



# **Bunscoil Bhríde**

## **Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour**

The Board of Management of Bunscoil Bhríde has adopted the following policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

This policy fully complies with the requirements of *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2024*.

The Board of Management acknowledges that bullying behaviour interferes with the rights of the child as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. We all, as a school community, have a responsibility to work together to prevent and address bullying behaviour and to deal with the negative impact of bullying behaviour.

We are committed to ensuring that all students who attend our school are kept safe from harm and that the wellbeing of our students is at the forefront of everything that we do. We recognise the negative impact that bullying behaviour can have on the lives of our students and we are fully committed to preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.

We confirm that we will, in accordance with our obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the harassment of students or staff on any of the nine grounds specified: gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.

Catholic schools have a distinctive understanding of the human person, recognising that every person is created in God's image and likeness and has inherent dignity as a child of God. This is the basis for ensuring that everybody in our school is treated with respect and care, in accordance with the Catholic Schedule.

As a Catholic school, we are committed to respecting the dignity of every individual. No human person is to be devalued and everybody has a part to play in the school community, regardless of difference.

### **Definition of bullying**

Bullying is defined in *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* and *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* as the following (detailed in Chapter 2 of the Procedures):

- Bullying is targeted behaviour, online or offline, that causes harm.
- The harm caused can be physical, social and/or emotional in nature and can have lasting effects on the child experiencing the behaviour.
- Bullying behaviour is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power in relationships between two people or groups of people in society.
- It is behaviour which is deliberate in nature and is unwanted. It is not accidental or reckless behaviour.
- The harm can be:
  - Physical (e.g. personal injury, damage to or loss of property)
  - Social: (e.g. withdrawal, loneliness, exclusion)
  - Emotional: (e.g. low self-esteem, depression, anxiety)

- A one-off instance of negative behaviour towards a student is not bullying behaviour. However, a single hurtful message posted on social media can be considered bullying behaviour as it may be visible to a wide audience and has a high likelihood of being shared multiple times and so becomes a repeated behaviour.

### **Behaviour that is not bullying behaviour:**

- If the repeated harm is real for the student experiencing the behaviour, but unintended by the other student, this is not bullying, but, importantly, must be addressed under the school's Code of Behaviour.
- Some students with special educational needs, may have social communication difficulties which may make them communicate their needs through behaviours that can hurt themselves or others. It is important to note that these behaviours are not deliberate or planned, but in certain situations, they are an automatic response which they cannot control.
- Disagreement between students is not considered bullying unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.

### **Types of Bullying**

There are many different types of bullying behaviour. These can include directing bullying at someone focused on the following: disability, exceptional ability, gender identity, physical appearance, racism, poverty status, religious identity, sexism and sexual harassment. This is not an exhaustive list.

#### **Bullying can be Direct:**

- Physical: pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping students. Physical assault. Destruction of personal property.
- Verbal: continual name calling which insults, humiliates the student – this may refer to physical appearance, clothes, gender, accent, academic ability, race or ethnic origin.
- Written: Writing insulting remarks in public places, passing notes or drawings about the student.
- Extortion: where something is obtained through force or threats

#### **Bullying can be Indirect:**

- Exclusion: where a student is deliberately and repeatedly isolated, excluded or ignored by a student or group of students.
- Relational: Where a student's attempts to form friendships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined, threats, non-verbal gesturing, malicious gossip, spreading rumours, silent treatment and manipulation of friend groups etc. can all form relational bullying for a student.

### **Online bullying behaviour**

Cyber bullying is carried out via text, direct messaging/instant messaging, social media platforms, email, apps, digital gaming sites, gaming consoles, chatrooms and other online technologies.

This can include:

- Sending or sharing of insulting and offensive or intimidating messages or images via online means as mentioned above.
- Posting information which is personal, private or sensitive without consent.
- Making and/or participating in fake profiles on a social network to impersonate and/or humiliate other students.
- Exclude/disrupt access to a student on purpose on online chat groups/access to accounts/from an online game

**A school is not expected to deal with bullying behaviour that occurs when students are not under the care or responsibility of the school.** However, where this bullying behaviour has an impact in school, schools are required to support the students involved. Where the bullying behaviour continues in school, schools should deal with it in accordance with their Bí Cineálta policy.

Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour that is not bullying behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

## Section A: Development/review of our Bí Cineálta policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour

All members of our school community were provided with the opportunity to input into the development/review of this policy.

	Date consulted	Method of consultation
School Staff	February 2025	Survey of the Staff
	3 <sup>rd</sup> March 2025	Staff Meeting following half day inservice in the Bí Cineálta Procedures. Teachers and SNAs in focus groups worked on drafting the policy
	During months of March / April	Final Draft Policy shared with the staff for feedback
Students	March 2025	Survey of pupils from 3 <sup>rd</sup> to 6 <sup>th</sup> class
	February and March 2025	Discussion at Student Council meetings, with representatives asked to bring feedback from their classes on the policy
Parents	February / March 2025	All parents in the school surveyed. Draft policy shared with the PA for feedback
Board of Management	March / April 2025	Draft policy shared with the Board in March in advance of Board meeting. Draft policy discussed and ratified at meeting of the Board on 9 <sup>th</sup> April 2025.
Date policy was approved: 9 <sup>th</sup> April 2025		
Date policy was last reviewed: 12 <sup>th</sup> June 2025		

## Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

This section sets out the prevention strategies that will be used by the school. These include strategies specifically aimed at preventing online bullying behaviour, homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour, racist bullying behaviour, sexist bullying behaviour and sexual harassment as appropriate (see Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures). In developing the preventative strategies which this school will use to prevent all forms of bullying behaviour, we come from the context of our Catholic

ethos, where inclusivity permeates our school in a real way.

Our school takes a proactive and holistic approach to preventing bullying in all its forms. These strategies align with our **Bí Cineálta Policy** and are embedded in the school culture, curriculum, and policies, ensuring that all members of the school community are actively involved in creating a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment.

#### *Culture and Environment:*

- We foster a **positive school culture** that is welcoming, inclusive, and based on respect, where bullying behaviour is not tolerated. This includes ensuring that students feel safe to report any incidents of bullying, knowing that they can confide in a **trusted adult**.
- The school promotes the school values of equality, inclusion and respect through the use of **artwork and signage**.
- **School diversity** is celebrated through **displays, events, and activities**, showcasing various cultures, backgrounds, and perspectives, fostering a sense of belonging among students.
- We encourage **positive behaviour** through school-wide initiatives like **Friendship Week**, where acts of kindness, collaborative activities, and promoting inclusivity are at the forefront.
- Students engage in **buddy systems** (e.g. pairing older students with younger ones for reading initiatives) to model positive behaviour and assist in social integration.
- Effective **supervision** during break times and lunchtime, as well as **playground helpers**, ensure that students are supported in social interactions and that bullying behaviour is quickly identified and addressed.

#### *Curriculum (Teaching and Learning):*

- Our **SPHE curriculum** (including programmes like **Walk Tall, Weaving Wellbeing, Zippy and Friends, Incredible Years, Stay Safe**, and **RSE**) directly addresses personal responsibility, social skills, and awareness of bullying behaviours.
- We integrate **wellbeing lessons** into the school week, such as **Wellbeing Wednesday**, and use **role-plays, journaling, and drama** to give students opportunities to practise and reflect on positive social behaviours.
- Our students regularly engage in **collaborative, play-based learning**, which helps build empathy and teamwork, promoting inclusivity and respect for diversity.
- **Critical literacy** and **team-building strategies** in subjects like **PE** encourage **respect for all identities** and support students in understanding the value of diversity and working together.
- We **model respectful behaviour** throughout the school, ensuring that students see positive examples from staff, peers, and school leaders. This creates a culture where kindness, respect, and inclusivity are the norms.

#### *Policy and Planning:*

- Our **Bí Cineálta Policy** outlines our commitment to **preventing bullying** in all forms, including online, homophobic, transphobic, racist, sexist bullying, and sexual harassment. This policy ensures that students, staff, and parents understand the procedures for reporting and addressing bullying, with a clear focus on support and prevention.
- **Regular staff training** ensures that all school personnel are equipped to recognise and appropriately respond to bullying behaviours. This includes a consistent, unified approach to bullying incidents and **clear follow-up procedures** to address any concerns.

- Our **Acceptable Use Policy** provides guidelines for responsible use of technology, with a strong emphasis on preventing **cyberbullying**.
- Specific attention is given to **special educational needs** and **child protection policies**, ensuring that all students, regardless of their background or needs, are fully supported.
- The school maintains an open dialogue with parents through initiatives such as **Fortnightly Bulletins**, **Aladdin Connect**, and **School Website** to ensure that everyone is informed and involved in the school's efforts to combat bullying.

#### *Relationships and Partnerships:*

- **Parental Involvement:** Strong relationships with parents are integral to our prevention strategies. We actively involve families in the creation and review of policies, such as our **Bí Cineálta Policy**, ensuring that they are engaged participants in promoting positive behaviour both at home and at school.
- **Community Engagement:** We prioritize the involvement of the local community through events like **Parents' Day** and **Grandparents' Day**, where we model respect and inclusivity. These events help strengthen connections between families and the school, creating a shared commitment to a safe, respectful environment.
- **External Partnerships:** We have established partnerships with external agencies to enhance our anti-bullying efforts. These partnerships help us address all forms of bullying, including online and identity-based bullying, by providing specialized support and resources.
- **Student Participation:** Active student participation is encouraged through initiatives such as the **Student Council** and **Wellbeing Committees**. These platforms allow students to help shape the school culture, contribute to the development of anti-bullying activities, and raise awareness of key issues within the school.
- **Special Event Days:** We organise initiatives such as **Friendship Week**, which focuses on the promotion of new friendships and emphasises anti-bullying messages. Additionally, **Bluebells Day**, dedicated to autism awareness, is a celebration of difference and a platform to promote understanding and inclusivity.

These strategies collectively help to create a school environment where bullying in all its forms is not tolerated, and where students feel empowered to act respectfully and inclusively. Through these comprehensive efforts, we aim to build a community that respects diversity, values kindness, and ensures the well-being of every individual.

The school has the following supervision and monitoring policies in place to prevent and address bullying behaviour (see Chapter 5 of the **Bí Cineálta** procedures):

- **Bí Cineálta Policy**
- **Student-friendly Bí Cineálta Policy**
- **Code of Behaviour**
- **Supervision Policy**
- **Internet Safety talk for staff, students and parents**
- **Reception, Assembly and Dismissal of Pupils Policy**
- **Acceptable Use Policy**
- **Mobile Phone and Electronic Devices Policy**
- **Special Educational Needs Policy**
- **Intimate Care Policy**
- **Child Protection Policy**

## **Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour**

The teacher(s) with responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour are as follows:

- The Class Teacher will oversee recording of bullying reports for students in their class – this includes using the **Bí Cineálta** guidelines to investigate reports of bullying and recording bullying

behaviour on Aladdin

- The Class Teacher and Principal will follow up after twenty days to investigate if bullying has ceased
- All staff will be vigilant to bullying behaviour
- Principal will inform Board of Management of incidences of bullying

When bullying behaviour occurs, the school will:

- > ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour is heard and reassured
- > seek to ensure the privacy of those involved
- > conduct all conversations with sensitivity
- > consider the age and ability of those involved
- > listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation
- > take action in a timely manner
- > inform parents of those involved

The steps that will be taken by the school to determine if bullying behaviour has occurred, the approaches taken to address the bullying behaviour and to review progress are as follows (see Chapter 6 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

- While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the 'Relevant Teacher(s)', the 'Relevant Teacher(s)' will use his/her/their professional judgement in relation to the records to be kept of these reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same.
- If it is established by the 'Relevant Teacher(s)' that bullying has occurred, the 'Relevant Teacher(s)' must keep appropriate written records which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.
- The 'Relevant Teacher(s)' must record the bullying incident on Aladdin by adding an Alleged Bullying Behaviour Report to the relevant pupil's file which will be visible on the files of all other pupils named. The 'Relevant Teacher' must inform the Principal.

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). With this in mind the school's procedures are as follows:

- In investigating and dealing with bullying the teacher(s) will exercise his/her/their judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred, what type if it has and how best the situation might be resolved.
- All reports of bullying will be investigated and dealt with by the 'Relevant Teacher(s)'. In that way 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 instances of bullying, they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.
- Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, SNAs, caretakers and cleaners are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them or mentioned to them to the Class Teacher.
- Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff

or parents.

- On being informed of an alleged incident of bullying, the teacher dealing with the report will first interview the victim(s) and discuss the feelings which the victim(s) experienced because of the bullying behaviour.
- 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.
- When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour the 'Relevant Teacher(s)' should seek answers to questions of what, where, who, when 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 her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about the other's statements.
- Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that they may face from the other members of the group after an interview by the teacher.
- Where the 'Relevant Teacher(s)' has/have determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to her how she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts should be made to try to get her to see the perspective of the pupil being bullied.
- The "Relevant Teacher" does not apportion blame but should make an effort to try to get her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied, through use of the Restorative Questions. S/he emphasises that the intention is not to punish perpetrators but to talk to them, to explain how harmful and hurtful bullying is and to seek a promise that it will stop. If that promise is forthcoming and is honoured there will be no penalty and that will be the end of the matter.
- When an investigation is completed and/or a bullying situation is resolved, the "Relevant Teacher" will complete a report, to include the findings of the investigation, the strategy adopted and the outcome of the intervention, as well as any other relevant information. This will be recorded on Aladdin under the 'Documents' tab, by uploading a file "Alleged Bullying Behaviour Report".
- If a pupil chooses to continue the bullying behaviour, this can then no longer be considered a once off occurrence. In this event parent(s)/guardian(s) will be contacted. The school should 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 the pupil.
- Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved may be arranged separately with a view to bringing them together at a later date if the pupil who has been bullied is ready and agreeable.
- Repeated incidents of bullying behaviour will result in the imposition of sanctions. Such sanctions will be proportionate to the seriousness of the bullying behaviour. It must be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parents) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, that this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, her parents and the school.
- Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parent must be referred to the school's complaints procedure.
- 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 rights to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.
- The School will maintain care for the victim over time. This will be done by speaking to the child a number of weeks after the incident to check on their continuing welfare. The child's parents will also be consulted.
- If a child makes a report of bullying, but asks that nothing is to be done about it, the Relevant Teacher will support the child appropriately to explore how it will be handled sensitively and how parents may be notified. If a parent does

so, they must submit in writing that they require no further action to be taken, but even so, the school may still deem it necessary to be investigated and handled appropriately.

**The school will use the following approaches to support those who experience, witness and display bullying behaviour (see Chapter 6 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):**

The school adopts a **whole-school approach** to support all pupils affected by bullying behaviour, recognising that bullying is complex and requires multiple strategies tailored to individual needs. Support is offered to both bullied pupils and those who engage in bullying behaviour, with a focus on empathy, self-esteem, and behavioural reform.

*Supporting Bullied Pupils:*

- The primary aim is to **end the bullying behaviour** and **foster respect** for the bullied pupil as well as all others.
- We work to **increase empathy** towards bullied pupils and make it clear that **the bullying is not the fault** of the targeted pupil, ensuring this message is reinforced through **annual awareness-raising programmes** and the **swift identification** of those responsible.
- A **safe space** is provided for the bullied pupil, where they can feel secure and supported.
- **Listening and empathising** with the pupil is a crucial part of the process, with teachers and staff engaging in sensitive conversations to understand their experiences.
- We encourage bullied pupils to **raise their self-esteem** by engaging in activities that promote friendship and social skills, such as participating in **group work** in class or in **extra-curricular activities**. This helps foster **positive peer relationships** and emotional resilience.
- The use of **restorative practice** questions helps to address the harm caused by bullying and promote **reconciliation**.
- Pupils are encouraged to **use non-verbal signals** or gestures to communicate when they need to talk about any issues, ensuring they feel safe to express their concerns at any time.

*Supporting Pupils Displaying Bullying Behaviour:*

- Pupils who engage in bullying are **not blamed** or shamed but are instead given a **fresh start** with a '**clean sheet**', contingent on their commitment to reforming their behaviour.
- We make it clear that those who **reform their bullying behaviour** are doing the right thing, and they receive **praise** for their positive change.
- **Special education teaching support (where available)** is provided for pupils who need support in learning alternative ways of meeting their needs, without violating the rights of others.
- We use **restorative practice** to help pupils understand the **impact of their behaviour** on others, encouraging them to take responsibility and repair the harm done.
- Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour are encouraged to take part in **teamwork** and **group work** to build their social skills and promote empathy for others.
- **Wellbeing initiatives**, such as **Wellbeing Wednesday** and relevant content in **SPHE**, are used to address underlying issues and enhance self-worth, promoting healthy emotional development.

- Teachers and parents work together to **focus on the behaviour**, challenging and correcting the negative actions while offering support for the child's personal growth. A focus is placed on **supporting the child's behavioural reform**, rather than assigning blame or shame.
- Pupils displaying bullying behaviour may be given a **role of responsibility** within the school to help them develop empathy, ownership, and accountability for their actions.

#### *General Support Approaches:*

- **Friendship Week** provides an opportunity to raise awareness about bullying and foster a culture of kindness and inclusion.
- **Zones of Regulation** are used to help all pupils understand and manage their emotions, enhancing emotional intelligence and helping pupils regulate their feelings in social situations.
- Teachers may also use tools such as a **worry box** or **worry monster** in the classroom to encourage pupils to express concerns in a safe, private way.
- Regular check-ins and supportive **teacher-pupil dialogues** allow for continuous monitoring of progress and wellbeing, helping all pupils feel supported in addressing any issues they may face.

Through these approaches, we aim to ensure that all pupils—whether they are affected by bullying or displaying bullying behaviour—are given the tools, support, and opportunities to thrive in a safe and respectful school environment

All bullying behaviour will be recorded. This will include the type of behaviour, where and when it took place, and the date of the engagement with students and parents. The actions and supports agreed to address bullying behaviour will be documented. If the bullying behaviour is a child protection concern the matter will be addressed without delay in accordance with *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

## **Section D: Oversight**

The Principal will present an update on bullying behaviour at each Board of Management meeting. This update will include the number of incidents of bullying behaviour that have been reported since the last meeting, the number of ongoing incidents and the total number of incidents since the beginning of the school year. Where incidents of bullying behaviour have occurred, the Principal will also provide a verbal update which will include where relevant, information relating to trends and patterns identified, strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and any wider strategies to prevent and address bullying behaviour where relevant. This update does not contain personal or identifying information. See Chapter 7 of the *Bí Cineálta* procedures.

This policy is available to our school community on the school's website and in hard copy on request. A student friendly version of this policy is displayed in the school and is also available on our website and in hard copy on request.

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed, following input from our school community, each calendar year or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which this policy refers.