



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

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

The Board of Management of St. Mary's National School Castlefinn 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	12 <sup>th</sup> February 2025 14 <sup>th</sup> February 2025 29 <sup>th</sup> August 2025	Staff questionnaires completed. Staff grouped into three cohorts to design age appropriate questionnaires (Junior & Senior Infants, First to Third Class & Fourth to Sixth Class). Half Day Closure. Read, review & give feedback on draft policy.
Students	7 <sup>th</sup> – 11 <sup>th</sup> April 20 <sup>th</sup> May & 17 <sup>th</sup> June	Questionnaires distributed and completed. Student Council Input.
Parents	11 <sup>th</sup> March 2025 7 <sup>th</sup> – 11 <sup>th</sup> April	Parent Focus Group Questionnaires distributed, completed and returned.
Board of Management	18 <sup>th</sup> June 2025 1 <sup>st</sup> October 2025	CPSMA video viewed & discussed. Procedures shared with all BoM members. BoM ratification
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	23 <sup>rd</sup> June 2025	Bus providers and bus escort invited in for informal meet.
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:

- Positive and inclusive school culture
- Positive relationships
- Effective leadership
- Positive culture and environment
- A telling environment
- A trusted adult
- Safe physical access
- Supervision
- Concern box/ worry monster in classrooms
- Opportunities to participate in class and whole school activities to raise self – esteem.

## Curriculum

- Teaching and learning in SPHE
- RSE curriculum
- Student participation
- SPHE methodologies
- Promoting inclusion and diversity
- Extra - curricular activities to develop positive self - worth
- Group work/Collaboration
- Role - play, acting out scenarios
- Circle time
- Morning meetings.

## Policy and Planning:

- Bí Cineálta policy
- Student friendly Bí Cineálta policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Child Safeguarding statement
- Acceptable Use policy
- Supervision
- RSE Policy
- SEN policy
- SSE Wellbeing in Education
- Appropriate TPL (Teacher Professional Learning).

## Relationships and Partnerships:

- Strong interpersonal connections
- Bullying awareness initiatives
- Student and parent participation
- TPL (Teacher Professional Learning)
- Critical thinking skills
- Promoting peer support
- Supporting activities that build empathy, respect and resilience.

## Preventing cyberbullying behaviour:

(Note - the digital age of consent is the minimum age a user must be before a social media or internet company can collect, process and store their data. In Ireland the digital age of consent is 16. Children between 13 and 16 must have parental permission to sign up to social media services. Most social media platforms have a minimum age requirement and for the majority of these, it is 13 years old. Therefore, children under the age of 13 should not have a social media account).

- Promoting digital citizenship
- Implementing SPHE curriculum
- Open conversations with students about developing respectful and kind relationships online
- 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
- Holding Internet Safety day.

## Preventing homophobic/ transphobic bullying behaviour:

- Maintaining an inclusive physical environment such as displaying relevant posters
- Encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
- Challenging gender-stereotypes.

Preventing racist bullying behaviour:

- Fostering a school culture where diversity is celebrated and where students “see themselves” in their school environment
- Encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
- Encouraging bystanders to report when they witness racist behaviour
- 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:

- Ensuring members of staff model respectful behaviour and treat students equally irrespective of their sex
- Ensuring all student have the same opportunities to engage in school activities irrespective of their sex
- Celebrating diversity at school
- Encouraging parents to reinforce these values of respect at home.

Preventing sexual harassment:

- 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):

- Two teachers and six SNAs present to supervise at small break and lunch
- Children are accompanied by at least two staff members on school trips
- Children are told where to play when out at yard and what spaces to avoid
- Teachers bear in mind children who may have recently clashed when organising groups for collaborative work/ teams etc. with a view to giving space to the children involved to heal.

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.

## Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

The Principal – Mrs. Murray

Junior & Senior Infant teacher – Miss. Campbell

First Class – Miss. Ferry

Second Class – Ms. Cronolly

Third Class – Miss Catterson

Fourth Class – Mr. Quinn

Fifth & Sixth Class – Mrs. Mc Cready

Autism Class – Mrs. Gallagher

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):

**Identify if bullying behaviour has occurred:**

- Two staff members can be present when engaging with children individually initially without parents' notification and presence.
- Two staff members can be present when engaging with a group of children to investigate what happened. Teacher's discretion can be used with this approach about when best to use it.
- A group meeting will provide the opportunity for the children to give 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.

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.

**Requests to take no action:**

A student who reports bullying behaviour may ask a member of staff not to do anything and just "look out" for them due to not wanting to be identified as having told someone about the bullying behaviour. They might 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 behaviour. It must be made clear to the pupil that other parties may need to be informed for their welfare.

Parents may also make the school aware of bullying behaviour and specifically request that no action is to be taken by the school. Parents should put this in writing to the school. However, schools may decide that based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour through the Bí Cineálta procedures and/or the Code of Behaviour where appropriate.

**Determining if the 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. Factors to consider in the review include:

- the nature of the bullying
- the effectiveness of strategies use to address the bullying behaviour
- the relationship between the students involved.

Ongoing supervision of both the child experiencing bullying behaviour and the child displaying bullying behaviour may be required as well as continued support.

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 school.

**Recording bullying behaviour:**

All incidents of bullying behaviour should be recorded. The following details should be included on the record:

- form (see section 2.5 of Bí Cineálta procedures)
- type (see section 2.7 of Bí Cineálta procedures)
- where and when (if known)
- the date of initial engagement with the students and their parents
- the views of the students and their parents\* regarding the action to be taken to address the bullying behaviour (\*only in relation to their own child)
- when review takes place, it should be noted if the bullying behaviour has ceased and the views of the students and parents in relation to this.
- note the date of reviews and engagements
- note the date that the bullying behaviour has ceased
- any engagement with external services/ supports should also be noted
- if a SSF exists for a pupil involved, schools are encouraged to place a copy of the record on the student's support file.

**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 complaints procedure. In the event that a student and/or parent is dissatisfied following the complaints procedure, they may make a complaint to the Ombudsman for children. The Office of the Ombudsman for Children can be contacted at [ococomplaint@oco.ie](mailto:ococomplaint@oco.ie).

**Supports:**

NEPS

Oide

Webwise

National Parents Council

DCU Anti bullying centre

Tusla

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):

**Where bullying behaviour has occurred:**

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, then school can deal with it in accordance with Bí Cineálta policy

It is important for 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. Engage with the student who is experiencing bullying without delay. School staff should identify the supports needed for the student who is displaying bullying behaviour to better manage relational difficulties.

It is 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 the child 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 view 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 of both 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 a 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.

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:  
(Chairperson of board of management)

Date:

Signed:  
(Principal)

Date: