



## **Bí Cineálta Policy**

*To Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour*

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The Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire NS 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.
- It is behaviour which is deliberate in nature and unwanted. It is not accidental or reckless behaviour.

The harm can be:

- Physical, Social or Emotional
- A one-off instance of negative behaviour towards a pupil 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.

**Behaviour that is not bullying behaviour** :(will be addressed under the school's Code of Behaviour)

- A once off instance of negative behaviour.
- Some students with additional 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 intentional, deliberate or planned, but in certain situations, they are an automatic response which they cannot control.
- Disagreement between students is not considered bullying unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.

**Forms of Bullying:** Bullying behaviour can take many forms, which can occur separately or together. These can include the following which is not an exhaustive list.

**Direct bullying behaviour:**

- **Physical:** pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping students. Physical assault. Destruction of personal property.
- **Verbal:** continual name calling which insults, humiliates the student – this may refer to physical appearance, size, clothes, gender, accent, academic ability, race or ethnic origin.
- **Written:** Writing insulting remarks in public places, passing notes or drawings about the student.
- **Extortion:** where something is obtained through force or threats.

**Indirect bullying behaviour:**

- **Exclusion:** where a student is deliberately and repeatedly isolated, excluded or ignored by a student or group of students.
- **Relational:** Where a student's attempt to form friendships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined, threats, non-verbal gesturing, malicious gossip, spreading rumours, silent treatment and manipulation of friend groups etc can all form relational bullying for a student.

**Online bullying behaviour:** Cyber bullying is carried out via text, direct messaging/instant messaging, social media platforms, email, apps, digital gaming sites, gaming consoles, chatrooms and other online technologies. This can include:

- Sending or sharing insulting and offensive or intimidating messages or images via online means as mentioned above.
- Posting information which is personal, private or sensitive without consent.
- Making and/or participating in fake profiles on a social network to impersonate and/or humiliate other students.
- Exclude/disrupt access to a student on purpose on online chat groups/access to accounts/from an online game.

**Bullying behaviour outside school:** Scoil Mhuire NS 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 continues into the school environment, the school will address the bullying behaviour in accordance with this Bí Cineálta policy.

## 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	May & June 2025	Staff Meetings
Students	13/06/25	Pupil Focus Group
Parents	June 2025	Parental Questionnaire
Board of Management	05/06/25 + 20/10/25	BOM Meetings
Wider school community	12/06/25	Secretary Cleaner Bus Drivers
Date policy was approved: 20 <sup>th</sup> of October 2025		
Date policy was last reviewed:		

## Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

This section sets out the prevention strategies that will be used by Scoil Mhuire NS to address all forms of bullying behaviour, in whatever form and however motivated, including online bullying behaviour, homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour, racist bullying behaviour, sexist bullying behaviour and sexual harassment.

- In developing the preventative strategies which this school will use to prevent all forms of bullying behaviour, we come from the context of our Catholic ethos, where inclusivity permeates our school in a real way.
- Scoil Mhuire NS takes positive steps to ensure that the culture of the school is one which welcomes a respectful dialogue and encounter with diversity and difference by ensuring that prevention and inclusivity strategies are given priority and discussed regularly at our board of management and staff meetings.
- The dignity and the wellbeing of the individual person is of paramount concern in our Christian response. This school will listen closely to and dialogue with parents, thereby building a relationship of mutual understanding, respect, trust and confidence.
- In continuing to develop prevention strategies, this school will listen to young people and parents, to help establish their particular context and needs. Frequent periods of reflection and further engagement by the school, young people and parents, will be used to discern appropriate supports for young people in this school and to help inform future prevention strategies.

### 1. Culture and Environment – The school will strive to:

- Create a school community that supports a ‘telling’ environment by building relationships based on trust. The staff continuously remind the children that when ‘they tell the truth they will get in less or no trouble depending on the poor choice they made’.
- Promote the concept of “a trusted adult” as an effective strategy to encourage students to report if they or another student is experiencing bullying behavior
- Encourage pupils to use the SPHE strategy of ‘Say no, get away, tell’
- Ensure that the Code of Behaviour, Bí Cineálta and expectations of the entire school community are clearly explained to all children at the start of the year and recap as required.
- Create safe physical spaces
- The school will have appropriate supervision and take all reasonable measures to ensure the safety of their students
- Have the Bí Cineálta policy (child-friendly version) visible around the school

## 2. Curriculum – The school will strive to:

- Provide teaching and learning that is collaborative and respectful, fostering inclusion and respect for diversity
- The school will provide opportunities for pupils to develop a sense of self-worth through both curricular and extra-curricular programmes (Cycle Right, Cumann Na mBunscol, Computers/Coding, Credit Union Quiz, school garden, Christmas Plays etc.)
- The Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) curricula aim to foster pupils' well-being, self-confidence and sense of belonging and to develop pupils' sense of personal responsibility for their own behaviour and actions
- The Catholic ethos of the school helps pupils to develop their respect and understanding of different beliefs, perspectives and ways of living

## 3. Policy and Planning – The aims of the school's Bí Cineálta Policy are set out below:

- To foster a school ethos of mutual and self-respect
- To raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behavior – the student friendly version of this Bí Cineálta policy will be clearly displayed around the school
- To outline, promote and raise awareness of preventative approaches that can be used in response to reported incidences of bullying
- To develop a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and for those involved in bullying behaviour
- To outline procedures for noting and reporting instances of bullying behaviour
- To outline procedures for investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour
- The school's Acceptance Use Policy, Supervision Policy, Special Education Teaching Policy and Code of Behaviour support the implementation of the school's Bí Cineálta policy.

## 4. Relationships and Partnerships

- The school strives to foster strong interpersonal connections which are a vital part of effectively preventing and addressing bullying behaviour. The following, which is not an exhaustive list, could be considered to strengthen relationships and partnerships between members of the school community:
- Age-appropriate awareness initiatives that look at the causes and impacts of bullying behaviour
- Supporting the active participation of pupils in school life
- Supporting the active participation of parents in school life through the Parent's Association
- Supporting activities that build empathy, respect and resilience
- Encourage peer support such as peer mentoring
- Promoting acts of kindness
- Promote workshops/seminars/talks for the school community to raise awareness of the impact of bullying (visits from the Gardaí/internet safety talks etc.)

The school has the following supervision and monitoring policies in place to prevent and address bullying behaviour:

**Preventing Cyberbullying behaviour, homophobic/transphobic bullying behaviour, racist bullying behaviour, sexist bullying behaviour & sexual harassment**

**In addition to the above-mentioned strategies, the school has the following strategies in place to prevent bullying (which is not an exhaustive list):**

- Implementing the SPHE curriculum
- Implementing the Digital Media Literacy curriculum which teaches pupils about their responsible online behaviour and digital citizenship
- Having regular conversations with pupils about developing respectful and kind relationships online
- Developing and communicating an acceptable use policy for technology
- 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
- Encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
- Challenge gender-stereotypes
- Raise awareness of the impact of homophobic bullying behaviour
- Encourage pupils to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour
- Fostering a school culture where diversity is celebrated and where pupils "see themselves" in their school environment
- Raise awareness of racism and encourage bystanders to report when they witness racist behaviour
- Modelling of respectful behaviour by staff of all irrespective of sex.
- Ensuring all students have the same opportunities to engage in school activities irrespective of sex.
- Celebrating diversity at school and acknowledging the contributions of all pupils.
- Making clear that our school has a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment of any kind.
- Encouraging parents to reinforce these values of respect at home



## **Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour**

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

- Relevant teacher is the class teacher. Investigations and/or reports about bullying behavior must be dealt with by the relevant teacher first.
  - Principal and/ or deputy principal will deal with bullying behavior if the relevant teacher is absent or the relevant teacher uses their professional judgement and deems it necessary to have the Principal or Deputy Principal present at an investigation. The Principal and/or Deputy Principal are also available to provide up to date information and supports if needed to assist the relevant teacher in addressing bullying behavior.
  - The relevant teacher will oversee recording of bullying reports for students in their class – this includes using the school's procedure guidelines to investigate reports of bullying and recording bullying behavior on the school's template.
  - All staff will be vigilant to bullying behavior.
  - Principal will inform the Board of Management of incidences of Bullying.
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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
- > 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 follow:

### **Step 1: Identifying if bullying behavior has occurred:**

The primary aim in address reports of bullying behavior is to stop the bullying behavior and to restore relationships in a fair manner. Teachers will take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behavior reported by pupils, staff or parents. Class teachers will carry out investigations with another staff member present who will record the conversations using the school's template.

1. The relevant teacher will ask the following questions to determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour or not.
  - Is the behaviour targeted at a specific pupil or group of pupils?
  - Is the behaviour on purpose/intended to cause physical, social or emotional harm?
  - Is the behaviour repeated?

If the answer to each of the questions above is **Yes**, then the behaviour is bullying behaviour and the behaviour will be addressed using the procedures that follow below.

If the answer is **No**, then the behaviour is not bullying behaviour and it will be dealt with using the schools Code of Behaviour.

### **Step 2: Approaches taken when bullying behavior has occurred:**

2. If a group of pupils are involved each pupil will be engaged with individually at first. Thereafter, all pupils involved will be met as a group.
3. At the group meeting each pupil will be asked for their account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's views. Children are encouraged to tell the truth straight away and try to minimize loss of teaching time.
4. The relevant teacher will use the school template for recording the investigation and consider the 'what, where, when and why'.
5. Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has engaged in bullying behaviour, it will be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's Bí Cineálta policy and efforts should be made to try to get him/her to see the perspective of the pupil being bullied.
6. The relevant teacher does not apportion blame but will make an effort to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied.
7. The relevant teacher emphasizes that the intention is not to punish perpetrators but to talk to them, to explain how harmful and hurtful bullying is and to seek a promise that it will stop.
8. When an investigation is completed and/or bullying situation is resolved the "Relevant Teacher" will complete a report using the school's template, to include the findings of the investigation, actions to be taken and any other relevant information.
9. This will be stored in the child's file in the office.
10. Where bullying behaviour has occurred and the investigation has taken place, the parents of the students involved will be contacted to inform them of the matter and to consult with them on the actions to be taken to address the behaviour. Parents may be invited into the school for a meeting. Parents and children are required to co-operate with and support any investigations and assist the school in resolving any issues and restoring, as far as practicable, the relationships of the parties involved as quickly as possible.

**Step 3: Follow up where bullying behaviour has occurred:**

11. The relevant teacher will engage with the pupils involved and their parents again no more than 20 school days after the initial engagement.
12. The relevant teacher will document the review with pupils and their parents to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased.
13. The date that the bullying behaviour has ceased will also be recorded.
14. If it is found that the bullying behaviour has not ceased and the pupil chooses to continue the bullying behaviour the school will use disciplinary sanctions as provided for within the schools Code of Behaviour. Such sanctions will be proportionate to the seriousness of the bullying behaviour. It must be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parents) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required that this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parents and the school.
15. Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parent must be referred to the school's complaints procedure.
16. The School will maintain care for the victim over time. This will be done by speaking to the child a number of weeks after the incident to check on their continuing welfare. The child's parents will also be consulted.
17. If a child makes a report of bullying, but asks that nothing is to be done about it, the relevant teacher will support the child appropriately to explore how it will be handled sensitively and how parents may be notified.
18. If a parent makes a report of bullying, but asks that nothing is to be done about it, they must submit in writing that they require no further action to be taken, but even so, the school may still deem it necessary to be investigated and handled appropriately.

The school will use the following approaches to support those who experience, witness and display bullying behaviour:

The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying involves a whole school approach. Given the complexity of bullying behaviour, no one intervention/support programme works in all situations.

### **Supporting Bullied pupils:**

- Ending the bullying behaviour
- Fostering respect for bullied pupils and all pupils
- Fostering greater empathy towards and support for bullied pupils
- Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through annual awareness-raising programmes,
- Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through the speedy identification of those responsible and speedy resolution of bullying situations,
- Making adequate counselling facilities available to pupils who need it in a timely manner (subject to available funding & the availability of the Counselling Pilot Scheme Programme
- Helping bullied pupils raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that help develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school).

### **Supporting Bullying pupils:**

- Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are not blamed or punished and get a 'clean sheet'
- Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are doing the right and honorable thing and giving them praise for this
- Making adequate counseling facilities available to help those who need it learn other ways of meeting their needs besides violating the rights of others
- Helping those who need to raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school)
- Using learning strategies throughout the school and the curriculum to help enhance pupils' feelings of self-worth
- In dealing with negative behavior in general, encouraging teachers and parents to focus on, challenge and correct the behaviour while supporting the child,
- In dealing with bullying behaviour seeking resolution and offering a fresh start with a 'clean sheet' and no blame in return for keeping a promise to reform.

The school will seek out support from the relevant agencies below when deemed necessary.

- National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)
- Oide
- Webwise
- National Parents Council
- Túsla

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.

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: *Suzanne Duffy*

Date: 20/10/25

(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: *Amy Tiernan*

Date: 20/10/25

(Principal)