

Scoil Mháthair Dé: 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 Mháthair Dé 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 by the Department of Education & Skills in September 2013.

Best Practice in the Prevention of Bullying Behaviour

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 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

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

Scoil Mháthair Dé: Anti-bullying Policy

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, DES, 2013*.

School Contact Personnel

The relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying are the class teachers

Education & Prevention Strategies

The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying) that will be used by the school are as follows:

- Scoil Mháthair Dé will have an annual staff day/ CPD on the subject of bullying complemented by an awareness day for pupils and parents..
- Teachers can raise awareness of the prevention of bullying and the promotion of respect for diversity and inclusiveness through the SPHE curriculum. Specific provision for the exploration of bullying as well as the integrated areas of belonging and integrating, communication, conflict, friendship, personal safety and relationships.
- Personal safety skills will be explored through the Stay Safe programme which helps children recognize and cope with bullying.
- 'Friends for Life' programme is a school-based positive mental health programme from middle to senior standards in Scoil Mháthair Dé which helps students develop effective strategies to deal with worry, stress and change and teaches the skills required to reduce anxiety and promote resilience
- The continuous implementation of the 'Stop, Think, Do' social skills programme in all classes helps everybody in Scoil Mháthair Dé to develop an awareness of emotions and consequences of our actions in all social situations.

Investigation & Follow-Up Procedures

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 are as follows:

- 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

Scoil Mháthair Dé: Anti-bullying Policy

- Parents and pupils are 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;
- Incidents will be investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved;
- The relevant teacher will seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why.
- 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
- At the discretion of the teacher leading the investigation pupils involved maybe asked to write down their account of the incident(s)
- 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
- 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
- In a situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, the matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parents and the school is private
- 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.

Working with Pupils Affected by Bulling

The school's has a programme of support in place for working with pupils affected by bullying. Support teachers provide opportunities for pupils to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem. They help pupils develop their friendship and social skills by encouraging active participation in **Friendship Week** and in the organisation of social activities in school.

Part of the school's intervention process includes the implementation of the '**Friends for Life**' programme which is of particular value to pupils affected by bullying. The '**STOP, THINK, DO**' programme is also implemented by mainstream and SEN teachers. Pupils need assistance on an ongoing basis. Mainstream teachers work in conjunction with support teachers to devise individual programmes of support for pupils focusing on developing self worth and self-esteem. **Incredible Years** programme is being delivered by NEPS to all permanent staff throughout the 2016-17 school year: different groups at a time.

As part of the process of becoming a Health Promoting School we work with an advisor/coordinator from the Health Promotion Unit/HSE to implement such activities as **Anti-bullying Week**.

Scoil Mháthair Dé: Anti-bullying Policy

Speakers are invited to the school to speak to classes on developing an awareness on bullying. The Garda Community Programme provide speakers for class visits once a year and in particular to the middle and senior standards and wherever else support may be needed.

‘**Bluebox**’ therapists work within the school and provide therapy for pupils who may be affected by bullying and pupils who are involved in bullying and may need counselling.

Pupils who observe bullying are encouraged to tell what they witness and their responsibility to do so is explained to them

Supervision & Monitoring

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.