



## *Scoil Mhuire*

### **School Policy on Countering Bullying**

We in Scoil Mhuire believe that pupils have the right to learn in a supportive, caring and safe environment without fear of being bullied. The school also has a clear policy on the promotion of RESPECT for everybody where it is made clear that bullying is a form of anti-social behaviour. It is important therefore that the school has a clear, written policy to promote this belief, where pupils and parent(s)/ guardians are fully aware that any bullying complaints will be dealt with firmly, fairly and promptly.

This policy is based on the DES guidelines Countering Bullying Behaviour. It aims to produce a safe and caring environment in which all children can develop to their full potential.

The school does not tolerate or condone bullying of any form or at any level of the school community. The Board of Management is committed to ensuring that all members of the school community-pupils, staff, and parents are enabled to act effectively to deal with bullying. This policy guides action and organisation within the school for preventing and responding to bullying.

#### **Definition of Bullying**

Bullying may be defined as repeated acts of aggression; which may be verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against others.

Bullying may take many different forms such as physical aggression, damage to property, theft of property, extortion, intimidation, abusive telephone calls, isolation, name calling, writing notes, emailing or texting. As a form of aggressive behaviour it is usually hurtful and deliberate. It is persistent over time and makes it difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves.

It is important not to confuse bullying with isolated incidents of aggressive or antisocial behaviour, which must not be condoned. However, when the behaviour is systematic and ongoing it becomes bullying. Bullying affects everyone, not just the bullies and its victims. It also affects those who observe it and less aggressive children can be drawn in by peer pressure.

All members of the school community have a role to play in the prevention of bullying.

#### **Board of Management**

The Board of Management is responsible for ensuring that all members of the school community are enabled to deal effectively with bullying. The board is committed to providing time and resources for the implementation of the policy. The Board will ensure that proper supervisory and monitoring measures are in place to prevent bullying and to deal appropriately with any bullying issues as they arise.

March 11. 2010

## **School Staff and Prevention of Bullying**

The school staff will foster an atmosphere of friendship, respect and tolerance. Children's self-esteem will be developed through celebrating individual differences, achievements, acknowledging and rewarding good behaviour and manners and providing opportunities for success throughout the curriculum and school. This is outlined in greater detail in the school's Code of Behaviour. Teachers will help pupils to develop empathy by discussing feelings and trying to put themselves in the place of others. Relationships with pupils will be based on mutual respect and trust so that pupils will have confidence in the school staff. Teachers will be vigilant, respond sensitively and caringly to pupils who disclose incidents of bullying and investigate all disclosed incidents of bullying.

Teachers will discuss the school's anti-bullying policy with the pupils and use behavioural management strategies which focus on problem solving and enable pupils to take an active role in finding a solution to problems.

Awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour is addressed in the classroom, at school assemblies and other informal occasions when the opportunity arises. Pupils are taught skills and encouraged to report any incident of bullying. The pupils engage in circle time activities that focus on bullying, puppet play for younger children, speech bubbles and stick drawings, role-play, posters, lessons on bullying during Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) lessons. The DVD 'Bully' which stars the 6<sup>th</sup> class (Class of 2009) children of Scoil Mhuire will also be used as a very valuable resource by teachers of middle and senior classes in the school. During these activities pupils are made aware that both the bully and the person who is being bullied have choices. Discussion, art work, poems, drama etc. Will be used to heighten the children's awareness regarding bullying. An anti-bullying week will take place in the second term in March. This will be coordinated by the person who has overall responsibility for the Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) plan. Poster, poetry, colouring, slogan competitions for children from Infants to Sixth class will be held during that week. During anti-bullying week Junior Infants will pair with children from Second class during a circle time activity. This buddy system will encourage a positive atmosphere at play time.

The formal curriculum of the school will also be used to educate all pupils against bullying behaviour. Anti-bullying issues may be raised through the school religion programme, the Social Personal and Health Education programme, the Stay Safe Programme, the Arts and/or Circle time.

## **Advice for Pupils**

Pupils will be given advice frequently regarding bullying and how to recognise it and deal with it during class time in SPHE/ Religion lessons and also on posters around the school. Emphasis on advice will be given during anti-bullying week. The bullet points listed below will be displayed prominently in the corridors and in senior classrooms. This will form part of the duties of the SPHE coordinator. They may also be displayed in the junior and middle classes if teachers in these classes think the bullet points are appropriate for their classes.

- Tell yourself that you do not deserve to be bullied, and that it is **WRONG**.
- Be proud of who you are. It is good to be individual.
- Try not to show that you are upset. It is hard but a bully thrives on someone's fear.
- Stay with a group of friends/people. There is safety in numbers.
- Be assertive-shout NO. Walk away confidently. Go straight to a teacher or a member of staff.
- Fighting back makes things worse-So don't fight back. REPORT to a teacher or parents/guardians instead. If you need support find a friend and both of you speak to the teacher.
- Generally it is best to tell an adult straight away. You will get immediate support. The teachers will take you seriously and will deal with bullies in a way which will end the bullying and will not make things worse for you.

March 11. 2010

Pupils are expected to be tolerant and to have mutual respect for each other. Pupils should report incidents of bullying to their parents and teachers.

### **If you know someone who is being bullied**

- TAKE ACTION –Watching and doing nothing looks as if you are on the side of the bully. It makes the victim feel more unhappy and on their own.
- If you feel you cannot get involved, tell an adult IMMEDIATELY. Adults have ways of dealing with the bully without getting you in trouble.

Each year slogans developed during anti-bullying week will be displayed prominently on the corridors and will be adopted for use by the pupils in the school.

### **Advice for Parents**

The SPHE coordinator will oversee during anti-bullying week that a leaflet with the following bullet points will be sent home to all parents.

Encourage positive behaviour and discourage bullying behaviour both at home and at school.

Encourage children to solve difficulties without resorting to aggression.

Encourage children to share, to be kind, to be caring, and to be understanding towards others.

Look for unusual behaviour in your children. For example, they may suddenly not wish to attend school, feel ill regularly, or not complete work to their normal standard, ask for money or begin stealing money. Don't dismiss your instincts as being wrong.

Always take an active role in your child's education by enquiring how they are getting on. Discuss the school's anti-bullying policy with her/him.

If you feel your child may be a victim of bullying behaviour, inform the school IMMEDIATELY. Your complaint will be taken seriously and appropriate action will follow.

It is important to advise your child not to fight back. It can make matters worse. Support the school in its efforts to prevent and to treat bullying.

Tell your child there is nothing wrong with him/her. It is not his/her fault that he/she is being bullied.

Make sure your child is fully aware of the School Policy concerning Bullying, and that they will not be afraid to ask for help.

### **Procedures for Reporting and Investigating Bullying Incidents**

Bullying incidents should be reported to the class teacher and/or the supervising teacher for investigation. This reporting may be done by the pupil, parent/guardian or a friend. All reported incidents which are serious or are part of a pattern of behaviour will be noted, investigated and treated as circumstances require. Serious cases of bullying will be reported to the principal.

All reports of bullying, no matter how trivial, will be dealt by teachers. In that way pupils will gain confidence in reporting. This confidence factor is of vital importance.

March 11. 2010

Serious cases of bullying behaviour by pupils will be referred to the principal/deputy principal and the two assistant principals.

The principal and teacher inform the parent/s guardians of victims earlier rather than later if the situation warrants it. The parents are then in a position to help and support their children before a crisis occurs.

Parents must be informed of the appropriate person (the class teacher) to whom they can make their enquiries regarding incidents of bullying behaviour, which they might suspect or that have come to their attention through their children or other parents.

Non-teaching staff are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, to the teaching staff.

It should be made clear to all pupils that when they report incidents of bullying, they are not telling tales but behaving responsibly.

Individual teachers, in consultation with the appropriate staff member, (class teacher) should record and take appropriate measures regarding reports of bullying behaviour in accordance with the school's policy and Code of Behaviour and Discipline.

In the case of a complaint regarding a staff member, this should normally in the first instance be raised with the staff member in question and if necessary, with the principal.

Where cases, relating to either a pupil or a teacher remain unresolved at school level, the matter should be referred to the School's Board of Management (see Complaints Procedure).

### **Responding to Bullying**

Support will be provided for anyone who is bullied by offering them an immediate opportunity to talk about their experience with their teacher or other teacher, along with continuing support when they feel they need it. A victim will be assured that the school community will help them and put monitoring procedures in place to safeguard them.

The school will inform parents/guardians of what has happened and of the measures being taken to help them, encourage them to report further incidents if they occur.

Help and support will be sought for a bully. They will include speaking with them to discover why they became involved, informing their parents/guardians and continuing to work with them in order to modify their behaviour. The school Code of Behaviour applies to bullying. The bully will be helped to see things from the victim's point of view. Bullies may be excluded from the playground at lunch break or subject to special monitoring procedures and if bullying continues they may be suspended in accordance with procedure.

Any pupil who is involved in retaliation against a pupil who reports bullying will be subject to the school Code of Behaviour. Incidents of bullying will be used as opportunities for re-enforcing the anti-bullying policy of the school. Follow-up meetings may be arranged to assess progress and/or restore relationships.

### **Procedure for investigating and Dealing with Bullying**

Teachers will take a calm, unemotional, problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents/guardians. Such incidents will be investigated outside the classroom situation to avoid the public humiliation of the victim or the pupil engaged in bullying behaviour. In any incident of bullying, the teacher will speak separately to the pupils involved, in an attempt to get both sides of the story. All interviews will

March 11. 2010

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

1. When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the teacher will seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner.
2. If a group is involved, each member will be interviewed individually and if competent enough may be asked to write their account of what happened. Then the individuals are met as a group. Each member will be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone is clear about what everyone also has said.
3. If an incident appears to be serious it is advisable that the child or children are interviewed by the principal/class teacher and one other member of the teaching staff.
4. If it is concluded that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it will be made clear to him/her that he/she is in breach of the Code of Behaviour and Discipline and try to get him/her to see the situation from the victim's point of view.
5. Each member of the group should be helped to handle the possible pressures that often face them from the other members after interview by the teacher.
6. In cases where it has been determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, a meeting or discussion will take place with the parents or guardians of the two parties involved as appropriate to:
  - a. Explain the actions being taken and the reason for them, referring them to the school Code of Behaviour and Discipline
  - b. Discuss ways in which they can reinforce and support the actions taken by the school.
7. Arrange separate follow-up meetings with the two parties involved.

## **SANCTIONS**

The use of sanctions is an important element in the school's code. They are used in a corrective way and are intended to help the child to change and improve his or behavioural patterns.

- The nature of the misbehaviour, and the age and ability of the child of the child will determine the strategy to be employed.

### **Disciplinary Actions and Sanctions to deal with Bullying:**

**Bullying is a Level 2/Level 3 form of misbehaviour** and the sanctions applied are the same as those listed in our Code of Behaviour (Pages 15-18). The following may also apply:

- Apology to the victim.
- A record is kept. Pupil/s write an account of the incident/s that led to the bullying behaviour and what they have learned from this episode in their lives-parents are made aware of this report.
- Pupils may be removed from activity if endangering self or others.
- Pupil is sent to Principal/Deputy Principal and made aware that suspension could be a possibility.
- In cases where it has been determined that bullying behaviour has occurred the Principal/Deputy Principal informs parents.
- Suspension procedures may follow if deemed necessary by the school authorities.
- If a child is suspended for bullying behaviour the procedures followed in relation to suspension are outlined in the Code of Behaviour and Discipline (pages 18-21).

March 11. 2010

**SUCCESS CRITERIA:** (by which the policy will be judged)

- Atmosphere of discipline within the school
- Children are aware of school rules
- Staff apply school rules
- Growth in self discipline
- Co-operation between parents, teachers and pupils in maintaining the code
- Comments or compliments on behaviour
- Children working to the best of their ability
- Class working to the best of their ability
- Improvements in behaviour

**MONITORING AND REVIEW**

Each staff member is responsible for the implementation of the Code of Behaviour and Discipline and Anti-Bullying Policy. Within the classroom the teacher monitors his/her class. Teachers consider themselves responsible for the behaviour of children within sight or sound of them and respond to any instance of unacceptable behaviour. The principal is responsible for monitoring and reviewing Policy at staff level on a regular basis and reports any review the staff deem necessary to the Board of Management.

The Board of Management has ultimate responsibility for discipline in the school under its management and a duty to ensure that a fair code of discipline applies therein. The Board of Management will ensure the Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying policy is reviewed regularly.

In registering children in Scoil Mhuire, Killorglin, parents are expected to support teachers in following the policies and procedures of the school. A copy of all policies and procedures is available for viewing by the parents.

Chairperson Scoil Mhuire: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## What to do if you are being bullied

- Tell yourself that you do not deserve to be bullied, and that it is WRONG.
- Be proud of who you are. It is good to be individual.
- Try not to show that you are upset. It is hard but a bully thrives on someone's fear.
- Stay with a group of friends/people. There is safety in numbers.
- Be assertive-shout NO. Walk away confidently. Go straight to a teacher or a member of staff.
- Fighting back makes things worse-So don't fight back. REPORT to a teacher or parents/guardians instead. If you need support find a friend and both of you speak to the teacher.
- Generally it is best to tell an adult straight away. You will get immediate support. The teachers will take you seriously and will deal with bullies in a way which will end the bullying and will not make things worse for you.