



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 Muire gan Smál Primary School, Claremorris, 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 (a)-(i) in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour:

- 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,
 - 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 behavior, (including use of established intervention strategies)
- 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,
- 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. The 'Relevant Teacher' for investigating and dealing with bullying is the Class Teacher. However, the Principal and/ or Deputy Principal, may be involved at any stage of the process. It is expected that the relevant teacher will inform the Principal of all incidents being investigated.

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.

(a) A School-wide approach

- A school-wide approach to the fostering of respect for all members of the school community.
- Our school motto – 'I will accept everybody in my class just as they are and I will treat them with respect.'
- Use of the phrase 'Kind hands, kind words, kind feet' particularly in the infant classes.
- The promotion of the value of diversity to address issues of prejudice and stereotyping and highlight the unacceptability of bullying behavior.
- The fostering and enhancing of the self-esteem of all our pupils through both curricular and extra-curricular activities. Pupils are 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 we all develop an awareness of what bullying is, how it impacts on people's lives and the need to respond to it- prevention and intervention.
- Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and outings and extra - curricular activities. Non-teaching and ancillary staff are encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to 'Relevant Teacher's. Supervision also applies to monitoring student's use of communication technology within the school.
- All parents /guardians are directed to the school's website every year, where they will have access to this Anti- bullying Policy and the school's Code of Behaviour.
- The school's Anti-Bullying Policy is discussed with pupils through SPHE, RSE and Stay Safe lessons and they are helped to examine the issues of bullying in a calm, rational way, outside the tense context of particular incidents. In this way they become aware of the nature of bullying and the various forms it can take.

- A Restorative Practice approach to bullying will be taken by the school (**Appendix 5**)
When the alleged perpetrator(s) are interviewed, in return for honesty and for honouring a promise not to re-offend, they are offered amnesty and confidentially (unless a legal requirement dictates otherwise or they reoffend). This approach is considered fair by the general body of pupils who support it and cooperate with it. Since pupils observe almost all bullying in schools and a good awareness helps them to recognise it and encourages them to reject it.
- The school encourages 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 is made clear to all pupils, that when they report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.
- The school ensures that pupils know who to tell, how to tell and when to tell.
- Parents will be encouraged to approach the school if they suspect that their child is being bullied.
- Our school has an Acceptable Use Policy which parents and children sign when they enrol in our school. This policy outlined how access to technology within the school is strictly monitored and prohibits the use of mobile phones in school by students.
- Implementation of regular whole school awareness measures e.g. notice boards in the school and classrooms on the promotion of friendship and bullying prevention; Friendship Week, Internet Safety Week and reminders at whole school assemblies.

(b) Implementation of curricula

All pupils have an opportunity to learn about and explore the topic bullying including cyber-bullying, through age appropriate lessons, discussion, drama/role play, art, etc. and through engagement with the following curriculum components and programmes.

- The SPHE programme, which makes specific provision for exploring bullying as well as the interrelated areas of belonging and integration, communication, conflict, friendship, personal safety and relationships.
- The Stay Safe programme, which is a personal safety programme which seeks to enhance children’s self-protection skills including their ability to recognize and cope with bullying.
- The Relationships and Sexuality (RSE) Programme, particularly in the senior classes, provides opportunities for the children to learn about human sexuality and relationships. This topic has particular relevance to the matter of identity- based bullying. This learning will provide a good foundation for the children for future more detailed learning on the issues of homophobic and transphobic bullying at post-primary level.
- The Grow in Love Programme which is taught to pupils from infants to sixth class (unless a family explicitly chooses to opt out) teaches and promotes an attitude of respect for oneself and respect for all people.
- The Walk Tall Programme.
- Continuous Professional Development for staff in delivering these programmes and in Restorative Practices.
- Teachers in Muire gan Smál will utilise opportunities as they arise within the teaching of all subjects and throughout the school day, to foster mutual respect and to highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour.

- Wellbeing Week/Friendship Week/Internet Safety Week etc.
- Use of Webwise resources to teach internet safety.
- The school will endeavour to engage a speaker to facilitate a workshop on Cyber bullying.
- Our School Motto - “ I will accept everybody in my class just as they are and I will treat them with respect.”
- Acceptable Use of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) contracts for children and parents.

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:

Procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying

- (1) The primary aim for the ‘Relevant Teacher’ in investigating and dealing with bullying is use a Restorative Practice approach (**Appendix 4**) i.e. to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame).
- (2) 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.
- (3) All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying are investigated and dealt with by the ‘Relevant Teacher.’ In that way, pupils gain confidence in ‘telling’. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It is made clear to all pupils that when they report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly;
- (4) Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), bus escorts, caretakers, cleaners are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the ‘Relevant Teacher.’
- (5) 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;
- (6) It is very important that all involved (including each set of pupils and parents) understand the above approach from the outset.
- (7) Teachers will take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents.
- (8) Incidents will generally be investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.
- (9) All interviews will 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.

(10) The ‘Relevant Teacher’ investigates all instances of reported or suspected bullying behaviour, with a view to establishing the facts and bringing any such behaviour to an end. When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the ‘Relevant Teacher’ will seek answers to questions - **what, where, when, who** and **why**. This will be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner.

(11) If a group is involved, each member will be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved will be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member will be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other’s statements.

(12) The school, through the ‘Relevant Teacher’ reserves the right to ask any pupil to write an account of what happened, as part of the investigation. This will be a standard procedure and does not necessarily imply that a pupil is guilty of misbehavior.

(13) In cases where it has been determined by the “Relevant Teacher” that bullying behaviour has occurred, the pupil(s) involved in the bullying behaviour are asked to sign a binding promise document (**Appendix 4**) that they will treat all pupils fairly, respectfully and equally including the targeted pupil(s) This document will be written by the child with the help of the teacher, taking the age and level of understanding of the child into account.

(14) The ‘Relevant Teacher’ does not apportion blame but rather treats bullying behavior as a “mistake” that can and must be remedied. The ‘Relevant Teacher’ emphasizes that the intention is not to punish the perpetrators but to talk to them, to explain how hurtful and harmful bullying is and to seek a promise that it will stop. If that promise is forthcoming and is honoured there will be no penalty and that will be the end of the matter. Pupils who report bullying behavior therefore are not getting others “in trouble” but rather enabling them to learn from their mistake and avoid the trouble into which they may ultimately get if the bullying continued.

(15) When an investigation is completed and/or a bullying situation is resolved the ‘Relevant Teacher’ will complete a written record of : the reported bullying behaviour, the findings of the investigation, the strategy adopted and the outcome of the intervention, as well as any other relevant information.

(16) If a pupil has signed such a promise but then chooses to break that promise and continue the bullying behaviour, this can no longer be considered a “mistake.”

In this event, parents of both parties involved will be contacted immediately and informed of the matter and the actions being taken. The situation will be discussed with the parents/guardians of the child who is engaging in bullying behaviour and this time they will be asked to countersign their son/daughter’s promise (**Appendix 4**).

(17) Breach of this additional promise by further bullying behaviour is regarded as a very grave matter and will, be reported to the Board of Management of the school (**Appendix 3**). A disciplinary sanction may then be imposed by the school authorities. (See sanctions below) In any situation where such sanctions are imposed, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parents and the school.

(18) Sanctions

Where a pupil has been found to be engaging in bullying behavior, has formally promised to stop and has broken that promise, any of the following sanctions may be imposed:

- She/he may be required to sign another promise, this time countersigned by a parent/guardian.
- Parents/Guardians may be contacted by the ‘Relevant Teacher’ and informed of the nature and extent of the bullying behavior with a view to agreeing a strategy to end the bullying behavior.
- Parents/Guardians may be invited to a meeting with the ‘Relevant Teacher’ and the Principal and the pupil may be suspended from school.

- They case may be referred to the Board of Management.

(19) Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved will 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.

(20) In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the 'Relevant Teacher' will, 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 will 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 will advise the parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

Procedures for recording bullying behaviour

The Board of Management will ensure that the school follows the following clear procedures for the formal noting and reporting of bullying behaviour as recommended in *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*. All records will be maintained in accordance with relevant data protection legislation.

The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour will therefore adhere to the following:

(1) While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying will be investigated and dealt with by the 'Relevant Teacher', the 'Relevant Teacher' will use his/her professional judgement in relation to the records to be kept of these reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same;

(2) 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. A report form for investigating bullying behaviour can be found at **Appendix 2**. This will be printed, filled out, scanned and saved onto Aladdin.

(3) The 'Relevant Teacher' will 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 bullying is of a particularly vicious nature to warrant recording and reporting immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable.

In each of the circumstances at (a) and (b) above, the recording template at **Appendix 3** will be completed in full and retained by the teacher in question and a copy provided to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable. It should also be noted that the timeline for recording bullying

behaviour in the recording template at **Appendix 3** does not in any way preclude the ‘Relevant Teacher’ from consulting the Principal or Deputy Principal at an earlier stage in relation to a case.

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

- Restorative Practice
- Teacher support, monitoring, encouragement, positive feedback and affirmation to help enhance pupils feelings of self-worth
- Strategies such as Circle Time and group work
- Friendship Week/Wellbeing Week

8. Supervision and Monitoring of Pupils

The Board of Management confirms that appropriate supervision and monitoring procedures 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.

10. This policy was adopted by the Board of Management in January 2014.

11. This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents’ Association (where one exists). 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’ Association (where one exists).

A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the Department and the Patron.

Signed: Peter Mc Callig

(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Date: 23rd April 2024

Signed: Grace Burke

(Principal)

Date: 23rd April 2024

Appendix 1 Practical Tips for Building a Positive School Culture and Climate

- 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 the pupils 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/special educational needs.
- Give constructive feedback to pupils when respectful behaviour and respectful language are absent.
- Have a system of encouragement and rewards to promote desired behaviour and compliance with the school rules and routines.
- Explicitly teach pupils about the appropriate use of social media.
- Positively encourage pupils to comply with the school rules on mobile phone and internet use. Follow up and follow through with pupils who ignore the rules.
- Actively involve parents and/or Parent Association in awareness raising campaigns around social media.
- Actively promote the right to 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.
- All staff can actively watch out for signs of bullying behaviour.
- Ensure there is adequate playground/school yard/ outdoor supervision.
- School staff can get pupils to help them to identify bullying ‘hotspots’ in the school.
- ‘Hotspots’ tend to be in the playground/school yard/outdoor areas, changing rooms, corridors and other areas of unstructured supervision
- ‘Hot times’ tend to be times where there is less structured supervision such as when pupils are in the playground/school yard or moving classrooms.

Appendix 2 Report on Investigation into Bullying Behaviour

Name of pupil being bullied: _____

Class: _____

Teacher: _____

Date incident brought to the attention of the relevant teacher: _____

Name(s) and class(es) of pupil(s) involved in bullying behaviour:

Name	Class	Teacher

Findings of the investigation:

Strategy adopted in investigation:

Outcome of the intervention:

Any other relevant information:

Follow Up: I have used the procedures contained in the Anti-Bullying Policy and in my professional judgement the issues have been resolved and the relationships of the party / parties involved have been restored as far as is practicable.

Signed: _____ (Relevant Teacher)

Date: _____

I have been made aware of the investigation into bullying behaviour as outlined in this form.

Signed: _____ (Principal)

Appendix 3 Template for Recording Bullying Behaviour (Stage 2)

1. Name of pupil being bullied and class group

Name _____ Class _____

2. Name(s) and class(es) of pupil(s) engaged in bullying behaviour

3. Source of bullying concern/report (tick relevant box(es)) *

Pupil concerned	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Pupil	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parent	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Location of incidents (tick relevant box(es))*

Playground	<input type="checkbox"/>
Classroom	<input type="checkbox"/>
Corridor	<input type="checkbox"/>
Toilets	<input type="checkbox"/>
School Bus	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Name of person(s) who reported the bullying concern

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6. Type of Bullying Behaviour (tick relevant box(es)) *

Physical Aggression	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cyber-bullying	<input type="checkbox"/>
Damage to Property	<input type="checkbox"/>	Intimidation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Isolation/Exclusion	<input type="checkbox"/>	Malicious Gossip	<input type="checkbox"/>
Name Calling	<input type="checkbox"/>	Gender Based Bullying	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Where behaviour is regarded as identity-based bullying, indicate the relevant category:

Homophobic	Disability/SEN related	Racist	Membership of Traveller community	Other (specify)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact

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9. Details of actions taken

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Signed _____ (Relevant Teacher) Date _____

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal _____

* **Note:** The categories listed in the tables 3, 4 & 6 are suggested and schools may add to or amend these to suit their own circumstances.

Appendix 4 Binding Promise Agreement



I recognise that I have been involved in bullying behaviour that has caused hurt to another child / other children in the school. I promise that in the future I will treat all children in the school fairly, equally and respectfully including in particular _____.

I understand that this is a binding promise and that if I break this promise at any time in the future, I may be subject to more serious sanctions.

Signed: _____ (Pupil)

Class: _____

Date: _____

Signed: _____ (Parent / Guardian)

_____ (Parent / Guardian)

Witnessed: _____ (Class Teacher)

_____ (Principal)

Appendix 5 Restorative Questions for Dealing with Bullying Incidents

Questions for the alleged perpetrator

- What happened?
- What were you thinking and feeling at the time?
- What have your thoughts been since the incident?
- Who has been affected by your actions and in what way?
- How could things have been done differently?
- What do you think needs to happen to make things right?

Questions for the alleged victim of the bullying behaviour

- What did you think when you realised what happened?
- What have your thoughts been since the incident?
- How has this affected you and others?
- What has been the hardest thing for you?
- What do you think needs to happen to make things right?

Appendix 6 Restorative Questions Poster for Classrooms



The poster features a red border and a white background. At the top left is the logo for 'Scoil Mhuire gan Smál' with 'MERCY' and 'CLAREMORRIS' text. At the top right is the title 'Restorative Questions' with a rainbow graphic. Below are six numbered questions in colored speech bubbles: 1. What happened? (orange), 2. What were you thinking about at the time? (purple), 3. What have your thoughts been since? (dark blue), 4. Who do you think has been affected by your actions? In what way? (pink), 5. How could things have been done differently? (yellow), and 6. What do you think needs to happen to make things right? (green). At the bottom are five cartoon children with backpacks.

Scoil Mhuire gan Smál
MERCY
CLAREMORRIS

Restorative Questions

1. What happened?
2. What were you thinking about at the time?
3. What have your thoughts been since?
4. Who do you think has been affected by your actions? In what way?
5. How could things have been done differently?
6. What do you think needs to happen to make things right?



Appendix 7 Relevant Documentation and Resources

[Anti-Bullying | PDST](#) (All resources can be found at this link)

Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (Department of Education, 2013)

Anti-Bullying Procedures, Circular 45/2013 (Department of Education, 2013)

Anti-Bullying Support Material (PDST,

Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying (Department of Education, 2022)

Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying Implementation Plan (Department of Education, 2022)

Dealing with Bullying in Schools: A Consultation with Children and Young People (Ombudsman, 2012)