SCOIL MHUIRE GREENHILL

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

1. **Rationale**

In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the code of behaviour guidelines issued by the NEWB (now TUSLA), the Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire Secondary School has adopted the following anti-bullying policy within the framework of the school's overall code of behaviour. This policy fully complies with the requirements of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* which were published in September 2013. The Cineáltas Action Plan on Bullying, published in December 2022 will be implemented by the school in the 2023-2024 school year.

2. **Principles**

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 addressing bullying behaviour:

A positive school culture and climate which
- is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusion;
- encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment; and
- promotes respectful relationships across the school community;

Effective leadership;
A school-wide approach;
A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact;
Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that
- build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and
- explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including 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. **Definition of Bullying**

In accordance with the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* (DES 2013) bullying is defined as follows:

Bullying is unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time.

The following types of bullying behaviour are included in the definition of bullying:

- deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying,
- cyber-bullying and
- identity-based bullying such as homophobic bullying, racist bullying, bullying based on a person's membership of the Traveller community and bullying of those with disabilities or special educational needs.

Isolated or once-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour, including a once-off offensive or hurtful text message or other private messaging, do not fall within the definition of bullying and should be dealt with, as appropriate, in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour.

However, in the context of this policy, placing a once-off offensive or hurtful public message, image or statement on a social network site or other public forum where that message, image or statement can be viewed and/or repeated by other people **will** be regarded as bullying behaviour.

Negative behaviour that does not meet this definition of bullying will be dealt with in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour.

Additional information on different types of bullying is set out in Section 2 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

4. **Relevant Persons**

   The relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows: The Principal, Deputy Principal and Assistant Principals/Year Heads who form the senior management team in Scoil Mhuire.

5. **Education & Prevention Strategies**

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

   1. The School Code of Behaviour clearly sets out the expectations of the school community regarding behaviour towards others and outlines the consequences of engaging in bullying behaviour.

   2. The definition of bullying as set out in the DES Guidelines (2013) is prominently displayed in the school.

   3. Resources used for the programme delivered in Scoil Mhuire include that of the DCU FUSE Programme and The 'My Wellbeing Journey' series of textbooks for Junior Cycle SPHE. Structured and relevant lessons are delivered throughout the academic year in SPHE classes (1st- 4th Year) and in Religion classes (5th & 6th Year). Education relating to relationships, sexual identity, conflict resolution etc. is carried out through the SPHE and RE programmes at Junior and Senior Cycle. The following programmes and initiatives are in place in the school: Meitheal Programme for Fifth & First Years; Guidance & Counselling Programme; Chaplaincy Service; Referral to relevant outside agencies.

4. The Sociogram is administered to particular year groups on an annual basis. It is an awareness-raising and prevention tool which also identifies students who are vulnerable to bullying or who may be bullying others. This is administered by class teachers and the findings are discussed at the weekly Pastoral team meeting.

5. Annual presentations & events take place to reinforce the anti-bullying message ranging from talks on internet safety & cyber-bullying to drama presentations and visits from organisations involved in the prevention of mental health issues and raising awareness of the effects of bullying behaviour. Examples include: Healthy Living Week; Stand up Week, Presentations on Internet safety & cyber-bullying etc.

6. The School Journal contains a detachable bullying report form to enable a student or parent to report an incident. A dedicated email address: reportbullying@scoilmhuirecos.ie is available to submit reports at any time.

7. The Student Council engages in the promotion of the anti-bullying message through a Twitter account and by the co-ordination of events in the school to raise awareness of and prevent bullying behaviour e.g. Anti-Bullying Awareness Week or Friendship Week.

8. The Scoil Mhuire Information & Communication Technology and Social Media Acceptable Use Policy contain explicit guidelines regarding acceptable and unacceptable behaviour online and in the use of technology.

9. Scoil Mhuire Parents' Council hosts events/information meetings and presentations relating to Anti-Bullying on a periodic basis.

6. Procedures

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:

1. Any staff member to whom an incident report is made should log the report in the logbook which is retained in the Staffroom. This logbook is available to all staff members and may be viewed at any time by school personnel. Written reports will help to establish if there is a 'one-off' incident or if there is a pattern of repeated behaviour.

2. The staff member will reflect on the report and assess the situation. The primary aim for the relevant teacher in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame).

3. In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved.

4. All reports, of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. In that way pupils will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It should be made clear to all pupils that when they report genuine incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.

5. Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), bus escorts, caretakers, cleaners must be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher.

6. Parents and pupils are required to co-operate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving any issues and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved as quickly as possible.

7. It is very important that all involved (including each set of pupils and parents) understand the above approach from the outset.

8. Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents.

9. Incidents are generally best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.

10. All interviews should be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this way.

11. When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher should seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This should be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner.

12. If a group is alleged to be involved in bullying behaviour, each member should be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved should be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member should be asked for her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements.

13. Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that she may face from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher.

14. It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s) and to sign and date each account.

15. In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved should be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken (by reference to the school Code of Behaviour). The school should give parents an opportunity to discuss ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports for their daughter(s).

16. Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to her how she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts should be made to try to get her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied.

17. It must also be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parents) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required in accordance with the Code of Behaviour, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, her parents and the school.

18. Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved should be arranged separately with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date if the pupil who has been bullied is ready and agreeable. This can have a therapeutic effect;

19. In cases where the relevant teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, it must be recorded by the relevant teacher in the Recording Template.

20. In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant teacher must, as part of his/her professional judgement, take the following factors into account:
    Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased;
    Whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable;
    Whether the relationships between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable; and
    Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the school Principal or Deputy Principal

21. Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures;

22. In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

7. Support

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

- There is an established Guidance & Counselling service in the school to which all students have access to assist them in developing positive relationship strategies, raising self-esteem & confidence and examining personal behaviour and responsibility.

- Students may be referred to appropriate outside agencies/providers for support services.

- The Chaplain engages with students to assist them in achieving harmony in interpersonal relationships and to promote the values of tolerance, mutual respect, kindness, mercy and forgiveness.

- The pastoral network of Year Heads, Class Tutors, Subject Teachers and Classroom Assistants monitors the daily well-being and presentation of all students, particularly those who are experiencing challenges.

- A wide range of extra-curricular activities is available to students to promote inclusion, teamwork, self-confidence and friendship-building skills.

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.

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Council. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department of Education & Skills and to the Trustee Body, CEIST, if requested.

Reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management   Date: _____

Signed: _____ (Chairperson)