COLÁISTE MHUIRE SECONDARY SCHOOL

Anti-Bullying Policy

FOGHLAIM · FÁS · FOIRFIÚ

2024/25

1. 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 Coláiste Mhuire 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 both the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* which were published in September 2013 and the *Cinéaltas: Action Plan on Bullying* published in 2022.

2. 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-
    o is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity;
    o encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment; and
    o 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 -
    o build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and
    o 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.

3. 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 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 some of the different types of bullying are set out in *Appendix 1* of this document.

4. The relevant persons for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows: (see Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):
- All members of the school community have an obligation to report incidents of bullying.
- Pupils may report an incident of bullying in the following ways:
  - o Direct approach to a Subject Teacher, Form Tutor, Guidance Counsellor, Year Head, Deputy Principal, or Principal
  - o A note from a pupil or parent/guardian handed to a teacher
  - o A phone call by a parent/guardian or pupil to the Form Tutor, Guidance Counsellor, Year Head, Deputy Principal, or Principal in the school
- Teachers should report incidences and concerns to the Year Head
- Incidents of bullying behaviour, no matter how trivial, which are drawn to the attention of a teacher, will be dealt with by the Year Head who will inform the Deputy Principal/Principal
- Non-teaching staff e.g. secretaries, caretakers and cleaners are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, to any teacher, Year Head, Deputy Principal or Principal.

5. 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 (see Section 6.5 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):
- SPHE Programme (supported by the Wellbeing programme) delivered to every year group – the issue of bullying is addressed and the classroom activities support student learning
- Incoming First Years are briefed on anti-bullying and respect for all, during their introduction assembly in Coláiste Mhuire

- All year groups are regularly informed about anti-bullying during assembly
- Coding Programme at junior level and Computer Science at senior level address safety on the internet, cyber-bullying and digital footprints
- Presence of materials throughout the school highlighting the importance of fostering a warm, inclusive and bullying-free school environment
- Constant promotion of anti-bullying and a culture of openness and respect among pupils and staff. The school also aims to promote a strong ethos that is driven by the values of the 5 pillars of *The Edmund Rice Schools Trust Charter*. The fourth pillar; *Creating a caring school community*, is of particular relevance in this instance
- Prevention and awareness raising measures across all aspects of bullying that involves strategies to engage pupils in addressing problems when they arise. In particular, finding strategies that build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils
- Clear communication with parents through the student journal
  Staff, pupils and parents are made aware of expectations through the inclusion of information around conduct and respect in the student journal
- Supervision of all areas at break and lunchtime. Cameras used to check when incidents occur. (In keeping with the school CCTV Policy)
- Internet Safety Day provides the school with an opportunity to reinforce Internet safety and the importance of their footprints online
- LGBTQ+ Awareness provides the school with an opportunity to underpin our welcoming and accepting school ethos among all students
- During the Week of Welcome and Wellbeing Week, activities are arranged for all pupils to try something new and also to include all pupils
- International Day and a football World Cup to help International students to integrate into school
- Educational talks by people from minority groups. (E.g. Joanne O' Riordan, Adam Harris, Garda Community Liaison Officer)
- Mentoring system with senior prefects and a very involved Student Council who represent the pupil body and are involved in the decision-making processes. Pupil mentoring emphasises the importance of our anti-bullying ethos via curricular and extra-curricular programmes, and provides pupils with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth
- Very effective pastoral care system led by Year Heads and Guidance Counsellors
- Drop box outside the Guidance Counsellor's office that is checked regularly to give pupils an opportunity to anonymously get in touch with the Guidance Counsellor or report an incident
- School Anti-bullying policy available online for parents, and in the staff Shared Drive through their school Gmail account
- Teachers are aware of school procedures in relation to anti-bullying
- Enforcement of this policy, including sanctions when appropriate.

6. 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 (see Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):

- Positive classroom management strategies are used in order to minimise incidences of bullying in the classroom. If a teacher is aware of any incidents, they report their concerns to the relevant Year Head
- Concerns or incidents should be relayed to the Year Head
- Year Head follows up on reporting of incident and investigates the claims. The Year Head can work in conjunction with the Deputy Principal if needed in order to substantiate or dismiss claims
- The Year Head and/ or Deputy Principal gather evidence and speak to teachers and pupils. Security cameras are checked if needed
- Sanctions or strategies are put into place by the Year Head in order to address the bullying and prevent incidents in future. The situation is closely monitored and both parties involved are observed for a period of time following the claims
- If cyber-bullying takes place outside school, parents are advised to contact the Gardaí to investigate. If an incident of cyber-bullying affects school activities, normal sanctions are used and Gardaí are notified.

7. 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*):

- In Coláiste Mhuire, we promote an open and inclusive school where there is no stigma associated with reporting incidences of bullying. We foster a culture where pupils are encouraged to be themselves and take pride in themselves and their achievements.
- In incidents of bullying, support is provided by:
    o Pastoral care team
    o Counsellors
    o Year Heads
    o Form Tutors
    o Class Teachers
    o Groups of pupils
    o Senior prefects
    o Mentors
    o Special Educational Needs department
- The school has well established links with outside agencies such as Tusla, Good2Talk, the Educational Welfare Officer, National Educational Psychological Service etc.
- The SEN Coordinator gathers information on pupils from primary schools before they begin in Coláiste Mhuire and this ensures that the necessary supports are available. SEN

- pupils are invited to begin first year a day earlier than other pupils in order to ensure their transition period runs smoothly and they are comfortable in the school
- Coláiste Mhuire has a very strong and involved Parents' Council
- The Week of Welcome in September helps pupils transitioning from primary to secondary school and promotes inclusion of all pupils. It also shows pupils that support is available if they are struggling to integrate into secondary school
- Parents are well-informed and support is offered to them in incidents of bullying so they can best support their child.

8. Supervision and 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.

9. 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.

10. Policy Adoption and Review

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on the 11th of June 2019 and will be reviewed annually.

11. Policy Availability

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website, is available in the school office and provided to the Parents' Council. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

12. Policy Implementation

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

Appendix 1

(From Section 2 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*)

2.2 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 10 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 (IM), 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.

Appendix 2

(From Appendix 2 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*)

Practical tips for building a positive school culture and climate
The following are some practical tips for immediate actions that can be taken to help build a positive school culture and climate and to help prevent and tackle bullying behaviour.

- Model respectful behaviour to all members of the school community at all times.
- Explicitly teach pupils what respectful language and respectful behaviour looks like, acts like, sounds like and feels like in class and around the school.
- Display key respect messages in classrooms, in assembly areas and around the school.
- Involve pupils in the development of these messages.
- Catch them being good - notice and acknowledge desired respectful behaviour by providing positive attention.
- Consistently tackle the use of discriminatory and derogatory language in the school – this includes homophobic and racist language and language that is belittling of pupils with a disability or SEN.
- Give constructive feedback to pupils when respectful behaviour and respectful language are absent.
- Have a system of encouragement and rewards to promote desired behaviour and compliance with the school rules and routines.
- Explicitly teach pupils about the appropriate use of social media.
- Positively encourage pupils to comply with the school rules on mobile phone and internet use.
- Follow up and follow through with pupils who ignore the rules.
- Actively involve parents and/or the Parents' Association in awareness raising campaigns around social media.
- Actively promote the right of every member of the school community to be safe and secure in school.
- Highlight and explicitly teach school rules in pupil friendly language in the classroom and in common areas.
- All staff can actively watch out for signs of bullying behaviour.
- Ensure there is adequate playground/school yard/outdoor supervision.
- School staff can get pupils to help them to identify bullying "hot spots" and "hot times" for bullying in the school. Hot spots tend to be in the playground/school yard/outdoor areas, changing rooms, corridors and other areas of unstructured supervision. Hot times again tend to be times where there is less structured supervision such as when pupils are in the playground/school yard or moving classrooms.
- Support the establishment and work of pupil councils.

Appendix 3: 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))*	
Pupil concerned	
Other Pupil	
Parent	
Teacher	
Other	

4. Location of incidents (tick relevant box(es))*	
Playground	
Classroom	
Corridor	
Toilets	
School Bus	
Other	

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

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

9. Details of actions taken

Signed _____ (Relevant Teacher) Date _____

Appendix 4 Checklist for annual review of the anti-bullying policy and its implementation

The Board of Management (the Board) must undertake an annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation. The following checklist must be used for this purpose. The checklist is an aid to conducting this review and is not intended as an exhaustive list. In order to complete the checklist, an examination and review involving both quantitative and qualitative analysis, as appropriate across the various elements of the implementation of the school's anti-bullying policy will be required.

	Yes /No
Has the Board formally adopted an anti-bullying policy that fully complies with the requirements of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*?	YES
Has the Board published the policy on the school website and provided a copy to the parents' association?	YES
Has the Board ensured that the policy has been made available to school staff (including new staff)?	YES
Is the Board satisfied that school staff are sufficiently familiar with the policy and procedures to enable them to effectively and consistently apply the policy and procedures in their day to day work?	YES
Has the Board ensured that the policy has been adequately communicated to all pupils?	YES
Has the policy documented the prevention and education strategies that the school applies?	YES
Have all of the prevention and education strategies been implemented?	YES
Has the effectiveness of the prevention and education strategies that have been implemented been examined?	YES
Is the Board satisfied that all teachers are recording and dealing with incidents in accordance with the policy?	YES
Has the Board received and minuted the periodic summary reports of the Principal?	YES
Has the Board discussed how well the school is handling all reports of bullying including those addressed at an early stage and not therefore included in the Principal's periodic report to the Board?	YES
Has the Board received any complaints from parents regarding the school's handling of bullying incidents?	NO
Have any parents withdrawn their child from the school citing dissatisfaction with the school's handling of a bullying situation?	NO
Have any Ombudsman for Children investigations into the school's handling of a bullying case been initiated or completed?	NO
Has the data available from cases reported to the Principal (by the bullying recording template) been analysed to identify any issues, trends or patterns in bullying behaviour?	YES
Has the Board identified any aspects of the school's policy and/or its implementation that require further improvement?	NO
Has the Board put in place an action plan to address any areas for improvement?	N/A

Signed _Moira Mahon_
Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed _Keith Quinn_
Principal

Date: 12th September 2024

Coláiste Mhuire An Muileann gCearr

Anti- Bullying Policy

The Board of Management reviewed this policy document at their Board of Management Meeting on Thursday 12th September 2024.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on this date also. The policy will be reviewed as part of the policy review schedule and/or as legislation requires.

This document will be kept in hard copy in the school office, and be made available to all educational partners via G-Suite and the school website as appropriate.

Signed: _Moira Mahon_

Ms. Moira Mahon

Chairperson of the Board of Management

Date: 12/09/2024