Coláite Muire
Realt na Mara
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 Coláiste Muire 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 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; and
     - 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 behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies); and
   - 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 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.

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(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying is (are) as follows: (see Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):

The Year Head of the student who is the victim of bullying

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

1. An Education and awareness campaign involving school staff, students and parents. This campaign will involve:
    - A yearly bullying survey conducted across the student body to assess the prevalence and nature of bullying
    - Class time being given to anti-bullying strategies across the student body. Materials from the website: *www.antibullyingcampaign.ie* to be used.
    - The negative consequences of bullying identified and discussed.
    - Poster campaign targeting the different types of bullying (Cyber, Homophobic, Racist…)
2. The topic of Bullying will be dealt with in a number of subject areas:
    - The SPHE programme promotes ideas of healthy relationships and dealing with difficulties. The topic of bullying is specifically addressed on the curriculum.
    - The RE programme promotes fairness and the development of the whole person as well as help create an awareness of caring in the wider community- a faith in action.
    - The History curriculum deals with aspects racism and colonialism which give opportunity for the discussion.
    - The Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) programme provides opportunities to explore and discuss areas such as human sexuality and relationships, which has particular relevance to identity-based bullying.
    - The English curriculum provides opportunities for bullying to be discussed.
    - In Civil, Social and Political Education (CSPE), the interdependence of people in communities at local, national and international levels is stressed.
    - The Physical education programme can provide excellent opportunities for channelling and learning how to control aggression. It fosters ideas of teamwork and resilience.
    - The IT programme will be used to promote internet safety and the appropriate use of Social Media.
    - The *Aspects of the Criminal Justice System* which is run as part of the Transition Year programme deals with the legal consequences of bullying behaviour as well as dealing with confrontation and restorative justice.

3. The school journal is used to provide a definition of bullying as well as strategies to deal with bullying situations.
4. A page on the school website is used to provide helpful strategies for parents and students to deal with bullying.
5. Peer support is encouraged by a mentoring system linking senior students with First Year students. Junior students are encouraged to report incidents of bullying to senior students.
6. The parents of First Year students are invited to attend a talk dealing with bullying and cyber bullying.

7. School staff will avail of in-service opportunities which deal with PDST Anti Bullying Procedures.
8. In the Supervision of students at break time, supervisors will be given defined areas. The identification of "hot-spots" and "hot-times" can be very beneficial in preventing and dealing with bullying in school.
9. The student council will be supported and consulted for their ideas with regard to Anti-Bullying strategies.
10. The Parent's liaison officer will consult with parents on a regular basis to obtain feedback.
11. Staff will positively encourage pupils to comply with the school rules on mobile phone and internet use of mobile phones outlined in the Code of Discipline.
12. Mental Health initiatives such as the Cork Mental health public speaking competition will be used to promote positive mental health. Speakers from the *Aware* group visit the school every year to speak with senior students on the subject of depression.

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:

1. When a staff member, parent or student is alerted to an incidence of bullying, they will refer the matter to the relevant teachers involved.
2. The form for the recording of bullying behaviour is filled out and presented to the "relevant teacher".
3. Parents will be contacted at an early stage.
4. 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.
5. Parties involved will be interviewed by the "relevant teacher" in a calm manner. They may be asked to write an account of the incident.
6. Where the relevant teacher 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.
7. Follow-up meetings will be scheduled to assess the success of any intervention.
8. The Code of Discipline of the school will be followed in the administering of sanctions.
9. The School Principal will be informed of the results of the process.
10. Serious instances of bullying behaviour should, in accordance with the Children First and *the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, be referred to the HSE Children and Family Services and/or Gardaí as appropriate.
11. Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures. In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

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

1. Students who are affected by bullying behaviour are encouraged to speak with the school counsellor.

2. Year heads and class tutors will monitor the affected student's behaviour.
3. The peer support structures, mentioned above, will be used to provide support for affected students.
4. In certain cases, where there are concerns regarding the student, the schools' DLP will be notified. Services such as NEPS may be contacted in these cases.
5. Parents are contacted to follow up on student's progress. Parents are encouraged to keep in contact with the school.

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 ratified by the Board of Management on Dec 5th 2019**
11. **This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website (or where none exists, is otherwise readily accessible to parents and 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.**

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 (or where none exists, be otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) 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 patron and the Department.**

13. **This policy is due for renewal on Dec 3rd 2021**

Signed : <u>Frances O Mahony</u>   Signed: <u>Ann Doherty</u>

(Chairperson of BOM)   (Principal)