School Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

Should there be any discrepancy between the Irish and English in this policy, it is accepted that the Irish is the correct version and the English is provided as a translation.

The Board of Management of Gaelscoil Uí Fhiaich 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.

Some students with special education needs may have social communication difficulties which may cause them to communicate their needs through behaviours than 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 have difficulty controlling.

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 Bi 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	19/05/2025	Draft circulated in April Consultation and amendments at staff meeting 19/05/2025
Students	9/06/25	Assembly in the Halla Discussed in classrooms with teachers.
Parents	11/06/25	Shared with Coiste 19/05/25 for comment and sharing. Discussed at Coiste meeting 11/06/25
Board of Management	07/04/25 Draft	Accepted by Board 18/06/25

Wider school community as appropriate	20/5/2025 – secretaries/Eddie 21/5/2025 - cleaners	Paper copy provided
Date policy was approved: *18/06/25*		
Date policy was 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):

Sample Education and prevention strategies

School-wide approach
- A school-wide approach to the fostering of respect for all members of the school community.

- The promotion of the value of diversity to address issues of prejudice and stereotyping, and highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour.

- The fostering and enhancing of the self-esteem of all our pupils through both curricular and extracurricular activities. Pupils will be provided with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth through formal and informal interactions.

- Whole staff professional development on bullying to ensure that all staff develops an awareness of what bullying is, how it impacts on pupils' lives and the need to respond to it-prevention and intervention.

- Professional development with specific focus on the training of the relevant teacher(s)

- School wide awareness raising and training on all aspects of bullying, to include pupils, parent(s)/guardian(s) and the wider school community.

- Development and promotion of an Anti-Bullying code for the school-to be included in student journals and displayed publicly in classrooms and in common areas of the school.

- The school's anti-bullying policy is discussed with pupils and all parent(s)/guardian(s)s are given a copy as part of the Code of Behaviour of the school (every year).

- The implementation of regular (e.g. per year/per term/per month/per week) whole school awareness measures e.g. a dedicated notice board in the school and classrooms on the promotion of friendship, and bullying prevention; annual Friendship Week and parent(s)/guardian(s) seminars; annual or term or monthly student surveys; regular school or year group assemblies by principal, deputy principal, year heads etc.

- Encourage a culture of telling, with particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders. 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 incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.

- Ensuring that pupils know who to tell and how to tell, e.g.:

    o Direct approach to teacher at an appropriate time, for example after class.

    o Hand note up with homework.

    o Make a phone call to the school or to a trusted teacher in the school.

    o Get a parent(s)/guardian(s) or friend to tell on your behalf.

    o Administer a confidential questionnaire to pupils from first class up and regular discussion in infant classes.

    o Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place.

- Identify clear protocols to encourage parent(s)/guardian(s) to approach the school if they suspect that their child is being bullied. The protocol should be developed in consultation with parents.

- The development of an Acceptable Use Policy in the school to include the necessary steps to ensure that the access to technology within the school is strictly monitored, as is the pupils' use of mobile phones / smart devices

Implementation of curricula

Developing Awareness amongst the Children

i)The Curriculum

Naíonáin – Rang 2:

Developing awareness across the following curricular areas:

Informal Irish discussions

OSPS programmes

Circle time

Talking about feelings

Talking before and after break times in relation to acceptable behviours

Naming friends

Showing interest in others – everyone is special.

Giving opportunities for self-expression

Group work

Social, Personal and Health Education Curriculum (SPHE)

Various SPHE programmes available to be covered within classes – Stay Safe/ Walk Tall etc.

Drama

Encouraging self-expression

Group work

Acting out roles

SPHE programme involving sketches (Stay Safe etc)

Religion Programme

Grow in Love

Getting along with one another

Expression of feelings

Importance of friendship and behaving in a Christian fashion to everyone

Getting to know one another and caring for each other.

Physical Education

Group work

Understanding rules of games and following rules

ii) Yard and Play Time

Rules of the yard and the reason behind them

Teaching the children to respect personal space.

Disputes / accidents to be resolved immediately

Aingeal Cuideachta

Rang 3 – Rang 6

i)The Curriculum

Developing awareness across the following curricular areas:

Gaeilge

Informal discussions on things that happened in the yard etc

Formal discussions which allow children to develop vocabulary around bullying behaviours

Discussions on fairness

English

Circle time

Exploring poetry on the topics of bullying/ friendships etc

Reading stories and novels around the topic

Feelings and emotions – developing vocabulary around the topic

Visual Arts

Pictorial representations of poetry

Discussion on each other's work

Drama

Role play on various scenarios

Social, Personal and Health Education Curriculum (SPHE)

Various programmes on SPHE

Rules around respecting school property/ personal property and each other

Co-operation between children/ classes/ school community/ wider community/ national and international communities awakening a civic spirit.

Circle Time

Older children supporting younger children in the school.

Internet Safety Day

Religion

Themes within the book – e.g. communication/ forgiveness.

Physical Education

Involvement in Co-operative games

Understanding rules of games and following rules

Accepting judgements

Exercising self-control in competitive games

ii) Yard and Play Time

Rules of the yard to be explained

Disputes / accidents to be resolved immediately

Teaching the children to respect personal space.

Close eye to be kept on activities

iii) In General

Notes to be kept on incidents that happen

Communication between teachers in relation to events which have happened

on the yard.

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

- Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extra- curricular activities. Non-teaching and ancillary staff will be encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers. Supervision will also apply to monitoring student use of communication technology within the school.

- Involvement of the student council in contributing to a safe school environment e.g. Buddy system, mentoring, Lunchtime Pals and other student support activities that can help to support pupils and encourage a culture of peer respect and support.

- Aingeal Cuideachta – infant yards

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

1. *Class teacher*

2. *Any / all staff*

3. *Deputy principal*

4. *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 and the pupil exhibiting bullying behavior 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):

The school's procedures for investigation, follow-up and recording of bullying behaviour and the established intervention strategies used by the school for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour are as follows :
Bullying is identified in 'Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying and bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent ar Address Bullying Behaviour fro Prinary 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 following three questions should be considered to determine if bullying has occurred.

1. Is the behaviour targeted at a specific student or group of students?
2. Is the behaviour intended to cause physical, social or emotional harm?
3. Is the behaviour repeated?

If the answer to each of the questions above is Yes, then the behaviour is bullying behaviour and the behaviour should be addressed using the Bí Cineálta procedures.

6.1. **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

Where Bullying Behaviour has Occurred

- 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

6.3 **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.

6.4 **Determining if bullying behaviour has ceased**
- The teacher must engage with the students and parents involved no more than 20 school days after the initial discussion to review progress following the initial intervention.
- Important factors to consider as part of the review are 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 behaviour as well as the student who has displayed the behaviour. It can take time for relationships to settle and for supports to take effect. In some cases, relationships may never be restored to how they were before the bullying behaviour occurred.
- If the 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 the strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour as provided for within the school's 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.

- The record should include the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour.
- It should document the review with students and their parents to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased and the views of students and their parents in relation to this.
- These records should be retained in accordance with the school's record keeping policy and in line with data protection regulations

Complaints Procedure
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.
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.

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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's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying involves a whole school approach. Given the complexity of bullying behaviour, no one intervention/support programme works in all situations.

• **Supporting Bullied pupils and those who have witnessed it:**

- Ending the bullying behaviour, - Fostering respect for bullied pupils and all pupils, - Fostering greater empathy towards and support for bullied pupils, - Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through annual awareness-raising programmes, - Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through the speedy identification of those responsible and speedy resolution of bullying situations, - Making adequate counselling facilities available to pupils who need it in a timely manner (subject to available funding) - 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).

Supporting Bullying pupils:

- 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 honorable thing and giving them praise for this, - Making adequate counseling 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 behavior in general, encouraging teachers and parents to focus on, challenge and correct the behaviour while supporting the child, - In dealing with bullying behaviour seeking resolution and offering a fresh start with a 'clean sheet' and no blame in return for keeping a promise to reform.

Supports

Supports are available to help prevent and address bullying behaviour. These include the following:

- National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)
- Oide
- Webwise
- National Parents Council
- Dublin City University Anti-Bullying Centre
- Tusla

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: _____   **Date:** 18/06/2025_____

Chairperson

Signed: *Deaglán Ó Drisceoil*   **Date:** 18/06/2025_____

Principal