

### **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, Knockraha** 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.
- (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 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 alleged bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment
- promotes respectful relationships across the school community
- has effective leadership
- has a school-wide approach;
- has a shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact;
- Implements education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures)
- builds empathy, respect and resilience in pupils
- explicitly addresses the issues of cyber-bullying and identity based-bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying
- is effective in supervising and monitoring of pupils;
- supports all staff;
- is consistent in recording, investigating and following up on alleged bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies);
- has 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 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 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.

Additional information on different types of bullying is set out in Section 2 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

#### **(4) The Relevant Teacher**

In these procedures, the member of teaching staff who has responsibility for investigating and dealing with bullying is referred to as the "relevant teacher". At primary level, the relevant teacher **will normally be the class teacher.**

All classroom teachers, Special Education Teachers, the Deputy Principal and the Principal must investigate and deal with incidents of bullying when they occur, keeping in mind the definition of bullying.

**Bullying is unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, physical or psychological conducted by an individual or group against another individual or group and which is repeated over time.**

Temporary and substitute staff will be made aware of the school's code of behaviour and its anti-bullying policy by School Management.

#### **(5) Education and Prevention Strategies that will be used by the school**

Effective practice will include prevention and awareness raising measures across all aspects of bullying and involves strategies to engage pupils in addressing problems when they arise. In particular, such strategies need to build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils.

As self-esteem is a major factor in determining behaviour, the school will, through both its curricular and extra-curricular programmes, provide pupils with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth.

Initiatives and programmes focused on developing pupils' awareness and understanding of bullying, including its causes and effects. The following curricular programmes/policies/initiatives will be referred to.

Circle Time, Weaving Well-Being, Stay Safe, SPHE and RSE.

**Children will not be allowed to bring mobile phones to school in an effort to prevent possible cyber-bullying. The Gardaí or other relevant personnel will speak to senior pupils from time to time on the safe use of the internet.**

#### **(6) Procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying**

- (a)** 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);
- (b)** 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;**
- (c)** All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying will 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;
- (d)** Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), bus escorts, caretakers, cleaners will be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the Principal, the Deputy Principal or to the relevant teacher;
- (e)** 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;
- (f)** It is very important that all involved (including each set of pupils and parents) understand the above approach from the outset;
- (g)** Teachers will take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents;
- (h)** Incidents will be investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved;
- (i)** 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.
- (j)** When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher will seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This will be done in a calm atmosphere, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner;
- (k)** 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;
- (l)** Each member of a group will be supported through the possible pressures that they may face from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher;
- (m)** It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s);
- (n)** In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that serious 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;
- (o)** 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;

(p) It must 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;

(q) Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved will be arranged separately (if necessary) with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date if the pupil who has been bullied is ready and agreeable. This can have a therapeutic effect;

(r) 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**.

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 parents or the school Principal or Deputy Principal;

(s) 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;

(t) In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school will advise the parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

### (7) Procedures for reporting bullying behaviour

All records will be maintained in accordance with relevant data protection legislation. The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour will adhere to the following:

While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, **he/she 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;**

1. 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.

2. The relevant teacher will use the **recording template at 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;

b) where the school has decided as part of its anti-bullying policy that in certain circumstances bullying behaviour will be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable.

In each of the circumstances at (a) and (b) above, **the recording template at Appendix 3** will be completed in full and retained by the teacher in question and a copy provided to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable. It should also be noted that the timeline for recording bullying behaviour in the recording template at Appendix 3 does not in any way preclude the relevant teacher from consulting the Principal or Deputy Principal at an earlier stage in relation to a case.

In cases where a school has serious concerns in relation to managing the behaviour of a pupil, the advice of the National Education Psychological Service (NEPS) will be sought.

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 may consult the HSE Children and Family Social Services and /or Gardaí as appropriate with a view to drawing up an appropriate response, such as a management plan”.

### **(8) The school’s programme of support for pupils affected by bullying**

The school will seek in every way possible to support those affected by bullying. **Education and Prevention strategies** at (5) above will be revisited if necessary.

The relevant class teacher and the school principal will check periodically with the victim/s of bullying to ascertain if the bullying behaviour has ceased.

They will also check in with the perpetrator/s as their bullying behaviour may also be a cry for help.

The parents of both parties will be contacted to see if they are happy with the resolution.

All staff will be vigilant while on yard duty to ensure as far as is possible that the parties involved have resolved their issues.

If particular incidents are of a very serious nature or are ongoing and cannot be resolved at school/home level, it may be necessary, in consultation with parents to seek help from an outside agency such as NEPS (National Education Psychological Services) the HSE Children and Family Social Services and /or the Gardaí with a view to drawing up an appropriate response, such as a management plan”.

### **(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) 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 in April 2014.

This policy has been made available to school personnel and has been provided to the Parents’ Association . 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 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:** *Arthur Bowen*  
Chairperson Board Of Management

Date: *14/09/2023*

**Signed:** *Nosul Qivan*  
Principal

Date: *14/09/2023*