

Anti-Bullying Policy

The following Anti-Bullying Policy was drawn up by the Staff and Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire, Maigh Cuilinn, Co. Galway.

The policy was formulated in accordance with the Education Act 1998, Section 15, (1), Section 21 (1), (3), (4), Section 23 (2), (3) and in accordance with Circular 20/90 of the Department of Education and Rule 130 of the Rules for National Schools of the Department of Education. It is based on the Department's Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Schools, 1993 (<http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Post-Primary-School-Policies/Policies/Anti-Bullying.html>) It was revised in 2013 to take account of the Department's 2013 Action Plan on bullying in schools (<http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/Action-Plan-On-Bullying-2013.pdf>)

Scoil Mhuire is committed to its Mission Statement and believes in its ethos of a positive school climate, which focuses on respect for the individual and takes responsibility for the safety and welfare of its pupils.

Bullying behaviour thrives in an atmosphere of uncertainty and secrecy, in which the victim often feels a sense of hopelessness.

Scoil Mhuire acknowledges the role of Board of Management, the teachers and other members of staff in

- establishing and maintaining an awareness of bullying among school participants
- promoting a culture which promotes respect and recognises bullying behaviour
- encouraging reporting of allegations of bullying
- establishing procedures for dealing with allegations of bullying, and
- provides support for the victim and for the person engaged in bullying behaviour

Scope of the policy:

This policy addresses the bullying of pupils enrolled in Scoil Mhuire. It does not address bullying of teachers or other members of staff as this is addressed in a separate policy. It takes account of bullying within Scoil Mhuire's school hours, including break times and during school trips and activities.

Definition of Bullying:

Bullying can be defined as repeated aggression, be it verbal, psychological or physical, which is conducted by an individual or a group against others. It is behaviour which is intentionally aggravating and intimidating. It includes behaviour such as teasing, taunting, deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip or other forms of relational bullying; threatening, hitting, extortion or sexual bullying; cyber-bullying; identity-based bullying; by one or more individuals against another individual.

Relational bullying is a subtle and insidious form of bullying which seeks to affect how the victim is perceived by his/her peers. It can include control, e.g. "Do this or I won't be your friend anymore" (implied or stated explicitly), a group ganging up against one person (girl or boy), nonverbal gesturing, nasty looks, malicious gossip or spreading rumours about a person, exclusion from the friendship group and the "silent treatment". It includes any act where relationship/friendship is used as a weapon.

Sexual Bullying: The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) has defined sexual bullying as "any bullying behaviour, whether physical or non-physical, that is based on a person's sexuality or gender. It is when sexuality or gender is used as a weapon by boys or girls towards other boys or girls - although it is more commonly directed at girls. It can be carried out to a person's face, behind their back or through the use of technology".

Identity-based bullying has been defined as any form of bullying related to the characteristics considered unique to a child's identity, such as their race, religion, ethnic background, family status, sexual orientation or physical appearance. These forms of bullying are not only targeted at an individual, but reflect negative attitudes towards a wider sub-community or group to whom that individual identifies with (or is believed to identify with.)

Aims of the Policy:

1. To create a school ethos which encourages each individual to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour
2. To raise awareness of bullying being an unacceptable form of behaviour with school management, teachers, pupils and parents/ guardians
3. To ensure comprehensive supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of school activity are kept under observation
4. To develop procedures for noting and reporting incidents of bullying behaviour
5. To develop a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and for those engaged in bullying behaviour
6. To work with and through the various local agencies in countering all forms of bullying and anti-social behaviour

Indications of Bullying:

- Anxiety about attending school
- Deterioration in educational performance
- Pattern of physical illness
- Unexplained changes in mood or behaviour
- Visible signs of anxiety or distress
- Possessions missing
- Increased requests for money
- Unexplained bruising
- Reluctance to say what is troubling him/her
- These are all signs of a variety of problems - as well as bullying. When bullying is noticed, it should be reported. When pupils notice others being bullied, they should tell

Procedures for noting and reporting bullying:

1. The individual who has concerns about bullying should report to the class teacher or Principal
2. Reports of bullying either from parents or staff members must be recorded
3. The teacher should investigate and act appropriately. If the teacher suspects that bullying occurred the Principal/Deputy Principal should be informed
4. Parent of those involved should be notified and given an opportunity to discuss the matter with the teacher
5. It should be made clear that children reporting incidents of bullying are acting responsibly
6. A record must be kept of how the matter was handled and the outcome. A record card may be necessary. When the class moves on the succeeding teacher should be informed of any problems that existed

Procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying:

1. Calm, unemotional, problem solving approach
2. Incidents are best investigated outside of the classroom situation
3. Teachers should speak separately to the children involved
4. Members of a group should be met separately and as a group
5. Parents of both sides should be informed where it has been determined that bullying has occurred
6. Check with the child/parents of the child bullied later to check that no further difficulties have arisen
7. A record must be kept by the teacher/Principal of the measures taken and the outcome

Sanctions:

Repeated acts of bullying constitute a serious misdemeanour. Refer to school policy for the Code of Behaviour.

Refer to Stay Safe guidelines for protection and to other documents/programmes to help teachers/parents educate children to avoid/deal with bullying.

We accept that bullying is possible in our school, and in the event of a teacher being made aware of a bullying incident it will be dealt with immediately and having due regard for all parties involved.

This policy is brought to the attention of staff and pupils in the first term of each school year.

It was presented to the parents in draft form in June 2013. Their observations and comments were presented along with the draft policy to the Board of Management on 20th of June 2013 for ratification.

Ratified by Board of Management on 20th June 2013