

School Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

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The Board of Management of Coláiste Ráithín 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	6/3/26	Survey
Students	9-12 March 2026	Survey
Parents	9 March 2026	Survey
Board of Management	23 March 26	On BOM agenda for discussion
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	11 March 26	Survey
Date policy was approved: 25/5/25		
Date policy was last reviewed: 23/3/26		

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):

Fuse
 Cyber Safe workshops
 Guest speakers
 Visits from An Garda Síochána
 Stand Up Week
 SPHE
 CSPE
 Training for all staff
 Staff supervision

A telling environment

- A friendly atmosphere is created among the school community by acknowledging and rewarding positive behaviour.
- All the interested parties are responsible for keeping the school community safe (teachers/pupils/parents and the staff of the school). Parents should immediately report any bullying concerning the school's pupils.
- Students are encouraged to communicate with a member of staff as soon as they become aware of any bullying
- Developing and promoting the school's anti-bullying code with a view to posting it on the school's website.
- Bullying is never acceptable and this is a continuous message. It is recommended that any information about bullying, cyberbullying or harassment which takes place in the school is given to the school. Pupils are advised to report any incident/act of bullying to the school authorities (teacher, class counsellor, year head, deputy principal, principal). An inquiry is held in relation to every incident which is disclosed.
- Pupils are supervised before/after school, at break and lunch time and between classes. Each person in the school has a continuous role to show, seek and preserve respect.
- A reflective questionnaire/term surveys is/are distributed to pupils on a yearly basis to give them an opportunity to discuss their views together, with teachers and with their parents/guardians.
- A standard policy of awareness is implemented throughout the school. At the beginning of the school year, the school's anti-bullying code is discussed with staff, parents/guardians, pupils and the board of management. The code is discussed regularly on an informal basis during the year in class, and during assembly (with class counsellors and year heads), and is promoted around the school.
- Events are organised during the year to highlight friendship, empathy and equality and to celebrate differences.
- A mentoring system is in place between 5th and 1st year students to foster and develop interdependence and friendship.
- Meetings are regularly organised between year heads/AP1, the SRO teacher, the principal and the deputy principal to discuss pupils' behaviour.

- Computer classes are conducted regarding cyberbullying and safety on the internet.
- Self-esteem and friendship are fostered among all pupils through both curricular and extra-curricular activities.
- Staff is regularly afforded opportunities of career development in relation to bullying.
- If necessary, the school will be given advice and help from the appropriate organisations such as NEPS, the Health Board (HSE), and an Garda Síochána.
- This policy is linked to all the school's policies, especially: the code of conduct, the IT acceptable usage policy, the child protection policy etc.

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):

Code of behavior
Year Head System
Guidance Counsellor
Student support team
CCTV

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

Year heads, Deputy Principal & Principal

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):

- (i) The pupil is always listened to and the year head is informed. The principal/the deputy principal is also informed. When investigating bullying, the main aim of the relevant teacher/year head will be to address any issue which needs to be settled and to restore, as far as practicable, the relationship between the parties concerned.
- (ii) When investigating bullying or when dealing with bullying, the teacher will use his or her professional judgement to determine whether bullying took place and how best to handle the problem; the year head in consultation with the class teacher and the class counsellors inquire into the case to ascertain whether the complaint is justified.
- (iii) The relevant teacher/year head must investigate every report, including anonymous reports, and deal with them. In that way, pupils will be more confident that it is worth their while reporting incidents of bullying. It is essential to foster that confidence among pupils. It should be clearly stated to pupils that they are not giving a tip-off when they report incidents of bullying but rather conducting themselves in a responsible way.
- (iv) Non-teaching staff – the secretary, special needs assistants, caretakers, cleaners, drivers – are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour which they witness, or which are mentioned to them, to the year head/deputy principal/principal.
- (v) Parents/guardians and pupils are obliged to co-operate during any investigation and to help the school to settle any issue of bullying and to restore, as far as practicable, the relationship between the parties involved in the bullying.
- (vi) Teachers/year heads should adopt a calm, forward-thinking, unemotional approach while dealing with allegations of bullying behaviour.
- (vii) As much as possible, it is best to handle incidents outside of the classroom to protect the privacy of all those concerned.
- (viii) Each interview should be held in as delicate a manner as possible taking the pupils' rights into consideration. Pupils who are not directly involved in the case can provide useful information.
- (ix) In analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher/year head should seek responses to the questions *what, where, when, which person or which people, and why?* Those questions should be posed in a calm peaceful way to set an example of the way to deal effectively and non-aggressively with conflict.

- (x) If there is a group involved, each person in the group should be interviewed one by one. The entire group should then be spoken to. At the group meeting, each member should be asked to give an account of what he or she saw to ensure the entire group hears all of the accounts.
- (xi) Each member in the group should be supported given the pressures which other members in the group could put on them after the interview with the teacher/year head.
- (xii) It could be fitting or helpful to ask those who were involved in the incident to give a written account of what happened.
- (xiii) Where the relevant teacher/year head determines that bullying was carried out, contact should be made, as soon as possible, with the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the parties in order to inform them of the situation and to explain the measures that will be taken (with reference to the school's policy). The school should give the parent(s)/guardian(s) an opportunity to discuss the matter in ways which could reinforce or increase the school's policy and support for the pupils.
- (xiv) Where the relevant teacher/year head determines that a pupil was engaging in bullying behaviour, it should be clearly pointed out to that pupil that they have breached the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts should be made to ensure the pupil sees the case from the point of view of the pupil who was being bullied.
- (xv) It must be made clear to everyone involved (each group of pupils and the parent(s)/guardian(s)) in any case where disciplinary action is needed that it is a private issue between the pupil who is being subjected to disciplinary action, their parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school.
- (xvi) Extra meetings should be arranged with the parties concerned in an effort to bring them together in the future provided the pupil who was bullied is in favour of that. Therefore, meetings may be therapeutically beneficial.
- (xvii) If the relevant teacher/year head considers that the bullying behaviour was not adequately dealt with within 20 school days after he or she had determined that the bullying behaviour took place, that relevant teacher must make a record of that.
- (xviii) In deciding whether a case of bullying was dealt with appropriately and adequately, the relevant teacher/year head must include the following factors in their professional judgement:
- Whether the bullying behaviour has ended;
 - Whether any issue that needed to be resolved between the parties has been settled, to the extent possible;
 - Whether the relationship between the parties has been restored, in so far as practicable;
 - Any feedback from the parties concerned, from their parent(s)/guardian(s) or from the principal or the deputy principal of the school.

- (xix) Where the parent(s)/guardian(s) are not satisfied that the school dealt with the case of bullying in accordance with these procedures, the parent(s)/guardian(s) must be informed of the school's procedure regarding making a complaint.
- (xx) Where the parent(s)/guardian(s) resort to the school's procedures regarding making a complaint but is/are still not satisfied, the school must inform the parent(s)/guardian(s) that he or she or they has/have the right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

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):

- Pupils who were bullied are monitored to ascertain whether they are under continuous stress as a result of the incident.
- If pupils need extra counselling or support, the school will endeavour to organise it and pupils will be encouraged to participate in activities in order to increase their self-esteem and develop their friendship and social skills.
- Pupils who notice incidents of bullying behaviour are encouraged to discuss those incidents with teachers.
- Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour are given advice so that they can learn other ways of fulfilling their needs rather than infringing upon the rights of others.

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: _____

(Chairperson of board of management)

Date: _____

23/3/26

Signed: _____

(Principal)

Date: _____

23/3/26