

Scoil Mhuire, Ballincollig 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 has adopted the following anti-bullying policy within the framework of the school's overall code of behaviour. This policy complies with the requirements of the ***Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*** which were published in September 2013.
2. The Board of Management recognises the serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of pupils and is therefore committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour:

a) A positive school culture and climate which:

- i. Is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity;***
- ii. encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment; and***
- iii. 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 –

- i. build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and***
- ii. explicitly address the issue of cyber-bullying and respond/deal with 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. Bullying is defined 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.***

The following types of bullying behaviour are included in the definition of bullying:

- a) relational bullying which includes deliberate exclusion; isolating; ignoring; spreading mean, hurtful, malicious gossip or rumour about an individual,
- b) cyber-bullying and

- c) 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/private message, do not fall within the definition of bullying. These will 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.

4. The **relevant teacher** for investigating and dealing with an allegation of bullying will normally be the class teacher. However an allegation of bullying may be raised with any teacher in the school. Teachers will take appropriate measures regarding allegations in accordance with the school's anti-bullying policy.
5. The **education and prevention strategies** (including strategies aimed at cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying) that will be used by the school are as follows:
 - *Anti bullying lessons will be taught in accordance with the Social, Personal & Health Education (S.P.H.E.) Programme from Junior Infants to 6th class explicitly teaching respectful language and respectful behaviour;*
 - *Stay Safe Lessons on bullying will be taught. These focus on the different types of bullying and what to do if bullied;*
 - *Religion /Ethical programme content that relates to anti-bullying will be taught. Scoil Mhuire is a Catholic School and is committed to Gospel values in its daily living. Central to this is the maxim 'always treat others as you would like them to treat you';*
 - *The school's Code of Behaviour emphasises the promotion of respectful behaviour. It outlines specific duties and responsibilities of staff, parents and pupils and also what they can expect from others;*
 - *The school's Adult Anti-Bullying/Dignity at Work policy promotes respectful behaviour among staff;*
 - *Oral work opportunities will be used in all subjects to promote self-esteem and enhance relationships;*
 - *School Assemblies will be used to foster a positive school spirit and to increase awareness of the schools anti bullying policy;*

- *Respect messages and contracts will be displayed in classrooms and around the school;*
- *Desired respectful behaviour will be acknowledged;*
- *The use of discriminatory/derogatory language in the school will be tackled including homophobic/racist language and language that belittles pupils with a disability and feedback will be given when respectful behaviour and respectful language are absent;*
- *School rules will be taught and compliance with rules and routines will be promoted and recognised;*
- *Explicit teaching will take place on the appropriate use of social media and the need to be safe;*
- *Pupils are obliged to comply with the school rules on mobile phone and internet use. Pupils are not permitted to have a mobile phone or hand held device switched on during school time or while on the school grounds c.f. School policy on mobile phones;*
- *All staff including non-teaching staff will actively watch out for signs of bullying behaviour;*
- *Adequate supervision will be provided including playground/school yard/outdoor supervision;*
- *Parental support for anti-bullying measures/procedures will be actively sought;*
- *Pupils are encouraged to be aware of the welfare of other pupils. It is made clear to pupils that when they report incidents of bullying they are acting responsibly and are not telling tales;*
- *The school computers use the NCTE (National Council for Technology in Education) filtering system to block social media websites limiting access to opportunities to engage in any inappropriate activity online;*
- *The school will provide parents with advice and guidelines in relation to their responsibilities for keeping their children safe on line;*
- *Parents and pupils are expected to sign an Acceptable Use of Information & Communication Technology (I.C.T.) Contract, the contents of which teachers will regularly raise with pupils and which parents are expected to discuss with their children.*

6. 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 is to **resolve** 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 professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved;*
- *Reports, including anonymous reports of bullying will be investigated and dealt with;*
- *Non-teaching staff are required to report incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them to the relevant teacher;*
- *Pupils who observe incidents of bullying behaviour should be encouraged to discuss them with teachers.*
- *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;*
- *Teachers will take a calm, problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents. They should seek answers to questions of what, where, when who and why;*
- *Interviews will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned;*
- *Incidents are generally best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all;*
- *If a group is involved, each member may be interviewed individually or asked to write down their account of the incident(s) or meet as a group. At the group meeting, each member may 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 will be supported through possible pressures from the other members of the group after an interview;*
- *In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved will be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken (by reference to the school policy);*
- *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;*
- *Any disciplinary sanctions are a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, her parents and the school. Sanctions are dealt with in accordance with the school's behaviour policy;*
- *Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved may 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;*

- *In cases where the relevant teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed by the parties involved within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, it must be recorded by the relevant teacher in the appropriate recording template;*
- *In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant teacher will, 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;*
- *The special support of parents is required at all stages of the process. Parents are specifically required to participate by: coming to meet the relevant teacher and/or principal if requested; co-operating with whatever action plan is put in place; respecting confidentiality and keeping the good name of all pupils.*
- *Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents will be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures (see Appendix A).*
- *In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures (as in Appendix A) and is still not satisfied, the school will advise the parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for children.*

The Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011 (Children First) and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools provide that in situations where "the incident is serious and where the behaviour is regarded as potentially abusive, the school must consult the HSE Children and Family Social Services with a view to drawing up an appropriate response, such as a management plan".

Serious instances of bullying behaviour will in accordance with Children First and The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, be referred to the HSE Children and Family Services and/or Gardaí as appropriate.

7. The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows:

Pupils who have been bullied will be supported by the school within the limits of resources available through the provision of opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise self-esteem, to develop friendships and social skills and thereby build

resilience whenever this is needed. Where appropriate and available a referral for counselling may be made.

Support for pupils involved in bullying behaviour will also be provided by the school within the limits of resources available. For those with low self-esteem this will include opportunities to increase feelings of self-worth. Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour may be referred for counselling where appropriate and available to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others.

8. 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.
9. 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.
10. This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on June 17th 2014.
11. This policy has been made available to school personnel, is readily accessible to parents and pupils on request and provided to the Parents' Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the Patron if requested.
12. This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management regularly. Notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, readily accessible to parents and pupils on request 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.

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