

Scoil Mochua

Anti-Bullying Policy



Section 1: Rationale

In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, the Board of Management of Scoil Mochua 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.

The annual review of this policy is implemented on a whole-school basis. Feedback is invited and considered from staff members, parents and pupils. This whole-school approach facilitates the development of an inclusive policy.

The school looks forward to engaging with the Department on the new *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying Implementation Plan 2023--2027* over the coming years.

Section 2: Key Principles

The Board of Management recognize 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 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.

Section 3: 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, as set out in Section 2 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, are detailed in Appendix 2.

Section 4: Responsibility for Investigation

The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying will normally be the class teacher, however any teacher may act as a relevant teacher if circumstances warrant it. The relevant teacher may involve the Principal/ Deputy Principal.

Section 5: Education and Prevention Strategies

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

SPHE Curriculum	Scoil Mochua delivers a whole-school approach, with a 2-year spiral
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	programme. It comprises of 10 Strand Units – 5 per year.
Whole School Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Well-being Week ○ Anti-Bullying Week ○ Friendship Week ○ Safer Internet Day ○ Wellbeing Boxes in all classrooms and situated in central locations throughout the school. ○ Class Buddy System ○ Assemblies
Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils	A monthly supervision rota is distributed to all staff, ensuring that good supervisory and monitoring measures are in place in the mornings when the children are arriving to school, and during lunch times. Appropriate supervision is organized for all school activities.
<p>Cross curricular areas – English, Drama, Art, P.E.</p> <p>Extra-curricular areas – social groups, sports teams, board games club, debating teams, quiz teams, student council, green schools committee, Aistear</p>	<p>Scoil Mochua uses a cross curricular approach to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Promote inclusion and diversity ○ build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils ○ provide pupils with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth, building self-esteem.
Stay Safe	<p>Senior Infants, 2nd Class, 4th Class and 6th Class</p> <p>Revised annually with all year groups</p>
Weaving Wellbeing - Positive Psychology programme	All year groups
Implementation of RSE plan	All class levels
Cyber Bullying Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Zeeko Guest Speaker (3rd – 6th Class) ○ Safer Internet Day ○ School Webpage: http://www.scoilmochnua.com/internet-safety.html
Identity-based bullying (including homophobic and transphobic bullying)	All Together Now (5 th and 6 th Class)

Section 6: Procedure for Investigation

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 (in line with Section 6.8 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools):

- A pupil or parent may bring a bullying concern to any teacher in the school. Individual teachers must take appropriate measures regarding reports of bullying behaviour in accordance with the school's anti-bullying policy.

Established intervention strategies

Procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying

- i) 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 (rather than to apportion blame);
- ii) In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved;
- iii) All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. In that way pupils will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It should be made clear to all pupils that when they report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly;
- iv) Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), caretakers, cleaners must be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher;
- v) 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;
- vi) It is very important that all involved (including each set of pupils and parents) understand the above approach from the outset;
- vii) Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents;
- viii) Incidents are generally best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved;
- ix) All interviews should be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this way;

- x) 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;
- xi) 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;
- xii) Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that they may face them from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher;
- xiii) It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s);
- xiv) In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved should 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 should 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;
- xv) Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts should be made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied;
- xvi) It must also be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parents) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parents and the school;
- xvii) Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved should 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. This can have a therapeutic effect;
- xviii) In cases where the relevant teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, it must be recorded by the relevant teacher in the recording template at Appendix 1;
- xix) In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant teacher must, as part of his/her professional judgement, take the following factors into account:
 - Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased;
 - Whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable;
 - Whether the relationships between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable; and

- Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the school Principal or Deputy Principal;
- xx) Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures;
- xxi) In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

Procedures for recording bullying behaviour

All records must be maintained in accordance with relevant data protection legislation. The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour must adhere to the following:

- i) While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the relevant teacher will use his/her professional judgement in relation to the records to be kept of these reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same;
- ii) If it is established by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher must keep appropriate written records which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.
- iii) The relevant teacher must use the recording template in Appendix 1 to record the bullying behaviour in the following circumstances:
 - a) in cases where he/she considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour occurred; and
 - b) where the school has decided as part of its anti-bullying policy that in certain circumstances bullying behaviour must be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable.

In each of the circumstances at (a) and (b) above, the recording template at Appendix 1 must be completed in full and retained by the teacher in question and a copy provided to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable. It should also be noted that the timeline for recording bullying behaviour in the recording template at Appendix 1 does not in any way preclude the relevant teacher from consulting the Principal or Deputy Principal at an earlier stage in relation to a case.

Bullying as part of a continuum of behaviour

It is also important to note that bullying behaviour can be part of a continuum of behaviour rather than a stand-alone issue and in some cases behaviour may escalate beyond that which can be described as bullying to serious physical or sexual assault or harassment. In cases where a school has serious concerns in relation to managing the behaviour of a pupil, the advice of the National Education Psychological Service (NEPS) should be sought.

Referral of serious cases to Tusla

In relation to bullying in schools, Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017 and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools provide that in situations where “the incident is serious and where the behaviour is regarded as potentially abusive”, the school may need to make a referral to Tusla and/or Gardaí as appropriate.

The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools also provide that where school personnel have concerns about a child but are not sure whether to report the matter, the Designated Liaison Person must seek advice from the Children and Family Agency, Tusla.

Section 7: Supports for Pupils Affected by Bullying

The school provides a range of supports for pupils affected by bullying. These supports are based on the individual needs of the child. The school may utilise some of following in supporting pupils:

Friendship Building Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Circle time○ Active resource○ Social group
Self-Esteem Building Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Allocation of school jobs○ Weaving Wellbeing
Pastoral Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Provided by Deputy Principal○ School point of contact (selected by the child)
External Agency Support/ Counselling	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ CAMHS○ Pieta House○ NEPS

Pupils who observe incidents of bullying behaviour should be encouraged to discuss them with teachers.

Section 8 – Supervision and 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.

Section 9 – Equality Legislation

The Board of Management confirms that the school will, in accordance with its obligations under equality legislation, take 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.

Section 10


This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 7/2/2024 [date].

Section 11


This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department of Education and the Patron if requested.

Section 12

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 and provided to the Parents' Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the Patron and the Department.

Signed: 
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Date: 7/2/24

Signed: 
(Principal)

Date: 7/2/2024

Date of next review: November 2024.

Appendix 1 Template for recording bullying behaviour

1. Name of pupil being bullied and class group

Name _____ Class _____

2. Name(s) and class(es) of pupil(s) engaged in bullying behaviour

3. Source of bullying concern/report (tick relevant box(es))

4. Location of incidents (tick relevant box(es))

Pupil concerned		Playground	
Other Pupil		Classroom	
Parent		Corridor	
Teacher		Toilets	
		Other	

5. Name of person(s) who reported the bullying concern:

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6. Type of Bullying Behaviour (tick relevant box(es))

Physical Aggression		Cyber-bullying	
Damage to Property		Intimidation	
Isolation/Exclusion		Malicious Gossip	
Name Calling		Other (specify)	

7. Where behaviour is regarded as identity-based bullying, indicate the relevant category:

Homophobic	Disability/SEN related	Racist	Membership of Traveller community	Other (specify)

8. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact:

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9. Details of actions taken:

Signed _____ (Relevant Teacher) Date _____

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal _____

*Note: The categories listed in the tables 3,4& 6 are suggested and schools may add to or amend these to suit their own circumstances.

Appendix 2 – Types of Bullying

The following are some of the types of bullying behaviour that can occur amongst pupils:

- **Physical aggression:** This behaviour includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping people. It may also take the form of severe physical assault. While pupils often engage in ‘mess fights’, they can sometimes be used as a disguise for physical harassment or inflicting pain.
- **Intimidation:** Some bullying behaviour takes the form of intimidation. It may be based on the use of very aggressive body language with the voice being used as a weapon. Particularly upsetting can be a facial expression which conveys aggression and/or dislike.
- **Isolation/exclusion and other relational bullying:** This occurs where a certain person is deliberately isolated, excluded or ignored by some or all of the class group. This practice is usually initiated by the person engaged in bullying behaviour and can be difficult to detect. It may be accompanied by writing insulting remarks about the pupil in public places, by passing around notes about or drawings of the pupil or by whispering insults about them loud enough to be heard. Relational bullying occurs when a person’s attempts to socialise and form relationships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined. One of the most common forms includes control: “Do this or I won’t be your friend anymore” (implied or stated); a group ganging up against one person (girl or boy); non-verbal gesturing; malicious gossip; spreading rumours about a person or giving them the “silent treatment”.
- **Cyber-bullying:** This type of bullying is increasingly common and is continuously evolving. It is bullying carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as text, social network sites, e-mail, instant messaging, apps, gaming sites, chat-rooms and other online technologies. Being the target of inappropriate or hurtful messages is the most common form of online bullying. As cyber-bullying uses technology to perpetrate bullying behaviour and does not require face to face contact, cyber-bullying can occur at any time (day or night). Many forms of bullying can be facilitated through cyber-bullying. For example, a target may be sent homophobic text messages or pictures may be posted with negative comments about a person’s sexuality, appearance etc.

- **Name calling:** Persistent name-calling directed at the same individual(s) which hurts, insults or humiliates should be regarded as a form of bullying behaviour. Often name-calling of this type refers to physical appearance, e.g., size or clothes worn. Accent or distinctive voice characteristics may attract negative attention. Academic ability can also provoke name calling. This tends to operate at two extremes. There are those who are singled out for attention because they are perceived to be weak academically. At the other extreme there are those who, because they are perceived as high achievers, are also targeted.
- **Damage to property:** Personal property can be the focus of attention for bullying behaviour. This may result in damage to clothing, mobile phone or other devices, school books and other learning material or interference with a pupil's locker or bicycle. The contents of school bags and pencil cases may be scattered on the floor. Items of personal property may be defaced, broken, stolen or hidden.
- **Extortion:** Demands for money may be made, often accompanied by threats (sometimes carried out in the event of the targeted pupil not delivering on the demand). A pupil may also be forced into theft of property for delivery to another who is engaged in bullying behaviour