**Scoil Mhuire Chnoc a’ Bhile**

**Anti-Bullying Policy**

**Rationale**

Here at Scoil Mhuire we believe that our pupils have the right to learn in a supportive, caring and safe environment. The ethos of the school is one where values of respect and understanding for all are promoted.

Bullying is a form of anti-social behaviour. It is always wrong and will not be tolerated. It is important, therefore, that the school has a clear written policy to promote this belief, where both pupils and parents/guardians are fully aware that any complaints of bullying will be dealt with firmly, fairly and promptly.

This policy is drawn up in accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the code of behaviour guidelines issued by the NEWB. It fully complies with the requirements of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary School (September 2013). It was drawn up in consultation with the Board of Management, staff and parents.

**Definition of Bullying**

Bullying is defined as unwanted negative behaviour comprising of physical, verbal or psychological aggression directed by an individual or group against others and which is **repeated over time**. It can occur at any age, in any environments. It can be long or short-term. Bullying may take many different forms. It includes, but is not confined to

* physical aggression
* damage to property
* theft of property
* extortion
* intimidation
* isolation
* deliberate exclusion
* name calling
* written notes and/or pictures designed to intimidate another person
* spreading rumours, lies or gossip to hurt a person’s reputation
* cyber-bullying, i.e. abusive emailing, texting, social networking, posting offensive and/or aggressive messages
* harassment based on gender, family status, age, disability, sexual orientation, race, religion and membership of a minority group
* homophobic and transgender bullying – using terms in a derogatory manner, spreading rumours, intimidation or attacks, malicious gossip
* relational – isolation and exclusion, continuously putting someone down, taunting, ignoring
* Special needs – name calling, taunting others because of a disability, ability, learning needs, taking advantage of other pupils’ vulnerabilities and limited capacity to recognise and defend themselves, mimicking a person’s disability, setting others up for ridicule

*Please note that networking sites have a minimum age limit in order to register. We strongly recommend that children under the age of 13 do not register on social networking sites as directed by children Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA 1998). We advise that parents/guardians monitor their children’s use of the internet and technologies to combat cyber-bullying.*

It is important to note that isolated or once-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour do not fall within the definition of bullying and 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 views and/or repeated by other people will be regarded as bullying behaviour.

All members of the school community – teachers, SNA, secretary, parents/guardians, pupils and the BOM, have a role to play in the prevention of bullying.

**Board of Management**

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 principals of best practise 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
* address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity based bullying
* Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils
* Supports for staff
* Consistent recording, investigation and follow-up of bullying behaviour (including the use of established intervention strategies
* On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy
* In accordance with its obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps which are reasonably practicable to prevent sexual harassment of pupils or staff and/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 an ethnic minority.

**School Staff**

The school staff will foster an atmosphere of friendship, respect and tolerance. Children’s self-esteem will be developed through celebrating individual differences, achievements, acknowledging and rewarding good behaviour and manners and providing opportunities for success throughout the curriculum and school. Teachers will help pupils to develop empathy by discussing feelings and trying to put themselves in the place of others. Any discriminatory and derogatory language will be tackled.

Relationships with pupils will be based on mutual respect and trust so that pupils will have confidence in the school staff. Teachers will be vigilant, respond sensitively and caringly to pupils who disclose incidents of bullying and investigate all disclosed incidents of bullying.

Once-off incidents of name calling are not bullying and will be dealt with under the school’s Code of Behaviour.

Teachers will employ the following strategies for the prevention of bullying behaviour:

* Discuss the anti-bullying policy with the pupils.
* Employ behavioural management strategies which focus on problem-solving and enable pupils to take an active role in finding solutions to problems.
* Use of the formal curriculum to educate all pupils about bullying behaviour.
* Education and prevention strategies will be used, including:
* Religious Education programme
* Anti-bullying lessons/pack
* Cyber-bullying: Webwise programme
* SPHE programme
* RSE
* Stay Safe
* Walk Tall
* The Right Start (Human Rights Education in Primary School)
* ‘Think Good, Feel Good’ – A Cognitive Behaviour Therapy workbook for Children and Young People by P Stallard
* Talkabout for Children series – ‘Developing self awareness and self esteem’, ‘Developing social skills’, ‘Developing friendship skills’ all by Alex Kelly
* Making links with other policies – The Code of Behaviour, Child Protection Policy, Supervision of Pupils, Acceptable Use Policy and sporting activities are all particularly relevant to the prevention of bullying in the school
* At the start of each school year, the staff will restate the steps for recognising bullying, the procedures in place to address a case of bullying and the strategies for dealing with unwanted behaviour so that everyone is clear from the beginning of the year.
* Each term, and intermittently where required, the topic of bullying will be discussed with each class and our school’s policy will be communicated to the children in child friendly language.

**The relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying in Scoil Mhuire are:**

**Class teachers:** Mr Moran (Deputy Principal and Deputy Designated Liaison Person), Mrs Ryan, Mrs Healy, Ms Redfern, Ms Dunne, Ms Ryan

**Special Education Teachers:** Mrs Tierney (Principal and Designated Liaison Person), Mrs Flynn, Ms Fitzgerald, Ms McKevitt

**Pupils**

* Pupils are expected to be tolerant and to have mutual respect for each other and for all members of staff
* Pupils are encourages to use the strategies they have been taught in dealing with unwanted behaviour
* Pupils are advised to *always report* incidents of bullying – whether them happen to themselves or others – to parents and teachers
* Bystanders are recognised as agents in the eradication of bullying
* Pupils involved in bullying behaviour will be supported as the need arises
* Pupils who are victims of bullying will be supported as the need arises

**Parents/Guardians**

Parents/guardians are expected to:

* encourage positive behaviour and discourage negative behaviour both at home and at school
* encourage children to solve difficulties without resorting to aggression
* discuss the school’s anti-bullying policy with their children
* support the school in its efforts to prevent and tackle bullying
* show respect for all members of the school staff

**Publishing and publicising the Anti-bullying policy**

In order to ensure that Scoil Mhuire is effective in tackling bullying, this policy will be

* displayed in the school office
* promoted and discussed in every classroom
* promoted through the Parents’ Association
* explained at Infant meetings and enrolment meetings, in the school handbook, through school newsletters
* highlighted in the school Homework Diary

At the beginning of each school year, a child friendly one-page version of the policy will be brought home and signed by each child and parent/guardian.

**Procedures for reporting and investigating bullying incidents**

The primary aim in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve and restore, as far as practicable the relationships of the parties involved. Every effort will be made to ensure that all involved understand the approach from the onset.

1. All allegations of bullying will be noted, investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher so that pupils will gain confidence in telling. The relevant teacher/s will use his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolves. The relevant teacher will use his/her professional judgement in relation to records kept of these reports, the actions taken and any discussion with those involved regarding same. Written reports of incidents, actions taken and discussion held with those involved will be kept by the relevant teacher.
2. Serious incidents will be referred immediately to the Principal.
3. Incidents will be investigates as discretely as possible when the teacher/s will speak separately to the alleged victim, the alleged offender and any witnesses. This will involve the taking of a written record of what happened. Answers will be sought to questions of *what, when, who and why*. A calm, problem-solving approach will be taken.
4. In cases where it has been determined that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher/s will keep appropriate written records which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore the relationships of the parties involved. These written records will follow the template provided in Appendix 1 of this policy and will be stored in a central filing cabinet.
5. The relevant teacher/Principal will request separate meetings with the parents/guardians of the parties involved. Their assistance will be sought in preventing a repeat of the behaviour and in discussing how they can reinforce/support the actions being taken by the school and the supports provided for pupils.
6. Victims can be assured that the school community will help them, and monitoring procedures (teacher observation, checking in with the parent/guardian and the child, further meetings with the principal if necessary) will be put in place to safeguard them.
7. Sanctions may follow for the bully such as loss of privileges as appropriate to the situation and age of the child. Help and support will be sought for the bully.
8. Follow-up meetings will be arranged to assess progress and/or restore relationships.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the BOM once in every school year. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available to staff and parents via the school website and, if requested, to the Patron and the Department.

**This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on ­­­ 18/10/21.**

**Signed: Cáit McCormack Signed: Aoife Tierney Cathaoirleach, BOM Principal**

**Date: 18/10/21 Date: 18/10/21**

**Date of next review: ­­­­­­­­­­­­October 2022**

