Bí Cineálta

Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour 2

Definition of Bullying 3

Section A: Development/review of our Bí Cineálta policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour 4

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour 5

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour 11

Section D: Oversight 17

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Bí Cineálta

Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management, Scoil na gCeithre Máistrí, 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*.

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.

The Board of Management of Scoil na gCeithre Máistrí is committed to ensuring that all students who attend Scoil na gCeithre Máistrí 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.

Scoil na gCeithre Máistrí additionally confirms that we will take all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the bullying or harassment of our students in whatever form and however motivated.

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 each person in Scoil na gCeithre Máistrí Athlone is treated with respect and care, in accordance with the Catholic Schedule.

As a Catholic gaelscoil, Scoil na gCeithre Máistrí is committed to respecting the dignity of every individual. No person is to be devalued, and all have an indispensable 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 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.

Our school - Scoil na gCeithre Máistrí - 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	28/08/2026 07/09/2026 07/09/2026	• Staff Meeting • Bí Cineálta documents shared with staff • Staff Questionnaire • Whole staff in-service (half-day closure)
Students	14/09/2026	Student Questionnaire 1st to 6th class
Parents	04/09/2026	Parent Questionnaire
Board of Management	17/09/2026 17/09/2026	• Initial consultation and sharing of draft policy • Ratification of new policy
Wider school community as appropriate e.g. school bus drivers	22/09/26	Policy published on website
Date policy was approved: 17/09/26		
Date policy was last reviewed: 26/08/25		

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

Section B 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 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 the school in a real way.

This school takes positive steps to ensure that the culture of the school is one which welcomes a respectful dialogue and encounter with diversity and difference, by ensuring that prevention and inclusivity strategies are given priority and discussed regularly at Board of Management and staff meetings.

The dignity and the wellbeing of the individual person is of paramount concern in our Christian response. This school will listen closely to and dialogue with parents, thereby building a relationship of mutual understanding, respect, trust and confidence.

In continuing to develop prevention strategies, this school will listen to young people and parents, to help establish their particular context and needs. Frequent periods of reflection and engagement by the school, young people and parents, will be used to discern appropriate supports for young people in this school and to help inform future prevention strategies.

Culture and Environment

We strive to:

- Create a positive and inclusive school culture and environment where students and school staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported.
- Foster relationships between all members of the school community that are based on respect, care, integrity and trust.

- Develop and maintain a school culture where bullying behaviour is unacceptable and a consistent approach to addressing bullying behaviour
- Involve students in shaping the school culture by promoting kindness, diversity and inclusion in all aspects of school life.
- Support a telling environment where reporting of bullying behaviour is encouraged.
- Support the concept of reporting to a "trusted adult" in the school.
- Create safe physical spaces in our school – appropriate supervision and visibility of school staff at break times.

Curriculum

- Provide teaching and promote learning which is collaborative and respectful, fostering inclusion and respect for diversity.
- Provide opportunities for students to develop a sense of self-worth.
- Display a shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact.
- Teach SPHE and RSE curricula which aim to foster student's well-being and self-confidence and sense of belonging and to develop students' sense of personal responsibility for their own behaviour and actions.
- Explicitly teach students about bullying and its effects using the following resources:

- Stay Safe Programme;
- Walk Tall Programme;
- the Gender Equality Matters Programme in senior classes (which looks at stereotyping in a child-friendly way),
- the FUSE Programme (from the DCU Antibullying Policy)
- Cyberbullying programmes such as the Webwise Programme
- My Selfie and the Wider World
- HTML Heroes

- Organise seminars/workshops given by relevant professionals focusing on educating pupils on Bullying prevention; appropriate online behaviour; online safety and fostering Wellbeing amongst students. The school-wide approach and the role of parents is of great importance in this regard.
- Use of programmes such as Friends for Life (which looks at social skills and resilience).

- The school will specifically consider the additional needs of SEN pupils with regard to programme implementation and the development of skills and strategies to enable all pupils to respond appropriately.

Policy and Planning

We strive to:

- Place the wellbeing of the school's community at the heart of all our school's policies and plans.
- Ensure that other school policies such as the Acceptable Use policy, Special Education Teaching policy, Child Safeguarding Statement and Code of Behaviour etc support the implementation of the Bí Cineálta policy.
- Establish clear procedures for reporting and responding to bullying.
- Engage in appropriate teacher professional learning courses that can support school staff to prevent and address bullying behaviour.
- Review the Bí Cineálta policy annually and as required.

Relationships and Partnerships

We strive to strengthen relationships between members of the school community through:

- Supporting the active participation of students in school life.
- Supporting the active participation of parents in school life.
- Implementing age-appropriate awareness initiatives that look at the causes and impacts of bullying behaviour.
- Conducting workshops and seminars for students, school staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of bullying.
- Supporting activities that build empathy, respect and resilience.
- Encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring
- Promoting acts of kindness
- Promoting cooperation and collaboration through team sports, activities and group work

Preventing Cyberbullying Behaviour

We strive to prevent cyberbullying behaviour through:

- Communicating the school's Acceptable Use Policy for technology to parents and ensuring that all parents sign a copy of the policy.
- Reviewing the Acceptable Use Policy regularly.
- Implementing the SPHE curriculum
- Implementing the Digital Media Literacy curriculum
- Preventing students from having unsupervised access to the internet while in school
- Referring to appropriate online behaviour as part of the standards of behaviour in the Code of Behaviour.
- Promoting online safety events for parents who are responsible for overseeing their children's activities online
- Directing parents to the Department of Education website *anti-bullying advice for parents and pupils*
- Holding an Internet safety day to reinforce awareness around appropriate online behaviour

Preventing homophobic/transphobic bullying behaviour

The strategies outlined in the first five sections above are also applicable to the prevention of homophobic and transphobic bullying.

We strive to prevent homophobic/transphobic bullying behaviour through:

- Maintaining an inclusive physical environment.
- Encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
- Challenging gender stereotypes
- Encouraging students to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour
- Encouraging parents to reinforce values of respect at home.

Preventing racist bullying behaviour

The strategies outlined in the first five sections above are also applicable to the prevention of racist bullying.

We strive to prevent racist bullying behaviour through:

- 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 peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building active
- 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 sexist bullying behaviour

The strategies outlined in the first five sections above are also applicable to the prevention of sexist bullying.

We strive to prevent racist bullying behaviour through:

- 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 values of respect at home

Preventing sexual harassment

The strategies outlined in the first five sections above are also applicable to the prevention of sexual harassment.

We strive to prevent sexual harassment through:

- (ensuring/ establishing) making clear that our school has a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment of any kind.
- Clarifying that sexual harassment should never be dismissed as teasing or banter
- promoting positive role models within the school community
- challenging gender stereotypes that can contribute to sexual harassment
- encouraging parents to reinforce values of respect at home

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):

- Acceptable Use of the Internet Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Child Safeguarding Statement

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.

Parents are encouraged to raise any concerns about their child with their class teacher at the earliest opportunity.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

The relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows:

Class Teacher: The class teacher will investigate and deal with cases of suspected bullying in his or her class. A pupil, parent or guardian may communicate a concern regarding suspected bullying to any teacher in the school but it is the class teacher who will investigate and address the concern.

Any person who receives a complaint regarding suspected bullying behavior must report the complaint to the class teacher who will address the complaint.

Deputy Principal: In cases where the class teacher determines that the behaviour being investigated should be reported to the Deputy Principal/Anti-Bullying co-ordinator.

Principal: In cases where the class teacher or the Deputy Principal determine that the behaviour being investigated should be reported to the Principal.

Any teacher may act as a relevant teacher if circumstances warrant it.

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):

The whole school community has a responsibility to prevent and address bullying behaviour. Schools should work in partnership with their patron, Board of Management, staff, students and their parents to develop and implement their Bí Cineálta policy.

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.

When addressing bullying behaviour teachers should:

- 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 the students 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 Identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred

Stage 1 – Identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred

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.

When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred teachers should consider what, where, when and why?
Note: these steps are required as outlined in the Procedures

- 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 be helpful to ask the students involved to write down their account of the incident(s) where bullying behaviour has occurred

To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour the following questions should be considered after the teacher has conducted a preliminary investigation:

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.

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.

If the answer to any of these questions is *No*, then the behaviour is not bullying behaviour. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

Stage 2 – 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 students 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

- it is important to listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation
- a record will be kept of the engagement with all involved
- this record will document the form and type of bullying behaviour, if known (see Section 2.5 and 2.7 of the Bi Cineálta procedures), where and when it took place and the date of the initial engagement with the students involved and their parents.
- the record will include the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour

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, it may be decided that, based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying

behaviour.

Stage 3 - Determining if bullying behaviour has ceased

- the teacher must engage with the students involved and their parents again no more than 20 school days after the initial engagement
- important factors to consider as part of this engagement 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
- the teacher 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.
- the date that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased should also be recorded
- any engagement with external services/supports should also be noted
- ongoing supervision and support may be needed for the students involved even where bullying behaviour has ceased
- if the bullying behaviour has not ceased the teacher should review the strategies used in consultation with the students involved and their parents. A timeframe should be agreed for further engagement until the bullying behaviour has ceased
- if it becomes clear that the student who is displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behaviour, then school consideration should be given to 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
- if a parent(s) is not satisfied with how the bullying behaviour has been addressed by the school, in accordance with the *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*; they should be referred to the school's complaints procedures
- if a parent is dissatisfied with how a complaint has been handled, they 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 school will use the following approaches to support those who experience, witness and display bullying behaviour (see Chapter 6 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

We take all instances of bullying behaviour on a case-by-case basis, but we may use the following approaches generally:

- All students involved will be checked-in with regularly and behaviour will be monitored carefully.
- The teacher will check-in with parents too and will look for their ongoing support to monitor their child at home and to communicate with the school if needed.
- We will use resources, as appropriate – including those developed by NEPS (National Educational Psychological Service), Oide (support service for schools) and from programmes/sites such as Webwise and FUSE.
- Teachers will be encouraged to attend training in Restorative Practice.

All bullying reportings 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, Scoil na gCeithre Máistrí, 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 Scoil na gCeithre 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.

- *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*
- *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying*
- *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*

- Scoil na gCeithre Máistrí Athlone, Co. Westmeath N37 RP03
  Ascaill Lios Uí Mhulláin, Átha Luain, Co. na hIarmhí, Éire N37 RP03