



# Anti-Bullying Policy



**Anti-Bullying Policy (updated November 2015 )**

**SECTION 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 THOMAIS has adopted the following anti-bullying policy within the framework of the school's overall Code of Behaviour. This policy complies with the requirements of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* which were published in September 2013.

**SECTION 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:

**Fostering a positive school culture and climate which**

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

**Effective leadership at all levels ie school staff, parents and pupils**

**A school-wide approach to the recognition of, the rejection of and the reporting of bullying behaviour.**

**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

**Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils;**

**Supports for staff to assist them in investigating and dealing with reports of bullying behaviour;**

**Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour; and**

**Regular review and evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy**

**SECTION 3:** In accordance with the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* the definition of bullying:

**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.

Negative behaviour that does not meet this definition of bullying will be dealt with in accordance with Scoil Thomáis Code of Behaviour.

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 Scoil Thomáis 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.

**APPENDIX 1 gives specific examples of bullying behaviour – this list is not exhaustive**

**Additional Information on different types of bullying: *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools S.2***



**Anti-Bullying Policy (updated November 2015 )**

**SECTION 4:** In **Scoil Thomáis** the relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying is (are) as follows:

1. **Class Teacher** (initially)
2. **Pastoral Care Postholder** for the year group by referral from Class Teacher
3. **Principal/ Deputy Principal** by referral from Class Teacher & Pastoral Care Postholder or as necessary

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Any teacher may act as the relevant teacher should circumstances warrant it.

**SECTION 5: The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber bullying & identity based bullying) that will be used by Scoil Thomáis are as follows:**

The **Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum**, including the RSE and Stay Safe Programmes support the anti-bullying policy. The Stay Safe Programme is taught to selected classes ( Senior Infants, First, Third, Fifth) each year. Parents are invited to an evening Information Meeting (usually in February) to explain the content of the programme.

The school's anti-bullying policy will be discussed with the pupils. Scoil Thomáis will develop a school **Anti-Bullying Charter** which will be displayed in all classrooms and in prominent places around the school.

**Awareness Raising Exercises for class groups (2<sup>nd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup>)** will be taught at intervals each year. These exercises will proactively raise awareness amongst pupils about the nature and extent of bullying behaviour, and the consequences of and unacceptability of bullying behaviour. Pupils will also be made aware of their own personal responsibility if bullying behaviour is witnessed. ( Reference: Anti Bullying Campaign Website – [www.antibullyingcampaign.ie](http://www.antibullyingcampaign.ie))

**Pupils will be taught rules for keeping safe from bullies** (*From Personal Safety Skills - Stay Safe Programme*) i.e

- (1) Say 'No' using assertive body language and eye contact, (2) Get Away, (3) Tell Someone

**Teaching strategies that make use of cooperative and collaborative learning** are used regularly across all curricular areas. This helps to build acceptance of and respect for other pupils and helps pupils work more cooperatively with others. Methodologies to explore and express feelings in a safe and respectful environment e.g. circle time and role play will be also used by teachers with a view to preventing bullying.

**Teachers and non-teaching school staff regularly praise and positively reinforce acceptable and/or improved pupil behaviour** - this helps in creating a school culture which discourages bullying type behaviour. Positive self-esteem is fostered among the pupils by celebrating individual differences, by acknowledging good behaviour and by providing opportunities for success. As self-esteem is a major factor in determining behaviour, Scoil Thomáis, through both its curricular and extra-curricular classes, provide pupils with opportunities to develop positive self-worth.

**School Staff and Postholders with special responsibility for pastoral care are particularly vigilant in monitoring pupils who are considered at risk of bullying/ who are being bullied.** Particular attention is also focused on pupils with SEN.

Cyber-Bullying at school requires access to technology. In Scoil Thomáis, pupils working with technology have access to the internet only under the supervision of teacher. Pupils do not have access to their mobile/smartphones during the school day.

**Prevention and awareness raising measures will also deal explicitly with cyber-bullying in the senior classes.**

The WEBWISE programme includes prevention and awareness raising lessons which focus on educating pupils on appropriate online behaviour, how to stay safe while on-line and also on developing a culture of reporting concerns about cyber-bullying. Senior classes to be involved in awareness raising lessons to coincide with Internet Safety Day ( February each year) .

**Identity based & homophobic insults** will be treated in exactly the same way as racist or other insults – it will be explained to pupils that such insults are hurtful and are not acceptable.

**Ongoing training and support for school staff** on recognizing bullying behaviour and dealing with reports of bullying behaviour and in implementing Scoil Thomáis Anti-Bullying Policy.

**Preparation of a Parent Advice Sheet** to alert about the nature of bullying behaviour, how to recognize signs of bullying and how to report concerns to the school. This information will also be included in the Infant Induction meeting each year.

**The school will co-operate with Scoil Thomáis Parents Association** in providing for information sessions for parents on bullying and on the school's Anti-Bullying Policy.

**Parents contribute to and support the school's policy on bullying** by encouraging positive behaviour both at home and at school, by being vigilant for signs and symptoms of bullying, and by communicating concerns to the school.



## Anti-Bullying Policy (updated November 2015 )

SECTION 6: Procedures for investigation, follow-up and recording of bullying behaviour and the established intervention strategies used by Scoil Thomáis 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).**

### Procedures for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying Behaviour

- **Non-teaching staff** ie school secretary, SNAs, caretakers & cleaners must report, to the relevant teacher, any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or reported to them;
- **All reports of bullying will be investigated and dealt with** by the relevant Teacher, normally the CLASS TEACHER (and if deemed necessary) the Postholder with responsibility for Pastoral Care, with a view to establishing the facts and bringing any such behaviour to an end.
  - In investigating reports and allegations of bullying, the relevant Teacher will **determine whether bullying has occurred** by reference to the definition of bullying outlined in this policy. Teacher will also **identify the type of bullying involved**. 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
- **Pupils who are alleged to have been involved in bullying behaviour will be interviewed by the 'relevant Teacher/s' to establish the nature and extent of the behaviour and any reasons for it.**
- **If it is established that a pupil/s has been involved in bullying behaviour** the 'relevant Teacher/s'
  - will treat bullying behaviour as **behaviour that can and must be remedied. RESTORATIVE APPROACH**
  - will emphasise that the intention is not to initially sanction the pupil/s involved in the bullying behaviour but to
    - (a) explain clearly and firmly how harmful and hurtful and unacceptable bullying is and
    - (b) seek a firm commitment that the bullying behaviour will stop.
  - **will seek that the pupil/s sign a PROMISE 1 AGREEMENT** – this is a firm commitment from the pupil that they will treat all pupils fairly, equally and respectfully including the targeted pupil/s. It will be made clear to pupil/s that the upholding of this promise is of the utmost importance. **Parents/Guardians are not involved at this stage of the investigation.**
- If **PROMISE 1** is honoured by the pupil there will be no further sanction and the matter will be finalised. Pupils who report bullying therefore are not getting others 'in trouble' so much as enabling them to get 'out of trouble' into which they may ultimately get if the bullying continued.
- **If a pupil has signed PROMISE 1 but then chooses to break this** and continues the bullying behaviour, the school will take the matter further. In this event parent(s)/guardian(s) will be informed about the matter and must countersign their daughter/son's **PROMISE 2 AGREEMENT**.
- **The Breaking of PROMISE 2 by further bullying behaviour is regarded as a serious breach of conduct and is classified as serious or gross misbehaviour.**

Where a pupil has promised to discontinue bullying behaviour towards other pupil/s and breaks PROMISE 2, the following actions will follow (i) a BULLYING REPORT will be recorded as per APPENDIX 3 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* and (ii) IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CODE OF BEHAVIOUR will be activated as follows:

**Parent(s)/Guardian(s) invited to meet with the 'relevant Teacher/s' and the Principal/Deputy Principal about the ongoing bullying behaviour and the pupil may be temporarily suspended from school as per Code of Behaviour.**

**The case may be referred to the Board of Management and the pupil may be suspended/ expelled from the school as per school Suspensions & Expulsion Procedures.**

*NOTE: Whilst the school will adhere to the above procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying issues it may be necessary for the relevant Teacher/s and Principal/Deputy Principal to modify aspects of the above steps when dealing with younger pupils and SEN pupils. This to ensure that the resolution of bullying issues is dealt with in a manner that is appropriate to the age and understanding of the pupil/s involved.*



## Anti-Bullying Policy (updated November 2015 )

### Procedures for Recording Bullying Behaviour

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

- While all reports of bullying will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, (and if deemed necessary) the Postholder with responsibility for Pastoral Care, the relevant teacher/s will keep records of the actions taken and any interviews with those involved regarding same; (c/f school report templates modified from Anti-Bullying Campaign.ie)
- The relevant teacher will use the recording template ( Ref: Appendix 3 of *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*) to record the bullying behaviour in the following circumstances:
  - a) In cases where teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed after a determination that bullying behaviour occurred; and a PROMISE 2 AGREEMENT has been broken
  - b) in certain circumstances\* serious bullying behaviour must be further recorded and reported to the relevant Teacher/Pastoral Care Teacher & Principal/Deputy Principal \*ie denial in cases where clear evidence is available, non-co-operation with the school investigation etc

In each of the circumstances at (a) and (b) above, the recording template will be completed in full and retained by the relevant teacher and a copy provided to the Pastoral Care Teacher & Principal/Deputy Principal as applicable.

The timeline for recording bullying behaviour in the recording template does not in any way preclude the 'relevant teacher/s' from consulting the Pastoral Care Teacher or Principal/Deputy Principal at an earlier stage in relation to a case.

All documentation regarding bullying incidents and their resolution is retained securely in the Principal/Deputy Principal Office.

Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents will be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures. In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school will advise the parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

### **SECTION 7: Established Intervention Strategies**

**Bullying as part of a continuum of behaviour:** It is also important to note that bullying behaviour can be part of a continuum of behaviour rather than a stand-alone issue. Cases arise where behaviour can escalate beyond that which can be described as bullying to serious physical or sexual assault or harassment. To ensure that such cases are dealt with appropriately this bullying policy is linked to Scoil Thomáis Code of Behaviour. Referral will be made to NEPS, CAMHS and other external agencies and authorities where appropriate.

#### **Referral of serious cases to the HSE/TUSLA**

In relation to bullying in schools, Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011 (Children First) and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools provide that in situations where "the incident is serious and where the behaviour is regarded as potentially abusive, the school must consult the TUSLA Children and Family Agency with a view to drawing up an appropriate response, such as a management plan".

Serious instances of bullying behaviour will, in accordance with the *Children First and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, be referred to the TUSLA Children and Family Agency and/or Gardaí as appropriate.

#### **IMPORTANT NOTE:**

Whilst all reports of bullying will be investigated by the relevant teacher it must be stated that where the incidents of bullying are occurring outside of the school environment and/or outside of school hours and/or involving persons who are not pupils in the school - the school may not be able to fully deal with these matters. In such cases the school will make all reasonable efforts to co-operate with parents in assisting them to resolve the issues. The school may also direct those involved to the appropriate support agencies ie Gardaí/Community Garda Service, Health Service Executive/TUSLA, or other relevant community service.



**Anti-Bullying Policy (updated November 2015)**

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

*Support for pupils who have been victims of bullying behaviour as follows:*

- Ending the bullying behaviour through awareness raising and restorative intervention,
- Changing the school culture to foster more respect for bullied pupils and all pupils,
- Changing the school culture to foster greater empathy towards and support for bullied pupils,
- Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through the identification of those responsible and the resolution of bullying situations,
- Directing counselling facilities available to pupils who need it in a timely manner,
- Helping bullied pupils raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that help develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school).
- Implementing a 'buddy system' in the school (*if applicable*),

*Support for pupils who have been identified as having engaged in bullying behaviour as follows:*

- Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are not blamed or punished and get a 'clean sheet,'
- Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are doing the right and honourable action and are praised for this,
- Directing counselling facilities available to help those who need it learn other ways of meeting their needs besides violating the rights of others,
- Helping those who need to raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school),
- Using learning strategies throughout the school and the curriculum to help enhance pupils' feelings of self-worth,
- In dealing with negative behaviour in general, encouraging teachers and parents to focus on, challenge and correct the behaviour while supporting the pupil,

**SECTION 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.

At least once in every school term, the Principal will report to the Board of Management on the overall number of bullying cases reported (by reference to bullying recording template APPENDIX 3 cases) since the previous report to the Board and (ii) confirm that all cases referred to have been or are being, dealt with in accordance with the school's anti-bullying policy and the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary schools*.

**Section 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.

**SECTION 10: This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 25<sup>th</sup> March**

*2014 and reviewed and updated in November 2015*

**SECTION 11:** This policy will be made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the Patron if requested.

**SECTION 12:** This policy should be read in conjunction with the current School Code of Behaviour & Procedures for Suspension and Expulsions. The implementation of the Anti-Bullying Policy will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year. Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the Patron and the Department.

**Signed: Patrick Keane Chairperson - Scoil Thomáis Board of Management**

**Signed: Mary McGarry, Principal**

**Date of Next Review: APRIL 2017**





**Anti-Bullying Policy (updated November 2015)**

**Appendix 1.**

***Bullying (intentional, repetitive, hurtful behaviour) can take a number of forms.  
These may include any of the following (this list is not exhaustive):***

- **Repeated aggressive behaviour/attitude/body language, for example:**
  - Shouting and uncontrolled anger
  - Personal insults, Verbal abuse
  - Offensive language directed at an individual,
  - Continually shouting or dismissing others
  - Public verbal attacks/criticism
  - Domineering behaviour
  - Open aggression
  - Offensive gestures and unwanted physical contact
- **Intimidation, either physical, psychological or emotional, for example:**
  - Treating in a dictatorial manner
  - Ridicule
  - Persistent slagging
  - Deliberate staring with the intent to discomfort
  - Persistent rudeness in behaviour and attitude toward a particular individual
  - Asking inappropriate questions/making inappropriate comments re. personal life/family
  - Asking inappropriate questions/making inappropriate comments re. social life or schoolwork
- **Interference with property, for example:**
  - Stealing/damaging books or equipment
  - Stealing/damaging clothing or other property
  - Demanding money with menaces
  - Persistently moving, hiding or interfering with property
  - Marking/defacing property
- **Undermining/Public or Private Humiliation, for example:**
  - Condescending tone
  - Deliberately withholding significant information and resources
  - Writing of anonymous notes
  - Malicious, disparaging or demeaning comments
  - Malicious tricks/derogatory joke,
  - Knowingly spreading rumours
  - Belittling others' efforts, their enthusiasm or their new idea,
  - Derogatory or offensive nicknames (name-calling)
  - Using electronic or other media for any of the above (cyber bullying,
  - Disrespectfully mimicking a particular individual in his/her absence
  - Deliberately refusing to address issues focusing instead on the person
- **Ostracising or isolating, for example:**
  - Deliberately marginalising an individual
  - Deliberately preventing a person from joining a group
  - Deliberately preventing from joining in an activity, schoolwork-related or recreational
  - Blaming a pupil for things s/he did not do



## Appendix 2

### Reporting & Investigation Documents for Scoil Thomáis

#### School Procedures for Investigating Reports of Bullying

**Incident Report** Form  
**Action Taken** Form

**Information before Class Survey JUNIOR** *(Where this School Stands on Bullying)*  
**Incident Survey** for the Whole Class JUNIOR

**Information before Class Survey SENIOR** *(Where this School Stands on Bullying)*  
**Incident Survey** for the Whole Class SENIOR

**Alleged Bullying Interview** Sheet  
**Bullying Behaviour Checklist**

Pupil **PROMISE 1** Agreement  
Pupil **PROMISE 2** Agreement

**FORMAL REPORT OF BULLYING** - Appendix 3 Report  
*(Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary & Post-Primary Schools 2013)*