

An Mhodhscoil Anti-Bullying Policy

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 An Mhodhscoil 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.

The Board of Management of An Mhodhscoil 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;

(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.

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.

Pupils are encouraged to recognise, reject and report bullying behaviour. Anybody can be targeted including pupils, parents and school staff.

Examples of bullying behaviours

The list of examples below is not exhaustive

<p>General behaviours which apply to all types of bullying</p>	<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.
<p>Cyber</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Denigration: Spreading rumours, 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

Identity Based Behaviours: <i>Including any of the nine discriminatory grounds mentioned in Equality Legislation</i> (gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community).	
Homophobic and Transgender	<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
Race, nationality, ethnic background and membership of the Traveller community	<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
Relational	<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
Sexual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unwelcome or inappropriate sexual comments or touching • 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

An Mhodhscoil's school wide Education and Prevention Strategies

The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying in An Mhodhscoil are:

- **Principal**
- **Deputy Principal**
- **All teachers**

The education and prevention strategies that will be used by the school are as follows:

An Mhodhscoil's school-wide approach:-

- Will establish a school-wide approach to the fostering of respect for all members of the school community.
- Will promote the value of diversity to address issues of prejudice and stereotyping, and highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour.
- Will foster and enhance 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.
- Will have whole staff professional development on bullying to ensure that all staff develop an awareness of what bullying is, how it impacts on pupils' lives and the need to respond to it-prevention and intervention.
- Will have an annual audit of professional development needs with a view to assessing staff requirements through internal staff knowledge/expertise and external sources
- Professional development with specific focus on the training of the relevant teacher(s)
- Will have school wide awareness raising and training on all aspects of bullying, to include pupils, parent(s)/guardian(s) and the wider school community.
- Will supervise and monitor the 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.
- Will involve the student council in contributing to a safe school environment e.g. Buddy system, mentoring, Lunchtime Pals and other student support activities that can help to support pupils and encourage a culture of peer respect and support.
- Will develop and promote 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.
- An Mhodhscoil's anti-bullying policy will be discussed with pupils. It will be available on the school's web site, and any parent/guardian may request a printed copy.
- Will have whole school awareness measures e.g. a dedicated notice board in the school and classrooms on the promotion of friendship, and bullying prevention; annual Friendship Week and parent(s)/guardian(s) seminars; student surveys; regular school or year group assemblies by principal, deputy principal etc.
- All staff will 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 will 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.

- All staff will as far as professionally possible, ensure 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.
 - Make a phone call to the school or to a trusted teacher in the school.
 - Anti-bully or Niggle box?
 - Get a parent(s)/guardian(s) or friend to tell on your behalf.
 - Administer a confidential questionnaire to all pupils.
 - Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place.
- Will assist and encourage parent(s)/guardian(s) on how to approach the school if they suspect that their child is being bullied.
- The 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. Pupils will be required to have their mobile phones and or other electronic equipment turned off at all times within the school grounds unless otherwise instructed by teachers.
- An Mhodscoil's broadband programme has blocked all social network sites on the basis that they waste time and take up too much bandwidth which is been provided for educational purposes only.
- Parents will be made aware of the age appropriateness of social sites and encouraged to monitor use of same by their children while outside the confines of An Mhodscoil.

The list of supports which may be used in the school and the identification of other supports available to the school are;

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 evidence based programmes, e.g. Cool School Lessons, #UP2US, Stay Safe Programme, The Walk Tall Programme, On My Own Two Feet.
- School wide delivery of age appropriate lessons on **Relational aggression** (Cool School Programme: A Friend in Deed): **Cyber Bullying** (#UP2US, Be Safe-Be Web wise, Think Before you Click, Let's Fight it Together, Web wise Primary teachers' resources): **Homophobic and Transphobic Bullying** (Growing up LGBT, Stand Up Programme, The Trust pack): **Diversity and Interculturalism**, Yellow Flag Programme.
- An Mhodscoil will involve the Community Gardaí in the delivery of the Garda SPHE Programmes at primary level. These lessons, delivered by Community Gardaí, cover issues around personal safety and cyber-bullying.
- An Mhodscoil 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.
- The school will implement the advice in "*Sexual Orientation advice for schools*" (RSE Primary booklet).

The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber-bullying and identity based bullying) used by the school are as follows:

- At least six awareness-raising exercises per school year for each class group proactively explaining the nature and variety, causes, consequences and unacceptability of bullying.
- Two of these lessons will be delivered in September to coincide with the school's Seachtain an Chairdis (Friendship Week).
- Two further lessons will be taught at the beginning of each subsequent term.
 - Pupils are helped to examine the issue of bullying in a calm rational way, outside of the tense context of particular bullying incidents. In the process they are made more aware of the nature of bullying and the various forms that it can take.
 - Pupils are made aware that the consequences of bullying behaviour are always bad for those who are targeted, even if this is not always obvious at the time.
 - Pupils are encouraged to recognise, reject and report bullying behaviour.

Lessons will be drawn from evidence-based programmes such as:

- The anti-bullying module of the SPHE programme as it applies during each school year.
- The Stay Safe programme.
- The RSE Programme
- The Walk Tall Programme.
- Be Safe – Be Webwise
- Anti-Bullying Campaign- Tools for Teachers.

Talk for parents re: Awareness and Prevention of Cyber Bullying etc. in the First Term of the school year.

Links to other policies:

An Mhodscoil's Anti Bullying Policy will also include practices and activities that are particularly relevant to bullying, e.g. Code of Behaviour, Child Protection's policy, Supervision of pupils, Acceptable Use policy, Attendance, Sporting activities. Also form part of An Mhodscoil's policy.

Procedures for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying

The primary aim of An Mhodscoil 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).

An Mhodscoil's procedures will 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.

An Mhodscoil's procedures for investigating, follow-up and recording bullying behaviour and the established intervention strategies used by the school for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour are as follows:

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 teachers.
Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), bus escorts, caretakers, 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

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 will take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach.
- Where possible, incidents will be investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.
- All interviews will be conducted with sensitivity in relation to the needs of the pupils involved and understanding shown to all aspects of pupil interactions. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this way.
- When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher will seek answers to questions of 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;
- If a group is involved, each member will be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved may be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member may be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements. Those involved, if it is deemed appropriate, may be asked to write down their account of an incident(s).

- In their capacity as teachers in An Mhodscoil, teachers will, as far as possible, help and support each member of a group to cope with the possible pressures that may face them from the other members of the group after the interview by the teacher.
- Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it will be made clear to the pupil how he/she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts will be made to try to get the pupil to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied;
- 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 will be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken. The school will 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;
- It will be made clear to all involved, to 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 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.
 - 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 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.
 - 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) will 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 will advise the parent(s)/guardian(s) of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

Recording of bullying behaviour:

All recordings of bullying incidents will be done in an objective and factual manner.

An Mhodscoil's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour are as follows:

Informal- pre-determination that bullying has occurred:

- Teachers will keep a written record, in the incident book, of any incidents witnessed by them or notified to them. All incidents must be reported to the relevant teacher
- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying, will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. The relevant teacher will keep a written record of the reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same.
- The relevant teacher will 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 will 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.
- At the end of every academic year the principal, in consultation with the relevant teacher/s will sign off on the storage of all records retained by the relevant teacher.

Formal Stage 2:

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

- 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
- In certain circumstances bullying behaviour, e.g. cyber bullying, will be reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable.

When the recording template is used, it will be retained by the relevant teacher in question and a copy maintained by the principal. At the end of each academic year these records will be signed off on by the Principal and relevant teacher and stored in the dedicated anti-bullying filing cabinet. Access to these records will be on a need to know basis. These records will be stored and or retained in keeping with data protection rules and regulations.

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
- No Blame Approach
- Circle Time
- Restorative interviews
- Restorative conferencing
- Implementing sociogram questionnaires
- Peer mediation where suitable training has been given

The Procedures mention the following intervention strategies and reference:

www.bullyingawarenessweek.org/pdf/BullyingPreventionStrategiesinSchools_Ken_Rigby.pdf

- The traditional disciplinary approach
- Strengthening the victim
- Mediation
- Restorative Practice
- The Support Group Method
- The Method of Shared Concern

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

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.

- Pastoral care system
- Buddy / Peer mentoring system
- Tutor/Year head system
- Care team / Student Support Team
- Group work such as circle time

If pupils require counselling or 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 and parents should understand that there are no innocent bystanders and that all incidents of bullying behaviour must be reported to a teacher.

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.

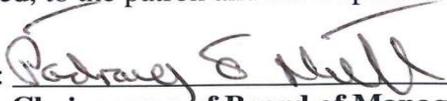
Prevention of Harassment:

The Board of Management of An Mhodscoil 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.

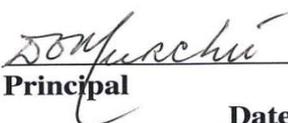
This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 20/05/2014 [date].

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

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, to parents/pupils on request and provided to the Parents' Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Signed: 
Chairperson of Board of Management

Date: 20/05/2014

Signed: 
Principal

Date: 20/05/2014

Date of next review: Jan 2015