

# School Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

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

The Board of Management of Gortanumera NS 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.

## 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	20.1.25	Discussion and questionnaire
Students	20.1.25	Discussion, questionnaire
Parents	23.1.25	Letter and questionnaire
Board of Management	23.1.25	Discussion
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	N/A	
Date policy was approved: 24.3.25		
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:**

- The school should have a positive and inclusive environment to prevent and address bullying behaviour.
- The school should be a space where students and school staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported.
- The relationships between all members of the school community should be based on respect, integrity and trust.
- School leadership team influences the school culture and set standards and expectations for the school community when preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.
- Each member of staff has a responsibility to develop and maintain a school culture where bullying behaviour is unacceptable and to take a consistent approach to addressing bullying behaviour.
- Students can shape the school culture by promoting kindness and inclusion within their peer group and maintain a positive and supportive school environment for all.

- Parents, as active partners in their child's education can help foster an environment where bullying behaviour is not tolerated through promoting empathy and respect.
- It is important that the school community is a 'telling' environment. Children must not be afraid that they will face retaliation or fear of getting into trouble, or not being believed etc. They must know that the school is a safe environment where reporting bullying behaviour is encouraged.
- A **trusted adult**, is an effective strategy to encourage children to report if they or another student is experiencing bullying behaviour. **Staff support this strategy by letting students know they can talk to them. They will let the child know they have done the right thing by reporting the behaviour. The trusted adult without delay, informs the child's class teacher and the Principal.**
- Create safe physical places in the school. This helps support psychological safety and is an important measure to prevent bullying behaviour.
- Supervision is an important measure to help prevent and address bullying behaviour

#### Curriculum:

- Teaching and learning that is collaborative and respectful is promoted
- Students have regular opportunities to work in small groups with their peers Which can help build connection, belonging and empathy among students.
- Our school encourages opportunities for students to develop a sense of self-worth through both curricular and extra-curricular programmes.
- SPHE and RSE curricula aim to foster students' well-being, self-confidence and sense of belonging and to develop students' sense of personal responsibility for their behaviours and actions

#### Policy and Planning:

- The wellbeing of the school community should be at the heart of school policies and plans.
- Other policies such as the school's acceptable use policy, supervision policy, special education teaching policy and Code of Behaviour that can support implementation of a school's Bí Cineálta policy
- Supporting the participation of students in the development and implementation of school policies and plans can help increase awareness and ensure effective implementation.
- Engaging in appropriate teacher professional learning courses can support school staff to prevent and address bullying behaviour. School staff should also share their experiences and examples of best practice.

#### Relationships and Partnerships:

- Strong interpersonal connections are a vital part of effectively preventing and addressing bullying behaviour  
This is done through the following:
- Age-appropriate awareness initiatives that look at the causes and impacts of bullying behaviour including those dealing with navigating friendships, identity-based bullying, racist bullying, homophobic/transphobic bullying, sexism and sexual harassment.
- supporting the active participation of students in school life
- supporting the active participation of parents in school life, including those who may find it difficult or daunting to engage with the school due to being unfamiliar with the education system or due to language or cultural barriers



- supporting activities that build empathy, respect and resilience
- promoting acts of kindness
- teaching problem solving
- Class discussions

#### **Preventing cyber bullying behavior**

The Digital Age of consent is 16.

Most social media platforms and services have a minimum age requirement and for the majority of these services it is 13 years' old. Therefore technically, children under the age of 13 should not have a social media account. It is important for their child's safety, that parents are aware of their children's use of technology including smartphones and gaming consoles.

Strategies to prevent cyberbullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- implementing the SPHE curriculum
- having regular conversations with students about developing respectful and kind relationships online
- developing and communicating an acceptable use policy for technology

#### **Preventing homophobic/transphobic bullying behaviour**

All students including gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students, have a right to feel safe and supported at school.

Strategies to prevent homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- challenging gender stereotypes
- encouraging students to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour

#### **Preventing racist bullying behaviour**

Schools have become much more culturally diverse over the last number of decades. Students attending schools come from many different cultures and backgrounds. Students from diverse backgrounds may face discrimination and prejudice and may be subject to racist bullying behaviour. Strategies to prevent racist bullying behaviour include some of the following,

- fostering a school culture where diversity is celebrated and where students "see themselves" in their school environment
- having the cultural diversity of the school visible and on display
- encouraging bystanders to report 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

- ensuring that library reading material and textbooks represent appropriate lived experiences of students and adults from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds

**Preventing racist bullying behaviour:**

- We focus on gender equality as part of the school's measures to create a supportive and respectful environment.

Strategies to prevent sexist bullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- 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
- organising awareness campaigns, workshops and presentations on gender equality and respect
- encouraging parents to reinforce these values of respect at home

**Preventing sexual harassment**

Preventing sexual harassment requires an approach that focuses on education, awareness and clear enforceable policies. In our School there is a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment. Sexual harassment should never be dismissed as teasing or banter.

Strategies to prevent sexual harassment include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- > promoting positive role models within the school community
- > challenging gender stereotypes that can contribute to sexual harassment

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):

Creating safe physical spaces in schools:

The creation of safe physical spaces supports psychological safety and is an important measure to prevent bullying behaviour. Spaces that have a clear line of sight make it easier for school staff to supervise students. Hidden spaces in hallways, in the schoolyard can be areas where there is a greater risk for bullying behaviour to occur.

Our school increases visibility in these areas by the

- Wooden gate to avoid students congregating in these areas or increasing supervision.
- We take the following measures to create safe physical spaces:
  - > ensure good lighting is present to avoid dark corners or spaces
  - > remove visual barriers from windows such as posters
- improve the visibility of school staff who are supervising at break times including during yard duty
- > artwork and signage help our schools to promote the school's values such as equality, diversity, inclusion and respect

This helps students to identify and to feel a sense of responsibility for their school environment. The inclusion of spaces within schools for collaborative learning can also play a part in fostering a sense of belonging. It is important that the school grounds are well maintained to promote a sense of ownership and respect in the school community

Supervision

Appropriate supervision is an important measure to help prevent and address bullying behaviour. We take all reasonable measures to ensure the safety of their students and to supervise students when students are attending school or attending school activities.

Our School has a yard duty rota where teacher is on duty during each break with Sna. Children must be collected and dropped off by parents in the school yard

Teacher supervision during breaks inside when weather is not permitting children to go outside

School opens at 9.17 for children to enter their classrooms.

Excursions and sporting events will have teacher supervising children.

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

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

Ms. Ryan, MS Madden, Ms. Duane, MS Dooley, Ms. O'Brien

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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):

### ***Identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred***

When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred the teacher should consider the following: what, where, when and why?

- If a group of students is involved, each student should be engaged with individually at first. Thereafter, all students involved should be met as a group.
- At the group meeting, each student should be asked for their account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's views.
- Each student should be supported, as appropriate, following the group meeting.
- It may also be helpful to ask the students involved to write down their account of the incident.

Incidents can occur where behaviour is unacceptable and hurtful but the behaviour is not bullying behaviour. Strategies that deal with inappropriate behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

### **Where bullying behaviour has occurred**

School staff should know what to do when bullying behaviour is reported to them or when they witness bullying behaviour. The school's Bí Cineálta policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour and the student friendly policy should clearly explain what actions will be taken when bullying behaviour is reported. (See Chapter 4).

The 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.

It is important for school staff to be fair and consistent in their approach to address bullying behaviour.

Both the student who is experiencing bullying behaviour and the student who is displaying bullying behaviour need support.

It is important that the student who is experiencing bullying behaviour is engaged with without delay so that they feel listened to, supported and reassured.

School staff should identify the supports needed for the student who is displaying bullying behaviour to better manage relational difficulties and ensure that their needs are met.

A student's agency or sense of power can be decreased when they experience or witness bullying behaviour.

When a student tells an adult that they feel that they are experiencing bullying behaviour they may feel that they are taking back some control over what is

### **Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour**

It is very important that a student's agency is not decreased further by adults deciding what will happen next without listening to the student and involving them in deciding on the actions that will be taken.

The following principles must be adhered to when addressing bullying behaviour

: > ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour feels listened to 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\*

\*Parents are an integral part of the school community and play an important role, in partnership with schools, in addressing bullying behaviour.

Where bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved must be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and to consult with them on the actions to be taken to address the behaviour as outlined in the school's Bí Cineálta policy.

In circumstances where student expresses concern about their parents being informed, the school should develop an appropriate plan to support the student and for how their parents will be informed.

The school should consider communication barriers that may exist when communicating with parents, for example, literacy, digital literacy or language barriers.

Given the complexity of bullying behaviour it is generally acknowledged that that no one approach works in all situations..

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):

**Identifying if Bullying behaviour has occurred:**

- If a group of students involves, each student should be engaged with individually at first
- Thereafter, all students involved should be met as group
- At group meeting, each student should be asked for their account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's views.
- Each student will be supported as appropriate following the group meeting
- May also be helpful to ask each student to write down their account of the incident
- **Where Bullying has occurred:**
- School staff will be fair and consistent in their approach to address bullying behaviour.
- Both student who is experiencing bullying behaviour and student who is displaying bullying behaviour need support.
- Student who is experiencing bullying behaviour is engaged without delay so they feel listened to, supported and reassured.

- School staff should identify the supports needed for the student is displaying bullying behaviour to better manage relational difficulties and ensure their needs are met.
- **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.
  - 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 feels safe.
  - Parents may also make the school aware of bullying behaviour that has occurred and may ask the school to not take action,
  - Parents should put this request in writing to the school.
  - However, while acknowledging parents’ requests, the school may decide that, based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour.
- **Determining if bullying behaviour has ceased:**
  - Teacher must engage with the students and parents involved no more than 20 school days after the initial discussion to review the progress following the initial intervention. The review will look at the nature of the bullying behaviour, the effectiveness of the strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and the relationship between the students involved.
  - Even though the bullying behaviour may have ceased, ongoing supervision and support may be required for both the student who has experienced the bullying and the student who has displayed the bullying behaviour.
  - If bullying behaviour has not ceased, the teacher should review the strategies used in consultation with the students and parents and agree to meet again over an agreed timeframe until the bullying behaviour has ceased.
  - Where it becomes clear that the student who is displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behaviour, then the school should consider using strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour as provided in the schools Code of Behaviour.
  - If disciplinary sanctions are considered, this is a matter between the relevant student, their parents and the school.
- **Recording Bullying Behaviour:**
  - All incidents of bullying behaviour should be recorded. This will be done on Aladdin on the log of actions.
- **In log of actions Please include the following**
  - Form of bullying behaviour
  - Where it took place
  - When it took place
  - Date of the initial engagement with the students and their parents.
  - Views of the students and their parents regarding the actions taken to address the bullying behaviour
  - Review with students and their parents to determine if bullying has ceased and views of students and parents in relation to this
  - Date each of these engagements
  - Date when bullying has ceased
  - Any engagement with external supports/services
  - If student has a Support file place a copy of the record in their file.
  - If Student Support Plan in place, plan should be updated to incorporate response

### strategies and associated supports

- **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 schools' complaints procedure.
- If the event that the student or parent is dissatisfied with how the complaint has been handled, they may make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children if they believe the schools actions had a negative effect on the student.

- **Supports:**

- Supports available are NEPS, OIDE, Webwise

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: **Pat Rourke**

Date: 24.03.25

(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: **Anne Ryan**

Date: 24.03.25

(Principal)