

Scoil Mhuire na nGael



Bí Cineálta

Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire na nGael 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 well-being 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

What is 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.

	Date Consulted	Method of Consultation
School Staff	18 th September 2024 6 th December 2024 20 th December 2024	Staff Meeting Staff Survey Staff Training
Students	11 th – 15 th November 2024	Student Survey
Parents	7 th November 2024	Parental Survey
Board of Management	15 th October 2024 2 nd December 2024	Board of Management meetings
Whole School Community	September – December 2024	Survey; meetings
Date policy was approved: 4/2/25		
Date policy was last reviewed: 15 th October 2024 (based on 2013 guidelines)		

SECTION B

PREVENTING BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

This section sets out the prevention strategies that will be used in Scoil Mhuire na nGael. These include strategies are aimed at preventing all forms and types of bullying (see Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

The four key wellbeing areas of the Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice underpin our school's approach to preventing bullying behaviour. These

areas are ***Culture and Environment; Curriculum (Teaching and Learning); Policy and Planning; and Relationships and Partnerships.***

What is not bullying?

A one-off instance of negative behaviour towards another student is not bullying behaviour. However, a single hurtful message posted on social media can be considered bullying behaviour as it may be visible to a wide audience and has a high likelihood of being shared multiple times and so becomes a repeated 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.

Culture and Environment

We recognise that a positive and inclusive school culture and environment is essential to prevent and address bullying behaviour. We endeavour to create and sustain a school environment where students and school staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported. The strategies that we implement in our school to prevent bullying behaviour are as follows:

- Model respectful behaviour to all members of the school community at all times.
- We support and foster a 'telling environment'.
- Create safe spaces within the school so that all areas in which the pupils gather are in clear sight.
- Pupils are made aware of the concept of a 'trusted adult' and how this individual can support them when making a disclosure.
- Explicitly teach pupils what respectful language and respectful behaviour look like, act like, sound like and feel like in class and around the school.
- Display key respect messages in classrooms, in assembly areas and around the school. Involve pupils in the development of these messages.
- Catch them being good - notice and acknowledge desired respectful behaviour by providing positive attention.
- Consistently tackle the use of discriminatory and derogatory language in the school – this includes homophobic and racist language and language that is belittling of pupils with a disability or SEN.

- Give constructive feedback to pupils when respectful behaviour and respectful language are absent.
- Have a system of encouragement and rewards to promote desired behaviour and compliance with the school rules and routines.
- Explicitly teach pupils about the appropriate use of social media.
- Positively encourage pupils to comply with the school rules on mobile phone and internet use. Follow up and follow through with pupils who ignore the rules.
- Actively involve parents in awareness-raising campaigns around social media.
- Actively promote the right of every member of the school community to be safe and secure in school.
- Highlight and explicitly teach school rules in pupil-friendly language in the classroom and in common areas.
- All staff can actively watch out for signs of bullying behaviour.
- Ensure there is adequate playground/schoolyard/outdoor supervision.
- School staff can get pupils to help them identify bullying "hot spots" and "hot times" for bullying in the school.
 - Hot spots tend to be in the playground/school yard/outdoor areas, changing rooms, corridors and other areas of unstructured supervision.
 - Hot times again tend to be times where there is less structured supervision such as when pupils are in the playground/school yard or moving classrooms.
- Support the establishment and work of student councils.

Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)

Teaching and learning that is collaborative and respectful is promoted. The curricular subjects offered to our students provide opportunities to foster inclusion and respect for diversity. Our school provide opportunities for students to develop a sense of self-worth through both curricular and extracurricular programmes.

- The Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) curricula are taught consistently at all class levels with a view to fostering students' well-being, self-confidence and sense of belonging and to develop students' sense of personal responsibility for their own behaviour and actions.
- The KiVa anti-bullying programme is taught in all classes from 1st to 6th class. This programme is also supplemented by the FUSE programme from 3rd to 6th class.
- The Stay Safe programme is explicitly taught from Junior Infants to 6th class on a biennial basis (at a minimum). This may be increased if deemed necessary.
- A digital curriculum is taught from 1st to 6th class which is supported by the resources from Webwise, which informs pupils about all issues relating to online

activity and safety.

Policy and Planning

The well-being of our school community is at the heart of our school's policies and plans. The following plans and policies support preventing bullying-related behaviour:

Curricular Plans

- ❖ SPHE – Social Personal and Health Education
- ❖ Religious Education
- ❖ Digital Learning Plan

School Policies

- ❖ Anti-Bullying Policy
- ❖ Code of Behaviour
- ❖ Child Safeguarding Statement
- ❖ Internet Acceptable Usage Policy
- ❖ Health and Safety Policy
- ❖ Special Education Policy
- ❖ Protected Disclosure Policy
- ❖ Supervision Policy
- ❖ RSE Policy

Relationships and Partnerships

As a school, we acknowledge that 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 Council
- School clubs
- Partnership Schools Ireland Action Team
- Cineáltas team.
- In-school Management Team
- Board of Management

We strive to create and discover opportunities for the development and maintenance of relationships and partnerships, such as:

- Parents' evening and workshops on bullying and Internet safety

- Organisation and running of anti-bullying and kindness weeks
- Grandparents Day
- Inter-class and school debating competitions
- KiVa events
- Whole Class Dina
- Fun Friends/Friends for Life
- Social groups
- Nurture Groups

The following preventative approaches will also be adopted in our school to address other forms and types of bullying. Some approaches are more aligned with specific forms of bullying. The approaches are:

- Actively promote the importance of digital literacy, digital citizenship, and fostering safe online environments.
- Engage in regular conversations with students about developing respectful and kind relationships online.
- Develop and communicate 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
- Holding an Internet safety day to reinforce awareness around appropriate online behaviour

All students have a right to feel safe and supported at school. As a school, we will:

- Maintain an inclusive and welcoming physical environment
- Encourage peer support and empathy-building activities
- Promote equality and tolerance among the students
- Provide professional learning opportunities for students and staff to raise awareness of bullying behaviour
- Encourage pupils to speak up when then they witness bullying behaviour.
- Foster a school culture where diversity is celebrated and where students "see themselves" in their school environment
- Have the cultural diversity of the school visible and on display
- Encourage bystanders to report incidents of bullying behaviour which they witness
- Provide support to school staff to respond to the needs of students for whom

English is an additional language and for communicating with their parents.

- Provide support to school staff to support students from ethnic minorities.
- Ensure members of staff model respectful behaviour and treat students equally.
- Ensure all students have the same opportunities to engage in school activities.
- Celebrate diversity at school and acknowledge the contributions of all students.
- Encourage parents to reinforce these values of respect at home
- Promote positive role models within the school community

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):

Appropriate supervision is an important measure to help us prevent and address bullying behaviour. Our school takes all reasonable measures to ensure the safety of our students and to supervise our students when they are attending school or attending school activities. Our school implements the following:

- A supervision policy
- Supervised areas during school hours e.g. classrooms, yards, school halls, school library
- Structured break and lunchtime supervision rotas
- Technology and digital monitoring
- Clear visibility and open layouts (where possible)
- Transition supervision
- Morning and dismissal supervision
- Attendance and accountability checks
- Incident reporting during supervision

SECTION 3

ADDRESSING BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

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

- Class Teachers
- Special Education Teachers
- Cineáltas Team
- In School Management Team
- Senior Management Team

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):

1. Identify if bullying behaviour has occurred.

- This will be carried out by considering the 'what, where' when and how'.
- For the purpose of gathering information for analysis, the KiVa screener will be completed by the teacher who was the first to know about the hurtful behaviour.
- Following the completion of the screener, the specific Bí Cineálta questions will be considered upon analysis of the screener form as a means to inform a decision as to whether bullying has taken place. Those questions are:

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. In this situation, the school's Code of Behaviour will be considered.

2. Where bullying has occurred

- Once bullying behaviour has been established, the Cineáltas team will be informed and become active with the case.
 1. The discussion takes place between the pupil experiencing the bullying behaviour and 2 members of the BÍ Cineálta team.
 2. Individual discussions with the pupil/s who were engaging in the bullying behaviour.
 3. Group discussion with the students involved in the bullying behaviour.
 4. Based upon the outcome of the discussions, an informed decision is made to determine which approach is most suitable to address the bullying behaviour.
- Our school will not 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 on our school, we will support the students involved. Where the bullying behaviour continues in school, we will deal with it in accordance with our BÍ Cineálta 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 our school, we will 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.
- As a school we will be fair and consistent in our approaches to addressing bullying behaviour, supporting all parties involved in the bullying situation. The situation will be addressed in a timely manner in order to ensure that the pupils experiencing the bullying behaviour feel safe and reassured.
- Once the bullying behaviour has been identified, school staff will identify the support needed for the student who is displaying bullying behaviour to better manage relational difficulties and ensure that their needs are met.
- The following principles will 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
- Where bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved will 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 this policy.

- Given the complexity of bullying behaviour, we acknowledge that no one approach works in all situations. In these situations, the school will decide upon an approach that is best suited to its own circumstances.

3. Requests to take no action

- Parents may make our school aware of bullying behaviour that has occurred and specifically request that our school take no action or just 'monitor the situation'. If this is the situation, parents must 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, our school may decide that, based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour.

4. Determining if bullying behaviour has ceased.

- A teacher involved 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.
- Factors to be considered 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, further 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 support 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 strategies used will be reviewed in consultation with the students and parents and agree to meet again over an agreed timeframe 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 will 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.

5. Recording bullying behaviour

- All incidents of bullying behaviour will be recorded. The record will document the form and type of bullying behaviour if known, where and when it took place and the date of the initial engagement with the students and their parents.
- The record may include the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour.

- The record will 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 of each of the engagements and the date that has been determined as when the bullying behaviour has ceased will be documented in the record also.
- The involvement of external services/supports will also be noted.
- These records will be retained in accordance with the school's record-keeping policy and in line with data protection regulations.
- If a Student Support File exists for a student, we may place a copy of the record on the student's support file. This will assist the school in providing a consistent and holistic response to support the well-being of the students involved. Where a Student Support Plan exists, the plan may be updated to incorporate response strategies and associated supports.

6. 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 which is available on the school's website.

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):

Our school adopts a variety of approaches to support pupils who experience, witness, or display bullying behaviour. Here are some of the strategies which we use in Scoil Mhuire na nGael:

For Pupils Who Experience Bullying:

1. **Safe Reporting Mechanisms:** Create reporting systems so students feel secure in sharing their experiences.
2. **Counselling and Support:** Provide access to the Cineáltas team and/or school psychologist (if applicable) to help students process their feelings and build resilience.
3. **Peer Support Programmes:** Establish buddy or peer mentoring systems to ensure affected pupils have trusted friends for support.
4. **Parental Involvement:** Inform and involve parents to collaborate on solutions tailored to the pupil's needs.

For Pupils Who Witness Bullying:

1. **Empowering Bystanders:** Teach students to intervene safely, report bullying, or support the student experiencing bullying behaviour, emphasising that silence can enhance the problem.

2. **Anti-Bullying Campaigns:** Organise assemblies or workshops to educate students on the importance of standing against bullying collectively.
3. **Recognition Programmes:** Reward students who act responsibly and courageously in bullying situations, reinforcing positive behaviour.

For Pupils Who Display Bullying Behaviour: (if applicable)

1. **Restorative Practices:** Facilitate restorative conversations where the pupil understands the impact of their actions and works toward making amends.
2. **Behavioural Interventions:** Implement personalised behaviour plans with clear targets and rewards to guide them toward positive changes.
3. **Skill Development:** Offer programmes that teach empathy, conflict resolution, and anger management, if necessary.
4. **Engage Families:** Work with the student's family to address underlying issues contributing to the behaviour.

General School-Wide Approaches:

1. **Clear Policies:** Develop and enforce a strong anti-bullying policy that defines unacceptable behaviour and outlines consequences.
2. **Professional Development:** Train teachers and staff to recognise, address, and de-escalate bullying situations effectively.
3. **Inclusive Environment:** Promote a culture of respect, inclusivity, and kindness through classroom discussions, posters, and events.
4. **Monitoring:** Increase supervision in bullying hotspots like playgrounds, corridors, and online spaces (where applicable).

These combined efforts help create a safe and supportive school environment for all students.

Supports are available to our school to assist pupils who may experience, witness or display bullying behaviour. The school may also liaise with the following:

- **NEPS (National Educational Psychology Services):** In relation to bullying, NEPS psychologists may advise our school on best practices to prevent and address bullying if issues arise in the school and/or provide training in preventative initiatives, such as developing social and emotional skills, social skills, executive function skills, promoting resilience and skills in relationship repair between peers as appropriate.
- **Oide:** Oide is the Department of Education's support service for schools, and it supports professional learning for primary and school leaders and teachers. The work of Oide contributes to school improvement by providing high-quality professional learning experiences, support and resources relating to curricular developments, broader educational goals and national priorities, such as well-being which includes preventing and addressing bullying. Oide provides continuing professional learning support to schools to support the implementation of these procedures.
- **Webwise:** Webwise is the online safety initiative of the Department of Education. Webwise develops and disseminates resources that help teachers

integrate digital citizenship and online safety into teaching and learning in their schools. Webwise also provides information, advice, and tools to parents to support their engagement in their children's online lives.

- **National Parents Council:** The NPC delivers online and in-person courses to support parents of students to prevent and address bullying behaviour.
- **Dublin City University (DCU) Antibullying Centre:** The Antibullying Centre offers a range of modules as part of its FUSE programme for the entire school community that can be used to help promote a positive school culture and assist in preventing and addressing bullying behaviours.
- **Tusla:** Schools should contact Tusla directly for advice in cases where it is considered that bullying behaviour is a child protection concern.

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: Proinsias Ó Cuanágh Date: 4/2/25
(Chairperson of the Board of Management)

Signed: Lisa Jones
(Principal)

Date: 4/2/25