BORD OIDEACHAIS AGUS OILIÚNA CHILL DARA AGUS CHILL MHANTÁIN
KILDARE AND WICKLOW EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARD

GAELCHOLÁISTE MHAIGH NUAD

Manor Mills, Maigh Nuad, Co. Chill Dara. *W23V9P2*
Príomhoide: Micheál Ó Ceoinín.
Príomhoide Tánaisteach: Séamus De Búrca.

Bí Cineálta School Policy for Preventing and Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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The Board of Management of Gaelcholáiste Mhaigh Nuad 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 recognises that bullying behaviour interferes with children's rights as set out in the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**. We all have a responsibility, as a school community, to work together to prevent and address bullying behaviour and to deal with the negative impact that bullying behaviour has.

We are committed to ensuring that every student attending our school is kept safe from harm and that the wellbeing of our students is at the forefront of everything we do. We recognise the negative impact that bullying behaviour can have on the lives of our students and are fully committed to preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.

We confirm that, in accordance with our obligations under equality legislation, we will take all reasonable and practicable measures to prevent the harassment of students or staff members on any of the nine specified grounds: **gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race, and membership of the Traveller community.**

Definition of Bullying

Bullying is defined in **Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying** and **Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools** as targeted harmful behaviour, whether online or offline.

The harm caused may be physical, social and/or emotional. Bullying behaviour continues over a period of time and involves an imbalance of power in the relationship between two individuals or groups within society.

A detailed definition is provided in **Chapter 2 of the Bí Cineálta Procedures.**

Every school must develop and implement a **Bí Cineálta policy** which outlines how the school community prevents and addresses bullying behaviour.

The school's **Code of Behaviour** provides for strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour that does not constitute bullying behaviour.

Section A: Development/Review of our Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

All members of our school community were given an opportunity to contribute to the development/review of this policy.

	Date of Consultation	Method of Consultation
School Staff	13/01/2025 15/01/2025	Questionnaire issued Staff meeting
Students	28/01/2025 08/04/2025	Focus group (Student Council) – questionnaire completed Questionnaire issued to all students
Parents	03/03/2025	Questionnaire issued
Board of Management	08/05/2025	Consultation with the Board of Management
Wider School Community (as appropriate e.g. bus drivers)	15/01/2025	Staff meeting Consultation where appropriate
Annual Review	21/09/2026	Survey carried out by the wider school community

Date policy approved: 08/05/2025

Date of most recent review: 21/09/2026

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

This section outlines the preventative strategies that the school will use. These include strategies specifically aimed at preventing **online bullying, homophobic and transphobic bullying, racist bullying, sexual bullying and sexual harassment**, as appropriate (see Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta Procedures).

Preventative Strategies

Culture and Environment

- Create and maintain a positive and inclusive school culture and environment where students feel safe, connected and supported.
- Ensure that relationships between all members of the school community are based on respect, care, integrity and trust through fostering open communication and by encouraging students to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour with a trusted adult.
- Establish clear expectations regarding behaviour and apply them consistently.
- Anti-bullying notices will be displayed throughout the school, and a student-friendly Bí Cineálta policy will be prominently displayed, together with murals, artwork and support signage promoting school values such as equality, diversity, inclusion and respect.
- Create safe physical spaces within the school.
- Provide a Sensory Room for students.
- Provide a range of organised activities during break times, e.g. chess club, coding club, quiet space, etc.

Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)

- Promote cooperation, empathy and respect through group work and pair work.
- Enable students to create, develop and maintain respectful and healthy relationships with themselves and others through the SPHE curriculum. Students will also learn about bullying, its effects and how to address it.
- Foster understanding of diversity through the teaching of human relationships and sexuality as part of the RSE programme.
- Focus on the interdependence of people in communities at national and international levels, and learn about Traveller culture and history through the CSPE curriculum. Students will also learn about family status and homelessness.
- Raise awareness of racism and colonialism through History, providing students with an understanding of the root causes of prejudice and bias.
- Develop social and emotional skills through SPHE and Wellbeing.
- Facilitate Kindness Week, Stand Up Week and Health and Wellbeing Week annually.
- Every class will create a class agreement that promotes mutual respect.
- Provide a mentoring system between Transition Year students and First Year students to ease the transition from primary school to post-primary school.

Policy and Planning

- Provide training for school staff on how to address bullying, for example training from NEART.
- Encourage school staff to participate in appropriate Continuing Professional Development relating to the prevention and addressing of bullying behaviour, diversity and inclusion.
- The Bí Cineálta policy will be reviewed annually and it will be ensured that the most up-to-date version is in use.
- Clear procedures will be established for identifying and addressing bullying.
- The Acceptable Use Policy (Internet) has been developed to monitor the use of technology in the school and every effort will therefore be made to prevent cyberbullying.
- The school's Code of Behaviour, Child Protection Policy and Procedures, Bí Cineálta Policy, Additional Educational Needs Policy, Emergency Policy, Mobile Phone Policy, SPHE Policy, RSE Policy and Wellbeing Policy will be followed and implemented. These policies are relevant to bullying and every effort will be made to apply them in preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.
- Student voice will be developed through the Student Council and through daily engagement in classrooms and corridors.
- Through the school's approach to preventing and addressing bullying, particular attention will be paid to students with Additional Educational Needs (AEN) or disabilities. Appropriate policies will be followed and all supports will be provided for these students through fostering an inclusive environment, developing social skills, supporting transition from primary to post-primary school, and nurturing a respectful and supportive school culture.

Relationships and Partnerships

- An understanding of the causes and impact of bullying will be developed through age-appropriate awareness initiatives, including those addressing friendship difficulties, identity-based bullying, racist bullying, homophobic/transphobic bullying, sexism and sexual harassment.
- Active student participation in school life will be supported.

• Active parental involvement in school life will be supported, including those who may find engagement difficult due to unfamiliarity with the education system or language and cultural barriers. The ladder system will be communicated and implemented so that parents clearly understand who to contact (class teacher > year head > deputy principal > principal), while also feeling comfortable contacting any member of staff.

• Workshops and seminars will be organised for students, staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of bullying, e.g. NEART, Webwise, etc.

• Activities that develop empathy, respect and resilience will be supported, such as Kindness Week and recognition of acts of kindness throughout the school through positive notes, etc.

• The mentoring system between Transition Year students and First Year students will be facilitated to support students transitioning from primary school to post-primary school.

• Debates will be hosted through the debating club and in classes on issues relating to bullying, and problem-solving skills will be taught.

• The Student Support Team will support the development, implementation and review of school strategies to prevent bullying behaviour.

• Regular engagement will take place with members of the wider school community who have regular contact with students, such as bus drivers, Educational Welfare Officers, local businesses near the school, sports coaches and others.

Preventing Cyberbullying Behaviour

• Promote digital literacy and digital citizenship through the SPHE curriculum and digital wellbeing modules.

• Foster a safe online environment in accordance with the Acceptable Use Policy.

• Engage in regular discussions with students about fostering respectful and kind relationships online.

• Refer regularly to appropriate online behaviour as part of the standards of behaviour in the Code of Behaviour.

• Promote or organise online safety events for parents responsible for supervising their children's online activities, e.g. Webwise, Cybersafekids.ie, Fuse, Digiwise.

• Celebrate Safer Internet Day to reinforce awareness of appropriate online behaviour.

• As part of the RSE programme, students will learn about consent and sharing photographs/videos online and will understand the consequences associated with this.

• Bullying/Cyberbullying workshops will be organised, particularly where required, as part of the SPHE curriculum.

Preventing Homophobic/Transphobic Bullying

• Foster and maintain an inclusive physical environment through the display of appropriate posters and materials.

• Stand Up Week will take place annually to promote understanding of diversity, inclusion, respect and kindness.

• Students will learn about LGBTQ+ issues through the RSE programme and SPHE generally.

• Peer support, peer mentoring and activities that promote empathy will be encouraged.

• Stereotypes will be challenged across all subject areas.

• Workshops and seminars will be organised for students, staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of homophobic bullying, for example through Belong To.

• Students will be encouraged to speak out when they witness homophobic behaviour.

Preventing Racist Bullying

• Foster a school culture in which diversity is visible, celebrated and reflected throughout the school environment. This diversity will be evident through displays, posters, the Gratitude Wall and other visible initiatives.

• Teach the history and impact of racism across the curriculum.

• Use and celebrate literature and the work of people from diverse cultures.

• Encourage students to speak out when they witness racist behaviour.

• Encourage peer support, peer mentoring and empathy-building activities.

• Provide supports for staff to support students from ethnic minorities, including members of the Traveller and Roma communities, and to foster communication with their parents.

• Invite guest speakers from diverse ethnic backgrounds to speak with students about the impact of racism.

• Ensure that library materials reflect the life experiences of students and adults from a variety of national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

Preventing Sexual Bullying

• Ensure staff model respectful behaviour and treat students equally regardless of gender.

• Ensure all students have equal opportunities to participate in school activities regardless of gender, e.g. sports games and teams.

• Celebrate diversity within the school and recognise the participation of all students.

• Across various subjects, workshops and research projects will focus on gender equality and respect, e.g. Gender Equality Matters and The Shona Project.

• Parents will be encouraged to reinforce these values of respect at home, and respectful behaviour will be recognised through positive notes and Kindness Week activities.

Preventing Sexual Harassment

• Through SPHE, students will learn about healthy, protective relationships and how to treat one another in a respectful and kind manner.

• Positive role models within the school community will be highlighted.

• Gender stereotypes that may contribute to sexual harassment will be challenged.

Supervision and Monitoring Policies

Supervision

• At every Board of Management meeting, the Principal will provide an update on the number of bullying incidents and the measures taken to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

• The school's Bí Cineálta policy will be reviewed each calendar year, or sooner if deemed necessary by the Board of Management. The review should involve contributions from the entire school community, including the Board, staff, students, parents and, where appropriate, the wider community. Appendix E of the Bí Cineálta procedures should be completed.

• Regular feedback regarding implementation of the Bí Cineálta policy will be sought from the school community.

• The school community will be informed that the annual review has taken place and the form contained in Appendix F may be used for this purpose. The confirmation will be published on the school website following completion of the review.

• Schools will submit anonymised data on bullying incidents to assist national understanding of the prevalence of bullying behaviour and effective preventative and intervention strategies.

• Staff supervision: all staff should know how to recognise and respond to bullying behaviour and should be visible in common areas before school, during breaks, lunch and throughout the school day.

• Student supervision: no class should be left unsupervised and teachers should remain vigilant regarding events occurring in classrooms and during breaks.

• Visitor supervision: visitors should always be supervised and should not be left alone with students.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

The following personnel are responsible for addressing bullying behaviour:

Year Head, Deputy Principal, Principal, or a member of the Student Support Team.

When bullying behaviour occurs, the school will:

Ensure that the student experiencing bullying is listened to and reassured.

Strive to protect the privacy of those involved.

Conduct all conversations sensitively.

Take account of the age and abilities of those involved.

Listen to the views of the student experiencing bullying regarding the most appropriate way to address the situation.

Act promptly.

Inform the parents of those involved.

The following steps will be taken by the school to establish whether bullying behaviour has occurred, to address the bullying behaviour, and to review progress

(See Chapter 6 of the Bí Cineálta Procedures)

• All reported or suspected bullying behaviour will be investigated with a view to establishing the facts and recording them on an incident/occurrence report form. (Reference may be made to Appendix C of the Bí Cineálta Procedures.)

• The teacher responsible will take a fair and consistent approach when dealing with bullying reported by a student, parent or member of staff.

• Everyone involved in the situation will be given an opportunity to be heard.

• Where a group of students is involved, each student will be interviewed individually first. Afterwards, all students involved will meet as a group. Each student should be given an opportunity to provide their account in front of the group. Each student should also provide a written account. Support will be provided to all students throughout the process. It should be established whether the behaviour constitutes bullying rather than inappropriate and hurtful behaviour, as the latter falls under the Code of Behaviour.

• During the investigation, the responsible teacher will use professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the matter can be resolved. The teacher should consider the following: **what, where, when and why**. The definition of bullying behaviour in Chapter 2 and the questions contained in Appendix C of the procedures should be used in reaching a decision.

• The responsible teacher should adhere to the following principles when addressing bullying behaviour:

Provide immediate support to the student experiencing bullying and ensure they feel safe.

Also provide support to the student displaying the behaviour, as there may be underlying issues requiring attention.

Agree with the student experiencing bullying on the most appropriate steps to take. Do not make decisions for them without involving them.

Inform the parents of all parties involved at an early stage and communicate with care and respect.

Maintain confidentiality and integrity at all times, avoiding peer pressure and ensuring that the student or students feel safe.

Where appropriate, use approaches such as restorative practice or mediation, provided suitably trained personnel are available and both parties consent.

• Non-teaching staff, such as SNAs, caretakers, cleaners, secretaries and others, will be encouraged to report incidents of bullying behaviour.

• Schools are not expected to address bullying behaviour that occurs when students are not under the care or responsibility of the school. However, where such behaviour impacts on school life, the school has a responsibility to support the students involved. If the bullying behaviour continues within the school setting, it will be dealt with in accordance with the Bí Cineálta policy. (See Section 6.2 of the Bí Cineálta Procedures.)

• Parents play a central role alongside the school in addressing bullying behaviour. Parents should be contacted at an early stage to explain the situation and the actions being taken by the school. Parents will be given opportunities to discuss how they can support and reinforce the school's actions and supports for students. It should be made clear to all students and parents that bullying cases are private matters under GDPR and concern only the student involved, their parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school.

• The responsible teacher should contact parents within **20 days** of the initial discussion to review progress following the first intervention.

• The primary aim when responding to reports of bullying behaviour should be to stop the bullying and, where possible, restore the relationship between the students involved, rather than to assign blame. In some circumstances, it may not be possible to restore the relationship to how it was before the bullying occurred.

• A report of the incident will be completed when the investigation is concluded and/or when the bullying case has been resolved. This will ensure that a record is maintained of all relevant information, the strategies implemented, the outcomes achieved and any other relevant information.

• If the bullying behaviour has not ceased, the responsible teacher should review the strategies used in consultation with the students and parents concerned. A timeline for further discussions and review meetings should be agreed until the bullying behaviour has stopped.

• If it becomes clear that a student continues to engage in bullying behaviour, the responsible teacher should refer to the Code of Behaviour and the strategies relating to inappropriate behaviour. Any disciplinary sanctions will be dealt with between the individual student, their parents/guardians and the school.

• Where the bullying behaviour has ceased, the responsible teacher will continue to provide support to the students involved.

• If a parent is dissatisfied with how the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with the **Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools**, they should be referred to the school's complaints procedure.

• If a parent remains dissatisfied with the handling of the complaint, they may make a complaint to the **Ombudsman for Children** if they believe the school's actions have had a negative impact

on the student.

The school will use the following approaches to support those who experience bullying, those who witness it and those who engage in bullying behaviour

(See Chapter 6 of the Bí Cineálta Procedures)

- Every support will be provided to the student experiencing bullying. The school will engage with them without delay to ensure they feel supported, reassured and safe. Parents/guardians will also be consulted to determine appropriate supports and actions.

- Support is also required for the student displaying the bullying behaviour. This is important so that the school can identify the supports needed to manage related difficulties more effectively and ensure that their needs are met.

- It is important that school staff adopt a fair and consistent approach when addressing bullying behaviour.

- The following principles must be applied when responding to bullying behaviour:

Ensure that the student experiencing bullying is listened to and reassured.

Strive to ensure the privacy of those involved.

Conduct all conversations sensitively.

Take account of the age and abilities of those involved.

Listen to the views of the student experiencing bullying regarding the most appropriate way to address the situation.

Act promptly.

Inform the parents of those involved.

- Where a student expresses concerns about their parents being informed, an appropriate support plan will be developed for the student, including arrangements for how their parents will be informed.

- A student reporting bullying may ask a staff member not to take action beyond "keeping an eye on things". The student may not wish to be identified as someone who reported the bullying and may fear the situation could worsen if disclosed. In such circumstances, it is important that the staff member demonstrates empathy, responds sensitively and works with the student to determine what actions can be taken and how their parents will be informed. It is essential that the student who has experienced bullying feels safe.

- Parents may also inform the school about bullying behaviour and request that no action be taken. Such requests should be submitted in writing, or support should be provided where literacy, digital competency or language barriers exist. However, after considering the parent's request, the school may decide, depending on the circumstances, that it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour.

- Ongoing supervision and support will be provided to both the student who experienced the bullying behaviour and the student who displayed the behaviour.

- An inclusive, respectful, safe and welcoming school environment will be fostered, where students are encouraged to speak out against bullying and where support is always available.

All bullying behaviour will be recorded. This will include the type of behaviour, where and when it occurred, and the dates of communication with students and parents. The agreed actions and supports implemented to address bullying behaviour will also be documented. Where bullying behaviour gives rise to a child protection concern, the matter will be dealt with immediately in accordance with the **Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools**.

Section D: Oversight

The Principal will provide an update on bullying behaviour at every meeting of the Board of Management. This update will include:

- The number of incidents of bullying behaviour reported since the previous meeting.

- The number of ongoing incidents.

- 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, where relevant, including information relating to trends and patterns identified, strategies used to address bullying behaviour, and broader strategies employed to prevent and address bullying behaviour. No personal or identifying information will be included in these updates. See Chapter 7 of the Bí Cineálta Procedures.

This policy is available to the school community on the school 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 upon request.

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed annually or as soon as practicable following any significant change in matters to which this policy refers.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

(Chairperson of the Board of Management)

Signed: _____

Date: _____

(Principal)