

# Scoil Mhuire



## 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 (2008), the Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire National 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. 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.
3. 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 conduct by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time. It is targeted behaviour, online or offline, that causes harm and involves an imbalance in power in relationships between two people or groups of people in society.**

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.

The different types of bullying behaviour are listed in the **appendix** attached to this policy. Additional information on different types of bullying is set out in Section 2 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

4. The **relevant teachers** for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows:

- The class teacher of the victim
- The class teacher of the alleged bully
- Learning Support Teachers
- Principal and Deputy Principal

5. **The education and prevention strategies used by the school are as follows:**

#### **School-wide approach**

- A school-wide approach is adopted to the fostering of respect for all members of the school community;
- A positive school culture is fostered by putting emphasis on the school code of behaviour, 'Discipline for Learning';
- The multi-cultural and diverse pupil enrolment trend promotes a culture whereby mutual respect, mutual courtesy and an awareness of interdependence thrives;
- All staff members are aware of the ethos of the school whereby care values are promoted and supported;
- Whole-staff professional development on bullying aims to ensure that all staff develop an awareness of what bullying is, how it impacts on pupils' lives, and the need to respond to it through prevention and intervention. An annual audit of the professional development needs of staff in this regard is conducted;
- Awareness raising measures on all aspects of bullying are inclusive of pupils, parents/guardians and the wider community, and take the form of interventions and initiatives such as:
  - Speakers are invited to address staff and parent groups in relation to cyber - bullying.
  - Information relating to cyber-bullying is available on the school website
  - An Internet Safety Week is held annually
- An effective supervisory and monitoring system is in place that facilitates the prevention of and response to bullying behaviour. This involves the monitoring and supervision of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school exits, school tours, and extra-curricular activities. Non-teaching

and ancillary staff are encouraged to be vigilant and report issues of suspected bullying to the relevant teacher. Supervision also applies to monitoring student use of communication technology (including mobile phones) within the school, ensuring full compliance with the school's Acceptable Use Policy.

### **Curriculum: programmes and initiatives**

- The SPHE, RSE, and Stay Safe Programmes are fully implemented.
- There is Continuous Professional Development for staff in delivering these programmes
- There is school-wide delivery of lessons on **cyber-bullying**: Be Safe – Be Web Wise; Think Before You Click; and Web Wise Primary Teachers' Resources; **homophobic and transphobic bullying** is addressed through the INTO programme, 'Different Families Same Love'.
- The Garda Primary Schools Programme is delivered by community gardaí and focuses on online safety and cyber-bullying.
- The school is particularly mindful of the needs of SEN pupils with regard to programme implementation and the development of skills and strategies to enable all pupils to respond appropriately.

### **Links to other policies**

School policies and practices that are particularly relevant to bullying include the following:

- Code of Behaviour
- Child Protection Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Supervision of pupils
- Pupil attendance

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:
  - i. The primary aim for the relevant teacher in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame);
  - ii. In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher will exercise their professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved;
  - iii. All reports of bullying, including those made anonymously, must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. **Pupils should understand that there are no innocent bystanders and that all incidents of bullying behaviour must be reported to a teacher.** It should be made clear to all pupils that when they report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly;
  - iv. Parents and pupils are required to co-operate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving any issues and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved as quickly as possible;
  - v. All interviews should be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this way;
  - vi. When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher should seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This should be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner;
  - vii. If a group is involved, each member should be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved should be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member should be asked for their account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements;

- viii. In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents/guardians of the parties involved should be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken (by reference to the school policy). The school should give parents/guardians an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports for their pupils;
- ix. Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear that a breach of the school's anti-bullying policy has occurred, and efforts should be made to try to get the perpetrator to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied;
- x. It must also be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parents/guardians) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parents/guardians and the school;
- xi. Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved should be arranged separately with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date if the pupil who has been bullied is ready and agreeable;
- xii. Where a parent/guardian is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents/guardians must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures. In the event that a parent/guardian has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parents/guardians of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.
- xiii. Appendix 3 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013) must be used to record incidents of bullying. This written record must be retained by the relevant teacher and a copy must be provided to the Principal.

**7. The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows:**

- All supports and opportunities will be provided for the pupils affected by bullying to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop friendships and social skills and build resilience: these include in-school supports such as the school's pastoral care system (the Care Team) and the use of group work such as Circle Time, as well as the support of outside agencies, where considered necessary.
- If pupils require counselling or further support the school will endeavour to liaise with the appropriate agencies to organise the same. This may be for the pupil affected by bullying or involved in the bullying behaviour.

**8. 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.

**9. 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.

**10. This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 8<sup>th</sup> April, 2024.**



11. The policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Association. A copy of the policy will be made available to the Department of Education and the patron if requested.
  
12. The 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. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Signed: Ry Walsh  
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: Sibhan McKiernan  
(Principal)

Date: 15-04-24

Date: 15/04/24

Date of next review: April 2025

# Appendix

## Types of Bullying

Additional information on different types of bullying is set out in Section 2 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* (2013).

The list of examples below is non-exhaustive, and Scoil Mhuire may wish to add behaviours which reflect its own circumstances.

### General behaviours which apply to all types of bullying:

- Harassment based on any of the nine grounds in the equality legislation, e.g. sexual harassment, homophobic bullying, racist bullying etc.
- Physical aggression
- Damage to property
- Name calling
- The production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other materials aimed at intimidating another person
- Offensive graffiti
- Extortion
- Intimidation
- Insulting or offensive gestures
- Invasion of personal space

### Cyber (See Cyber Bullying Policy)

- Denigration: Spreading rumours, lies or gossip to hurt a person's reputation
- Harassment: Continually sending vicious, mean or disturbing messages to an individual
- Impersonation: Posting offensive or aggressive messages under another person's name
- Flaming: Using inflammatory or vulgar words to provoke an online fight
- Trickery: Fooling someone into sharing personal information which you then post online
- Posting or sharing confidential or compromising information or images
- Exclusion: Purposefully excluding someone from an online group
- Cyber stalking: Ongoing harassment and denigration that causes a person considerable fear for their safety
- Silent phone calls
- Abusive phone calls
- Abusive text messages
- Abusive email
- Abusive communication on social networks or on games consoles
- Abusive website comments/Blogs/Pictures
- Abusive posts on any form of communication technology
- Spamming - persistent phone calls/ texts/ likes and comments

### Identity Based Behaviours:

- Including any of the nine discriminatory grounds mentioned in Equality Legislation (gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller Community).

## **Homophobic and Transgender**

- Spreading rumours about a person's sexual orientation
- Taunting a person of a different sexual orientation
- Name calling e.g. Gay, queer, lesbian...used in a derogatory fashion
- Physical intimidation or attacks
- Threats
- Discrimination, prejudice, comments or insults about colour, nationality, culture, social class, religious beliefs, ethnic or traveller background.

## **Race, Nationality, Ethnic background and membership of the Traveller Community**

- discrimination, prejudice, comments or insults about colour, nationality, culture, social class, religious beliefs, ethnic or traveller background.
- exclusion on the basis of any of the above

## **Relational:**

This involves manipulating relationships as a means of bullying. Behaviours include:

- malicious gossip
- isolation & exclusion
- ignoring
- excluding from the group
- taking someone's friends away
- "Bitching"
- Spreading rumours
- Breaking confidence
- Talking loud enough so that the victim can hear
- Use of terminology such as 'nerd' in a derogatory way

## **Sexual**

- Unwelcome or inappropriate sexual comments or touching
- Harassment

## **Special Educational Needs, Disability**

- Name calling
- Taunting others because of their disability or learning needs
- Taking advantage of some pupils' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to recognize and defend themselves against bullying
- Taking advantage of some pupils' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to understand social situations and social cues.
- Mimicking a person's disability
- Setting others up for ridicule