

# Anti-Bullying Policy

Revised October 2021

## 1. INTRODUCTION

It would be naïve to say that bullying never happens in our school. Bullying happens in all schools, to a lesser or greater degree and must be dealt with promptly and effectively. The Board of Management recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives and wellbeing of pupils.

This Anti-Bullying Policy is a revision of Scoil Mhuire's existing policy. This revised Anti-Bullying Policy is 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 has adopted the following anti-bullying policy within the framework of the school's overall Code of Positive 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 Anti-Bullying Policy should be read in conjunction with our school's Code of Positive Behaviour.

## PRINCIPLES

The Board is fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour:

- Adoption of a Whole-School Approach to Bullying
- The maintenance of a safe, supportive calm and orderly school environment where pupils can learn, play and live full lives as children without fear of being bullied
- Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils
- Fostering a culture of acceptance and tolerance among all members of the school community for each other and for the wider community
- Fostering a culture of inclusivity where difference and diversity is welcomed
- Providing clarity regarding what constitutes bullying behaviour and of the negative impact it can have on pupils wellbeing
- Reinforcement of the message that bullying in any form is unacceptable and will not be tolerated
- Supporting pupils in disclosing and discussing incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment
- Supporting those affected by bullying behaviour and those involved in bullying behaviour and restoring relationships between the parties involved
- Providing clear information and strategies for teachers, pupils and parents to deal with incidents of bullying in an equitable, timely and positive manner
- Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies)
- 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



## 2. WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying is defined by the Department of Education and Skills as unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time.

Bullying is generally accepted to be behaviour that is deliberate and sustained or repeated over time and which has a serious negative impact on the well-being of the victim.

Bullying is always wrong, is always unacceptable and should never be overlooked, ignored or tolerated.

## 3. WHAT BULLYING IS NOT

It is important that pupils and their parents/guardians have a clear understanding of what bullying **is** and what it **is not**.

Isolated or one-off incidents of intentional or unintentional negative behaviour by a pupil or a group of pupils towards another individual pupil or group of pupils, does not fall within the definition of bullying and will be dealt with, as appropriate, in **accordance with the school's Code of Positive Behaviour**.

Pupils and their parents/guardians should refer to the following guidelines, which will help them to identify bullying:

- When someone says or does something hurtful **unintentionally**, and **they do it once**, that is RUDE
- When someone says or does something hurtful **intentionally**, and **they do it once**, that is MEAN
- When someone says or does something hurtful **intentionally**, and **they keep doing it even when you tell them to stop or show them that you're upset that** is BULLYING

## WHY DO CHILDREN ENGAGE IN BULLYING BEHAVIOUR?

It is widely acknowledged that bullying is a learned behaviour. Pupils who bully tend to display aggressive attitudes combined with a low level of self-esteem. Children can become bullies for a variety of reasons. The child who engages in bullying behaviour may:

- lack self-esteem
- be experiencing feelings of insecurity or inadequacy
- be a victim of bullying
- be a victim of physical, sexual or emotional abuse
- find it difficult to socialise with peers
- come from a home background where discipline is lacking
- feel compelled to support a bully in engaging in bullying behaviour out of fear or coercion



#### 4. EXAMPLES OF BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

Bullying behaviour can take many forms. The following is a non-exhaustive list of examples of bullying behaviour:

##### **Physical Aggression**

e.g. pushing, shoving, shouldering, slapping, punching, kicking, poking, tripping.

##### **Interfering with Personal Property**

e.g. damaging, taking or hiding another pupil's personal property.

##### **Extortion**

e.g. demands that money, food or personal property be handed over to the bully, often accompanied by threats.

##### **Blackmail**

e.g. threats of unpleasant consequences if the victim fails to carry out the bully's demands.

##### **Intimidation**

e.g. the use of aggressive body language and vocal language in such a way as to cause fear or anxiety.

##### **Abusive Calls**

e.g. an abusive overt or anonymous telephone call is a form of verbal intimidation or bullying.

##### **Isolation**

e.g. deliberate isolation, exclusion or ignoring by some or all, of the class group.

##### **Passing Notes**

e.g. writing insulting remarks about the victim in public places or passing around notes about or drawings of the victim.

##### **Name-Calling**

e.g. persistent name-calling to hurt, insult or humiliate.

##### **Slagging**

e.g. persistent *good-natured* slagging, after having been asked to desist.

##### **Spreading Rumours**

e.g. spreading gossip or rumours about the victim.

##### **Psychological**

e.g. giving the victim to believe that he/she is being talked about/laughed about/hated by others.

##### **Racist/Ethnic**

e.g. drawing undue attention to, insulting, mocking or criticising the victim on the basis of his/her race or ethnicity.



### **Homophobic**

e.g. drawing undue attention to, insulting, mocking or criticising the victim on the basis of his/her actual, identified or assumed gender or sexual orientation.

### **Cyberbullying**

Cyberbullying is bullying which is done via the internet using a computer, tablet, mobile phone or other internet capable device. Cyberbullying constitutes a psychological rather than a physical bullying.

Cyberbullying can take the form of:

- Rude, nasty, mean or threatening text messages, emails, photos or videos
- silent phone calls
- nasty posts or pictures on social media forums
- accessing the victims accounts
- posing as or impersonating the victim online

Placement of isolated offensive or hurtful public messages, images or statements on a social network site or other public forum where that message, image or statement can be viewed or repeated by other people, is also regarded as bullying behaviour.

### **5. PRESENTATION OF VICTIMS OF BULLYING BEHAVIOUR**

Victims of bullying are often reluctant to talk about what they are going through or to discuss their feelings. They will often present as anxious, insecure and suffering from low self-esteem.

There may be an obvious change in the mood, behaviour and general presentation. The following is a non-exhaustive list of possible signs of bullying. A victim of bullying may:

- engage in negative or aggressive behaviour towards other pupils at school or towards parents/guardians or siblings at home
- display a sudden, marked deterioration of his/her behaviour
- experience tantrums and damage possessions
- present with depression, e.g. moodiness, crying
- display anxiety about travelling to/from school
- express reluctance to attend school and/or after school activities
- experience a marked deterioration in terms of academic performance, concentration and enthusiasm
- become very self-critical
- engage in self-harm
- express feelings of worthlessness and usefulness
- complain of aches, pains and illness without obvious cause
- suffer from actual physiological symptoms of stress, e.g. headaches, stomach cramps, nausea
- present with loss of appetite
- suffer from insomnia or be reluctant to sleep in bed at night alone
- experience nightmares
- suffer from episodes of bedwetting
- request or steal money or other items
- present with unusual cuts, bruises etc.



- be reluctant to talk about school

Whereas a pupils presenting with one or a combination of the above may not actually be the victim of bullying, the possibility that bullying is a factor should be borne in mind and appropriately investigated.

## 6. PRESENTATION OF BULLIES

Bullying is learned behaviour.

Although bullies may present very differently depending on the circumstances involved, one or more of the following general characteristics tend to apply. Bullies may:

- appear to lack empathy or display remorse
- appear indifferent to the pain/hurt their behaviour causes
- display aggressive attitudes
- enjoy inflicting pain or causing offense
- be generally badly behaved
- be attention seekers
- seek to impress others by means of bravado, boasting or bad behaviour
- tend to monopolise friends and exclude pupils in order to exercise control
- suffer from low self-esteem or lack of confidence
- be a victim of bullying themselves

## 7. STEPS TO TAKE IF YOU BELIEVE YOUR CHILD TO BE A VICTIM OF BULLYING BEHAVIOUR AT SCHOOL

- Talk to your child and encourage him/her to share his/her experiences and feelings with you
- Reassure your child that he/she has done nothing wrong and does not deserve to be badly treated by anyone
- Reassure your child that you will support him/her in sorting out the problem
- **Encourage your child to be assertive and to say "No"**
- Highlight the importance of confident speech and body language
- While it is tempting to encourage your child to fight back physically, the school cannot endorse such advice; we cannot promote violent behaviour. Much more positive and effective is a non-aggressive, non-violent confident, assertive approach
- Encourage your child to get away from the bully and to seek help from a teacher
- Keep a record of incidents in order to assess the severity of the problem
- **Contact your child's teacher and make him/her aware of your concerns.** This is best done in written form, i.e. an email. A follow up-phone conversation can then take place once the teacher has had an opportunity to investigate the situation. You will find the teacher appreciative of your alerting him/her to the situation
- **Stay in touch with your child's teacher regarding the situation**
- Contact the Principal if you feel that the situation is not improving or being dealt with satisfactorily
- Contact the Principal for advice at any stage



## 8. INVESTIGATING AND ADDRESSING INCIDENTS OF BULLYING BEHAVIOUR AND ALLEGED BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

### A. Persons Responsible

Allegations and reports of bullying behaviour will be investigated, as appropriate, by:

- The relevant Class or SEN Teacher
- The Principal
- The Board of Management
- The Designated Liaison Person (DLP)

### B. Investigation Procedure

Parents and pupils are expected 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.

Initially, the Investigating Teacher should gather information regarding the allegation of bullying behaviour, including:

- speaking privately with the alleged victim(s)
- securing a written account of the bullying behaviour from the alleged victim(s)
- speaking privately with the alleged perpetrator(s)
- securing a written account of the incident(s) or circumstance(s) from the alleged perpetrators
- speaking with and securing written and verbal accounts of the incident(s) or circumstance(s) from relevant staff members
- speaking with and securing written and verbal accounts of the incident(s) or circumstance(s) from other pupils
- consulting with the parents/guardian of the alleged victim(s) and alleged perpetrator(s)

Where possible, allegation/incidents to be discretely investigated outside the classroom situation.

All investigations to be conducted with sensitivity and due regard to all the students concerned.

When investigating allegations of bullying behaviour or incidents, the relevant teacher should seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why in a calm, non-confrontational manner.

The Investigating Teacher may consult with any staff member or other persons during the course of their investigation in order to seek guidance or further relevant information.

Depending on the seriousness of the alleged bullying, the Investigating Teacher may:

- consult with the Designated Liaison Person DLP, who may decide to seek advice from and/or submit a report to TUSLA.



- as a Mandated Person, seek advice from and/or submit a report to TUSLA.

The Investigating Teacher should consult with the Principal and advise him that an investigation is taking place. He/she should keep the Principal apprised of the progress of investigations at all stages. The Principal may involve himself in the investigation at any stage.

The Investigating Teacher must consult with the Principal before any action in relation to bullying behaviour takes place.

The Investigating Teacher should complete an Investigation of Alleged Bullying Form (see Appendix 1)

The Investigating Teacher, in consultation with the Principal, will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best to resolve the situation.

### **C. Actions to be Taken:**

The outcome of the investigation will be recorded on the Investigation of Bullying Form (see Appendix 1.)

If it is determined that bullying behaviour has either not occurred or cannot be verified, this will be communicated to the parents/guardians of the pupils involved via phonecall.

Where it has been determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved should be contacted to inform them of the matter and to explain the actions being taken. Parents should be given an opportunity to discuss ways in which they can support the actions being taken by the school.

Meetings with the relevant parties involved may be arranged separately with a view to bringing them together at a later date, when the victim is ready and comfortable. An additional follow up meeting with the parents of the children involved may take place after an appropriate time to ensure the matter has been resolved satisfactorily.

Where bullying behaviour has occurred, appropriate action will be taken in line with **the school's Code of Positive Behaviour**. Depending on the seriousness of the bullying behaviour, this may include:

- Restorative Practice (see Appendix 3)
- Lunch Time Detention with Focused Written Exercises
- Loss of Privileges
- Commencement of a Behaviour Contract
- Formal Letter to Parents/Guardian from Principal
- Referral to the Board of Management (which may include consideration of suspension or expulsion)
- Referral to TUSLA
- Referral to An Garda Síochána



Follow up actions, i.e. sanctions imposed, engagement in Restorative Practice, consultations and meeting with parents should be recorded on AB Follow Up Actions Form (Appendix 2.)

All forms must be completed in full and maintained in compliance with GDPR. In cases where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case appropriately and in accordance with these procedures, the parents will be referred to the school's **Complaints and Grievances Policy**. **Following this, if the parent** remains unsatisfied, the parent has the right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

#### 9. FOLLOW-UP ENGAGEMENT WITH PERPETRATORS OF BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

The perpetrator(s) of bullying behaviour will:

- have it made clear that bullying behaviour in school is completely unacceptable
- be encouraged to reflect on their negative behaviour
- be encouraged to consider the impact his/her behaviour had on the victim
- be encouraged to engage with the victim in Restorative Practice
- be supported in making amends for the negative behaviour
- serve an appropriate sanction

Staff members engaging with the pupil should do so outside of the classroom context, whenever possible. Discrete discussions tend to:

- Reduce the potential for the pupil to engage in bravado or defiance in front of the class
- Maintain an appropriate level of discretion and afford the pupil a level of respect and dignity

Staff members, should:

- describe the negative behaviour that took place in a calm, factual manner
- explain that such behaviour is unacceptable
- encourage the pupil to reflect on/explain/discuss his/her behaviour, using a Reflective Exercise Sheet (see Appendix 4)
- encourage the pupil to consider the impact his/her behaviour had on the victim
- support the pupil in engaging with Restorative Practice (see Appendix 5)
- in consultation with the Principal, impose the appropriate sanction

The pupil should be made aware that, although he/she is valued, his/her behaviour is unacceptable and has caused hurt and disappointment.

If the pupil fails to respond appropriately or engage with the process, his/her non-cooperation and non-engagement will compound the already serious misbehaviour of bullying and be considered very serious misbehaviour, rendering the pupil liable to sanctions appropriate to this level of misbehaviour.



#### 10. SUPPORTING VICTIMS OF BULLYING

Victims of bullying behaviour will be supported in the following ways:

- Restorative Practice Sessions with the perpetrator with a view to repairing/restoring relationships
- Whole-class SPHE Lessons on Bullying Awareness
- Whole-class teaching of social skills
- Whole-class teaching of assertiveness skills
- Teacher initiated buddy systems

#### 11. SUPPORTING PERPETRATORS OF BULLYING

Perpetrators of bullying behaviour will be treated with respect and dignity and will be supported in the following ways:

- Teacher-led consultation with the pupil to identify issues, explain the victim's perspective, support the pupil in making amends.
- Whole-class lessons to build confidence and self-esteem
- Initiation of Classroom Support as per Continuum of Support
- Withdrawal from class for teaching of social skills, good decision making and empathy by SEN Teacher, with parent/guardian consent
- Advice for parents regarding help and support available, e.g. play therapy, counselling, CAMHS, psychological assessment
- Support meetings with parents/guardians of the pupil

#### 12. WHOLE SCHOOL BULLYING AWARENESS AND PREVENTION

The school will make use of a variety of Bullying education and prevention strategies, such as:

SPHE based lessons (Walk Tall Programme, Stay Safe Programme, RSE Programme) and Webwise, to enable pupils to:

- recognise bullying behaviour and respond appropriately
- confront bullying behaviour
- develop self-protection skills
- resolve conflict
- develop empathy and respect for each other
- build confidence, resilience and self-esteem
- develop awareness of cyberbullying
- stay safe online

Anti-Bullying Week

Friendship Week

Safer Internet Day

**Zippy's Friends, as appropriate**

Friends for Life, as appropriate

#### 13. REPORTING AND RECORDING

During the course of investigation of allegations of bullying behaviour, records will be kept securely by the Investigating Teacher.



On conclusion of investigation, records **will be kept securely in the Principal's office.**

Records will be maintained in accordance with GDPR.

Relevant recording documents include:

- Documentary evidence of bullying behaviour, e.g. notes, screenshots, photographs
- Emails sent by pupils or parents regarding the bullying behaviour
- **Written witness' accounts of incidents of bullying behaviour**
- Investigation of Alleged Bullying Form
- Outcome of Investigation of Alleged Bullying Form
- Reflective Exercise Sheets (Victim)
- Reflective Exercise Sheets (Perpetrator)
- Restorative Practice Sheets
- Board of Management Meeting minutes, where applicable
- DLP records, where applicable
- **Principal's Child Protection Oversight Report to the Board of Management, where applicable**

Incidents of Bullying Behaviour that are determined to have occurred are reported to the Board of Management at meetings of the Board.

Cases of bullying that come to the attention of the DLP are reported to the Board of Management at meetings of the Board as part of **the Principal's Child Protection Oversight Report.**

#### 14. COMMUNICATION, IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

The policy will be shared with all staff, each of whom has a responsibility to familiarise himself/herself with its contents and the procedures outlined therein.

The policy will be shared with Parents/Guardian via email. It will also be available to **view/download from the school's website.**

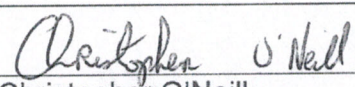
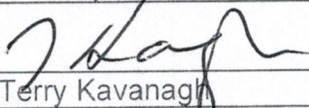
A copy of the policy will be sent to the Patron .

The policy will be implemented by the Principal and Staff of Scoil Mhuire.

It will be reviewed by the Board of Management in light of experience and additional guidance from the DES.

#### 15. RATIFICATION

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire on November 2021.

Chairperson Board of Management		1/12/2021
	Christopher O'Neill	
Principal and Secretary Board of Management		1-12-21
	Terry Kavanagh	



## APPENDIX 1

INVESTIGATION OF ALLEGED BULLYING	
DATE	TIME
STAFF MEMBER(S) INVESTIGATING	
ALLEGED VICTIM(S)	
PUPIL(S) ALLEGED TO HAVE ENGAGED IN BULLYING BEHAVIOUR	
HOW THE ALLEGED BULLYING BEHAVIOUR CAME TO LIGHT	
NAME(S) OF WITNESS(S), REPORTER(S)	
DETAILS OF ALLEGED BULLYING	



STEPS TAKEN AS PART OF INVESTIGATION	

CHECKLIST	
Anti-Bullying Policy Consulted?	
Principal Consulted?	
Records Confidentially Secured?	

DETERMINATION OF STAFF MEMBER(S) INVESTIGATING		
Has/have the Staff Member(s) investigating determined that bullying behaviour has taken place?	YES	
	NO	

SIGNED		DATE	
SIGNED		DATE	



## APPENDIX 2

AB Follow Up Actions							
STAFF MEMBER(S) IN CHARGE							
VICTIM(S)							
PUPIL(S) WHO ENGAGED IN BULLYING BEHAVIOUR							
INITIAL CONSULTATION WITH PARENTS OF VICTIM(S)							
FORM	Meeting		Email		Phonecall		Text
DATE							
DETAILS							

INITIAL CONSULTATION WITH PARENTS OF OTHER PUPILS(S)							
FORM	Meeting		Email		Phonecall		Text
DATE							
DETAILS							

SANCTIONS IMPOSED	
SANCTION	1.
	2.
	3.
	4.



REFLECTIVE EXERCISE							
VICTIM(S)	DONE				ENGAGEMENT		
	YES		NO		Good	Fair	Limited
OTHER(S)	DONE				ENGAGEMENT		
	YES		NO		Good	Fair	Limited

RESTORATIVE PRACTICE SESSIONS							
1	DATE		Good Progress		Fair Progress		Limited Progress
DETAILS							
2	DATE		Good Progress		Fair Progress		Limited Progress
DETAILS							

FOLLOW UP CONSULTATION WITH PARENTS OF VICTIM(S)							
FORM	Meeting		Email		Phonecall		Text
DATE							
DETAILS							



FOLLOW UP CONSULTATION WITH PARENTS OF OTHER(S)				
FORM	Meeting		Email	
DATE			Phonecall	
DETAILS			Text	

CHECKLIST	
PARENTS CONSULTED	
PRINCIPAL CONSULTED	
SANCTIONS IMPOSED	
VICTIM(S)/OTHER PUPIL(S) ENGAGEMENT	
REFLECTIVE EXERCISES COMPLETED	
RESTORATIVE PRACTICE ENGAGEMENT	
FOLLOW UP WITH PARENTS	

REPORT OF STAFF MEMBER(S) IN CHARGE		
Is the Staff Member(s) satisfied that the situation is resolved?	YES	
	NO	
DETAILS		

SIGNED		DATE	
SIGNED		DATE	



## APPENDIX 3



# Scoil Mhuire, Maigh Cuilinn

## CODE OF POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR

### Reflective Exercise OTHER(S)

Ainm NAME	
Rang CLASS	
Dáta DATE	
MY ACCOUNT OF WHAT TOOK PLACE	
WHAT WERE YOU THINKING AT THE TIME?	
DID YOU CONSIDER THE CONSEQUENCES AT THE TIME?	
WHAT HAVE YOUR THOUGHTS BEEN SINCE?	



WHO HAS BEEN AFFECTED BY WHAT YOU DID?	
IN WHAT WAY HAVE THEY BEEN AFFECTED?	
DO YOU REGRET WHAT YOU DID? IF SO, WHY? IF NOT, WHY?	
WHAT DO YOU THINK NEEDS TO HAPPEN NOW TO MAKE IT RIGHT?	
Pupil's Signature:	
Parents Signature:	
Síniú an Mhúinteora:	
Síniú an Phríomhoide:	





## Scoil Mhuire, Maigh Cuilinn

### CODE OF POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR

### Reflective Exercise

Ainm NAME	
Rang CLASS	
Dáta DATE	
MY ACCOUNT OF WHAT TOOK PLACE	
HOW DID YOU FEEL AT THE TIME?	
WHY DO YOU THINK THIS HAPPENED?	



HOW DO YOU FEEL NOW?	
WHAT HAS BEEN THE HARDEST THING FOR YOU IN ALL OF THIS?	
WHO HAS BEEN SUPPORTIVE OR HELPFUL TO YOU?	
WHAT DO YOU THINK NEEDS TO HAPPEN NOW TO MAKE IT RIGHT?	
Pupil's Signature:	
Parents Signature:	
Síniú an Mhúinteora:	
Síniú an Phríomhoide:	



## APPENDIX 5

**Restorative Practice**

Restorative Practice in our school provides a focus on developing positive relationships between all members of the school community. It gives opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their behaviour.

Restorative Practice is a process whereby children are given the opportunity to reflect on their behaviour and how they and others have been affected by it, so as to help heal broken relationships and prevent reoccurrence.

Where Bullying Behaviour occurs, the school will use restorative practice involving all parties affected to help repair the harm done.

Restorative Practice sessions will be held, by agreement with the parents/guardians of the parties involved.

The Reflective Exercises completed by the Victim(s) and the Other(s) involved will form the basis of the sessions.

Restorative Questions to respond to Bullying Behaviour

- What happened?
- What were you thinking about at the time?
- What have your thoughts been since?
- Who has been affected by what you did?
- In what way have they been affected?
- What do you think needs to happen to make things right?

Restorative Questions to help those harmed by other actions

- What did you think when you realised what had happened?
- What have your thoughts been since?
- How has this affected others?
- What has been the hardest thing for you?
- What do you think needs to happen to make things right?

The successful resolution of the issues involved will be contingent on positive engagement by all parties involved and the level of progress made in Restorative Practice sessions.