Scoil Mhichíl

Anti-bullying policy

Introduction

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 Mhichíl Cahermurphy 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.

Bullying affects everyone, not just the perpetrators and the victims. It also affects those other children who watch, and less aggressive pupils can be drawn in by group pressure. Bullying is not an inevitable part of school life or a necessary part of growing up, and it rarely sorts itself out. It is clear that certain jokes, insults, intimidating/threatening behaviour, written abuse and violence are to be found in our society. No one person or group, whether staff or pupil, should have to accept this type of behaviour. Only when all issues bullying are addressed, will a child best be able to benefit from the opportunities available at the School.

Why is Anti-bullying Policy necessary?

- 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: Practical tips to build positive school culture and climate are included in Appendix 2. The Board of Management and staff seek to create a 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; and
- 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); and
 - On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

Aims

- 1. To create a school ethos which encourages children to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour. Stay Safe, Walk Tall
- 2. To raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with school management, teachers, pupils and parents.
- 3. To ensure comprehensive supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of school activity are kept under observation.
- 4. To develop procedures for noting and reporting incidents of bullying.
- 5. To develop procedures for investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.
- 6. To develop a programme for those affected by bullying behaviour and for those involved in bullying.
- 7. To develop a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and for those involved in bullying behaviour.

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:

- o **Physical aggression**: This behaviour includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping people. It may also take the form of severe physical assault. While pupils often engage in 'mess fights', they can sometimes be used as a disguise for physical harassment or inflicting pain.
- o **Intimidation:** Some bullying behaviour takes the form of intimidation: it may be based on the use of very aggressive body language with the voice being used as a weapon. Particularly upsetting can be a facial expression which conveys aggression and/or dislike.
- o **Isolation/exclusion and other relational bullying**: This occurs where a certain person is deliberately isolated, excluded or ignored by some or all of the class group. This practice is usually initiated by the person engaged in bullying behaviour and can be difficult to detect. It

may be accompanied by writing insulting remarks about the pupil in public places, by passing around notes about or drawings of the pupil or by whispering insults about them loud enough to be heard. Relational bullying occurs when a person's attempts to socialise and form relationships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined. One of the most common forms includes control: "Do this or I won't be your friend anymore" (implied or stated); a group ganging up against one person (girl or boy); non-verbal gesturing; malicious gossip; spreading rumours about a person or giving them the "silent treatment".

- o **Cyber-bullying:** This type of bullying is increasingly common and is continuously evolving. It is bullying carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as text, social network sites, e-mail, instant messaging (IM), apps, gaming sites, chat-rooms and other online technologies. Being the target of inappropriate or hurtful messages is the most common form of online bullying. As cyber-bullying uses technology to perpetrate bullying behaviour and does not require face to face contact, cyber-bullying can occur at any time (day or night). Many forms of bullying can be facilitated through cyber-bullying. For example, a target may be sent homophobic text messages or pictures may be posted with negative comments about a person's sexuality, appearance etc.
- O Name calling: Persistent name-calling directed at the same individual(s) which hurts, insults or humiliates should be regarded as a form of bullying behaviour. Often name-calling of this type refers to physical appearance, e.g., size or clothes worn. Accent or distinctive voice characteristics may attract negative attention. Academic ability can also provoke name calling. This tends to operate at two extremes. There are those who are singled out for attention because they are perceived to be weak academically. At the other extreme there are those who, because they are perceived as high achievers, are also targeted.
- o **Damage to property**: Personal property can be the focus of attention for bullying behaviour. This may result in damage to clothing, mobile phone or other devices, school books and other learning material or interference with a pupil's locker or bicycle. The contents of school bags and pencil cases may be scattered on the floor. Items of personal property may be defaced, broken, stolen or hidden.
- O **Extortion**: Demands for money may be made, often accompanied by threats (sometimes carried out in the event of the targeted pupil not delivering on the demand). A pupil may also be forced into theft of property for delivery to another who is engaged in bullying behaviour.
 - o **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.

Examples of bullying behaviours

	Examples of bunying behaviours
General behaviours which apply to all types of bullying	 Harassment based on any of the nine grounds in the equality legislation e.g. sexual harassment, homophobic bullying, racis bullying etc. Physical aggression Damage to property Name calling Slagging The production, display or circulation of written words, picture or other materials aimed at intimidating another person Offensive graffiti Extortion Intimidation Insulting or offensive gestures The "look" Invasion of personal space A combination of any of the types listed.
Cyber	 Denigration: Spreading rumors, lies or gossip to hurt a person's reputation Harassment: Continually sending vicious, mean or disturbing messages to an individual Impersonation: Posting offensive or aggressive messages under another person's name Flaming: Using inflammatory or vulgar words to provoke an online fight Trickery: Fooling someone into sharing personal information which you then post online Outing: Posting or sharing confidential or compromising information or images Exclusion: Purposefully excluding someone from an online group Cyber stalking: Ongoing harassment and denigration that causes a person considerable fear for his/her safety Silent telephone/mobile phone call Abusive text messages Abusive text messages Abusive communication on social networks e.g. Facebook/Ask.fm/ Twitter/You Tube or on games consoles Abusive website comments/Blogs/Pictures

Identity Based Behaviours

Including any of the nine discriminatory grounds mentioned in Equality Legislation (gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community).

Abusive posts on any form of communication technology

 Spreading rumours about a person's sexual orientation Taunting a person of a different sexual orientation Name calling e.g. Gay, queer, lesbianused in a derogatory manner Physical intimidation or attacks Threats 		
 Discrimination, prejudice, comments or insults about colour, nationality, culture, social class, religious beliefs, ethnic or traveller background Exclusion on the basis of any of the above 		
This involves manipulating relationships as a means of bullying. Behaviours include: Malicious gossip Isolation & exclusion Ignoring Excluding from the group Taking someone's friends away "Bitching" Spreading rumours Breaking confidence Talking loud enough so that the victim can hear The "look" Use or terminology such as 'nerd' in a derogatory way		
 Unwelcome or inappropriate sexual comments or touching Harassment 		
 Name calling Taunting others because of their disability or learning needs Taking advantage of some pupils' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to recognise and defend themselves against bullying Taking advantage of some pupils' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to understand social situations and social cues. Mimicking a person's disability Setting others up for ridicule 		

- o 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.
- O 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.
- o Negative behaviour that does not meet this definition of bullying will be dealt with in accordance with the school's code of behaviour.

Signs and Symptoms of a child who may be being bullied:

- 1. Anxiety about travelling to and from school
- 2. Unwillingness to go to school
- 3. Deterioration in Educational Performance
- 4. Patterns of physical illness e.g. Headache, tummy ache etc.
- 5. Unexplained changes either in mood or behaviour particularly before returning to school after long weekends or school holidays
- 6. Visible signs of anxiety or distress, stammering, becoming withdrawn, nightmares, difficulty sleeping, crying, not eating, vomiting, bedwetting, lingering behind at school after class is over. Not willing to go out at playtime.
- 7. Spontaneous out of character comments about either pupils or teachers
- 8. Possessions either missing or damaged
- 9. Increased request for money or stealing money
- 10. Unexplained bruising, cut or damaged clothing
- 11. Reluctant and/or refusal to say what is troubling them.

These signs may suggest that a child is being bullied, they **do not** necessarily mean that the child **is** being bullied. If repeated or recurring in combination these signs do warrant investigation in order to establish what is affecting the pupil.

Relevant Teacher

A pupil or parent may bring a bullying concern to any teacher in the school.

In the first instance the individual class teacher will deal with and report on any incidents of bullying behaviour. The relevant teacher in all instances will be the class teacher. In cases of serious or persistant incidences of bullying the class teacher will engage with the principal to work out the most effective strategies for dealing with such instances.

Supports for staff

All members of the school staff have a copy of the school's Anti Bullying Policy, were an integral part of drawing up the policy and are familiar with its contents.

In the event of temporary or substitute staff being employed they will be made aware of the school's code of behaviour and our Anti – Bullying Policy. All staff will recognise bullying behaviour and will implement effective strategies for preventing bullying as an integral part of the school's SPHE programme.

Intervention Strategies

OUR SCHOOL POLICY

- 1. All staff members share collective responsibility to act in preventing bullying behaviour by any member of the school community. The school is organised in order to minimise opportunities for bullying by always having adequate supervision in so far as possible.
- 2. The school acknowledges the right of each member of the school community to work in a secure and safe environment.
- 3. The school promotes positive habits of self respect, self discipline, and responsibility.
- 4. The school is committed to promoting gender equity and equality in all aspects of its functioning.
- 5. The school places particular emphasis on the care of "at risk pupils" and uses its monitoring system to provide early intervention if necessary to respond to needs. This monitoring system consists of the following:
- a. The school uses an anti-bullying questionnaire with pupils to identify pupils at risk of being bullied or perpetrators. Appendix A
- b. The staff will investigate any incidents that arise as a result of this questionnaire.
- c. Victim, offender and witnesses will be interviewed about any issue that arises
- d. Issues are then addressed and discussed in SPHE.
- e. Parents of both victim and offender will be informed and invited to discuss the situation if they wish.
- f. Staff will monitor and observe the behaviour on an ongoing basis and observe the interaction of the victim and the perpetrator during school activities. This will create

- a continuous review and positive feedback can be relayed to both children and parents. Emphasis will be on positive encouragement in the area of development of social skills.
- g. Children will be helped to develop coping skills through the use of 'Speak Up and Get Along' book and the Prim Ed Anti-Bullying materials.

SCHOOL PROCEDURES IN RELATION TO PARENTAL CONCERN

- 1. Parent will initially deal with class teacher.
- 2. Class teacher will ascertain the facts.
- 3. Class teacher will record their findings.
- 4. Class teacher will inform the principal.
- 5. A plan of action will be formulated.

Procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying

- 1. All reports of bullying no matter how trivial, will be noted, investigated and dealt with by the teachers. In that way pupils will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance.
- 2. Serious cases of bullying behaviour by pupils will be referred immediately to the Principal.
- 3. Parents or guardians of victims and perpetrators will be informed by the Principal (earlier rather than later) of incidents so that they are given the opportunity of discussing the matter. They are then in a position to help and support their children before a crisis occurs.
- 4. Non-teaching staff such as caretakers, cleaners are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them to the teaching staff.
- 5. In the case of a complaint regarding a staff member, this should normally in the first instance be raised with the staff member in question and if necessary, with the Principal.
- 6. Where cases, relating to either a pupil or a teacher remain unresolved at school level, the matter should be referred to the school's Board of Management.

Action to be taken when bullying is suspected

If bullying is suspected we talk to the suspected victim, the suspected perpetrator and any witnesses. If any degree of bullying is identified, the following action will be taken:-

Help, support and counselling will be given as is appropriate to both the victims and the perpetrators:

We support the **victims** in the following ways:

- By offering them an immediate opportunity to talk about the experience with their class teacher, or another teacher if they choose.
- By offering continuing support when they feel they need it.
- Informing the victims' parents/guardians.

- 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 / Peer mentoring system
 - Group work such as circle time
- If pupils require counselling or further supports the school will endeavour to liaise with the appropriate agencies to organise same. This may be for the pupil affected by bullying or the person 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 teacher.

We also discipline, yet try to help the **perpetrators** in the following ways:

- By talking about what happened, to discover why they became involved.
- Informing the perpetrators parents/guardians.
- By continuing to work with the perpetrators in order to get rid of prejudiced attitudes as far as possible.
- By taking one or more of the disciplinary steps described below to prevent more bullying.

Disciplinary Steps:

- 1. They will be warned officially to stop offending.
- 2. Informing the perpetrators parents/guardians.
- 3. There may be extra supervision at break and/or lunch times.
- 4. If they will not end such behaviour, they will be recommended for an appointment with a professional counsellor.

The following advice will be given to children who are being bullied.

- a) Tell yourself that you do not deserve to be bullied, and that it is **WRONG!**
- b) Be proud of who you are. It is good to be individual.
- c) Try not to show that you are upset. It is hard but a perpetrator thrives on someone's fear
- d) Stay with a group of friends/people. There is safety in numbers.
- e) Be assertive shout "No!" Walk confidently away. Go straight to a teacher or member of staff.
- f) Fighting back may make things worse. If you decide to fight back, talk to a teacher or parent/guardian first.
- g) Generally it is best to tell an adult you trust straight away. You will get immediate support.

Teachers will take you seriously and will deal with perpetrators in a way, which will end the bullying and will not make things worse for you.

If you know someone is being bullied:-

- a) **TAKE ACTION!** Watching and doing nothing looks as if you are on the side of the perpetrator. It makes the victim feel unhappy and on there own.
- b) If you feel you cannot get involved, tell an adult **IMMEDIATELY.** Teachers have ways of dealing with the perpetrator without getting you into trouble.
- c) Do not be, or pretend to be, friends with a perpetrator.

Advice to parents:

- a) Look for unusual behaviour in your children. For example, they may suddenly not wish to attend school, feel ill regularly, or not complete work to their normal standard.
- b) Always take an active role in your child's education. Enquire how their day has gone, who they have spent their time with, how lunchtime was spent etc.
- c) If you feel your child may be a victim of bullying, inform the School **IMMEDIATELY**. Your complaint will be taken seriously and appropriate action will follow.
- d) It is important that you advise your child not to fight back. It can make matters worse!
- e) Tell your own son or daughter there is nothing wrong with him or her. It is not his or her fault that they are being bullied.
- f) Make sure your child is fully aware of the School policy concerning bullying, they will not be afraid to ask for help.

INVESTIGATING AND DEALING WITH INCIDENTS

- (i) The primary aim for the relevant teacher 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);
- (ii) In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved;
- (iii) All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. 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;
- (iv) Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs) must be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher;
- (v) Parents and pupils will be 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;
- (vi) Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents;
- (vii) Incidents will be investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved;
- (viii) All interviews will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this way;
- (ix) When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher will seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. The teacher will model behaviour consistent with dealing effectively with a conflict situation in a non aggressive manner.
- (x) If a group is involved, each member will be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved will be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member will be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements;
- (xi) Each member of the group will be supported through the possible pressures that they may face them from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher;
- (xii) On occasion those involved may be asked to write an account of the incident if appropriate.
- (xiii) 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). The school will give parents an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports for their pupils;
- (xiv) Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it will be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts will be made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied;
- (xv) It will also be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parents) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parents and the school;

(xvi) Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved will 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 and if in the opinion of the teaching staff that this would be of benefit.

FOLLOW UP AND RECORDING

- 1. In cases where the relevant teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, it must be recorded by the relevant teacher in the recording template at **Appendix 3**.
- 2. 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; and
 - Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the school Principal or Deputy Principal;
- 3. 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 school's complaints procedures;
- 4. 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.

Procedures for recording bullying behaviour

- (i) It is the school's policy that all reports , including anonymous reports of bullying will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant class teacher in the first instance. The relevant teacher will use his/her professional judgement in relation to the records to be kept of these reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same. In general a written record of all incidents investigated will be retained by the school in a school incident book specifically to record bullying incidents. Relevant teacher will inform the principal of all incidents being investigated.
- (ii)If it is established by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher will 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.
- (iii) The relevant teacher will use the recording template at **Appendix 1** 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 of serious bullying behaviour that it will be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable.

In each of the circumstances of serious bullying behaviour at (a) and (b) above, the recording template at **Appendix 3** must be completed in full and retained in a school file and a copy also retained by the relevant teacher.

School copy will be retained in a secure office filing cabinet. All records will be maintained until relevant students are 21 years of age.

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)s to support school interventions
- No Blame Approach
- Circle Time

The Procedures mention the following intervention strategies and reference Ken Rigby; http://www.bullyingawarenessweek.org/pdf/Bullying_Prevention_Strategies_in_Schools_Ken_Rigby.pdf (See Appendix 5)

- The traditional disciplinary approach
- Strengthening the victim
- Mediation
- Restorative Practice
- The Support Group Method
- The Method of Shared Concern

Exceptional Situations

- In situations where bullying behaviour may escalate to serious physical assault or harassment the school's Code of Behaviour Policy will be used in situations where despite the intervention of staff of the school ,no improvement in the behaviour of an individual or group has occurred the school will make referral to the NEPS service in the first instance.
- In relation to bullying in schools, 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 should, in accordance with the 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.
- The *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* also provide that where school personnel have concerns about a child but are not sure whether to report the matter to the HSE, the Designated Liaison Person must seek advice from the HSE Children and Family Social Services.

Supervision and Monitoring of Pupils

The Board of Management confirms that appropriate supervision and monitoring policies and practices are in place for all breaks to both prevent any bullying behaviour and to facilitate observation and early intervention where possible.

In relation to Acceptable Internet Use Policy all internet sessions are supervised by the teacher. Teachers monitor pupils internet usage and pupils have been instructed to access only educational websites. All social networking sites are blocked.

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.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on	[date]
---	-------	---

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website (or where none exists, is otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parents' Association (where one exists). A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

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 (or where none exists, be otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parents' Association (where one exists). A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Reviewed by the Board of Management on 21/06/2022

Signed:	Signed:		
	(Chairperson of Board of Management)	(Principal)	
Date:	Date:		