



Anti-Bullying Policy

1. In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the code of behaviour guidelines issued by the NEWB, the Board of Management of Scoil Maelruain Junior has **adopted the following anti-bullying policy** within the framework of the school's overall code of behaviour. This policy fully complies with the requirements of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools which were published in September 2013.

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

(a) A positive school culture and climate which

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

Key elements

- 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.
- Actively involve parents and/or the Parents' Association in awareness raising campaigns about potential dangers of Internet Usage.
- 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.

(b) Effective leadership

(c) A school-wide approach

(d) A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact

(e) 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;

(f) Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils

(g) Supports for staff

(h) Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies); and

(i) On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

3. In accordance with the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* bullying is 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*.

Anti-bullying Focus Groups

A group of 14 children, two from each of the First and Second Classes, were taken as a focus group to give feedback regarding their experiences and opinions of identity-based and cyber bullying ahead of the school's drafting of a new anti-bullying policy. Identity-based bullying, in particular homophobic and transphobic bullying, and cyber bullying had been highlighted in the recent guidelines issued by the Department of Education as areas which needed to be addressed in schools' approaches to bullying. It was felt that some of these forms of bullying might not be very relevant to children in a Junior National School so the focus group was set up to inform staff of young children's understanding, or lack of understanding, of these types of bullying.

The children were taken by Mr. Callan and Ms. Ní Chléirigh, working in two separate groups. Each teacher taught lessons and had Circle Time type discussions with the children, loosely based on the Bullying section of the Stay Safe programme.

The children's understanding of what constituted bullying was first assessed by asking them to define it. The key points raised by the children were:

- Bullying is usually a repeated act of aggression or "being mean".
- Bullying isn't something you do without thinking, like hitting someone when you lose your temper, it's something the bully sets out to do.
- Bullying doesn't have to involve hitting or pushing, it can be name calling, not letting someone join in a game, telling lies about somebody, giving somebody "looks".

The children's understanding of what to do in case of bullying was assessed, again through informal Circle Time discussion. The children's answers again followed what they had been taught through Stay Safe.

- Tell the bully you don't like their behaviour and that if it doesn't stop tell them you will tell the teacher.
- Use a firm, strong voice, try to look brave.
- If you can't feel brave, it's ok, none of it is your fault anyway.
- If you see bullying, tell the bully to stop, support the person being bullied, encourage them to tell, help them to tell.

Cyber Bullying:

The teachers explored cyber bullying with the children, describing it as being similar to people passing mean notes or whispering mean things, but with technology. The children were well able to give examples of types of technology (phones, smartphones, computers, tablets) and they certainly do use them, but from discussions with the children it was very clear that they didn't use them to contact other children. For example, none of the children had phones, but some said they would be getting them "after the Communion". When asked why they needed one they said it was because they would be allowed walk home from school then. It appeared that children in this age-group had little contact with other children

through technology, nor had they much, if any, experience of social media. However, from discussions with the children and other teachers it does appear that a number of children have unsupervised access to devices with internet connectivity, which is an area of concern. **(NB: Since the focus groups concluded, Mr. Callan has heard children talking about “adding each other” on a game called FIFA 14. It seems that they are playing an internet-based multi-player game in which they can add friends and send messages to each other. This could have the potential to be used for bullying in the same way that social media are.)**

Identity-based Bullying:

The teachers explored identity-based bullying with the children, describing it as being bullied “for being just the way you are”. When asked for examples of what this could mean the children responded with the following:

- A girl who isn't a girly girl, one who plays with boys and likes football.
- A boy who plays with dolls and girls.
- A boy who has long hair and is a bit girly.
- A child who has a hearing aid.
- A child in a wheelchair.
- A child with something wrong with their legs or a funny walk.
- Someone who is really short.
- Someone who's babyish.
- Someone with a different voice (when pressed, the child's explanation indicated they meant a stammer or speech impediment, rather than an accent).
- Someone with braces.

Interestingly, the first three examples the children thought up can be seen as being a seven or eight year old's definition of homophobic bullying, or at least bullying on the grounds of someone not meeting preconceived gender expectations. Another point of interest was that no child mentioned ethnicity or country of origin as a form of “difference”.

Following these discussion, the teachers asked the children for their opinions on the matter of difference. The children offered the following opinions:

- It's okay to be different.
- Someone being different has no effect on you and is none of your business.
- Being different can actually be cool.
- If someone is looking like they are being left out you should offer to include them in your play.
- If they don't want to join in, that's ok too.

The conclusion of the focus groups involved the children making anti-bullying posters, focusing specifically on identity-based bullying (explained again to the children as “being bullied just for being who you are”) and preparing a presentation for the other classes.

Conclusions:

The focus groups were definitely a worthwhile exercise as they resulted in child-led exploration of the subject of bullying as a whole and child-friendly and age-appropriate definitions of the new areas to be included in the anti-bullying policy, namely identity-based (such as homophobic) and cyber-bullying. This exercise could easily be repeated on a whole class basis, perhaps as part of an annual Anti-Bullying Week, with First Second Classes engaging in the lessons and providing feedback and presentations to younger classes. While cyber-bullying and interaction on social media and phones seem to be less of an area of concern for children of this age group, unsupervised access to internet devices is worrying. Lessons on

cyber-bullying in junior school could focus more on internet safety and the concept of strangers on the internet. If a teacher felt knowledgeable enough on the subject, the school could offer an information evening for parents to inform them of ways to keep their children safe around technology.

4. The relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows:

Principal

Deputy Principal

All class teachers

Any teacher or member of staff may act as a relevant teacher if circumstances warrant it.

5. The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber-bullying, homophobic and transphobic bullying) that will be used by the school are as follows:

Education and prevention strategies

School-wide approach

- A school-wide approach to the fostering of respect for all members of the school community.
- The promotion of the value of diversity to address issues of prejudice and stereotyping, and highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour.
- The fostering and enhancing of the self-esteem of all our pupils through both curricular and extracurricular activities. Pupils will be provided with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth through formal and informal interactions.
- Whole staff professional development on bullying to ensure that all staff develops an awareness of what bullying is, how it impacts on pupils' lives and the need to respond to it-prevention and intervention.
- School wide awareness raising and training on all aspects of bullying, to include pupils, parent(s)/guardian(s) and the wider school community.
- Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extra-curricular 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.
- Involvement of the Buddy system and in contributing to a safe school environment that can help to support children and encourage a culture of peer respect and support.
- Development and promotion of an Anti-Bullying code for the school-to be included in student journals and displayed publicly in classrooms and in common areas of the school.
- The school's anti-bullying policy is discussed with pupils and all parent(s)/guardian(s) are given a copy as part of the Code of Behaviour of the school (every year).
- The implementation of whole school awareness measures e.g. a dedicated notice board in the school and classrooms on the promotion of friendship, bullying prevention and parent(s)/guardian(s) seminars; assemblies by principal and deputy principal.
- Encourage a culture of telling, with particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders. 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 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.
 - Get a parent(s)/guardian(s) or 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 parent(s)/guardian(s) to approach the school if they suspect that their child is being bullied. This protocol is explained at induction meetings for new pupils before they start school. It is incumbent on parents to report any alleged incident of bullying at the outset.
- Acceptable Use Policy in the school includes the necessary steps to ensure that the access to technology within the school is strictly monitored, as is the pupils' use of mobile phones.

Implementation of curricula

- The full implementation of the SPHE and CSPE curricula and the RSE and Stay Safe Programmes.
- Continuous Professional Development for staff in delivering these programmes.
- School wide delivery of lessons on bullying from Stay Safe Programme and The Walk Tall Programme
- Delivery of lessons on:
 - Relational aggression:** Cool Kids Programme and Time to Talk
 - Cyber Bullying:** Be Safe-Be Web wise
- The school should list every resource related to the SPHE curriculum, and make a list of supports.
- Delivery of the Garda SPHE Programmes at primary. These lessons, delivered by Community Gardai, cover issues around personal safety and cyber-bullying
- The school will specifically consider the additional needs of SEN pupils with regard to programme implementation and the development of skills and strategies to enable all pupils to respond appropriately.

Links to other policies

- School policies, practices and activities that are particularly relevant to bullying, e.g. Code of Behaviour, Child Protections policy, Supervision of pupils, and Acceptable Use policy

6. The school's procedures for investigation, follow-up and recording of bullying behaviour and the established intervention strategies used by the school for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour are as follows:

6.8.9. Procedures for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying

The primary aim 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);

The school's procedures must be consistent with the following approach.

Every effort will be made to ensure that all involved (including pupils, parent(s)/guardian(s)) understand this approach from the outset.

Reporting bullying behaviour

- Any pupil or parent(s)/guardian(s) may bring a bullying incident to any teacher in the school.
- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying, will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher.
- Teaching and non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), caretaker, cleaners must report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher;

Investigating and dealing with incidents: Style of approach (see section 6.8.9)

- In investigating and dealing with bullying, the (relevant)teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved;
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) 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;
- Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach.
- Where possible incidents should be investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved;
- 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;
- 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;
- If a group is involved, 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 his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements;
- Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that may face them from the other members of the group after the interview by the teacher;
It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s)
- In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parent(s)/guardian(s) 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 policy). The school should give parent(s)/guardian(s) an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports provided to the pupils;
- Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts should be made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied;
- It must also be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parent(s)/guardian(s)) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school;

Follow up and recording

- 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;
 - Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parent(s)/guardian(s) or the school Principal or Deputy Principal
- 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.
- Where a parent(s)/guardian(s) is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parent(s)/guardian(s) must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures.
- In the event that a parent(s)/guardian(s) has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parent(s)/guardian(s) of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

Recording of bullying behaviour

It is imperative that all recording of bullying incidents must be done in an objective and factual manner. The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour are as follows:

Informal- pre-determination that bullying has occurred

- All staff must keep a written record of any incidents witnessed by them or notified to them. Consideration needs to be given to where the records will be made e.g. incident book. All incidents must be reported to the relevant teacher.
- While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the relevant teacher must keep a written record of the reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same.
- The relevant teacher must inform the principal of all incidents being investigated.

Formal Stage 1-determination that bullying has occurred

- If it is established by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher must keep appropriate written records which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.
- The school in consultation with the relevant teacher/s should develop a protocol for the storage of all records retained by the relevant teacher.

Formal Stage 2-Appendix 3 (From DES Procedures)

The relevant teacher must use the recording template at **Appendix 3** to record the bullying behaviour in the following circumstances:

- a) in cases where he/she considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour occurred; and
- b) Where the school has decided as part of its anti-bullying policy that in certain circumstances bullying behaviour must be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable.

Examples of bullying behaviours

General behaviours which apply to all types of bullying	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Harassment based on any of the nine grounds in the equality legislation e.g. sexual harassment, homophobic bullying, racist bullying etc.● Physical aggression● Damage to property● Name calling● Slagging● The production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other materials aimed at intimidating another person● Offensive graffiti● Extortion● Intimidation● Insulting or offensive gestures● The "look"● Invasion of personal space● A combination of any of the types listed.
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<p>Cyber</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Denigration: Spreading rumors, lies or gossip to hurt a person’s reputation ● Harassment: Continually sending vicious, mean or disturbing messages to an individual ● Impersonation: Posting offensive or aggressive messages under another person’s name ● Flaming: Using inflammatory or vulgar words to provoke an online fight ● Trickery: Fooling someone into sharing personal information which you then post online ● Outing: Posting or sharing confidential or compromising information or images ● Exclusion: Purposefully excluding someone from an online group ● Cyber stalking: Ongoing harassment and denigration that causes a person considerable fear for his/her safety ● Silent telephone/mobile phone call ● Abusive telephone/mobile phone calls ● Abusive text messages ● Abusive email ● Abusive communication on social networks e.g. Facebook/Ask.fm/ Twitter/You Tube or on games consoles ● Abusive website comments/Blogs/Pictures ● Abusive posts on any form of communication technology
<p>Identity Based Behaviours Including any of the nine discriminatory grounds mentioned in Equality Legislation (gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community).</p>	
<p>Homophobic and Transgender</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Spreading rumours about a person’s sexual orientation ● Taunting a person of a different sexual orientation ● Name calling e.g. Gay, queer, lesbian...used in a derogatory manner ● Physical intimidation or attacks ● Threats
<p>Race, nationality, ethnic background and membership of the Traveller community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Discrimination, prejudice, comments or insults about colour, nationality, culture, social class, religious beliefs, ethnic or traveller background ● Exclusion on the basis of any of the above
<p>Relational</p>	<p>This involves manipulating relationships as a means of bullying. Behaviours include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Malicious gossip ● Isolation & exclusion ● Ignoring ● Excluding from the group ● Taking someone’s friends away ● “Bitching” ● Spreading rumours ● Breaking confidence ● Talking loud enough so that the victim can hear ● The “look” ● Use or terminology such as ‘nerd’ in a derogatory way
<p>Sexual</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Unwelcome or inappropriate sexual comments or touching

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harassment
Special Educational Needs, Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name calling • Taunting others because of their disability or learning needs • Taking advantage of some pupils' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to recognise and defend themselves against bullying • Taking advantage of some pupils' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to understand social situations and social cues. • Mimicking a person's disability • Setting others up for ridicule

Any of the above behaviours must be recorded and reported immediately to the principal.

When the recording template is used, it must be retained by the relevant teacher in question and a copy maintained by the principal. ***A record of alleged bullying will be kept on Aladdin as part of the child's individual file.***

Established intervention strategies

- Teacher interviews with all pupils
- Negotiating agreements between pupils and following these up by monitoring progress. This can be on an informal basis or implemented through a more structured mediation process
- Working with parent(s)/guardian(s) to support school interventions
- Circle Time
- Restorative interviews

7. The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows (see Section 6.8.16 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools) :

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pastoral care system - Buddy / Peer mentoring system - Group work such as circle time • If pupils require counselling of further supports the school will endeavour to liaise with the appropriate agencies to organise same. This may be for the pupil affected by bullying or involved in the bullying behaviour. • Pupils should understand that there are no innocent bystanders and that all incidents of bullying behaviour must be reported to a teacher. |
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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.

- Children are monitored and supervised throughout the school day.
- Bullying danger spots identified by the children's focus groups: The yard, wall near the door, 2nd class yard, corner of the yard, just outside the gate going home, in the corridor or in the hall when going on a message,
- Acceptable Use Policy in the school:
 - Internet sessions are supervised by a teacher/SNA
 - The Schools Broadband Programme has blocked all social networking sites.).

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.

10. This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 7th May 2014

11. This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

12. This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year. Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents'. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Next review date November 2021.

Signed: _____
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: _____
(Principal)

Date: _____

Date: _____

Date of next review: _____

