SCOIL MHUIRE 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 Mhuire Primary School has adopted the following anti-bullying policy within the framework of the school's overall Code of Behaviour. The 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 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
   (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.
   (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 *Anit-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*
Bullying is defined as follows:

Bullying is unwanted 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 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 will 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 of 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.

4. The relevant teacher for investigating and dealing with bullying is the class teacher initially, and the Principal teacher thereafter if necessary. In the absence of the Principal the Deputy Principal will become the relevant person.

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

We adopt a whole school approach where all have a shared understanding of what constitutes bullying and an awareness of its negative impact.

The school staff promote and foster an atmosphere of mutual friendship, respect and tolerance.

Children's self-esteem is promoted through celebrating individual differences, acknowledging achievements, rewarding good behaviour and providing opportunities for success throughout the curriculum.

The school's Code of Behaviour is brought to the attention of all pupils at the start of the school year. The rules and the reasons for them are explained and discussed and will be referred to throughout the year as the need arises. This is done at an age-appropriate level.

The school implements in full its Mobile Phone and Acceptable Use Policies.
We educate pupils on appropriate online behaviour, raising awareness of cyber-bullying and its implications. Gardai visit the school each year to talk to the children about the implications of the internet and social media.

Teachers help children develop empathy by discussing feelings and encouraging children to put themselves in the place of others. Problem solving strategies are explored with the children to help resolve conflict.

Children are made aware that bullying is an unacceptable form of behaviour. This is done explicitly through the Stay Safe, Walk Tall and the RSE programmes (cf SPHE plan) Regular school assemblies will be used to reinforce this. Opportunities also are availed of in Religion, Drama, P.E. and Sport.

Teachers engage children in group activities which will encourage them to work together, co-operate, listen to and respect one another's views e.g. annual cake sale, project work, Junior Achievement, debating.

We engage the services of our NEPS Psychologists when the need arises to advise us and recommend appropriate intervention programmes.
Zippy's Friends Programme, Circle Time, Drug Awareness Programme are among the programmes we have found that help promote positive relationships.

We promote open communication with parents where they can feel comfortable approaching staff about incidents of bullying.
In an effort to promote positive relationships on the yard playground games are explicitly taught as part of the P.E. Programme in the Junior classes. These games are revised in the Spring Term.

We ensure that comprehensive supervision and monitoring measures are in place.

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:

(a)   In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher(s) will exercise his/ her/their professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred, what type of bullying and how best the situation might be resolved.

(b)   All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher(s). In this way, pupils will gain confidence in telling. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It will be made clear to pupils that when they report incidents of bullying, they are not telling tales but are behaving responsibly.

(c)   Non-Teaching Staff – Special Needs Assistants, School Secretary, Caretaker and Cleaners will be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher.

(d)   Parents/Guardians 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.

(e)   It is very important that all involved, parents and pupils, understand the above approach from the outset.

(f)   Teachers will take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents.

(g)   Initial investigations of bullying will be done in class where possible but some incidents might be best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.

(h)   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.

(i)   When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher(s) 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.

(j)   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.

(k)   Each member of a group will be supported through the possible pressures that they may face them from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher.

(l)   It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s).

(m)   In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved will 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 will give parents an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports for their pupils.

(n)   Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it will be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts will be made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied.

(o)   It will also be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parents) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parents and the school.

(p)   Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved may 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.

(q)   In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant teacher must, as part of 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 it practicable and
- Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the school Principal or Deputy Principal.

(r)   An additional follow-up meeting with parents of the children involved may take place after an appropriate time to ensure that the matter has been resolved satisfactorily.

(s)   Where a parents 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.

(t)   In the event that a parent/guardian 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.

Recording: Noting and reporting of bullying behaviour will be documented using the template for recording bullying behaviour (Appendix 3). All records will be maintained in accordance with relevant data protection legislation. The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour will adhere to the following:

(a)   While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher(s) will use her/their professional judgement in relation to the records to be kept of these reports, the actions taken and any discussion with those involved regarding same.

(b)   If it is established by the relevant teacher(s) that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher(s) will keep appropriate written records which will assist her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.

(c)   The relevant teacher(s) will use the recording template as Appendix 3 to record the bullying behaviour in the following circumstances:

(i) In cases where she considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after she had determined that bullying behaviour occurred; and

(ii) 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.

In each of the circumstances at (i) and (ii) above, the recording template at **Appendix 3** must 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 involves a whole school approach. Given the complexity of bullying behaviour, no one intervention/
support programme works in all situations. Therefore, various approaches and intervention strategies may be used , including suggesting that parents seek referrals to appropriate outside agencies in order to receive further support for the pupils and their families, if needed.

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.

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:

_____

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

12. This Policy and its implications 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' Council. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Signed: _____ ____   Date: _____
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: _____   Date: _____

Date of next review: _____

Appendix 2 Practical tips for building a positive school culture and climate

The following are some practical tips for immediate actions that can be taken to help build a positive school culture and climate and to help prevent and tackle bullying behaviour.

- 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.
- 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 the Parents' Association in awareness raising campaigns around social media.
- 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.
- 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 "hot spots" and "hot times" for bullying in the school.
  - Hot spots tend to be in the playground/school yard/outdoor areas, changing rooms, corridors and other areas of unstructured supervision.
  - Hot times again tend to be times where there is less structured supervision such as when pupils are in the playground/school yard or moving classrooms.
- Support the establishment and work of student councils.

Appendix 3 Template for recording bullying behaviour

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))*		**4. Location** of incidents (tick relevant box(es))*	
Pupil concerned		Playground	
Other Pupil		Classroom	
Parent		Corridor	
Teacher		Toilets	
Other		School Bus	
		Other	

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

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

Physical Aggression		Cyber-bullying	
Damage to Property		Intimidation	
Isolation/Exclusion		Malicious Gossip	
Name Calling		Other (specify)	

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

Homophobic	Disability/SEN related	Racist	Membership of Traveller community	Other (specify)

8. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact

9. Details of actions taken

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 Checklist for annual review of the anti-bullying policy and its implementation

The Board of Management (the Board) must undertake an annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation. The following checklist must be used for this purpose. The checklist is an aid to conducting this review and is not intended as an exhaustive list. In order to complete the checklist, an examination and review involving both quantitative and qualitative analysis, as appropriate across the various elements of the implementation of the school's anti-bullying policy will be required.

	Yes /No
Has the Board formally adopted an anti-bullying policy that fully complies with the requirements of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*?	
Has the Board published the policy on the school website and provided a copy to the parents' association?	
Has the Board ensured that the policy has been made available to school staff (including new staff)?	
Is the Board satisfied that school staff are sufficiently familiar with the policy and procedures to enable them to effectively and consistently apply the policy and procedures in their day to day work?	
Has the Board ensured that the policy has been adequately communicated to all pupils?	
Has the policy documented the prevention and education strategies that the school applies?	
Have all of the prevention and education strategies been implemented?	
Has the effectiveness of the prevention and education strategies that have been implemented been examined?	
Is the Board satisfied that all teachers are recording and dealing with incidents in accordance with the policy?	
Has the Board received and minuted the periodic summary reports of the Principal?	
Has the Board discussed how well the school is handling all reports of bullying including those addressed at an early stage and not therefore included in the Principal's periodic report to the Board?	
Has the Board received any complaints from parents regarding the school's handling of bullying incidents?	
Have any parents withdrawn their child from the school citing dissatisfaction with the school's handling of a bullying situation?	
Have any Ombudsman for Children investigations into the school's handling of a bullying case been initiated or completed?	
Has the data available from cases reported to the Principal (by the bullying recording template) been analysed to identify any issues, trends or patterns in bullying behaviour?	
Has the Board identified any aspects of the school's policy and/or its implementation that require further improvement?	
Has the Board put in place an action plan to address any areas for improvement?	

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES

The INTO and Primary School Management reached agreement in 1993 on a procedure for dealing with complaints by parents against teachers. The purpose of this procedure is to facilitate the resolution of difficulties where they may arise in an agreed and fair manner. The agreement lays out in five stages the process to be followed in progressing a complaint and the specific timescale to be followed at each stage. Please note this is a non-statutory procedure.

Only those complaints about teachers which are written and signed by parents/guardians of pupils may be investigated formally by the Board of Management, except where those complaints are deemed by the board to be:

.   on matters of professional competence and which are to be referred to the Department of Education and Skills.
.   frivolous or vexatious complaints and complaints which do not impinge on the work of a teacher in a school; or
.   complaints in which either party has recourse to law or to another existing procedure.

Unwritten complaints, not in the above categories, may be processed informally as set out in Stage 1 of this procedure.

Stage 1

1.   A parent/guardian who wishes to make complaint should, unless there are local arrangements to the contrary, approach the class teacher with a view to resolving the complaint.
2.   Where the parent/guardian is unable to resolve the complaint with the class teacher she/he should approach the Principal with a view to resolving it.
3.   If the complaint is still unresolved the parent/guardian should raise the matter with the Chairperson of the Board of Management with a view to resolving it.

Stage 2

1.   If the complaint is still unresolved and the parent/guardian wishes to pursue the matter further he/she should lodge the complaint in writing with the Chairperson of the Board of Management.
2.   The Chairperson should bring the precise nature of the written complaint to the notice of the teacher and seek to resolve the matter between the parties within five days of receipt of the written complaint.

Stage 3

1.   If the complaint is not resolved informally, the Chairperson should, subject to the general authorisation of the Board and except in those cases where the Chairperson deems the particular authorisation of the Board to be required:

(a)   supply the teacher with a copy of the written complaint and
(b)   arrange a meeting with the teacher and, where applicable, the Principal teacher with a view to resolving the complaint. Such a meeting should take place within 10 days of receipt of the written complaint.

Stage 4

1.   If the complaint is still not resolved the Chairperson should make a formal report to the Board within 10 days of the meeting referred to in 3(b).
2.   If the Board considers that the complaint is not substantiated the teacher and the complainant should be so informed within three days of the Board Meeting.
3.   If the Board considers that the complaint is substantiated or that it warrants further investigation it proceeds as follows:

(a)   the teacher should be informed that the investigation is proceeding to the next stage.

(b)   the teacher should be supplied with a copy of any written evidence in support of the complaint.

(c)   the teacher should be requested to supply a written statement to the Board in response to the complaint.

(d)   the teacher should be afforded an opportunity to make a presentation of case to the Board. The teacher would be entitled to be accompanied and assisted by a friend at any such meeting.

(e)   the Board may arrange a meeting with the complainant if it considers such to be required. The complainant would be entitled to be accompanied and assisted by a friend at any such meeting and

(f)   the meeting of the Board of Management referred to in (d) and (e) will take place within 10 days of the meeting referred to in 3(b).

Stage 5

1.   When the Board has completed its investigation, the Chairperson should convey the decision of the Board in writing to the teacher and the complainant within five days of the meeting of the Board.

2.   The decision of the Board shall be final.

3.   The Complaints Procedure shall be reviewed after three years.

4.   Primary School Management or INTO may withdraw from this agreement having given the other party three Months notice of intention to do so.

In this agreement 'days' means school days.