

# SCOIL MHÁTHAIR DÉ

## ANTI BULLYING POLICY

### 1.0 Adoption of Policy

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.

### 1.1 Best Practice in the Prevention of Bullying Behaviour

#### Key principles

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.

In Scoil Mháthair Dé we view bullying as an unacceptable behaviour that will not be tolerated in our school.

We encourage all pupils to support each other by reporting incidents of bullying.

All reports of bullying in our school will be investigated and be dealt with sympathetically.

### 1.2 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 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*.

### 1.3 School Contact Personnel

The relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying are the class teachers (Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*) recommends that the relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying in Primary Schools is/are the class teacher(s).

In the case where children from two different classes are involved, both class teachers will be deemed to be the relevant teachers. In such a case a local agreement can be made between the two relevant teachers that one of them take on the case, or they can work together on this.

### 1.4 Education & Prevention Strategies

The *Anti-bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*

(KEY PRINCIPLES OF BEST PRACTICE, 6.1 Positive school culture and climate, 6.1.1 & 6.1.2 ) state:

***“A cornerstone in the prevention of bullying is a positive school culture and climate that is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity and respect. A school policy on bullying is most effective when supported by a positive school climate which encourages respect, trust, care, consideration and support for others.*”**

***Central to a positive school culture is respectful relationships across the entire school community. This encompasses relationships amongst peers (e.g. pupil to pupil, teacher to teacher) and relationships between groups (e.g. teachers and pupils, parents and teachers etc.).***

It is with this in mind that 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 in Scoil Mháthair Dé are as follows:

- From school year 2020/21 a child friendly definition of bullying to be taught to all students (two versions: one for Junior Infants to Second Class, one for Third to Sixth class – to be developed with Anti-Bullying sub-committee). This will be prominently displayed in the school.
- Children will be made aware of what to do if they feel they are being bullied or if they see another child being bullied. The role of the bystander will be specifically explained to all children.
- Circle time discussions on bullying in each class, one per term.
- Anti-bullying lessons from Stay Safe, RSE & Walk Tall and as part of SPHE plan to include anti-homophobic/transphobic bullying.
- Anti-cyberbullying lessons will be given to classes from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> annually.
- Annual awareness campaigns – in conjunction with staff, pupils, parents & BOM.
- Golden Rules champion (peer to peer weekly award system celebrating positive behaviour amongst children).
- Friendship week to be organised in February or March. This event encourages positive behaviour across the school and is a very enjoyable week for the whole school. This involves a cross-curricular approach to the theme of friendship and is a whole school initiative. It is foreseen that it will continue into the future.
- Student Council. The Student Council supported by the Leadership and Management Team will implement buddy/friendship systems in senior and junior yard, details below.
- Support systems for yard times once Covid restrictions re Bubbles/ Pods are eased:
  - Senior yard - Buddy system (older children volunteer to be a friend to a child who needs support).
  - Friendship stop in Junior yard. A child needing someone to play with can stand at the Friendship Stop, any child can offer to play with that child.
- Staff will be given an Anti-Bullying pack with policy documents & DES Guidelines.
- Staff training in anti-bullying and how to deal with bullying will be offered by end of first term in the 2020-21 school year.
- '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

Opportunities for CPD will be advertised in the staff room.

- In Scoil Mháthair Dé we operate a whole school approach to all behaviour management including bullying. All adults working in the school are made aware of and implement these policies.
- We recognise that this list is not exhaustive. All anti-bullying education and prevention strategies used during the school year will be included in the annual report as required by legislation.

## 1.5 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
- 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.

- In Scoil Mháthair Dé we note that some children engage in low-level negative behaviours towards others. These behaviours may be the same as behaviours which can be deemed as bullying, but do not always fall under the definition of bullying e.g. a child may laugh at another child, this may

be hurtful but a one off experience, or it can be part on an on-going pattern of behaviour that may amount to bullying.

- Teachers monitor these behaviours as part of their responsibilities. In our school, all staff are encouraged to keep a note of behaviours if and when they see a pattern emerging and to alert other staff via Aladdin. However minor or once-off occurrences of negative behaviour may not be recorded and can generally be dealt with informally using our behaviour system i.e. Golden Rules etc.

## 1.6 Working with Pupils Affected by Bullying

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. 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.

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' 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 counseling.

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

It is recognised in our school that bullying affects the victim, the person who is doing the bullying and the person who witnesses bullying.

### Support for the child who has been bullied

- Support in the form of a trusted adult to speak to daily is offered to the child who has been bullied for as long as this is deemed necessary.

- Self-esteem building exercises and opportunities to increase feelings of self-worth will be undertaken with the child who has been bullied in order to restore their self-esteem.
- Where appropriate or necessary friendship groups or a buddy system will be implemented for the child for yard times.
- If it is deemed appropriate the child will be offered concrete support in how to deal with a similar situation in the future i.e. given the language tools to react and seek help immediately. This can be practised with role play and drama. This is particularly useful for children with Special Educational Needs who may lack the necessary verbal and/or non-verbal skills to do so. The teacher, with the support of the SEN team will offer this support.

### **Support for the child who has deemed to be engaging in bullying behaviour**

- The child who has been engaging in bullying behaviour will be offered concrete support in changing her/his behaviour. This can involve self-esteem building exercises and opportunities to increase feelings of self-worth. This child may also be given the opportunity to speak to a trusted adult on a regular basis to encourage her/him to continue to make positive behaviour choices.
- Where deemed appropriate follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved may be arranged separately with a view to possibly bringing both sides together at a later date if the pupil who has been bullied is ready and agreeable. This can have a therapeutic effect.

### **Support for the child who has witnessed bullying behaviour**

- The child who has witnessed bullying behaviour will be offered concrete support if necessary, by being given the opportunity to speak to a trusted adult on a regular basis to help him/her process what s/he has witnessed.
- Children who make an initial report on what is later deemed to be bullying behaviour will be praised. The importance of the bystander will be highlighted.

## **1.7 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.

## **1.8 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.

### 1.9 Policy Adoption

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on \_\_\_\_\_

### 1.10 Communication

This policy has been made available to school personnel and published on the school website and is readily accessible to parents and pupils on request. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the Patron if requested.

### 1.11 Implementation Review

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.

## 12. POLICY RATIFICATION

The policy was ratified by the Board of Management of Scoil Mháthair Dé at its meeting held on 9/XI/2020

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

*Sonagh A. O'Malley*

Chairperson, Board of Management