



Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire Kiskeam 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 such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the 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 each person 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 all have an indispensable part to play in the school community, regardless of difference.

Definition of bullying

Bullying is **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 behavior which is **deliberate** in nature and is unwanted. It is not accidental or reckless behavior.

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.

Types of Bullying

There are many different types of bullying behaviour. These can include directing bullying at someone focused on the following: disability, exceptional ability, gender identity, LGBTQ+, physical appearance, racism, poverty status, religious identity, sexism and sexual harassment. This is not an exhaustive list.

Bullying can be:

Direct:

- 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:

- Exclusion: where a student is deliberately and repeatedly isolated, excluded or ignored by a student or group of students.
- Relational: Where a student's attempts 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, e-mail, apps, digital gaming sites, gaming consoles, chatrooms and other online technologies. This can include:

- Sending or sharing of 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.

Behaviour that is not bullying behaviour:

- If repeated harm is experienced by a student, however it is deemed as 'unintended' by the other student- this is not bullying, but, it must be addressed under the school's code of behaviour.
- Disagreement between students is not considered bullying unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.
- A one-off instance of negative behaviour towards a 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 thus becoming a repeated behavior.
- 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 cannot control.



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	November 14 th 2024 - Tralee Education Centre Monday November 18 th 2024-Croke Park hours	Stage 1: School Staff reps attended course in Tralee Ed Centre. Stage 2: Staff Meeting - staff provided with the opportunity to discuss the new Bí Cineálta action plan and stemming from this discussion, staff were informed of the important points in dealing with an incidence or report of bullying - notice board in staff room with the relevant information displayed as well as resources and record form. Staff given time to discuss and relay feedback.
Students	October & November 2024:	October: Agree to Agree survey distributed during SPHE lessons to all households and children were given the homework of reading & replying to questions based on their internet usage. Nov: Students were given a questionnaire to seek their input in reviewing how kind they feel their school environment is. January
Parents	Starting Sept 2024	Two staff and parents representatives have been attending termly meetings for the Agree to Agree Initiative for internet safety

	March 2025	and safeguarding our children's online experiences. Online Survey circulated to all parents re: Safeguarding, Bullying and Well-being in our school
Board of Management	June 2025	BOM will be consulted on our Bí Cineálta policy. Their input will ensure that the policy reflects the school's ethos and compiles the statutory requirements.
Staff	Staff Meeting Friday May 23rd	Sharing of draft policy with staff to discuss/consult and make any amendments.
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	June 2025	Draft policy circulated to all parent body and staff.
Date policy was approved:		
Date policy was last reviewed:		

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

<p>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.</p> <p>In developing 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 the school in a real way.</p> <p>This school 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 board of management and staff meetings.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>In continuing to develop prevention strategies, this school will listen to young people</p>
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and parents, to help establish their particular context and needs. Frequent periods of reflection and 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.

Culture and Environment:

We strive to:

Create a school culture where bullying behaviour is unacceptable and a consistent approach to addressing bullying behaviour.

Involve parents as active partners in fostering an environment where bullying behaviour is not tolerated.

Support the idea that our school is a telling environment.

Promote the concept of a trusted adult - Stay Safe linkage - who to tell.

Create safe spaces in our school building and yards - visibility

Incorporate artwork and signs to promote our school values - creation of a school charter promoting rights - equality, inclusion and respect.

Encourage a sense of belonging with ownership over their own space through art and creativity.

Create a positive school culture and climate which- is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity; encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment; and promotes respectful relationships across the school community. Include "Worry Boxes" as a method to anonymously or discreetly make staff aware of any issues.

Ways in which we work to achieve these goals are as follows:

Staff are briefed on the uniform approach we must take to handle all reports of bullying - this is distributed to staff and a copy is displayed on the Staff Room notice board for ease of access also.

Anti Bullying week activities such as Random Acts of Kindness (RAK) homework, Poster making, slogan making, displays etc. Staff acknowledge kind behaviour formally and informally on yard or in assemblies.

Playground helpers - students in higher classes volunteer to support younger classes on yard to help with games and positive interactions.

Child Friendly Anti- Bullying Policy was formed with pupil and parent input and is distributed to parents, children and staff to discuss. This policy outlines various ways to tell.

Parents receive information at times regarding useful information on Anti Bullying. Stay safe and SPHE lessons focusing on positive behaviour form part of curricular content in all classes. Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils.

Class and School Charter/Agreements as well as notice board to promote kindness and build responsibility amongst pupils.

Curriculum (teaching and learning)

We strive to:

Provide teaching and promote learning which is collaborative and respectful, fostering inclusion and respect for diversity.

Display a shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact. Ways in which we work to achieve this:

Teach SPHE and RSE content which fosters student's well-being and self-confidence as well as promoting personal responsibility for their own behaviours and actions.

Model respectful behaviour towards colleagues, pupils and visitors in our school environment.

Curricular and Extra-curricular activities can help to develop a sense of self-worth, working together, inclusion and respect.

Students are given regular opportunities to work in small groups with peers, which can help build a sense of connection, belonging and empathy.

Acknowledgment of our diverse school population - celebrating diversity and culture in our school through art, assemblies, displays, photographs, international events.

Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that- build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.

Supports for staff; Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies); and

On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

Strategies to prevent Bullying Behaviour

Cyberbullying Prevention: The school endeavors to foster digital citizenship amongst students- through specific SPHE lessons, extra-curricular initiatives (FUSE) and Internet Safety Talks with external facilitators. The school implements an Internet Acceptable Use policy, Agree to Agree agreement and holds Online Safety events to educate students and parents about responsible online behaviour.

• Homophobic/Transphobic Bullying: Strategies include promoting inclusive



environments, peer support, and raising awareness about the impact of homophobic behaviour.

- **Racist Bullying:** The school will focus on celebrating cultural diversity, encouraging peer support, and they will provide resources for staff to support students from diverse backgrounds, including those with English as an additional language.

- **Sexist Bullying:** The school will promote gender equality through staff role models, equal opportunities for all students, and awareness campaigns.

Sexual Harassment: A zero tolerance policy is enforced through SPHE lessons, positive role models and challenging gender stereotypes.

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

Staff at all times endeavour to encourage pupils to show respect for each other.

- Implementation of the SPHE curriculum.
- Positive self-esteem is fostered among the pupils by celebrating individual differences, by acknowledging good behaviour and by providing opportunities for success.
- Digital Media Policy includes learning about responsible online behaviour and digital citizenship. Implement the Agree to Agree agreement to all incoming infant classes from 2025/26. AUP also developed for technology in our school.
- The school's anti-bullying policy is discussed regularly with the pupils.
- Staff are particularly vigilant in monitoring pupils who are considered at risk of bullying/ being bullied.
- All disclosed incidents of bullying are investigated thoroughly and consistently by following the correct procedure as outlined to staff and recorded.
- School wide awareness raising on all aspects of bullying, supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extracurricular activities.
- Foster a culture where diversity is celebrated and students "see themselves" in the school environment.
- Involvement of pupils in contributing to a safe school environment e.g. Kindness/ anti-bullying week, and other activities that can help to pupils and encourage a culture of peer respect and support
- Ensuring that pupils know who to tell and how to tell.
- Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place.
- Refer to appropriate online behaviour when using devices and in SPHE lessons.
- Promote online safety events or material for parents



Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

Class teachers, SET teachers, Deputy Principal, Principal, DLP, deputy DLP. * Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, SNA's, caretakers and cleaners are encouraged to report any bullying behaviour witnessed by them to the child's class teacher.

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
- > support for students who display and students who experience bullying behaviour
- > 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 :

1. Identifying and Assessing the Behaviour

Staff will investigate all reports of bullying by considering what happened, where, when, and why.

- If multiple students are involved, each child will be spoken to individually first, followed by a group meeting, where appropriate. The children will be asked to give an account of the incident.

- Students may be asked to give a written account, to ensure clarity.

- Staff will use the definition of bullying outlined in the school's Bí Cineálta policy and they will refer to guiding questions to determine if bullying has occurred.

- The following three questions should be considered to determine if bullying has occurred.

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 all three questions is 'yes' then the behaviour meets the definition of bullying and it will be addressed following the school's Bí Cineálta Policy.

- If the answer to any of these questions is 'no' then the behaviour does not meet the definition of bullying. Incidents can occur where behaviour is unacceptable and hurtful, but the behaviour is not deemed as bullying behaviour. These incidents should be dealt with in accordance to the school's code of behaviour.

2. Taking Prompt and Supportive Action • Action is taken without delay to make the student experiencing bullying feel heard, supported, and safe. • Staff will approach the situation with sensitivity, fairness, and consistency, considering the age and ability of all involved. • The privacy of those involved is respected throughout the process. • Both the student experiencing bullying and the student displaying the behaviour will be supported to manage their emotions and difficulties.

3. Involving Parents and Guardians

The parents/guardians of all parties are contacted at an early stage and involved in discussions about how the behaviour will be addressed. • Where a student expresses fear or concern about informing their parents, staff will create a support plan and agree on how and when parents will be contacted. • Staff will be mindful of any barriers to communication, such as literacy or language needs.

4. Agreeing on and Implementing Interventions

- The views of the student who experienced bullying are central in planning the next steps.

- A tailored plan of action is created with input from students, parents, and staff.



- Interventions may include restorative practices or mediation.
- Any incidents of Bullying-which occurs while the children are under the care or responsibility of the school, will be dealt with appropriately and without delay.
- 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 student involved.

5. Reviewing and Monitoring Progress

- Within 20 school days, the staff member will re-engage with the students and parents to review the situation.
- Progress is evaluated based on:
 - Whether the bullying behaviour has stopped,
 - The effectiveness of the actions taken,
 - The current relationship between students involved.
- Ongoing Support: Even if bullying has stopped, continued monitoring and support may be needed for both the student affected and the student who engaged in the behaviour, as it can take time for relationships to heal.
 - If Bullying persists, the teacher should reassess and adjust strategies with input from the students and parents, agreeing to another review within a set timeframe.
- Escalation: If the student displaying the bullying behaviour continues, despite interventions, the school may need to apply the Code of Behaviour.

6. Recording and Documentation

- All incidents of bullying will be formally recorded.
- The form will include: The type and location of the behaviour, Dates of engagement with students and parents, Actions taken and follow-up outcomes.
- Records are stored in accordance with data protection laws and the school's record keeping policy.
- If a Student Support File exists, the bullying record will be included in the SSF and will be updated as needed.

7. Handling Requests for No Action

- If a student asks that staff take no action and simply "keep an eye," staff will: Show empathy, discuss options with the student, Work together to agree on appropriate steps while prioritising the student's sense of safety and agency.
- Parents may also request that no action be taken. This request must be put in writing, though the school may still decide to act based on the circumstances.

8. Complaints Process • If a parent is not satisfied with how bullying has been addressed by the school, in accordance with these procedures, they should be referred to the school's complaints procedure.

• In the event that a student and/or parent is dissatisfied following the complaints procedure, they may make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

9. Accessing Support Services

• The school may engage with services such as
National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)

Oide

INTO

Webwise

National Parents Council

DCU Ant Bullying Centre,

Tusla and any other outside agencies that provide advice and support implementing effective plans and approaches to incidents.

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):

Support for Students Who Experience Bullying Behaviour:

- Listen and validate the student's experience.
- Provide reassurance and emotional support.
- Offer external counselling services to help rebuild confidence (Paly therapy, local services).
- Ensure the student feels safe and supported within the school.
- Address the bullying promptly and take action to resolve it. • Involve parents in supporting the student's wellbeing.
- Encourage engagement in activities that build friendships and social skills.
- Promote a sense of belonging and empower the student to speak up.

Supporting Pupils Who Witness Bullying:

- Foster a 'telling environment'
- Encourage reporting and reassure witnesses of support.
- Promote empathy and understanding of the impact of bullying.
- Teach safe ways to intervene or seek help.
- Emphasize the role of witnesses in creating a positive school environment.
- Ensure witnesses feel confident and safe if standing up for peers.
- Offer support for distressed witnesses.
- Foster a culture of respect, encouraging witnesses to be active allies.



Support for Students Who Display Bullying Behaviour:

- Focus on understanding the reasons behind the behaviour.
- Offer guidance on alternative ways to meet emotional or social needs.
- Provide external counselling support to address underlying issues.
- Encourage positive behaviour and personal growth.
- Promote self-reflection and responsibility for actions.
- Reinforce that reforming behaviour leads to a fresh start without blame. Create opportunities for building empathy and social skills.

Involve parents in supporting behaviour change.

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: _____ Date: _____
(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(Principal)