Scoil Mhichíl Naofa, Bere Island N.S.
Roll no: 19525R

Anti Bullying Policy

Reviewed: March 2025

In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the code of behaviour guidelines issued by the NEWB (TUSLA), the Board of Management of Scoil Mhichil Naofa 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.

Children First National Guidance 2017	
- outlines that bullying can be defined as repeated aggression – whether it be verbal, psychological or physical – that is conducted by an individual or group against others.	- describes bullying as behaviour that is intentionally aggravating and intimidating, and occurs mainly among children in social environments such as schools. - It includes behaviours such as physical aggression, cyber bullying, damage to property, intimidation, isolation/exclusion, name calling, malicious gossip and extortion.
Bullying can also take the form of: - identity abuse based on gender, sexual preference, race, ethnicity and religious factors. - With developments in modern technology, children can also be the victims of non-contact bullying, via mobile phones, the internet and other personal devices.	

Children First National Guidance 2017 and the Anti-Bullying Procedures provide that in cases of serious instances of bullying where the behaviour is regarded as possibly abusive, a referral may need to be made to Tusla or An Garda Síochána as appropriate.

Where school personnel have concerns about a child arising from alleged bullying behaviour but are not sure whether to report the matter to TUSLA, the designated liaison person shall seek advice from Tusla in accordance with the procedures set out in Chapter 5 of Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017.

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:

Key Principles of Best Practice in Preventing & 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;	- promotion of positive communication amongst whole school community
A school-wide approach;	
A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact;	- Including Restorative Practice approach
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)	
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 • identity-based bullying such as homophobic bullying, racist bullying, bullying based on a person's membership of the Traveller community, religious belief or non-belief 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*.

The relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying are the DLP and the DDLP.

Working together in a supportive, respectful partnership within an inclusive school environment is central to our vision in Scoil Mhichil Naofa.
Diversity is celebrated in the school, through highlighting different cultural celebrations e.g. Ramadan, Diwali etc as well as Christian celebrations and through the study of History; identity based themes are discussed e.g. anti – Semitism (WW II), Apartheid etc.

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:

- An awareness on the part of all staff of the extremely serious nature of bullying and the severe consequences that may result in situations where it is not addressed.
- A recognition by all staff of the fact that any student can be the victim of, or perpetrator of bullying behaviour.
- Regular reminders in class and during Circle Time of our school ethos where pupils and staff reflect on the importance of a positive school climate, where each individual is respected and where the development and preservation of self-esteem is valued.
- Preventative strategies include staff vigilance and a comprehensive SPHE plan in every class.
- A school approach to discipline which reflects the fact that pupils model their behaviour on adults and which therefore employs techniques such as positive motivation and recognition as opposed to methods based on threat and fear.
- Raising the awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour through curricular initiative in areas such as novel exploration, drama, co-operation and the control of aggression.
- The school Anti-Bullying Charter is signed by each individual child.
- Comprehensive supervision and monitoring measures are in place through which all areas of school activity are kept under observation.
- The full implementation of the SPHE, RSE and Stay Safe Programmes.
- Continuous Professional Development for staff in delivering these programmes.
- School wide delivery of lessons on bullying from evidence based programmes, e.g. Stay Safe Programme, The Walk Tall Programme, Prim-Ed Anti- Bullying- Identify, Prevent, Cope, Anti-bullying Campaign.ie, Be Safe-Be Web Wise, HTML Heroes, Prim- Ed Cyber-Bullying Programme "Cool School ", Friends For Life etc.
- Delivery of the Garda SPHE Programmes. These lessons delivered by the Community Guard, cover issues around personal safety and cyber-bullying
- The school will specifically consider the additional needs of SEN pupils with regard to programme implementation and the development of skills and strategies to enable all pupils to respond appropriately.
- The school will implement the advice in "Sexual Orientation advice for schools" (RSE Primary, PDST Information Booklet).

Key Measures re Cyber Bullying

Cyber Bullying:

- Cyber bullying includes (but is not limited to) communicating via electronic means with the objective of causing hurt, fear, embarrassment, humiliation, alarm and/or distress to one or more persons.
- Cyber bullying includes the use of mobile phones and the internet with the objective of upsetting someone.
- It may take the form of general insults or impersonation, defamation or prejudice-based bullying.
- Unlike other forms of bullying a once-off posting can constitute bullying.
- While this policy addresses issues related to cyber bullying of students (i.e. situations in which one or more students are the victim[s] of bullying), the policy also applies to teaching and other school staff.

Key Measures re Cyber Bullying

- Staff will endeavour to identify signs of cyberbullying and to keep informed about the technologies that children commonly use.
- Advice will be communicated to help students protect themselves from being involved in bullying (as perpetrator or as victim) and to advise them on reporting any incidents.
- Students will be informed about cyber bullying in the course of their education.
- The children are not permitted to have mobile phones either in school or on school outings. (see Code of Behaviour.)
- Gardaí will visit & talk about cyber bullying from time to time.
- Teachers will dedicate standalone lessons each term to deal with the issue of cyber bullying.
- Students and staff are expected to comply with the school's policy on the use of computers in the School. (Acceptable Use Policy)
- Parents will be provided with information and advice on cyber bullying.
- Parents and students are advised that it is illegal for a child under 13 to register with and use many social media networks, including Facebook, Instagram, and SnapChat.
- Scoil Mhichil Naofa's internet is filtered which endeavours to block access to inappropriate web sites, apps etc.
- No pupil is allowed to work on the Internet within the school, without a member of staff present. Children are encouraged to use certain child friendly sites such as Kiddle to search for information.

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 School recognises that:	- early intervention is crucial; - a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach should be adopted; - incidents are best investigated outside the classroom situation; - humiliation of victim or bully should be avoided at all costs; - interviews should be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned;

	- other pupils can sometimes provide useful information; - dealing effectively with conflict in a non-aggressive manner is setting an example for pupils; - parental input and co-operation is valuable; - both victim and bully need help. - Any pupil or parent(s)/guardian(s) may bring a bullying incident to the relevant teacher in the school. - A suspicion of bullying should be raised with the relevant class teacher first and then if necessary with the Principal. - Parents are encouraged to make an appointment to speak with relevant class teacher if they suspect that their child is being bullied. - All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying, will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. - Teaching and non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), bus escorts, caretakers, cleaners must report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher.
Investigation of Bullying:	- All interviews will take place outside the classroom situation with due regard to child protection measures e.g. door to office/room will be left open. - A written record of discussions will be kept (Incident Record Sheet) and the pupil may be asked to give his/her own written account, if this is appropriate. - When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher should seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This should be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner; - If a group is involved, each member should be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved should be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member should be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements; - Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that may face them from the other members of the group after the interview by the teacher; - If it is concluded that a pupil has engaged in bullying behaviour, it will be made clear to them that they are in breach of the schools Code of Behaviour and Discipline. - Efforts will be made to assist the pupil in seeing the situation from the victim's point of view. - In cases where bullying behaviour has occurred, parents/guardians of the two parties involved will be contacted. They will be referred to this school policy. Action being taken and the reason for it will be explained

	to them and ways in which they can reinforce or support the school action will be explored.
Questions to be asked when responding to challenging behaviour include:	- What happened? - What were you thinking at the time? - What have your thoughts been since? - Who has been affected by what you did? - In what way have they been affected? - What do you think needs to happen next?
Questions to be asked when responding to those harmed include:	- What happened? - What were you thinking at the time? - What have your thoughts been since? - How has this affected you / others? - What has been the hardest thing for you?
Follow Up:	- Follow-up contact with the two parties may be organised to take place within one month of the investigation. The possible therapeutic effect of a bringing together of victim and bully at a future date will be considered if the victim is ready and agreeable to do so. - Following any incident of bullying, the school recognises that issues relating to the prevention of bullying may need to be examined. This will involve exploration of suitable programmes with victims, bullies and their peers. Whole school focus or specific class lessons may need to be revised dealing with respect, self-esteem, aggression or the issue of bullying itself. - If, during the course of the investigation, there are child protection concerns, the Children First 2011 guidelines become relevant as does the schools Child Protection policy. - Where the school feels an individual needs specific support from outside agencies, a referral to NEPS will be considered. - The effectiveness of this school policy will be assessed regularly with regard to the level and type of bullying behaviour that may be happening in the school. Amendments will be made to reflect any change in approach deemed necessary.
Recording of Bullying Behaviour:	- Where a bullying investigation has been carried out the class teacher will keep a written record of the incident. - Where the principal has used the Bullying Incident Investigation Record Form (see Appendix 3), a copy will be kept in the office along with his/her own records of the investigation. (see Section 6.8 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools)

The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows:(see Section 6.8 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools) :

- The relevant teacher will endeavour to assure the child that they are the victim and that they did the right thing by telling.
- The teacher will monitor the situation in the period after the bullying incident/s and regularly check with the child/children to see how things are going.
- The Principal will follow up by checking in regularly on how the situation has developed.
- All in-school supports and opportunities will be provided for the pupils affected by bullying to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop friendships and social skills and build resilience e.g.
    - SALT Conflict Resolution Programme
    - Restorative Practice
    - Circle Time activities
    - SPHE Programmes e.g. Walk Tall, Zippy's Friends,
    - NEPS – Friends For Life, Incredible Years, Get Up. Stand Up etc.
    - Play / Art Therapy
    - The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS).If pupils require counselling or further supports the school will endeavour to liaise with the appropriate agencies to organise same. This may be for the pupil affected by bullying or involved in the bullying behaviour.
    - Pupils should understand that there are no innocent bystanders and that all incidents of bullying behaviour must be reported to a relevant teacher

Links to other Policies:

- Code of Behaviour
- Child Safeguarding Statement
- ICT and Acceptable Use Policy
- Positive Communication Policy
- DEIS Plan
- Health and Safety Policy

Supervision & 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.

	Date:
This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on:	27th March
This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.	
Signed: Brenda Elphick (Chairperson of Board of Management)	
Signed: Fiona Hartnett (Principal)	
This policy will be reviewed on:	Summer 2026

- 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.
- A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.