



Preventing and Addressing Bullying Behaviour

Introduction

The Board of Management of *Ballyagran 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.

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 behaviour is deliberate in nature and is unwanted. It is not accidental or reckless behaviour. 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 (Chapter 2)* as:

- targeted behaviour, online or offline that causes harm
- constituting:
 - physical (*personal injury, damage to or loss of property*)
 - social (*withdrawal, loneliness, exclusion*)
 - emotional (*low self esteem, depression, anxiety*)
- repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power in relationships between two people or groups of people in society.
- a once off hurtful post or message on social media

Types of Bullying Behaviour

There are many different types of bullying behaviour. These can include the following which is not an exhaustive list:

- **disablist bullying behaviour:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of a perceived or actual disability or additional need
- **exceptionally able bullying:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their high academic ability or outstanding talents
- **gender identity bullying:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their perceived or actual gender identity
- **homophobic/transphobic (LGBTQ+) bullying:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their perceived or actual membership of the LGBTQ+ community
- **physical appearance bullying:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their physical appearance. Students who “look different” can be mocked or criticised about the shape, size or appearance of their body
- **racist bullying:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their race or ethnic origin which includes membership of the Traveller or Roma community. Racism is defined in the National Action Plan Against Racism¹³ as “a form of domination which manifests through those power dynamics present in structural and institutional arrangements, practices, policies and cultural norms, which have the effect of excluding or discriminating against individuals or groups, based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin”
- **poverty bullying:** behaviour that intends to humiliate a student because of a lack of resources
- **religious identity bullying:** behaviour that intends to harm a student because of their religion or



religious identity

- **sexist bullying:** behaviour that intends to harm a student based on their sex, perpetuating stereotypes that a student or a group of students are inferior because of their sex
- **sexual harassment:** any form of unwanted verbal, nonverbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature or other conduct based on sex which affects the dignity of the student

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 and so becomes a repeated behaviour.

Behaviour that is not bullying behaviour

- If the repeated harm is real for the student experiencing the behaviour, but unintended by the other student, this is not bullying, but, importantly, must be addressed under the school's code of behaviour.
- 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.
- Disagreement between students is not considered bullying unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.

This Bí Cineálta policy sets out how our 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 & address bullying behaviour

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

	<u>Date consulted</u>	<u>Method of consultation</u>
School Staff	Wednesday 15/01/2025 Wednesday 30/04/2025	Staff meeting Staff meeting incl SNAs
Students	Friday 02/05/2025 Thursday 08/05/2025	Assembly Age appropriate whole class discussions and student council meeting
Parents	05/03/2025	Draft of changes made available to PA
Board of Management	13/03/2025 22/05/2025	Initial consultation Draft policy & procedures reviewed
Wider school community	May 2025	Discussion with bus drivers & bus escorts Draft Policy uploaded to website
Date policy was approved: 12th June 2025		
Date policy was last reviewed: 25th September 2025		



SECTION B:

Preventing Bullying Behaviour

This section sets out the prevention strategies that will be used by this school 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 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.

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.

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 engagement by the school, young people and parents, will be used to discern appropriate support 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.
- Parents are involved as active partners in fostering an environment where bullying behaviour is not tolerated.
- Support the idea that our school is a “telling” environment.
- Establish clear expectations for behaviour and enforce them consistently.
- Promote the concept of a trusted adult. This is promoted and reinforced through the yearly teaching of the Stay Safe Friendship and Bullying topics.
- Create safe spaces in our school buildings and yards e.g. Buddy Benches.
- 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;*
 - *promotes respectful relationships across the school community;*
- Foster and enhance the self-esteem of all our pupils through both curricular and extracurricular activities. Pupils will be provided with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth through formal and informal interactions.



The following strategies and initiatives may be used:

- Stay Safe materials and associated videos
- Chess club
- Cuman na mBunscol football/camogie/hurling
- Sportsweek (fun competitions)
- Weaving Well Being used from 1st to 6th class
- Buddy Benches are used on both the front and back yard to promote kindness, friendship and inclusivity.
- Lunchtime Football/Hurling activities during the school year that encourage inclusion
- Acts of Kindness acknowledged by class teacher and principal
- Positive affirmations by teachers in classrooms and on yard.
- Student Council established in 2023 to allow for pupil voice
- Green Flag/Active Flag committees
- Gardening
- Peer, class or school based activities on the yard:
 - (i) *playground games;*
 - (ii) *run around the world;*
 - (iii) *movement breaks;*
 - (iv) *use of PE equipment on the yard for pupils to choose from at lunchtime;*
 - (v) Take on the Teachers

**This list is not exhaustive*

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.
- A Wellbeing Week will take place in October each year with an emphasis on kindness and friendship
- Playground helpers – students in higher classes volunteer to support younger classes on the yard to help with games and positive interactions. This initiative is organised by our Active Flag Committee.
- Child Friendly Bí Cineálta 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 which focus on positive behaviour.
- Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils.
- Celebrating school, class and individual achievements through our weekly assemblies.



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.
- Implementation of the Stay Safe Programme biennially. The friendship and bullying topic in the Stay Safe programme is completed annually, every October in advance of Wellbeing Week.
- Online Safety education programmes, HTML Heroes (1st, 2nd, 3rd & 4th) and My Selfie and the Wider World (5th & 6th) will be taught across classes to tie in with Internet Safety Day
- Model respectful behaviour towards colleagues, pupils and visitors in our school environment.
- Curricular and extracurricular 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, 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.

These strategies may include the use of the following resources:

- <https://www.staysafe.ie/>
 - www.pdst.ie/walktall
 - www.antibullyingcentre.ie/fuse/
 - www.webwise.ie/
 - [1st and 2nd HTML Heroes Class Programme](#)
 - [3rd and 4th HTML Heroes Class Programme](#)
 - www.webwise.ie/bekindonline/
 - www.webwise.ie/myselfie-wider-world/
 - [All Together Now](#)
 - [Show Racism the Red Card](#)
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- Support for staff including access to CPD when and as required.
 - Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established



intervention strategies);

- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the Bí Cineálta Policy through our yearly reviews

Policy and planning

The aim of SN Béal Átha Grean Bí Cineálta policy is:

- To raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with school management, teachers, pupils, parents/guardians
- To promote a school ethos and culture where all school community members treat each other with kindness and respect
- To promote a school ethos which encourages children to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour
- To ensure appropriate supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of school activity are kept under observation.
- To develop procedures for noting, investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To implement a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and for those involved in bullying behaviour.
- To work with appropriate agencies in countering all forms of bullying and promoting anti bullying behaviour.
- The Acceptable Use Policy, Supervision policy, Special Education Policy, Code of Behaviour, RSE Policy, Child Safeguarding Statement all support the implementation of the Bí Cineálta policy.
- Appropriate Teacher Professional Development will be planned for and organised in order to support the successful implementation of this policy.
- Effective leadership is a key component with Principal, Deputy Principal, DLP, DDLP, and all members of the in-school leadership team focused on supporting the implementation of this policy. Relationships and Partnerships
- Interpersonal connections are supported through a range of formal and informal structures such as our Parents Association, and our student committees and groups.
- Age and stage appropriate awareness initiatives that engage the student body in looking at their own behaviour – promoting acts of kindness and friendship, being an active help to others and looking at the causes of and impact of bullying during SPHE lessons.
- Conducting workshops and seminars for students, staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of bullying.
- Positive home school links and relationships, help parents to communicate with teachers at an early stage if they suspect their child is being bullied.
- Encouraging peer mentoring and peer support
 - *Playground Helpers*
 - *Wellbeing Walks*



- *Buddy Reading between older and younger classes*

- Supporting the active participation of students and parents in school life.
- The meaningful involvement of the board of management, staff, pupils and their parents in the development, implementation and review of the school's Bí Cineálta policy and student friendly version is actively pursued by the school through the regular use of discussion groups and surveys.

Supervision & Monitoring

Staff at all times endeavour to encourage pupils to show respect for each other. The school has the following supervision and monitoring policies in place to aid health and safety on the school premises as well as to prevent and address bullying behaviour (see Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

- A yard supervision rota is devised at the beginning of each term so that adequate and appropriate supervision is provided for on yard. Breaktimes are appropriately supervised and procedures for dealing with issues arising are clarified for pupils in class and during assembly on a regular basis.
- Organised playground games and rotating yard spaces help to manage behaviour and give a focus for the supervising staff of where potential issues may arise.
- Excursions and trips are always carefully planned for and balancing staff to pupil ratios to provide as safe an environment as possible for those travelling and remaining at school is prioritised.
- An Acceptable Use Policy has been developed and is regularly reviewed to ensure that pupils are aware of their responsibilities when accessing the internet in school and when using school devices.
- Staff are particularly vigilant in monitoring pupils who are considered at risk of bullying/ being bullied.
- School wide awareness raising on all aspects of bullying, supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extracurricular activities.
- All disclosed incidents of bullying are investigated thoroughly and consistently by following the correct procedure as outlined to staff and recorded on specific school templates. Reports on bullying are stored in a specific folder in the principal's office.
- School wide awareness raising on all aspects of bullying, supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extracurricular activities.
- The pupils are actively involved in contributing to a safe and inclusive school environment. These messages are reinforced during our Wellbeing Week each October.
- Ensuring that pupils know who to tell and how to tell. The school actively encourages the concept of a 'trusted adult' through letting pupils know regularly that they can talk to them.
- Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place.
- Promote online safety events or material for parents. The school regularly invites outside speakers to address parents and pupils about the importance of online safety pre & post school supervision to ensure pupils are supervised from the time they enter the school grounds to the time that they leave the school.



SECTION C:

Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

- The class teacher (relevant teacher) will oversee recording of bullying reports for students in their class – this includes using the procedures guidelines to investigate reports of bullying and recording bullying behaviour
- The principal will inform the Board of Management of incidents of bullying.

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:

(as per Chapter 6 of the Bí Cineálta procedures).

When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred the teacher should consider the following:

- Teacher/teachers investigates all instances of reported or suspected bullying behaviour with a view to establishing the facts and managing the behaviour.
- In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved. Teacher(s) should consider the following: what, where and when?
- Teachers will be fair and consistent in their approach when addressing bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents.
- Interviews will be conducted outside the classroom in a fair and consistent way. If a group has been involved, each member will be interviewed individually at first and, thereafter, as a group when each child will be asked for his/her account of what happened. It may be helpful to ask the students involved to write down their account of the incident.
- 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 student who is experiencing bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation.*
 - *Take action in a timely manner.*
 - *Inform parents of those involved.*
- Non-teaching staff such as special needs assistants (SNAs), caretakers, cleaners, secretary, escorts are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to a teacher.



- School staff should know what to do when bullying behaviour is reported to them.
- 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 in accordance with their Bí Cineálta policy.
- Both the student who is experiencing bullying behaviour and the student who is displaying bullying behaviour need support.
- Parents are an integral part of the school community and play an important role, in partnership with schools, in addressing bullying behaviour.
- The primary aim of the teacher investigating bullying is to resolve issues and to restore relationships. Ongoing supervision and support may be required for both the student who has experienced the bullying behaviour as well as the student who has displayed the bullying behaviour. In some cases, relationships may never be restored to how they were before.
- The parents/guardians of the parties involved will be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken. The school will give parents/guardians an opportunity to discuss ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the support provided to the pupils.
- It must also be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parents/guardians) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter (under GDPR) between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parents/guardians and the school.
- When an investigation is completed and/or a bullying situation is resolved the teacher will complete a report, to include the findings of the investigation, the strategy adopted and the outcome of the intervention, as well as any other relevant information.
- Behaviour reflection sheets filled out by pupils to be kept in pupil's folders which will be passed onto the next class teacher.
- Staff fill out a Bullying Incident report on Aladdin. This report will be attached to the child's profile
- The teacher must engage with the students and parents involved no more than 20 days after the initial discussion to review progress following the initial intervention.
- If the bullying behaviour has not ceased the teacher should review the strategies used in consultation with the students involved and their parents. A timeframe should be agreed for further engagement until the bullying behaviour has ceased.
- If it becomes clear that the student who is displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behaviour, then the school consideration should be given to using the strategies to deal with



inappropriate behaviour as provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour. If disciplinary sanctions are considered, this is a matter between the relevant student, their parents and the school.

- If a parent(s)/guardian(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 School, they should be referred to the school's complaints procedures.
- If a parent is dissatisfied with how a complaint has been handled, they may make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children if they believe that the school's actions have had a negative effect on the student.

Teacher Brief Guide/Checklist	Detail
• What? • Where • When? • Why? • If a group of students is involved, each student should be engaged with individually at first. • Thereafter, all students involved should be met as a group • Any group meeting should allow each student to give 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 behaviour provided in Chapter 2 sets out clear criteria to help schools to identify bullying behaviour. The questions included in <u>Appendix C</u> can further assist schools in this regard. • Incidents can occur where behaviour is unacceptable and hurtful but the behaviour is not bullying behaviour. Strategies that deal with inappropriate behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour. • Incidents that take place outside school are not under the remit of the school however where the impact of the bullying behaviour becomes evident in school, the school will support the pupils involved. • Where incidents from outside school continue inside school, they will be dealt with under the Bí Cineálta Policy and Procedures.	



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

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. When bullying behaviour is thought to have occurred, the school will clearly:

- 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 school will use the following approaches to support those who experience, witness and display bullying behaviour *(as per Chapter 6 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):*

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)
- 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 honourable thing and giving them praise for this
- Making adequate counselling facilities available to help those who need to 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.

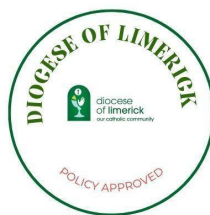
All bullying behaviour will be recorded. This will include the type of behaviour, where and when it took place, and the date of the engagement with students and parents. The actions and supports agreed to address bullying behaviour will be documented. If the bullying behaviour is a child protection concern 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.



A signed copy is available through the school office

