



Anti-Bullying Policy

1. In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the code of behaviour guidelines issued by the NEWB, the Board of Management of **Scoil Mhuire** school has adopted the following anti-bullying policy within the framework of the school's overall code of behaviour. This policy fully complies with the requirements of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* which were published in September 2013.
2. **Aim of the Policy:**
Our aim is to develop a consistent whole school approach to dealing with bullying in order to reduce the incidence of bullying. In our Mission Statement we "seek to create a caring and co-operative environment where tolerance and respect are nurtured", therefore we are opposed to bullying of any kind in our school.
3. **Objectives:**
The Board of Management recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of pupils and is therefore fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour:
 - A positive school culture and climate which-
 - is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity;
 - encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment; and
 - promotes respectful relationships across the school community;
 - Effective leadership;
 - A school-wide approach;
 - A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact;
 - Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that-
 - build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and
 - explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.
 - Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils;
 - Supports for staff;
 - Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies); and
 - On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.
 - Acceptable Use Policy
4. In accordance with the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* bullying is **defined** as follows:

Bullying is unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical conducted, by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time.

The following types of bullying behaviour are included in the definition of bullying:

- deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying,
- cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying such as homophobic bullying, racist bullying, bullying based on a person's membership of the Traveller community and bullying of those with disabilities or special educational needs.

Isolated or once-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour, including a once-off offensive or hurtful text message or other private messaging, do not fall within the definition of bullying and should be dealt with, as appropriate, in accordance with the school's code of behaviour.

However, in the context of this policy, placing a once-off offensive or hurtful public message, image or statement on a social network site or other public forum where that message, image or statement can be viewed and/or repeated by other people will be regarded as bullying behaviour.

Negative behaviour that does not meet this definition of bullying will be dealt with in accordance with the school's code of behaviour.

Additional information on different types of bullying is set out in Section 2 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

5. **Procedures for Noting and Reporting Bullying**

Reporting:

Pupils and Teachers:

- Pupils should report minor incidents of bullying to their class teacher or to the teacher on duty.
- More serious incidents are to be reported to the Principal.
- Principal may refer the matter to the Board of Management.
- Children should be encouraged to report bullying incidents and be taught that to do so is behaving responsibly and not telling tales.
- Pupils not directly involved in incidents should be encouraged to report bullying that they may have witnessed.
- Incidents which occur on the way to school and which are reported to the teacher should be noted in the school journal and be signed by the parents or via Seesaw for younger students.

Parents:

- Parents reporting alleged incidents of bullying should do so either by letter, digital medium or by telephoning the Principal (this is as a safeguard to protect the victim from further bullying). Following this the Principal will make a written report of the case.
- Incidents of bullying within the school must be handled solely by the Principal and staff of the school initially and, if need be, by the Board of Management. Parents should not confront either the parents of or the child/children involved in incidents of bullying which occur on school premises.

Noting and Recording:

Teachers/Principal:

- Initial incidents reported by pupils/parents can be noted by the teacher and reviewed monthly. (See Appendix 1). If a pattern emerges for any child or children, the principal should be informed and further investigations made where necessary.
6. The school's procedures for investigation, follow-up and recording of bullying behaviour and the established intervention strategies used by the school for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour are as follows (see Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):

The following points should be noted when investigating alleged incidents of bullying:

- Adopt a low key approach,
- Victim and bully should not be interviewed together with the early stages of the investigation in either minor or serious incidents and later only if the victim feels ready.
- Communication between teacher/principal, teacher/teacher must be opened up immediately when alleged bullying has been reported to either party by a child, a parent or another adult.
- Parents should be requested not to become involved in alleged incidents or to interview either pupils or parents of those involved but to report them immediately to the school (preferably by phone or letter) and allow the school sufficient time to deal with the situation in accordance with the bullying policy in the school.
- Minor incidents could be dealt with using the written account approach where each party in an alleged incident is asked to write his/her account of what happened. See Incident Record Sheet.

- Incidents which are more serious and may involve a group of people with a ringleader are to be dealt with in accordance with the No Blame Approach which involves setting up interviews with the victim and later with the group involved in the incident. There are 7 Steps laid out in this approach:(See Appendix 2)

Step 1: Interview the victim

Step 2: Convene a meeting with the people involved

Step 3: Explain the problem

Step 4: Share responsibility

Step 5: Ask the group for ideas

Step 6: Leave it up to them

Step 7: Meet them again individually

If, after following the above approach, the bully persists the child/children will be sanctioned in accordance with our D.F.L. Policy, i.e. Step 5 or Step 6 of the sanctions.

7. The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber- bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying) that will be used by the school are as follows (see Section 6.5 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):
 - Stay Safe as part of SPHE programme
 - All classes doing Stay Safe immediately after October mid-term. Programme runs until all lessons have been covered.
 - “Lucky to be me” fortnight runs for the first two weeks in September to develop positive self -esteem and to celebrate the uniqueness of each child.
 - School ethos and mission statement
 - Training for staff
 - Raising awareness of bullying to include cyber bullying as being unacceptable on a school wide basis
 - DFL programme with focus on bronze, silver and gold medals.
 - Pupil of the week
 - Community Garda visiting 5th class each year for input on cyber bullying.
 - Staff training as part of CPD
 - Code of Discipline
 - Anti-Cyber Bullying Policy
 - Internet Safety Week
8. The school’s programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows (see Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):
 - Stay Safe
 - SPHE Programme
 - Lucky to be me fortnight
 - Play therapy/ Art therapy (if available)
 - Grow in Love programme
 - Internet Safety Week
 - Wellbeing Month (May)
 - PDST Manual Anti Bullying Support Material
9. **Supervision and Monitoring of Pupils**
The Board of Management confirms that appropriate supervision and monitoring policies and practices are in place to both prevent and deal with bullying behaviour and to facilitate early intervention where possible.
10. **Prevention of Harassment**
The Board of Management confirms that the school will, in accordance with its obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the sexual harassment of pupils or staff or the harassment of pupils or staff on any of the nine grounds specified i.e. gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.

11. This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 4 April 2022.
12. This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website is otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request and provided to the Parents' Association (where one exists). A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.
13. This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year. Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Association (where one exists). A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Signed: John Curran
Chairperson of Board of Management

Signed: Carol Burke-Heneghan
Principal

Date: 4 April 2022

Date: 4 April 2022

Date of Next Review: 2023

Appendix 2: No Blame Approach to Bullying

There are seven steps in this approach as follows:

Step 1: Interview the Victim

When the teacher finds out that bullying has happened, she starts by talking to the victim about her feelings. She does not question him about incidents, but she does need to know who is involved, including non-participant spectators. She encourages him/her to write down the effects of the bullying, how it makes him/her feel.

Step 2: Meeting with the People Involved

The teacher arranges to meet with the group of pupils who have been involved. This will include some bystanders or colluders who joined in but did not initiate any bullying. We find that a group of six to eight people works well.

Step 3: Explain the Problem

Teacher tells them about the way the victim is feeling and might use a poem, piece of writing or drawing to emphasise her distress. At no time does she discuss the details of specific incidents or allocate blame to the individuals or the group.

Step 4: Shared Responsibility

The teacher does not attribute blame but states that she knows that the group can do something about it, something to help.

Step 5: Ask The Group for Their Ideas

Each member of the group is encouraged to suggest a way in which the victim could be helped to feel happier. The teacher gives some positive responses but she does not go on to extract a promise of good behaviour.

Step 6: Leave It to Them

The teacher ends the meeting by passing over the responsibility to the group to solve the problem. She arranges to meet them again, individually, a week later to see how things are going.

Step 7: Meet Them Again

About a week later, the teacher discusses with each student, including the victim, how things have been going. This allows the teacher to monitor the bullying and keeps the young people involved in the process.