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# **Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour**

## **1. Introduction:**

The Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire Junior 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 recognise the negative impact that bullying behaviour can have on the lives of our students and we are fully committed to preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.

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 an ethnic minority such as the travelling community and Roma community.

## **2. Mission Statement**

We at Scoil Mhuire Junior strive to work together to provide a safe, caring environment for all pupils. We endeavour to work together in partnership with personnel, students, parents and wider school community to prevent and address bullying behaviour. We believe all pupils should be valued, respected and given every opportunity to excel.

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at our school and the school actively promotes an anti-bullying environment. We encourage pupils to talk to us if they experience or witness bullying.

The Board of Management recognises the serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of pupils. It is therefore committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behavior.

Scoil Mhuire Junior promotes a positive school culture and climate which is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity. We promote respectful relationships across the school community and encourage pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behavior in a non-threatening environment.

### **3. Definition of bullying**

**‘Bullying’** is defined in *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* and *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* 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’.**

[Chapter 2, Bí Cineálta procedures]

Each school is required to develop and implement a Bí Cineálta policy that sets out how the school community prevents and addresses bullying behaviour. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour that is not bullying behaviour are provided for within the school’s Code of Behaviour.

The core elements of the definition are further described below:

- ✓ **Targeted Behaviour**
- ✓ **Repeated Behaviour**
- ✓ **Imbalance of Power**
- ✓ **Behaviour that is not bullying behaviour**
- ✓ **Criminal behaviour**

#### **Targeted Behaviour:**

Bullying is deliberate, unwanted behavior that causes harm to others, and where the student displaying bullying behavior knows that their behavior is or will be perceived as harmful by the child or young person experiencing the behaviour. Bullying is not accidental or reckless behaviour. The harm can be physical [for example personal injury, damage to or loss of property], social [for example withdrawal, loneliness, and exclusion] and/or emotional [for example low self-esteem, depression, and anxiety] and can have a serious and long term negative impact on the student experiencing the bullying behaviour. If the repeated harm is real for the student experiencing the behaviour but unintended by the other student, this is not bullying but importantly, must still be addressed under the Schools Code of Behaviour.

#### **Repeated Behaviour:**

Bullying takes the form of a systematic pattern of behaviour which is repeated over time. Single offline incidents of intentional negative behaviour involving an imbalance of power are not considered bullying but must still be addressed under the school’s code of behaviour. Posting a single harmful message/image/video online, and which is highly likely to be reposted or shared with others can therefore be seen as bullying behaviour.

### **Imbalance of Power:**

In incidents of bullying behaviour, the student experiencing bullying behaviour finds it hard to defend themselves as a result of the abuse of a real or perceived imbalance of power. This imbalance of power may manifest itself through differences in size, strength, age, ability, peer group power, economic status, social status, religion, race, ethnic origin including membership of the Traveling and/or Roma communities, sexual orientation, family circumstances, gender, gender identity, gender expression, experience of the care system, disability or the receipt of special education. In incidents of online [or cyber] bullying, the imbalance of power may relate to online anonymity, technical proficiency and possession of information/images/video, and the inability of the targeted student to remove the offensive material or escape the bullying.

### **Behaviour that is not bullying behaviour:**

A one off instance of negative behaviour towards another student is not bullying behaviour. However, a single hurtful message posted on social media can be considered bullying behaviour as it may be visible to a wide audience and has a high likelihood of being shared multiple times and so becomes repeated behaviour. Disagreement between students, or instances where students don't want to be friends or to remain friends, is not considered bullying unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others including deliberate manipulation of friendship groups. Some students with special educational needs may have social communication difficulties which may make them communicate their needs through behaviours that can hurt themselves or others. It is important to note that these behaviours are not deliberate or planned but, in certain situations, they are an automatic response which they can't control. Bullying is not accidental or reckless behaviour. If the repeated harm is real for the student experiencing the behaviour but unintended by the other student, this is not bullying. These behaviours, while not defined as bullying can be distressing. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

### **Criminal Behaviour:**

Bullying behaviour can be considered criminal behaviour under certain circumstances and legal consequences can apply. The age of criminal responsibility in Ireland is 12 years. Some online behaviour may be illegal, and students need to be aware of the far reaching consequences of posting inappropriate or harmful content online. In cases of intimate imagery, the Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020, also known as Coco's Law, criminalises the non-consensual sharing of intimate issues and also criminalises threatening to share these images. If bullying behaviour involves physical violence or threats of violence, it may be considered assault. If bullying behaviour involves discrimination or hate speech targeting a student based on their race, religion, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation or membership of the Travelling community, it may be considered a hate crime under the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989, and those engaging in such behaviour may face criminal charges. If bullying behaviour involves sexual harassment or sexual assault, this may also be considered criminal behaviour. An Garda Síochána is the appropriate authority to investigate alleged criminal behaviour.

## **How Bullying Behaviour Occurs**

Bullying behaviour can take many forms, which can occur separately or together. These can include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

### **4. Direct Bullying Behaviour**

#### **Physical bullying behaviour:**

Physical bullying behaviour includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping students. It may also take the form of severe physical assault. While students can often engage in 'mess fights' they can sometimes be used as a disguise for physical harassment or inflicting pain. Personal property can be a focus of attention for bullying behaviour. This may result in damage to clothing, mobile phone or other devices, schoolbooks and other material or interference with a student'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.

#### **Verbal bullying behavior**

Continual name calling directed at a student which hurts, insults or humiliates the student should be regarded as a form of bullying behaviour. Often name calling of this type refers to physical appearance; for example, size or clothes worn or gender identity. It can also refer to a student's accent, distinctive voice characteristics, academic ability, race or ethnic origin.

#### **Written bullying behavior:**

Written bullying behaviour includes writing insulting remarks about a student in public places, passing around notes about or drawings of a student.

#### **Extortion:**

Bullying behaviour can involve extortion. Extortion is where something is obtained through force or threats.

#### **Indirect bullying behaviour:**

Bullying behavior which isn't easily seen by others and is conducted out of sight, such as excluding people from groups or spreading lies or rumours.

#### **Exclusion:**

Exclusion bullying behaviour occurs where a student is deliberately and repeatedly isolated, excluded or ignored by a student or group of students.

#### **Relational:**

Relational bullying behaviour occurs where a student's attempts to socialize and form relationships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined. Common forms include control: "Do this or I won't be your friend anymore", a group of students ganging up against one student, nonverbal gesturing: malicious gossip: spreading rumours about a student, giving a student the "silent treatment", and the deliberate manipulation of friendship groups to make someone unpopular.

## **Online bullying behavior:**

Online bullying behaviour [cyberbullying] is carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as text or direct messaging/instant messaging, social media platforms, email, apps, digital gaming sites, gaming consoles, chatrooms and other online technologies.

This form of bullying can include:

- sending or sharing nasty, insulting, offensive, and/or intimidating messages or images via text messages, emails, direct messages or other websites or apps.
- posting information considered to be personal, private and sensitive without consent.
- making and/or participating in fake profiles on a social network to impersonate and/or humiliate other students.
- excluding or disrupting access to a student on purpose from online chat groups, access to accounts or from an online game. Even though a 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 where it is intended to be shared or has a likelihood of being shared multiple times and is thus repeated. As online bullying uses technology to carry out bullying behaviour and does not require face to face contact it can occur at any time. Many types of bullying behaviour can be facilitated through online bullying. In many cases online bullying can relate to an 'offline' experience with someone known to the student. This type of bullying may involve forms of sexual exploitation including but not limited to, sextortion and the non-consensual sharing of intimate images. The sharing or threatened sharing of images without consent is a criminal offence.

## **5. Types of Bullying Behaviour**

There are many different types of bullying behaviour. These can include the following which is not an exhaustive list.

- **disablist bullying behaviour:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of a perceived or actual disability or additional need.
- **exceptionally able bullying:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their high academic ability or outstanding talents.
- **gender identity bullying:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their perceived or actual gender identity.
- **homophobic/transphobic[LGBTQ+] bullying:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their perceived or actual membership of the LGBTQ+ community.
- **physical appearance bullying:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their physical appearance. Students who 'look different' can be mocked or criticised about the shape, size or appearance of their body
- **racist bullying:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their race or ethnic origin which includes membership of the Traveling or Roma community. Racism is defined in the National Action Plan Against Racism as 'a form of domination which manifests through those power dynamics present in structural and institutional arrangements, practices, policies and cultural norms, which have the effect of excluding or discriminating against individuals or groups, based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin.
- **poverty bullying:** behaviour that intends to humiliate a student because of lack of resources
- **religious identity bullying:** behaviour that intends to harm a student because of their religion or religious identity.
- **sexist bullying:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student based on their sex, perpetuating stereotypes that a student or group of students are inferior because of their sex.
- **sexual harassment:** any form of unwanted verbal, nonverbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

## **Section A: Development of our Bí Cineálta Policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour.**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Date Consulted</b>	<b>Method of consultation</b>
School Staff	9 <sup>th</sup> April 2025 24 <sup>th</sup> June 2025	Half day closure Sent for review to staff
Pupils	17 <sup>th</sup> June 2025	Group meeting with pupils
Parents	17 <sup>th</sup> June 2025	Questionnaire sent to parents
Board of Management	28 <sup>th</sup> August 2025	Emailed for review and approval
Wider School Community as appropriate	n/a	n/a
Date policy was approved: 28 <sup>th</sup>		
Date policy was last reviewed:		

## **Section B – Preventing Bullying Behaviour**

The following education and prevention strategies [including strategies specifically aimed at cyberbullying, homophobic, transphobic bullying behaviour and racist bullying behaviour, sexist bullying behaviour and sexual harassment and will be used by Scoil Mhuire Junior School.

### **A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact**

Scoil Mhuire Junior School endeavours to put in place appropriate systems to ensure that all relevant members of the school community (parents, pupils, staff and the wider community) have a shared understanding of what constitutes bullying behaviour as defined in this policy.

### **Effective leadership**

The Board of Management has overall responsibility to ensure that this policy is effective, sustainable and measured. The Board of Management must ensure accountability is of the highest standard and frequently appraise the outcomes of the strategies and measures contained within the policy.

- The Principal, as a key leader, strongly influences attitudes and set standards in relation to dealing with bullying
- The ISM team (In-school management team) have a clear role to act in a leadership capacity within the school community, stimulating a whole school approach to preventing and tackling bullying and modelling best practice.
- Teachers must act as good role models and must be fair, clear and consistent.

### **Culture and Environment**

A positive and inclusive school culture and environment is essential to prevent and address bullying behaviour. Scoil Mhuire Junior School is a school where students and school staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported. Relationships between all members of the school community are based on respect, care, integrity and trust. Open communication between the patron, boards of management, school staff, students and their parents help to foster a collaborative approach and shared responsibilities in relation to preventing and addressing bullying behaviour. The school leadership team influences the school culture and set the standards and expectations for the

school community when preventing and addressing bullying behaviour. Each member of school staff has a responsibility to develop and maintain a school culture where bullying behaviour is unacceptable and to take a consistent approach to addressing bullying behaviour. Our students shape the school culture by promoting kindness and inclusion within their peer group and maintaining a positive and supportive school environment for all. Parents, as active partners in their child's education, help to foster an environment where bullying behaviour is not tolerated through promoting empathy and respect.

### **A Telling Environment**

It is important that the school community supports a 'telling' environment. Students should feel comfortable to talk about concerns regarding bullying behaviour.

The reasons why students may not report include the following:

- fear of retaliation from the student displaying the bullying behaviour or their friendship group
- concerns about being seen as a "tell tale" for reporting bullying behaviour
- fear that the adult may make the situation worse
- fear that the adult doesn't have the knowledge and skills to deal appropriately with the bullying behaviour
- fear that the adult may deny access to their smart phone
- not knowing what will happen when they report bullying behaviour
- fear that they will not be believed
- concerns about "getting into trouble" for reporting bullying behaviour
- not having evidence to back up the allegation of bullying behaviour, this can be seen particularly with relational bullying behaviour

Scoil Mhuire Junior School promotes a safe environment and a telling culture where reporting of bullying behaviour is encouraged.

### **A Trusted Adult**

The concept of "a trusted adult" is an effective strategy which encourages our pupils to report if they or another pupil is experiencing bullying behaviour. Staff support this strategy by letting students know that they can talk to them. Students who witness bullying behaviour are supported and encouraged to report the behaviour to a trusted adult in the school so that the behaviour can be addressed. Students who witness bullying behaviour on social media have an important role in helping to address the behaviour by reporting the witnessed behaviour to a trusted adult. The trusted adult reassures the student that they have done the right thing by reporting the behaviour. The trusted adult will inform the class teacher, the principal or deputy principal. The trusted adult will continue to support the student, as appropriate, while the behaviour is being addressed by the relevant member of staff.

### **Creating safe physical spaces**

We take the following measures to create a safe physical space in Scoil Mhuire Junior School:

- We improve the visibility of school staff who are supervising at break times including during yard duty.
- We use artwork and signage to promote the school's values such as equality, diversity, inclusion and respect.
- We highlight 'hot spots' and 'hot times' around the school – identifying places and times whereby bullying may be likely to occur.

### **A School-wide approach**

- We acknowledge the right of each member of the school community to enjoy school in a secure environment.
- We acknowledge the uniqueness of each individual and their worth as a human being
- We promote positive habits of self-respect, self-discipline and responsibility among all its members.

- We actively prohibit vulgar, offensive, sectarian or other aggressive behaviour by any of its members.
- We have a clear commitment to promoting equity in general and gender equity in particular in all aspects of its functioning.
- We have the capacity to change in response to pupils needs.
- We identify aspects of the curriculum through which positive and sustainable influences can be exerted towards forming pupils' attitudes and values.
- We take particular care of 'at risk' pupils and use systems to identify needs and facilitate early intervention where necessary –thus responding to the needs, fears & anxieties of individual members in a sensitive manner.
- Scoil Mhuire Junior School recognises the need to work in partnership with and keep parents informed on procedures to improve relationships within the school community.
- We recognise the right of parents to share in the task of equipping pupils with a range of life skills.
- We recognise the role of other community agencies in preventing and dealing with bullying.
- We promote habits of mutual respect, courtesy and an awareness of the interdependence of people in groups and communities.
- We promote qualities of social responsibility, tolerance and understanding among its members both in school and outside of school.
- Staff members share a collegiate responsibility, under the direction of the Principal, to act in preventing bullying/aggressive behaviour by any member of the school community.
- We promote of the value of diversity to address issues of prejudice and stereotyping, and highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour.
- We foster and enhance of the self-esteem of all our pupils through both curricular and extra-curricular activities. Pupils are provided with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth through formal and informal interactions.
- There are opportunities for whole staff professional development on bullying to ensure that all staff develop an awareness of what bullying is, how it impacts on pupils' lives and the need to respond to it-prevention and intervention.
- There is an annual audit of professional development needs, with a view to assessing staff requirements through internal staff knowledge/expertise and external sources.
- There is professional development with specific focus on the training of the relevant teachers.
- There is school wide awareness raising and training on all aspects of bullying, to include pupils, parents/guardians and the wider school community.
- Scoil Mhuire Junior School, we take all reasonable measures to ensure the safety of our students and to supervise students when students are attending school or attending school activities. Non-teaching and ancillary staff will be encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers.
- Supervision will also apply to monitoring student use of communication technology within the school.
- Development and promotion of a Student Friendly Bí Cineálta Code will be displayed publicly in classrooms and in common areas of the school.
- The school's Bí Cineálta Anti-bullying policy is discussed with pupils and all parents/guardians are given access to a copy on enrolment.
- The implementation of regular (e.g. per year) whole school awareness measures e.g. dedicated notice boards in the school/classrooms on the promotion of friendship and bullying prevention; annual Anti-bullying Week, Friendship week, Internet Safety Week and parents/guardian' talks, regular school assemblies.
- Encourage a culture of talking about bullying behaviour, with particular emphasis on the importance of the role of bystanders. In that way pupils will gain confidence from talking. 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.



- ✓ Ensuring that pupils know who to tell and how to tell, e.g.:
  - ✓ Direct approach to teacher at an appropriate time, for example after class.
  - ✓ Hand note up with homework.
  - ✓ Ask parent/guardian to phone the school
  - ✓ Ask a friend to tell on your behalf.
  - ✓ Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place.
- Identify clear protocols to encourage parents/guardians to approach the school if they suspect that their child is being bullied.
  - The implementation of an Acceptable Use Policy in the school to include the necessary steps to ensure that the access to technology within the school is strictly monitored.
  - The implementation of a Mobile Device policy with clear guidelines on the use of mobile devices in the school.

### **Implementation of curricula**

We promote teaching and learning that is collaborative and respectful. Students have regular opportunities to work in small groups with their peers, this helps build sense of connection, belonging and empathy among students. The curricular subjects offered to students provide opportunities to foster inclusion and respect for diversity. We provide opportunities for students to develop a sense of self-worth through both curricular and extracurricular programmes.

The Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) primary curricula aims to foster students' wellbeing, self-confidence and sense of belonging and to develop students' sense of personal responsibility for their own behaviour and actions. Students' social and emotional learning (SEL) skills can be improved through the SPHE curriculum. At Scoil Mhuire Junior school we ensure:

- The full implementation of the SPHE and the RSE and Stay Safe Programmes.
- Continuous Professional Development for staff in delivering these programmes.
- The school celebrates Wellbeing month during the month is September.
- The school celebrates Internet Safety week each year and Safer Internet Day.
- The school will specifically consider pupils with special educational needs with regard to programme implementation and the development of skills and strategies to enable all pupils to respond appropriately.

### **Prevention Strategies**

This section sets out the prevention strategies that are used by the school. These include strategies specifically aimed at preventing online bullying behaviour, homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour, racist bullying behaviour, sexist bullying behaviour and sexual harassment as appropriate (see Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures)

Technology and social media have provided many positive opportunities for entertainment, social engagement and education. Technology is a part of life that can impact even the youngest members of society. However, the increase in the use of technology has led to students becoming increasingly vulnerable to cyberbullying or unacceptable online behaviour. As a school, we proactively address these challenges by promoting digital literacy, digital citizenship, and fostering safe online environments.

**Strategies to prevent cyberbullying behaviour** include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- implementing the SPHE curriculum
- implementing the Digital Media Literacy curriculum which teaches students about responsible online behaviour and digital citizenship

- having regular conversations with students about developing respectful and kind relationships online
- developing and communicating an Acceptable Use policy for technology
- referring to appropriate online behaviour as part of the standards of behaviour in the Code of Behaviour.
- The digital age of consent is the minimum age a user must be before a social media or internet company can collect, process and store their data. In Ireland the digital age of consent is 16. For the purposes of data collection, students between the age of 13 and 16 years old must have parental permission to sign up to social media services where companies use the legal basis of consent to collect process and store users' data. Most social media platforms and services have a minimum age requirement and for the majority of these services it is 13 years' old. Therefore technically, children under the age of 13 should not have a social media account. It is important for their child's safety, that parents are aware of their children's use of technology including smartphones and gaming consoles.

### **Preventing homophobic/transphobic bullying behaviour**

All students including gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students, have a right to feel safe and supported at school. Strategies to prevent homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- maintaining an inclusive physical environment such as by displaying relevant posters
- encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
- challenging gender stereotypes
- conducting workshops and seminars for students, school staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of homophobic bullying behaviour.
- encouraging students to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour.

### **Preventing racist bullying behaviour**

Schools have become much more culturally diverse over the last number of decades. Students attending schools come from many different cultures and backgrounds. Students from diverse backgrounds may face discrimination and prejudice and may be subject to racist bullying behaviour. Strategies used at Scoil Mhuire Junior School to prevent racist bullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- fostering a school culture where diversity is celebrated and where students feel apart of their school environment.
- having the cultural diversity of the school visible and on display through displays, posters, photographs, slides, videos, books etc.
- conducting workshops and seminars for students, school staff and parents to raise awareness of Racism.
- encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities.
- encouraging bystanders to report when they witness racist behaviour
- providing supports to school staff to respond to the needs of students for whom English is an additional language and for communicating with their parents.
- providing supports to school staff to support students from ethnic minorities, including Traveller and Roma students, and to encourage communication with their parents
- inviting speakers from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

### **Preventing sexist bullying behaviour**

Scoil Mhuire Junior focuses on gender equality as part of the school's measures to create a supportive and respectful environment.

- ensuring that library reading material and textbooks represent appropriate lived experiences of students and adults from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds
- Strategies to prevent sexist bullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive

list: create times and safe spaces to explain sexual development, harmful sexual behavior and sex inequality in an age and development-appropriate way.

- ensuring members of staff model respectful behaviour and treat students equally irrespective of their sex.
- ensuring all students have the same opportunities to engage in school activities irrespective of their sex.
- celebrating diversity at school and acknowledging the contributions of all students.
- organising awareness campaigns, workshops and presentations on gender equality and respect.
- encouraging parents to reinforce these values of respect at home.

### **Preventing sexual harassment**

Preventing sexual harassment requires an approach that focuses on education, awareness and clear enforceable policies. At Scoil Mhuire Junior School, there is a zero tolerance approach to sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment should never be dismissed as teasing or banter.

Strategies to prevent sexual harassment include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- using the updated SPHE specifications to teach students about healthy relationships and how to
- treat each other with respect and kindness
- promoting positive role models within the school community

### **Supervision and Monitoring policies**

The school has the following supervision and monitoring policies in place to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

- Child Protection Safe Guarding Statement
- Acceptable Use policy/Remote Learning/Social Media Policy
- Yard and Supervision Policy
- Attendance Policy
- School Tours Policy
- Special Educational and Inclusion Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Dignity at Work Policy
- Mobile Device Policy
- RSE Policy

## **Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour**

The whole school community has a responsibility to prevent and address bullying behaviour. The staff, pupils and the parents of Scoil Mhuire Junior School work in partnership to develop and implement the Bí Cineálta policy. The primary aim in addressing reports of bullying behaviour should be to stop the bullying behaviour and to restore, as far as practicable, the relationships of the students involved, rather than to apportion blame. When addressing bullying behaviour teachers should:

- ✓ ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour feels listened to and reassured
- ✓ seek to ensure the privacy of those involved.
- ✓ conduct all conversations with sensitivity.
- ✓ consider the age and ability of the students involved.
- ✓ listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation.
- ✓ take action in a timely manner.
- ✓ inform parents of those involved.

### **Responsibility for Addressing Bullying Behaviour**

The teacher(s) with responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour is (are) as follows:

- All teachers
- Assistant Principals
- Deputy Principal
- Principal

### **Reporting bullying behaviour**

- Any pupil or parent(s)/guardian(s) may bring a bullying incident to any teacher in the school
- All reports will be investigated and dealt with by the appropriate teacher
- Teaching and non-teaching staff (SNAs, secretaries, caretakers) must report any incidents of bullying
- All alleged bullying behaviour must be reported to the Principal

### **Identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred**

**Bullying is defined in Cineáltas:** *[Action Plan on Bullying and Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools]* **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.**

During informal investigations, the pupil reflection sheet is used to determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour.

Three questions should be considered in this process:

- 1. Is the behaviour targeted at a specific student or group of students?**
- 2. Is the behaviour intended to cause physical, social or emotional harm**
- 3. Is the behaviour repeated?**

If the answer to each of the questions above is **Yes**, then the behaviour is bullying behaviour and the behaviour should be addressed using the Bí Cineálta Procedures.

*Note:* One-off incidents may be considered bullying in certain circumstances. A single hurtful message posted on social media can be considered bullying behaviour as it has a high likelihood of being shared multiple times and thus becomes a repeated behaviour.

If the answer to any of these questions is **No**, then the behaviour is not bullying behaviour. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred teachers should consider **what, where, when and why?**

- if a group of students is involved, each student should be engaged with individually at first thereafter, all students involved may be met as a group
- at the group meeting, each student may be asked for their account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's views
- each student should be supported as appropriate, following the group meeting it may be helpful to ask the students involved to write down their account of the incident(s)

### **Where bullying behaviour has occurred**

- parents are an integral part of the school community and play an important role, in partnership with schools, in addressing bullying behaviour. Where bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the students involved must be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and to consult with them on the actions to be taken to address the behaviour it is important to listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation.
- a record should be kept of the engagement with all involved. This record should document the

form and type of bullying behaviour, if known (see Section 2.5 and 2.7 of the Bí Cineálta procedures), where and when it took place and the date of the initial engagement with the students involved and their parents the record should include the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour.

#### **Follow up where bullying behaviour has occurred:**

- the teacher must engage with the students involved and their parents again no more than 20 school days after the initial engagement
- important factors to consider as part of this engagement are the nature of the bullying behaviour, the effectiveness of the strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and the relationship between the students involved

#### **Determining if bullying behaviour has ceased**

- the teacher should document the review with students and their parents to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased and the views of students and their parents in relation to this
- the date that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased should also be recorded
- any engagement with external services/supports should also be noted
- ongoing supervision and support may be needed for the students involved even where bullying behaviour has ceased
- if the bullying behaviour has not ceased the teacher should review the strategies used in consultation with the students involved and their parents. A timeframe should be agreed for further engagement until the bullying behaviour has ceased
- if it becomes clear that the student who is displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behaviour, then the school consideration should be given to using the strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour as provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour. If disciplinary sanctions are considered, this is a matter between the relevant student, their parents and the school.
- if a parent(s) is not satisfied with how the bullying behaviour has been addressed by the school, in accordance with the Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools. they should be referred to the school's complaints procedures if a parent is dissatisfied with how a complaint has been handled, they may make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children if they believe that the school's actions have had a negative effect.

#### **Recording bullying behaviour**

All incidents of bullying behaviour are recorded. The record will document the form and type of bullying behaviour, if known, where and when it took place and the date of the initial engagement with the students and their parents. The record will include the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour. It should document the review with students and their parents to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased and the views of students and their parents in relation to this. It is important to document the date of each of these engagements and the date that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased. Any engagement with external services/supports should also be noted. These records will be retained in accordance with the school's record keeping policy and in line with data protection regulations. Where a Student Support File exists for a student, schools are encouraged to place a copy of the record on the student's support file. Where a Student Support Plan exists, the plan will be updated to incorporate response strategies and associated responses.

#### **Template for Recording Bullying Behaviour**

The teacher must use the recording template in Appendix 1 to record the bullying behaviour: The recording template must be retained by the teacher and a copy given to the Principal. Teachers records are retained in a secure space in the teacher's classroom. All report templates given to the Principal will be retained in the filing cabinet in the Principal's Office.

### **Established intervention strategies for supporting pupils**

- Teacher interviews with pupils
- Working with parent/guardian to support school interventions
- No Blame Approach
- Circle Time
- Conferencing
- Implementing questionnaires
- Sociometric surveys
- Strengthening the victim
- Support for the pupil who has engaged in bullying behaviour
- Mediation
- Restorative Practice
- The Support Group Method
- The Method of Shared Concern
- 

### **5. The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows:**

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.

- SPHE Lessons
- Stay Safe Programme
- Walk Tall Programme
- RSE Programme
- NEPS programmes on [www.neps.ie](http://www.neps.ie)
- Anti-bullying Week
- Internet Safety Week
- Friendship week
- Well - being Month
- Social Skills Group
- Out sourced wellbeing sessions

### **Requests to take no action**

A student reporting bullying behaviour may ask that a member of staff does nothing about the behaviour other than "look out" for them. The student may not want to be identified as having told someone about the bullying behaviour. They may feel that telling someone might make things more difficult for them. Where this occurs, it is important that the member of staff shows empathy to the student, deals with the matter sensitively and speaks 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.

Parents may also make schools aware of bullying behaviour that has occurred and specifically request that the school take no action. Parents should put this request in writing to the school or be facilitated to do so where there are literacy, digital literacy or language barriers. However, while acknowledging the parent's request, the school may decide that, based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour

### **6. 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.

- There are agreed supervision and monitoring practices in the school. Staff members have a responsibility to ensure that supervision of pupils in class is effective and

consistent.

- Supervision in playground areas is managed and conducted effectively, with particular attention given to arrival & dismissal times.
- In relation to Acceptable Use Policy in the school, the following issues are addressed:
  - All Internet sessions are supervised by a teacher
  - The school regularly monitor pupils' Internet usage within school time.
  - Pupils are instructed to access only those discussion forums and messaging or other electronic communication fora that have been approved by the school.

(Note that the Schools Broadband Programme has blocked all social networking sites and is provided for educational purposes only). Please refer to the Acceptable Use Policy for more information and supports.

## **7. External Supports and Services**

Supports are available to help prevent and address bullying behaviour. These include the following:

- ✓ NEPs
- ✓ Oide
- ✓ Webwise
- ✓ National Parents Council
- ✓ The DCU Anti-Bullying Centre (FUSE Anti-bullying programme for the entire school community.)
- ✓ Tusla

## **Section D: Oversight**

Bullying behaviour update to board of management: Appendix 3

At each meeting of the board of management, an update on the number of incidents of bullying behaviour and the measures taken to prevent and address bullying behaviour is given by the Principal. The purpose of the update is to inform discussion at board level on the effectiveness of the measures that the school is taking to prevent and address bullying behaviour and the effectiveness of the school's BÍ Cineálta Policy. The update must include the following:

- the number of incidents of bullying behaviour that have been reported since the last meeting
- the number of incidents of bullying behaviour that are currently ongoing
- the number of incidents of bullying behaviour that have been reported since the beginning of the school year
- Where incidents of bullying behaviour have been reported since the last meeting, the update must include a verbal report which should include the following information where relevant:
  - the trends and patterns identified such as the form of bullying behaviour, type of bullying behaviour if known, location of bullying behaviour, when it occurred
  - the strategies used to address the bullying behaviour
  - any wider strategies to prevent and address bullying behaviour
  - if any serious incidents of bullying behaviour have occurred which have had a serious adverse impact on a student
  - if a parent has informed the school that a student has left the school because of reported bullying behaviour
  - if any additional support is needed from the board of management
  - if the school's BÍ Cineálta policy requires urgent review in advance of the annual review

This update will not include any personal information or information that could identify the students involved. It is important that the minutes of the board of management meeting documents the number of new incidents of bullying behaviour, the number currently ongoing and the total number of incidents of bullying behaviour since the beginning of the school year as reported by the principal. The minutes should also note where the board has considered the bullying behaviour verbal update and document when the board has decided that an urgent review of the school's BÍ Cineálta policy is required.

## **8. Monitoring and Review**

The school's BÍ Cineálta policy will be reviewed each calendar year or as soon as practicable where the

Board of Management determines that a review is warranted. The review will be completed with input from the school community which includes the Board of Management, staff, students and their parents and members of the wider school community. The school will engage with the Student Council and Parents to obtain their views on the content and effectiveness of the school's Bí Cineálta Policy. The template contained in Appendix 4 must be completed to confirm that all aspects of the annual review are complete.

This policy was reviewed by the Board of Management at a meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2025 (but ratified via email prior on 28<sup>th</sup> August 2025)

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and is 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.

Signed:

*Niamh Cronin*

Niamh Cronin  
(Principal)

*Joan Ashbrook*

Joan Ashbrook  
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Date: 28<sup>th</sup> August 2025



## Template for Recording Bullying behaviour

1. Name of pupil being bullied: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Date of initial engagement with pupil and parent: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Name	Class	Name	Class

4. Source of Bullying  
(tick concern/report (tick relevant box(es]

5. Location of incidents  
tick relevant box(es)

Pupil concerned	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yard	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other pupil	<input type="checkbox"/>	Classroom	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parent/Guardian	<input type="checkbox"/>	Toilets	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	School grounds	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	P.E. Hall	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hallway	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	School Taxi	<input type="checkbox"/>

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	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cyber bullying	<input type="checkbox"/>
Damage to Property	<input type="checkbox"/>	Intimidation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Isolation/Exclusion	<input type="checkbox"/>	Malicious gossip	<input type="checkbox"/>
Name calling	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other/specify	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

Homophobic	Disability/SEN related	Racist	Membership of the Traveller Community	Other specify
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact

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9. Details of actions taken including external supports if required

**10. Concerns of parent(s) and requested action to be taken**

**11. Concerns of pupil and requested actions to be taken**

**12. Agreed Review date: \_\_\_\_\_**

**13. Review with pupil and parents**

**14. Date bullying behaviour ceased: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Signed: \_\_\_\_\_(Teacher )      Date:\_\_\_\_\_**

**Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal: \_\_\_\_\_**

## **Appendix 2: Practical tips for building a positive school culture and climate in Scoil Mhuire Junior School**

- 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 phones and internet use.
- Follow up and follow through with pupils who ignore the rules.
- Actively involve parents 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 school yard/outdoor supervision.
- Support the establishment and work of a Student Council.

### **Appendix 3: Guide to Providing Bullying Behaviour Update Guide to providing Bullying Behaviour Update for Board of Management meeting of \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_**

- Having reviewed the details of the incidents of bullying behaviour that have been reported since the previous Board of Management meeting, the principal will provide the following information at each ordinary meeting of the Board of Management:
- Where incidents of bullying behaviour have been reported since the last meeting, the update must include a verbal report which will include the following information where relevant:
  - ☐ the trends and patterns identified such as the form of bullying behaviour, type of bullying behaviour if known, location of bullying behaviour, when it occurred etc.
  - ☐ the strategies used to address the bullying behaviour
  - ☐ any wider strategies to prevent and address bullying behaviour
  - ☐ if any serious incidents of bullying behaviour have occurred which have had a serious adverse impact on a student
  - ☐ if a parent has informed the school that a student has left the school because of reported bullying behaviour
  - ☐ if any additional support is needed from the board of management
  - ☐ if the school's Bí Cineálta policy requires urgent review in advance of the annual review

This update should not include any personal information or information that could identify the students involved.

## Review of the Bí Cineálta Policy

The Board of Management (the Board) must undertake an annual (calendar) review of the school's Bí Cineálta policy and its implementation in consultation with the school community. As part of the review, this document will be completed.

### Bí Cineálta Policy Review

1. When did the Board formally adopt its Bí Cineálta policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour in accordance with the Bí Cineálta Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools? Insert date when the Bí Cineálta policy was last adopted by the school. \_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/20\_\_\_\_

2. Where in the school is the student friendly Bí Cineálta policy displayed?  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. What date did the Board publish the Bí Cineálta policy and the student friendly policy on the school website? \_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/20\_\_\_\_

4. How has the student friendly policy been communicated to students?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. How has the Bí Cineálta policy and student friendly policy been communicated to parents  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. Have all school staff been made aware of the, school's Bí Cineálta policy and the Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools?

Yes ☐ No ☐

7. Does the Bí Cineálta policy document the strategies that the school uses to prevent bullying behaviour?

Yes ☐ No ☐

8. Has the Board received and minuted the Bullying Behaviour Update presented by the principal at every ordinary board meeting over the last calendar year?

Yes ☐ No ☐

9. Has the Board discussed how the school is addressing all reports of bullying behaviour. Yes ☐ No ☐

10. Is the Board satisfied that all incidents of bullying behaviour are addressed in accordance with the school's Bí Cineálta Policy?

Yes ☐ No ☐

11. Have the prevention strategies in the Bí Cineálta policy been implemented?

Yes ☐ No ☐

12. Has the Board discussed the effectiveness of the strategies used to prevent bullying behaviour?

Yes ☐ No ☐

13. How have (a) parents, (b) students and (c) school staff been consulted with as part of the review of the Bí Cineálta Policy?

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14. Outline any aspects of the school's Bí Cineálta policy and/or its implementation that have been identified as requiring further improvement as part of this review:

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15. Where areas for improvement have been identified, outline how these will be addressed and whether an action plan with timeframes has been developed?

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15. Does the student friendly policy need to be updated as a result of this review and if so why?

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16. Does the school refer parents to the complaints procedures if they have a complaint about how the school has addressed bullying behaviour? Yes ☐ No ☐

17. Has a parent informed the school that a student has left the school due to reported bullying behaviour? Yes ☐ No ☐

18. Has the Office of the Ombudsman for Children initiated or completed an investigation into how the school has addressed an incident of bullying behaviour? Yes ☐ No ☐









