Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Ballinadee N.S. 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.

We confirm that we will take all steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent all 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 everybody in our school is treated with respect and care, in accordance with the Catholic Schedule. As a Catholic school, we are committed to respecting the dignity of every individual. No human person is to be devalued and everybody has a 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.

The core elements of the definition are further described below:

Targeted behaviour: Bullying is deliberate, unwanted behaviour that causes harm to others, and where the student displaying bullying behaviour knows that their behaviour is or will be perceived as harmful by the child or young person experiencing the behaviour. Bullying is not accidental or reckless

behaviour. The harm can be physical (for example, personal injury, damage or loss of property), social (for example. withdrawal, loneliness, exclusion) and/or emotional (for example, low self-esteem, depression, anxiety) and can have a serious and long-term negative impact on the student experiencing the bullying behaviour. If the repeated harm is real for the student experiencing the behaviour but unintended by the other student, this is not bullying but, importantly, must still be addressed under the school's code of behaviour.

Repeated behaviour: Bullying takes the form of a systematic pattern of behaviour which is repeated over time. Single offline incidents of intentional negative behaviour involving an imbalance of power is not considered bullying but must still be addressed under the school's code of behaviour. Posting a single harmful message/image/video online, and which is highly likely to be reposted or shared with others can therefore be seen as bullying behaviour.

Imbalance of power: In incidents of bullying, the student experiencing the bullying behaviour finds it hard to defend themselves as a result of the abuse of a real or perceived imbalance of power. This imbalance of power may manifest itself through differences in size, strength, age, ability, peer group power, economic status, social status, religion, race, ethnic origin including membership of the Traveller and/or Roma communities, sexual orientation, family circumstances, gender, gender identity, gender expression, experience of the care system, disability or the receipt of special education. In incidents of online (or cyber) bullying, the imbalance of power may relate to online anonymity, technical proficiency and possession of information/images/video, and the inability of the targeted student to remove offensive online material or escape the bullying.

Behaviour that is not bullying behaviour: 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. 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.

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	24/08/26 27/08/26	Whole Staff meeting Whole staff Meeting
Students	02/09/26 - 08/09/26	Class Focus Groups
Parents	08/09/26 - 14/09/26	Survey
Board of Management	15/09/26	Sent via email to board members
Wider school community as appropriate	15/09/2026	Consultation as deemed necessary with secretary and before/after school club
Date policy was approved:		
Date policy was last reviewed: 30-09-2025		

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

- A positive and inclusive school culture and environment which:

  -is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity.

  -is a 'telling' environment which encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment.

  -promotes and models respectful relationships across the school community.
- Effective leadership that sets the standards and expectations for the school community when preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.
- Open communication between the patron, boards 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.
- A school-wide approach where each member of staff takes a consistent approach to effective observation and addressing of bullying behaviour.
- A 'trusted adult' who reassures and supports students that they have done the right thing by reporting bullying behaviour.
- Parents as active partners in their child's education, fostering an environment where bullying is not tolerated through promoting empathy and respect.
- Students promote kindness and inclusion within their peer groups helping to maintain a positive and supportive school environment for all.
- Students are provided with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth through formal and informal interactions.
- Safe physical spaces to support psychological safety and to prevent bullying behaviour. This includes.

  -clear visibility of school staff who are supervising at break times.

  -school garden to help students feel a sense of responsibility for their school environment and to foster a sense of belonging.

-Bí Cineálta Student Friendly Policy displayed in entrance of school and in each classroom.

- Some specific school initiatives that promote this culture are: Themed Weeks, student committees, Buddies, Roots of Empathy.
- All staff will actively watch out for signs of bullying behaviour.
- Appropriate supervision is in place at all times, 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.

Curriculum

- Teaching and learning that is collaborative and respectful is promoted. Students have regular opportunities to work in small groups with their peers, which can help build a 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 provided with opportunities to develop a sense of self-worth through both curricular and extra-curricular programmes.
- The full implementation of the Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum and the Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) and Stay Safe Programmes.
- School wide delivery of lessons on bullying from evidence-based programmes e.g. Stay Safe Programme, Walk Tall Programme, Webwise.
- Our basic school rules "The 3 R's" will be on display in each classroom and SET rooms.
- Morning meetings to begin our school day everyday including SET and SNA's to build sense of belonging and community throughout the school.
- Delivery of the Roots of Empathy every 2nd year to 5th and 6th Classes.
- Delivery of the Garda SPHE programmes at primary level. These lessons, delivered by Community Gardai, cover issues around personal safety and cyber-bullying.
- 'Internet Safety Day' to educate students about the dangers of cyberbullying and to teach safe and responsible internet use.
- The fostering and enhancing of the self-esteem of all our students through both curricular and extracurricular activities. Students will be provided with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth through formal and informal interactions.

- Organise seminars/workshops given by relevant professionals to older pupils and to parents/guardians, focusing on educating pupils on appropriate online behaviour, how to stay safe while online and on developing a culture of reporting any concerns about cyber-bullying. The school-wide approach and the role of parents is of great importance in this regard.
- Use of programmes such as Zippy's Friends (well being and relationships)
- CPD for all teachers on the Relate model of Support.
- 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

- Bí Cineálta policy
- Student friendly Bí Cineálta policy
- Code of behaviour
- Child safeguarding statement and risk assessment
- Acceptable use policy
- Supervision policy
- SPHE and RSE Policy
- SEN policy
- Appropriate Continuous Professional Development for staff.
- Have our child-friendly Bí Cinealta Policy on display prominently around the school.
- Please refer to the school's policy documents on the Code of Behaviour (including the Acceptable Use of Devices and the Internet Policy), Child Protection Policy, Supervision of Pupils, and Attendance Policies
- All staff, to the best of their ability, will ensure there is adequate playground/school yard/outdoor supervision (as per the school's Supervision Policy).
- School staff and pupils can identify hot spots and hot times for bullying in the school. - Hot spots tend to be in the playground/school yard/outdoor areas, toilet areas, corridors and other areas of unstructured supervision. - Hot times tend to be times where there is less structured supervision such as when pupils are in the playground/school yard, arriving into the classroom or moving classrooms.

Relationships and Partnerships

- Strong interpersonal connections supported through a range of formal and informal structures such as Student Committees, Buddy system, team sports etc.
- Supporting the active participation of parents in school life
- Supporting the active participation of students in school life.
- Promoting acts of kindness and activities that build empathy, respect and resilience. e.g. Wellbeing week, Roots of Empathy, morning meetings, buddies etc.
- Encouraging peer tutoring.
- Teaching problem solving skills
- Critical Thinking Skills
- Preventing cyber bullying

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):

Supervision

- Morning duty: Students are supervised within sight of staff members on yard and in school.
  -Dry Mornings: Principal and Deputy Principal are on duty with SNAs. When bell rings teachers collect children from their lines and bring them to classroom.
  -Wet Mornings: Principal, Deputy Principal and SNAs supervise children in classrooms. When bell rings teachers meet children in their rooms
- Yard Supervision Rota: Teachers, along with SNAs under the direction of the yard duty teacher, provide yard supervision and wet day supervision in the classroom.
- Classes are assigned designated areas on the yard to ensure age-appropriate interactions and ease of monitoring and observation of behaviour.
- At the end of the school day, class teachers walk their class out to the front door.
- The school grounds are enclosed and pupils do not leave the school grounds during the day without adult supervision.
- On school excursions there is always a minimum of two staff members accompanying each class.
- When the bell rings SNAs and supervising teachers walk classes to rooms and wait for class teachers to arrive.

Monitoring

- Incident reporting: The class teacher investigates and documents all incidents of reported or suspected bullying behaviour.
- Incident investigation: All reports of bullying should be investigated promptly and thoroughly. The investigation should include interviews with the student who reported the incident, the student who was allegedly bullied and any witnesses.

- Follow up: The school should take appropriate action to address the bullying behaviour.
- A report on incidents of bullying behaviour is given at each BOM meeting.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

- The Class Teacher
- The Principal/Deputy Principal will provide support and advice and will become involved where appropriate.

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 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
- Act 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):
Stage 1 - Identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred the class teacher should consider what, where, when and why? Where one student is reported to be involved, • The students should be engaged with individually at first. • Thereafter, this student and the student who is reported to be experiencing the bullying behaviour should be met together. If a group of students are 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)

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

- Is the behaviour targeted at a specific student or group of students?
- 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:

- 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 engaged with, without delay, so that they feel listened to, supported and reassured.
- School staff should identify the support needed for the student who is displaying bullying behaviour to better manage relational difficulties and ensure that their needs are met.
- 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

Bullying Behaviour that occurs when students <u>are not</u> under the care or responsibility of the school

A school is not expected to deal with bullying behaviour that occurs when the 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 their 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 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.

What is not bullying behaviour?

- A once-off instance of negative behaviour
- Disagreement between students
- Instances where students don't want to remain friends
- Non-deliberate behaviours of students with special educational needs (Bí

Cineálta Section 2.2)

Cyberbullying

- Bullying behaviour, including cyberbullying behaviour, which has occurred outside of school can often continue in school.
- Where a student engages in cyberbullying behaviour when in school, the school must address the bullying behaviour
- Where a student experiences cyberbullying behaviour in school, the school must address the bullying behaviour.
- In the case of cyberbullying, although the hurtful message may have been sent outside of school hours, the student may view the message while in school. Where this happens, the school must address the bullying behaviour

Recording Bullying Behaviour (See Template Appendix B which shows all the required fields/details)

- 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.
- Where a Student Support File exists for a student a copy of the record should be placed on the student's support file.
- Where a Student Support Plan exists, the plan should be updated to incorporate response strategies and associated supports.
- 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 2.4)

Stage 3 - Follow up - 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 (Appendix B) 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 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, it must be made clear to all (pupils and parents/guardians) that this is a private matter (under GDPR) between the student being disciplined, his/her parents/guardians and the school

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.
- The school will consider each such request on a case-by-case basis while reserving the right, if determined 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.

Complaint Process

- 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):

In supporting pupils impacted by bullying behaviour the school will:

- Keep monitoring relationships and behaviour of the pupils that experienced, witnessed or displayed bullying behaviour so as to determine the behaviours have stopped and relationships are restored to an acceptable level.
- Continue to promote a positive school culture where students feel safe, respected and valued.
- Continue to promote and encourage appropriate staff training initiatives for supporting students and addressing bullying.
- Provide opportunities for pupils to participate in activities designed to raise self-esteem, to develop friendships and social skills and thereby building resilience

and a sense of self-worth whenever this is needed.

Supports following: available to help prevent and address bullying include the following:

- NEPS providing advice on best practice to prevent and address bullying when issues arise in schools and/or training in preventative initiatives.
- Oide - providing TPL.
- Webwise - online safety awareness raising and education initiative for pupils and parents.
- National Parents Council - online and in person courses to support parents to prevent and address bullying.
- Tusla - for cases where it is considered that bullying behaviour becomes a child protection concern.

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 at the school entrance hallway, in each classroom. It 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

Signed: _____ Date: 22/9/2026

John Twomey (Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: Linda Harte Date: 22/9/2026.

Linda Harte (Principal)

Sub section information:

Age requirements for social media platforms (2026)

Facebook – 13 years old
Twitter (X) – 13 years old
Instagram – 13 years old
Snapchat - 13 years old
What'sApp - 13 years old
TikTok - 13 years old
House Party – 12 years old
i-messages app – 13+ and you must have parent guardian sign up via their email account
YouTube – 13 years old
Twitch - 13 years old
Discord - 13 years old
Roblox - 7+
Playstations and other consoles – 12+
Gmail account – 16+

Support websites for the school community

https://tacklebullying.ie/resources/schools/

https://www.webwise.ie/

https://antibullyingcampaigh.ie/

https://schooldays.ie/articles/bullying

https://tusla.ie/uploads/content/Parents_Coping_With_Bullying_d3.pdf

https://www.sticksandstone.ie