Maria International School of Bucharest

Resilience Respect Compassion Integrity Responsibility

Anti-Bullying Policy

Our Mission

We provide a learning experience and environment at Maria International that fosters creativity and excellence. Whilst providing supportive, stimulating and relevant lessons and resources within the context of the British style international curriculum.

Our school will be a caring place where adults and children are valued equally. Our aim is to create an environment where children and the whole school community will be inspired to be resilient, respectful, compassionate and act with integrity.

Our children will learn to respect themselves and others in an atmosphere of high expectations where they are nurtured and dare to make mistakes

We will strive to create opportunities for students to have a well-rounded school and learning experience, where they can develop critical thinking skills and work in collaboration with others.

Our Values

Resilience - We will handle adversity and problems with a mentality that enables us to keep going and do better.

Respect - We treat others with dignity, empathy and equality through our words and actions.

Compassion - We are kind, caring and will help everyone to be the best they can be.

Integrity - We are open, honest and act with good morals and ethics in all situations.

Responsibility - We ensure our own work, learning and duties are completed in a timely manner and to a high standard

Introduction

We at Maria International believe that a student's learning experience and staff job satisfaction are enhanced when in a positive environment supported by positive attitudes. However, this can be compromised if attitudes and behaviours are not in line with the Maria International mission, values, and expectations.

It is our aim at Maria International to create an environment that is free of prejudice, discrimination, intimidation, abuse and other forms of disrespectful attitudes. When joining the

Maria International community, whether as an employee, student, parent/guardian or third-party provider we expect that this policy is read, understood and adhered to. As such we further expect that any member of the Maria International community signs and respects this policy and its information, guidance, policies and procedures within.

Maria International stands firm in its approach to dealing with those who would compromise the well-being or learning of others through attitudes that go against our values and expectations. Maria International also is committed to standing against all forms of bullying. In line with our other policies such as our E-Safety and Acceptable Usage Policy, Peer on Peer Abuse Policy and Procedural Guidance and Equal Opportunities Policy we also take care to prevent instances of intimidation, taunting, the use of racist, religious, cultural, sexual/sexist, or homophobic language. It is also important to us at Maria International that we don't disparage others with special educational needs or disabilities.

This policy aims to set out how bullying, in any form, is to be addressed at Maria International and should be used and considered in conjunction with other Maria International policies such as

- Maria International Mission, Values and Vision
- Maria International Positive Behaviour Policy
- Maria International Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Maria International Staff Handbook
- Maria International Primary Student Handbook
- Maria International Complaints and Concerns Policy
- Maria International Terms and Conditions
- Any relevant EU and Romanian Legislation

What is Bullying?

The Anti-bullying Alliance defines bullying as:

'Bullying is the repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. It can happen face to face or online.'

Maria International breaks bullying down into four main categories:

- **Cyber** - Intentional and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, phones, and other electronic devices.
  Cyberbullying can include:
    - abusive or hurtful texts, emails or posts, images or videos
    - deliberately excluding others online
    - nasty gossip or rumours

- imitating others online or using their log-in.

- **Physical** - Includes hitting, kicking, tripping, pinching and pushing or damaging property. Physical bullying causes both short term and long term damage.

- **Social** - sometimes referred to as covert bullying, is often harder to recognise and can be carried out behind the bullied person's back. It is designed to harm someone's social reputation and/or cause humiliation.
  Social bullying can include:
  - lying and spreading rumours
  - negative facial or physical gestures, menacing or contemptuous looks
  - playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate
  - mimicking unkindly
  - encouraging others to socially exclude someone
  - damaging someone's social reputation or social acceptance.

- **Verbal** - includes name-calling, insults, teasing, intimidation, homophobic or racist remarks, or verbal abuse. While verbal bullying can start harmlessly, it can escalate to levels that start affecting the individual target.

Signs and Symptoms of Bullying

A child may demonstrate signs or symptoms of bullying. It is the responsibility of all those in the Maria International community to be aware of these signs and symptoms so that if a child is being bullied or abused, Maria International can intervene quickly and attempt to resolve the issue. The following signs and symptoms could indicate that a child is being bullied:

- Starts doing poorly in their school work
- Comes home or to school with their clothes torn or their belongings damaged
- Have their possessions gone missing
- Starts to claim they are feeling unwell in the morning before school
- Becomes withdrawn, anxious or lacking in self-confidence
- Cries themselves to sleep
- Starts to wet the bed or have nightmares
- Eats less or stops eating
- Starts stuttering
- Has unexplained cuts, bumps or bruises
- Attempts or threatens to self-harm or commit suicide
- Is afraid to say what is wrong when prompted
- Is afraid to go to school or lessons
- Changes their usual routines

- Participate in bullying

These are some of the most common signs that a child is being bullied so Maria International requests that all staff be aware of these signs and symptoms. If any of these signs or symptoms are noticed, or staff have any other suspicions that a child is being bullied they should report it immediately to the relevant Head of Key Stage.

Dealing with Incidences of Bullying

At Maria International, we have a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of bullying and all staff are expected to intervene when they see, hear or suspect any form of bullying is going on. Maria International also expects and encourages that any witnesses and bystanders to bullying make it clear to the bully that the behaviour being demonstrated is not acceptable and to inform a teacher immediately.

Maria International Students

At Maria International, we place age-appropriate expectations on our students to follow the expectations and values of Maria International. This means that students are being respectful to others, acting with integrity and treating others how they would like to be treated themselves. Maria International understands that students can be afraid of notifying a teacher or other responsible adult about bullying for fear of the repercussions, however, we encourage students to be confident and brave in reporting bullying to Maria International staff.
If a Maria International student witnesses or experiences bullying of any kind we expect students to do the following:

- Not act as an audience to the bullying that is occurring
- Immediately notify a teacher of the bullying
- Explain as clearly, calmly and objectively as possible
- Not take matters into their own hands

Maria International Staff

All Maria International staff should be active members of the Maria International community, helping to foster a safe and caring atmosphere in the school. Staff are further expected to consistently and fairly model the behaviour expected of students in line with the school values and expectations.
Maria International staff should be aware of the different forms of bullying and discrimination that can occur and deal firmly with any instances of bullying and/or discrimination that they suspect or discover. If a student reports an instance of bullying or witnesses bullying they are to document and report the incident immediately.
Staff members are expected to do the following if bullying or discrimination is reported, suspected or witnessed:

- Deal with and investigate the incident immediately

- Notify the Head of Key Stage that a bullying and/or discriminatory incident has taken place
- Complete the Bullying Incident Form as soon as possible
- Give the completed Bullying Incident Form to the Head of Key Stage

Maria International Middle and Senior Leadership

As soon as a bullying or discriminatory incident is reported, the Head of Key Stage will:

- Interview the parties involved in the incident, keeping a record of the interview with full names of staff and students present
- Inform the homeroom teacher and other staff members who teach the bullied student(s)
- Cooperatively with the homeroom teacher, decide the most effective strategy and plan of action to deal with the bullying
- Discuss with the Headteacher the appropriate sanctions for the bully in line with the Maria International Positive Behaviour Policy
- Inform all parents/guardians of the parties involved of the situation, strategy and plan of action to deal with the bullying, the sanctions to be applied (if appropriate) and ask for parental support
- Oversee the effective implementation of the strategy and plan of action, and keep the Headteacher and parents/guardians up to date with further developments

Sanctions

At Maria International bullying and discrimination are considered to be serious breaches of Maria International's Positive Behaviour Policy. As a result, a range of further strategies and sanctions may be applied in line with the Maria International Positive Behaviour Policy and through consideration of the nature of the bullying on a case-by-case basis.

In cases where the bully does not respond to the preventative strategies and plans of action put in place to stop the bullying, Maria International will take tough and serious actions.

The Headteacher will be kept informed and may be used in consultation in regards to appropriate sanctions, which can include:

- Writing a formal written letter of apology to the student and parents/guardians
- Research and presentation about bullying and discrimination and the negative effects of bullying and discrimination can have on the bully, witnesses and person being bullied.
- Withdrawal from outside break and lunchtimes
- Withdrawal of other privileges (such as Golden Time)
- Withdrawal and withholding participation in school trips or sporting events that are not essentially required as part of the curriculum
- Individual Action Plan may be written
- Lesson by Lesson report card to be monitored by the Homeroom teacher
- A written letter of warning to parent's/guardian's of exclusion in the event of future misbehaviour, bullying and/or discrimination incidents

- Internal Suspension, between one and three days
- External Suspension, between one and two days. Students and Parents/Guardians must meet with the Head of Key Stage on the day of return, before being allowed back into class. The discussion will involve expectations and consequences as well as an evaluation to see if the student is ready to return to classes.
- Indefinite Suspension, a student is kept away from school for an indefinite period of time. This is done in cases where an investigation into a serious incident needs to take place

The Head of Key Stage will contact the parents/guardians to inform them of the current situation and to arrange a meeting with them, the student and the Homeroom teacher. At the meeting, the appropriate sanctions that have been decided upon are discussed and subsequently implemented.

In some situations, due to the nature of the offence that has been committed, Maria International may be obligated to report the incident to the Police. As a result, Police involvement may be necessary to safeguard the school and the Maria International community

Maria International will also offer support to the student and work cooperatively with the parents/guardians if it is deemed that the student could benefit from outside counselling.

Further Offences

If further offences are committed then these will be directly dealt with by the Headteacher, and this could result in the parent's/guardians being advised to seek an alternative school for their student to attend. This could happen at short notice but in accordance with the Maria International Terms & Conditions.

The Headteacher will notify and meet with the parents/guardians to discuss any sanctions that are to be implemented and the plan of action moving forward.

Review and Appeal

The review and appeals process for any serious disciplinary matters is outlined as part of the Maria International Complaints and Concerns Policy, which is available to parents/guardians upon request or can be found on the Maria International school website (www.misb.ro).

Supporting Students

All students involved in the incident of bullying and/or discrimination are expected to fully participate in meetings and discussions that lead up to the plan of action moving forward. No student should feel left out, intimidated or isolated in these discussions and meetings.

In the interests of finding the most effective solution to the incidents and ensuring that they do not continue we expect that these discussions and meetings are approached with honesty and frankness that involve both the bully and the student(s) who was bullied. However, it must be remembered that in cases of bullying and discrimination there is no equal blame to be shared and that a student facing a bully can be upsetting and intimidating.

Students who have been bullied

When a member of staff is interacting with the student(s) who have been bullied it is important to remember to offer reassurance and support to help them.

Students have been bullying

Maria International recognises that appropriate sanctions are necessary and have to be used, it is also recognised that the school needs to help the bully in changing their attitude and behaviour through other methods such as counselling and other support mechanisms. After the incident has been resolved, Maria International staff should always seek ways to help and support the student to change their attitudes and behaviours as well as help them to understand the impact and effects that bullying has on other people.

Bullying between adults

Maria International does not tolerate harassment, bullying or discrimination against its staff members or other adult members of the Maria International community. Any cases of bullying against adult members of the Maria International community, including Maria International staff, must be reported immediately to the Headteacher.

Reporting and Recording Incidents of Bullying

Any incidences of bullying should be recorded using the Bullying Incident Form and then given to the appropriate member of staff, either the relevant Head of Key Stage or the Headteacher. After the incident has been reported and sanctions have been applied it is then the duty of the Head of Key Stage or the Headteacher to ensure that all reports, forms, minutes and records are kept secure by the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Any adult members of the Maria International community, including Maria International staff, who feel they are being bullied should immediately notify the Headteacher who will deal with the situation.

Strategies for the Prevention of Bullying

Through the Curriculum

Maria International attempts to ensure that anti-bullying education is embedded throughout the school curriculum, assemblies, homeroom and other school activities.

Staff are allowed to use assemblies, homeroom, class time, lunch or break times, when necessary and appropriate, to create time necessary to deal with problems of bullying or potential bullying, quickly and discreetly.

Some themes and topics that could be covered regarding anti-bullying include:

- What bullying is and the different forms bullying can take
- Anti-Bullying Week (11th-15th November 2024) to help raise awareness
- Maria International's Anti-Bullying Policy
- The effects of bullying
- Why bullying must stop
- How to act without prejudice
- Acting cooperatively and empathetically
- How to resist peer pressure
- How to be self-accepting, self-confident and resilient
- Being assertive (but not aggressive)
- How to resolve differences constructively
- Conflict Resolution
- How to use face-to-face interaction to resolve differences rather than electronic communication
- How to be a good bystander
- How to support someone who is being bullied
- How to react when bullied
- Who to go to when bullied or suspect someone is being bullied

These will be taught, and more, with age-appropriate content and with sufficient time given to ensure that they are taught deeply and with care.

Cyber-Bullying

A number of cases of cyberbullying occur on social media sites and apps, it is important for parents/guardians to be aware of the online presence of their child for their own safety. Further information should be sought by parent's/guardian's of the age restrictions of the apps and social media that their child is using.

If a student is being cyber-bullied it is important that they do not reply to any malicious posts, comments, texts or emails but should instead take screenshots that can later be used as evidence after they have immediately reported the incident. Students should also be reminded that they should not share their login details for any website, app or game and not share any unnecessary personal information.

Involving Parents/Guardians

Everyone in the Maria International community, including parents/guardians, should be aware of the zero-tolerance approach that Maria International has when it comes to bullying,

discrimination and other forms of abuse as well as the positive and proactive approach to educating students and the community about anti-bullying. Parents/Guardians are expected to read through the policies and procedures and to subsequently sign that they accept them and agree to follow and model the behaviours expected by Maria International.
If an incident of bullying occurs, parents/guardians will be notified and kept informed of the actions being taken.

Extra Resources

To further aid in the anti-bullying education of the Maria International community here are some extra links and resources that can be used to inform and learn more:

- Anti-bullying Alliance
- STOMP Out Bullying™ | Cyberbullying & Bullying Prevention
- Bullying and advice on coping and making it stop

Bullying Incident Form

Date:	Time:
Location:	Observed or Reported:
Alleged Aggressor:	Alleged Victim:
Witnesses	
Staff Supervising:	
Type of Bullying Observed: (Cyber, Physical, Social, Verbal	
Description of Incident:	
Repeated or One-Off Incident:	Immediate Action Taken: (Yes/No, Description)
Report Completed By:	Staff Signature:

Bullying Incident Follow Up Form

Head of Key Stage: (Name, Key Stage and actions taken, Signature, Date)
Designated Safeguarding Lead/Deputy: (Name, Signature, Date)
Designated Safeguarding Lead/Deputy: (Actions Taken and Next Steps)
Date Form Filed and Signature by Designated Safeguarding Lead:

Any additional comments should be made on the reverse of this page

Investigating Cases of Bullying

This information is taken from Find Out What Happened.

Get the Facts

- Keep all the involved children separate.
- Get the story from several sources, both adults and kids.
- Listen without blaming.
- Don't call the act "bullying" while you are trying to understand what happened.

It may be difficult to get the whole story, especially if multiple students are involved or the bullying involves social bullying or cyberbullying. Collect all available information.

Determine if it's Bullying

There are many behaviours that look like bullying but require different approaches. It is important to determine whether the situation is bullying or something else.

Review the definition of bullying. State law and school policy may have additional guidelines for defining bullying behaviour.

To determine if this is bullying or something else, consider the following questions:

- What is the history between the kids involved? Have there been past conflicts?
- Is there a power imbalance? Remember that a power imbalance is not limited to physical strength. It is sometimes not easily recognized. If the targeted child feels like there is a power imbalance, there probably is.
- Has this happened before? Is the child worried it will happen again?

Remember that it may not matter "who started it." Some kids who are bullied may be seen as annoying or provoking, but this does not excuse the bullying behaviour.

Once you have determined if the situation is bullying, support the kids involved.

Review and Evaluation

This policy is to be renewed, evaluated and appropriately updated annually by the Maria International leadership team and Head Teacher.

Date of next review: 15/08/2025

Prepared/Updated by: Alicia Bruwer **Date**: 07/11/2024

Approved by: Nicholette Vicol **Date**: 10/11/2024

This policy is to be reviewed **annually** and updated as and when relevant changes occur.