Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Gaelcholáiste Cheatharlach 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.

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	26/03/25 30/04/25 28/08/26 15/09/26	Committee formed to implement the Bí Cineálta procedures Half-day school closure Staff Meeting Survey
Students	01/04/25 15/09/26	Student survey
Parents	31/03/25 12/09/26	Parent/Guardian survey
Board of Management	01/04/25	BoM meeting
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	17/09/25	Spoke to the drivers
Date policy was approved: 22/09/26		
Date policy was last reviewed: To be reviewed in September 2027		

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

This section sets out the prevention strategies that will be used by the school. These include strategies specifically aimed at preventing online bullying behaviour, homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour, racist bullying behaviour, sexist bullying behaviour and sexual harassment as appropriate (see Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

1. The school adopts a whole-school approach which promotes respect and diversity, builds empathy and resilience in students, and reinforces the unacceptability of bullying.
2. Teachers maintain high standards in terms of positive classroom management in the provision of the curriculum and managing student behaviour.
3. Teachers are encouraged to be vigilant in areas of the school where bullying may occur such as locker areas, stairwells, corridors etc.
4. Designated areas for students- separate toilets for Junior and Senior students.
5. Non-teaching staff are encouraged to report concerns.
6. School management, Student Care and full staff meetings take place where the

topic of bullying is discussed, if required.

7. Through our ongoing curricular and extracurricular programmes and particularly through our positive behaviour and awards programme, students are provided with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth.
8. An Ethos award was introduced in 2024 to highlight and celebrate students' actions that align with our core values.
9. Ongoing staff CPD ensures awareness of bullying, its impact, and effective prevention and intervention strategies.
10. School-wide awareness campaigns engage students, staff, and parents.
11. Creating an inclusive environment for LGBTQ+ students through displaying supportive poster material, challenging gender stereotypes & addressing homophobic and transphobic bullying. Celebration of annual Stand Up Week.
12. Promoting gender equality by ensuring all students have equal opportunities to participate in school activities, organising campaigns and educating students on recognising and challenging sexist stereotypes. Staff are encouraged to model respect and challenge gender-based assumptions.
13. The Anti-Bullying Policy is promoted at various occasions e.g. parents' nights, first year enrolment and open evenings.
14. Student leadership and voice are promoted through initiatives like the Student Council, Ceannairí, and Cairde to foster peer respect and a safe environment. Throughout the year these groups play a role in raising awareness of bullying issues and assisting in the prevention of bullying.
15. Students are encouraged to report concerns directly to a teacher or through a trusted adult.
16. Full implementation of SPHE, PE, CSPE, RSE and Digital Literacy curricula.
17. Integration of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) with Wellbeing curriculum to promote empathy, respect and inclusivity with a focus on social and emotional learning
18. Maintaining a zero-tolerance policy regarding sexual harassment, using SPHE and Wellbeing modules to discuss healthy relationships and respectful behaviour. Awareness campaigns that teach students about the impact of sexual harassment.
19. The Bí Cineálta policy and its student-friendly version are reviewed with all stakeholders and published on the school website; the latter is displayed throughout the school.
20. Regular meetings of Year Heads, Student Support, Wellbeing, SNA and SEN teams promote student wellbeing.
21. Bullying prevention resources are regularly promoted.
22. Our Guidance Plan reflects strategies and supports to prevent bullying behaviour.
23. Our Wellbeing programme promotes anti-bullying.
24. Prevention and awareness raising measures will also deal explicitly with cyber-bullying through educating students about appropriate online behaviour, how to stay safe while on-line and through developing a culture of reporting any concerns about or incidents of bullying to a member of the teaching staff.
25. Digital citizenship and responsible online behaviour are embedded in the curriculum; students engage in digital media literacy classes at Junior Cycle level and online resources through websites such as Webwise are used to encourage responsible use of the internet.
26. Full adherence to the IT Acceptable Use Policy

27. School environment is enriched with visual messages promoting equality, inclusion, diversity, and respect.
28. In combating bullying/inappropriate behaviour, the School will take particular account of the needs of pupils with disabilities or with SEN. This will involve improving inclusion, focusing on developing social skills, paying particular attention to student induction and cultivating a school culture that respects everyone and values helping one another.
29. Partnerships with agencies such as NEPS, an Garda Síochána, the HSE, Carlow Youth Services, Barnardos, Pieta House, Athy Community Family Resource Centre etc. enhance wellbeing and anti-bullying efforts.

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):
In addition to all the practices identified above Gaelcholáiste Cheatharlach has the following supervision and monitoring policies to prevent and address bullying behaviour: Supervision outside of class: A weekly schedule of student supervision on corridors and outside areas is developed to monitor student behaviour and wellbeing. Any causes for concern are dealt with and reported to school management. Staff members are assigned to monitor high-traffic areas such as the schoolyard, hallways, locker areas, and bathrooms during all break times to prevent and identify potential bullying incidents. Classroom supervision: All staff are watchful and observe relationships between students in class, note absence patterns and let it be known that high standards of behaviour are always expected. Teachers are instructed to monitor student interactions in classrooms, particularly during unstructured periods such as transitions between lessons, to ensure that all students feel safe and included. Year Head and Student Support Team: the Year Heads and student support team meet weekly where concerns around students are discussed. Student Engagement in Monitoring: Students are encouraged to report bullying behaviour they witness or experience, fostering a "telling environment" where students feel comfortable speaking up. Ceannairí, Cairde and the student council are also involved in promoting positive behaviour. Use of CCTV: CCTV cameras are installed in select common areas, such as hallways and entrances, to assist in monitoring behaviour. CCTV is used in line with privacy regulations to deter bullying and ensure student safety.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

1st Year: 1st Year Head

2nd Year: 2nd Year Head

3rd Year: 3rd Year Head

4th Year: 4th Year Head and TY Coordinator

5th Year: 5th Year Head

6th Year: 6th Year Head

Please note that all staff (class teachers, class tutors, year head, guidance counsellors, SNAs, ancillary stafff, Deputy Principal, and Principal) have a responsibilty 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
- 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 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):

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 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 Bí Cineálta 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 Behaviour. When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred teachers should consider what, where, when and why?

1. Initial Listening and Documentation	The designated teacher(s) will meet with the student(s) reporting the incident to listen to their account and record details accurately. The focus is on ensuring the student feels heard, safe, and supported.
2. Investigation and Information Gathering	The teacher will gather information by speaking with all students involved individually to understand different perspectives on the incident. If necessary, teachers may ask each student to provide a written account of their experience.
3. Assessment of Bullying Criteria	Based on the gathered information, the teacher assesses whether the behaviour meets the criteria of bullying, focusing on aspects such as repetition, intentional harm, and power imbalance. The Bí Cineálta definition of bullying is applied for clarity.
4. Consultation with Relevant Staff and Parents	The designated teacher consults with senior management and with other relevant staff (e.g., year heads, student support team) and informs the parents or guardians of the students involved. Parents are included early in the process to foster a collaborative approach.
5. Development of an Intervention Plan	If bullying is confirmed, an intervention plan is created to stop the bullying behaviour and support all parties involved. This may include mediation (if appropriate), counselling support, and additional monitoring of the students involved.
6. Implementing Restorative Approaches (as appropriate)	Where possible, restorative practices are used to encourage accountability and facilitate reconciliation between parties. Mediation or restorative meetings are conducted only if all involved students consent and staff have been trained in these methods
7. Ongoing Monitoring and Support	Both the student experiencing bullying and the student displaying bullying behaviour receive ongoing support and monitoring. This may include regular check-ins, peer support, and additional supervision in shared areas

8. Progress Review and Follow-Up	Within 20 school days of implementing the intervention plan, the designated teacher meets with all involved parties to assess if the bullying behaviour has ceased and if support needs have been met. Parents are also updated on the progress
9. Further Actions if Necessary	If the bullying behaviour persists, additional disciplinary measures may be applied in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour. Further support strategies, including engagement with external services, may also be considered.

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):

Students who experience bullying

Counselling and Emotional Support: Access to the school guidance counsellor and/ or external support services for individual sessions to help manage the impact of bullying.

Safe Spaces: provision of 'safe spaces', such as the counselling room where students can feel secure and supported during school hours.

Regular Check-Ins: Scheduled meetings with a designated teacher or trusted adult to ensure the student feels supported and safe.

Peer Support Programs: Encouraging positive peer connections through work with our Ceannairí and Cairde groups to build resilience and foster supportive friendships.

Encouragement to Report: Reinforcing the importance of reporting bullying behaviour and providing clear guidance on how to report safely.

Students who witness bullying

Support and Education on Bystander Impact: Offering information on the positive role bystanders can play. Conducting empathy-building activities to foster a culture of kindness and inclusion.

Counselling Access: Witnesses of bullying may experience anxiety or guilt; offer access to the guidance counsellor if they need to discuss the impact of witnessing such behaviour.

Students Who Display Bullying Behaviour

Restorative Practices: Using restorative conversations or mediation to help the student understand the impact of their behaviour, fostering accountability and empathy (where appropriate and consented by both parties)
Regular Monitoring and mentorship: Assigning a staff mentor to monitor and support the student as they work towards positive behaviour changes, with regular check-ins
Parental Involvement: Collaborating with parents to reinforce positive behaviour at home, ensuring a consistent approach between school and family.
Counselling or Additional Support: Providing counselling to address underlying issues, such as low self-esteem or past experiences of bullying, which may be influencing the students' 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. See Chapter 7 of the Bí Cineálta procedures.

This policy is available to our school community on the school's website and in hard copy on request. A student friendly version of this policy is displayed in the school and is also available on our website and in hard copy on request.

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed, following input from our school community, each calendar year or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which this policy refers.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: _____ Date: _____

(Principal)