



St. Patrick's National School, Castletara, Co. Cavan

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Castletara 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		
Students		
Parents		
Board of Management		
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers		
Date policy was approved:		
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):

Prevention Strategies

Culture and Environment

- Create a positive school climate where all students feel safe, respected and valued
- Promote diversity and inclusion in all aspects of school life
- Using circle practice in the classroom to build a positive culture and environment
- Encourage open communication between students, staff and parents. Encourage pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour
- Establish clear expectations for behaviour and enforce them consistently
- Promote respectful relationships across the school community
- Open communication
- Effective routines / transitions
- Anti-bullying signs and messages will be displayed around the school. Positive messages that promote friendship and caring attitudes will also be displayed.
- Pupil Behaviour Promise Sheet

Curriculum (Teaching & Learning)

- Integrate anti-bullying message into the school curriculum
- Teach students about bullying and its effects
- SPHE methodologies
- Provide opportunities for students to develop social and emotional skills
- Incorporate lessons on respect, empathy and diversity in the curriculum
- An anti-bullying /friendship day/week
- The Stay Safe Programme will be implemented at appropriate times and levels in school
- Behaviour charts in the classroom
- Class rules drawn up with the class in September
- Behaviour reflection sheets
- Buddy benches in the playground
- Resources such as: The Weaving Wellbeing Programme, Mindful Matters, Social

Stories, etc.

- Explicit teaching and appropriate communication and emotional literacy
- Group work / collaboration
- Sensory room for emotional regulation
- Movement Breaks

Policy & Planning

- Develop a clear and consistent anti-bullying policy that is enforced by all staff members
- Review and update the anti-bullying policy regularly
- Provide training for staff on how to recognize and respond to bullying
- Establish clear procedure for reporting and responding to bullying incidents
- The Acceptable Internet Use Policy was developed to ensure that access to technology within the school is strictly monitored
- School Policies – The following policies, practices and activities that are particularly relevant to bullying include: Code of Behaviour, Child Safeguarding statement, Risk Assessment, Supervision of Pupils, Acceptable Use Policy, Attendance, Communication Policy, SPHE, RSE, PE, SEN, Inclusion policy
- Student Voice
- The schools approach to tackling and preventing bullying will take particular account of the needs of pupils with disabilities or with SEN, will join up with other relevant school policies and supports and will endeavor to ensure that all the services that provide for such pupils work together
- Approaches to decreasing the likelihood of bullying for pupils with SEN include improving inclusion, focusing on developing social skills, paying attention to key moments such as transitioning from primary to post-primary and cultivating a good school culture which has respect for all and helping one another as central.

Relationships & Partnerships

- Encourage open communication between students, staff and parents
- Build positive relationships with students and families
- Implementation of education and prevention strategies including awareness raising measures that build empathy, respect and resilience in students
- Teacher Professional Learning
- Collaborate with community organisations to provide additional support and resources
- Guest speakers may be invited to address staff and parent groups at regular

intervals in relation to various types of bullying

- Work with parents and students to educate them about the dangers of cyber-bullying by facilitating outside speakers e.g. the community Garda. The programme 'Webwise' will be taught on a regular basis in school. This programme teaches safe and responsible internet use
 - Clear protocols are in place to encourage parents/guardians to approach the school they suspect that their child is being bullied. These protocols are developed as part of the school's communication policy
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Preventing Cyberbullying

School will actively try to prevent Cyberbullying by using the following strategies:

- implementing the SPHE curriculum
- implementing the Digital Media Literacy curriculum which teaches students about responsible online behaviour and digital citizenship
- having regular conversations with students about developing respectful and kind relationships online
- developing and communicating an acceptable use policy for technology
- referring to appropriate online behaviour as part of the standards of behaviour in our 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

Preventing homophobic/transphobic bullying behaviour

All students including gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students, have a right to feel safe and supported in our school. Our school will use the following strategies to help prevent homophobic/transphobic bullying behaviour.

- maintaining an inclusive physical environment
- using inclusive resources
- encouraging peer support and empathy building activities
- challenging genderstereotypes
- encouraging students to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour

Preventing racist bullying behaviour

Our school will use the following strategies to help prevent racist bullying behaviour:

- fostering a school culture where diversity is celebrated and where students "see

themselves” in their school environment

- having the cultural diversity of the school visible and on display
- encouraging peer support and organising empathy building activities
- encouraging bystanders to report when they witness racist behaviour
- providing supports to school staff to respond to the needs of students for whom English is an additional language and for communicating with their parents
- providing supports to school staff to support students from ethnic minorities and to encourage communication with their parents
- inviting speakers from diverse ethnic backgrounds
- ensuring that library reading material, resources and textbooks represent appropriate lived experiences of students and adults from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds (Diversity & Inclusion Books)
- organise events to highlight culture/traditions of other countries

Preventing sexist bullying behaviour

Our school aims to create a supportive and respectful environment and will use the following strategies to prevent sexist bullying behaviour:

- ensuring members of staff model respectful behaviour and treat students equally irrespective of their sex
- ensuring all students have the same opportunities to engage in school activities irrespective of their sex
- celebrating diversity at school and acknowledging the contributions of all students
- organising awareness campaigns, workshops and presentations on gender equality and respect
- encouraging parents to reinforce these values of respect at home

Preventing sexual harassment

In our school there is a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment. We use the following strategies to prevent sexual harassment:

- treating each other with respect and kindness
- promoting positive role models within the school community
- challenging gender stereotypes that can contribute to sexual harassment

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

Staff Supervision – All staff members should be trained to recognize and respond

to bullying behaviour. They should be present and visible in common areas and playground during break times.

Student Supervision – Class teachers should supervise students during class time and at break times. They should be aware of what is happening in their classrooms and on the playground.

Visitor supervision – Visitors to the school should be supervised at all times. They should not be left alone with students.

- **Monitoring**

Incident reporting – The class teacher investigates all instances of reported or suspected bullying behaviour with a view to establishing the facts and records on an incident form

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

- Internet Usage Policy
- Special Educational Needs Policy
- Code of Behaviour

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

- Class Teacher
- In School 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):

Approach

Castletara N.S.'s Anti-Bullying Campaign involves 4 steps:

- Step 1 – Action taken in response to an incident report
- Step 2 – Regular Class Survey
- Step 3 – Alleged Bullying Interview Sheet and Bullying Behaviour Checklist
- Step 4 – Pupil Behaviour Promise (3rd-6th Class)

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 will:

- 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 the students involved
- listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour before deciding how to address the situation
- take action in a timely manner
- inform parents of those involved

Identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred

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.

To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour we will consider the

following questions:

1. Is the behaviour targeted at a specific student or group of students?
2. Is the behaviour intended to cause physical, social or emotional harm?
3. Is the behaviour repeated?

If the answer to each of the questions above is 'Yes', then the behaviour is bullying behaviour. and the behaviour should be addressed using the procedures outlined in this policy.

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.

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

Anti-Bullying Campaign Step 1 – Action taken in response to an incident report.

All information relating to the alleged bullying is recorded on the Step 1 'Action Taken In Resonse to Incident Report' Form. All information is dated and signed and any follow up actions are recorded. This sheet is to be signed off after 20 days of the initial alleged report stating that there are no longer ongoing issues with pupils. Parents/Pupils should be contacted to ensure this is the case.

Anti Bullying Campaign Step 2 – Regular Class Survey. This document outlines where the school stands on bullying, reminding the children what bullying is and by completing the survey the pupils have the opportunity to provide information to inform if bullying has or has not taken place.

Anti-Bullying Campaign Step 3 – Alleged Bullying Interview Sheet. This document compiles information from an interview conducted in an amicable way seeking information and a promise. A bullying behaviour checklist on this document is also completed which will record if the behaviour includes verbal, written, property, discrimination, social, intimidation or physical bullying.

Where bullying behaviour has occurred

- parents are an integral part of the school community and play an important role, in

partnership with schools, in addressing bullying behaviour. Where bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the students involved 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

- we will listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour before deciding how best to address the situation
- a record will be kept of the engagement with all involved
- this 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 involved and their parents
- the record will include the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour

Anti-Bullying Campaign Step 4 – Pupil Behaviour Promise. The pupil (3rd – 6th) who has been determined as engaging in bullying behaviour will sign a Pupil Behaviour Promise Sheet. This is to be countersigned by the teacher and the pupil's parents.

Follow up where bullying behaviour has occurred:

- the teacher will engage with the students involved and their parents again no more than 20 school days after the initial engagement. The nature of the bullying behaviour, the effectiveness of the strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and the relationship between the students involved will be considered as part of this engagement.
- the teacher 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 that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased will also be recorded
- any engagement with external services/supports will 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 will review the strategies used in consultation with the students involved and their parents. A timeframe will 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 consideration will be given to using the strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour as provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour. If disciplinary sanctions are considered, this is a matter

between the relevant student, their parents and the school

- if a parent(s) is not satisfied with how the bullying behaviour has been addressed by the school, in accordance with the Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, they will 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):

Staff will:

- Manage the bullying behaviour
- Support the pupils who have experienced bullying behaviour, displayed bullying behaviour and witnessed bullying behaviour
- Promote a positive school culture where pupils feel safe, respected and valued
- Raise awareness of the appropriate programmes and teacher training
- Help pupils 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; team activities during or after school; small social groups with SET
- Make it clear that adopting strategies is a positive step towards creating a more respectful and inclusive school environment
- In dealing with challenging behaviour, encourage teachers and parents to focus on positive reinforcement
- Circle Time

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: Eddie Conboy Date: 22.10.2025
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: Tara Bradley Date: 22.10.25
(Principal)