

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Scoil Mhuire gan Smál Tiernascragh

Rationale

This policy outlines what bullying is and the procedures followed in Scoil Mhuire gan Smál, Tiernascragh to address incidents of bullying. In our school we are very fortunate to have minimal incidents of bullying. Bullying is neither an inevitable part of school life, nor a necessary part of growing up and it rarely sorts itself out without intervention.

Bullying can affect everyone, not just the bullies and the victims. It can also affect those other children who watch; some pupils can be drawn-in by group pressure. Only when all issues of bullying are addressed, will a child best be able to benefit from the opportunities available in school.

Here at Scoil Mhuire gan Smál, Tiernascragh, we believe that our pupils have the right to learn in a supportive, caring and safe environment. All institutions, whether large or small, contain some individuals who have the potential for bullying behaviour. If a school is well disciplined and organised, it can minimise the occurrences of bullying.

Scoil Mhuire gan Smál has a clear ethos on the promotion of good citizenship and it is made clear that 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.

- 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 gan Smál, Tiernascragh, 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, the school's Code of Behaviour and Teaching Council's Professional Code of Conduct for Teachers.

- The Board of Management recognizes 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 behavior:
- 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 behavior 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 behavior (including use of established intervention strategies)
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

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*.

WHAT IS CYBER-BULLYING?

There are many types of cyber-bullying. The more common types are:

1. **Text messages** – can be threatening or cause discomfort. Also included here is

'Bluejacking' (the sending of anonymous text messages over short distances using bluetooth wireless technology)

2. **Picture/video-clips via mobile phone cameras** – images sent to others to make the victim feel threatened or embarrassed

3. **Mobile phone calls** – silent calls, abusive messages or stealing the victim's phone and using it to harass others, to make them believe the victim is responsible

4. **Emails** – threatening or bullying emails, often sent using a pseudonym or somebody else's name

5. **Chat room bullying** – menacing or upsetting responses to children or young people when they are in a web-based chat room

6. **Instant messaging (IM)** – unpleasant messages sent while children conduct real-time conversations online using MSM (Microsoft Messenger), Yahoo Chat or similar tools

7. Bullying via websites – use of defamatory blogs (web logs), personal websites and online personal 'own web space' sites such as You Tube, Facebook, Ask.fm, Bebo (which works by signing on in one's school, therefore making it easy to find a victim) and Myspace – although there are others.

- The **relevant teachers** for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows:
 - Junior Infants, Senior Infants, First and Second Class – Ms Mc Namara
 - Third, fourth, fifth and sixth Class- Ms Dwyer
 - The principal – Ms Mc Namara
- The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber- bullying, homophobic and transphobic bullying) that will be used by the school are as follows (see Section 6.5 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):
 - Staff at all times will endeavour to encourage pupils to show respect for each other.
 - The Stay Safe Programme will be fully implemented in the school.
 - Parents are encouraged to visit the Stay Safe website and a link is provided from the school website.
 - The SPHE curriculum provides opportunities for role playing bullying incidents and conflict resolution.
 - Extra- curricular activities are encouraged to help develop pupils' self esteem and experience the discipline of following rules in sport.
 - "Friendship Stops" and "Thinking Chairs" will be in use in the Junior Yard.
 - Speakers will be invited to address staff and parents' groups in relation to cyber-bullying, homophobic and transphobic bullying.
 - Information relating to cyber-bullying, homophobic and transphobic bullying will be made available to pupils and parents.
 - The holding of an anti-bullying week each year in conjunction with the Stay Safe Programme.

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, (e.g. the six step approach available from the "Dealing with Incidents" section of the Anti-Bullying Campaign website) are as follows:

1. The 'Relevant Teacher' investigates all instances of reported or suspected bullying behaviour, whether these take place within the school or outside it, with a view to establishing the facts and bringing any such behaviour to an end.
2. The School, through the 'Relevant Teacher' reserves the right to ask any pupil to write an account of what happened, as part of an investigation. This will be a standard procedure and does not necessarily imply that a pupil is guilty of misbehaviour.

3. Pupils who are alleged to have been involved in bullying behaviour are interviewed by the 'Relevant Teacher' to establish the nature and extent of the behaviour and any reasons for it. In the event that they have been involved in bullying behaviour they are asked to sign a binding promise that they will treat all pupils fairly, equally and respectfully including the targeted pupil(s).
 4. The 'Relevant Teacher' does not apportion blame but rather treats bullying behaviour as a "mistake" that can and must be remedied. S/he emphasises that the intention is not to punish perpetrators but to talk to them, to explain how harmful and hurtful bullying is and to seek a promise that it will stop. If that promise is forthcoming and is honoured there will be no penalty and that will be the end of the matter. Pupils who report bullying therefore are not getting others "in trouble" so much as enabling them to get out of trouble into which they may ultimately get if the bullying continued.
 5. When an investigation is completed and/or a bullying situation is resolved the 'Relevant Teacher' will complete a report, to include the findings of the investigation, the strategy adopted and the outcome of the intervention, as well as any other relevant information.
 6. If a pupil has signed such a promise but then chooses to break that promise and continue the bullying behaviour, this can then no longer be considered a "mistake." In this event parent(s)/guardian(s) will be informed and requested to countersign their daughter/son's promise. Breach of this additional promise by further bullying behaviour is regarded as a very grave matter and a serious sanction may be imposed by the school authorities (See sanctions below).
- All documentation regarding bullying incidents and their resolution is retained securely in the school.

Sanctions:

Where a pupil has been found to be engaged in bullying behaviour, has formally promised to stop and has broken that promise, any of the following sanctions may be imposed:

- S/he may be required to sign another promise, this time countersigned by a parent/guardian;
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) may be contacted by the 'Relevant Teacher' and informed of the nature and extent of the bullying behaviour with a view to agreeing a strategy whereby a promise to end the bullying behaviour would be honoured;
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) may be invited to a meeting with the 'Relevant Teacher' and the Principal and the pupil may be suspended from school.
- The case may be referred to the Board of Management and the pupil may be expelled from the school.

Code of Discipline

- Reasoning with the pupil.
- Reprimand (including advice on how to improve)
- Communications with parents
- Temporary separation from peers, friends and others, removal of privileges.
- Detention during break.
- Prescribing additional work-educational.
- Referral to Principal
- Suspension

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

- Bullied pupils:
 - Ending the bullying behaviour,
 - Changing the school culture to foster more respect for bullied pupils and all pupils,
 - Changing the school culture to foster greater empathy towards and support for bullied pupils,
 - Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through the awareness-raising programme,
 - Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through the speedy identification of those responsible and speedy resolution of bullying situations,
 - After resolution, enabling bullied pupils to complete a victim-impact statement,
 - Making adequate counselling facilities available to pupils who need it in a timely manner,
 - Helping bullied pupils raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that help develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school).
 - Implementing a "buddy system" in the school (*if applicable*).
- Bullying pupils:
 - Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are not blamed or punished and get a "clean sheet,"
 - Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are doing the right and honorable thing and giving them praise for this,
 - Making adequate counseling facilities available to help those who need it learn other ways of meeting their needs besides violating the rights of others,

- Helping those who need to raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school).
- Using learning strategies throughout the school and the curriculum to help enhance pupils' feelings of self-worth,
- In dealing with negative behavior in general, encouraging teachers and parents to focus on, challenge and correct the behaviour while supporting the child,
- In dealing with bullying behaviour seeking resolution and offering a fresh start with a "clean sheet" and no blame in return for keeping a promise to reform.

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.

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 .

This policy has been made available to school personnel, is readily accessible to parents and pupils on request 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: Peter Feerick

Chairperson of Board of Management

Date: _____

Signed: Melanie Mc Namara

Principal

Date: _____

This policy is reviewed every year.