Bí Cineálta School Policy on Preventing and Tackling Bullying Behaviour

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The Board of Management of Gaelscoil Ghrainne Mhaol has adopted the following policy on preventing and tackling bullying behaviour.
This policy fully complies with the requirements of Bí Cineálta: Procedures for Preventing and Tackling Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2024.
The Board of Management recognises that bullying behaviour impacts on a child's rights as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. We all have a responsibility, as a school community, to work together to prevent and tackle bullying behaviour and to deal with the negative impact of bullying behaviour.
We are committed to ensuring that every pupil attending our school is kept safe from harm and that our pupils' wellbeing is paramount in everything we do. We recognise the negative impact that bullying behaviour can have on the lives of our pupils and are fully committed to preventing and tackling bullying behaviour.
We confirm that, in accordance with our obligations under equality legislation, we will take all measures that are reasonably practicable to prevent harassment of pupils 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 for Preventing and Tackling Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools as targeted behaviour, online or offline, that causes harm. 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 people or groups of people in society. The detailed

definition is given in Chapter 2 of the Bí Cineálta procedures.
Every school must develop and implement a Bí Cineálta policy setting out how the school community prevents and tackles bullying behaviour. Provision is made in the school's Code of Behaviour for strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour that is not bullying behaviour.

Section A: Development/Review of our Bí Cineálta policy on preventing and tackling bullying behaviour

Every member of our school community was given the opportunity to have input into the development/review of this policy.

Consultation Group	Consultation Date	Method of Consultation
School Staff	07/03/2025	Half day taken to engage with Bí Cineálta. Regular talk and discussion at staff meetings. Questionnaire given to all staff.
Pupils	April 2025	Questionnaire given to pupils. Discussion with children regarding bullying.
Parents	March 2025	Questionnaire sent to parents.
Board of Management	May 2025 May 2026	Policy approved by the Board of Management. Policy reviewed.
Wider school community (as appropriate e.g. bus drivers)		
Latest date on which the policy was reviewed: May 2026		

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

This section sets out the preventative strategies that the school will use. These include strategies specifically aimed at preventing online bullying behaviour, homophobic and

transphobic bullying behaviour, racist bullying behaviour, sexual bullying behaviour, and sexual harassment as appropriate.

Culture and Environment:

A positive and inclusive school culture and environment is essential for preventing and tackling bullying behaviour. Gaelscoil Ghráinne Mhaol ensures that the school environment is a space where pupils and school staff feel a sense of belonging and where they feel safe, connected, and supported.

Fostering Positive Relationships between Staff and Pupils: GSGM encourages warm, supportive, and respectful relationships between all staff members and pupils. When pupils feel connected to and supported by adults in the school, they are more likely to feel safe and report concerns.

Establishing and Embedding Core Values: Positive core values such as respect, kindness, empathy, inclusiveness, and responsibility are clearly defined and consistently implemented across the school. These values are visible in classrooms, hallways, and school assemblies, and are integrated into daily interactions.

The school leadership team influences the school culture and sets standards and expectations for the school community when preventing and tackling bullying behaviour. In Gaelscoil Ghrainne Mhaol, there is a continuous emphasis on kindness, empathy, and respect. Children are taught that Gaelscoil Ghráinne Mhaol is a kind school and that we show kindness to each other at all times with our words, hands, and feet. In Gaelscoil Ghráinne Mhaol, Restorative Practice is implemented throughout the whole school to ensure that relationships between all members of the school community are based on respect, care, integrity, and trust.

There is open communication between the patron, boards of management, school staff, pupils, and their parents, which helps to foster collaborative approaches and shared responsibilities regarding the prevention and tackling of bullying behaviour.

The school emphasizes every individual's right in the school community to be safe in school. School staff lead by example, demonstrating behavior that shows respect for all members of the school community in every interaction they have with them.

Staff give constructive feedback to pupils when behavior and language demonstrating kindness and respect are not evident.

Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)

- Collaborative and respectful teaching and learning are continually promoted.
- A special week themed on kindness is organised with activities and lessons specifically focusing on the subject.
- Stories, poems, and other texts in the English and Irish curricula addressing themes of friendship, empathy, respect, and standing up for others are utilised. Characters facing bullying or helping others can be discussed.
- Drama and role-play are used to put pupils in situations where they must think about how to identify bullying, how to respond to it, and how to help victims.
- Art and music are used as mediums to express feelings and discuss themes related to bullying, such as isolation, sadness, or courage.
- History and Geography: Historical stories or diverse cultures illustrating the importance of diversity, cooperation, and equality are used.
- Cross-Curricular Projects: Projects linking different subjects together are used to explore anti-bullying themes from various perspectives. For example, pupils could create an anti-bullying campaign using art, technology, and writing.
- Student Council: The student council is included to gather pupils' views on preventing bullying, promoting kindness, and informing them about school policies.

- Pupils have regular opportunities to work in small groups with their peers, helping to build a sense of connectedness, belonging, and empathy among pupils.
- The value of diversity is promoted to address biased attitudes and highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour.
- Self-esteem is nurtured and enhanced among all pupils through both curricular and extra-curricular activities. Pupils will be given opportunities to develop positive self-esteem through formal and informal interactions.
- The Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) curricula at primary level aim to foster pupil wellbeing, self-confidence, and belonging, developing pupils' sense of personal responsibility regarding their own behaviour and actions. Pupils' Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) skills can be enhanced through the SPHE curriculum. The programs we use are: Stay Safe, RSE Program, Misneach, Friends for Life.

Policy and Planning:

There is a range of other policies at the school that support the implementation of the school's Bí Cineálta policy. These include:

- Acceptable Usage Policy
- Supervision Policy
- Special Educational Needs Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Health and Safety Policy
- Wellbeing Plan
- School Self-Evaluation regarding Wellbeing

Gaelscoil Ghráinne Mhaol engages in continuous professional development throughout the school to assist in implementing the Bí Cineálta policy: Friends for Life, ADHD Friendly School, Restorative Practice Training.

Career development for all staff regarding bullying to ensure the whole staff understands what bullying is, how it affects pupils' lives, and the need to respond to and prevent it.

Annual review of teachers' CPD needs to gather information on the skills and experience of the school's teachers.

A whole-school awareness and training campaign regarding all aspects of bullying, including parent(s)/guardian(s) and the broader school community.

Relationships and Partnerships:

The following non-exhaustive list can be considered to strengthen relationships and partnerships among members of the school community:

- Age-appropriate awareness initiatives examining the causes and impact of bullying behaviour, including those addressing navigating friendships, identity-based bullying, racist bullying, homophobic/transphobic bullying, sexism, and sexual harassment.
- Empowering Student Voices: Creating mechanisms for pupils to voice their concerns and contribute to a positive school environment. This could include student councils, suggestion boxes, or regular class meetings where pupils can share their thoughts and opinions. Supporting pupils' active participation in school life.
- Supporting active parental involvement in school life, including those who may find engagement with the school difficult or challenging due to unfamiliarity with the education system or language/cultural barriers.
- Running workshops or seminars for pupils, school staff, and parents to raise awareness of the impact of bullying.
- Supporting activities that develop empathy, respect, and resilience. Promoting acts of

kindness. Teaching problem-solving.

The school has implemented the following supervision and monitoring policies to prevent and tackle bullying behaviour.

Creating Safe and Welcoming Physical Spaces: Gaelscoil Ghráinne Mhaol ensures that all areas of the school, including classrooms, playgrounds, and toilets, are physically safe and feel welcoming to every pupil. We are mindful of any area that could be dangerous or isolated. Creating safe physical spaces supports psychological safety and is an important measure in preventing bullying behaviour. It is easier for school staff to supervise pupils in clearly visible spaces. In Gaelscoil Ghráinne Mhaol, children are always visible in the classroom, garden, or yard. Appropriate supervision is a key measure in helping to prevent and tackle bullying behaviour. Gaelscoil Ghráinne Mhaol has a supervision policy to ensure pupil safety and oversee pupils while attending school or school events.

Preventing Cyberbullying Behaviour

- Implementing the SPHE curriculum.
- Implementing the digital media literacy curriculum, teaching pupils about responsible online behaviour and digital citizenship.
- Regular conversations with pupils about fostering respectful and kind online relationships.
- Developing and communicating an Acceptable Usage Policy for technology.
- Referencing appropriate online behaviour within the standards of behavior in the Code of Behaviour.
- Promoting or hosting online safety events for parents responsible for supervising their children's online activities.
- Running Internet Safety Day to reinforce awareness of appropriate online behaviour.
- Providing resources and lessons to pupils and parents/guardians as part of Internet Safety Day from the following sources: Webwise, HTML Heroes, Fuse, Be Kind Online.
- Banning smart devices at school.
- Creating a class contract regarding suitable behaviour on school computers.
- Communicating rules from the Code of Behaviour and school values regarding appropriate online behaviour to parents at the Open Day.

Preventing Homophobic/Transphobic Bullying Behaviour

- Fostering and maintaining an inclusive physical environment, such as displaying relevant posters.
- Encouraging peer support, such as peer mentoring and empathy-building activities.
- Challenging gender stereotypes.
- Hosting workshops and seminars for pupils, school staff, and parents to raise awareness of the impact of homophobic bullying behaviour.
- Encouraging pupils to speak out when they witness homophobic behaviour occurring.
- Ensuring library reading material and textbooks reflect the appropriate lived experiences of pupils and adults from diverse national, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds.
- Inviting speakers from diverse ethnic backgrounds.
- Ensuring all pupils have equal opportunities to participate in school activities regardless of gender.

Preventing Racist Bullying Behaviour

- Fostering a school culture where diversity is celebrated and pupils "see themselves" in their school environment.
- Making the cultural diversity of the school visible and displayed.
- Hosting workshops and seminars for pupils, 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 support to school staff to respond to the needs of pupils for whom English is an additional language and to communicate with their parents.
- Providing support to school staff to support pupils from ethnic minorities, including pupils from the Traveller and Roma communities, and to encourage communication with their parents.
- Inviting speakers from diverse ethnic backgrounds.
- Ensuring library reading material and textbooks reflect the appropriate lived experiences of pupils and adults from diverse national, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds.
- Providing opportunities for the Gaelscoil Ghráinne Mhaol communities to learn about and celebrate diverse national, ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds by holding a Multicultural Week.
- Taking a firm whole-school stance against racist bullying and applying agreed, non-negotiable rules showing that it will not be tolerated at Gaelscoil Ghráinne Mhaol.

Preventing Sexual Bullying Behaviour

Gaelscoil Ghráinne Mhaol is committed to focusing on gender equality as part of school measures to create a supportive and respectful environment.

Preventative strategies for sexual bullying behaviour include, but are not limited to:

- Ensuring staff members model respectful behaviour and treat pupils equally regardless of gender.
- Ensuring all pupils have equal opportunities to participate in school activities regardless of gender.
- Celebrating diversity in school and recognising every pupil's participation.
- Promoting respectful vocabulary: Encouraging the use of gender-neutral language and making it clear that gender discrimination or disrespectful language is unacceptable. School staff should model this language.
- Staff training: Providing training to staff members on identifying sexual bullying, intervening effectively, and supporting victims. They should be aware of the subtle ways sexual bullying can manifest.
- Comprehensive curriculum: Ensuring the curriculum is free from gender bias and reflects gender diversity positively. Including materials that promote equality and challenge stereotypes.
- Encouraging standing up: Empowering pupils to stand up against sexual bullying behaviour when they see it. Teaching safe strategies to intervene or seek help from a trusted adult.
- Partnership with parents: Working with parents to build an understanding of sexual bullying and its effects. Keeping them informed about school policies and strategies.
- Monitoring and review: Regularly monitoring the school environment for any signs of sexual bullying and reviewing the effectiveness of strategies in place.

Preventing Sexual Harassment:

Preventing sexual harassment requires an approach focused on education, awareness, and clear, enforceable policies. Strategies to prevent sexual harassment include, but are not limited to:

- Promoting positive role models within the school community.
- Challenging gender stereotypes that could contribute to sexual harassment.
- Creating a safe and supportive school environment: Pupils should feel safe and respected at school. This can be fostered through positive pupil-staff relationships, running

anti-bullying activities, and being responsive to harassment reports.
- Collaboration with parents and the community: The school should work alongside parents and community organisations to promote consistent messages regarding appropriate behaviour and to support victims of harassment.
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating strategies: The school should regularly review its policies and programmes to ensure they are effective and responsive to school needs.

Section C: Tackling Bullying Behaviour

The primary aim when addressing reports of bullying behaviour is to stop the bullying behaviour and, as far as possible, restore the relationship between the pupils involved, rather than assign blame.
The teacher(s) responsible for tackling bullying behaviour is/are: **Cliodhna Ní Chearbhaill**.
When bullying behaviour occurs, the school will:
- Ensure the pupil experiencing bullying behaviour is listened to and reassured.
- Endeavour to ensure the privacy of those involved.
- Conduct all conversations sensitively.
- Consider the age and capacity of those involved.
- Listen to the views of the pupil experiencing bullying behaviour regarding the best way to address the situation.
- Act in a timely manner.
- Inform the parents of those involved.

The following are the steps the school will take to determine if bullying behaviour occurred, the approaches taken to address the bullying behaviour, and the review of progress:
Basic Definition of Bullying Behaviour
Bullying is targeted behaviour, online or offline, that causes harm. The harm 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 people or groups of people in society.
Determining Whether Bullying Behaviour Occurred
When identifying whether bullying behaviour occurred, the teacher will consider the following: what, where, when, and why?
Is physical, social, or emotional harm intended as a result of the behaviour? Is the behaviour being repeated?
If the answer to any of the above questions is 'No', the behaviour is not bullying behaviour. Provision is made in the school's Code of Behaviour for strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour.
If the answer to all of the above questions is 'Yes', the behaviour is bullying behaviour and should be tackled in accordance with Bí Cineálta procedures.
If a group of pupils is involved, each pupil should be contacted individually first. Afterwards, all pupils involved should meet as a group. At the group meeting, each pupil should be asked to give their own account of what happened to ensure everyone in the group is clear about each other's perspectives. Support should be provided to each pupil as appropriate following the group meeting.
It may also be helpful to ask the pupils involved to write down their account of the incident(s).
Where Bullying Behaviour Has Occurred
A school is not expected to deal with bullying behaviour occurring when pupils are not under the school's care or responsibility. However, if that bullying behaviour impacts at school, schools are

obliged to support the pupils involved. Should the bullying behaviour continue at school, schools should address it according to this policy.
Where the pupil displaying bullying behaviour is not from the school, but the pupil experiencing bullying behaviour is from the school, the school will support the pupil experiencing bullying behaviour and engage with them and their parents to decide on actions that can be taken.
Parents are an integral part of the school community and play an important role, alongside schools, in tackling bullying behaviour. Where bullying behaviour has occurred, parents of the pupils involved must be contacted early to inform them of the case and consult with them regarding actions to be taken to address the behaviour.
It is important to listen to the views of the pupil experiencing bullying behaviour on the best way to resolve the situation. A record of discussions held with everyone involved should be kept. This record should document the form and nature of the bullying behaviour, if known (see Sections 2.5 and 2.7 of the Bí Cineálta procedures), where and when it occurred, and the date of initial contact with the pupils involved and their parents. The views of the involved pupils and their parents regarding actions to be taken to tackle the bullying behaviour should be included in the record.

Follow-up Discussion Where Bullying Behaviour Occurred

The teacher must re-engage in discussion with the pupils and parents involved no later than 20 school days after the initial contact. Key factors to consider in this discussion include the nature of the bullying behaviour, the effectiveness of the strategies used to address the bullying behaviour, and the relationship between the pupils involved. The teacher should document the review with pupils and their parents to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased and gather the views of the pupils and parents in that regard.
The date on which it was determined that the bullying behaviour had ceased should also be recorded.
Any engagement with external services/supports should also be noted. Ongoing supervision and support for the pupils involved may be required even after the bullying behaviour has ceased.
If the bullying behaviour has not ceased, the teacher should review the strategies used in consultation with the involved pupils and their parents, agreeing on a timeline for further discussion until the bullying behaviour ceases. If it is clear that the pupil displaying bullying behaviour continues the behaviour, strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour provided in the school's Code of Behaviour will be used. If disciplinary sanctions are considered, this is a matter between the relevant pupil, their parent(s), and the school.
If parent(s) are not satisfied with how the school tackled the bullying behaviour, they should be referred to the school's complaints procedures in accordance with Bí Cineálta Procedures for Preventing and Tackling Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools. If a parent remains dissatisfied with how the school handled the bullying behaviour, they may make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children if they believe the school's actions adversely affected the pupil.

The school will use the following approaches to support those bullied, witnesses, and those displaying bullying behaviour:

(1) Providing support to those being bullied:

(a) Listen carefully to them and believe them.
(b) Reassure them that speaking out is right and that the bullying is not their fault.
(c) Ensure their immediate and long-term safety.
(d) Offer emotional support, for example through active listening and enabling them to express their feelings.

(e) Inform them that help is available and direct them to appropriate support services (designated teachers).
(f) Work with them to create a safety plan to help deal with future bullying situations.
(g) Continue checking in with them regularly to ensure they are doing well.

(2) Providing support to witnesses:

(a) Explain to them the importance of standing up against bullying and helping those being bullied.
(b) Create a safe environment where they can speak out without fear of gossip or retaliation.
(c) Teach them safe and effective ways to intervene (e.g., engaging the victim in conversation, reporting the bullying to an adult).
(d) Acknowledge and praise them for positive actions and courage.
(e) Educate the class on the consequences of bullying on individuals and the school community as a whole.

(3) Providing support to those displaying bullying behaviour using Restorative Practice:

(a) Intervene early and consistently when bullying behaviour occurs.
(b) Speak with them privately about their behaviour and convey that it is unacceptable.
(c) Seek to understand the reasons behind their behaviour (e.g., frustration, lack of social skills, external influences).
(d) Teach them about the impact of their actions on others and promote empathy.
(e) Help them develop positive social and emotional skills, such as conflict resolution, anger management, and effective communication.
(f) Apply appropriate consequences related to the behaviour, emphasizing learning and behaviour change rather than sole punishment.
(g) Provide support to help them change their behaviour, such as through counselling sessions or social and emotional programmes.
(h) Monitor their behaviour regularly and provide feedback.

All bullying behaviour will be recorded. This will include the type of behaviour, where and when it occurred, and the date of contact with pupils and parents. Agreed actions and supports to tackle bullying behaviour will be documented. If bullying behaviour is a child protection concern, the matter will be dealt with 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 every Board of Management meeting. This update will include the number of reported bullying behaviour incidents since the last meeting, the number of ongoing incidents, and the total number of incidents since the start of the school year. Where bullying behaviour incidents have occurred, the principal will also provide an oral update including, where relevant, information relating to identified trends and patterns, strategies used to address the bullying behaviour, and any broader strategies to prevent and tackle bullying behaviour. This update contains no personal or identifying information. 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 pupil-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 material change in any matter to which this policy refers.

Signed: _____ Date: _____ (Chairperson, Board of Management)
Signed: _____ Date: _____ (Principal)