

Appendix A

School Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour.

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of **Management of Maynooth Educate Together National School** has adopted the following policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

This policy fully complies with the requirements of *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2024*.

The board of management acknowledges that bullying behaviour interferes with the rights of the child as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. We all, as a school community, have a responsibility to work together to prevent and address bullying behaviour and to deal with the negative impact of bullying behaviour.

We are committed to ensuring that all students who attend our school are kept safe from harm and that the wellbeing of our students is at the forefront of everything that we do. We recognise the negative impact that bullying behaviour can have on the lives of our students and we are fully committed to preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.

We confirm that we will, in accordance with our obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the harassment of students or staff on any of the nine grounds specified: gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.

Definition of bullying

Bullying is defined in *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* and *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* as **targeted behaviour, online or offline that causes harm. The harm caused can be physical, social and/or emotional in nature.**

Bullying behaviour is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power in relationships between two people or groups of people in society. The detailed definition is provided in Chapter 2 of the Bí Cineálta procedures.

Each school is required to develop and implement a Bí Cineálta policy that sets out how the school community prevents and addresses bullying behaviour. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour that is not bullying behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

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

All members of our school community were provided with the opportunity to input into the development/review of this policy.

| | Date consulted | Method of consultation |
|---|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| School Staff | 6/12/2024 19/5/2025 | Staff Meeting Questionnaire |
| Students | 7/11/2024 & 29/04/2025 | Focus groups Questionnaire |
| Parents/Guardians | 12/2/2025 | Questionnaire |
| Board of Management | 22/5/2025 | Meeting |
| Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers | 15/5/2025 | Email |
| Date policy was approved: 20/5/2025 | | |
| Date policy was last reviewed: | | |

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

This section sets out the prevention strategies that will be used by the school. These include strategies specifically aimed at preventing online bullying behaviour, homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour, racist bullying behaviour, sexist bullying behaviour and sexual harassment as appropriate (see Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

Preventing Cyber Bullying 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

implementing the SPHE curriculum and Stay Safe (all levels)

FUSE programme (4th-6th class)

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
communicating our acceptable use policy for technology annually (AUP) to students, parents and guardians

referring to appropriate online behaviour as part of the standards of behaviour in the Code of Behaviour

promoting online safety events for parents who are responsible for overseeing their children's activities online*

holding an annual Internet safety day to reinforce awareness around appropriate online behavior

Using the resource-Webwise

Yearly visits from the Community Gardaí to promote online safety

Encouraging sign up to the PTA voluntary no smartphone code in primary school

Termly pupil anti-bullying survey

Bi-annual Anti-Bullying assemblies with principal teacher

Fostering a culture of celebrating inclusion and diversity via monthly assemblies/awards, inclusion and diversity week and multicultural celebration-

Bernardos – 'Staying Safe Online Programme' -5th Classes

Reflection sheets for pupils to reflect on inappropriate behavior/cyber bullying

Preventing homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour

All students including gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students, have a right to feel safe and supported at school

Implementing the SPHE curriculum and Stay Safe (all levels)

FUSE programme (4th-6th class)

All Together Now Programme (LGBTQ+) 5th and 6th Class

maintaining an inclusive physical environment by displaying relevant posters and books in the classroom and school library

Flying the LGBTQ+ flag

Holding the INTO Different Families Same Love Competition annually and celebrating LGBTQ+ during inclusion and diversity week

encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities

challenging gender stereotypes through discussions and discrete lessons

encouraging students to speak up when they witness homophobic behavior

respecting and embracing student preferences in being referred to as he/she/they etc. with consent of parents/guardians

Including students on their preferred team (male/female) during internal and school run competitions (non-contact)

Termly Pupil anti-bullying survey

Bi-annual Anti-Bullying assemblies with principal teacher

Reflection sheets for pupils to reflect on inappropriate behavior, homophobic/transphobic behavior

Preventing racist bullying behaviour

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.

Implementing the SPHE curriculum and Stay Safe (all levels)

FUSE programme (4th-6th class)

fostering a school culture where diversity is celebrated and where students “see themselves” in their school environment.

The schools host an annual ‘inclusion and diversity week’ whereby ethnic minorities such as Traveller and Roma communities are celebrated

The Revised Learn Together Curriculum (2022) is taught in every classroom and includes education and celebration of different belief systems, values and ethical perspectives, equality and justice.

having the cultural diversity of the school visible and on display around the school, on noticeboards and in our school library

conducting workshops and seminars for students (Red Card to Racism)

encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities

encouraging and rewarding bystanders when they report witnessing 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. We have a number of staff who speak multiple languages who support in translation

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 e.g. Kildare Traveller Action

ensuring that library reading material and textbooks represent appropriate lived experiences of students and adults from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds

encouraging and celebrating children when they speak their 1st, 2nd, 3rd languages

Termly Pupil anti-bullying survey

Bi-annual Anti-Bullying assemblies with principal teacher

Fostering a culture of celebrating inclusion and diversity via monthly assemblies/awards, inclusion and diversity week and multicultural celebrations

Reflection sheets for pupils to reflect on inappropriate behavior and racism

Preventing sexist bullying behaviour

Schools should focus on gender equality as part of the school’s measures to create a supportive and respectful environment

Implementing the SPHE curriculum and Stay Safe

FUSE programme (4th-6th class)

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

encouraging parents to reinforce these values of respect at home

Termly Pupil anti-bullying survey

Bi-annual Anti-Bullying assemblies with principal teacher

Fostering a culture of celebrating inclusion and diversity via monthly assemblies/awards, inclusion and diversity week and multicultural celebrations

Reflection sheets for pupils to reflect on inappropriate sexist bullying behaviour

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.

Implementing the SPHE curriculum and Stay Safe

promoting positive role models within the school community

challenging gender stereotypes that can contribute to sexual harassment

Termly Pupil anti-bullying survey

Bi-annual Anti-Bullying assemblies with principal teacher

Fostering a culture of celebrating inclusion and diversity via monthly assemblies/awards, inclusion and diversity week and multicultural celebrations

Reflection sheets for pupils to reflect on inappropriate behavior/sexual harassment

Links:

[Stay Safe](#)

[Walk Tall | PDST](#)

[SPHE/RSE Toolkit | Curriculum Online](#)

[FUSE - Home](#)

[Webwise - Internet Safety](#)

[All Together Now - Belong To - LGBTQ+ Youth Ireland](#)

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

The relevant person to address bullying behaviour is The Class Teacher

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):

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
- 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.**

Identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred

Investigation: If a group of students is involved, each student will be engaged with individually at first

by the relevant teacher-**the class teacher**. The school's anti-bullying resource pack can be used at this stage.

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.

The definition of bullying provided in Chapter 2 sets out clear criteria to help schools to identify bullying behaviour. ***Is it repeated, targeted and harmful?***

The questions included in **Appendix C** will help determine if bullying has occurred, will further assist in this regard.

Incidents can occur where behaviour is unacceptable and hurtful but the behaviour is not bullying behaviour. Strategies that deal with inappropriate and unacceptable behaviour are provided for within the school's Positive Behaviour Policy.

The school will use the following approaches to support those who experience, witness and display bullying behavior (see Chapter 6 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

Where bullying behaviour has occurred

The school's Bí Cineálta policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour and the **student friendly policy (Appendix B)** will be used to determine what actions will be taken when bullying behaviour is reported. (See Chapter 4).

Bullying outside of school hours and involving external pupils

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 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. It is important for school staff to be fair and consistent in their approach to address bullying behaviour.

Supporting those involved

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 is 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/guardians of all those involved

Parents/guardians 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/guardians 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 as outlined in the school's Bí Cineálta policy.

In circumstances where a student expresses concern about their parents/guardians 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/guardians, 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. To ensure clarity among the school community about how instances of bullying behavior will be dealt with, the approaches that will be used by the school must be specified in the school's Bí Cineálta policy.

Parents/guardians **will not be informed** of consequences for the child who has engaged in bullying behavior if the Positive Behaviour Policy is adhered to.

Requests to take no action. A student reporting bullying behavior may ask that a member of staff does nothing about the behavior other than "look out" for them. The student may not want to be identified as having told someone about the bullying behavior. 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 behavior feels safe. Parents/guardians may also make schools aware of bullying behavior that has occurred and specifically request that the school take no action. Parents/guardians 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 behavior.

Determining if bullying behavior has ceased. The teacher must engage with the students and parents involved no more than **20 school days** after the initial discussion to review progress following the initial intervention. Important factors to consider as part of the review are the nature of the bullying behavior, the effectiveness of the strategies used to address the bullying behavior and the relationship between the students involved. Even though the bullying behavior may have ceased, ongoing supervision and support may be required for both the student who has experienced the bullying behavior as well as the student who has displayed the behavior. 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 behavior occurred. If the bullying behavior has not ceased, the teacher should review the strategies used in consultation with the students and parents and agree to meet again over an agreed timeframe until the bullying behavior has ceased. Where it becomes clear that the student who is displaying the bullying behavior is continuing to display the behavior, then the school should consider using the strategies to deal with inappropriate behavior as provided for within the school's Positive Behaviour Policy. If disciplinary sanctions are considered, this is a matter between the relevant student, their parents and the school.

Recording bullying behavior All incidents of bullying behavior should be recorded. The record should document the form (Section 2.5) and type (See Section 2.7) of bullying behavior, if known, where and when it took place and the date of the initial engagement with the students and their parents/guardians.

All recorded bullying behaviour will also document the actions and supports agreed to address bullying behaviour. 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/guardians regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behavior. It should document the review with students and their parents to determine if the bullying behavior 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 behavior 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 (Log of Actions). 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.

Supports to help and prevent and address bullying behavior

- National Educational Psychological Services,
- OIDE,
- Webwise,

-National Parents Council (NPC)
-DCU Antibullying Centre
-TUSLA

Complaints process

If a parent/guardian is not satisfied with how bullying behavior 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 on our school website. 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

Section D: Oversight

The principal will present an update on bullying behaviour at each board of management meeting. This update will include the number of incidents of bullying behaviour that have been reported since the last meeting, the number of ongoing incidents and the total number of incidents since the beginning of the school year.

Where incidents of bullying behaviour have occurred, the principal will also provide a verbal update which will include where relevant, information relating to trends and patterns identified, strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and any wider strategies to prevent and address bullying behaviour where relevant. This update does not contain personal or identifying information. See Chapter 7 of the Bí Cineálta procedures.

This policy is available to our school community on the school's website and in hard copy on request. A student friendly version of this policy is displayed in the school and is also available on our website and in hard copy on request.

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed, following input from our school community, each calendar year or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which this policy refers.

Signed: _____ (Chairperson of Board of Management)

Date: _____

Signed: _____ (Principal)

Date: _____

