



# Appendix A

## Balla Secondary School Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

### **Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour**

The Board of Management of Balla Secondary School 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.

As a Catholic school, we are committed to respecting the dignity of every individual. No human person is to be diminished or devalued, and all have an indispensable part to play in the school community, regardless of difference.

### **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                                                    | October 2024<br>April 2025<br>May 2025 | School Development Planning Meeting<br>Bi Cineálta Half Day Closure<br>Staff Meeting                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Students                                                        | April and May 2025                     | Students were given a survey to seek their input in developing the Bi Cineáltas Bí Cineálta policy and the Student Friendly Format<br><br>Bi Cineálta policy draft shared with student body and student council for feedback.                                                                                                                   |
| Parents                                                         | April 2025<br><br>May/June/August 2025 | Parents were sent a survey to seek their input in developing the Bi Cineáltas Bí Cineálta policy<br><br>Policy created with this information and draft shared and reviewed with parents association for feedback<br><br>Attention drawn to resources and initiatives in the school during wellbeing week via google classroom and social media. |
| Board of Management                                             | Summer 2025                            | Review new policy draft leading to consultation and final ratification.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers | Summer 2025                            | Secretaries, cleaners, caretaker, canteen staff and bus drivers/inspector consulted.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Date policy was approved: 12/6/25                               |                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Date policy was last reviewed:                                  |                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

## 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):

In developing preventative strategies which this school will use to prevent all forms of bullying behaviour, we come from the context of our Catholic ethos where inclusivity permeates the school in a real way.

This school takes positive steps to ensure that the culture of the school is one which welcomes a respectful dialogue and encounter with diversity and difference by ensuring that prevention and inclusivity strategies are given priority and are discussed at board of management and staff meetings.

The dignity and the wellbeing of the individual person is of paramount concern in our Christian response. This school will listen closely to, and in dialogue with parents, and thereby build a relationship of mutual understanding, respect, trust and confidence.

In continuing to develop prevention strategies, this school will take as much time as is practicable listening to young persons and parents, to help establish their particular context and needs. Frequent periods of reflection and further engagement, by the school, young persons and parents, will be used to discern appropriate supports for young people in this school and will help inform future prevention strategies.

### **Culture and Environment:**

At Balla Secondary School we strive to:

- Create a school culture where bullying behaviour is unacceptable and a consistent approach to addressing bullying behaviour exists.
- Involve parents/guardians as active partners in fostering an environment where bullying behaviour is not tolerated.
- Support the idea that our school is a safe environment to share concerns.
- Promote the concept of a trusted adult(s) - who to tell.
- Create safe spaces in our school building and grounds – visibility
- Incorporate artwork and signs to promote our school values and promoting student rights.
- Encourage a sense of belonging with ownership over their own space through art and creativity.

Create a positive school culture and climate that;

- Is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity
- Encourages students to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment and
- Promotes respectful relationships across the school community

Ways in which we work collaboratively to achieve these goals are as follows:

- Staff are instructed on the uniform approach that must be taken on receipt of a bullying concern. This is distributed to staff and a copy is displayed on the Staff Room notice board for ease of access and shared via a shared google drive folder.
- Cinneálta week activities such as Random acts of Kindness homework, Poster making, slogan making, etc.
- Student Mentoring programme and 'buddy' system – senior cycle students volunteer and are trained to support younger students at various times throughout the school day to help with organisation, transitions, friendship building activities, lunchtime games and positive interactions.
- Student Friendly Bí Cineálta Policy was formed with student and parent/guardian input and is distributed to parents/guardians, students and staff to discuss. This policy outlines various ways for students to inform a trusted adult.
- Parents receive information at times regarding useful information on Bí Cineálta.
- Tutor classes and SPHE classes focusing on positive behaviour form part of curricular content in all classes.
- Effective supervision and monitoring of students
- Notice board to promote kindness and build responsibility amongst students.

### ***Curriculum (Teaching & Learning)***

At Balla Secondary School we strive to:

Provide teaching and promote learning which is collaborative and respectful, fostering inclusion and respect for diversity.

Display a shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact.

Ways in which we work to achieve this:

- Teach SPHE and RSE content which fosters student's well-being and self-confidence as well as promoting personal responsibility for their own behaviours and actions.
- Model respectful behaviour towards colleagues, students and visitors in our school environment.
- Curricular and Extra-curricular activities can help to develop a sense of self-worth, teamwork, inclusion and respect.
- Students are given regular opportunities to work in small groups with peers, which can help build a sense of connection, belonging and empathy.
- Acknowledgment of our diverse school population. Celebrating diversity and culture in our school through art, displays, photographs, international events.
- Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that-
  - build empathy, respect and resilience in students; and
  - explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.

- Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies); and
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the Bí Cineálta policy.

### ***Policy & Planning***

- To raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with all stakeholders.
- To promote a school culture which encourages students to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To ensure appropriate supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of school activity are kept under observation.
- To develop procedures for noting, investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To implement a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and for those involved in bullying behaviour.
- To work with appropriate agencies in countering all forms of bullying and promoting Cineáltas.
- The Internet & Acceptable Use Policy, Mobile Phone Policy, Supervision procedures, Whole School Guidance Plan, Inclusion Policy and Code of Behaviour all support the implementation of the Bí Cineálta policy.
- Effective engagement is a key component with the Leadership & Middle management team focused on supporting the implementation of this policy

### ***Relationships and Partnerships***

- Interpersonal connections are supported through a range of formal and informal structures such as our parents' association, our student council and various student committees and groups.
- Age and stage appropriate awareness initiatives that engage the student body in looking at their own behaviour e.g. promoting acts of kindness and friendship, being an active help to others and looking at the causes of and impact of bullying during SPHE lessons.
- Conducting workshops and seminars for students, staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of bullying.
- Encouraging peer mentoring and peer support
- Supporting active participation of students and their parents/guardians in school.
- Engaging parents/guardians and students in actively contributing to the formation of a Student Friendly Bí Cineálta Policy to make them active participants in promotion of and discussion of useful ways to identify and reduce bullying behaviour and highlight procedure and how to deal with it if it does occur.

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):

1. Staff at all times strive to encourage students to show respect for each other.
2. Implementation of the SPHE curriculum.
3. Positive self-esteem is fostered among the students by celebrating individual differences, by acknowledging positive behaviour and by providing opportunities for success.
4. Wellbeing curriculum includes learning about responsible online behaviour and digital citizenship.
5. The school's Bí Cineálta policy is discussed regularly with the students.
6. Staff are particularly vigilant in monitoring students who may be considered at risk of bullying/ being bullied.
7. All disclosed incidents of bullying are investigated thoroughly and consistently by following the correct procedure as outlined to staff and recorded using the template for this.
8. School wide awareness raising on all aspects of bullying.
9. Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours, field trips and extracurricular activities.
10. Involvement of students in contributing to a safe school environment e.g. Kindness/ Bí Cineálta week, Wellbeing Week, LGBTQ+ and other activities that can help to students and encourage a culture of peer respect and support
11. Ensuring that students know who to inform and how to inform.
12. Ensure bystanders understand the importance of informing if they witness or know that bullying is taking place.
13. Refer to appropriate online behaviour when using devices and in SPHE lessons.
14. Promote online safety events or material for parents
15. The listing of supports currently being used in the school and the identification of other supports available to the school e.g. [www.tacklebullying.ie](http://www.tacklebullying.ie), [www.antibullyingcentre.ie](http://www.antibullyingcentre.ie), [fuse](http://fuse.ie), [www.webwise.ie](http://www.webwise.ie)
16. Shared folder of resources for teaching of bullying including lessons from above websites – shared Google drive for all teachers to access.
17. Challenge gender- stereotypes – equal participation of all. Equal recognition.
18. Raise awareness of the impact of homophobic bullying behaviour and encourage students to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour.
19. Foster a culture where diversity is celebrated and students “see themselves” as belonging in the school environment.
20. Ensure the resources available reflects our diverse school population from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.
21. Modelling of respectful behaviour by staff of all students regardless of gender.
22. Ensuring all students have the same opportunities to engage in school activities.
23. Ensuring that our school has a zero-tolerance approach to harassment of any kind with enforceable policy. Please refer to the Code of Behaviour.

## Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

The teachers with responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour are as follows:

| Role                    | Responsibilities                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Class Teacher           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oversee recording of bullying reports for students in their classes</li> <li>• Investigate reports of bullying using procedure guidelines</li> <li>• Record bullying behavior on the correct form</li> <li>• Implement initial interventions</li> </ul>              |
| Year Head               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide up-to-date information and supports to assist class teacher</li> <li>• Follow up after twenty days to investigate if bullying has ceased</li> <li>• Liaise with parents as needed</li> <li>• Escalate serious cases to Deputy Principal/Principal</li> </ul> |
| Deputy Principal        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow up on unresolved cases</li> <li>• Support implementation of interventions</li> <li>• Assist with parent meetings for serious cases</li> </ul>                                                                                                                 |
| Principal               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold overall responsibility for policy implementation</li> <li>• Inform Board of Management of bullying incidents</li> <li>• Lead serious interventions when required</li> </ul>                                                                                     |
| All Staff               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remain vigilant to bullying behavior</li> <li>• Report any observed incidents promptly</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                    |
| SST Team, SENCo & ASDCo | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide specialised support for vulnerable students</li> <li>• Assist with intervention planning</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                          |

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
- > act 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):

The school's procedures for investigation, follow-up and recording of bullying behaviour and the established intervention strategies used by the school for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour are as follows:

- While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the 'Relevant Teacher(s)', the 'Relevant Teacher(s)' will use their professional judgement in relation to the records to be kept of these reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same.
- If it is established by the 'Relevant Teacher(s)' that bullying has occurred, the 'Relevant Teacher(s)' must keep appropriate written records which will assist their efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.
- The 'Relevant Teacher' must record the bullying incident by adding an alleged bullying behaviour report to the relevant pupil's file. The relevant teacher must inform the Year Head.

The primary aim in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame). With this in mind the school's procedures are as follows:

- a) In investigating and dealing with bullying the 'Relevant Teacher(s)' will exercise their judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred, what type if it has and how best the situation might be resolved.
- b) All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the 'Relevant Teacher(s)'. In that way students will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It should be made clear to all students that when they report instances of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.
- c) Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, SNAs, caretakers and cleaners are encouraged to report any incidences of bullying behaviour witnessed by them or mentioned to them to the year head.
- d) Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by students, staff or parents.
- e) On being informed of an alleged bullying incident the 'Relevant Teacher' dealing with the report will first interview the victim to discuss the feelings which the victim experienced due to the alleged bullying behaviour.
- f) Initial investigations of bullying will be done in class where possible but some incidents may be best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.
- g) When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour the 'Relevant Teacher(s)' should seek answers to questions of what, where, who, when and why. This should be done in a clam manner, setting an

example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non- confrontational manner.

- h) If a group is involved each member should be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved should be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member should be asked for their account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about the other's statements.
- i) Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that they may face from the other members of the group after interview by the relevant teacher.
- j) Where the 'Relevant Teacher(s)' has/have determined that a student has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to them how they are in breach of the school's Bí Cineálta policy and efforts should be made to try to get them to see the perspective of the student being bullied.
- k) The "Relevant Teacher" does not apportion blame but should try to try to get them to see the situation from the perspective of the student being bullied. They emphasise that the intention is not to punish perpetrators but to talk to them, to explain how harmful and hurtful bullying is and to seek an assurance that it will stop. If that assurance is forthcoming and is honoured there will be no penalty and that will be the end of the matter.
- l) When an investigation is completed and/or a bullying situation is resolved the 'Relevant Teacher' will complete a report, to include the findings of the investigation, the strategy adopted and the outcome of the intervention, as well as any other relevant information. This may be recorded on the student file as *Alleged Bullying Behaviour Report*.
- m) If a student chooses to continue the bullying behaviour, this can then no longer be considered a once off occurrence. In this event parent(s)/guardian(s) will be contacted. The school should give parents an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports for the student.
- n) Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved may be arranged separately with a view to bringing them together at a later date if the student who has been bullied is ready and agreeable.
- o) Depending on the seriousness of the bullying some/all supportive interventions will be utilised.
- p) Repeated incidents of bullying behaviour will result in the imposition of sanctions. Such sanctions will be proportionate to the seriousness of the bullying behaviour. It must be made clear to all involved (each set of students and parents) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required that this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, their parents/guardians and the school.
- q) Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parent must be referred to the school's complaints procedure.
- r) In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parents of their rights to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.
- s) The School will maintain care for the victim over time. This will be done by speaking to the student a number of weeks after the incident to check on their continuing welfare. The student's

parents will also be consulted.

- t) If a student makes a report of bullying, but asks that nothing is to be done about it, the relevant teacher will support the student appropriately to explore how it will be handled sensitively and how parents may be notified. If a parent does so, they must submit in writing that they require no further action to be taken, but even so, the school may still deem it necessary to be investigated and handled appropriately.

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):

The school's programme of support for working with students affected by bullying involves a whole school approach. Given the complexity of bullying behaviour, no one intervention/support programme works in all situations.

***Supporting Bullied students:***

- Ending the bullying behaviour,
- Fostering respect for bullied students and all students.
- Fostering greater empathy towards and support for bullied students.
- Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted student through annual awareness-raising programmes.
- Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted student through the speedy identification of those responsible and speedy resolution of bullying situations.
- Making adequate counselling facilities available to students who need it in a timely manner (subject to available resources).
- Helping bullied students raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that help develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school).

***Supporting Bullying students:***

- Making it clear that bullying students who reform are not blamed or punished and get a 'clean sheet.'
- Making it clear that bullying students who reform are doing the right and honorable thing and giving them praise for this.
- Making adequate counseling facilities available to help those who need it learn other ways of meeting their needs besides violating the rights of others,
- Helping those who need to raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school),
- Using learning strategies throughout the school and the curriculum to help enhance students' feelings of self-worth,
- In dealing with negative behavior in general, encouraging teachers and parents to focus on, challenge and correct the behaviour while supporting the child,
- In dealing with bullying behaviour seeking resolution and offering a fresh start with a 'clean sheet' and no blame in return for keeping a promise to reform.

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: Pauline Moran Date: 12/6/25  
(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: Teesea Webb Date: 12/06/25  
(Principal)

