Kilcornan National School

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Kilcornan 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 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. 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	9th September 2024 4th November 2024 18th November 2024 9th December 2024 14th March 2025 28th April 2025 12th May 2025 19th May 2025 11th June 2025	Croke Park Meetings Staff Meetings Bí Cineálta In-school Training Day Full Day Training in LEC for school leaders
Students	7th November 2024 16th December 2024 5th February 2025 19th February 2025 12th March 2025 30th April 2025 16th May 2025 6th June 2025	Student Council Meetings Surveys
Parents	December 2024 November N/L 2024 December N/L 2024 March N/L 2025 April N/L 2025 June N/L 2025 Termly meetings	Parental surveys Newsletters (N/L) Meetings with Chairperson of Parents' Council
Board of Management	23rd October 2024 10th December 2024 13th February 2025 8th April 2025 19th June 2025	Board of Management meetings Email correspondence of policy and recommended videos
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers		N/A
Date policy was approved: 19th June 2025		
Date policy was last reviewed: N/A		

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

This section sets out the prevention strategies that will be used by Kilcornan National 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 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.

Culture and Environment

Kilcornan National School is committed to fostering a positive and inclusive culture and environment to prevent and address bullying behaviour. 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 our board of management and staff meetings.

1. A Telling Environment

Kilcornan National School will promote and support a 'telling environment', where pupils feel safe reporting bullying without fear of retaliation or not being believed. We will aim to instill confidence in pupils that the adult will have the knowledge and skills to deal appropriately with the situation.

2. A Trusted Adult

Pupils will be made aware that they can trust and speak to staff members if they have a concern regarding bullying. This will be largely implemented through the Student Council and Amber Flag committee. The strategy of a 'trusted adult' is already part of Kilcornan National School's approach to bullying and will continue to be used.

3. Safe Physical Spaces in School

The creation of safe physical spaces supports psychological safety and is an important measure to prevent bullying behaviour. Kilcornan National School will create a safe physical environment by ensuring staff are visible at break times and are also positioned in areas where inappropriate behaviour may take place, such as corners. Wellbeing boards, anti-bullying posters and Bí Cineálta pupil policies will be displayed throughout the main school building and pre fabs. Students can feel a greater sense of belonging to a school community when they are given ownership of their own space through art and creativity and this will be promoted in Kilcornan through interaction with the Student Council and initiatives such as a school garden and planting areas.

4. Supervision

As above, appropriate supervision can effectively prevent and address bullying. Where possible, staff will endeavour not to leave their classrooms unless another adult is present, or may request the assistance of a neighbouring teacher or adult if they must leave their workspace. Catering for other interests in the school yard and offering a variety of activities such as skipping ropes, musical yards and the celebration of 'Wellbeing Wednesday' in Kilcornan forms part of the school's strategies to prevent bullying behaviour taking place by keeping pupils stimulated and occupied.

5. Curriculum

The curriculum will be used to foster inclusion and a respect for diversity throughout Kilcornan National School. The S.P.H.E curriculum in particular will be used to discuss wellbeing, self-confidence, a sense of belonging and to develop students' sense of personal responsibility for their own behaviour and actions.

6. Policy and Planning

The wellbeing of the school community will be at the heart of school policies and plans. Bí Cineálta has been developed in conjunction with the views of parents, staff and pupils and these parties will be consulted as part of the policy's review.

7. Relationships and Partnerships

Strong interpersonal connections are a vital part of effectively preventing and addressing bullying behaviour. These interpersonal connections are supported through a range of formal and informal structures such as student councils, school clubs, parents' associations and student support teams. 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.

Kilcornan National School will endeavour to strengthen relationships and partnerships between members of the school community through a variety of methods such as:

- age-appropriate awareness initiatives that look at the causes and impacts of bullying behaviour including those dealing with navigating friendships, identity-based bullying, racist bullying, homophobic/transphobic bullying, sexism and sexual harassment
- supporting the active participation of students in school life through our Student Council, Amber Flag committee, Active Flag committee and Green Flag committee
- supporting the active participation of parents in school life, including those who may find it difficult or daunting to engage with the school due to a variety of barriers such as language
- conducting workshops and seminars for students, school staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of bullying
- supporting activities that build empathy, respect and resilience
- encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring
- promoting acts of kindness
- teaching problem solving
- hosting debates

8. Preventing Cyberbullying Behaviour

Technology and social media have provided many positive opportunities for entertainment, social engagement and education. Technology is a part of life that can impact even the youngest members of society. However, the increase in the use of technology has led to students becoming increasingly vulnerable to cyberbullying or unacceptable online behaviour. Kilcornan National School will proactively address these challenges by promoting digital literacy, digital citizenship, and fostering safe online environments by:

- 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
- regularly reviewing our acceptable use policy for technology
- referring to appropriate online behaviour as part of the standards of behaviour in the Code of Behaviour

- promoting or hosting online safety events for parents who are responsible for overseeing their children's activities online
- continuing to raise awareness about and promote the school's Smartphone Agreement and membership of the Go Phone Free Initiative, where parents pledge not to give their child a phone until they leave primary school
- holding an Internet safety day to reinforce awareness around appropriate online behaviour

9. Preventing Homophobic/Transphobic Behaviour

All students including gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students, have a right to feel safe and supported at school. Kilcornan National School will use the following strategies to prevent homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour including:

- maintaining an inclusive physical environment such as by displaying relevant posters
- encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
- challenging gender stereotypes
- conducting workshops and seminars for students, school staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of homophobic bullying behaviour
- encouraging students to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour

10. Preventing Racist Bullying Behaviour

Schools have become much more culturally diverse over the last number of decades. Students attending schools come from many different cultures and backgrounds. Students from diverse backgrounds may face discrimination and prejudice and may be subject to racist bullying behaviour. Strategies Kilcornan National School will use to prevent racist bullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- 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
- conducting workshops and seminars for students, school staff and parents to raise awareness of racism
- encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and 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, including Traveller and Roma students, and to encourage communication with their parents
- inviting speakers from diverse ethnic backgrounds
- ensuring that library reading material and textbooks represent appropriate lived experiences of students and adults from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds

11. Preventing Sexist Bullying Behaviour

Gender equality will form part of Kilcornan National School's measures to create a supportive and respectful environment. Strategies to prevent sexist bullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- 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

12. Preventing Sexual Harassment

Preventing sexual harassment requires an approach that focuses on education, awareness and clear enforceable policies. Sexual harassment should never be dismissed as teasing or banter and there is a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment in Kilcornan National School. Strategies to prevent sexual harassment include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- 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):
<u>Safe Physical Spaces in School</u> The creation of safe physical spaces supports psychological safety and is an important measure to prevent bullying behaviour. Kilcornan National School will create a safe physical environment by ensuring staff are visible at break times and are also positioned in areas where inappropriate behaviour may take place. There are Calm Corners available in classrooms for the use of all pupils. Wellbeing boards, anti-bullying posters and Bí Cineálta pupil policies will be displayed throughout the main school building and pre fabs. Students can feel a greater sense of belonging to a school community when they are given ownership of their own space through art and creativity and this will be promoted in Kilcornan through interaction with the Student Council and initiatives such as a school garden and planting areas. <u>Supervision</u> As above, appropriate supervision can effectively prevent and address bullying. Where possible, staff will endeavour not to leave their classrooms unless another adult is present, or may request the assistance of a neighbouring adult if they must leave their workspace. Catering for other interests in the school yard and offering a variety of activities such as outdoor games, skipping ropes, musical yards and the celebration of 'Wellbeing Wednesday' every week in Kilcornan forms part of the school's strategies to prevent bullying behaviour taking place by keeping pupils' stimulated and occupied.

<u>Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour</u>

The teacher(s) with responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour is (are) as follows:
<u>All class teachers have responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour</u>

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 (see appendix)
- 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):

1. Identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred

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

- what, where, when and 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.
- Every effort will be made to engage with the pupil/s in a private space in order to make them feel comfortable
- At the group meeting, each student should be asked for their account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's views. Each student should be supported, as appropriate, following the group meeting. It may also be helpful to ask the students involved to write down their account of the incident.
- The definition of bullying provided in Chapter 2 of the Bí Cineálta Procedures will be used as it sets out clear criteria to help schools to identify bullying behaviour. The questions included in Appendix C 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.

2. Where bullying behaviour has occurred:

- Important Note: Kilcornan National 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, it will be dealt with in accordance with the Bí Cineálta policy.
- Where the student displaying the bullying behaviour is not a student in the school, but the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour is a student in the school, the school should support the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as appropriate and engage with them and their parents to determine what steps can be taken.
- It is important for school staff to be fair and consistent in their approach to address bullying behaviour.
- Both the student who is experiencing bullying behaviour and the student who is displaying bullying behaviour need support.
- It is important that the student who is experiencing bullying behaviour is engaged with without delay so that they feel listened to, supported and reassured.
- School staff should identify the supports needed for the student who is displaying bullying behaviour to better manage relational difficulties and ensure that their needs are met.
- A student's agency or sense of power can be decreased when they experience or witness bullying behaviour. When a student tells an adult that they feel that they are experiencing bullying behaviour they may feel that they are taking back some control over what is happening to them. It is very important that a student's agency is not decreased further by adults deciding what will happen next without listening to the student and involving them in

deciding on the actions that will be taken.

- The following principles must be adhered to when addressing bullying behaviour:
- ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour feels listened to and reassured
- seek to ensure the privacy of those involved
- conduct all conversations with sensitivity
- consider the age and ability of those involved
- listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation
- take action in a timely manner
- inform parents of those involved

3. Requests to take no action

- A student reporting bullying behaviour may ask that a member of staff does nothing about the behaviour other than "look out" for them. The student may not want to be identified as having told someone about the bullying behaviour. They may feel that telling someone might make things more difficult for them. Where this occurs, it is important that the member of staff shows empathy to the student, deals with the matter sensitively and speaks with the student to work out together what steps can be taken to address the matter and how their parents will be informed of the situation. It is important that the student who has experienced bullying behaviour feels safe.

- Parents may also make schools aware of bullying behaviour that has occurred and specifically request that the school take no action. Parents should put this request in writing to the school or be facilitated to do so where there are literacy, digital literacy or language barriers. However, while acknowledging the parent's request, schools may decide that, based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour.

4. Determining if bullying behaviour has ceased

- The teacher must engage with the students and parents involved no more than 20 school days after the initial discussion to review progress following the initial intervention.
- Important factors to consider as part of the review are the nature of the bullying behaviour, the effectiveness of the strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and the relationship between the students involved.
- Even though the bullying behaviour may have ceased, 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 behaviour. It can take time for relationships to settle and for supports to take effect. In some cases, relationships may never be restored to how they were before the bullying behaviour occurred.
- If the bullying behaviour has not ceased, the teacher should review the strategies used in consultation with the students and parents and agree to meet again over an agreed timeframe until the bullying behaviour has ceased.
- Where it becomes clear that the student who is displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behaviour, then the school should consider 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 Kilcornan National School.

5. Recording bullying behaviour

- All incidents of bullying behaviour should be recorded.
- The record should 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 and their parents.
- The record should include the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour.
- It should 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. It is important to document the date of each of these engagements and the date that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased. Any engagement with external services/supports should also be noted.
- Kilcornan National School's template for recording bullying behaviour will be used to record all bullying incidents (Appendix A)
- These records will be retained in accordance with the school's record keeping policy and in line with data protection regulations.
- Where a Student Support File exists for a student, a copy of the record will be added to the support file. This will assist the school's student support team in providing a consistent and holistic response to support the wellbeing of the students involved.

6. Complaint process

- If a parent is not satisfied with how bullying behaviour 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 with how a complaint has been handled, a student and/or parent may make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children if they believe that the school's actions have had a negative effect on the student. The Office of the Ombudsman for Children can be contacted at ococomplaint@oco.ie.

7. Supports

Supports are available to help prevent and address bullying behaviour and include:

- National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)
- Oide: Department of Education's Support Service for Schools
- Webwise: Department of Education's Online Safety Initiative
- NPC: National Parents' Council
- Dublin City University (DCU) Anti Bullying Centre
- Tusla

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):

1. Experiencing and Displaying Bullying Behaviour:

- Where bullying behaviour has not occurred under the care of the school, the school is not expected to deal with the bullying behaviour, but will support the students involved.
- Where the student displaying the bullying behaviour is not a student in the school, but the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour is a student in the school, the school will support the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as appropriate and engage with them and their parents to determine what steps can be taken.
- School staff will be fair and consistent in their approach to addressing bullying behaviour.
- Both the student who is experiencing bullying behaviour and the student who is displaying bullying behaviour will be given support
- The student who is experiencing bullying behaviour will be engaged with in a timely manner so that they feel listened to, supported and reassured.
- Supports needed for the student who is displaying bullying behaviour to better manage relational difficulties and ensure that their needs are met will be identified.
- Pupil voice will be emphasized and pupils will be involved in deciding on the actions that will be taken following a bullying disclosure
- Staff will endeavour to:
- Ensure the student experiencing bullying behaviour feels listened to and reassured
- seek to ensure the privacy of those involved
- conduct all conversations with sensitivity
- consider the age and ability of those involved
- listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation
- take action in a timely manner
- inform parents of those involved

2. Witnessing Bullying behaviour

- Kilcornan National School's Bí Cineálta Pupil Policy will ensure that the importance of reporting bullying behaviour will be strongly encouraged.
- The school staff and Student Council will be used to create awareness of the importance of reporting bullying behaviour

Pupils will be assured that if they report bullying behaviour, they will:

- Be reassured they are doing the right thing
- Be listened to in a supportive environment
- Their report will be treated with confidence

Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

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 upon 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: Tom Cantillon Date: 3rd December 2025

(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: Shirley Balfry Date:3rd December 2025

(Principal)