Scoil Mhuire

Scoil Mhuire Anti-Bullying Policy

Review: December 2023

Introduction

Scoil Mhuire National School thanks you for reading this very important policy. We want to prevent and tackle bullying behaviour. We encourage everyone to become very familiar with this policy.

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Full Compliance

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 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.

Key Principles of Best Practice

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;

● 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)

● On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

The 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, extortion, isolation, and

● persistent name calling, 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 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 our 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.

This policy applies to activities and events that take place:

● During school time (including break times)

● School tours/trips

● Extra-curricular activities

● Or any incidents where children are wearing their school uniform Scoil Mhuire NS reserves the right to take action against bullying perpetrated outside the school which spills over into the school.

Who Is Responsible For Doing What?

The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows:

Anti-Bullying Coordinators:

· **Brian Coleman** (School Principal)

· **Lorraine Higgins** (Deputy Principal)

Those Responsible For Implementing This Policy:

● **All Teaching Staff and SNAs:** All Teaching Staff will investigate and record incidents of bullying behaviour. Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) will assist teachers in monitoring pupils and activities on the yard.

● **Stephen Sheridan (Home School Community Liaison officer):** Responsibility for links with parents and dispersal of relevant information and support.

● **The Management Team:** This team reviews the policy annually and monitors its implementation regularly, including the creation and implementation of annual Action Plans.

● **Whole Staff:** The whole staff reviews the policy annually and monitors the implementation of the policy, the delivery of the Stay Safe Programme in all classes and takes part in necessary upcoming CPD and uses any resources available for the prevention of bullying.

Our Education and Prevention Strategies

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:

● Teachers influence attitudes to bullying behaviour in a positive manner through a range of curricular initiatives. There are a number of curriculum components and programmes which are particularly relevant to the prevention of bullying and the promotion of respect for diversity and inclusiveness.

● SPHE curriculum makes specific provision for exploring bullying as well as the interrelated areas of belonging and integrating, communication, conflict, friendship, personal safety and relationships.

● The Stay Safe programme is a personal safety skills programme which seeks to enhance children's self-protection skills including their ability to recognise and cope with bullying. This content is shown in Cuntas Míosúil.

● RSE aims to provide opportunities for children to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.

● Other resources and programmes include: PDST Anti-Bullying Support Material, Webwise, Walk Tall.

Our Procedures Re: Bullying Behaviour

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:

● Children are encouraged to disclose and discuss what they perceive to be incidents of bullying behaviour. This can be with the class teacher, the teacher on yard duty at the time, the principal, Special Needs Assistants, any member of staff, the school completion project worker or with their parents. This is a "telling school" as defined in the Stay Safe Programme. Children will therefore be constantly assured that their reports of bullying (either for themselves or peers) will be treated with sensitivity.

● Allegations of bullying having occurred are dealt with promptly, firmly and fairly.

● The Incident will be investigated – what, who, when, where, why?

● Pupils are required to cooperate with any investigation. Parents of those involved may, if deemed necessary, also be required to cooperate with any investigation. Pupils who are not directly involved but who have witnessed negative behaviour can also provide very useful information and may be expected to assist in any investigation. Children should understand there are no innocent bystanders if they remain passive where bullying is concerned—all bystanders should report what they perceive to be bullying/negative behaviour.

● The relevant teacher will exercise professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred. This may involve consultation with the class teacher(s) of the children involved and members of the management team.

● Once it has been established that bullying has indeed taken place, the bullying behaviour will be noted and recorded on the online school's administration system by the relevant class teacher(s).

● If a group is involved, they may be met both individually and as a group. Each member will be asked for his/her account of what has happened. Accounts may be recorded. (Restorative Practice).

● The parents/guardians of the parties involved will be made aware of what has happened and requested to come and discuss the matter with the teacher and/or principal with a view to solving the problem.

● The alleged bully/bullies will be asked to reflect on his/her/their behaviour and its consequences for himself/herself/themselves and for the person (/people) who is (/are) the victim(s). If deemed necessary, he/she/they will be asked to sign an undertaking that "this behaviour will not reoccur." (Restorative Practice).

● Efforts will be made to resolve any issues through mediation and to restore, as far as feasible, the relationships of the individuals involved. The situation will be monitored by the class teacher(s) of the individuals involved.

● Serious incidents or recurring incidents of bullying behaviour which have, in the opinion of the relevant class teacher, not been adequately or appropriately addressed within 20 school days will be recorded on the DES template and shall be reported to the principal / deputy principal. The teacher will also use the DES recording template where he/she considers the bullying behaviour to constitute serious misconduct.

● The situation will continue to be closely monitored to ensure that the problem has been resolved. Reconciliation of all is seen as the ultimate goal. Actions taken will be recorded. Records will be reviewed and analysed.

● The code of behaviour will be invoked in circumstances where it is deemed prudent by the relevant teacher and school principal.

● At each Board of Management meeting, the Principal will provide a report to the Board of Management setting out:

○ The overall number of bullying cases reported (by means of the bullying recording template) to the Principal or Deputy Principal since the previous report to the board.

○ Confirmation that all these cases have been, or are being dealt with in accordance with the school's anti-bullying policy.

● Additionally, 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 Board of Management.

● 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.

The School's Programme of Support

The school's Programme of Support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows:

● All in-school 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 may include:

○ Social skills groups

○ Buddy Programmes

○ Group work such as circle time

○ Revision of specific Stay Safe lessons with class groups

● If pupils require counselling or further supports 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.

● Pupils should understand that there are no innocent bystanders and that all incidents of bullying behaviour must be reported to a member of staff.

Cyber Bullying

Cyber bullying includes (but is not limited to) communicating via electronic means with the objective of causing hurt, fear, embarrassment, humiliation, alarm and/or distress to one or more persons.

Cyber bullying includes the use of digital technology and the internet with the objective of upsetting someone.

It may take the form of general insults or impersonation, defamation or prejudice-based bullying.

Unlike other forms of bullying, a once-off posting can constitute bullying.

While this policy addresses issues related to cyber bullying of students (i.e. situations in which one or more students are the victim[s] of bullying), the policy also applies to teaching and other school staff.

Key Measures regarding Cyber Bullying

● Staff will be trained to identify signs of cyberbullying and will endeavour to keep informed about the technologies that children commonly use.

● Advice will be communicated to help students protect themselves from being involved in bullying (as perpetrator or as victim) and to advise them on reporting any incidents.

● Gardaí will continue to visit the school to talk about cyber-bullying.

● Teachers will dedicate a stand-alone lesson to deal with the issue of cyberbullying.

● Parents will be updated annually on our anti bullying policy.

● Students and staff are expected to comply with the school's policy on the use of computers in the school. (Acceptable Use Policy)

● Parents have access to information and advice on cyber bullying.

● Scoil Mhuire endeavours to block access to inappropriate websites, using firewalls, antivirus protection and filtering systems.

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.

Date This Policy Was Adopted

This policy was adopted and reviewed by the Board of Management on: 20th December 2023.

Availability of This Policy

This policy has been made available to school personnel and the student council, published on the school website and provided to the Parents Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

Review of This Policy

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.

A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Signed: Signed:

(Chairperson of Board of Management)   (Principal)

Date: Date:

Appendix 1 Template for recording bullying behaviour

1. Name of pupil being bullied and class group

Name _____Class_____

2. Name(s) and class(es) of pupil(s) engaged in bullying behaviour

_____
_____
_____

3. Source of bullying concern/report (tick relevant box(es))

Pupil concerned	
Other Pupil	
Parent	
Teacher	
Other	

4. Location of incidents (tick relevant box(es))

Playground	
Classroom	
Corridor	
Toilets	
School Bus	
Other	

5. Name of person(s) who reported the bullying concern

6. Type of Bullying Behaviour (tick relevant box(es)) *

Physical Aggression		Cyber-bullying	
Damage to Property		Intimidation	
Isolation/Exclusion		Malicious Gossip	
Name Calling		Other (specify)	

7. Where behaviour is regarded as identity-based bullying, indicate the relevant category:

Homophobic	Disability/SEN related	Racist	Membership of Traveller community	Other (specify)

8. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact

9. Details of actions taken

Signed _____ (Relevant Teacher)   Date _____

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal _____

APPENDIX (2): Types of Behaviour Involved in Cyberbullying

These guidelines provide assistance in identifying and describing the types of behaviour involved in cyberbullying. The means of cyber bullying are constantly changing, and the following list of types ofbullying behaviour can be expanded in light of the experience of the school community:

Types of Behaviour in Cyber Bullying...

Hate Sites

● Encouraging other people to join the bullying by publishing someone's personal details or linking to their social network page.

● Abusive messages.

● Transmitting abusive and/or threatening messages.

● Chat rooms and discussion forums.

● Posting cruel and/or or abusive comments about someone.

Digital Devices/Gaming Consoles

● Sending humiliating and abusive video messages or photographic images messages.

● Making silent or abusive phone calls.

● Sending abusive text messages.

● Interactive gaming.

● Locking victims out of games.

● Spreading false rumours about someone.

● Hacking into someone's account.

● Sending viruses.

● Sending hacking programs to another person.

● Unauthorised interference with a computer device.

Abusing Personal Information

● Transmitting personal photos, videos, emails.

● Reposting without permission

APPENDIX (3): How You Can Support Your Child

A. Dealing with cyberbullying: https://www.webwise.ie/parents/cyberbullying-advice

B. Support Re Other Types of Bullying

Teaching a child to say "NO" in a good assertive tone of voice will help deal with many situations. A child's self-image and body language may send out messages to potential bullies.

Parents should approach their child's teacher by appointment if the bullying is school related. It is important for you to understand that bullying in school can be difficult for teachers to detect because of the large numbers of children involved. Teachers will appreciate bullying being brought to light. School bullying requires that parents and teachers work together for a resolution.

Sometimes parental advice to a child is to "hit back" at the bully if the abuse is physical. This is not always realistic as it requires a huge amount of courage and indeed sometimes makes the situation worse.

Children should not be encouraged to engage in violent behaviour. Teaching children to be more assertive and to tell is far more positive and effective.

It is important to be realistic; it will not be possible for a single child to assert his/her rights if attacked by a group. Children should be advised to get away and tell in situations such as this.

Keep an account of incidents to help you assess how serious the problem is. Many children with a little help overcome this problem very quickly.

What If Your Child Is Bullying?

1. Don't panic. This may be a temporary response to something else in the child's life e.g. a new baby, a death in the family, a difficult home problem etc. Give your child an opportunity to talk about anything that could be upsetting him/her.

2. Don't punish bullying by being a bully yourself. Hitting and verbal attacks will make the situation worse. Talk to your child and try to find out if there is a problem. Explain how the victim felt. Try to get the child to understand the victim's point of view. This would need to be done over time.

3. Bullies often suffer low self-esteem. Use every opportunity you can to praise good, considerate, helpful behaviour. Don't only look for negatives.

4. Talk to your child's teacher and find out more about your child's school behaviour. Enlist the teacher's help in dealing with this. It is important that you both take the same approach.

5. If the situation is serious you may need to ask the school or G.P. to refer your child to the child guidance clinic for help.