



## ANTI-BULLYING & HARASSMENT POLICY (2026)

### 1. DOCUMENT CONTROL

Policy Owner	SMT and Board of Governors
Drafted By	SMT
Date of Approval	20 April 2026
Review Date	April 2027
Related Policies	Learner Code of Conduct & Handbook (2026); Social Media & Digital Citizenship Policy (2026); Data Management & POPIA Compliance Policy (2026); Substance Abuse Policy (2026); Staff Code of Conduct & Disciplinary Policy (2026).

### 2. PREAMBLE & ETHOS ALIGNMENT

Loreto Convent School is rooted in the Catholic understanding of *Imago Dei* — that every person is created in the image of God. Therefore, any act that diminishes the dignity of another person is an offence against our ethos.

Guided by the charism of **Mary Ward**, this policy is anchored in:

- **Sincerity:** We do not hide behind masks or anonymity (cyberbullying). We relate to one another with open hearts.
- **Truth:** We reject the spreading of rumours and false witness.
- **Justice:** We defend the vulnerable and refuse to be silent bystanders.
- **Freedom:** Every learner has the right to move through this school freely — to learn, to play, to grow — without fear of intimidation, exclusion, or harm. This policy exists to protect that freedom. A school where any learner is afraid is a school that has failed in its mission.
- **Accompaniment:** We walk alongside both the victim and the perpetrator. The victim deserves support, protection, and healing. The perpetrator — who is also a child made in the image of God — deserves the opportunity to understand the harm they have caused, to be held accountable, and to be restored to right relationship with their peers. Punishment without accompaniment is not justice; it is merely consequence.

### 3. LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

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This policy is drafted in compliance with:

- *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (ss.9, 10, 16, 28).*
- *South African Schools Act 84 of 1996.*
- *Children’s Act 38 of 2005 (s.110 — mandatory reporting).*
- *Protection from Harassment Act 17 of 2011.*
- *Cybercrimes Act 19 of 2020.*
- *Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA), Act 4 of 2013.*

### 4. DEFINITIONS

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**Bullying:** An intentional act that causes physical, emotional, or social harm to another person. While often repeated, a **single severe incident** (particularly involving digital media or physical violence) constitutes bullying under this policy.

**Cyberbullying:** The use of electronic communication to bully a person, typically by sending messages of an intimidating or threatening nature. This applies to conduct occurring **on or off school premises** if it impacts the school environment.

**The “Silent Bystander”:** A learner who witnesses bullying and chooses not to report it or intervene. In alignment with our values, bystanders who facilitate or encourage bullying are considered complicit.

**Sexual Bullying:** Any unwanted conduct of a sexual nature (verbal, physical, or digital) that violates a learner’s dignity.

### 5. PREVENTATIVE MEASURES

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Prevention is the primary objective of Loreto Convent School.

- **Education:** The Life Orientation curriculum and “Service Portfolio” of the Prefect Body will run annual anti-bullying campaigns focusing on the impact of actions on others.
- **Digital Citizenship:** Training on responsible social media use is mandatory for all grade levels.
- **Supervision:** Staff are rostered to monitor high-risk areas (playgrounds, corridors, waiting areas) during breaks and dismissal.
- **Parent Formation:** The school runs an annual information session for parents on digital safety, cyberbullying, and the signs of social exclusion. This session is organised by the School Counsellor in partnership with the Parent Body. Parents are the school’s most important partners in prevention — a child who is supported at home is more resilient and more likely to report concerns early.

## 6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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### 6.1. The Learner

- To respect the dignity of peers.
- To report incidents immediately (as a victim or a witness).
- To refrain from retaliation.

### 6.2. The Parent/Guardian

- To monitor their child's online activity and social media usage.
- To report behavioural changes or complaints to the school immediately.
- To cooperate with the school's restorative or disciplinary processes.

### 6.3. The School (Staff & SMT)

- To take every report seriously and investigate without bias.
- To protect the identity of reporters where possible (subject to safety laws).
- To maintain the "Ethics Box" or anonymous reporting channels.

### 6.4. Anonymous Reporting (The Ethics Box)

To encourage whistleblowing and protect the vulnerable, a physical "**Ethics Box**" is located in the Library. Learners may submit anonymous written reports regarding bullying or harassment which are collected and investigated weekly by the School Counsellor.

### 6.5. Student Leadership: The Prefect Body

The **Service Portfolio of the Prefect Body** is mandated to lead termly anti-bullying campaigns. Prefects act as the first point of contact for peer-advocacy and are trained to identify and report "silent bullying" behaviours to the SMT.

## 7. PROCEDURES: REPORTING, INVESTIGATION & CONSEQUENCES

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### 7.1. Phase 1: Reporting

Incidents can be reported to any staff member, the School Social Worker, or via the anonymous Ethics Box. The School Social Worker is the designated Safe Officer.

### 7.2. Phase 2: Investigation & Triage

The relevant Grade Head or SMT member will investigate.

- **Privacy:** All parties will be treated with dignity. Details are not discussed with unrelated parents.
- **Statement:** Written statements will be taken from the victim, the alleged perpetrator, and witnesses.
- **Timeframe:** The investigation must be completed within 5 school days of the report being received. If the matter is complex or involves multiple parties, the investigating staff member must notify all parties in writing that the investigation is ongoing and provide an estimated completion date. No party should be left without communication for more than 3 school days.

### 7.3. Phase 3: Classification & Consequence

**STATUTORY REPORTING OBLIGATION (Children’s Act s.110):** Any staff member who suspects or becomes aware of abuse, sexual violence, or criminal injury involving a learner is legally required to report this to the South African Police Service (SAPS) and the Department of Social Development. This obligation is not discretionary and cannot be overridden by the school, the parents, or the learner. The Information Officer (Executive Principal) co-ordinates statutory reports and ensures compliance.

- **Level 1 (Minor/First Offence):**

*Examples:* Teasing, excluding peers, minor name-calling.

**Action:** Restorative mediation by Class Teacher/Counsellor. Verbal warning. Apology required.

- **Level 2 (Serious/Repeated):**

*Examples:* Cyberbullying, threats, physical intimidation, recurring Level 1 behaviour.

**Action:** Parents summoned. Disciplinary Hearing. Detention or Suspension. Mandatory Counselling for both bully and victim.

- **Level 3 (Severe/Criminal):**

*Examples:* Sexual bullying, physical assault causing injury, distribution of intimate images (revenge porn), hate speech (racism/homophobia).

**Action:** Immediate Suspension pending a Disciplinary Hearing. Possible Expulsion.

**Perpetrator Support:** Even where a learner is suspended or faces expulsion proceedings, the school will ensure that they and their family have access to professional counselling support. Accountability and restoration are not in conflict — a learner who understands the harm they have caused and is genuinely rehabilitated is less likely to reoffend.

### 7.4. Phase 4: Restorative Justice

Regardless of the sanction, the school aims to restore relationships. The perpetrator must understand the harm caused, and the victim must be supported in healing.

### 7.5. Phase 5: Appeal

- 1) A learner (or their parent/guardian) who disputes the finding or sanction arising from a bullying investigation may appeal in writing to the Executive Principal within 5 school days of receiving the written outcome.
- 2) The grounds of appeal must be one or more of the following:
  - a) procedural irregularity in the investigation;
  - b) new evidence not available at the time of the investigation; or
  - c) the sanction is disproportionate to the finding.
- 3) The Executive Principal will acknowledge the appeal within 2 school days and respond substantively within 10 school days. For Level 3 matters where expulsion is being considered, the appeal lies to the Board of Governors.

## 8. RECORD-KEEPING

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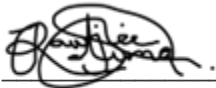
- 8.1 All bullying and harassment reports, investigation notes, written statements, findings, sanctions, and outcomes are recorded and retained in the relevant learner's file.
- 8.2 Records are maintained in accordance with the Data Management & POPIA Compliance Policy (2026). They are accessible only to the Executive Principal, the relevant Deputy Principal, and the School Counsellor.
- 8.3 Anonymous reports submitted via the Ethics Box are recorded by the School Counsellor in a confidential log. Trends are reported to the SMT termly without identifying individual learners.
- 8.4 Records relating to bullying findings are retained for the duration of the learner's enrolment and for 3 years thereafter.

## 9. APPROVAL

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By signing the School Code of Conduct, parents and learners acknowledge this policy.

Signed on behalf of the Board of Governors:



Date: 20 April 2026

**Fatima Rawjee**

**Chairperson: Board of Governors**

Signed by the Executive Principal:



Date: 20 April 2026

**Suzette Truter**

**Executive Principal**