Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

2025

(Bí Cineálta = Be Kind

The Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire Secondary School 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 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. We will also endeavor to prevent the harassment of students because of their physical appearance, their high or low academic ability or their lack of resources.

The Bí Cineálta anti-bullying procedures will be made clear to all staff, parents/guardians, students and other relevant parties.

The Policy will be published on the school website.

A student-friendly version of the procedures will be prominently displayed throughout the school and in the school journal.

Definition of bullying

Bullying is defined in *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2024* as targeted behaviour, online or offline that causes harm. The harm caused can be physical, social and/or emotional in nature. Bullying behaviour is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power in relationships between two people or groups of people in society.

Bullying behaviour can take many forms including the following -

Physical, Verbal, Written, Extortion, Exclusion and Relational bullying behaviour.

On-line Bullying Behaviour

On-line bullying behaviour (Cyberbullying) is carried out using Information and Communications Technologies such as text messaging, social media platforms, e-mail, apps, digital gaming sites, gaming consoles, chatrooms and other online technologies.

Even though an offensive message may be posted online just once by a student, it can be considered bullying behaviour as it may be seen by a wide audience and has a likelihood of being shared multiple times, thereby making it repeated.

Bad behaviour which is not bullying behaviour

The following are examples of incidences that are not considered bullying behaviour and they will be dealt with under the School's Code of Behaviour.

- A one-off incidence of negative behaviour towards another student. (Excluding on-line)
- Disagreements between students, or where students do not want to be friends or remain friends.
- Accidental and reckless behaviour without intent.
- A student with Special Education Needs may sometimes behave inappropriately towards another student. This behaviour may not be deliberate or planned. They may have difficulty regulating their behaviour or understanding the impact their behaviour has on others.

As stated, these incidences will be dealt with in line with the School Code of Behaviour.

Bullying incidents which occur outside the of school

The school will not deal with bullying behaviour that occurs when students are not under the care or responsibility of the school. Where this bullying behaviour has an impact in school, the students involved will be supported. If the bullying continues in school, it will be dealt with in line with the Bí Cineálta Policy.

Criminal Behaviour

If bullying behaviour in school is deemed to be criminal behaviour it will be referred to An Garda Siochána. Actions in breach of Coco's Law, violence or threats of violence and discrimination or hate speech are examples of criminal behaviours. In these instances students and parents will be supported as much as is possible by the school.

Section A

Development 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	12.3 2025	On-line survey
School Staff	11.4.2025	Half day workshop
Year Heads	6.3.2025, 13.2.2025	Meetings
Committee	7.1.2025, 17.1.2025, 23.1.2025, 12.3.2025, 31.3.2025, 21.5.2025	Meetings
Students	9.3.2025 23.5.2025	On-line survey Focus groups 1st 2nd 3rd 5th Years.
Parents	9.3. 2025	On-line survey
Board of Management		
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	11.4. 2025	All staff workshop
Date policy was approved:		
Date policy was last reviewed:		

Section B

Preventing Bullying Behaviour.

We in Scoil Mhuire are proactive in our efforts to eliminate bullying behaviour in our school. An outline of initiatives to this end are outlined under the following headings -

Culture and Environment, Curriculum, Relationships and Partnership and Policy and Planning.

Culture and Environment

Scoil Mhuire has implemented many strategies to create an inclusive and welcoming environment where every student feels welcome and safe. These strategies include but are not limited to the following –

- A welcoming environment is created through the use of colour, the display of positive words, students' work and on-screen positive messages which are inclusive of all.

Inclusion is fostered through a strong pastoral care system of Form Groups, Form Time and Year Group Assemblies. There is a Breakfast Club open to all students, lunch-time activities catering for a wide range of interests, class trips, Faith Events, Christmas Concert and Graduation Ceremonies which are inclusive of all students.

- Students are supported by Senior Prefects, a First Year Mentoring System (Athrú), a 6th Year Mentoring initiative, a Care Room, a Breaktime Drop-in Centre and an Open Door Policy by Management.
- Students are encouraged to be Upstanders and to report any incidences of negative behaviour towards other student/s that they become aware of in school.
- A disability awareness programme is under consideration for First Year students.

Curriculum

- Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) classes are timetabled for First, Second, Third Year and TY classes. All SPHE teachers have availed of up-to-date inservice.
- Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) classes are timetabled for 5th and 6th Year students. All RSE teachers have availed of up-to-date in-service.
- The Cool Schools Programme is delivered to all First-Year classes.
- Anti-bullying presentations are given to all Junior students.
- Information Technology classes, including Internet Safety, are timetabled for all 1st Year Students.

- Themed weeks and ongoing well-being activities happen throughout the year.
- Diversity is a consideration when choosing textbooks in all subjects.
- The history department shows sensitivity in the use of language when discussing historical events.
- Different family demographics and socio-economic groupings are referenced by the History Department.
- Higher level Mathematics is encouraged for all students.
- Non-active roles are assigned in Physical Education where appropriate to ensure the inclusion of all students in the class.
- The Science Department model inclusive language and discussion on sensitive topics, for example reproduction and genetics.
- The Music Department takes a multicultural approach when choosing pieces and songs which impart messages around friendship, kindness and inclusivity are encouraged.
- Teamwork in classes is carefully managed and monitored to ensure all students are engaged and given the opportunity to work with a range of other students.

Relationship and Partnership

The following school bodies have anti-bullying on their agenda throughout the year.

- Care Team
- Student Council
- Parent Council
- Board of Management

The school liaises as is appropriate with the following -

- National Education Psychological Service (NEPS)
- TUSLA
- Sexual Assault Treatment Unit (SATU)
- Gardai

Diversity is a consideration when inviting outside speakers to the school
Teachers strive to model positive inclusive behavior and language.

Policy and Planning

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.

- All School Policies reflect this vision.

- School Self-Evaluation has student well-being at the centre of its review of practices and performance to identify areas for improvement and enhance teaching and learning.

Supervision and Monitoring of Students

- Teachers supervise students inside the school and in the school yard before and after school and during all breaks.
- Most student lockers are in classrooms.
- Students have the use of classrooms for lunchtime.
- Seating plans are managed to ensure the best classroom dynamic possible.
- There is a range of supervised activities for students at lunchtime

Section C

Addressing reported incidence of Bullying Behaviour.

The teachers with responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour are:

Year Heads, Deputy Principal, Principal.

Is it Bullying?

We understand that some students will occasionally behave inappropriately, and that other students will be negatively impacted by this behaviour. We encourage students, parents/guardians, staff and other relevant parties to report incidences where they or someone they know is negatively impacted by the behaviour of others.

Any individual who observes suspected bullying behaviour or who has a case of suspected bullying behaviour reported to them should refer the matter to the relevant Year Head using the template provided. (Appendix...

The **Year Head** will investigate the report. The primary aim in investigating a report of bullying is to resolve the issue and restore as far as practical, the relationships of the parties involved.

When an issue is reported to a Year Head -

The Year Head working closely with the relevant Deputy Principal and using the Bí Cineálta definition of bullying will determine as far as possible if bullying has occurred.

A calm, unemotional problem-solving approach will be taken, and interviews will be conducted in a sensitive manner, with due regard for the rights of all students involved.

Factual information will be gathered. Students directly involved will be spoken to individually, and in groups where it is deemed appropriate. Students indirectly involved

may also be spoken as their input may be useful in resolving the situation. This will necessitate students being called out of class for brief periods of time.

When students are interviewed as a group, care will be taken that all members are clear about each other's statements.

Students may be asked to put their version of events in writing.

The Year head/Deputy Principal will seek answers to the who, when, where, what and why related to the incidence/s.

Where it is determined that it is an issue of poor behaviour rather than bullying, the procedures in the School Code of behaviour will be followed.

Addressing Bullying Behaviour.

Where it is determined that Bullying has occurred –

The parents/guardians of the parties involved will be contacted by the Year Head and appraised of the situation.

The importance of parents/guardians and students' co-operation in resolving issues will be emphasized.

Parents/Guardians and Students will be made aware that the aim is to resolve the situation and restore as far as possible relations between the parties. They will be included in discussions on how the situation can best be resolved and how to help their child learn from the event and move on from it.

All students involved will be

- Listened to and supported.
- A no blame approach will be taken.
- Agreements between students may be negotiated in an informal or in a structured way.
- Mediation between students may be offered.
- Where sanctions are applied, this will be a private matter between the student, their parents/guardians and the school.
- Students involved in bullying behaviour will be supported to take ownership of their actions and to amend their behaviour.
- Students who have suffered because of the bullying behaviour will be supported in the manner most appropriate to help them regain confidence.

Requests to take no action.

A student reporting bullying behaviour may ask that no action be taken. In this case the staff member will work with the student to work out together what steps can be taken to address the matter and how their parents will be informed of the situation. It is important that the student who has experienced bullying behaviour feels safe.

A parent may also make the school aware of bullying behaviour that has occurred and request that no action be taken. The student/s impacted by the bullying behaviour will be included in these discussions. Parents will be asked to put their request in writing to the school. However, while acknowledging the parent's request, the school may decide that, based on circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour.

Reviewing Progress

Following no more than 20 days after it has been determined that bullying behaviour has occurred and interventions have been put in place, the Year Head will engage with the Students and Parents/Guardians involved to review progress.

If the bullying behaviour has not ceased, new strategies will be discussed and implemented. A further review will be conducted in an agreed timeframe and so on until the bullying behaviour has ceased.

Where a bullying incident continues to be unresolved or is deemed serious enough, the issue will be recorded and referred immediately to the Principal of the school.

Where a parent/guardian is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, they will be referred to the school's complaints procedures.

Where a parent/guardian has exhausted the school's complaint's procedures and remains unsatisfied, the school will advise them of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

Supporting students

The following in-school supports and opportunities will be available to all students affected by bullying in any way. The aim is to raise their self-esteem, to help them develop friendships and social skills and to build their resilience.

Pastoral Care system
Athrú Mentor Programme
Form Teacher/Year Head system
Care Team
Meetings with Guidance Counsellor
Encouragement to join extra-curricular activities.

If students require counselling or further support, the school will endeavour to liaise

with the appropriate agencies to organise same. This may be for the student affected by bullying or involved in bullying behaviour.

Record keeping

- All records of bullying incidences will be written in an objective and factual manner.
- Staff will keep a brief written record of an incidence of bullying observed or reported to them. The Teacher Referral Form will be used when reporting an alleged bullying incidence to a Year Head.
- The Year head/Deputy Principal will make brief factual notes of discussions with all parties.
- Information regarding the type of behaviour, where and when it took place, the dates of engagement with students and parents/guardians, the actions and support agreed to address the 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*.
- Bullying behaviour which is deemed criminal in nature will be referred to An Garda Siochana

All records will be stored securely in the Year head's office.

Section D

Oversight

The Principal will provide an update on bullying behaviour at each Board of Management Meeting. The update will include the number of incidences of bullying behaviour that have been reported since the last meeting, the number of ongoing incidences and the total number of incidences since the beginning of the school year. Where incidences of bullying have occurred, the Principal will also provide a verbal update which will include where relevant, information relating to trends and patterns identified, strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and any wider strategies to prevent and address bullying behaviour where relevant. This update does not contain personal or identifying information.

This policy is available to our school community on the school's 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: Sandra Doyle Date: 12/6/25
(Chairperson Board of management)

Signed: Jacqueline Nolan Date: 12/6/25
(Principal)