

Scoil Mhuire

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire has adopted the following policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

This policy fully complies with the requirements of *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2024*.

The Board of Management acknowledges that bullying behaviour interferes with the rights of the child as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. We all, as a school community, have a responsibility to work together to prevent and address bullying behaviour and to deal with the negative impact of bullying behaviour.

We are committed to ensuring that all students who attend our school are kept safe from harm and that the wellbeing of our students is at the forefront of everything that we do. We recognise the negative impact that bullying behaviour can have on the lives of our students and we are fully committed to preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.

We confirm that we will, in accordance with our obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the harassment of students or staff on any of the nine grounds specified: gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.

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 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 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.

Definition of Bullying

- Bullying is targeted behaviour, online or offline, that causes harm.
- The harm caused can be physical, social and/or emotional in nature and can have lasting effects on the child experiencing the behaviour.
- Bullying behaviour is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power in relationships between two people or groups of people in society.
- It is behaviour which is deliberate in nature and is unwanted. It is not accidental or reckless behaviour.
- 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 (including text messaging)
 - 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.
- The harm can be:
 - Physical (eg: personal injury, damage to or loss of property)
 - Social: (eg: withdrawal, loneliness, exclusion)
 - Emotional: (eg: low self esteem, depression, anxiety)
- A one-off instance of negative behaviour towards a student is not bullying behaviour. However, a single hurtful message posted on social media can be considered bullying behaviour as it may be visible to a wide audience and has a high likelihood of being shared multiple times and so becomes a repeated behaviour.

Behaviour that is not bullying behaviour:

- If the repeated harm is real for the student experiencing the behaviour, but unintended by the other student, this is not bullying, but, importantly, must be addressed under the school's Code of Behaviour.
- Some students with special educational needs, may have social communication difficulties which may make them communicate their needs through behaviours that can hurt themselves or others. It is important to note that these behaviours are not deliberate or planned, but in certain situations, they are an automatic response which they cannot control.
- Disagreement between students is not considered bullying unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.

Section A: Development/review of our Bí Cineálta policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour

All members of our school community were provided with the opportunity to input into the development/review of this policy.

	Date consulted	Method of consultation
School Staff	W/E 11 April 2025 2 May 2025 13 May 2025	Teacher Survey - Online Bí Cineálta Half-day Staff Meeting
Students	W/E 11 April 2025 6 May 2025	Student Survey - Online Student Focus Group
Parents	8 April 2025	Survey – Online Parents' Association Meeting
Board of Management	14 May 2025	BOM Meeting
Wider school community as appropriate ie school secretary, caretaker, etc.	8 April 2025	Meeting
Date policy was approved: 14 May 2025		
Date policy was last reviewed:		

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

This section sets out the prevention strategies that will be used by the school. These include strategies specifically aimed at preventing online bullying behaviour, homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour, racist bullying behaviour, sexist bullying behaviour and sexual harassment as appropriate:

The policy addresses bullying behaviour, harassment and sexual harassment. While it primarily addresses issues related to bullying of students, it applies also to teaching and other school staff, parents/guardians and others insofar as measures under the policy relate to them. The policy applies:

- During school time (including breaks)
- Going to and from school
- During school tours
- During extra-curricular activities
- To any behaviour of a bullying nature (outside school) which seriously impacts on a students'/staff members' participation in school and/ or where the matter relates to the school's duty of care of a student/ staff member.

Actions to prevent bullying

- Our Anti-Bullying Policy is an integral part of Scoil Mhuire's Code of Behaviour.
- Everyone in Scoil Mhuire has a duty to look out for any behaviour which can be deemed bullying. This includes parents/guardians and the wider school community.
- Class tutors can remind students regularly of effects of Bullying.
- Supervision and monitoring of students behaviour, including lockers, yard, corridors and areas with access to computers.
- Inclusion in the Curriculum - create awareness in a wide range of subjects.
- Activities are planned that raise awareness and prioritise anti-bullying interventions.
- CPD training for all staff
- Development of the Anti-Bullying Charter for all classrooms.
- A series of events will be organised, relating to raising awareness of bullying.
- The school will specifically consider the additional needs of SEN pupils with regard to programme implementation.

Culture and Environment

- Create a positive school climate where all students feel safe, respected, and valued.
- Promote diversity and inclusion in all aspects of school life.
- Using various practices in the classroom to build a positive culture and environment.
- Encourage open communication between students, staff, and parents. Encourage students to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.
- Establish clear expectations for behaviour and enforce them consistently.
- Promote and model respectful relationships across the school community.
- Open communication.
- Effective routines/transitions.
- Anti-bullying signs and messages will be displayed around the school. Positive messages that promote friendship and caring attitude will also be displayed.

Curriculum (Teaching & Learning)

- Integrate anti-bullying messages into the school curriculum.
- Teach students about bullying and its effects.
- SPHE and Wellbeing methodologies.
- Provide opportunities for students to develop social and emotional skills.
- Incorporate lessons on respect, empathy, and diversity into the curriculum.
- An annual anti-bullying/friendship day/week.
- Explicit teaching and appropriate communication and emotional literacy.
- Group work/Collaboration.
- Sensory Walk for emotional regulation breaks.
- Policy and Planning.
- Develop a clear and consistent anti-bullying policy that is enforced by all staff.
- Review and update the anti-bullying policy regularly.
- Provide training for staff on how to recognize and respond to bullying.
- Establish clear procedures for reporting and responding to bullying incidents.
- The Acceptable Use Policy was developed in the school to include the necessary steps to ensure that access to technology within the school is strictly monitored.
- Student voice eg. Focus Groups, Student Council consultation, Student friendly and student designed Bí Cineálta policy poster, etc.
- The school's approach to tackling and preventing bullying will take particular account of the needs of students with disabilities or with SEN, and will join up with other relevant school policies and supports and will endeavour to ensure that all the services that provide for such students work together.
- Approaches to decreasing the likelihood of bullying for pupils with SEN include improving inclusion, focusing on developing social skills, paying attention to key moments such as transitioning from primary to post-primary and cultivating a good school culture which has respect for all and helping one another as central.

Relationships & Partnerships

- Encourage open communication between students, staff, and parents.
- Build positive relationships with students and families.
- Implementation of education and prevention strategies including awareness raising measures that build empathy, respect and resilience in students.
- Teacher CPD.
- Collaborate with community organisations to provide additional support and resources.
- Guest speakers may be invited to address staff and parent groups at regular intervals in relation to various types of bullying.
- Work with parents and students to educate them about the dangers of cyberbullying by facilitating outside speakers.
- Clear protocols are in place to encourage parents/guardians to approach the school if they suspect that their child is being bullied. These protocols were developed as part of our communication policy.

Preventing Cyberbullying Behaviour

- Explicitly teach the issues of cyberbullying and the importance of using technology safely e.g. Safer Internet Day, Webwise, etc.
- Monitor student use of technology in the classroom and on school grounds.
- Work with parents and students to educate them about the dangers of cyberbullying by facilitating outside speakers.

Preventing Homophobic/Transphobic Bullying Behaviour

- Create a safe and inclusive environment for all students, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Educate students about the importance of respecting all people, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Encourage peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities.
- Teach students about the importance of gender equality e.g. Gender Equality Matters
- Celebrate diversity at school and acknowledge the contributions of all students.

Preventing Racist Bullying Behaviour

- Teach students about the history and impact of racism e.g. Show Racism the Red Card.
- Promote diversity and inclusion in the classroom.
- Provide support to students who have been targeted by racist bullying.
- Ensure that library reading material represents appropriate lived experiences of students and adults from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

The school has the following supervision and monitoring policies in place to prevent and address bullying behaviour:

All staff members should be trained to recognise and respond to bullying behaviour. They should be present and visible in common areas, lockers, yard, corridors and areas with access to computers during break times.

Class teachers should supervise students during class time and should be aware of what is happening in their classrooms.

All visitors to the school must be Garda Vetted. At arrival to the school, visitors must check in at reception and liaise with the designated teacher they are working with.

All reports of bullying should be investigated promptly and thoroughly. The investigation should include interviews with the student who reported the incident, the student who was allegedly bullied, and any witnesses.

The school should take appropriate action to address the bullying behaviour.

By implementing these policies, Scoil Mhuire can create a safer and more positive school environment for all students.

This policy is consistent with other policies in Scoil Mhuire:

- Code of Behaviour
- Child Protection
- Student Support
- Internet Safety: Acceptable Use Policy
- Health and Safety
- SPHE/RSE
- Guidance
- Learning Support
- Admissions Policy

This policy links to the following Curriculum areas:

- SPHE: the issue of bullying dealt with in each of three years of Junior Cycle SPHE
- The Cool School anti-bullying lessons could be taught by subject teachers and Class Tutors e.g. CSPE (Human Rights), English (personal writing), PE (Q of sporting exclusion)
- Other links could include:
 - Transition Year
 - LCVP
 - Tutor Time
 - Weekly assembly
 - Restorative Model eg Questionnaire; Teachers Observation form; Incident Report form; Code of Behaviour

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

The teachers with responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour are as follows:

- Any member of the Student Support Team: Mr Eamonn Corrigan, Ms Mairead Glynn, Ms Sinead Egan, Ms Michelle Shea, Ms Natalie Grady
- Class Tutor and/or Guidance Counsellor.
- Any member of staff with whom the student feels comfortable.
- A Mentor
- Principal or Deputy Principal.

A student should feel comfortable reporting a bullying incident by using one, or any, of the following approaches:

- Directly approaching a teacher at an appropriate time. e.g. after class, break/lunch time.
- Handing up a note with homework or at assembly time
- Getting a parent to contact the school by ringing the school

When bullying behaviour occurs, the school will:

- ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour is heard and reassured
- seek to ensure the privacy of those involved
- conduct all conversations with sensitivity
- consider the age and ability of those involved
- listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation
- take action in a timely manner
- inform parents of those involved

The steps that will be taken by the school to determine if bullying behaviour has occurred, the approaches taken to address the bullying behaviour and to review progress are as follows:

Noting and Recording Incidents of Bullying

- All reported incidents of bullying to be noted on the Bullying Incident Report form.
- Bullying Incident Report form to be filled in by the teacher to whom it was reported.
- Forms to be completed by the teacher and left in the secretary's office for the attention of the Principal.
- Access to the files to be restricted to the Student Support Team, the Principal and the Guidance Counsellor.
- Files are to be kept in the filing cabinet for 5 years after the student leaves the school
- Non-teaching staff such as secretary, special needs assistants(SNA's), caretaker and cleaners will report any incidences of bullying behaviour witnessed by them to the relevant teacher

Dealing with Reported Incidents of Bullying

- The principle of consultation applies across all measures here.
- The procedures for noting and recording as outlined above will apply.
- The rights of all students and staff will be respected and a fair hearing will be given to all.
- Staff will be aware that allegations of bullying need to be fully investigated before action is taken.

1. Initial steps to be taken following report/disclosure of bullying behaviour:

Action taken by:

Any staff member who will then inform the Principal or Deputy Principal.

Procedure:

The Principal or Deputy Principal will:

Speak to the student(s) involved

Speak to relevant student(s) and/ or interview the class

Keep a record

Follow up progress with all parties involved and monitor the situation.

Parents of students involved may be contacted.

Support and/or sanction *may* include:

Serious talk with the student(s)

Outline a fair and mutually agreed outcome.

Student Support Team may also be involved as appropriate.

In cases where sanctions need to be imposed they will be enforced as per the school's Code of Behaviour.

2. Subsequent incidents/reports of bullying:

Action taken by:

Any staff member who will then inform the Principal or Deputy Principal.
Members of the Student Support team and/or Principal may be involved.

Procedure:

Serious talk with the student(s)
Outline a fair and mutually agreed outcome.
Student Support Team may also be involved as appropriate.
In cases where sanctions need to be imposed they will be enforced as per the school's Code of Behaviour.
Board of Management may be informed.

Support and/or sanction *may* include:

Serious talk with the student.
Any sanctions imposed will be applied as per the Code of Behaviour.
Student Support Team to monitor behaviour.

3. Where bullying behaviour persists / serious incidents of bullying:

Action taken by:

Principal / Deputy Principal involved
Student Support Team may be involved
Board of Management will be notified at the discretion of the Principal.

Procedure:

Parents to meet the Principal where appropriate.
Feedback to Student Support Team
Keep a Record
Follow up progress to be monitored by the Student Support Team and/or the Principal and Deputy Principal.
In cases where sanctions need to be imposed they will be enforced as per the school's Code of Behaviour.

Support and/or sanction *may* include:

Referral to external supports e.g. Child Psychologist/ Counsellor may be suggested
In cases where sanctions need to be imposed they will be enforced as per the school's Code of Behaviour.
The future of the student in the school may be considered.

Reports of Bullying Behaviour involving Staff

- Any reported allegations of bullying/harassment between students and staff should be dealt with directly by the Principal.
- In relation to staff to staff incidents, the matter should be referred directly to the Principal where an Incident report is to be filled out.
- Refer also to the ASTI/JMB Agreed Grievance procedure, Occupational Health.

The school will use the following approaches to support those who experience, witness and display bullying behaviour:

- The victim will receive the utmost privacy and confidentiality in the initial, and subsequent, investigations.
- Events will be organised, relating to the education and raising awareness of bullying, which will continue to be incorporated into SPHE and CSPE lessons.
- In a case where sanctions need to be imposed, they will be enforced, as per the school's Code of Behaviour.
- Following an investigated incident of bullying, Class Tutors, members of the Student Support Team and break-time Supervisors will monitor the behaviour of the students involved.
- Staff will be informed of necessary developments in bullying incidents, at staff meetings. They will be asked to monitor and observe the students or classes involved in specific incidents and to pass on these observations to the principal/deputy principal.
- Parents or guardians will be informed of serious incidents and if necessary their input may be required to help resolve the issue.
- A referral system will be in place to ensure that all incidents will be dealt with. If those investigating can't resolve the issue it may be referred to the Board of Management and/or other outside agencies including:
 - National Education Psychological Service (NEPS)
 - Oide
 - Webwise
 - National Parents Council
 - Dublin City University (DCU) Anti-Bullying Centre
 - Tusla

All bullying behaviour will be recorded. This will include the type of behaviour, where and when it took place, and the date of the engagement with students and parents. The actions and supports agreed to address bullying behaviour will be documented. If the bullying behaviour is a child protection concern the matter will be addressed without delay in accordance with *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

Section D: Oversight

Bullying behaviour update to Board of Management

At each meeting of the Board of Management the principal will present an update on the number of incidents of bullying behaviour and the measures taken to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

This will inform discussion at board level on the effectiveness of the measures that the school is taking to prevent and address bullying behaviour and the effectiveness of the school's Bí Cineálta Policy.

The update will include the following:

- the number of incidents of bullying behaviour that have been reported since the last meeting
- the number of incidents of bullying behaviour that are currently ongoing
- the number of incidents of bullying behaviour that have been reported since the beginning of the school year

Where incidents of bullying behaviour have been reported since the last meeting, the update will include a verbal report which will include the following information where relevant:

- the trends and patterns identified such as the form of bullying behaviour, type of bullying behaviour if known, location of bullying behaviour, when it occurred
- the strategies used to address the bullying behaviour
- any wider strategies to prevent and address bullying behaviour
- if any serious incidents of bullying behaviour have occurred which have had a serious adverse impact on a student
- if a parent has informed the school that a student has left the school because of reported bullying behaviour
- if any additional support is needed from the board of management
- if the school's Bí Cineálta policy requires urgent review in advance of the annual review

This update will not include any personal information or information that could identify the students involved.

It is important that the minutes of the board of management meeting documents the number of new incidents of bullying behaviour, the number currently ongoing and the total number of incidents of bullying behaviour since the beginning of the school year as reported by the principal. The minutes should also note where the board has considered the bullying behaviour verbal update and document when the board has decided that an urgent review of the school's Bi Cineálta policy is required.

Review of the Scoil Mhuire Bí Cineálta Policy

The school's Bí Cineálta policy will be reviewed each calendar year or as soon as practicable where the board of management determines that a review is warranted.

The review will be completed with input from the school community which includes the board of management, staff, students and their parents and members of the wider school community.

Scoil Mhuire will engage with their Student Council and their Parents Association to obtain their views on the content and effectiveness of the school's Bí Cineálta Policy.

Aside from the annual review, the school will be open to feedback on the implementation of their Bí Cineálta policy on a regular basis. Open discussions with school staff, students and parents around approaches may be taken to prevent and address bullying behaviour can help support effective implementation.

Where bullying behaviour has had a serious adverse impact on a student, the school will review the measures that they took to prevent and address bullying behaviour, with a view to identifying lessons that could be learned, so as to prevent a similar situation arising in the future. This may require an update to the school's Bí Cineálta policy.

The school community must be given notice that the annual review has taken place. This confirmation will be published on the school website once the annual review has taken place.

This policy is available to our school community on the school's website and in hard copy on request. A student friendly version of this policy is displayed in the school and is also available on our website and in hard copy on request.

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed, following input from our school community, each calendar year or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which this policy refers.

Signed: <u>Padaig O'Brien</u>	Date: <u>14.05.2025</u>
(Chairperson of board of management)	
Signed: <u>ZS</u>	Date: <u>14/5/25</u>
(Principal)	