Blessington Community College

Bi Cinealta Policy

Signed:

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Chairperson of the Board of Management

Approval Date:

11ᵗʰ September 2025

Approval Date:

11 / September / 2025

Signed:

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Principal

Principal: Kieran Burke
Deputy Principal :Kevin Kelly
Deputy Principal :Ian Swan

Appendix A
School Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Blessington Community College 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.

ETHOS

Blessington Community College is a caring school. The staff are dedicated to fostering educational excellence and earnestly endeavour to empower all students to reach their full potential — academic and social, physical and spiritual. Through partnership and cooperation, the staff of Blessington Community College respect and nurture the dignity and uniqueness of everyone. Blessington Community College defines education as the on-going development of all students so that they may realise their true and best selves. From the outset students are taught they are partners in their own education. The school aims to prepare students for public examinations, in an age when academic qualifications are indispensable for admission to further education and entry into employment. The school recognises that its

students are of varying cultural and social backgrounds and have a wide variety of aspirations and abilities.

The school embraces the vital role that parents, and guardians play in the overall education for their children. The school also recognises the importance of the community in which the student lives. For this reason, every effort is made to ensure that the student is aware of his/her role in the community and is encouraged to be positively involved in the wider 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

SCOPE

This policy applies to the entire school community — students, parents and staff.

RATIONALE

Blessington Community College aims to protect the wellbeing of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. Through its Mission Statement promoting a secure and caring community the Board of Management of Blessington Community College has adopted the following policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour. This policy fully complies with the requirements of Bi Cineålta: 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. Ireland ratified the United Nations (UN)

Convention on the Rights of the Child 1 in September 1992. In doing this we committed to promote, protect and fulfil the rights of children.

Bullying is a children's rights issue. Bullying interferes with the following rights of the child:

➢The right to freedom of expression (Article 13)

➢ The right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 14)

> The right to freedom of association and freedom of peaceful assembly (Article 15)

➢ The right to privacy (Article 16)

➢ The right to be protected from all forms of abuse and neglect (Article 19)

➢ The right to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health (Article 24)

➢ The right to education (Article 28)

➢ The right to enjoy their own culture, religion or language (Article 30)

1`   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.

  o 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.

  o Written: Writing insulting remarks in public places, passing notes or drawings about the student.

  o Extortion: where something is obtained through force or threats.

Bullying can be Indirect:

  o Exclusion: where a student is deliberately and repeatedly isolated, excluded or ignored by a student or group of students.

  o 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:

Cyberbullying is carried out via text, direct messaging/instant messaging, social media platforms, email, apps, digital gaming sites, gaming consoles, chat rooms and other online technologies. This can include:

o   Sending or sharing of insulting and offensive, or intimidating messages or images via online means as mentioned above.

o   Posting information, which is personal, private or sensitive without consent.

o   Making and/or participating in fake profiles on a social network to impersonate and/or humiliate other students.

o   Exclude/disrupt access to a student on purpose in online chat groups/access to accounts/from an online game.

Culture and Environment

A positive and inclusive school culture and environment are essential to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

o   The school environment should be a space where students and school staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported.

o   Relationships between all members of the school community should be based on respect, care, integrity and trust.

e Open communication between KWETB, boards of management, school staff, students and their parents help to foster a collaborative approach and shared responsibilities in relation to preventing and addressing bullying behaviour. o The school leadership team influences the school culture and sets the standards and expectations for the school community when preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.

●   Each member of the school staff has a responsibility to develop and maintain a school culture where bullying behaviour is unacceptable and to take a consistent approach to addressing bullying behaviour.

●   Students can shape the school culture by promoting kindness and inclusion within their peer group and maintaining a positive and supportive school environment for all.

●   Parents, as active partners in their child's education, can help foster an environment where bullying behaviour is not tolerated through promoting empathy and respect.

Section A: Development/review of our Bf Cineålta 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	August/September 2024	Stage 1: Staff Meeting — staff provided with the opportunity to discuss the new Bi Cinealta 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	Feb/March 2025	Students were given a questionnaire to seek their input in developing an Anti-Bullying policy in Child Friendly Format — their wording, examples and suggestions were all taken into account when drafting this Policy. Focus group:
Parents	Feb/March 2025	Feedback sought from parents and children in formation of a Child Friendly Anti Bullying policy. Policy created with this information and sent out to parents/children to review
		together with information on same in terms of how to

		contact the school if needed.
Board of Management	11/Sept 2025	Review new policy draft - leading to consultation and final ratification after

Date policy was approved:	*11/ Sept* 2025
Date policy was last reviewed:	*11/Sept 2025*

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour (have to list prevention strategies yet)

The Board of Management confirms that appropriate supervision and monitoring policies and practices are in place to both prevent and deal with bullying behaviour and to facilitate early intervention where possible.

- A proactive approach is encouraged during periods of supervision. Supervision is provided before and after school, during morning and lunch breaks, as well as monitoring students in corridors.
- We offer a Games Club and Reading & Recreation Club at designated lunchtimes.
- Every base class has a Tutor with whom they meet every morning for roll call and check-in.
- There is a Student Support Team in place which comprises the Principal, Deputy Principals, Year Heads, Guidance Counsellors, AEN/ASD Coordinators, HSCL and SCP.
- The school community aims to prevent cyberbullying, homophobic and transphobic bullying, racist bullying, sexist bullying and sexual harassment as outlined in sections 5.5, 5.6, 5.7, 5.8 and 5.9 of the Bi Cineálta procedures.
  These include:
  - ➢ Promotion of a positive school climate and culture where RESPECT is key: assemblies, SOM, Positive behaviour points, BFL, Check and
    `Connect,`
  - ➢ Effective Leadership:
  - ➢ Whole-school approach
  - ➢ Fair and transparent Code of Positive Behaviour
  - ➢ Acceptable Use Policy
  - ➢ Digital Awareness
  - ➢ Encouraging Peer Support: Cinneiri Prefects, Student Council
  - ➢ Celebrating diversity: Diversity Week, Ethos Week, Ethos Ambassadors
  - ➢ Support for EAL students
  - ➢ Promote awareness of bullying (CSPE, SPHE AND RSE Programmes) ➢ Anti-Bullying workshops/guest speakers: Friendship Week, Wellbeing
  - ➢ Effective supervision and monitoring of students
  - ➢ Consistent recording, investigation and follow-up of bullying behaviour: SST, Pastoral team
  - ➢ Ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the Cineáltas Procedure

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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. All staff (class teachers, class tutors, year heads, guidance counsellor, HSCL, SCP, SNA's, Deputy Principals, Principal) have a responsibility to report suspected incidents of bullying. These should be brought to the attention of the Year Head, who will complete a Bullying Incident Report Form. 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 o
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

identifying if Bullying Behaviour has Occurred

Bullying is defined in 'Cineåltas: Action Plan on Bullying and Bf Cineålta: 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 Bf Cineålta procedures.

To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour, you should 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 Bi Cineålta Procedures. Note: 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 Positive Behaviour. When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred, teachers should consider what, where, when and why.

- o If a group of students is involved, each student should be engaged with individually at first o thereafter, all students involved should be met as a group o 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 o Each student should be supported as appropriate, following the group meeting
- o It may be helpful to ask the students involved to write down their account of the incident(s)

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 must 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 o The school is obliged to fully investigate any alleged incidents of bullying which are reported by parents.
- ● It is important to listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation o A record should be kept of the engagement with all involved, including the initial 'Bullying Incident Report Form' (Appendix I).
- e This record should document the form and type of bullying behaviour, if known (see Section 2.5 and 2.7 of the Bi Cineálta procedures), where and when it took place and the date of the initial engagement with the students involved and their parents v/
- • The record should include the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour

Follow-Up Where Bullying Behaviour Has Occurred

- ● The teacher must engage with the students involved and their parents again, no more than 20 school days after the initial engagement
- ● Important factors to consider as part of this engagement 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 ● The teacher 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

- The date that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased should also be recorded
- Any engagement with external services/supports should 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 should review the strategies used in consultation with the students involved and their parents. A timeframe should be agreed upon 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 Positive Behaviour. If disciplinary sanctions are considered, this is a matter between the relevant student, their parents and the school o If a parent(s) is not satisfied with how the bullying behaviour has been addressed by the school, in accordance with the Bi Cineålta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary

Schools. They should be referred to the school's complaints procedures o 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

Supports

The school may seek the support of any of the following when working with students affected by bullying:
- Counselling service (through guidance or chaplain)
- Building self-esteem and developing social skills
- Use of restorative practices to rebuild and maintain relationships • Cooperation with parents
- Referral to outside agencies (if necessary) in cooperation with parents
- National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)
- Oide
- Web wise
- National Parents Council
- Dublin City University (DCU) Anti-Bullying Centre o Tusla

Record-Keeping

All bullying behaviour will be recorded on the 'Bullying Incident Report Form' (Appendix 1). 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 Bf Cineålta 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.