

## **Coláiste Naomh Feichín**

### **Bí Cineálta**

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

The Board of Management of **Coláiste Naomh Feichín** 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 on any of the nine grounds specified: gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.

This policy comprehends bullying that is either perpetrated by students or experienced by students in the College. The matter of intra-staff bullying is addressed in the following ETB policies.

- **Bullying Prevention Policy – Compliant Procedure for ETB Staff.**
- **Harassment/Sexual Harassment prevention policy – complaint procedure for ETB staff.**

### **Definition of Bullying**

**Bullying is defined 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.**

*Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying 2024*

*Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2024*

Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour that is not bullying behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

## Table of Contents:

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Definition of Bullying.....	1
Section A: Development of our Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour.....	3
Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour.....	4
Culture and Environment .....	4
Curriculum (Teaching and Learning).....	7
Policy and Planning.....	8
Relationships and Partnerships.....	9
Preventing Cyberbullying Behaviour.....	10
Preventing Homophobic/Transphobic Bullying Behaviour.....	11
Preventing Racist Bullying Behaviour.....	12
Preventing Sexist Bullying Behaviour.....	12
Preventing Sexual Harassment.....	13
Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour.....	14
Approach .....	14
Identifying if Bullying Behaviour has Occurred.....	14
Where Bullying Behaviour has Occurred .....	16
Requests to take No Action.....	17
Follow up where Bullying Behaviour has Occured and Determining if Bullying Behaviour has Ceased.....	18
Recording Bullying Behaviour.....	19
Complaint Process.....	19
Supports.....	19
Section D: Oversight.....	20
Reference: .....	20

## Section A: Development 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 of this policy.

	Date Consulted	Method of Consultation
School Staff	24/03/25  03/04/25 20/05/25	Training Course in Dublin completed by Gearóidín Ní Chonghaile and Máire Ní an Mháistir Half Day Staff Training Bí Cineálta Policy accepted by Staff
Students	6-10/04/25  19/05/25	Bí Cineálta Poster designed by students in Bliain 1 & 2 Brought to the Student council and accepted
Parents	14/05/25  19/05/25	All stakeholders in the school received a copy of the Draft Plan via email Draft Plan brought before the Parent's Association and accepted by those members
Board of management	09/04/25  14/05/25  28/05/25	Bí Cineálta Procedures explained to the Board of Management All stakeholders in the school received a copy of the Draft Plan via email Bí Cineálta Plan brought before the Board and ratified
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers		The Plan will be available on the school website
Date policy was approved: 28/05/25		
Date policy was last reviewed:		

## **Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour**

This section sets out the prevention strategies that is 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.

The *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice* provides the following four key areas that are essential for a holistic, wholeschool approach to wellbeing promotion:

1. Culture and Environment;
2. Curriculum (Teaching and Learning);
3. Policy and Planning;
4. Relationships and Partnerships.

These four areas are considered by our school when developing these measures to prevent bullying behaviour.

### **Culture and Environment**

A positive and inclusive school culture and environment is essential to prevent and address bullying behaviour. The school environment should be a space where students and school staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported.

Relationships between all members of the school community should be based on respect, care, integrity and trust. Open communication between the patron, Board of Management, school staff, students and their parents help to foster a collaborative approach and shared responsibilities in relation to preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.

The school leadership team influences the school culture and set the standards and expectations for the school community when preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.

Each member of school 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.

## **A Telling Environment**

It is important that the school community supports a 'telling' environment.

According to research conducted in Ireland, there is a persistent tendency not to report bullying incidents. Students should feel comfortable to talk about concerns regarding bullying behaviour.

The reasons why students may not report include the following:

- Fear of retaliation from the student displaying the bullying behaviour or their friendship group
- Concerns about being seen as a "tell-tale" for reporting bullying behaviour
- Fear that the adult may make the situation worse
- Fear that the adult doesn't have the knowledge and skills to deal appropriately with the bullying behaviour
- Fear that the adult may deny access to their smart phone
- Not knowing what will happen when they report bullying behaviour
- Fear that they will not be believed
- Concerns about "getting into trouble" for reporting bullying behaviour
- Not having evidence to back up the allegation of bullying behaviour, this can be seen particularly with relational bullying behaviour.

Schools should be safe environments where reporting of bullying behaviour is encouraged.

## **A Trusted Adult**

The concept of "a trusted adult" can be an effective strategy to encourage students to report if they or another student is experiencing bullying behaviour. Staff could support this strategy by letting students know that they can talk to them.

Students who witness bullying behaviour should be supported and encouraged to report the behaviour to a trusted adult in the school so that the behaviour can be addressed. Students who witness bullying behaviour on social media have an important role in helping to address the behaviour by reporting the witnessed behaviour to a trusted adult.

The trusted adult should reassure the student that they have done the right thing by reporting the behaviour. The trusted adult should, without delay, inform the member of staff who has responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour.

At postprimary level this may be the Deputy Principal, Class Teacher, or a member of the student support team. If unsure who to inform, the trusted adult should inform the Principal or Deputy Principal. The trusted adult should continue to support the student, as appropriate, while the behaviour is being addressed by the relevant member of staff.



## **Creating Safe Physical Spaces in School**

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, around staircases and in the schoolyard can be areas where there is a greater risk for bullying behaviour to occur.

Schools could 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
- Install mirrors to improve visibility and reduce blind spots
- Improve the visibility of school staff who are supervising at break times including during yard duty
- Murals, artwork and signage can help schools to promote the school's values such as equality, diversity, inclusion and respect.

Students can feel a greater sense of belonging to a school community when they are given ownership of their own space through art and creativity. 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. All of the above are in place and in practice in our school.

## **Supervision**

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

### **Supervision policies in place to prevent Bullying Behaviour:**

- Class Timetabling
- Break time/Lunch Supervision
- Supervision before and after school starts from once students arrive on the school grounds
- Supervision of students on school trips and outings
- Supervision at sports times
- Supervision when visiting speakers come to the school.

### **Actions in our school to promote a positive Culture and Environment:**

- Display of the Anti-Bullying Charter
- Display of pupils work
- Coffee Mornings: to strengthen relationships between the school and the local community.

- Supervision of the students during non-structured time
- A positive class room culture
- Inclusion of new groups such as specific cultural days
- Sports (Football Blitz & Basketball)
- Wellbeing Days
- Group work facilitated in classes
- Specific days to promote Subject : Maths Week , Science Week
- The Christmas Show
- Pictures displayed of students on different trips and doing activities
- Scléip
- Stand –Up awareness Week (Against LGBTQ+ Bullying) / Anti- Bullying week
- Wear Red Day (Against Racism)
- Student Voice/Student Council
- Parents Council
- Behaviour Policy
- Classroom Rules
- Code of Behaviour
- Awards Ceremony for extracurricular activities
- Student of the Year
- Attendance Awards
- Focus on Pupils Well Being.

## **Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)**

Teaching and learning that is collaborative and respectful should be promoted. Students should have regular opportunities to work in small groups with their peers, which can help build sense of connection, belonging and empathy among students.

The curricular subjects offered to students provide opportunities to foster inclusion and respect for diversity. Schools are encouraged to provide opportunities for students to develop a sense of selfworth through both curricular and extracurricular programmes.

The Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) curricula at post primary level aim to foster students' wellbeing, selfconfidence and sense of belonging and to develop students' sense of personal responsibility for their own behaviour and actions. Students' social and emotional learning (SEL) skills can be improved through the SPHE curriculum.

At postprimary level, the updated SPHE specifications aim to help students to feel empowered to create, nurture and maintain respectful and healthy relationships with themselves and others. The RSE strand of the specification also provides space for postprimary students to examine and consider relationships and human sexuality which can foster an understanding of diversity which may help to reduce gender and identitybased bullying as well as sexism and sexual harassment.

Students can also consider diversity and inclusion through the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment's Religious Education specifications/syllabus. As well as this, diversity and inclusion can be experienced via Patron's Curricula which aim to encourage respect and understanding of different beliefs, perspectives and ways of living.

In Civic Social and Political Education (CSPE), there is a focus on the interdependence of people in communities, at local as well as national and international levels. History and, at Senior Cycle, Politics and Society can be used to raise awareness of racism and colonialism. By examining historical and contemporary examples of racial discrimination and colonial legacies, students can develop an understanding of the root causes of bias and prejudice. Resources and materials are also available to support incorporating Traveller culture and history across all areas of the curriculum.

#### **Actions in our school to enhance Curriculum (Teaching and Learning):**

Different teaching method using different learning skills (Differentiation)

Quizlet, Wordwall, Kahoot, mentimeter

CSPE

Work Experience

Trips Abroad

Code of Behaviour

School Diary

Gardaí coming in with talks

Extra- Curricular

Trips out of school: Ploughing Championships, Visits to Colleges, Careers Events

Zeeko for the Pupils and the parents (Education on on-line safety)

SPHE, CSPE, RSE Education

Seeing the students work around the school in the rooms and in the hallways.

#### **Policy and Planning**

The wellbeing of the school community is at the heart of school policies and plans. There are a range of other policies such as the school's Code of Behaviour, Child Protection Statement and Special Needs Policy 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. There is a range of training available for school staff which relates to promoting inclusion and diversity in schools

#### **Policies and Planning in our school that support this Bí-Cinéalta Policy:**

- Pupils Diary and signing of the diary regularly
- Visits from the local Garda to inform students of laws relevant to pupils such as Coco's Law and to advise them on safety on line and advice for their safety in general.
- Topics that are relevant to the students are explained and discussed openly.
- Policy development and planning and implementation involve and include the pupil and pupils voice.
- Policies in the school that support a positive learning environment include the Code of Behavior, Locker Policy
- There are specifically planned days/weeks such as 'Stand –Up Awareness Week' (Anti- LGBQ+ Bullying), 'Wear Red Day' (Anti-Racism)
- Education about Bullying in SPHE and in the general classes.
- Wellbeing Days
- Class Teachers
- Guidance Classes
- Yearly training from ZEEKO on Online Safety

#### **Relationships and Partnerships**

Strong interpersonal connections are a vital part of effectively preventing and addressing bullying behaviour. These interpersonal connections are supported through a range of formal and informal structures such as student councils, school clubs, parents' associations and student support teams.

#### **Actions in our school that strengthen relationships and partnerships between members of the school community:**

- There are specifically planned days/weeks such as 'Stand –Up Awareness Week' (Anti- LGBQ+ Bullying) , 'Wear Red Day' (Anti-Racism)/Anti- Bullying Week
- Education about Bullying in OSPS and in the general classes.
- Wellbeing Days
- Class Teachers for each year group
- Guidance Classes
- Visitors from outside organizations (e.g. Road Safety Authority, Apprenticeship, PLC, Colleges and University speakers)
- Conradh na Gaeilge
- An Taisce – Green Schools
- Board of Management
- GAA
- Basketball Ireland
- Parents / Teachers meetings

- GRETB
- Department of Education
- French Pupil Exchange
- The Local Shop
- The bus drivers
- Open Night in School for new students
- Talks for parents on significant times of transition (Starting Second Level Education, Transition Year vs 5<sup>th</sup> Year information Evening, Post Leaving Certificate choices: College, Apprenticeships, and PLC courses).
- Support in Social Personal Health Education classes and in Guidance classes during periods of transition particularly beginning Second Level Education, Post Junior Cycle and for Leaving Certificate students as they complete Second Level Education.
- Parent(s)/Guardian(s) have good lines of communication with the school and they know they can contact the school in relation to any concern about their child/children.
- Education on bullying in SPHE & in other general subjects.
- Promoting acts of kindness

## **Preventing Cyberbullying Behaviour**

Technology and social media have provided many positive opportunities for entertainment, social engagement and education. Technology is a part of life that can impact even the youngest members of society. However, the increase in the use of technology has led to students becoming increasingly vulnerable to cyberbullying or unacceptable online behaviour.

Schools should proactively address these challenges by promoting digital literacy, digital citizenship, and fostering safe online environments. Strategies to prevent cyberbullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- Implementing the SPHE curriculum
- Implementing the Digital Media Literacy curriculum which teaches students about responsible online behaviour and digital citizenship
- Having regular conversations with students about developing respectful and kind relationships online
- Developing and communicating an acceptable use policy for technology
- Referring to appropriate online behaviour as part of the standards of behaviour in the Code of Behaviour
- Promoting or hosting online safety events for parents who are responsible for overseeing their children's activities online\* (Zeeko)
- Holding an Internet safety day to reinforce awareness around appropriate online behaviour (Zeeko).

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 (Circular 0042/2018 and CIRCULAR 0043/2018).

For the purposes of data collection, students between the age of 13 and 16 years old must have parental permission to sign up to social media services where companies use the legal basis of consent to collect process and store users' data. 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.

#### **Actions in School to prevent Cyberbullying Behaviour:**

- School rules – The phone is to be placed in the locker at the beginning of the school day and is to remain there until the end of the school day.
- Internet censorship including restrictions on potentially harmful sites.
- Restrictions on use of social media accounts in school such as Facebook and Instagram
- Training from Zeeko at the beginning of the year for 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> years on Internet safety. Zeeko provide an online training for parents and teachers annually to support their work with the pupils on Internet safety and to help awareness.
- SPHE classes include topics on Internet safety.

#### **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:

- Maintaining an inclusive physical environment such as by displaying relevant posters
- Encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
- Challenging gender stereotypes
- Conducting workshops and seminars for students, school staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of homophobic bullying behaviour
- Encouraging students to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour.

#### **Actions in School to prevent Homophobic/Transphobic Bullying Behaviour:**

- Stand –Up Awareness Week for the prevention of LGBTQ+ bullying. The week includes awareness around the types of bullying that can occur in general and what steps can be taken by pupils to deal with it.
- RSE includes education on awareness around a person's sexuality and promotes acceptance and understanding to people own individuality.
- Supporting pupils to speak out against homophobia.

## **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 the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- 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
- Conducting workshops and seminars for students, school staff and parents to raise awareness of racism
- 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 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 library reading material and textbooks represent appropriate lived experiences of students and adults from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

### **Actions in School to prevent Racist Bullying Behaviour:**

- ‘Wear Red Day – Show Racism the Red Card’.
- Treating all students equally and embracing all cultures
- Supporting students in learning English as a foreign language
- Providing school information in different languages when necessary: Irish, English, Ukrainian and Russian.

## **Preventing Sexist Bullying Behaviour**

Schools should 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.

#### **Actions in School to prevent Sexist Bullying Behaviour:**

- SPHE classes include treating all persons equally regardless of gender

### **Preventing Sexual Harassment**

Preventing sexual harassment requires an approach that focuses on education, awareness and clear enforceable policies. Schools must make it clear that 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:

- Using the updated SPHE specifications at postprimary level to teach students about healthy relationships 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.

#### **Actions in School to prevent Sexual Harassment:**

- SPHE classes education on healthy relationships.
- Positive role modelling in the school.
- Supervision of Students during structured and unstructured times
- Visibility in classrooms (glass in doors to view into rooms).

Many of the preventative strategies listed above can be implemented by schools to prevent all types of bullying behaviour. Coláiste Naomh Feichín endeavor to further develop these actions in order to prevent bullying behavior in our school community and to promote a caring and respectful environment.



## Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

The primary aim in addressing reports of bullying behaviour should be to stop the bullying behaviour and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.

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.

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 :

### Approach

When bullying behaviour occurs, the school (teachers) 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

### Identifying if Bullying Behaviour has Occurred

**Bullying is defined 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.**

*Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying 2024*

*Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2024*

To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour you should consider the following questions:

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

When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred teachers should consider what, where, when and why?

#### **Group of Students involved in Incident(s):**

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.

#### **Behaviour that is NOT Bullying Behaviour**

A one off instance of negative behaviour towards another student is not bullying 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**.

## 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 should be kept of the engagement with all involved.
- This record should document the form and type of bullying behaviour, where and when it took place and the date of the initial engagement with the students involved and their parents. (Template can be found in **Appendix A**).
- The record should include the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour.

School staff should know what to do when bullying behaviour is reported to them or when they witness bullying behaviour. When bullying behaviour is reported to, or witnessed by school staff the procedures in this policy must be followed.

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 this BÍ-Cinéalta policy.

Where the student displaying the bullying behaviour is not a student in the school, but the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour is a student in the school, the school should support the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as appropriate and engage with them and their parents to determine what steps can be taken.

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 happening to them. 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.

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. Schools 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. International and national research also continues to evolve in this area and the effectiveness of particular approaches continues to be reviewed. Each school must therefore decide on an approach that is best suited to its own circumstances.

Approaches such as restorative practice and mediation should only be used to address bullying behaviour when the teachers involved have been trained in how to engage in these methods and the students involved have agreed to their use. Instances of bullying behaviour will be dealt with clearly as outlined in this document.

## **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.

### **Follow up where Bullying Behaviour has Occured and 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 *Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.
- 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 the 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.

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.



## **Recording Bullying Behaviour**

All bullying behaviour will be recorded (**Template in Appendix A**). 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.

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. It is important to document the date of each of these engagements and the date that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased. Any engagement with external services/supports should also be noted.

These records should be retained in accordance with the school's record keeping policy and in line with data protection regulations.

Where a Student Support File exists for a student, schools are encouraged to place a copy of the record on the student's support file. This will assist the school's student support team, where they exist, in providing a consistent and holistic response to support the wellbeing of the students involved. Where a Student Support Plan exists, the 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 school's complaints procedure.

Additional Information relating to schools' complaint procedures are available at the following link: <https://www.gov.ie/en/policyinformation/parentalcomplaints/>

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](mailto:ococomplaint@oco.ie).

## **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 (DCU) AntiBullying Centre
- Tusla

## 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: James J. Lonsdale Bha

Date: 28/5/25 (Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: Georgina N. O'Brien

Date: 28/5/25 (Principal)

## Reference:

Department of Education (2024) *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post Primary Schools*