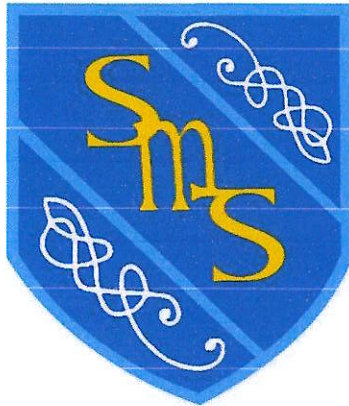# Scoil Mhuire na nGael

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 na nGael school 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. Scoil Mhuire na nGael is now a KiVa school. Therefore, we, as a KiVa school (from September 2021), adopt and implement the principles and procedures of the KiVa anti-bullying programme and collaborate with the members of the Genesis Louth programme to fully embed the initiative.

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

(a) A positive school culture and climate which:

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

2. Scoil Mhuire na nGael is a KiVa school. We follow the KiVa anti-bullying programme and we consider the following aspects to be key elements of a positive school culture:

- We acknowledge the right of each member of the school community to enjoy school in a safe and secure environment.

- We acknowledge the uniqueness of each individual and their worth as a human being.
- We promote positive habits of self-respect, self-discipline and responsibility among all our members.
- We actively discourage vulgar, offensive or other aggressive behaviour by any of our members.
- We have a clear commitment to promoting equity in general and gender equity in particular in all aspects of our functioning.
- We have the capacity to change in response to our pupils' needs.
- We identify aspects of our curriculum through which positive and sustainable influences can be exerted towards forming our pupils' attitudes and values and dispositions
- We take particular care of 'at risk' pupils and uses our systems to identify needs and facilitate early intervention where necessary –thus responding to the needs, fears & anxieties of individual members in a sensitive manner.
- Scoil Mhuire na nGael recognises the need to work in partnership with and keep parents informed on procedures to improve relationships within the school community.
- We recognise the right of parents to share in the task of equipping pupils with a range of life skills.
- We recognise the role of other community agencies in preventing and dealing with bullying.
- We promote habits of mutual respect, courtesy and an awareness of the interdependence of people in groups and communities.
- We promote qualities of social responsibility, tolerance and understanding among our members both in school and outside of school.
- Staff members share a collegiate responsibility, under the direction of the Principal, to act in preventing bullying/aggressive behaviour by ANY MEMBER of the school community.

(b) Effective leadership

- The overall responsibility for the full implementation and effectiveness of this policy resides with the Board of Management. In their role as the management body of the school, the procedures and practices implemented in the school will be reviewed annually.
- The principal of Scoil Mhuire na nGael, as a key leader, will positively influence attitudes and set clear expectations and standards in relation to addressing and dealing with episodes of bullying.
- The members of the ISM team, in their leadership capacity, support the principal teacher and their fellow colleagues in stimulating a school-wide/community-based approach to preventing and responding to episodes of bullying. The ISM team also are custodians of and model best practices in relation to preventing and dealing with bullying. Reports of bullying are assessed by the deputy principal and then referred to the school's KiVa team if appropriate.

- Teachers also model best practices for their colleagues and also pupils. They must be fair, transparent, clear, professional and consistent in their approach
- The KiVa team avail of training and support from the members of the Genesis programme and are leaders for the KiVa programme in the school.

(c) A school-wide approach

- A whole-community approach to address and deal with bullying is both a necessity and a requirement. The community of Scoil Mhuire na nGael consists of school management, all staff (teaching and non-teaching), pupils and parents/guardians.
- Beyond the school community, bullying behaviour may extend to outside of school. Where this negatively impacts a school - parents and pupils have a responsibility to support the school in helping to address the issue. This applies particularly (but not exclusively) to cyberbullying.
- Support and assistance from community-based agencies/bodies may at times be required. These include Gardaí, Tusla and Community Workers who may be required in some cases.
- Collective vigilance is needed throughout the whole school/community sector to identify and deal with issues around bullying in a fair and equitable manner.

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

As a school, Scoil Mhuire na nGael strives to develop and embed an awareness/understanding among all educational stakeholders (staff, pupils, parents and the wider community) of what constitutes bullying behaviour as defined in sections 2 and 3 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary school 2013.

(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

- All staff members have a responsibility to ensure the constant and committed supervision of pupils at all times both in the classroom and in the playground.
- Student Council is consulted and engaged in a supervisory role, suitable to their capacity and understanding of the issues involved both in class and in the playground
- Ancillary staff members also play a role in informing relevant personnel of episodes of bullying which they may have observed among the pupils.

(g) Supports for staff

- Regular discussion and review of policy and procedures are essential to support staff on a continuous basis.
- All staff have a uniform interpretation of what is expected in relation to bullying, how to identify possible bullying behaviours, how to manage disclosures and how to deal effectively with incidents of bullying within the classroom context.
- Staff are aware that supporting one another is a key aspect of prevention and new/inexperienced members of staff must be given every opportunity to discuss concerns and model best practices.
- CPD in relation to Anti Bullying Strategies regularly occurs in Scoil Mhuire na nGael for all members of staff.
- Staff are trained in the delivery of the KiVa anti-bullying programme and receive support from Genesis personnel in this.
- Staff (from 3rd to 6th class) are supplied with KiVa resources for the delivery of the programme.

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

- KiVa standardised documentation is used to record all allegations and investigations.

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

3. In accordance with the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools bullying is defined as follows:

Bullying is an 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 bullyings such as homophobic bullying, racist bullying, bullying based on a person's membership of a minority 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.

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.

Bullying behaviours that Scoil Mhuire na nGael has identified as relevant to our context:

General behaviours which apply to all types of bullying	- 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.
Cyber	**Denigration:** Spreading rumors, lies or gossip to hurt a person's reputation **Harassment:** Continually sending vicious, mean or disturbing messages to an individual **Impersonation:** Posting offensive or aggressive messages under another person's name **Flaming:** Using inflammatory or vulgar words to provoke an online fight **Trickery:** Fooling someone into sharing personal information which you then post online **Outing:** Posting or sharing confidential or compromising information or images **Exclusion:** Purposefully excluding someone from an online group **Cyber stalking:** Ongoing harassment and denigration that causes a person considerable fear for his/her safety - Silent telephone/mobile phone call - Abusive telephone/mobile phone calls - Abusive text messages - Abusive email

	• Abusive communication on social networks or on games consoles • Abusive website comments/Blogs/Pictures • Abusive posts on any form of communication technology
Identity Based Behaviours Including any of the nine discriminatory grounds mentioned in Equality Legislation (gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community).	
Homophobic and Transgender	• 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	• 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	This involves manipulating relationships as a means of bullying. Behaviours include: • 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	• Unwelcome or inappropriate sexual comments or touching • Harassment
Special Educational Needs, Disability	• 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

<u>4</u>. The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying is (are) as follows:

As we are a KiVa school, we have specific staff (teaching and non-teaching) who investigate and deal with bullying in the school. They are as follows:

- The relevant class teacher

- The KiVa Team (2 Kiva teams in the school – a dedicated team for classes from Junior Infants – 2nd Class and a second-team for classes from 3rd – 6th) The KiVa teams also have a dedicated coordinator. . The KiVa teams are responsible for investigating and dealing with merging cases of bullying in cooperation with class teachers. In the event that the bullying cannot be resolved by the KiVa team, the issue will be forwarded to the deputy principal/principal who will take over in the dealing of the case.

- Deputy Principal

- Principal

<u>5</u>. The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber-bullying, homophobic and transphobic bullying) that will be used by Scoil Mhuire na nGael are as follows:

Education and Prevention Strategies

School-wide approach

- A school-wide approach to the fostering of respect for all members of the school community.
- The explicit implementation of the KiVa programme and the teaching of the specific lessons in classes from 1st-6th Class
- The promotion of the value of diversity to address issues of prejudice and stereotyping, and highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour.
- The fostering and enhancing of the self-esteem of all our pupils through both curricular and extracurricular activities. Pupils will be provided with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth through formal and informal interactions.
- Whole staff professional development on bullying to ensure that all staff develops an awareness of what bullying is, how it impacts pupils' lives and the need to respond to it-prevention and intervention.
- 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 a specific focus on the training of the relevant teacher(s)

- School-wide awareness-raising and training on all aspects of bullying, including pupils, parent(s)/guardian(s) and the wider school community.
- Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extracurricular activities. Non-teaching and ancillary staff will be encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers. Supervision will also apply to monitoring student use of communication technology within the school.
- Involvement of the student council in contributing to a safe school environment
- Development and promotion of an Anti-Bullying code for the school to be displayed publicly in classrooms and in common areas of the school.
- The school's anti-bullying policy is discussed with pupils and all parent(s)/guardian(s)s are given a copy as part of the Code of Behaviour of the school (every year). The policy is also available on the school website.
- The implementation of regular whole school awareness measures e.g. KiVa Anti-bullying Programme, a dedicated notice board in the school and classrooms on the promotion of friendship, and bullying prevention; annual Anti-bullying Week and parent(s)/guardian(s) seminars; annual student surveys; regular school or year group assemblies by the principal, deputy principal, members of the ISM team or class teachers.
- The annual provision of internet safety training for all pupils from 3rd to 6th class.
- Encourage a culture of telling, with particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders. Pupils will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It should be made clear to all pupils that when they report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.
- Ensuring that pupils know to tell their teacher or another trusted adult if they have an issue
- Our Acceptable Use Policy and Mobile Phone/Electronic or Smart devices policy includes the necessary steps to ensure that access to technology within the school is strictly monitored.

Implementation of Curricula

- Scoil Mhuire na nGael fully implements the SPHE, RSE, Stay Safe and KiVa programmes.
- Continuous Professional Development for staff in delivering these programmes is regularly facilitated and provided
- School-wide delivery of lessons on bullying from evidence-based programmes
- Delivery of the Garda SPHE Programmes at primary level, when available. These lessons, delivered by Community Gardai, cover issues around personal safety and cyber-bullying.

- The school will specifically consider the additional needs of SEN pupils with regard to programme implementation and the development of skills and strategies to enable all pupils to respond appropriately.

Links to other policies

- Our Anti-Bullying policy is linked to the following other policies:
- Code of Behaviour
- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Acceptable Usage
- Use of Mobile Phone and Electronic Device Policy
- Remote Teaching and Learning Policy
- Special Education
- Attendance
- Supervision of Pupils
- Tour/Field Trip

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

The primary aim in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame). The school's procedures are 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.

(A) Reporting bullying behaviour
- Any pupil, parent(s)/guardian(s) or staff member (teaching or non-teaching) may bring a bullying incident to any teacher in the school.

(B) Investigating and dealing with incidents:

- In investigating and dealing with bullying, the relevant teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement and complete a KiVa screening form to determine if the case is systemic bullying. If the screening determines that bullying is taking place, the case is referred to the specific KiVa team for the age group. If the screening determines that bullying is not taking place, the issue will be resolved by the class teacher.
- Once referred to the KiVa team, the following will take place:
  - ➤ Members of the KiVa team have a discussion with the pupils who is bullied.

- ➤ Members of the KiVa team will have a discussion with the pupils/pupils who have taken part in the bullying.
- ➤ Members of the KiVa team will facilitate a discussion between the pupil who is being bullied and those pupils who are taking part in the bullying.
- ➤ Members of the KiVa team will check if the class teacher has selected pupils (if necessary) to support the victim.
- ➤ Members of the KiVa team will engage in a follow-up discussion with the victim.
- ➤ Members of the KiVa team will engage in a follow-up discussion with the pupils who had taken part in the bullying and the victim (if appropriate)
- If the bulling case cannot be resolved (within 20 school days), the matter will be referred to the deputy principal/principal by the KiVa team following the completion of **Appendix 3 Recording Bullying Behaviour Template** (Anti-bullying procedures for primary and post-primary schools p.43)
- The deputy principal/principal will proceed with the investigation and dealing of the bullying case.
- Depending on the outcome of the deputy principal's/principal's investigation and dealing with the case, the principal may have to invoke the school's Code of Behaviour policy.
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) and pupils are required to co-operate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving any issues and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved as quickly as possible;
- Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach.
- Where possible, incidents should be investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved;
- All interviews should be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this way.
- When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the KiVa team should seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This should be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner.
- If a group is involved, each member should be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved should be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member should be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements.
- Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that may face them from the other members of the group after the interview by the teacher.
- When appropriate those involved to write down their account of the incident(s).
- In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher or KiVa team that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the parties involved should be contacted within an appropriate time frame to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken (by reference to the school

policy). The school should give parent(s)/guardian(s) an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports provided to the pupils.

- Where the KiVa team has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts should be made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied.
- It must also be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parent(s)/guardian(s)) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school.

(C) Follow up and recording

- In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the KiVa team must, as part of their 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)s or the school Principal or Deputy Principal
- Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved should be arranged separately with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date if the pupil who has been bullied is ready and agreeable.
- Where a parent(s)/guardian(s) is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parent(s)/guardian(s) must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures.
- In the event that a parent(s)/guardian(s) has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parent(s)/guardian(s) of their right to make a complaint under the school's parental complaint procedure.
- In the event that a parent(s)/guardian(s) has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parent(s)/guardian(s) of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

(D) Recording of bullying behaviour

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

Informal- pre-determination that bullying has occurred

- All staff keep a written record of any incidents witnessed by them or notified to them. A copy of this written account will be provided to the teacher to who they are referring the information to and to the deputy principal/principal. This written record will be stored in a secure location in the relevant classroom/office.
- The KiVa screening form is completed for all allegations and a copy of the forms will be kept by the KiVa coordinator. A copy of the screening form will also be kept by the deputy principal/principal in their specific file.

Formal Stage 1-determination that bullying has occurred

- If it is established by the relevant teacher (following the completion of the KiVa screening form) that bullying has occurred, the case is referred to the KivA Team for further investigation and recording. The KiVa team will keep appropriate written records that will assist their efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved. All records will be kept on file by the KiVa coordinator.
- A file will be prepared and submitted to the principal for storage.
- All files are kept and archived at the end of each academic year.

Formal Stage 2-Appendix 3 (From DES Procedures)

The use of the official recording bullying behaviour template (Appendix 3 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools p.43) will be utilised in the following circumstances:

a) In cases where the teacher/KiVa team considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she/they have determined that bullying behaviour occurred, and

b) Where the school has decided as part of its anti-bullying policy that in certain circumstances bullying behaviour must be recorded and reported immediately to the deputy principal or principal as applicable.

When the recording template is used, it must be retained by the relevant teacher in question and a copy maintained by the principal. This template will be scanned and stored as a document on the pupil's individual Aladdin file.

7. 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, develop friendships and social skills and build resilience. These include the following:
- Explicit teaching of KiVa lessons from pupils from 1st-6th class
- Explicit teaching of SPHE lessons which promote anti-bullying
- The use and teaching of the Stay Safe, RSE and Walk Tall programmes
- The use of resources from www.pdst/primary/antibullying
- NEPS programmes available on https://www.gov.ie/en/service/5ef45c-neps/ e.g. FRIENDS
- The organisation of our annual Anti-Bullying Week
- Buddy system (where appropriate)
- Group work involving Circle Time
- Staff wear high viz vests during break times to make pupils aware of the adults who they can trust, approach and speak to on any issue relating to bullying.
- If pupils require counselling or further supports the school will endeavour to liaise with the appropriate agencies to organise same. NEPS will also be contacted for advice
- Pupils should understand that there are no innocent bystanders and that all incidents of bullying behaviour must be reported to a teacher.

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.

- A supervision rota is in place monitoring the arrival and dismissal of pupils at morning and evening times. A separate rota is in place for break tine supervision, including wet days.
- The student council will be utilised as a resource to support the school in counteracting bullying among the pupils.
- All internet sessions take place in the classroom and are fully supervised by the class teachers. All security features of both Seesaw and Google Classroom have been updated for maximum pupil online safety (Refer to Remote Learning and Acceptable Usage Policies)
- The Schools Broadband Programme has blocked all social networking sites thus ensuring that the bandwidth which is being provided is used for educational purposes only.
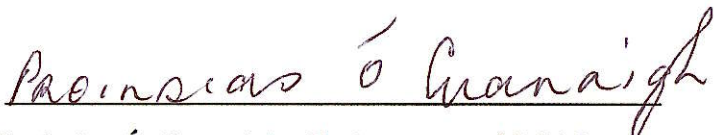
9. Prevention of Harassment

The Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire na nGael 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 reviewed by the Board of Management on the 15th of October 2024.

11. This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and is readily accessible to parents and pupils on request and provided to the Parents' Association who were active partners in its compilation. 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 be readily accessible to parents and 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: *Proinsias Ó Cuanaigh*

Proinsias Ó Cuanaigh, Chairperson of BOM

Signed: *Lisa Jones*

Lisa Jones, Principal

Date: 15th October 2024