

Scoil Mhuire Anti-Bullying Policy

For Scoil Mhuire, Ennistymon, Co. Clare.

Every person has the right to attend school without fear of being bullied.

This anti-bullying policy applies to all students and staff, paid and unpaid, within the school community. Workplace bullying in this school is dealt with in the “Dignity at Work Policy”. It aims to promote mutual respect and protect the dignity of people, fostering the holistic development of all. Children can only learn within a safe environment and the absence of bullying is seen as an essential part of this. Bullying in all its forms runs counter to the fostering of a safe and happy atmosphere and the ethos of Scoil Mhuire.

Objectives

- To provide a mutually respectful environment in which it is safe to work and learn.
- To set out clear and defined procedures for identifying, reporting, dealing with and following up all incidents of bullying.
- To reduce the incidence of bullying.
- To promote life skills for dealing with bullying.
- To ensure all students, parents, staff, management and others will be aware of this policy.
- To facilitate members of the school community to disclose incidents of bullying in confidence.
- As a result of this policy and its implementation, the school will endeavour to support all parties involved in bullying.

Definition

Bullying is repeated aggression; verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against another/others.

Isolated incidents of aggressive behaviour, which should not be condoned, cannot be described as bullying. Incidents such as these are dealt with by the Code of Behaviour. However, when the behaviour is systematic and ongoing it is bullying.

Types of bullying *(for full descriptions of the following please refer to Appendix 1)*

- Student behaviour
- Bullying of School Personnel
- Teacher behaviour

Prevention

The focus of the school is on the prevention of bullying incidents and equipping all school members with the life-skills to deal with it.

- **Education**
 - Junior Cycle SPHE (includes several classes on bullying)
 - Cross curricular: the effects and nature of bullying should be addressed in all subjects where the curriculum allows.
 - Annual class assembly devoted to the topic.
 - Posters about bullying and how to report it will be displayed in the school along with information about support organisations such as Childline. This will be the responsibility of the SPHE department.
 - A page will be included in the school diary about the types of bullying and how to report it. This will be the responsibility of the Deputy Principal.
 - This policy and its appendices will be displayed on the school website.
 - Staff will be educated through in-service and staff meetings.
- **Vigilance**
 - The school will identify and monitor the places and times bullying is most likely to occur. The Students' Council will conduct an annual survey to this end and management will consider the findings and take appropriate action.
See Appendix 2
- **Pastoral Care Structures**
 - Prefect system and Students' Council
 - Weekly Year Head meetings with the Principal and bullying issues may be passed to the Guidance Counsellor.
 - Buddy System (Transition Year and First Year students)
- **Ethos of Telling**
 - Students should be educated regarding their responsibility to report witnessed incidents of bullying.
 - Students should know who they can tell – this can be any member of the staff but the information must be passed to the appropriate Year Head.
 - The school will endeavour to keep all sources of information concerning bullying incidents confidential.

- Parents/guardians should contact the Principal regarding incidents of bullying behaviour within the school which they might suspect or that have come to their attention through their children or others.

In cases where bullying is reported, whether by staff, parents, members of the public, victims or fellow students, the school will do its utmost to keep the identity of the person reporting it anonymous.

Dealing with Incidents of Bullying

- The Bullying Report Form (*Appendix 3*) will be completed by the member of staff to whom a report is made. This report will be passed to the appropriate Year Head.
- In a minor incident, the member of staff to whom a report is made may deal with the incident themselves. In this case the student(s) involved will not sign the Bullying Report Form but it will be passed to the Year Head.
- When made aware of an incident of bullying, the Year Head should use his/her professional judgement to decide whether it is a case that they can deal with effectively themselves or a more serious case that should be referred immediately to the school Principal.
- Repeated minor incidents or a more serious incident, in normal circumstances, will be reported to the Principal and the parents or guardians of all relevant parties will be involved. Where the incident is deemed to be more serious, for example, gross misbehaviour or physical assault the Board of Management will be informed.
- Alleged victim and alleged bully will be interviewed separately. Students will be alerted to the effects of unacceptable behaviour during this interview. All those involved may be asked to give a written account of the incident(s) and these will be attached to the Bullying Report Form. This is standard practice and will in no way imply guilt.
- Parents/guardians of all students involved may be requested to attend a meeting with the Principal.
- All interviews will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all parties involved.
- Records will be kept of all incidents and of the procedures that were followed.
- Incidents that are dealt with at Year Head level or higher will be followed up by at least one subsequent meeting with the students involved and the Year Head. Details of the meeting are to be recorded in the Bullying Report Form.
- Offenders and victims of bullying may be referred for counselling.
- In the case of a complaint regarding a staff member, this should be referred immediately to the school Principal.

- Sanctions for Bullying
 - Verbal warning
 - School Community Service
 - Withdrawal of privileges
 - Detention (lunchtime or Friday afternoon)
 - Other sanctions as may be deemed appropriate
 - Suspension*
 - Exclusion*
- In order to appeal a decision, a parent/guardian/student may request a review by writing to the Principal.

* Suspension or exclusion would be preceded by an interview with the parents/guardians to discuss the matter. In extreme cases, the student's case may be brought before the Board of Management who must then consider whether the student may remain in the school, having considered the report from the Principal and taking into account any views expressed by the parents/guardians. The Principal reserves the right to adjudicate on individual cases and to apply the above procedures taking into account any special circumstance, which may be relevant.

Monitoring and Implementation

Overall responsibility for monitoring and implementation lies with the Principal and the Board of Management.

Review and Evaluation

Each year the Students' Council will survey levels of bullying in the school. A review of this policy will be organised by the Principal after each serious incident of bullying to determine how well it served its purpose. It will also be reviewed as part of the school's policy-review schedule and to reflect changes in legislation.

This policy was drawn up by representatives of the students, parents, staff and Board of Management.

Ratified by the Board of Management on: 13th October 2009

Appendix 1

Student Behaviour

VERBAL

Name-calling, making offensive remarks, insulting someone, taunting, teasing or threatening. If slugging (good natured banter) extends to very personal remarks aimed repeatedly at one individual about appearance, clothing, personal hygiene or references of an uncomplimentary nature about of one's family then it assumes the nature of bullying.

PHYSICAL

Hitting, punching, tripping, spitting, kicking, pushing, scratching, stealing, throwing objects at someone, performing humiliating acts on someone, hiding or taking belongings.

DAMAGE TO PROPERTY

Damaging property or possessions; clothing, school books, lockers. Includes defacing, stealing or hiding possessions.

EMOTIONAL

Spreading rumours/nasty stories about someone, making fun of someone

EXCLUSION/ISOLATION

Deliberately ignoring, isolating, excluding, ostracising or alienating someone.

EXTORTION

Demanding money, possessions or lunches, sometimes accompanied by threats.

INTIMIDATION

Playing dirty tricks, defacing or taking possessions, threatening looks or gestures, intimidating looks or gestures, intimidating or threatening phone calls, emails notes or text messages, extortion, threats of aggression against people, property or possessions.

WRITTEN

Intimidating or harassing through emails, messages, notes, text-messages, letters, graffiti etc.

CYBERBULLYING

Using the Internet or mobile phones to send hurtful messages or post information or images to damage people's reputation and friendships

DISCRIMINATION

This covers discrimination on any of the nine grounds described in the Equal Status Act 2000: Gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the traveller community

Bullying of School Personnel

Bullying of school personnel by means of physical assault, damage to property, verbal abuse, threats to people's families etc.

Teacher Behaviour

A teacher may, unwittingly or otherwise, engage in, instigate or reinforce bullying behaviour in a number of ways:-

Using sarcasm or other insulting or demeaning form of language when addressing pupils; making negative comments about a pupil's appearance or background;

Humiliating directly or indirectly, a pupil who is particularly academically weak or outstanding, or vulnerable in other ways;

Using any gesture or expression of a threatening or intimidatory nature, or any form of degrading physical contact or exercise;

Appendix 2

School Survey

Year Group _____

At this school have **you** been:

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Teased? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Called Names? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Pushed or shoved? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Hit, kicked or punched? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Threatened? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Made to do something you didn't want to do? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Made fun of? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Left out? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Had your belongings taken or hidden? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Had your belongings deliberately damaged? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Had nasty things written about you or to you? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |

If there is anything you want to add to this list you are welcome to do so here:

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The places where I notice the things listed above happening to people in this school are:

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The times during the school day that these things are most likely to happen are:

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The places in this school where I feel least comfortable or safe because of the way people behave are:

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Appendix 3

Bullying Report Form

Date: _____

Time: _____

Staff Member: _____

Class: _____

Names of students involved

Details of incident (Attach extra sheets if necessary)

Action Taken (Warning, Sanction, Referral, Mediation, Other)

Signed

STUDENT: _____

STAFF MEMBER: _____

PARENT/Guardian (if necessary): _____

Suggestions for follow up

Date to follow up: _____

Signed: _____

Comment: _____