Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Scoil Bhríde PS, Edenderry 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.

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 targeted behaviour, online or offline that causes harm. The harm caused can be physical, social and/or emotional in nature. Bullying behaviour is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power in relationships between two people or groups of people in society. The detailed definition is provided in Chapter 2 of the Bí Cineálta procedures.

Each school is required to develop and implement a Bí Cineálta policy that sets out how the school community prevents and addresses bullying behaviour. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour that is not bullying behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

Approach

The primary aim in addressing reports of bullying behaviour should be to stop the bullying behaviour and to restore, as far as practicable, the relationships of the students involved, rather than to apportion blame.

Behaviour that is not bullying behaviour
A one off instance of negative behaviour towards another 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.

Disagreement between students, or instances where students don't want to be friends or to remain friends, is not considered bullying behaviour unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others including deliberate manipulation of friendship groups.

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 can't control. Bullying is not accidental or reckless behaviour. If the repeated harm is real for the student experiencing the behaviour but unintended by the other student, this is not bullying. These behaviours, while not defined as bullying can be distressing.

Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

Criminal behaviour
Bullying behaviour can be considered criminal behaviour under certain circumstances and legal consequences can apply. The age of criminal responsibility in Ireland is 12 years. Some online behaviour may be illegal, and students need to be aware of the far reaching consequences of posting inappropriate or harmful content online. In cases of intimate imagery, the Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020, also known as Coco's Law, criminalises the non-consensual sharing of intimate images and also criminalises threatening to share these images. If bullying behaviour involves physical violence or threats of violence, it may be considered assault. If bullying behaviour involves discrimination or hate speech targeting a student based on their race, religion, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation or membership of the Traveller community, it may be considered a hate crime under the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 198911, and those engaging in such behaviour may face criminal charges. If bullying behaviour involves sexual harassment or sexual assault, this may also be considered criminal behaviour. An Garda Síochána is the appropriate authority to investigate alleged criminal behaviour.

Types of bullying behaviour
There are many different types of bullying behaviour. These can include the following which is not an exhaustive list:
> disablist bullying behaviour: behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of a perceived or actual disability or additional need
> exceptionally able bullying: behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their high academic ability or outstanding talents
> gender identity bullying: behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their perceived or actual gender identity
> homophobic/transphobic (LGBTQ+) bullying: behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their perceived or actual membership of the LGBTQ+ community
> physical appearance bullying: behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their physical appearance. Students who "look different" can be mocked or criticised about the shape, size or appearance of their body
> racist bullying: behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their

race or ethnic origin which includes membership of the Traveller or Roma community. Racism is defined in the National Action Plan Against Racism13 as "a form of domination which manifests through those power dynamics present in structural and institutional arrangements, practices, policies and cultural norms, which have the effect of excluding or discriminating against individuals or groups, based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin"14

> poverty bullying: behaviour and language that intends to humiliate a student because of a lack of resources

> religious identity bullying: behaviour and language that intends to harm a student because of their religion or religious identity

> sexist bullying: behaviour and language that intends to harm a student based on their sex, perpetuating stereotypes that a student or a group of students are inferior because of their sex

> sexual harassment: any form of unwanted verbal, non verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature or other conduct based on sex which affects the dignity of the student.

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	19/02/25	Half-day Closure
Students	07/04/25 28/04/25	Online questionnaire Student Council in consultation with the whole school created a child-friendly anti-bullying policy
Parents	07/04/25	Online questionnaire
Board of Management	12/05/25	Review new policy draft, consultation and final ratification
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	06/05/25 13/05/25	Consultation with Community Garda – talk with 5th/6th regarding online safety and age of criminal responsibility. Consultation with bus inspector – talk with relevant regarding expected behavior on school bus
Date policy was approved:		
Date policy was last reviewed:		

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):

Culture and Environment

- Fostering a positive and inclusive environment.
- A "Telling" environment should be encouraged in relation to all types and forms of bullying as per Bí Cineálta Framework.
- Promote that staff are trusted adults that pupils can talk to. Link to Stay Safe lessons.
- Have a worry box or area in classrooms for children.
- Ensure there is appropriate and adequate supervision to prevent and address bullying behaviour.
- Activities to encourage kindness e.g. kindness cards to someone in the class
- Behaviour systems e.g. card system, Dojo points etc.
- Incorporate artwork and signs to promote our school values – equality, inclusion and respect.

Curriculum

- Hosting Internet safety Day and setting out firm standards of expected behaviours when using ICT in classrooms.
- Opportunities to work in small groups with peers.
- Teaching FUSE, SPHE and RSE lessons.
- Diversity – inclusion through religious education.
- Using stories and picture books to explore diversity and a range of different situations.
- Educate children on school's Code of Behaviour and how to be a good citizen.

Policy and Planning

- Educate children on the new Bí Cineálta framework.
- Create a policy and plan to deal with bullying.
- Staff will undergo training and reflect on school policies.
- Staff will undergo relevant CPD.
- Align the following policies with the new Bí Cineálta framework: Supervision, Code of Behaviour, SPHE, Acceptable Usage, Special Education.

Relationships and Partnerships

- Liaise with Parents Association, Student Council, extra-curricular groups, external community groups in relation to Bí Cineálta framework.
- Online safety events for parents and children.
- Communication with parents – recording information regarding any incidents.

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):

Preventing Cyber-bullying behaviour
- Educate pupils to show respect for each other
- Implementation of the SPHE curriculum - Refer to appropriate online behaviour when using devices and during SPHE lessons
- Implementing digital media literacy curriculum, highlighting responsible online behavior and digital citizenship.
- Having regular conversations with pupils about developing respectful and kind relationships online. Engage with Acceptable Usage Policy where relevant.
- Referring to appropriate online behavior as part of the standards of the behavior in the Code of Behaviour.
- The Bí Cineálta Framework is discussed regularly with pupils.
- All disclosed incidents of bullying are investigated thoroughly and consistently and correct procedure is followed
- Promoting or hosting online safety events for parents who are responsible for overseeing their children's activities online.
- Holding Internet Safety Day to reinforce awareness around online behaviour.
- Ensuring that pupils know who to tell and how to tell.
- Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know bullying is taking place.
- Create a Google Drive folder that includes all relevant materials and resources for preventing and addressing bullying.

Preventing Homophobic/Transphobic Bullying Behaviour
- Maintaining an inclusive physical environment e.g. displaying of posters, library books etc.
- Encouraging peer support e.g. peer mentoring and empathy building activities
- Challenging gender stereotypes.
- Workshops and seminars for students, teachers, school staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of homophobic bullying behaviour.
- Encouraging students to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour.

Preventing Racist Bullying Behaviour
- Fostering a school culture where diversity is celebrated and where students "see themselves" in their school environment e.g. displaying of posters, library books etc.
- Having the cultural diversity of the school visible and on display.
- Workshops and seminars for students, teachers, school staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of racist bullying behaviour.
- Encouraging peer support e.g. peer mentoring and empathy building activities
- Encouraging students to speak up when they witness racist behaviour.
- Providing supports to school staff to respond to the needs of students for whom English is an additional language and for communicating with their parents.
- Providing supports to school staff to support students from ethnic minorities including Traveller and Roma students, and to encourage communication with their parents.
- Inviting speakers from diverse ethnic backgrounds.
- Ensuring that the library reading material and textbooks represent appropriate lived experiences of students and adults from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

Preventing Sexist Bullying Behaviour
- Ensuring members of staff model respectful behaviour and treat students equally irrespective of their sex.
- Ensuring all students have the same opportunities to engage in school activities

irrespective of their sex.
- Celebrating diversity at school and acknowledging the contributions of all students.
- Organizing awareness campaigns, workshops and presentations on gender equality and respect.
- Encouraging parents to reinforce these values of respect at home.

Preventing Sexual Harassment
- Engaging with the SPHE curriculum to teach students about healthy relationship and how to treat each other with respect and kindness.
- Promoting positive role models within the school community.
- Challenging gender stereotypes that can contribute to sexual harassment.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

- Class teacher in consultation with ISMT and principal.

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

Outside of school
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.

Requests to take no action
A student reporting bullying behaviour may ask that a member of staff does nothing about the behaviour other than "look out" for them. The student may not want to be identified as having told someone about the bullying behaviour. They may feel that telling someone might make things more difficult for them. Where this occurs, it is important that the member of staff shows empathy to the student, deals with the matter sensitively and speaks with the student to work out together what steps can be taken to address the matter and how their parents will be informed of the situation. It is important that the student who has experienced bullying behaviour feels safe.
Parents may also make schools aware of bullying behaviour that has occurred and specifically request that the school take no action. **Parents should put this request in writing** to the school or be facilitated to do so where there are literacy, digital literacy or language barriers.

However, while acknowledging the parent's request, schools may decide that, based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour.

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):

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 alleged cases of bullying behaviour are as follows;

1. Establishing the Facts – If an incident has taken place that might involve bullying, the class teacher will record whatever details are known by completing an "Incident Report Form".
2. Open an "Action Taken Form" to record all actions taken in relation to the incident e.g. conversations with parents and students, filling in "Incident Report Form", etc.
3. At the teacher's discretion, survey all classes in year group e.g. all 3rd class groups, using copies of the "Regular Class Survey" in the Bí Cineálta folder on the Google Drive. Read through the questionnaires for evidence of bullying.
4. Interview any alleged perpetrators using the "Alleged Bullying Interview" form and where appropriate follow up with the "Bullying Behaviour Checklist" using the "Reform not Blame" approach. 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 the other's statements.
5. Class teacher must determine if bullying has taken place using the following three questions:
   a) Is the behaviour targeted at a specific or group of students?
   b) Is the behaviour intended to cause physical, social or emotional harm?
   c) Is the behaviour repeated?
   When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred, teachers should consider **what, where, when and why?**
   If the answer to any of these questions is No, then the behaviour is not bullying behaviour.
   Note: one off incidents may be considered bullying in certain circumstances. A single hurtful message posted on social media can be considered bullying behaviour as it has a high likelihood of being shared multiple times and thus becomes a repeated behaviour.
6. In the event that bullying has taken place (i.e. yes to all three questions above), ask the student to make a verbal promise to cease the behaviour. **If the behaviour was of a particularly serious nature or if the pupil is less than fully co-operative and/or had previously bullied, parents will have to be present for the initial promise meeting.** Class teacher fills in the "Record of Bullying Behaviour" form. At this point the class teacher updates parents of parties involved.
7. The teacher must engage with the students involved and their parents again no more than twenty school days after the initial engagement.
8. In the event that the bullying behaviour continues, a meeting will be arranged between class teacher, parents, a member of the ISMT and principal. The pupil who has continued the bullying behaviour will be asked to make a second verbal promise along with their parents. The pupil will be given a stern warning and will be informed of the following should the bullying behaviour continue:
   - Another may take place with the principal, parents/guardians, member of the ISMT and pupil.
   - Details of all previous incidents will be discussed.
   - At this meeting the principal may then decide to suspend pupil from school. The BOM will be informed of the suspension.
9. As per Scoil Bhríde's anti-bullying campaign, the pupil who has been bullied will complete the "Targeted Pupil Impact Statement" form sometime after the resolution of the bullying situation but within the same school year.
10. Records of the incident/s of bullying should be placed on the relevant student's file in order to provide a consistent and holistic response to support the well-being of the students involved.

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):

- Implement school policy
- Buddy/peer mentoring system
- Development of the children's self-esteem
- Group work e.g. circle time
- Counselling where appropriate
- "Targeted Pupil Impact Statement" form
- Liaising with HSCL
- Liaising with outside supports
- Restorative practice
- CPD for staff

Complaint process
If a parent is not satisfied with how bullying behaviour has been addressed by the school, in accordance with these procedures, they should be referred to the school's complaints procedure. Additional Information relating to schools' complaint procedures are available at the following link: https://www.gov.ie/en/policy information/parental complaints/
In the event that a student and/or parent is dissatisfied with how a complaint has been handled, a student and/or parent may make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children if they believe that the school's actions have had a negative effect on the student.
The Office of the Ombudsman for Children can be contacted at ococomplaint@oco.ie

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.

Recording
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.

Signed: _Nichola. Hogan_ Date: _06 May 2025_
(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: _Kevin Duffy_ Date: _06 May 2025_
(Principal)