Scoil Mhuire gan Smál Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire gan Smál 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 the Traveller community.

We confirm that we will take all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the bullying or harassment of our students in whatever form and however motivated.

Catholic schools have a distinctive understanding of the human person, recognising that every person is created in God's image and likeness and has inherent dignity as a child of God. This is the basis for ensuring that each person in our school is treated with respect and care, in accordance with the Catholic Schedule.

As a Catholic school, we are committed to respecting the dignity of every individual. No human person is to be devalued, and all have an indispensable part to play in the school community, regardless of difference.

Definition of bullying

· Bullying is targeted behaviour, online or offline, that causes harm.

· The harm caused can be physical, social and/or emotional in nature and can have lasting effects on the child experiencing the behaviour.

· Bullying behaviour is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power in relationships between two people or groups of people in society.

· It is behaviour which is deliberate in nature and is unwanted. It is not accidental or reckless behaviour .

The harm can be :

● Physical (eg: personal injury, damage to or loss of property)
● Social: (eg: withdrawal, loneliness, exclusion)
● Emotional: (eg: low self esteem, depression, anxiety)

· A one-off instance of negative behaviour towards a 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 a repeated behaviour.

Behaviour that is not bullying behaviour:

o 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 be addressed under the school 's code of behaviour.

o 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 cannot control.

o Disagreement between students is not considered bullying **unless** it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.

Types of Bullying:

There are many different types of bullying behaviour. These can include directing bullying at someone focused on the following: disability, exceptional ability, gender identity, LGBTQ+ , physical appearance, racism, poverty status, religious identity, sexism and sexual harassment. This is not an exhaustive list.

Bullying can be : Direct:

· Physical: pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping students. Physical assault. Destruction of personal property.

· Verbal: continual name calling which insults, humiliates the student – this may refer to physical appearance, sixe, clothes, gender, accent, academic ability, race or ethnic origin.

· Written: Writing insulting remarks in public places, passing notes or drawings about the student.

· Extortion: where something is obtained through

force or threats Bullying can be :Indirect:

· Exclusion: where a student is deliberately and repeatedly isolated, excluded or ignored by a student or group of students.
· Relational: Where a student's attempts to form friendships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined, threats, non-verbal gesturing, malicious gossip, spreading rumours, silent treatment and manipulation of friend groups etc can all form relational bullying for a student.

Online bullying behaviour:

Cyber bullying is carried out via text, direct messaging/instant messaging, social media platforms, e- mail, apps, digital gaming sites, gaming consoles, chatrooms and other online technologies.

This can include:

· Sending or sharing of insulting and offensive or intimidating messages or images via online means as mentioned above.

· Posting information which is personal, private or sensitive without consent.

· Making and/or participating in fake profiles on a social network to impersonate and/or humiliate other students.

· Exclude/disrupt access to a student on purpose on online chat groups/access to accounts/from an online game.

Section A: Development/review of our Bi Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire gan Smál has adopted this policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour in line with the requirements of **Bi Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2024**.

Consultation Process

All members of our school community were provided the opportunity to contribute to the development or review of this policy:

	Date Consulted	Method of Consultation
School Staff	March 2025	Bí Cineálta half day school closure

Students	February 2025	Student Council meeting & Survey
Parents	February 2025	Survey
Board of Management	6th May 2025	Presented with the policy
Wider School community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers		

Date Policy was approved: 6th May 2025	
Date Policy was last reviewed: N/A	

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

This section sets out the prevention strategies that will be used by this school to address all forms of bullying behaviour, in whatever form and however motivated, including online bullying behaviour, homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour, racist bullying behaviour, sexist bullying behaviour and sexual harassment.

In developing preventative strategies which this school will use to prevent all forms of bullying behaviour, we come from the context of our Catholic ethos where inclusivity permeates the school in a real way.

This school takes positive steps to ensure that the culture of the school is one which welcomes a respectful dialogue and encounter with diversity and difference, by ensuring that prevention and inclusivity strategies are given priority and discussed regularly at board of management and staff meetings.

The dignity and the wellbeing of the individual person is of paramount concern in our Christian response. This school will listen closely to and dialogue with parents, thereby building a relationship of mutual understanding, respect, trust and confidence.

In continuing to develop prevention strategies, this school will listen to young people and parents, to help establish their particular context and needs. Frequent periods of reflection and engagement by the school, young people and parents, will be used to discern appropriate supports for young people in this school and to help inform future prevention strategies.

Culture and Environment: We strive to :

- Create a school culture where bullying behaviour is unacceptable and a consistent approach to addressing bullying behaviour.
- Involve parents as active partners in fostering an environment where bullying behaviour is not tolerated.
- Support the idea that our school is a telling environment.
- Promote the concept of a trusted adult – stay safe linkage – who to tell.
- Create safe spaces in our school building and yards – visibility
- Incorporate artwork and signs to promote our school values – creation of a school charter promoting rights – equality, inclusion and respect.
- Encourage a sense of belonging with ownership over their own space through art and creativity.
- Create a positive school culture and climate which- o is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity; o encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment; and o promotes respectful relationships across the school community;

Ways in which we work to achieve these goals are as follows:

- ○ Staff are briefed on the uniform approach we must take to handle all reports of bullying – this is distributed to staff and a copy is displayed on the Staff Room notice board for ease of access also.

- Playground helpers – students in higher classes volunteer to support younger classes on the yard to help with games and positive interactions. Minders at lunchtime also.
- Parents receive information at times regarding useful information on Anti Bullying.
- Stay safe and SPHE lessons focusing on positive behaviour form part of curricular content in all classes.
- Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils.

Curriculum (teaching and learning): <u>We strive to :</u>

- Provide teaching and promote learning which is collaborative and respectful, fostering inclusion and respect for diversity.
- Display a shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact.

<u>Ways in which we work to achieve this:</u>

- Teach SPHE and RSE content which fosters student's well-being and self confidence as well as promoting personal responsibility for their own behaviours and actions.

- Model respectful behaviour towards colleagues, pupils and visitors in our school environment.
- Curricular and Extracurricular activities can help to develop a sense of self worth, working together, inclusion and respect.
- Students are given regular opportunities to work in small groups with peers, which can help build a sense of connection, belonging and empathy.
- Acknowledgment of our diverse school population – celebrating diversity and culture in our school through art, displays, photographs, international events.
  - · 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.
- 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.

Policy and planning

The aim of Scoil Mhuire gan Smál's Bi Cinealta policy is

- To raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with school management, teachers, pupils, parents/guardians.
- To promote a school ethos which encourages children to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To ensure appropriate supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of school activity are kept under observation.
- To develop procedures for noting, investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To implement a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and for those involved in bullying behaviour.
- To work with appropriate agencies in countering all forms of bullying and promoting anti bullying behaviour.
- The Acceptable Use Policy, Supervision policy, Special Education Policy and Code of Behaviour all support the implementation of the Bi Cinealta policy.
- Effective leadership is a key component with Principal, Deputy Principal, DLP, DDLP, and all middle management focused on supporting the implementation of this policy.

Relationships and Partnerships

- Interpersonal connections are supported through a range of formal

and informal structures such as our parents' association, our various and multiple student committees and groups.

- Age and stage appropriate awareness initiatives that engage the student body in looking at their own behaviour – promoting acts of kindness and friendship, being an active help to others and looking at the causes of and impact of bullying during SPHE lessons.
- Conducting workshops and seminars for students, staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of bullying.
- Encouraging peer mentoring and peer support
- Supporting active participation of students in school life and active participation of parents in school life also.
- Engaging parents and students in actively contributing to the formation of a Child Friendly Anti Bullying Policy to make them active participants in promotion of and discussion of useful ways to identify and reduce bullying behaviour and highlight procedure and how to deal with it if it does occur.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

1. The Principal.
2. Deputy Principal.
3. Any member of the ISM team.
4. The class teacher / SET / SNA / witnessing adult

When bullying behaviour occurs, the school will:
- ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour is heard and reassured
- seek to ensure the privacy of those involved
- conduct all conversations with sensitivity
- consider the age and ability of those 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

The steps that will be taken by the school to determine if bullying behaviour has occurred, the approaches taken to address the bullying behaviour and to review progress are as follows:

Steps to Determine if Bullying Behavior Has Occurred

1. **Recording and Reporting:**
   - SMGS will maintain anonymized records of alleged incidents.
   - Details such as the nature of the behavior, the responses, and outcomes are documented.
2. **Investigation:**
   - All allegations are examined on a case-by-case basis, considering the definition of bullying outlined above.
   - Key factors like targeted, repeated behavior and power imbalance are assessed.
3. **Consultation:**
   - Engage with all involved parties, including students, parents, and school staff, for an accurate understanding.

Approaches to Address Bullying Behavior

1. **School Culture and Environment:**
   - SMGS will foster an inclusive culture promoting kindness, respect, and zero tolerance for bullying.
   - Introduce the Cineáltas Charter to outline school values and measures against bullying.
2. **Educational Programs:**

○   Provide anti-bullying education for students.

- Train staff to recognize and address bullying behaviors effectively.
3. **Support Systems:**
    - Establish student support teams for early intervention and continuous support.
    - Encourage open communication between students, staff, and parents.
4. **Policy Implementation:**
    - Update anti-bullying policies to include specific guidelines for cyberbullying, gender identity bullying, and others.
    - Conduct regular policy reviews and involve all stakeholders in updates.

Reviewing Progress

1. **Monitoring and Evaluation:**
    - SMGS will engage in self-evaluation and continuous improvement processes to ensure effectiveness.
    - National data on bullying trends will be analyzed for broader insights.
2. **Feedback Mechanisms:**
    - Gather feedback from students, parents, and staff to refine anti-bullying strategies.
3. **Inspection and Compliance:**
    - Regular evaluations, including school inspections, will assess adherence to anti-bullying policies and practices.
4. **Annual Reporting:**
    - SMGS will contribute to a national database and produce annual reports highlighting progress and areas for improvement.

These guidelines reflect a commitment to a holistic, inclusive approach to combat bullying while prioritizing the wellbeing and safety of students.

The school will use the following approaches to support those who experience, witness and display bullying behaviour:

For Those Who Experience Bullying:

1. **Safe Spaces and Support Systems:**
    - Establishing Student Support Teams in schools to provide dedicated assistance.
    - Ensuring access to trusted adults within the school to encourage reporting and discussion.
2. **Mental Health and Wellbeing:**
    - Collaborating with psychological services like NEPS to provide counseling and emotional support.
    - Promoting awareness of available mental health resources.
3. **Empathy and Inclusion:**
    - Incorporating empathy-building activities into the curriculum to empower victims and strengthen peer understanding.

For Those Who Witness Bullying:

1. **Awareness and Bystander Intervention:**
   ○ Educational programs to highlight the role of bystanders in preventing bullying.
   ○ Encouraging reporting through safe and anonymous channels.
2. **Community Training:**
   ○ Training sessions for students, staff, and parents to identify and address bullying behavior effectively.
3. **Inclusive School Culture:**
   ○ Cultivating a positive environment where witnessing bullying is recognized and intervened upon.

For Those Who Display Bullying Behavior:

1. **Restorative Practices:**
   ○ Using restorative justice techniques to address behavior and repair harm. ○ Encouraging accountability and providing opportunities to make amends.
2. **Behavioral Support and Interventions:**
   ○ Tailored programs for individuals displaying bullying behavior to address root causes and develop empathy.
   ○ Collaboration with parents and external support systems to reinforce positive behavior.
3. **Policy Enforcement:**
   ○ Ensuring the consequences of bullying are outlined clearly in the school's anti-bullying policy, with measures focused on behavior correction rather than punishment.

Overarching Strategies:

1. **Community Engagement:**
   ○ Involving parents, teachers, and students in developing anti-bullying strategies.
   ○ Promoting school-wide awareness campaigns.
2. **Continuous Professional Development:**
   ○ Training school staff to handle bullying cases effectively and provide ongoing support.
3. **Policy and Planning:**
   ○ Regularly updating school policies to address evolving challenges, including cyberbullying and identity-based bullying.

These approaches create a framework where all members of the school community—victims, witnesses, and those exhibiting bullying behavior—are supported within a safe and inclusive environment.
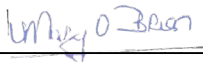
All bullying behaviour will be recorded. This will include the type of behaviour, where and when it took place, and the date of the engagement with students and parents. The actions and supports agreed to address bullying behaviour will be documented. If the bullying behaviour is a child protection concern the matter will be addressed without delay in accordance with Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.

Section D: Oversight

The principal will present an update on bullying behaviour at each board of management meeting. This update will include the number of incidents of bullying behaviour that have been reported since the last meeting, the number of ongoing incidents and the total number of incidents since the beginning of the school year. Where incidents of bullying behaviour have occurred, the principal will also provide a verbal update which will include where relevant, information relating to trends and patterns identified, strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and any wider strategies to prevent and address bullying behaviour where relevant. This update does not contain personal or identifying information. See Chapter 7 of the Bí Cineálta procedures.

This policy is available to our school community on the school's website and in hard copy on request. A student friendly version of this policy is displayed in the school and is also available on our website and in hard copy on request.

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed, following input from our school community, each calendar year or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which this policy refers.

Signed: _____ _____ Date:06/05/25 (Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: _____ Date:06/05/25 (Principal)