School Position on Bullying

The school community of Scoil Náisiunta Naomh Micheál believes that each pupil has a right to an education free from fear and intimidation.

The school regards bullying as a serious infringement of individual rights and a serious threat to the self-esteem and self-confidence of targeted pupil(s). Therefore it does not tolerate bullying of any kind.

Every report of bullying is treated seriously and dealt with, having due regard for the well-being of the targeted pupil(s) and perpetrator(s).

An 'Anti-Bullying Committee' made up of staff members, children and parents, exists to cultivate an environment free from bullying.

The immediate priority, should a bullying incident occur, is ending the bullying, (thereby protecting the person(s) being targeted) and resolving issues and restoring the relationships involved insofar as is practicable using a 'Reform, not Blame' approach.

All pupils are expected to contribute to the creation and maintenance of a safe environment in the school. On becoming aware of any bullying situation, in or outside school, involving members of the school community, they should notify a trusted responsible adult. Bullying behaviour is too serious not to report.

Pupils' participation in school life in general is encouraged through existing school structures. Awareness of bullying, and willingness to take action to prevent or stop it, is part of this participation.

Anti-Bullying Policy

1. In accordance with requirements of the Education Welfare Act 2000 and the code of behaviour guidelines issued by the NEWB, the Board of Management of Scoil Náisiúnta Naomh Micheál 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.

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
        - 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
    - 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 monitoring of pupils
    - 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)
- 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 defines 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 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*

4. **The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying is (are) as follows:**

   The class teacher(s) of the relevant pupils i.e. re. matters that relate to an individual class
   The school principal, in consultation with the class teachers, will deal with issues that involve children in two or more classes.

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:**

   a. All teachers will implement the school's SPHE programme in full. This includes Stay Safe, Walk Tall and Grow In Love programmes.
   b. At least five awareness raising exercises per school year for each class group (*e.g. from the 'Awareness Raising' strand of the Anti-Bullying Campaign*) pro-actively explaining the nature and variety, causes, consequences and unacceptability of bullying.
   c. SET teachers will engage in follow-on activities related to a. and b. above
   d. Anti-Bullying Committee will hold regular events to remind children about the importance of telling.
   e. A Friendship week each year will focus on positive behaviour, respecting difference, and preventing all aspects of bullying.
   f. The four basic school rules will be on display in all classrooms and SET rooms. In discussing these rules, teachers will emphasize
      - Building self-esteem
      - Avoiding identity based bullying
      - An awareness of cyberbulling (4th, 5th & 6th class)
      - An awareness of SEN and disabilities
   g. Non-teaching staff (secretary, SNAs, caretaker, cleaning staff, will be encouraged to report any incidence of bullying witnessed by them)
   h. Appendix 1 contains a list of support websites for the school community for support with bullying outside the school building.

i. Appendix 2 outlines the age requirements for a sample of online social media platforms. Children and parents are reminded of these age requirements on a regular basis.

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:-**

All teachers have a set of guidelines in the classroom, provided by the Anti-Bullying Committee, to ensure a consistent approach to investigating bullying. Reported cases of online bullying reported to a teacher, will also be investigated using the guidelines below.

a. Teacher investigates complaint. "Incidents are generally best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all concerned." (DES guidelines 6.8.9 (viii))

b. Analysis of alleged bullying behaviour – What? Who? When? Why?

c. "It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s)". DES guidelines 6.8.9.(xiii)

d. Investigating teacher records the details and speaks to the principal

e. Where bullying is confirmed… bullies are made clear about 1. The facts 2. That they are in breach of the Code of Behaviour because…; 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 relationship of the parties involved.

f. The 'Relevant Teacher' does not apportion blame but rather treats bullying behaviour as a mistake that can be remedied. He/She emphasises that the intention is not to punish perpetrators but to talk to them to explain how harmful and hurtful bullying is and to seek a promise that it will stop. If that promise is forthcoming and is honoured there will be no penalty and that will be the end of the matter. Pupils who report bullying therefore are not getting others "in trouble" so much as enabling them to get out of trouble into which they may ultimately get if the bullying continues.

g. Where bullying is confirmed, principal and/or relevant teacher will meet with both parties parents… The main purpose of any such meeting is to ensure that the offending activity ceases and to restore " as far as practicable, the relationships of the parties involved as quickly as possible". (DES guidelines 6.8.9 (v)).

h. "Parents and pupils are required to co-operate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving any issues and restoring, as far as practicable, the relationships of the parties involved as quickly as possible." (DES guidelines 6.8.9 (v)). Resolution may include an initial separation of the parties in the school playgrounds with a gradual normalising of contact.

i. "In cases where the relevant teacher considers that bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 days after he/she has

determined that behaviour has occurred, it must be recorded by the relevant teacher in the recording DES template at Appendix 3 (of DES guidelines). DES guideline 6.8.9(xviii)

j. "In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed, the relevant teacher must … take the following factors into consideration.
   - Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased
   - Whether any issues between the parties has been resolved as far as practicable
   - Whether relationships between the parties have been restored as far as practicable, and
   - Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the school Principal or Deputy Principal" (DES guidelines 6.8.9. (xix))

Bullying as part of a continuum of behaviour

a. In cases where the school has serious concerns in relation to managing the behaviour of a pupil, the advice of the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) will be sought.

b. In situations where "the incident is serious and where the behaviour is regarded as potentially abusive, the school must consult the HSE Children and Family Services with a view to drawing up an appropriate response, such as a management plan". (Children First National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011).

c. Serious instances of bullying should, in accordance with Children First Guidelines, be referred to the HSE Children and Family Services and/or Gardaí as appropriate (DES guidelines 6.8.14). In dealing with such cases, the Designated Liaison Person will seek advice from the HSE Children and Family Social Services in advance of any such report.

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):

Bullied Pupils
a. Assurance and support from relevant teacher during initial investigation
b. In situations where a child who is affected by bullying is attending SEN classes, time will be given in these sessions to support the child through Social Stories and/or similar interventions.
c. Class teachers will use S.A.L.T. and/or some similar programme and/or relevant sections of the SPHE curriculum with the affected pupil(s). If this cannot be implemented within the classroom, the assistance of the principal, and/or deputy principal will be secured to ensure that an alternative arrangement can be made.

d. NEPS will be contacted to provide support if the relevant teacher and/or principal deem it necessary.
e. Children who have been affected by bullying will meet with the principal or deputy principal at least once weekly for three weeks following the initial investigation. These meetings will assist the teachers in ascertaining if the bullying behaviour has ceased and also assist the children in overcoming the effects of the bullying behaviour and in re-establishing relationships in so far as this is practicable. Records of these meetings will be retained.
f. The school will seek additional resources and/or SNA support(s) if and when the relevant teachers have ongoing concerns about the behaviour of a child.

Bullying Pupils:

a. It will be made clear that pupils who reform are not punished and will have "a clean sheet".
b. It will be emphasized that bullying pupils who reform are doing the right and honourable thing.
c. Where necessary, NEPS will be contacted to support the school in providing support for children whose behaviour warrants such intervention.
d. Help will be provided for those who need to raise their self-esteem through encouraging their participation in group activities such as team sports.
e. Using learning strategies throughout the school to enhance the pupils self-worth.

Sanctions

Where a pupil has been found to be engaged in bullying behaviour, has formally to stop and has broken that promise, any of the following sanctions may be imposed:

a. S/he may be required to sign a promise not to engage in bullying – this promise to be countersigned by the parent/guardian.
b. S/he may be excluded from representing the school in a sporting or cultural activity (e.g. music, drama etc.)
c. Parents/guardians may be invited to a meeting with the principal and/or relevant teacher and the pupil may be suspended from the school (in accordance with the school's behaviour policy).
d. The case may be referred to the Board of Management and the pupil may be expelled from the school.
e. "It must 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". (DES guidelines 6.8.9xvi)

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 Harrassment**

    The Board of Management confirms that the school will, in accordance with ts 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. This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on _____ .

11. This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website (or where none exists, is otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parents' Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

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 (or where none exists, be otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the Parents' Association. A record of the review and its outcomes will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Signed: _____ (Chairperson)

Signed: _____ (Principal)

Date: _____

This policy is to be reviewed annually.

Appendix 1: Support websites for the school community

https://tacklebullying.ie/resources/schools/

https://www.webwise.ie/

https://www.antibullyingcampaign.ie/

https://www.schooldays.ie/articles/bullying

https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Parents_Coping_with_Bullying_d3.pdf

https://www.sticksandstones.ie/

Appendix 2: Age requirements for social media platforms (April 2022)

Facebook - 13

Twitter - 13

Instagram - 13

Snapchat - 13

WhatsApp - 16

Musically/TikTok - 13

HouseParty – 12

I messages app-13+ and you must have a parent sign up via their email account

You Tube- 13

Twitch- 13

Discord- 13

Roblox- 7 +

Playstations and other consoles- 12+

Gmail account 16+