



ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Scoil Mhuire gan Smál Cailíní

(reviewed November 2017)

Rational

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 gan Smál Cailíní 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.

This policy is promoted by the Board of Management within the school to all pupils, parents and staff on a repeated basis, with particular attention being given to incoming pupils and their parents.

It is essential that all parties concerned have a clear understanding of the policy in order to form the basis for developing effective school-based strategies for dealing with the problem.

The policy is integrated in the school climate which encourages respect, trust, caring, consideration and support for others. It compliments the Code of Good Behaviour, which recognises that teachers should be firm, clear and consistent in their disciplinary measures and where positive motivation and recognition are seen as most effective in promoting desired behaviour. Effective supervision at all times and in all places is essential to the success of this policy. The raising of awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour is to be achieved through the staff development programme of the school and at Parent/Teacher meetings.

Key Principles in Preventing and Tackling Bullying Behaviour

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) A positive school culture and climate which-**
 - o is welcoming of **difference and diversity** and is based on **inclusivity**;
 - o encourages pupils to **disclose and discuss incidents** of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment; and

- o promotes **respectful relationships** across the school community;

(b) Effective leadership

(c) A school-wide approach

(d) A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact

(e) 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.

(F) Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils;

(g) Supports for staff

(h) Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies); and

(i) On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

Considerations in the Development of a Positive Policy on Countering Bullying

1. The school recognises the right of each member of the school community to enjoy school in a secure environment.
2. The school promotes qualities of social responsibility, tolerance and understanding among all of its members both in school and out of school.
3. The school acknowledges the uniqueness of each individual and her worth as a human being.
4. The school promotes habits of mutual respect, courtesy and an awareness of the interdependence of people in group and community.
5. The school recognises the role of other community agencies in preventing and dealing with bullying. To this end the school policy on bullying will be brought to the attention of parents, community liaison officer, school warden and local shopkeepers in order that instances of bullying behaviour be reported.
6. The school recognises the right of parents to share in the task of equipping the pupil with a range of life-skills. The teaching of the Stay Safe Programme complements this consideration.
7. The school recognises the need to co-operate with and keep parents informed on procedures to improve relationships within the school community. The promotion of home-school links, already well established in the school assists in achieving a positive policy in countering bullying. **The parent body and pupils will receive a copy of**

school procedures in which the guidelines for good behaviour are specified. A full copy of the Code will be available in the office for any parent requesting same.

8. The school disapproves of vulgar, offensive, sectarian or other aggressive behaviour by any of its members.
9. The school has a clear commitment to promoting equity in general and gender equity in particular in all aspects of its functioning.
10. The school identifies aspects of curriculum through which positive and lasting influences can be exerted towards forming pupils attitudes and values.
11. The school takes particular care of "at risk" pupils and uses its monitoring system to provide early intervention when and if necessary and responds to the needs, fears or anxieties of individual members in a sensitive manner.
12. The school has the capacity to change in response to pupils needs.

Definition of Bullying

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**
- **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.

Types of Bullying

The following are some of the types of bullying behaviour that can occur amongst pupils:

- Physical aggression – (pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping people up).
- Damage to property – (clothing, school books and other learning material may become a focus. It may be defaced, broken, stolen or hidden).
- Extortion – (of money/lunches).
- Intimidation – It may be based on the use of very aggressive body language with the voice being used as a weapon.
- Isolation/exclusion - This occurs where a certain person is deliberately isolated, excluded or ignored by some or all of the class group
- Name Calling – Persistent name-calling directed at the same individual(s) which hurts, insults or humiliates
- Slagging – (appearance, clothing or personal hygiene or references to members of family).
- Cyber Bullying - It is bullying carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as text, social network sites, e-mail, instant messaging (IM), apps, gaming sites, chat-rooms and other online technologies.

In these procedures, the member of teaching staff who has responsibility for investigating and dealing with bullying is referred to as the “relevant teacher”. At primary level, the relevant teacher will normally be the class teacher. In the absence of the class teacher, the Principal/Deputy Principal will assume the role of “relevant teacher”

Implementation of Education and Prevention Strategies Including Awareness

The prevention of bullying is an integral part of the written anti-bullying policy of this school. The following is a list of the specific education and prevention strategies that the school implements.

- SPHE programme with specific emphasis on social skills and self-esteem development.
- Circle Time
- Friendship Week
- Be Positive Week
- Cyber Bullying Workshop for 6th Class
- Internet Safety Presentation for 4th-6th Class
- School Policy of Inclusion
- SCP –Programme on Cyber Bullying and the Use of Social Media Sites
- Play-Time Pals
- Get Up Stand Up Programme for 6th Class

Procedures for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying

- 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);
- In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher will exercise his/her **professional judgement to determine** whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved;
- The **relevant teachers** for investigating and dealing with bullying are The **Class teacher/s in consultation with the Principal (Lorraine Houilhan, Deputy Principal Ursula Bn Mhic Amhlaoidh.**
In practice **ANY teacher can be relevant teacher, depending on the circumstances.**
- **All reports**, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. In that way pupils will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance. 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;
- Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), bus escorts, caretakers, cleaners must be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher;
- 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;
- It is very important that all involved (including each set of pupils and parents) understand the above approach from the outset;
- **Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents**
- Incidents are generally best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved;
- 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;
- 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;
- 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 her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements;

- Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that they may face from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher;
- It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s);
- In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents 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 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;
- Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to her how she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts should be made to try to get her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied;
- It must also be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parents) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, her parents and the school;
- 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. This can have a therapeutic effect.
- In cases where the relevant teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, it must be recorded by the relevant teacher in the recording template at **Appendix 1**
- In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant teacher must, as part of his/her professional judgement, take the following factors into account:
 - Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased;
 - Whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable;
 - Whether the relationships between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable; and
 - Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the school Principal or Deputy Principal
- Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures;
- In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

Procedures for Recording Bullying Behaviour

- **The Board of Management must ensure that the school has clear procedures for the formal noting and reporting of bullying behaviour and these must be documented in the school's anti-bullying policy.**
- All records must be maintained in accordance with relevant data protection legislation. The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour must adhere to the following:
- While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the relevant teacher will use his/her professional judgement in relation to the records to be kept of these reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same;
- If it is established by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher must keep appropriate written records which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.
- The relevant teacher must use the recording template at **Appendix 1** to record the bullying behaviour in the following circumstances:
 - (a) in cases where he/she considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour occurred; and
 - (b) where the school has decided as part of its anti-bullying policy that in certain circumstances bullying behaviour must be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable.

In each of the circumstances above (a) and (b), the recording template at **Appendix 1** must be completed in full and retained by the teacher in question and a copy provided to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable. It should also be noted that the timeline for recording bullying behaviour in the recording template at **Appendix 1** does not in any way preclude the relevant teacher from consulting the Principal or Deputy Principal at an earlier stage in relation to a case.

Supports for Pupils Affected by Bullying

- A programme of support for pupils who have been bullied must be in place. Such pupils may need counselling and/or opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise their **self-esteem**, to develop their friendship and **social skills** and thereby build resilience whenever this is needed.
- A programme of support for those pupils involved in bullying behaviour must also be part of the school's intervention process. Pupils involved in bullying behaviour need assistance on an ongoing basis. For those with low self-esteem, opportunities should be developed to increase

feelings of self-worth. It is, therefore, important that the learning strategies applied within the school allow for the enhancement of the pupil's self-worth. Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour may need counselling to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others.

- Pupils who observe incidents of bullying behaviour should be encouraged to discuss them with teachers.
- The school support interventions include circle time, play therapy, one-to-one sessions with SCP facilitator and social skills programme with Support Teacher.

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.

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.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on _____

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website (or where none exists, 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.

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 (or where none exists, be otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) 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: Marian O'Driscoll Chairperson

Date: 20/11/2017

Signed: Xiao Houlika Principal

Date: 20/11/2017

Date of next review: June 2020

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Signed: _____ Chairperson Date:

Signed: _____ Principal Date:

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