

## 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, the Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire GNS 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 and updated in November 2021.
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 staff and is therefore fully committed to the following **key principles of best practice** in preventing and addressing bullying behaviour and in promoting **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 without fear of repercussions and
  - promotes respectful relationships across the school community.

### Key elements of a positive school culture:

- The school acknowledges the right of each member of the school community to enjoy all aspects of school life in a psychologically safe and secure environment.
- The school acknowledges the uniqueness of each individual and his/her worth as a human being.
- The school promotes positive behaviours of self-respect, respect for others, self-management and active responsibility among all its members.
- The school prohibits vulgar, offensive, sectarian or other aggressive behaviour or language by any of its members.
- The school has a clear commitment to promoting equity in general and gender equity in particular in all aspects of its functioning.
- The school has the capacity to adapt in response to pupils' needs.
- The school identifies aspects of curriculum through which positive and lasting influences can be exerted towards forming pupils' attitudes and values.

- The school takes particular care of "at risk" pupils and uses its monitoring systems to facilitate early intervention where necessary and it responds to the needs, fears or anxieties of individual members in a sensitive manner.
- The school recognises the need to work in partnership with parents and keep them informed of procedures to improve relationships on a school-wide basis – THINK etc.
- The school recognises the role of parents in equipping the pupil with a range of life-skills that will prevent them from enduring bullying or bullying others.
- The school recognises the role of other community agencies in preventing and dealing with bullying.
- The school promotes habits of mutual respect, courtesy and an awareness of the interdependence of people in groups and communities.
- The school promotes qualities of social responsibility, tolerance and understanding among all its members both in school and out of school.
- Staff members share a collegiate responsibility, under the direction of the Principal, to act in preventing bullying/aggressive behaviour by any member of the school community.

#### **(b) Effective leadership**

- Effective leadership, supporting a school culture and climate that celebrates difference, is key to good practice. The role of all those in leadership roles within the school is of great importance in stimulating a school-wide approach to preventing and tackling bullying.
- Principals and other leaders in the school, including all teachers, should strive to engender an ethos under which bullying is unacceptable.
- School leaders should also involve both staff and pupils in developing and implementing a vision of the school where diversity is accepted and celebrated.
- As pupils model their behaviour on that of adults, Principals and teachers should act as good role-models, be fair, firm, calm and consistent in their disciplinary measures.

#### **(c) A school-wide approach**

- The *Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers* published by the Teaching Council makes explicit the values and standards expected of teachers in their daily work with pupils.
- The NEWB publication *Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools* recognises the role of all adults, including parents, in modelling good behaviour and states "The adults in the school have a responsibility to model the school's standards of behaviour, in their dealings both with pupils and with each other, since their example is a powerful source of learning for pupils. Parents should be expected to model the standards that pupils are asked to respect. In order to do this, they need to be familiar with the standards and to understand the importance of expecting pupils to behave according to these standards. The ways

in which parents and teachers interact will provide pupils with a mode of good working relationships”.

- (d) **A shared and clear understanding of what the nature of bullying is and its impact**
  - (e) **Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that**
    - build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils
    - 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.**
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, 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 and
- identity-based bullying such as homophobic bullying, racist bullying, bullying based on a person's religious community or membership of the Traveller community and bullying related to Neurodiversity as well as 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.

### Examples of bullying behaviours

<p><b>General behaviours which apply to all types of bullying towards any member of the school community</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harassment based on any of the nine grounds in the equality legislation e.g. sexual harassment, homophobic bullying, racist bullying etc.</li> <li>• Physical aggression</li> <li>• Damage to property</li> <li>• Name calling</li> <li>• Slagging in an intentionally hurtful manner</li> <li>• The production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other materials aimed at intimidating another person</li> <li>• Offensive graffiti</li> <li>• Extortion</li> <li>• Intimidation</li> <li>• Isolation and exclusion</li> <li>• Insulting or offensive gestures</li> <li>• Invasion of personal space</li> <li>• A combination of any of the types listed.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cyber</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Denigration:</b> Spreading rumors, lies or gossip to hurt a person's reputation</li> <li>• <b>Harassment:</b> Continually sending vicious, mean or disturbing messages to an individual</li> <li>• <b>Impersonation:</b> Posting an inoffensive, offensive or aggressive message under another person's name</li> <li>• <b>Flaming:</b> Using inflammatory or vulgar words to provoke an online fight</li> <li>• <b>Trickery:</b> Fooling someone into sharing personal information which you then post online</li> <li>• <b>Outing:</b> Posting or sharing confidential or compromising information or images</li> <li>• <b>Exclusion:</b> Purposefully excluding someone from an online group</li> <li>• <b>Cyber stalking:</b> Ongoing harassment and denigration that causes a person considerable fear for his/her safety or wellbeing.</li> <li>• Silent telephone/mobile phone call</li> <li>• Abusive telephone/mobile phone calls</li> <li>• Abusive text messages</li> <li>• Abusive email</li> <li>• Abusive communication on social networks e.g. Facebook/Ask.fm/ Instagram/Twitter/You Tube or on games</li> </ul>

	<p>consoles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abusive website comments/Blogs/Pictures</li> <li>• Abusive posts on any form of communication technology</li> </ul>
<p><b>Identity Based Behaviours</b>  <b>Including any of the nine discriminatory grounds mentioned in Equality Legislation</b>  (gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community).</p>	
<b>Homophobic and Transgender</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spreading rumours about a person's sexual orientation</li> <li>• Taunting a person of a different sexual orientation</li> <li>• Name calling e.g. Gay, etc...used in a derogatory manner</li> <li>• Physical intimidation or attacks</li> <li>• Threats</li> </ul>
<b>Race, nationality, ethnic background and membership of the Traveller community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discrimination, prejudice, comments or insults about colour, nationality, culture, social class, religious beliefs, ethnic or traveller background</li> <li>• Exclusion on the basis of any of the above</li> </ul>
<b>Relational</b>	<p>This involves manipulating relationships as a means of bullying. Behaviours include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Malicious gossip</li> <li>• Isolation &amp; exclusion</li> <li>• Deliberate &amp; intentional ignoring</li> <li>• Excluding from the group</li> <li>• Taking someone's friends away - isolating someone from a friend group/established group</li> <li>• Spreading rumours</li> <li>• Breaking confidence</li> <li>• Talking loud enough so that the victim can hear when being offensive about them</li> </ul>
<b>Harassment</b>	<p><b>Prevention of Harassment</b></p> <p>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 members of the school community 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.</p>
<b>Sexual</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unwelcome or inappropriate sexual comments or touching</li> <li>• Harassment</li> </ul>
<b>Special Educational</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Name calling</li> <li>• Taunting others because of their Neurodiversity, disability or</li> </ul>

Needs, Disability	learning needs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taking advantage of some pupils' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to recognise and defend themselves against bullying</li> <li>• Taking advantage of some pupils' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to understand social situations and social cues.</li> <li>• Mimicking a person's disability</li> <li>• Setting others up for ridicule</li> <li>• Exclusion</li> </ul>
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#### 4. Impacts and Indicators of Bullying Behaviour

##### Impacts of bullying behaviour:

- Pupils who are being bullied may develop feelings of insecurity, humiliation and extreme anxiety and thus may become more vulnerable. Self-confidence may be damaged with a consequent lowering of self-esteem.
- Pupils who witness bullying may also be affected and may suffer in similar ways to those who are bullied.
- There are also negative mental health consequences for individuals who engage in bullying behaviour.

##### Indicators of bullying behaviour:

The following signs and symptoms may suggest that a pupil is being bullied:

- Anxiety about travelling to and from school e.g. requesting parents to drive or collect him/her, changing travel routes, avoiding regular times for travelling to and from school.
- Unwillingness to go to school, refusal to attend, truancy.
- Deterioration in educational performance, loss of concentration and loss of enthusiasm and interest in school.
- Pattern of physical illnesses e.g. headache, stomach aches.
- Unexplained changes either in mood or behaviour which may be particularly noticeable before returning to school after weekends or more especially after longer school holidays.
- Visible signs of anxiety or distress e.g. stammering, withdrawing, nightmares, difficulty in sleeping, crying, not eating, vomiting, bedwetting.
- Spontaneous out-of-character comments about either pupils or teachers.
- Possessions missing or damaged.
- Increased requests for money or stealing money.
- Unexplained bruising or cuts or damaged clothing.
- Reluctance and/or refusal to say what is troubling him/her.

There may be other signs depending on the individual and his/her circumstances. The above signs do not necessarily mean that a pupil is being bullied but if repeated or

occurring in combination, these signs do warrant investigation in order to establish what is affecting the pupil.

It is, therefore, essential for school staff to be alert to changes in behaviour as early intervention can be very effective.

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

The Relevant Teachers in this school are:

Principal: Donncha Cleary

Deputy Principal: Breda Nugent

Class Teachers: All teaching staff

SET Teachers: All SET Teachers

Class Teachers will be the relevant teacher in investigating any alleged case of bullying in the early stages.

**Any teacher may act as a relevant teacher if circumstances warrant it.**

6. The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyberbullying, homophobic and transphobic bullying) that will be used by the school are as follows:

Sample Education and prevention strategies
<p><b>School-wide approach</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A school-wide commitment to the fostering of respect for all members of the school community.</li><li>• The promotion of the value of diversity to address issues of prejudice and stereotyping and highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour.</li><li>• The fostering and enhancing of the self-esteem of all our pupils through both curricular and extracurricular activities. Pupils will be provided with</li></ul>

opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth through formal and informal interactions.

- Whole staff professional development on bullying to ensure that all staff develops an awareness of what bullying is, how it impacts on pupils' lives and the need to respond to it - prevention and intervention.
- School wide awareness raising and training on all aspects of bullying, to include pupils, parent(s)/guardian(s) and the wider school community. (e.g. talks for parents/pupils on Stay Safe, Internet Safety/Cyberbullying).
- Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extra- curricular activities. Non-teaching and ancillary staff will be encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers. Supervision will also apply to monitoring student use of communication technology within the school.
- Buddy system and other student support activities that can help to support pupils and encourage a culture of peer respect and support.
- Development and promotion of an Anti-Bullying code for the school - displayed publicly in classrooms and in common areas of the school.
- The school's anti-bullying policy is discussed with pupils and all parent(s)/guardian(s) are given a copy as part of the Code of Behaviour of the school upon entry. It is also available on request from the Office.
- The implementation of regular whole school awareness measures including posters, competitions, group assemblies etc.
- Encourage a culture of telling, with particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders. 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.
- Ensuring that pupils know who to tell and how to tell, e.g.:
  - Direct approach to teacher at an appropriate time, for example after class.
  - Hand note up with homework.
  - "Worry box" for older children
  - Get a parent(s)/guardian(s) or friend to tell on your behalf.
  - Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place.
  - Identify clear protocols to encourage parent(s)/guardian(s) to approach the school if they suspect that their child is being bullied.
  - Ensure children and parent(s)/guardian(s) and Staff agree and sign the Acceptable Use Policy (AUP).

#### **Implementation of curricula**

- The implementation of the SPHE curriculum according to our school plan including the RSE, Stay Safe and Wellbeing Programmes.
- School wide delivery of lessons on bullying from evidence based programmes, e.g. Stay Safe Programme, FUSE Antibullying Programme DCU, Webwise Teacher's Resources, Barnardos Antibullying Programme.
- Visits from Community Garda.
- The school will specifically consider the additional needs of SEN/ASD pupils



with regard to programme implementation and the development of skills and strategies to enable all pupils to respond appropriately.

**Links to other policies**

- Please read the school's policy documents on Code of Behaviour, Child Protection policy, Supervision of pupils, Acceptable Use policy, Smartphone Policy, Social Media Policy

7. 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:

**The primary aim 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).**

**The school's procedures must be consistent with the following approach.**

Every effort will be made to ensure that all involved (including pupils, parent(s)/guardian(s)) understand this approach from the outset.

**Reporting bullying behaviour**

- Any pupil or parent(s)/guardian(s) may bring a bullying incident to any teacher in the school.
- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying, will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher.
- Teaching and non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), caretakers, cleaners must report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher;

**Investigating and dealing with incidents:**

In investigating and dealing with bullying, the (relevant) teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved.

- Parent(s)/guardian(s) 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.
- Teachers should take a calm, matter of fact or factual problem-solving approach.
- Where possible incidents should be investigated outside the classroom setting to ensure the privacy of all involved.
- All discussions 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 helpful 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 calmly, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner.
- If a group is involved, each participant should be consulted individually at first.

Thereafter, all those involved should be met as a group. At the group meeting, each participant should be asked for his/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 may face them from the other members of the group. 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 parent(s)/guardian(s) 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 parent(s)/guardian(s) an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports provided to the pupils.
- Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and every effort should be made to try to get him/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 parent(s)/guardian(s)) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school.

#### **Follow up and recording**

- 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
  - Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parent(s)/guardian(s) or the school Principal or Deputy Principal
- 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.
- Where a parent(s)/guardian(s) is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parent(s)/guardian(s) must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures.
- In the event that a parent(s)/guardian(s) has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parent(s)/guardian(s) of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

#### **Recording of bullying behaviour**

It is imperative that all recording of bullying incidents must be done in an objective and

factual manner.

The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour are as follows:

**Informal - pre-determination that bullying has occurred**

- All staff must keep a written record of any incidents witnessed by them or notified to them. Consideration needs to be given to where the records will be made e.g. incident book. All incidents must be reported to the relevant teacher.
- While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the relevant teacher must keep a written record of the reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same.
- The relevant teacher must inform the principal of all incidents being investigated.

**Formal Stage 1 - determination that bullying has occurred**

- 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 school has decided that all written records (as outlined below in Formal Stage 2) will be stored in a file in the Principal's Office.

**Formal Stage 2-Appendix 3 (From DES Procedures)**

The relevant teacher must use the recording template known **Appendix 3** 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.

When the recording template is used, it must be retained as outlined above.

**Established intervention strategies**

- Teacher interviews with all pupils
- Negotiating agreements between pupils and following these up by monitoring progress. This can be on an informal basis or implemented through a more structured mediation process
- Working with parent(s)/guardian(s) to support school interventions
- No Blame Approach
- Circle Time
- Anti Bullying Programme and Awareness Raising throughout the school year.

8. 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 e.g.
  - Pastoral care system
  - Buddy system
  - Care Team
  - Group work such as circle time
- If pupils require counselling or further supports, the school will endeavour to liaise with the National Educational Psychological Services (NEPS) or other appropriate agencies to organise same. This may be for the pupil affected by bullying or involved in the bullying behaviour.
- Where the incident is serious or potentially abusive, the school will consult with the HSE, The Child and Family Agency (Tusla) and/or Gardaí as appropriate.
- All pupils should understand that there are no innocent bystanders and that all incidents of bullying behaviour must be reported to a teacher.

9. 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.

10. This policy was adopted by the Board of Management in April 2014.

11. This policy has been made available to school personnel and published on the school website. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department of Education and Skills and the Patron if requested.

12. 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 of Education and Skills.

Signed:



Chairperson, Board of Management

Date: 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2024

Date of next review: January 2025

Signed:



Principal

Date: 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2024