.

## Expulsion for a First Offence

In exceptional circumstances the Board of Management may form the opinion that a student should be expelled for a first offence. A proposal to expel on the basis of a single breach of the code may include situations such as:

- Actual violence or physical assault on another student or member of staff, occurring on the school premises or during a supervised school event
- Supplying illegal drugs to other students in the school
- Sexual assault.

As expulsion is a most serious sanction the Board of Management will undertake a detailed and documented review of the circumstances and behaviours which have led to the decision to seek to expel a student.

## Procedures in respect of Expulsion

Procedures will be fair and will comply with the Education (Welfare) Act 2000. In particular

The student in respect of whom expulsion is being sought, together with his/her parents/guardians has

- o The right to be heard
- o The right to know that the alleged misbehaviour is being investigated
- o The right to know the details of the allegations being made and any other information that will be taken into account
- o The right to know how the issue will be decided
- o The right to respond to the allegations
- o The right to be heard by the Board of Management
- o The right to ask questions of the other party or witnesses where there is a dispute about the facts.

The student in respect of whom expulsion is being sought, together with his/her parents/guardians has

- o The right to impartiality
- o The right to an absence of bias
- o The right to impartiality in the investigation and the decision-making.

The procedural steps which follow a preliminary investigation will include:

- A detailed investigation carried out under the direction of the Principal
- A recommendation to the Board of Management by the Principal
- Consultations arranged by the Educational Welfare Officer
- Confirmation of the decision to expel.

Parents/guardians will be given due notice of meetings in writing and a fair and reasonable time to prepare for hearings. At each stage the student and his/her parents/guardians will be informed and will be given every opportunity to respond before a decision is made and before the sanction of expulsion is imposed. If a student and his/her parents/guardians fail to attend a meeting they should be informed in writing of the gravity of the matter and

the importance of attending a rescheduled meeting and, failing that, the duty of the school authorities to make a decision to respond to the student's alleged behaviour.

### **Step 1: A recommendation for expulsion of a student to the Board of Management by the Principal**

Where the Principal forms a view, based on the investigation of the alleged misbehaviour, that expulsion may be warranted, the Principal makes a recommendation to the Board of Management to consider expulsion. The Principal should:

- inform the parents and the student that the Board of Management is being asked to consider expulsion
- ensure that parents have records of: the allegations against the student; the investigation; and written notice of the grounds on which the Board of Management is being asked to consider expulsion
- provide the Board of Management with the same comprehensive records as are given to parents
- notify the parents of the date of the hearing by the Board of Management and invite them to that hearing
- advise the parents that they can make a written and oral submission to the Board of Management
- ensure that parents have enough notice to allow them to prepare for the hearing.

### **Step 2: Consideration by the Board of Management of the Principal's recommendation and the holding of a hearing**

It is the responsibility in the first instance of the Board of Management of Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan to review the initial investigation and satisfy themselves that the preliminary investigation was properly conducted in line with fair procedures. The Board should undertake their own reviews of all documentation and the circumstances of the case. They should ensure that no party who has had any involvement with the circumstances of the case is part of the Board's deliberations (for example, a member of the Board who may have made an allegation about the student). In the conduct of the hearing, the Board must take care to ensure that the members are, and are seen to be, impartial as between the Principal and the student. Parents may wish to be accompanied at hearings and the Board should facilitate this, in line with good practice and procedures. After both sides have been heard, the Principal or parents or student, if over 18 years of age, is not permitted to be present for the Board's deliberations.

### **Step 3: The Board deliberations and actions following the hearing**

Having heard from all the parties, it is the responsibility of the Board to decide whether or not the allegation is substantiated and, if so, whether or not expulsion is the appropriate sanction. Where the Board, having considered all the facts of the case, is of the opinion that the student should be expelled, the Board must notify the Educational Welfare Officer in writing of its opinion, and the reasons for this opinion. (*Education (Welfare) Act 2000, s24(1)*). The Board should refer to National Educational Welfare Board reporting procedures for proposed expulsions. The student cannot be expelled before the passage of **twenty school days** from the date on which the EWO receives this written notification (*Education (Welfare) Act 2000, s24(1)*).

An appeal against an expulsion under section 29 of the *Education Act 1998* will automatically succeed if it is shown that the Educational Welfare Officer was not notified in accordance with section 24(1) or that twenty did not elapse from the time of

notification to the Educational Welfare Officer to the implementation of the expulsion (*Education (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2007, s4A*). The Board of Management should inform the parents in writing about its conclusions and the next steps in the process. Where expulsion is proposed, the parents should be told that the Board of Management will now inform the Educational Welfare Officer.

### **Step 4: Consultations arranged by the Educational Welfare Officer**

Within twenty days of receipt of a notification from the Board of its opinion that a student should be expelled, the Educational Welfare Officer

- must make all reasonable efforts to hold individual consultations with the Principal, the parents and the student and anyone else who may be of assistance
- convene a meeting of those parties who agree to attend (*Education (Welfare) Act 2000, section 24*).

The purpose of the consultations and the meeting is to ensure that arrangements are made for the student to continue in education. These consultations may result in an agreement about an alternative intervention that would avoid expulsion. However, where the possibility of continuing in the school is not an option, at least in the short term, the consultation should focus on alternative educational possibilities. In the interests of the educational welfare of the student, those concerned should come together with the Educational Welfare Officer to plan for the student's future education. Pending these consultations about the student's continued education, the Board of Management may take steps to ensure that good order is maintained and that the safety of students is secured (*Education (Welfare) Act 2000, s24(5)*). The Board of Management may consider it appropriate to suspend a student during this time.

Suspension should only be considered where there is a likelihood that the continued presence of the student during this time will seriously disrupt the learning of others, or represent a threat to the safety of other students or staff.

#### **Step 5: Confirmation of the decision to expel**

Where the twenty-day period following notification to the Educational Welfare Officer has elapsed, and where the Board of Management remains of the view that the student should be expelled, the Board should formally confirm the decision to expel (this task might be delegated to the Chairperson of the Board of Management and the Principal). Parents should be notified immediately that the expulsion will now proceed. Parents and the student should be told about the right to appeal and supplied with the standard form on which to lodge an appeal. A formal record should be made of the decision to expel the student.

#### **Appeals;**

A parent, or a student aged over eighteen years, may appeal a decision to expel to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science (*Education Act 1998* section 29). An appeal may also be brought by the National Educational Welfare Board on behalf of a student.

#### **The Appeals Process**

The appeals process under section 29 of the *Education Act 1998* begins with the provision of mediation by a mediator nominated by the Appeals Committee (Department of Education and Science).

#### **Review of use of Expulsion**

The Board of Management will review the use of expulsion in the school at regular intervals to ensure that its use is consistent with school policies, that patterns of use are examined to identify factors that may be influencing behaviour in the school, and to ensure that expulsion is used appropriately.

## **The Plan For Reviewing the Code:**

The Principal and staff in partnership with the Board of Management will review the Code of Behaviour of Mercy Secondary School

on \_\_\_\_\_, having familiarised themselves with the Guidelines.

Where aspects of the school code are highlighted to be reviewed or addressed, the Board of Management, together with the Principal, will prioritise these areas and develop an action plan, within a timeframe, for doing this work.

Formal Adoption of the Code of Behaviour by the Board of Management of Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan:

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

Chairperson of Board of Management  
Mercy Secondary Kilbeggan Post Primary School

# Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan

## Draft Assessment Policy 2010

### Introduction

This Assessment Policy was developed in partnership with all members of the Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan Community – students, teachers, parent, management and trustees. It recognises the requirement of the school to *regularly evaluate students and periodically report the results of the evaluation to the students and their parents*, as set down by the Education Act 1998. This Assessment Policy will be reviewed regularly, as directed by the Board of Management.

### Relationship to Mission Statement

Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan is a Catholic co-educational school committed to the holistic education of all students, to ensure that individually, they each realise their full potential in a social and physical environment that is caring, supportive and joyful. We work in partnership with students, staff, parents and the community, and welcome all students from our multicultural society.

This Assessment Policy will play a key role in striving to ensure that each student realises his/her full academic potential in a learning environment that reflects a culture of partnership between teachers, parents and students.

### Aims and Objectives of this Policy

The primary aims and objectives of the policy are:

- To facilitate improved teaching and pupil learning.
- To create a consistent and standardised assessment procedure for monitoring and reporting achievement in the school
- To co-ordinate assessment procedures within departments on a whole school basis

### Assessment for Learning & Assessment of Learning

Our policy covers both **assessment of learning** and **assessment for learning**. Assessment *of* learning is assessment for accountability purposes, to determine a student's level of performance on a specific task or at the conclusion of a unit of teaching and learning. The information gained from this kind of assessment will be used in reporting. Assessment **for** learning, on the other hand, is a continuous process which combines a grade with advice to the student towards further improvement. Both forms of assessment are invaluable, and will be used by equally by teachers in this school.

## **The Purposes of Assessment**

- To evaluate what a student has learned in a particular area
- To provide feedback to students in a timely and constructive manner
- To provide feedback to teachers on the success of particular teaching methodologies in the learning process
- To highlight difficulties and shortcomings in the learning process in order to develop intervention strategies
- To identify students who require extension activities such as learning support
- To encourage and increase the skills of self assessment
- To keep records of attainment that will inform parents through the school's reporting process
- To measure the progress of students over time
- To raise expectations and standards
- To act as an incentive for students in the learning process.
- To ascertain whether it is appropriate for a student to continue studying in any given subject area.

## **Forms of Assessment**

### **1. Informal Assessment**

The most common forms of assessment used in the school are of an informal nature, and these take place regularly in the classroom. These informal assessments are at the discretion of individual teachers who will use them constructively for learning to take place. Timely feedback and constructive advice are vital components in this process. Where appropriate, teachers will keep records of these assessments to provide an insight into a student's progress over time and to fully inform the learning process. Informal Assessments methods include –

- Worksheets & written classwork
- Questions and answers in class
- Essays & assignments
- Reading & writing in Class
- Sample exam questions
- Homework – written or learned

### **2. Formal Assessment**

There are many types of formal assessments that take place in the school environment.

- I. Monthly/End of Topic Test** – These forms of assessments will be conducted at the discretion of the teacher on a monthly or end of chapter basis. These formal tests will be a vital component in providing feedback to teachers, students and parents, on the level of each student's attainment and learning in that specific subject area. Constructive feedback will be given by teachers to students who partake in these tests, and the results of these tests will be used in the school's formal reporting structure where appropriate.

- II. House Exams** – 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Years will sit their *Christmas Exams* in early December and their *Summer Exams* at the end of May. The duration of these exams shall be as follows – 1<sup>st</sup> Years 1 hour, 2<sup>nd</sup> Years 1.5 hours and 5<sup>th</sup> Years 2 hours. These exams are of a very serious nature, and this is recognised by students, parents and teachers alike. The purpose of these exams is to measure student learning and attainment in each subject area, and to give students experience in sitting formal exams similar in nature to the state exams. All house exams will follow the same operating rules as state exams. The results of these *Christmas Exams* and *Summer Exams* will count for 50% of the grades reported in the *Christmas Reports* and *Summer Reports* respectively. Continuous assessment in each subject area leading up to these exams will account for the other 50%.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Year students will not sit formal house exams at Christmas. Their *Christmas Report* will be based on a mix of continuous assessments in each subject area, as decided by the individual teacher. 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Year students will undertake Pre Junior and Pre Leaving Cert Mock Exams in February each year to prepare them for their state exams in June. These mock exams are seen as being very beneficial to the students in measuring their progress in their Junior Cert and Leaving Cert years. Students will gain valuable experience in time management and answering technique through sitting these mock exams. The results of these mock exams will form the basis for the Pre Junior Cert and Pre Leaving Cert Reports sent out in April. 3<sup>rd</sup> Year and 6<sup>th</sup> Year students do not sit any formal house exams at the end of May, and do not receive a *Summer Report*.
- Transition Year students do not sit any formal state or house exams in the school. Their Christmas and Summer Reports are based on continuous assessments in the classroom as determined by their individual subject teacher. As Transition Year is focused on experiential learning and personal development, the forms of assessment used may vary from the standard practices used in other years.
- III. State Exams** – The school will strive to ensure that all 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Year students participate - as directed by the State Exams Commission - in the many assessments that make up the Junior Cert and Leaving Cert exams. These assessments which may include orals, course work, practical work, portfolio work amongst others, will be operated in accordance with the regulations set down by the State Examinations Commission.
- IV. Other Assessments** – the school may engage in other forms of assessment from time to time. Incoming 1<sup>st</sup> Years will undertake a CAT assessment which will be used as a basis to form mixed ability 1<sup>st</sup> Year classes. This assessment will offer an early indicator to the school of a student's potential. All 1<sup>st</sup> Years will be screened by the Learning Support Department to investigate the possible provision of additional help where necessary. All 3<sup>rd</sup> Years will undertake a DATS assessment to assist in their investigation of possible college and career choices, when they proceed to 5<sup>th</sup> Year. The school's NEPS psychologist, in consultation with school management, may carry out psychological assessments and other assessments on students at different times throughout the year.



## General Guidelines

The form that these informal and formal assessments will take, are dependent on the subject area being assessed and will vary from subject to subject. Certain forms of assessment may oftentimes be peculiar to a particular subject.

All forms of assessment above will strive to meet the additional needs of students in the classroom when they arise. Classroom strategies such as differentiated assessment, visual aids, hearing aids, spelling waivers, increased time and dictionaries amongst others, may be used from time to time, as determined by the individual subject teacher.

Where feasible, and as determined by each department plan, common assessments across a year group will be used in each subject area. This will provide for increased cooperation and a common benchmark across each subject area.

Students are expected to treat all of the above forms of assessment with respect. Any student who willingly fails to participate fully, or who acts in a disrespectful way towards any form of assessment in the school will be dealt with accordingly.

## Assessment and Reporting

There are different methods whereby the results of formal and informal assessments will be reported to parents.

- **Student Journal** – the teacher may communicate the outcome of any assessment to the parents/guardian of a student by writing a note in the students journal. The parent/guardian is expected to acknowledge receipt of this note by countersigning it.
- **Direct Contact** - the teacher may decide as they see fit to contact the parent/guardian directly with respect to the outcome of any assessment undertaken by a student
- **Signature of Parent on Assessment** – the teacher may send the corrected assessment itself home with the student to be viewed and signed by the parent/guardian.
- **Parent Teacher Meetings** – there are Parent Teacher Meetings for all Year Groups throughout the academic year. At these meetings it will be possible for teachers to relay the outcomes of varying assessments to parents/guardians of individual students, that generates a accurate picture of the student's progress.
- **Written reports** – Formal written reports are posted to the parents/guardians of students on two occasions during the academic year, depending which year group they are in. 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, Transition Year and 5<sup>th</sup> Year parents/guardians will receive their *Christmas Report* in December before the Christmas holidays, and their *Summer Report* during the Summer holidays. Parents/guardians of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> will also receive a *Christmas Report* in December, but will then receive another report in April with the results of their Pre Junior and Pre Leaving Cert Exams. 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Year parents/guardians do not receive a *Summer Report*.

This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management at its meeting of \_\_\_\_\_ ( date)

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Chairperson

Next review date : \_\_\_\_\_

# Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan

## Attendance Policy

- Attendance Officer: Ms Gallen
- All teachers and substitute teachers must take attendance 1st class every morning.
- White slips are used for the morning attendance.
- Pink slips are used in the afternoon.
- The slips are returned to the attendance box in the staff room immediately after the 1<sup>st</sup> class. The attendance is recorded on the computer before 10:30am every morning.
- A print-out of the absent students for each class goes up on the notice-board in the staff-room every day
- Every day the Principal is given a copy and a copy is also inserted in the Health & Safety folder in the office in case of fire.
- Afternoon attendance slips are returned to the staff room at 2:30pm every day and the absences are recorded.
- Parents/Guardians must notify the school giving the reason for the student's absence. A phone-call must be followed up by a written note explaining the absence. These notes are kept in a folder in the secretary's office. If a note is not received, the parent/guardian is phoned reminding them to send in the note.
- If a student is absent for more than three days without an explanation the parent/guardian is phoned to explain the absence.
- The attendance officer complies with the rules and standards set out by the National Education Welfare Board. Returns are sent every quarter during the school year. Letters are sent to parents during the year informing them of a child's absence, if it is excessive i.e., over 10 days in the first term, after 20 days etc.
- Detention: A student who is late for 1<sup>st</sup> class in the morning or 1<sup>st</sup> class in the afternoon is detained for 15 minutes on Tuesday or Thursday, 1:20-1:35pm.
- A student may not leave the school at anytime during the day without presenting a letter from a parent or guardian to the office seeking permission to go home. If it is noticed that a student has left the premises without permission a parent/guardian is phoned immediately.
- Records of attendance going back three years are kept on file.

This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management at its meeting of

\_\_\_\_\_ ( date)

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Chairperson

Next review date : \_\_\_\_\_



## **Mercy Secondary School, Kilbeggan**

### **Policy on Homework / Study**

#### **Sept 2010**

Mercy Secondary School recognises the values of Homework/Study as a means of reinforcing and embedding learning. Homework/Study may take a variety of forms, which can include written tasks, oral/aural work, memory work etc. It should be noted that effective Homework/Study skills need to be learned, practiced and developed.

There are many good reasons why Homework/Study is set and why students should complete it.

#### **Homework:**

- Promotes independent learning.
- Promotes self-organisation.
- Promotes self-responsibility for learning.
- Fosters the habit of class preparation.
- Encourages reflection on what was covered during class.
- Consolidates and reinforces previous learning.
- Encourages associative learning.
- Allows student to work at their own pace.
- Provides regular feedback to student on personal progress.
- Provides parents/guardians with an insight into the curriculum.
- Provides parents/guardians with an insight into student ability and present skill level.
- Helps teachers to monitor individual progress.

#### **Homework/Study – Standard Practice for Students in Mercy Secondary School**

- That each student should have a Homework/Study timetable in his/her journal.
- That each student should enter a note of the Homework/Study to be done at the end of each lesson.
- That each student, to the best of his/her ability complete his/her Homework/Study to the standard specified by the teacher.
- That each student understands that consistent failure to deal responsibly with Homework/Study will result in sanctions as set out in the Code of Behaviour.
- That each student should follow the Homework/Study guidelines as presented in the student's journal.

#### **Homework Guidelines**

The key to doing quality homework

##### **In Class**

- Be a prospector – prospectors are active learners who think with the teacher for the key points of the lesson being presented.
- Use your journal to accurately record homework given. You will not remember – we forget 70% of what we hear within a day.

- Remember that ‘learning’ homework is as important as written work and must be recorded.
- Never leave the classroom not understanding what to do, ask the teacher.

**At Home:**

- Work in the same place, a place that you associate with study.
- Study away from distractions – no tv, no radio, undisturbed, with a place to store your books and materials. Discuss this with your parents.
- Study in a warm but well ventilated room.
- Keep your study area tidy, it is not a storage area.
- Have good but not glaring light.
- Make a homework/study timetable and check it before your start. (You will get help to make this in school.)

**When to do homework/study:**

- According to your homework/study timetable.
- When you are still fresh and alert.
- At a time when you are not likely to be disturbed.

**Getting started:**

- Check in your journal the work you have to do.
- Get your books ready.
- Start with what you like in order to get ‘in the mood’.

**Doing it:**

- Do the homework on the night it is given to you.
- Vary your easy and hard subjects to stop you becoming bored.
- Start each piece of work with the question ‘What do I have to be able to do this?’
- Specific goals – your results will be predictable if you set specific goals. For example: Non-specific goal: ‘I will try harder at school next term and do more study.’ Specific goal: ‘I will improve my geography mark by 8% by the Christmas Test’. A specific goal must be:
  - Attainable – have a homework/study plan and follow it.
  - Measurable – ask your teacher about your progress.
  - Have a time limit – e.g. the Christmas exam.
  - Presentation and Quality of work counts
  - Don’t just do it, do it ‘right’.

**How to present your homework:**

- Have a dedicated copy for each subject.
- Draw a margin down the side of the page.
- Rule off underneath the previous piece of work.
- Put a proper title and date.
- Neat handwriting.
- Reread what you have written and do any crossings-out neatly.
- Use a new paragraph for each new idea when writing prose.
- Make use of underlining, numbers, capitals and brackets.
- Make sure that diagrams and drawings are accurate and clear.
- Check spelling and punctuation before you hand it in.

- Remember to put your copy in your bag.
- Hand in your work on time.

**Finally . . .**

- Go over the work when you get it back to correct mistakes and to write in any important points that you missed out.

**Why bother doing homework or studying?**

- To improve yourself and understand the world around you.
- To qualify yourself for a job or college place.
- To improve your self esteem.
- To help your teachers assess how well you have understood an idea or topic and if you are ready to move on to new material.

**How long should I spend at homework and study each night?**

It is difficult to say how much time anyone should spend at homework or study. The quality of time spent is more important than quantity!

Suggested	Minimum
First Year:	1.5 hours per night 5 times per week
Second Year:	2 hours per night 5 times per week
Third Year:	2.5 hours per night 6 times per week
Transition Year:	2 hours per night or as recommended for project work
Fifth Year:	3 hours per night 6 times per week
Sixth Year:	3.5 hours per night 6 times per week

Supervised study is available in school for examination years. Other years can apply if there are places available.

## **Homework/Study – Standard Practice for Teachers in Mercy Secondary School, Kilbeggan**

- Each teacher will dictate the note to be entered by the student in his/her journal.
- Each teacher will take due account of the student's Homework/Study timetable in setting the work to be done.
- Each teacher will ensure that the Homework/Study set is reasonable and differentiated where appropriate – all students should be able to experience some level of achievement with Homework/Study
- Each teacher will have in place a means of checking, correcting and recording Homework/Study on a consistent and reasonable basis.
- Each teacher will use all available classroom sanctions/strategies to achieve and maintain expected standards in Homework/Study. The teacher will report students who fail to deal responsibly with Homework/Study through the Year Head Class Tutor System.
- Teachers should encourage students to follow the Homework/Study guidelines presented in the student's Journal.

### **Guidelines on Homework/Study for Teachers**

- It should be noted that Homework/Study is not always written work. There are many types of Homework/Study including – reading, writing, drawing, thinking, memorising, revising and studying.
- Give Homework/Study regularly but be aware of the time and effort required to complete the work.
- Ensure sufficient class time for all students to record the Homework/Study assignment in their homework Journal.
- If the assignment is an unusual one or of a new type, give a sufficient explanation as well as examples and allow students to ask questions to clarify their understanding.
- Spend time explaining to your students how you want Homework/Study presented.
- If you have students with literacy or learning difficulties, insist that they show you that they have correctly written down the Homework/Study. Also, check that they understand what you want them to do for homework.

### **There are many reasons why a student may not complete and hand in homework:**

- Lack of motivation or interest in school success.
- Lack of ability or understanding of the topic or task.
- Lack of skills.
- Home, family, life problems may be impacting on a student's capacity to complete Homework/Study.

Always tell the Year Head about any student who consistently fails to do Homework/Study. The Year Head may be able to explain why the work was not done or advise on proceeding with sanctions.

### **Homework/Study – Parents/Guardians Role**

It is expected that parents:

- Display an interest in the Homework/Study given and being done by students.
- Be familiar with study guidelines and advice being promoted by the school through the School Journal.
- Help the student in organising and maintaining an effective Homework/Study timetable.
- Check and sign the Journal each week and respond by encouragement and sanction as appropriate.
- Contact the school directly or through the Journal to tackle problems early on.

### **Mercy Secondary School supports and encourages homework/study among students by:**

- Provision of after school facilities for 3rd and 6th year students on an agreed basis and for other students if space allows.
- Provision of Homework/Study guidelines for students in the student's Journal.
- Supporting the system of sanctions and rewards operated by class teachers, team tutors and year heads.
- Facilitating study skills programmes for all students through S.P.H.E. and guidance programmes.



**Mercy Secondary School, Kilbeggan.**

# **ANTI-BULLYING POLICY**

This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management at its meeting of

\_\_\_\_\_ ( date)

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Chairperson

Next review date : \_\_\_\_\_

## Statement of Intent

The Board of Management and Staff of Mercy Secondary School, Kilbeggan are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all of our students so they can learn in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at our school. If bullying does occur, all students should be able to tell and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. We are a *TELLING* school. This means that *anyone* who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell the staff.

## Link to Mission Statement

This response to bullying is an integral part of our school SPHE programme and endeavours to promote a positive and safe climate in the school which is consistent with the current school mission statement.

## What Is Bullying?

Bullying is the use of aggression with the intention of hurting another person. Bullying results in pain and distress to the victim. Any form of actions or words intended to cause anguish, discomfort, or hurt in any form constitutes bullying.

***Bullying is repeated aggression, verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against others (DES, 1993)***

Bullying can be:

- Emotional being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding books, threatening gestures)
- Physical pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence
- Racist racial taunts, graffiti, gestures
- Sexual unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments
- Homophobic because of, or focussing on the issue of sexuality
- Verbal name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing
- Cyber All areas of internet ,such as email & internet chat room misuse  
Mobile threats by text messaging & calls  
Misuse of associated technology , i.e. camera & video facilities
- In its simplest form it can be unconscious, but it is much more often planned
- It can be done by an individual, but it is much more often perpetrated by a group

- It can be extremely subtle and difficult for the adults in charge to recognise.
- The perpetrator has his/her own problems, and is very often a coward.

## **Why is it Important to Respond to Bullying?**

Bullying hurts. No one deserves to be a victim of bullying. Everybody has the right to be treated with respect. Pupils who are bullying need to learn different ways of behaving.

Schools have a responsibility to respond promptly and effectively to issues of bullying.

## **Objectives of this Policy**

- All teaching and non-teaching staff, students and parents should have an understanding of what bullying is.
- All teaching and non-teaching staff should know what the school policy is on bullying, and follow it when bullying is reported.
- All students and parents should know what the school policy is on bullying, and what they should do if bullying arises.
- As a school we take bullying seriously. Pupils and parents should be assured that they will be supported when bullying is reported.
- Bullying will not be tolerated.

## **Signs and Symptoms**

A student may indicate by signs or behaviour that he or she is being bullied. Adults should be aware of these possible signs and that they should investigate if a student:

- doesn't want to go on the school / public bus
- begs to be driven to school
- changes their usual routine
- is unwilling to go to school (school phobic)
- begins to truant
- becomes withdrawn anxious, or lacking in confidence
- starts stammering
- attempts or threatens suicide or runs away
- feels ill in the morning
- begins to do poorly in school work
- comes home with clothes torn or books damaged
- has possessions which are damaged or " go missing"
- asks for money or starts stealing money (to pay bully)
- has dinner or other monies continually "lost"
- has unexplained cuts or bruises
- comes home starving (money / lunch has been stolen)
- becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- is bullying other students or siblings
- stops eating
- is frightened to say what's wrong

- gives improbable excuses for any of the above
- is afraid to use the internet or mobile phone
- is nervous & jumpy when a cyber message is received

These signs and behaviours could indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated

## Procedures

1. Report bullying incidents to staff
2. In cases of serious bullying, the incidents will be recorded by staff
3. In serious cases parents should be informed and will be asked to come in to a meeting to discuss the problem
4. If necessary and appropriate, guards will be consulted
5. The bullying behaviour or threats of bullying must be investigated and the bullying stopped quickly
6. An attempt will be made to help the bully (bullies) change their behaviour

## Investigating an Incident

- Accept what pupils say rather than believe initially. It is possible that some or all could be fabricated.
- Seek answers to the questions – What? When? Where? Who? Why? Using a calm non-aggressive style
- The victim should be interviewed by the Teacher, Tutor, Year Head, Deputy Principal or Principal, and if possible give a written report of the incident.
- The bully should be interviewed by the Teacher, Tutor, Year Head, Deputy Principal or Principal, and if possible give a written report of the incident.
- If a gang is involved each member should be interviewed individually and give a written report of the incident.
- Any witness should be interviewed and give a report of the incident. It is essential to assure their anonymity, and be watchful of bias.
- The teacher should write an overall account of the incident.

## Outcomes

- The bully (bullies) may be asked to genuinely apologise. There must be a definite commitment not to be involved in bullying again.
- In serious cases, suspension will be considered
- If possible the students will be reconciled.
- After the incident(s) have been investigated and dealt with, each case will be monitored to ensure that repeated bullying does not take place.
- In the event of a repeated offence, parents should be brought in and informed of the previous incident.
- A more severe punishment should be imposed.
- Records should be kept on file
- If the incident is particularly serious the student may be suspended and reported to the Board of Management.
- Immediate suspension could be imposed for a once off incident.

***Victims of Bullying need their self esteem raised through support and counselling. Perpetrators of bullying who are essentially weak need help/counselling to amend their ways.***

## **Sanctions**

The sanctions available in school applied to bullying incidents are among those outlined in our discipline policy. These may include detention, suspension referral to B.O.M. and in some extreme cases, possible expulsion. However, while these may be warranted they should always be applied in conjunction with offered support. Appropriate sanctions will be applied at the discretion of the personnel who are involved with the investigation of the bullying incident.

## **Parents**

- Watch for signs of distress
- Advise their child to report the incident
- Inform the school if they suspect bullying and feel that the school is not aware of the same.
- Have as much information as possible eg. Places, names, what happened, who was there etc.

## **Prevention**

- All partners in education – parents, staff and students are encouraged to undertake a shared responsibility to be aware and assist in the reporting and prevention of bullying
- Cross-curricular approach to bullying eg. English, Religion, PE, SPHE classes in Junior Cert and again in Senior Cycle to include topics such as assertiveness, conflict resolution and anger management.
- writing a set of school rules
- signing a behaviour contract
- writing stories or poems or drawing pictures about bullying
- reading stories about bullying or having them read to a class or assembly
- making up role-plays
- having discussions about bullying and why it matters
- Anti – Bullying awareness campaigns constantly in the life of the school.

**BULLYING THRIVES IN A CLIMATE OF FEAR AND SECRECY. POSITIVE ANTI-BULLYING STRATEGIES MUST INCLUDE BREAKING THIS CODE**

## **Code of Behaviour**

Our Code of Behaviour is dependent on –

- Respect for others
- Respect for Openness
- Respect for Property

Adhering to, repeating, encouraging –even insisting on implementing – these simple ideas would exclude bullying completely

## **Teacher Awareness**

- To help recognise victims of bullying, teachers should have a heightened awareness of “out of character” behaviour
- Teachers should protect students and challenge ALL forms of anti-social or negative behaviour and regard it as totally unacceptable.
- As teachers, we do not tolerate any actions or words which have a destructive influence, or interfere with other students rights in any way.
- As teachers, we should not accept cheek, rudeness, sexual comments etc.
- We also need to be aware of and appreciate the hurt and anger which teachers can cause pupils by sarcasm, personal remarks, unnecessary negative comments, unjust treatments.
- Bullying should not be confused with inter-personal conflicts.

## **Evaluation and Review**

Evaluation is an integral part of ensuring the effectiveness of this policy. It is important to revisit this policy on a regular basis to ensure that it is being adhered to and that it continues to meet the demands of the school as these change and develop. The following methods of review should ensure that the policy is being put into practice in the school. Furthermore, these should identify changes in bullying practise in the school, and should highlight difficulties and lack of change. It is important to note that any increase in the reporting of incidents does not necessarily mean an increase in bullying behaviour in the school. It may simply be that our policy is working.

## **Possible Methods of Review**

Questionnaires/Surveys (Staff and Students)  
Staff Meetings (Regular item on agenda)  
SPHE Coordinator discussions with Year Heads  
Contact with Parents (Increase Awareness)  
Feedback with students body  
Anti-Bullying Week  
Regular in-service  
Induction of new staff  
Assemblies  
SPHE classes  
Other curricular areas

## **Mercy Secondary School** **Bereavement Policy**

A Death which affects the whole School Community:  
*i.e. a staff member or student*

**The following sets out a list of guidelines for dealing with a bereavement in the school community –it is by no means exhaustive or in any definite order. This list should be considered in tandem with the suggested checklist attached to this policy.**

- **Brief Staff at meeting**
- **Inform the school community via class teachers**
- **Room allocated for counselling/grief work**
- **Prayers at Assembly**
- **Candle lit in assembly area/lobby**
- **Book of condolences**
- **Time and space for students to grieve**
- **In the case of a staff member, some colleagues will need to be relieved of their duties**
- **In the case of a student, that particular year group may need to have classes suspended**



- **Some students will need to be given time to go to the allocated room**
- **Some students will need to be allowed home with parental consent**
- **School Service for the deceased to be held as soon as appropriate**
- **Principal and Chaplain to visit the family**
- **School community informed of times of funeral liturgies**
- **School to be closed on day of funeral**
- **Letter to parents/buses/BOM**
- **Students to attend funeral in uniform**
- **On-going counselling and support to be available as needed**

This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management at its meeting of

\_\_\_\_\_ ( date)

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Chairperson

Next review date : \_\_\_\_\_

**SAMPLE STATEMENT FOR MEDIA**

It is with profound sadness that the Management, staff and students of Mercy Secondary School, Kilbeggan, have learned of the tragic death of .....

Our sincerest sympathy is extended to the family of .....

On hearing the tragic news the School Trauma Plan was put into immediate operation. The Crisis Response Team convened a meeting to ensure that students affected by this loss are cared for adequately. Procedures are in place to ensure that all in the school community affected by this loss are given all the help they need to cope at this time.

The ..... will be offering counseling and support for students and parents affected by this tragedy. Prayer services have been held with each class in the school. Students will attend and participate in the funeral service, in consultation with the wishes of the family.

Our prayers and support are with everyone affected by this tragedy.

September 2009.

## **Mercy Secondary School**

### **Policy Statement and Code of Practice on Measures to Combat Harassment**

#### **[1] GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

- 1.1** The Board of Management recognises that its staff are its most valuable asset and as such have a right to be treated with dignity and respect. The Board of Management is committed to providing a safe and harmonious working environment for its staff through pro-active and sensitive management.
- 1.2** The Board of Management acknowledges that harassment can adversely affect a member of staff's confidence and job performance and that it creates an intimidating and uncomfortable working environment.
- 1.3** Furthermore, harassment can constitute a threat to a member of staff's health, safety and welfare. Harassment at work may contravene the law and will not be permitted or condoned. Should harassment occur, staff affected have a right to complain about it and should not feel or be made to feel guilty or embarrassed about exercising that right.
- 1.4** The Board of Management is committed, through the dissemination and explanation of this policy document to all staff, to ensuring that harassment does not occur in the school and undertakes to deal with allegations of harassment seriously, sensitively and in confidence.
- 1.5** Staff who bring a complaint of harassment will be protected against victimisation or retaliation and staff who are guilty of harassment or victimisation will be subject to appropriate action in accordance with the agreed disciplinary procedure.
- 1.6** In order to effectively implement its policy on harassment, the Board of Management has adopted a Code of Practice of measures to combat harassment in the school. The Code of Practice is designed to deal with circumstances where the complainant and person against whom the allegation is made are both members of staff. Matters involving pupils should be dealt with under the school's discipline and pastoral care policies and procedures. (See Appendices 1 and 2)
- 1.7** The Board of Management will monitor the application of this policy. It will be assisted in this by the Principal who will provide the necessary information.
- 1.8** This Policy and Code of Practice is to be read in conjunction with

- *'Bullying at Work'* (Health and Safety Authority Guidelines 1999)
- *JMB/ASTI Sexual Harassment Policy for Schools* (Secretariat of Secondary Schools 1998)
- *'Tackling Harassment and Bullying in School'* (INTO November 1998)
- *'Measures to Promote the Dignity of Women and Men'* - Code of Practice (Department of Equality and Law Reform 1994)
- the relative legislation (c.f.2.6)
  - ⇒ the Employment Equality Act 1977
  - ⇒ the Employment Equality Act 1998
  - ⇒ the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 1989
  - ⇒ Code of Practice on Disciplinary Procedures - Statutory Instrument 117 1996

## [2] **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### 2.1 ***PURPOSE OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE***

- I.*** to raise awareness among staff as to what constitutes harassment in the workplace;
- II.*** to define the duties and responsibilities of Boards of Management, Principals, Deputy-Principals and staff in implementing the school's policy;
- III.*** to emphasise that unacceptable conduct on any grounds outlined in the policy will not be tolerated and will be dealt with promptly and fairly;
- IV.*** to establish procedures to be followed in relation to complaints of harassment.

### 2.2 ***WHAT IS HARASSMENT?***

Harassment takes many forms, occurs on a variety of grounds and may be directed at an individual or group of individuals. It is not the intention of the perpetrator but the deed itself and the impact on the recipient, which determine what constitutes harassment. Harassment can be seen as any unwanted conduct which adversely affects the dignity of women and men at work. Such behaviour is unacceptable where, for example:

- ⇒ it is unwanted, offensive to the recipient and unreasonable
- ⇒ it is used as the basis for an employment decision
- ⇒ it creates a hostile working environment

### 2.3 ***GROUND ON WHICH HARASSMENT CAN OCCUR***

For the purpose of this policy harassment can be defined as:

Any derogatory or discriminating behaviour which is offensive to others, which causes them to feel threatened, humiliated, patronised or harassed, or which interferes with their work performance, undermines job security or creates a threatening or intimidating work environment.

It is important to realise that harassment can arise on grounds other than those addressed by equal opportunities legislation.

For example, workplace bullying is a form of harassment which can take place for many reasons and can take many forms, both obvious and more subtle on grounds which are not specifically covered by legislation. Bullying can be defined as:

***“Offensive, intimidating, malicious, insulting or humiliating behaviour, abuse of power or authority which attempts to undermine an employee or group of employees and which may cause them to suffer stress”***

Harassment on grounds other than those addressed by equal opportunities legislation is no less distressing for individuals and no less detrimental to working relationships within a school. This policy and code of practice aim to provide staff with protection from harassment on any grounds.

## 2.4 **FORMS OF HARASSMENT**

Harassment can take many forms, for example:-

- ◆ inappropriate physical contact ranging from unnecessary touching to physical assault or the threat of physical assault;
- ◆ bullying, overt abuse of power;
- ◆ inappropriate use of formal procedures such as disciplinary or grievance procedures;
- ◆ constant negative criticism or undermining of a member of staff in front of others or in private;
- ◆ coercion, requests for sexual favours;
- ◆ verbal or written harassment including e.g. insensitive or embarrassing remarks, offensive language, gossip and slander, jokes, signals or gestures, racist comments, threats, etc.;
- ◆ unwelcome comments about dress or appearance, unrelated to the promotion of dress codes or standards within the school;
- ◆ offensive visual material e.g. pin-ups, pornographic pictures or literature, graffiti, etc.;
- ◆ isolation or non co-operation at work, exclusion from social activities;
- ◆ intrusion by pestering, spying, stalking.

**2.5 *Bullying in the workplace is repeated aggression, verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against another person or persons. Isolated incidents of aggressive behaviour, while to be condemned, should not be described as bullying. In the workplace environment there can be conflicts and interpersonal difficulties. Many of these are legitimate industrial relations difficulties which should be dealt with through the appropriate industrial relations channels. Only aggressive behaviour which is systematic and ongoing should be regarded as bullying. ('Bullying at Work' Health & Safety Authority Guidelines)***

## 2.6 **THE EFFECTS OF HARASSMENT**

Harassment exacts a high price from staff and school management alike. Staff can be subject to fear, stress and anxiety, which can put great strains on personal and family life. It can lead to illness, increased absenteeism, and apparent lack of commitment, poor performance and even resignation. All these have a direct impact on school effectiveness.

A distinguishing characteristic of harassment is that staff subjected to it may be very vulnerable and are often reluctant to complain. They may be too embarrassed or unsure as to how to make a complaint or concerned that it will be trivialised. They may fear reprisals. Staff suffering from harassment may not want attention focused

on the situation. They just want the unwanted behaviour to stop, so they suffer in silence.

## 2.7 ***HARASSMENT AND THE LAW***

Failure to deal with allegations or incidents of harassment at work may expose Boards to a number of legal consequences. These are outlined briefly below.

Harassment has been held to constitute discrimination under the Employment Equality Acts 1977 and 1998. Harassment will invariably constitute less favourable treatment under the terms of the act. It may also lead to claims of victimisation under this legislation.

Harassment may also lead to prosecution under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act if the employer is found to be negligent in his/her duty of care to employees. The argument is that the welfare of employees is not protected if they are harassed or bullied at work.

The European Commission has adopted a recommendation on the protection of the dignity of women and men at work and a Code of Practice on measures to combat sexual harassment, which recognises that sexual harassment is sex discrimination. cf. *Measures to Protect the Dignity of Women and Men at Work* - Code of Practice (Department of Equality and Law Reform 1994). Adherence to this code is taken into account by Equality Officers and the Labour Court when deciding on liability in a sexual harassment case.

In addition to discrimination claims, harassment may lead to criminal claims for assault or civil claims for negligence or breach of contract. For example, harassment may lead to a member of staff resigning and claiming constructive dismissal, c.f. Unfair Dismissal Act 1997. There are also specific statutory provisions which allow staff to claim if they are harassed because of their trade union membership or activities, or because of their non-membership of a trade union.

# **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

## [3] **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### 3.1 ***BOARDS OF MANAGEMENT***

The Board of Management has the overall responsibility for overseeing the implementation of this policy.

### **3.2 *PRINCIPAL***

- a)* The Principal is responsible for the implementation of the school's policy on harassment.
- b)* The Principal is also responsible for communicating the policy to staff and taking appropriate action to promote the policy, (e.g. by including the issue as an agenda item for discussion at a staff meeting)
- c)* The Principal has an additional responsibility to strive to ensure that harassment does not occur amongst staff. Any indication of this type of behaviour must be dealt with immediately.
- d)* The Principal must take all reasonable action practicable to ensure that potentially offensive material is not displayed or circulated.
- e)* The Principal must also ensure that any complaint of harassment is treated seriously, sensitively and in confidence.

### **3.3 *STAFF***

All staff have a responsibility to help ensure a working environment in which the dignity of colleagues is respected.

Staff also have a responsibility to work in a professional manner and to comply with the school's policy on harassment.

## **[4] PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS OF HARASSMENT**

The procedure outlined below indicate the action to be taken if a member of staff believes he/she is being harassed. The primary objective of these procedures is to resolve the issue/s and to restore effective working relations between the parties concerned as quickly as possible. It must be stressed that in most cases this is best



achieved by use of informal methods. Those before having recourse to formal procedure.

#### **4.1 INFORMAL PROCEDURE**

- 4.1.1 A member of staff who believes that he/she is subject to unacceptable behaviour may attempt to resolve the problem informally in the first instance. This stage is appropriate where the member of staff simply wants the behaviour to stop, where the harassment is not serious and where it has not been repeated.
- 4.1.2 In some case it may be possible and sufficient for the member of staff to specify to the person concerned the behaviour which has caused offence and that the behaviour in question is not welcome.
- 4.1.3 It should be emphasised however that the complainant is not required to approach the alleged harasser and is entitled to report the matter immediately if they so wish.
- 4.1.4 In any attempt to solve the problem without recourse to formal procedures a member of staff may wish to seek the confidential advice, assistance or support of a work colleague, the Principal or Deputy-Principal, a Trade Union representative or other appropriate person.
- 4.1.5 Where staff prefer those providing advice and support to be of their own gender, religion or race or someone who is aware of disability issues, then this should be accommodated where possible.
- 4.1.6 The intention of the informal process is to resolve the situation satisfactorily without recourse to disciplinary procedure. However, if the harassment continues, if it is of a serious nature, if it is repeated or if the complainant prefers to do so, it should be raised through the formal complaints procedure.

#### **4.2 FORMAL PROCEDURES**

- 4.2.1 It is recognised that there may be situations where it may be impractical to implement the informal stage and/or that the nature of the alleged harassment requires a more formal approach. It is not necessary to have gone through the informal procedure in order to make a formal complaint.
- 4.2.2 Complaints should be raised as soon as possible following an act of alleged harassment so that the matter can be dealt with swiftly and decisively.
- 4.2.3 Making a complaint is likely to be a distressing experience both for the complainant and for the person against whom the allegation is made. It is vital that such cases are handled seriously, sensitively and with the highest degree of confidentiality and that a full and fair investigation is carried out.
- 4.2.4 Throughout the formal procedure the complainant and the person against whom the allegation is made have the right to be represented by a Trade Union representative or colleague from the school. It is important that the same individual does not represent both parties.
- 4.2.5 A member of staff wishing to make a formal complaint should make the complaint in writing to the management of the school, i.e.:

- a) The Principal, Deputy-Principal or Chairperson.
- b) The Chairperson of the Board of Management where the Principal is making a complaint or is the subject of a complaint.

4.2.6 Alternatively, a complainant may make the complaint to the management of the school through:

- A Trade Union representative or colleague from the school.

In such circumstances the Trade Union representative or work colleague may assist in making the complaint on behalf of the complainant.

4.2.7 In circumstances where harassment is suspected or known to be occurring, the procedures may be initiated by the management of the school.

### **4.3 ACTION TO BE TAKEN ON RECEIPT OF FORMAL COMPLAINT**

4.3.1 On receipt of formal complaint, the complaint will be acknowledged in writing and an investigatory sub-committee of the Board convened within ten working days of receipt of the complaint.

4.3.2 The Education Office of the Trustees will be informed that a formal complaint has been received by the Board. Advice and assistance will be made available to the Board of Management by the Education Office.

4.3.3 The complainant should be advised that his/her allegations will be made known to the person against whom the allegation is made in the course of subsequent investigations.

4.3.4 The person against whom the allegation is made should be advised that a complaint has been made as soon as possible after receipt of the complaint. At the outset of the formal investigation, the person against whom the complaint is made will be given a copy of the formal complaint and advised that an investigation will ensue.

4.3.5 Depending on the severity of the alleged harassment, the person against whom the complaint is made may be suspended with pay depending the outcome of the formal investigation. Where such precautionary suspension is deemed necessary the advice of the Secretariat for Secondary Schools should be sought and the Education Office of the Trustees should be informed.

### **4.4 ESTABLISHMENT OF AN INVESTIGATORY SUB-COMMITTEE**

4.4.1 It is the responsibility of Board of Management to insure that formal complaints of harassment are investigated and dealt with by Management and not by the complainant.

4.4.2 It is important that investigations of any complaints are handled with sensitivity and due respect for the rights of both the complainant and the person against whom the allegation is made. The investigation should be seen to be independent and objective.

4.4.3 A two-person sub-committee should be established by the Board of Management. If so requested by the complainant, at least one member of the sub-committee shall be of the same sex as the complainant. The sub-committee should hold fully delegated authority of the Board of Management. In normal circumstances the

Principal may be in attendance and may be interviewed by the sub-committee but there may be reasons why it would be inappropriate for the Principal to be present.

4.4.4 Members of the sub-committee carrying out the investigation must not be connected with the allegation, nor should they be members of a disciplinary committee which may be established to deal with any issues arising from the investigation.

4.4.5 The sub-committee responsible for the investigation of a complaint should deal with it promptly and discreetly. Any investigatory meetings should normally commence within ten working days of receipt of the written complaint.

#### **4.5 *FORMAL INVESTIGATION***

##### **Initial meeting with the Complainant**

4.5.1 The sub-committee of the Board of Management shall in writing, advise the complainant:

That a meeting has been arranged to enable him/her to discuss his/her complaint with the sub-committee.

That he/she has the right to be accompanied and/or represented at all stages of the procedure by a Trade Union representative or a colleague from the school.

4.5.2 The sub-committee of the Board of Management shall meet separately with the complainant, who may be accompanied by a Trade Union representative or a colleague from the school, to:

Clarify and formally record the nature of the complaint and the fact that it is being handled under the formal procedure.

Establish the facts and issues relevant to the complaint.

Ensure that the complainant is aware of the next stage of the procedure.

Identify what the complainant would regard as a satisfactory resolution.

4.5.3 The issue of precautionary suspension may be reconsidered in light of information gained at this meeting regarding the allegations.

#### **4.6 *INFORMING THE PERSON AGAINST WHOM THE ALLEGATION IS MADE***

4.6.1 The sub-committee of the Board of Management shall in writing, advise the person against whom the allegation is made:

Of the allegations that have been made.

That a meeting has been arranged to investigate the allegations under the formal procedure.

That he/she has the right to be accompanied by a Trade Union representative or a colleague at all stages of the procedure.

4.6.2 The sub-committee of the Board of Management shall meet separately with the person against whom the allegation is made, who may be accompanied by a Trade Union representative or a colleague from the school, to:

Listen to what the person against whom the allegation is made, has to say about the alleged incidents and any other related matter.

Establish the facts and issues relevant to the complaint.

Ensure that the individual is aware of the next stages of the procedure.

#### **4.7 INFORMATION FROM OTHERS WHO MAY ASSIST THE INVESTIGATION**

4.7.1 The sub-committee of the Board of Management, as part of its investigation, may wish to meet with and/or consider relevant information from other persons, e.g. witnesses to the alleged incident/s.

4.7.2 All those giving information to the sub-committee should do so privately and not in the presence of any other person involved in or present during the alleged incident. A record of all meetings will be kept. All evidence provided to assist with the investigation will be treated as confidential by all parties to the investigation subject to any statutory requirements.

#### **4.8 DECISION OF THE INVESTIGATORY SUB-COMMITTEE**

4.8.1 Following its investigation the sub-committee shall advise the Board of Management of the outcome of the investigation i.e. whether allegations have been substantiated. It must be stressed that detail of the investigation should not be disclosed in order to maintain confidentiality for those involved.

4.8.2 The Board of Management will then make a decision on the action to be taken. The outcomes may include the following:

##### **a) *Disciplinary Action Inappropriate***

The investigation may establish that the allegations are unsubstantiated or of a nature where disciplinary action is not appropriate. The investigation may recommend other appropriate management action to meet the desired outcomes e.g. the provision of counselling, training or the drawing up of agreed action plans.

##### **b) *Disciplinary Action to be taken***

If, following a thorough and objective assessment of the evidence, the investigation establishes that there is a case to answer, the formal stage of the Disciplinary Procedure will be invoked.

4.8.3 If a complaint is found to be substantiated, appropriate disciplinary action will be taken by the Board of Management. Disciplinary action may include:

- A verbal warning
- A written warning
- Suspension from some duties with or without pay
- Suspension from full duties with or without pay
- Dismissal

4.8.4 Where sanctions are imposed, the person against whom the disciplinary action is taken retains the right of appeal under existing disciplinary procedures and natural justice.

#### **4.9 RECORDS**

4.9.1 A complete record of all meetings, investigations and findings shall be made and retained by the Board of Management for not less than 3 years. No record of any complaint will be registered on an employee's file unless the formal procedure outlined above is invoked.

#### **4.10 ABUSE OF FORMAL PROCEDURE**

4.10.1 It should be noted that, while a member of staff has the right to invoke the formal procedure without first exhausting informal procedures, use of formal procedures to make spurious or malicious allegations may in itself constitute harassment and be subject to investigation and disciplinary action.

#### **[5] VICTIMISATION OR RETALIATION:**

5.1 The Board of Management considers that a member of staff who makes a complaint in good faith should be protected from victimisation or retaliation. Any complaint of victimisation will be dealt with quickly, seriously and in confidence and may result in the disciplinary procedures being invoked. Furthermore, victimisation may constitute discrimination contrary to the Employment Equality Act 1998.

5.2 Nothing in this Code of Practice should be construed as seeking to remove any person's legal rights. Furthermore, a member of staff has the right to seek advice from any appropriate statutory body.

[The time limit within which a complaint under the Act Must be lodged is 6 months of the last occurrence of the discriminatory act. In exceptional circumstances this period may be extended to 12 months]

#### **[6] FURTHER ACTION**

The Chairperson of the Board of Management or his/her nominee will meet the members of staff concerned within three months to monitor the situation and assess the effectiveness of any action taken. The Education Office of the Trustees will be available for ongoing advice or assistance.

### **APPENDIX 1**

---

#### **WHERE A FORMAL COMPLAINT IS MADE AGAINST A STUDENT BY A MEMBER OF STAFF**

1.1 Where a formal complaint is made by a member of staff about harassment by a student, the complainant shall be advised that the allegation will be fully, properly and sensitively investigated without delay.

- 1.2 The student against whom the allegation is made and his/her parent/guardian should be advised immediately that such a formal complaint has been received and is being referred to the Board of Management. Suspension pending action by the Board may be necessary.
- 1.3 The investigating sub-committee should meet promptly with the complainant to establish the relevant facts and issues (cf. 4.5.1 and 4.5.2)
- 1.4 The investigating sub-committee should meet promptly with the student who should be accompanied by his/her parent/guardian. The student and his/her parent/guardian should be informed fully of the details of the complaint made and afforded an opportunity to respond to the allegations.
- 1.5 Where the sub-committee, as part of its investigation, finds it necessary to seek information from other persons it shall do so promptly, with the utmost discretion and in a manner that respects the sensitivities of the parties concerned.
- 1.6 If the complaint is substantiated and the student is found to be in breach of the School's Code of Behaviour he/she and his/her parent/guardian shall be advised of the sanctions that will be imposed.
- 1.7 The Chairperson should convey the outcome of the investigation in writing to the complainant within five days of the Board meeting.

**WHERE A COMPLAINT IS MADE AGAINST ON ESTUDENT BY ANOTHER STUDENT.**

- 1.1 Where a complaint of harassment is made by one student against another student, the complaint will be handled as appropriate under the school's pastoral care system and/or its code of discipline for students.
- 1.2 The implementation of the school's policy in bullying will be reviewed periodically and its effectiveness monitored.

**APPENDIX II**

---

**WHERE THE COMPLAINANT IS A STUDENT AND/OR A PARENT/GUARDIAN ACTING ON BEHALF OF A STUDENT.**

*The process for dealing with such complaints properly belongs in the school's child protection policy and procedures.*

- 1.1 Children and young people have a right to be treated with respect. Members of staff should be alert to the risk of emotional abuse, such as persistent and vindictive

sarcasm, verbal bullying, or severe and persistent negative comment or actions, particularly when directed consistently at a single student or small number of students in a class.

- 1.2 Members of staff should be encouraged to reflect on every aspect of their contact with children which might give rise to perceptions or allegations of harassment or bullying.
- 1.3 A whole-school approach to the review of the school's pastoral care system, its child protection policy, its code of behaviour and school rules, and the implementation of its disciplinary procedures shall be undertaken at appropriate intervals.
- 1.4 The induction of new and substitute staff members should include introduction to the school's pastoral care system, its child protection policy, its code of behaviour and school rules, its disciplinary procedures and appropriate use of sanctions. New and substitute teachers shall be assisted where necessary in developing appropriate skills in class-room management.
- 1.5 Unwritten allegations about bullying/harassment of a student by a member of staff should be processed informally with a view to resolving the issue promptly and satisfactorily. Every effort should be made to find a swift and effective resolution.
- 1.6 Where a formal complaint about bullying/harassment is made by a student or his/her parent/guardian, against a member of staff, the Principal will inform the member of staff of the precise nature of the written complaint and seek to resolve the matter informally between the parties.
- 1.7 The intention of the informal process is to resolve the situation satisfactorily without recourse to formal procedure. Every effort should be made to find a swift and effective resolution. If the complaint is not resolved informally, the Principal shall inform the member of staff that the matter is being referred to the Board of Management.
- 1.8 Where the complaint is referred to the Board of Management the Education Office of the Trustees should be informed. Advice and assistance will be available to the Board of Management from the Office.
- 1.9 The Board of Management considers that the complaint is not substantiated the member of staff and the complainant should be informed within 3 days of the Board meeting.
- 1.10 If the Board considers that the complaint is substantiated or that it warrants further investigation
  - The member of staff should be informed that an investigation is proceeding
  - The member of staff should be supplied with a copy of any written evidence in support of the complaint
  - The member of staff should be invited to supply a written statement to the Board in response to the complaint
  - The member of staff should be afforded an opportunity to make a presentation of case to the Board. The member of staff is entitled to be accompanied and assisted at such a meeting by a Trade Union official or a colleague from the school

- The Board may arrange a meeting with the student and his/her guardian if it considers such to be required
- Where the sub-committee, as part of its investigation, finds it necessary to seek information from other persons it shall do so with the utmost discretion and in a manner that respects the sensitivities of the parties concerned
- The sub-committee shall advise the Board of Management of the outcome of the investigation i.e. whether allegations have been substantiated. The detail of the investigation should not be disclosed in order to maintain confidentiality for those involved
- When the Board has completed its investigation the Chairperson should convey the outcome of the investigation in writing to the member of staff and to the complainant within five days of the Board meeting

1.11 The action taken by the Board of Management may include the following:

a) *Disciplinary Action Inappropriate*

The investigation may establish that the allegations are unsubstantiated or of a nature where disciplinary action is not appropriate. The investigation may recommend other appropriate management action to meet the desired outcomes e.g. the provision of counselling, training or the drawing up of agreed action plans.

b) *Disciplinary Action to be taken*

If, following a thorough and objective assessment of the evidence, the investigation establishes that there is a case to answer, the formal stage of the Disciplinary Procedure will be invoked.

1.12 Disciplinary action may include:

- a verbal warning
- a written warning
- suspension from some duties with or without pay
- suspension from full duties with or without pay
- dismissal

1.13 Where sanctions are imposed, the person against whom the disciplinary action is taken retains the right of appeal under existing disciplinary procedures and natural justice.

1.14 A complete record of all meetings, investigations and findings shall be made and retained by the Board of Management. No record of any complaint will be registered on an employee's file unless the formal procedure outlined above is invoked.

### **APPENDIX III**

---

## **ARRANGEMENTS TO PROTECT MEMBERS OF THE STAFF FROM ASSAULT ON SCHOOL PREMISES BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

### **1 GENERAL PREVENTION**

1.1 The school will issue and explain to parents its policy for the discipline and pastoral care of the students. Parents/guardians seeking clarification of the policy are welcome to meet with the Principal.



- 1.2 In order to ensure the efficient operation of the school, access to members of the staff should be normally by appointment only. Procedures for facilitating access of parents/guardians to the Principal and teachers should be made clear to both parents/guardians.
- 1.3 If necessary the Principal will be present at meetings between the parent/guardian and the teacher.
- 1.4 If a student/parent/guardian is known through previous experience to be potentially violent or to have displayed aggressive tendencies this information will be shared with relevant members of staff so as to prevent risk of violence.
- 1.5 Arrangements within the school building for summoning the assistance of the Principal or another member where necessary should be discussed, agreed and understood by all staff.
- 1.6 The telephone number of the local police station should be displayed for convenient reference.
- 1.7 The operation of arrangements to protect members of the staff from assault by members of the public should be reviewed and updated in the light of experience.

## **2 ACTION BY MANAGEMENT**

- 2.1 The timing and operation of a range of options available to the Principal as the agent of the Board of Management will depend on individual circumstances. These may include for example:
  - issuing warning on the possibility of prosecution
  - requiring that a prior appointment or other pre-condition be met before access to the school is restored
- 2.2 The Board of Management will:
  - Consider and where appropriate, investigate all reported incidents of violence (Form A is attached to facilitate reporting). A formal letter of warning may also be issued to any member of the public issuing threats etc. to a teacher.
  - A formal letter excluding an assailant from the school premises may be issued.
  - Notify the gardai of all cases involving assault.
  - Monitor the effectiveness of any measure taken.
  - Update advice where appropriate by issuing general guidelines to schools.

## **3 ACCESS TO STUDENTS BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

- 3.1 No unauthorised person will have access to any pupil. In the case of separated parents the school will seek to establish who has legal right of access.

This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management at its meeting of

\_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Chairperson

Next review date : \_\_\_\_\_

Name of School: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Report of Incident**

Persons involved -

Name and relationship with the school -

eg. Pupil, parent, guardian, other relative, intruder, teacher, other.

<b>Name known</b>	<b>Relationship with the School</b>	<b>Address if</b>
-----------------------	-------------------------------------	-------------------

- a) \_\_\_\_\_
- b) \_\_\_\_\_
- c) \_\_\_\_\_
- d) \_\_\_\_\_

Account of incident(s)

- (1) Incident type - eg. Physical violence, aggression, sexual, religious, racial or other personal abuse, intentional damage to personal property.

Please outline circumstances giving date(s), place(s) and time(s) as appropriate.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Please enter any further information on separate sheet.

Witnesses

(including other persons who may be contacted to help in any further investigation)

<b>Name known</b>	<b>Relationship with the School</b>	<b>Address if</b>
-----------------------	-------------------------------------	-------------------

- a) \_\_\_\_\_
- b) \_\_\_\_\_
- c) \_\_\_\_\_
- d) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ (Principal)                      \_\_\_\_\_ (Tel. No.)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Date)

**You should retain for your own records a duplicate copy of all the  
information you have supplied.**



***Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan Co Westmeath  
Policy for Gifted and Talented Pupils  
September 2010***

***Rationale***

Mercy Secondary school is committed to providing an environment which facilitates all students to maximise their potential. All children have a right to a broad, balanced and relevant education which provides continuity and progression and takes individual differences into account. In our school we aim to provide a curriculum that is appropriate to the needs and abilities of all our children. This policy outlines the school's practice and procedures relating to the support of gifted and talented pupils.

***Purpose***

The purpose of the policy is to provide a framework for the identification and ongoing support of gifted and talented students and to ensure that the potential of all students is fostered and encouraged.

***Inclusion***

Gifted and Talented pupils have equal access to all aspects of the curriculum and school life. We strive to maintain an ethos where it is acceptable to be bright. We strive to recognise achievement. We strive to help all students work with like minded peers.

***Definition***

A gifted pupil is one who is in the top 10% in terms of academic ability of the national population. A talented pupil is in the top 10% in a non academic area such as sport, visual or performing ability, mechanical ability, leadership and social awareness, creativity and arts and drama. This includes any pupil who could be recognised as gifted or talented but who is presently not reaching his or her full potential.

***Identification***

We use a range of strategies to identify more able and very able children. The identification process is ongoing and begins before the child joins our school with initial screening in entrance examinations. The identification involves staff, pupils, parents and carers. Information considered will depend on the particular subject area and will include, if applicable a talent portfolio. The portfolio will also include some or all of the following: Information from parents or carers, information from previous teachers gathered by our Home-school liaison teacher, class work, tests, or any other forms of assessment.

### ***Programmes for Teaching, Learning and Curriculum***

Opportunities for extension and enrichment will be built into our curriculum as outlined in the School wide Enrichment Model, including talent portfolios, curriculum modifications and enrichment activities. To meet the needs of gifted children the programme will include differentiation, flexible groupings, special classes, withdrawal or pull-out programmes, mentorship's, competitions, clubs, electives and cluster groups.

- Ongoing assessment against peers using standardised tests (CATS and DATS) and more informally, curriculum text book assessment will be used formatively to set new curriculum targets for individuals so that they can achieve at the highest level and always aim to make further progress. Students will take an active part in this process.
- Links are fostered between our schools and the Centre for Talented Youth in DCU, information on both Saturday and summer courses are given to both students and parents and advertised in the school.
- Extension activities, that are more demanding of their abilities, or enrichment activities that provide new and different ways of working will be provided. If teaching hours are available, individual tutoring in specialised topics can be organised during non-examinable subject's times.
- Opportunities for Gifted and Talented pupils in the area to work together, as well as enrichment clusters will be offered.
- There will be opportunities for performance, or to display talents during the school year. Examples: School Musicals, Open nights.
- After school clubs / sports and activities such as debating, Maths Olympiad, School quizzes are available to all our students
- If appropriate, adult mentors in specific areas will be approached to facilitate input on specialised topics.

### ***Professional involvement***

The Principal will coordinate the implementation of this policy in collaboration with the learning support coordinator. All teaching staff must be committed to this policy.

The Learning Support Coordinator has recently completed a modular course run by the Institute of Child Education and Psychology titled "Teaching Gifted and Talented Students: "Identifying and Responding to their Special Educational Needs"

The school makes use of local staff training and whenever possible, enables staff to attend local courses and conferences.

### ***Evaluation and review***

This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Management in consultation with parents, students and teachers on an on-going basis.

# **Mercy Secondary School**

## **ICT and Internet Usage Policy**

### **Introduction**

In today's world, Information Technology is everywhere around us – both in work and at home and for young people it has become increasingly important in their lives. The use of ICT in education is of particular importance and its fundamental aim should be to foster in students a spirit of responsibility and self-reliance and to provide them with skills for life learning.

The use of ICT in schools provides students with the opportunity to acquire basic and essential ICT skills. For both students and teachers, it allows access to additional learning and teaching resources, offers greater involvement in local partnership, community and interschool links, facilitating new learning experiences for all concerned.

### **Objectives**

- To build on the IT skills of the students entering the school community.
- To facilitate teaching more effectively.
- To encourage learning more effectively.
- To open up new learning opportunities for students.
- To engage teachers to use ICT in education.
- To allow controlled access to the Internet.

## **Policy Content**

### **1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> Year Students**

- 1 class period per week per class.
- Certain subject areas use ICT in class work (languages).
- Material covered includes Word Processing, Spreadsheets and Publisher.

### **TY Students**

- 3 class periods per week (1 double, 1 single).
- Other subject areas to include ICT in class work.
- Students are encouraged to complete four modules of the ECDL examinations.

### **5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Year Students**

- 1 class period per week
- LCVP students have timetabled access to Computer Room for the completion of project work.
- Career Guidance – use of IT for research.

### **Special Needs**

- Additional help and technology available to students with special educational needs.

### **School Policy on Internet Usage**

- Acceptable Use Policy in place – requires parental agreement.
- Students abusing the system will be denied access to the facilities for a given period of time.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Board of Management**

- Approve final policy.
- Evaluate policy on a regular basis.
- Consider reports from the Principal on the implementation of the policy.



### **Principal, Deputy Principal, Post Holders**

- Establish structures and procedures for implementation.
- Monitor the implementation.

### **Subject Teachers**

- Instruct students in use of ICT.
- Implement the policy.
- Develop the educational value of ICT.

### **Parents**

- Support the policy
- Encourage the development of IOCT in the school.

### **Students**

- Complete assigned courses – ECDL modules etc.
- Be committed to the educational use of computers.
- Use the Internet for educational purposes.
- Treat with respect the ICT facilities provided by the school.

### ***Implementation Procedures***

#### **IT Teachers**

- Formulate guidelines.
- Implement procedures.

#### **Subject Teachers**

- Consider how best to integrate ICT into their subject area.

#### **Guidance/Special Needs Teachers**

- Design programmes tailored to individual students' need.

#### **Indications to gauge the effectiveness of the policy**

- Number of students completing various modules.
- Use of ICT in student's homework assignments.
- Increased use of computers by staff and students.
- Provision of computers in classroom.

### **Monitoring Procedures**

- Principal and Deputy Principal to liaise with staff.
- Computer teachers meet regularly to review and plan policy.
- All staff to meet and plan for future use of ICT.
- All staff to outline their requirements for ICT.
- All staff to indicate if any software is required for specific subject areas.

### **Review Procedures**

- Set an operational timeframe for the policy of approx two years.
- Consider the views and experiences of teachers, students and parents.
- Has ICT had a noticeable impact on students' academic performances (Special needs students in particular).

# **INTERNET ACCEPTABLE USAGE POLICY**

## ***Staff and Pupils***

- When using the Internet, all users must comply with all copyright, libel, fraud, discrimination and obscenity laws, and all school staff (both teachers and support staff) are expected to communicate in a professional manner consistent with the rules of behaviour governing employees in the education sector.
- Pupils are responsible for their good behaviour on the school computers, just as they are, on and off the premises. While the use of information and communications technology is an important aspect of the curriculum, access to the Internet remains a privilege and not a right. It is given to pupils who act in a considerate and responsible manner, and will be withdrawn if they fail to maintain acceptable standards of use.
- Staff should ensure that pupils know and understand that no Internet user is permitted to:
  - retrieve, send, copy or display offensive messages or pictures;
  - use obscene or racist language;
  - harass, insult or attack others;
  - damage computers, computer systems or computer networks;
  - violate copyright laws;
  - use another user's password;
  - trespass in another user's folders, work or files;
  - use the network for unapproved commercial purposes
  - intentionally waste resources (such as on-line time, paper, ink)

## ***Location and Supervision***

- It is an absolute requirement that all school staff in Mercy Secondary School ensure that access to the Internet provided to staff and pupils in this school is through a filtered service. All users should be aware that the school can and does track and record the sites visited and the searches made on the Internet.
- While using the Internet at school pupils will be supervised.
- All pupils must understand that they are to use the Internet appropriately and why the rules exist.
- Network administrators will review files and communications to maintain system integrity and ensure that users are using the system responsibly. While normal privacy is respected and protected by password controls, as with the Internet itself, users must not expect files stored on the server to be absolutely private.

***Examples of Acceptable and Unacceptable Use: -***

**On-line activities which are encouraged include, for example:-**

- The use of email and computer conferencing for communication between colleagues, between pupils(s) and teacher(s), between pupil(s) and pupil(s), between school and industry;
- Use of the Internet to investigate and research school subjects, cross-curricular themes and topics related to social and personal development;
- Use of the Internet to investigate careers and further and higher education;
- The development of pupils' competence in ICT skills and their general research skills.

**On-line activities which are not permitted include, for example: -**

- Searching, viewing and/or retrieving materials that are not related to the aims of the curriculum or future careers;
- Copying, saving and/or redistributing copyright protected material, without approval;
- Subscribing to any services or ordering any goods or services, unless specifically approved by the school;
- Playing computer games or using other interactive 'chat' sites, unless specifically assigned by the teacher;
- Using the network in such a way that use of the network by others is disrupted (for example – downloading large files during peak usage times; sending mass email messages);
- Publishing, sharing or distributing any personal information about a user (such as home address, email address, phone number etc.);
- Any activity that violates a school rule;
- Intentionally wasting limited resources (e.g. printing).

***Advice for Parents***

While in school, teachers will guide pupils towards appropriate materials on the Internet. Outside school, parents or guardians bear the same responsibility for such guidance as they would normally exercise with information sources such as television, telephones, movies, radio and other media.

Appropriate home use of the Internet can be educationally beneficial, and can make a useful contribution to home and schoolwork. It should, however, be supervised, and parents should be aware that they are responsible for their children's use of the Internet resources at home.

**Offering advice to parents is good practice and Mercy Secondary School, Kilbeggan will therefore advise parents that: -**

1. it provides filtered and monitored access to the Internet for pupils;
2. will draw to parents attention appropriate guidance and advice on its use, which they might find helpful at home.

**Such guidance and advice should include the following: -**

- parents should discuss with their children the rules for using the Internet and decide together when, how long, and what comprises appropriate use;
- parents should get to know the sites their children visit, and talk to them about what they are learning;
- parents should ensure that they give their agreement before their children give out personal identifying information in any electronic communication on the Internet, such as a picture, an address, a phone number, the school name, or financial information such as credit card or bank details. In this way they can protect their children (and themselves) from unwanted or unacceptable overtures from strangers, from unplanned expenditure and from fraud;
- parents should encourage their children not to respond to any unwelcome, unpleasant or abusive messages, and to tell them if they receive any such messages or images. If the message comes from an Internet service connection provided by the school, they should immediately inform the Principal.

This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management at its meeting of

\_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Chairperson

Next review date : \_\_\_\_\_

10<sup>th</sup> September 2008

Dear Parent/Guardian,

**Re: Internet Permission Form**

As part of the school's education programme we offer pupils supervised access to the Internet.

This will allow students vast educational opportunities by helping them for example, to locate material which meets their educational needs, communicate with subject experts and participate in school projects with students in similar circumstances or from different cultures. In addition to the educational aspects of the internet, students will learn valuable skills for participation in the information age which may be useful for their chosen career.

The internet is a global computer network that is not controlled by any organisation. This means that information may change, disappear, and be controversial or potentially harmful. Although the school actively seeks to promote safe use of the Internet, it recognises the possibility that students may accidentally or deliberately access objectionable material.

Usage of the Internet therefore requires responsibility on the part of the user and the school. These responsibilities are outlined in the school's Acceptable Use Policy. For the reasons stated above, it is important that the enclosed policy is read carefully and signed by a parent or guardian.

We appreciate that parents and guardians are responsible for setting and conveying the standards that their children should follow when using media and information sources. To that end, the school supports and respects each family's right to decide whether or not to allow access to the Internet as defined by the school's Acceptable Use Policy.

Yours sincerely,

---

**Garrett Farrell**  
**(Principal)**

# Permission Form

Please review the attached school Acceptable Use Policy, Sign and return this permission form to your teacher.

**A: Mercy Secondary School, Kilbeggan, Co. Westmeath.**

Name of Pupil: \_\_\_\_\_

Year: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Pupil**

I agree to follow the school's Acceptable Use Policy on the use of the Internet. I will use the Internet in a responsible way and obey all the rules explained to me by the school.

Pupil's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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

## **B: Parent/Guardian**

As the parent or legal guardian of the above pupil I have read the Acceptable Use Policy and grant permission for my son/daughter to access the Internet. I understand that Internet access is designed for educational purposes. I also understand that every reasonable precaution has been taken by the school to provide for online safety but the school cannot be held responsible if pupils access unsuitable websites.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

In relation to the development of the school website, I understand that if the school considers it appropriate, my child's schoolwork may be chosen for inclusion on the school website.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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





## ***Mercy Secondary School, Kilbeggan*** ***Religious Education Policy***

**Mercy Secondary School, Kilbeggan is a voluntary Secondary School, established in 1964 by the Sisters of Mercy. Some years later it became one of the first co-educational schools in the country. The school provides a many faceted Christian education, aided by the Sisters of Mercy, whose presence sustains the foundation stone on which its culture and ethos are built.**

**Mercy Secondary School aims to provide an educational environment where students can develop a mature understanding of themselves and others and can develop to their full potential in every aspect of their education i.e. moral, academic, aesthetic, physical and spiritual. In accordance with the foundress of the Mercy Schools, Catherine McAuley, her gospel and her legacy, we show a special interest in the poor and disadvantaged and those with special needs. Consequently the aim of Religious Education is to awaken students to faith and help them throughout their lives to deepen and strengthen that faith with particular emphasis on the Catholic faith.**

**Religion is a core subject of the School Curriculum and all students must attend Religion class. Non Catholic students may be exempt from Liturgical Services in the local Catholic Church with permission from the Principal and written consent from their Parents/Guardians.**

### **Curriculum**

Junior Cycle Religious Education seeks to promote and awaken students to key the dimensions of their faith with particular emphasis on Ecclesiological Dimension, Moran Dimension, Christological Dimension and Faith Dimension. The Leaving Cert programme seeks to foster a deepening knowledge of the Catholic faith, moral formation and spirituality of the students. At Junior Cycle one hour and twenty minutes of class time is devoted to the formal teaching of Religious Education. At Senior Cycle one hour and twenty minutes is also devoted to Religious Education. A Homework Policy exists in R.E. similar in ways to the general Homework Policy in the school.

### **Junior Cycle**

#### **First Year**

- Communities of Faith – Our Community, the Christian Community and the wider Community.
- Foundation of Christianity – General introduction on the Four Evangelists. Use of Saint Mark's Gospel in order for students to experience Jesus as man and Son of God.
- Major World Religions – Judaism and its connections with Christianity.

- The Question of Faith – Religious practices. People and events who had significant impact on Faith in Europe.
- The Celebration of Faith – Sacred places, signs and symbols. Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation.
- The Moral Challenge – Introducing the students to Christian Moral Teachings: Ten Commandments and Values.
- Liturgical Prayer reflecting themes of Advent, Lent, Easter.

### **Second Year**

- Communities of Faith – Further deepening of the students understanding of Christian Community. General information about World Religions in Ireland.
- Foundations of Christianity – The Kingdom of God, we are called to be disciples, study of Saint Matthew’s Gospel. Catholic beliefs as in The Apostles Creed.
- Major World Religions – Further information about Judaism, Ecumenism.
- The Question of Faith – Images of God. Study of Mary as a Woman of Faith.
- The Celebration of Faith – Celebrating the Liturgical Year by Para liturgies. Study of the Sacrament of the Eucharist.
- The Moral Challenge – Implications of love and service, making moral choices, importance of forgiveness... Study of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

### **Third Year**

- Communities of Faith – The Christian Community study of some religious orders. Community and conflict; styles of leadership.
- Foundations of Christianity – The Paschal mystery of Jesus. Different titles for Jesus and their importance. The significance of the Paschal Mystery for our life. The Gospel of Luke.
- Major World Religions – Islam, contemporary issues.
- The Question of Faith – Challenges to Faith in the past and present.
- The Celebration of Faith – Responding to the mystery of God’s love. Ritual and worship – prayer and the different forms of Prayer.
- The Moral Challenge – Further understanding of the Commandments and the Beatitudes.

## Senior Cycle

### **Transition Year**

Title of T.Y. Programme: Searching – The aim of this programme is to highlight to students that they are travelling on a journey to find hope, engage faith and embrace love. The programme will explore the human need to question suffering, pain and death. The human attitude towards same. Work with true life stories while complementing these stories with sacred stories from Scripture. To encourage the students to examine and bear witness to the role of the Catholic faith in their own life as they travel on their own unique journey.

### **Fifth & Sixth Year**

- The Search for Meaning – To situate religious belief in the context of a universal experience. To awaken in students values such as justice, goodness, truth and love.
- Christianity – To deepen the students understanding of the Christological aspects of Christianity, using texts from Saint John's Gospel. The Sacrament of the Eucharist and the discourse at the Last Supper. Development of the early Church by use of appropriate texts from Acts of the Apostles.
- World Religions – Study of World Religions enables students to recognise that other faiths provide identity within their respective communities.
- Moral Decision Making – To develop within students a deeper understanding of morality as accepting self and others as part of God's plan of creation. Relevant topics.
- Marriage as a sacrament.
- Issues involved with dying and death; life after death.
- Important developments in the history of the Irish Church, early Christian monasteries, continental religious orders who came to Ireland in the Middle Ages, Apostolic religious orders of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: study the life of Catherine McAuley.

### **Budget**

Some finance is available depending on the needs of individual classes.

### **Liturgy**

Prayer Services that reflect themes of the Liturgical Year: Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter. Prayer Services for other important occasions for the School Community: First Year Class Prayer Services at the start of the year. Prayer Services on completion of various units/topics that are of importance for the students.

Masses - Opening of School Year, Transition Year, Graduation.  
Designated Prayer Room, centre of school – open door.

### **Chaplaincy**

Visit regular basis, supports Religious Education Department, celebrates Liturgical celebrations for school community. The ideal would be to have a fulltime Chaplain available to assist teachers of Religious Education and students and support the Learning Community.

### **Retreats**

The availability of Retreats for students is currently under review.

### **Justice**

Religious Education Department try to promote, encourage a sense, a spirit of justice amongst students. To awaken students to those 'in need' – Concern Fast, Trocaire Box, Missionary literature, Religion notice-board.

### **Parents/Guardians**

Parents/Guardians are invited to Graduation Mass, Transition Year Mass.  
Parents/Guardians are encouraged to meet with teachers of Religion at Parent Teacher Meetings.

### **Diocesan Advisors**

The Religious Education Department receive a Diocesan Newsletter; attend Diocesan in-services, cluster meetings, C.E.I.S.T. meetings attended.

### **School Leadership/Management/Staff**

All staff invited to formal Liturgical celebrations; support from the Principal and Deputy Principal for all Liturgical celebrations/activities. All staff are encouraged to promote the Mercy ethos of the school.

### **Assessment**

Assessment given during Academic Year – Christmas and Summer.

# **MERCY SECONDARY SCHOOL KILBEGGAN**

## **SCHOOL TRIPS POLICY**

### **Scope of School Trips Policy**

- The term ‘school trip’ covers all expeditions off the school premises. This policy is applicable to all members of staff who organize such trips and to the students - and their parents/guardians - who are participating in these activities.
- The Code of Behaviour of Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan applies to all students of Mercy Secondary School, and relates to all school activities both during and outside of normal school hours; it applies both on and off the school grounds and anywhere students are clearly identified or identifiable as students of the school. The Code of Behaviour, therefore, in all its detail applies to all outings and trips, whether or not they involve an overnight stay.

### **Rationale for School Trips and relevant policy**

- Mercy Secondary School, in line with its mission statement recognizes that exposure to a variety of experiences and cultures is part of a holistic education.
- The curriculum content of some subjects requires field studies/trips/recreational activities, which take place off school grounds.
- Trips assist in bonding between students, as well as providing teachers with an opportunity to get to know students in a non-school environment.
- There should be a balanced programme of outings and trips for the school year that does not prove too costly to parents and does not overburden the school timetable.
- All educational trips must be consistent with the rationale as specified by the DES in Circular Letter M20/04. All reasonable efforts will be made to satisfy all the criteria contained in this circular.
- This policy will assist staff in ensuring that proper standards of financial management and health & safety are implemented on all school trips.
- There is a need to clarify expectations of behaviour for all trips and to outline the conditions whereby a student may be refused permission to be included on a trip.

## **Procedures to be Followed by all Staff Organising School Trips**

School trips have considerable educational value. However, they must be planned and organised in a way that causes least disruption to the day-to-day routine.

### **(a) Day Trips**

- Day Trips may take place during the school day, or may extend beyond normal school hours. Some examples of day trips are:
  - Field work associated with specific subjects such as Biology, Geography
  - History trips
  - Visits to Art Galleries, Exhibitions, Museums, Theatre visits
  - Careers exhibitions and University Open Days
  - Debates
  - Concerts
  - Events in connection with Transition Year
- Any teacher planning to organise a day trip or any non-sporting outing during class time, must first inform the Principal and Deputy Principal of the intended date, at least one month in advance of the proposed date. The trip must be approved by the Principal.
- As a courtesy to colleagues, full details, including date, time and names of participating students must be posted on the staff room notice board by the organising teacher at least one week before the event.
- Sporting activities that are scheduled during class times must be agreed with the Principal/Deputy Principal at least one week in advance and details of the students involved posted on the staff room notice board by the organising teacher at least 3 days in advance of the event.
- Students who have a history of inappropriate behaviour may be excluded from day trips.
- On all day trips there must be an appropriate ratio between the number of students and the number of staff traveling, in accordance with criteria agreed by the Board of Management in advance.. This ratio will vary depending on the nature of the trip and the age of the students traveling.
- All students going on any trip during normal class hours **must** return permission forms signed by parents/guardians to the teacher-in-charge, before the outing takes place. Students who have not returned permission forms **may not** participate in the trip. Supplies of the permission forms are available from the Office. Staff should arrange with the School Secretary to take a school mobile telephone with them in case of emergency
- The organising teacher must keep a careful note of any monies paid by students for the trip and issue receipts for same. Monies should be handed in

to the school Secretary with a completed lodgment form (available from the Office). Staff are asked to ensure costings cover the entire cost of the proposed trip.

- For trips that extend beyond normal school hours, it is the responsibility of parents/guardians to ensure that arrangements are in place for their son's/daughter's journey to/from the school.
- An Accident /Incident Report Form must be completed for all accidents or incidents which may have occurred on the trip
- Members of staff taking students in coaches should note and apply the procedures set out in that policy document.

**(b) Overnight Expeditions or Trips Abroad.**

- Other trips may be over-night expeditions or of longer duration. These may be co-curricular activities organised by subject departments, or trips arranged for Year Groups, or ones that are part of the Outdoor Education Programme. Some examples are:
  - Irish trips - e.g. Donegal, Mayo
  - Exchange programmes involving a group of students and teacher(s)
  - Transition Year and Sixth Year trips - e.g. Germany, France
  - Delphi Outdoor Education Centre
  - Carlingford Outdoor Education Centre
- Members of staff, who wish to take students on an overseas trip, must submit their request for approval to the Board of Management by completing the attached Trip Proposal Form. Included in the proposal, should be the educational or other benefits that the students will derive from the trip. The Board of Management will consider the following when reaching its decision
  - the appropriateness of the proposed trip in terms of DES Circular M20/04.
  - The staffing arrangements for the trip and for the school
  - The financial controls in place for the trip
- The school will only use the services of licensed tour operators/travel agents when organizing trips outside the state, as per the Aviation Regulation Act 2001.
- The number of students participating varies depending on the nature of the trip and the staff/student ratio will be appropriate to the age group and as recommended by the travel agency.
- Staff will be informed of planned expeditions and invited to indicate to the teacher-in-charge if they are interested in being a member of the staff team that will accompany the students. All members of staff will be expected to share the work load beforehand, where necessary and during the trip. Decisions about which members of staff join a trip will depend on such factors

as the size of the group, the gender balance, requirements specific to the particular trip e.g. Irish teachers on a trip to the Gaeltacht, French and/or German teachers on a trip to Europe, teachers with Outdoor qualifications on adventure trips, Year Heads with year group, Form Teachers with classes on hikes and so on.

- The following general financial guidelines should be followed when organizing a trip
  - At least two teachers should be involved in the financial administration.
  - Separate financial records should be maintained for each school trip.
  - A detailed record of all participating students and the amounts paid should be retained.
  - Parents should be informed as early as possible of the full cost associated with the trip.
  - Written permission should be received from the parents of all trip participants and a receipt for all money paid should be issued.
  - Proper and full insurance cover must be in place for all school trips.
  - All money collected for a school trip should be lodged as soon as possible in the main school bank account.
  
- Students should be required to pay an initial deposit, followed by the remainder of the money within a stated period of time. Payments should be by means of cheques, money orders or bank drafts made payable to the school, **not the individual teacher.** Students should place their payment in a sealed envelope with their name on it. These payments should be then handed into the school Secretary by the teacher(s) in question, with a completed lodgment form (available from the Office).
  
- In the case of trips being oversubscribed, priority is given to those students who are studying the appropriate subject. Staff in charge reserve the right to refuse any student they deem unsuitable for the trip. Those considered unsuitable would include:
  - \_ students who in the past have proved unruly or undisciplined on trips
  - \_ students who have a poor discipline record in the school
  
- The initial letter to parents should contain a draft itinerary and deadline for registering and payment of non-refundable deposit. Parents must be made aware that the organiser reserves the right to make minor changes to the itinerary.
  
- If a passport is required, a photocopy of the student's passport must be included with the deposit. All passports must be valid for at least six months following the trip.
  
- Visas may be necessary for the destination and some countries require them to be processed together. There may be an additional cost to secure a visa. Parents should be informed that students with non-EU passports may need visas for EU countries.



- Students must have their E111 or European Health Insurance Card for travel to countries in the EU.
- It is important to impress upon parents that the onus is on them to ensure that their son/daughter has all necessary up-to-date documentation well in advance of the trip.
- Parents should be informed in good time if there are any mandatory or recommended inoculations for the destination. It is important that parents realise that the onus is on them to make arrangements for their son/daughter to receive all necessary inoculations.
- Students must attend all information meetings and co-operate with all requests pertaining to the trip.
- Parents must sign permission forms specific to the trip for students up to the age of 18
- Notification to parents should include details of proposed itinerary, dates, the cost of travel, insurance, food and accommodation. Guidelines for spending money and money for extras such as meals and excursions will also be communicated to parents.
- Mobile phone communication between teachers/supervisors and students on the trip may be necessary. A list should be made of participants' mobile phone numbers (as given on the Permission Form) and students should have the mobile phone number of trip leader – to be carried with them at all times while on the trip. A mobile phone is available from the School, as staff members are not required to give their personal mobile phone numbers to students.
- The trip organiser should have two emergency contact numbers; usually this will be the Principal and the Deputy Principal.
- If necessary two members of staff should carry out inspection of rooms or personal property (bags, suitcases etc) with the student present. This will only be done for good reasons based on reasonable grounds, such as concern for physical safety, suspected possession or use of a banned substance or other concerns.
- Staff should not have any physical contact with a student's clothing. If a search is deemed necessary, the student should be asked to empty his/her own pockets or to search the clothing that he/she is wearing.
- If a student is found to be in serious breach of any of the rules in the School Code of Behaviour, the staff in charge must contact the Principal immediately.
- An Accident/Incident Report Form must be completed for all accidents or incidents which have occurred. Examples of reportable incidents include: persistent lateness at the rendezvous point; not staying with the group;

rudeness to teachers; and serious breach of school rules, particularly in relation to alleged or proven alcohol or substance abuse.

- Members of staff taking students on trips which involve travel in coaches should note and apply the procedures set out in that policy document.

**(c) General Guidelines for Inter-School Competitions**

- Each coach is responsible for taking a properly equipped first-aid kit to his/her match.
- If a minor accident occurs the coach will treat it on the spot. In the event of a serious accident the coach will ring an ambulance directly.
- Any accident deemed to be of a serious nature is recorded on an accident report form, a copy of which is submitted to the Principal. PE staff will appraise students of the necessary safety equipment for each respective sport.
- The PE staff organise transport to and from all matches, using a recognised coach company. Students representing the school in competitions are not required to pay for buses.
- When an away match is organised during school hours, the number of staff traveling must be dependent upon the staffing requirements of the activities inschool. Generally one teacher will travel with a team. The needs of the students in school must receive priority when organising such matches.
- It is school policy that all students are encouraged to participate in team competitions. However, the school recognizes that it is the parents/guardians prerogative how often their child shall be involved in such competitions.
- Members of staff taking students on trips which involve travel in coaches should note and apply the procedures set out in that policy document.

**(d) Coach Trips**

Full details of bus bookings must be entered in the book in the main Office. Members of staff taking students away in coaches should note and apply the following:

- 
- All coaches used by the school must have an up to date PSV License and Cert.
- Before setting off, the emergency exits must be pointed out to students.
- Central aisles and access to exits must be kept clear at all times.
- Students must be advised to remain seated facing forward and not to have unnecessary movement during the journey. Where seat belts are fitted, these must be used.
- Smoking is not permitted on board coaches.
- In the event of any emergency, students should leave the coach by the nearest exit as quickly as possible and re-assemble at a given area where a head-count can be quickly made.
- Students should not go back to the coach for any reason until the all clear is given..
- If the teacher in charge considers that there was anything the matter with the coach, or that the behaviour of students was not appropriate, a full report must be given to the Principal as soon as possible after returning to the school.
- A list of persons on the coach must be placed on the Staff Room notice board before the departure of the coach.
- In the event of a delay for any reason in the time of returning to school, the teacher in charge must telephone the school. A notice giving the information to parents will then be posted on the inside of the main door, together with messages from parents for their children.

This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management at its meeting of

\_\_\_\_\_ ( date)

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Chairperson

Next review date : \_\_\_\_\_

# **Mercy Secondary School**

## **Smoke-Free Workplace Policy**

### **Rationale:**

Exposure to second-hand/Environmental Tobacco Smoke (ETS) also known as passive smoking is a cause of disease, including lung cancer and heart disease, in third parties. Neither the simple separation of smokers and non-smokers within the same airspace nor the provision of ventilation can eliminate exposure to ETS and the consequent health effects of such exposure. This policy has been developed to protect all employees, service users, customers and visitors from exposure to ETS, to ensure compliance with legal obligations and to ensure a safe working environment.

### **Policy**

It is the policy of Mercy Secondary School that all of its workplaces are smoke-free and that all employees have a right to work in a smoke-free environment. Smoking is prohibited within the entire school boundary with no exceptions. This policy applies to all employees, consultants, contractors, customers and visitors. In the school context this also applies to students and parents.

### **Implementation**

Overall responsibility for policy implementation rests with the Board of Management. All staff have an obligation to adhere to, and facilitate the implementation of this policy. The person in charge (Principal) shall inform all existing employees, consultants and contractors of the policy and their role in the implementation and monitoring of the policy. All new and prospective employees, consultants and contractors shall be given a copy of the policy on recruitment/induction by the Principal. Students and parents will be informed of this policy.

### **Infringements**

Infringements by staff will be dealt with under local disciplinary procedures. Infringements by customers, clients etc., will be dealt with in accordance with the procedure set out below. Employees, consultants, contractors, customers and visitors who contravene legislation prohibiting smoking in the workplace are also liable to a criminal prosecution with an associated fine.

**Procedure if a person smokes in contravention of Section 47 of the Public Health (Tobacco) Acts that prohibits smoking in the workplace.**

1. The person's attention is drawn to the "No Smoking" signs and advised that they are committing an offence by smoking on the premises.
2. The person is advised that it is also an offence for the Board of Management to permit anyone to smoke in contravention of the law.
3. The person is advised that the school has a smoke-free policy to ensure a safe working environment for employees and students.
4. If the person continues to smoke they will be advised that they are in breach of school rules and that disciplinary sanctions will have to be implemented.
5. Violation of the smoke free policy will invoke disciplinary procedures. Action will be in line with the procedures used for violation of any other health and safety procedure in the school.
6. Violation of the smoke-free policy by non-school personnel (e.g. visitors, contractors, suppliers) should be dealt with in accordance with the DES circular 18/99 Guidelines on Violence in Schools.

This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management at its meeting of

\_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Chairperson

Next review date : \_\_\_\_\_

## ***Mercy Secondary School, Kilbeggan***

### ***Policy Statement on Social, Personal Health Education and Relationships and Sexuality Education.***

Mercy Secondary School, Kilbeggan, Co. Westmeath is a Catholic Secondary School under the trusteeship of Sisters of Mercy.

#### **School Philosophy**

Mercy Secondary School, Kilbeggan aims to create a happy environment for every learner. We aim to constantly strengthen our capacity to be a healthy setting for learning and working, by focusing on all the conditions that effect health. We aim to create a positive school climate and atmosphere. In such an environment: -

- People feel valued
- Self-esteem is fostered
- High expectations and standards are promoted
- Uniqueness and difference are valued
- Social, moral and civic values are promoted

Through the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme the school aims to support the personal development, health and well-being of our students and help them create and maintain supportive relationships.

#### **The Aims of SPHE**

- To enable the students to develop skills for self-fulfilment and living in communities
- To promote self-esteem and self confidence
- To enable the students do develop a framework for responsible decision-making
- To provide opportunities for reflection and discussion
- To promote physical, mental and emotional health and well-being

SPHE is made up of ten modules. These modules are revisited each year as the students mature and their needs and abilities change. The emphasis will be on building skills and understanding attitudes and values important in all these areas.

## **Ten Modules in SPHE**

- Belonging and Integrating
- Self-Management
- Communications Skills
- Physical Health
- Friendship
- Relationship and Sexuality (RSE)
- Emotional Health
- Influences and Decisions
- Substance Use
- Personal Safety

SPHE will be allocated one class period per week for all Junior Cycle students. The Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) module is located in the overall framework of SPHE. Senior Cycle students will receive RSE through their Religion programme.

Through RSE, the school aims to provide opportunities for students to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral caring and responsible way.

## **The Aims of RSE**

- To help young people to understand and develop friendships and relationships
- To promote an understanding of sexuality
- To promote a positive attitude to ones own sexuality and to ones relationship with others
- To promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction
- To enable young people to develop attitudes and values towards their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework

## **RSE Programme Content**

The developmental stage of the students as well as their social and cultural context will be considered in the planning of the school programme. Teachers will use materials deemed suitable and appropriate for student needs and in accordance with school ethos.

The content of RSE is described under three themes. These themes are neither sequential nor discrete, they merge and overlap with each other.

### **1. Human Growth and Development**

This theme consists of an age appropriate understanding of the biology and psychology of the human life cycle. This is accompanied by a rationale for responsible behaviour in relationships and sexual activity.

### **2. Human Sexuality**

Sexuality is an integral part of the human personality and has biological, psychological, cultural, social and spiritual dimensions. The theme offers opportunities to develop a holistic understanding of sexuality as contributing to the development of personal well-being, enhancing personal and family relationships and ultimately contributing to the well being of society.

### **3. Human Relationships**

This theme focuses on the importance of relationships for health and well-being. It examines how one relates to oneself and others, stressing the importance of self-esteem as a basis for worthwhile friendships and relationships. It addresses issues such as communication, influence, intimacy, sexual attraction and sexual expression in relationships consistent with personal and moral integrity.

#### **What the School Currently Provides**

There are aspects of the SPHE/RSE programme addressed in other subject areas such as Religion, Home Economics, Science, CSPE and PE. The programme is also supported informally through the Student Mentoring System, Rainbows Programme (Bereavement Support) Home/School Liaison, Guidance Counsellor and Psychologist. The strong tradition of music and sports contribute to the personal development of students.

#### **Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of SPHE in the School**

- To allow for the effective delivery and planning of the programme a special duties post holder will be appointed co-ordinator.
- In organising the learning environment the teacher will be careful to create an atmosphere which respects the privacy of each individual student and treats all students with due sensitivity and care. Active learning methods will be used to ensure that students actively participate in their own learning.
- Contemporary topics and issues, which may emerge in this class, will be dealt with at a level appropriate to the age and stage of the student and within a moral framework.
- Parents have the primary responsibility for the teaching of sexuality to their children and RSE is a support to the family in this.
- Parents have the right to withdraw their children from RSE classes with such withdrawal to be given to the Principal in writing.
- Parents are welcome to view the programme content by appointment with the Principal.
- Visiting speakers on SPHE/RSE topics will be given a copy of the school SPHE/RSE Policy and must speak within the spirit of the policy. Teachers will be present at all times when a guest speaker is visiting a class.

#### **Training and Resources**

All resources needed in terms of time, finance and personnel, will be made available to develop and support the SPHE programme in school. Teacher training is seen as an essential element in delivering the programme. The objectives of this training are to enhance the personal growth of teachers and to enable them to acquire the knowledge, understanding and skills necessary to teach the programme. The programme will be supported by SPHE Support Service and the Schools Team within the Health Promotion Service of the Midland Health Board.



**Evaluation**

The SPHE Policy will be reviewed and evaluated on an ongoing basis.

# **Mercy Secondary School** **Substance Abuse Policy**

## **Introduction**

At Mercy Secondary School, Kilbeggan, the Management and School Staff are dedicated to the care of the whole school community. We strive to provide a safe and secure environment for learning.

## **Goals/Rationale**

This Policy applies to the entire school community, including Teachers, Students, Parents/Guardians and users of the school buildings.

It is important to stress that while not all young people are using substances, all young people are living in a substance-using society. Therefore, in order to meet the needs of our students, we must prepare and implement a Substance Abuse Policy. Furthermore, we need to provide consistency in responding to incidents, if they arise and, most importantly, we need to promote a Substance-Abuse-Free School.

## **Policy Content**

### **(a) Education for all School Members**

Education about alcohol, tobacco and drugs will be introduced under the broader context of the S.P.H.E. Programme, which in turn is developed and delivered in the context of a supportive whole school environment. We need to be clear about what a drug is. A drug is any chemical which alters how the body works, or how the person behaves or feels. Education will take place through specific modules and programmes in S.P.H.E., as in existing subjects, e.g. science, religion and through special projects (e.g. T.Y.). The use of outside visitors/speakers will be incorporated to enhance the work done in class. This will take place on separate occasions, first with parents/guardians in the form of an information night and then the students as part of the school day. This integrated community-based approach is required if the Policy is to be effective.

Education on healthy lifestyles is also incorporated and the students are encouraged to participate and get involved in sporting and other extra-curricular activities during their time in the school.

Training of staff would be seen as essential in identifying potential problems and would be introduced again in the form of an Information Day run by outside experts. This training would be complimented and supported by School Management and the S.P.H.E. Team.

### **(b) Management of Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Related Incidents**

This school does not condone the misuse of **legal or illegal** substances on school premises or school activities but our policy is to put the young person's welfare first. Under the Tobacco Control Act 2003, smoking is now illegal in any public place. Students found **smoking** in school will meet with their Principal or Deputy Principal. The students will then be subject to disciplinary sanctions as set out in the school's Code of Behaviour.

**Alcohol** may not be brought into the school or used while involved in school activities, except with the permission of the Principal. In the event of a student misusing alcohol the parents/guardians will be informed and appropriate action taken to promote the young person's welfare. Misuse of alcohol by any member of the school community in/on school grounds is prohibited.

**Signs of misuse of other substances** are easily confused with other problems; particularly those associated with adolescence. It is important not to jump to conclusions. Our Policy is to discuss students' problems sympathetically to find out the extent of the problem, explain the limits of confidentiality and establish what help the student needs. A teacher suspecting substance misuse should discuss this with the Principal. If there is evidence that a student is misusing substances the teacher must inform the Principal, who will contact the parents. If it seems that **illegal substances** are being brought into school, the school can discuss this with the Juvenile Liaison Officer, An Garda Síochána or the Health Board. If illegal substances are found, the Principal will pass them on the Gardaí to prevent an offence being committed. The Gardaí will be informed if illegal drugs are used or sold in school.

Any student attending school with any form of medication must inform the Principal of this in writing

**(c) Evaluation**

Evaluation of school policy is essential if it is to continue to meet the needs of future students. It can act as an awareness raising exercise in the school and enables some measurement of the change resulting from implementing a new or revised drug policy in the school.

This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management at its meeting of

\_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Chairperson

Next review date : \_\_\_\_\_

## **Drugs Policy – Final Meeting**

**We have been advised to send a copy of our policy to the A.G.M. of the Parents Association and have it passed.**

**We have also been advised to have all parents of in-coming first years to sign it and keep this copy in each students' file.**

**Any opportunity to have parents of current students to sign the policy should also be taken to ensure that all the student population are aware in writing of the implications.**

**Finally, it was suggested that “No Smoking” signs be put up around the school. They are available free from the Health Promotion Unit of the Midland Health Board at (0506) 45730 or from the Environmental Health Officer at (0506) 41301. There is also a Smoking Cessation Service in Tullamore for adolescents who find giving up a problem at (0506) 41301 or Mullingar (044) 84932.**

**Yours in Health Promotion**

---

**Sarah Mulligan**