

Scoil Réalt na Mara

Bí Cineálta Policy



Appendix A: Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Scoil Réalt na Mara 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.

We confirm that we will take all steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent all bullying or harassment of our students in whatever form and however motivated.

Catholic schools have a distinctive understanding of the human person, recognising that every person is created in God's image and likeness and has inherent dignity as a child of God. This is the basis for ensuring that everybody in our school is treated with respect and care, in accordance with the Catholic Schedule.

As a Catholic school, we are committed to respecting the dignity of every individual. No human person is to be devalued, and everybody has a part to play in the school community, regardless of difference.

Definition of bullying (see section 2.1 of Bí Cineálta Procedures)

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.

- Bullying is targeted behaviour, online or offline, that causes harm.
- The harm caused can be physical, social and/or emotional in nature and can have lasting effects on the the child experiencing the behaviour.
- Bullying behaviour is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power in relationships between two people or groups of people in society.
- It is behaviour which is deliberate in nature and is unwanted. It is not accidental or reckless behaviour .

The harm can be:

- Physical (eg: personal injury, damage to or loss of property)
- Social: (eg: withdrawal, loneliness, exclusion)
- Emotional: (eg: low self esteem, depression, anxiety)

Types of Bullying:

There are many different types of bullying behaviour. These can include directing bullying at someone focused on the following: disability, exceptional ability, gender identity, LGBTQ+,

physical appearance, racism, poverty status, religious identity, sexism and sexual harassment. This is not an exhaustive list.

Bullying can be:

Direct:

- *Physical:* pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping students. Physical assault. Destruction of personal property.
- *Verbal:* continual name calling which insults, humiliates the student – this may refer to physical appearance, clothes, gender, accent, academic ability, race or ethnic origin.
- *Written:* Writing insulting remarks in public places, passing notes or drawings about the student.
- *Extortion:* where something is obtained through force or threats

Bullying can be:

Indirect:

- *Exclusion:* where a student is deliberately and repeatedly isolated, excluded or ignored by a student or group of students.
- *Relational:* Where a student's attempts to form friendships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined, threats, non-verbal gesturing, malicious gossip, spreading rumours, silent treatment and manipulation of friend groups etc can all form relational bullying for a student

Online bullying behaviour:

Cyber bullying is carried out via text, direct messaging/instant messaging, social media platforms, email, apps, digital gaming sites, gaming consoles, chatrooms and other online technologies.

This can include:

- Sending or sharing insulting, offensive or intimidating messages or images via online means as mentioned above.
- Posting information, which is personal, private or sensitive without consent.

- Making and/or participating in fake profiles on a social network to impersonate and/or humiliate other students.
- Exclude/disrupt access to a student on purpose on online chat groups/access to accounts/from an online game

A school is not expected to deal with bullying behaviour that occurs when students are not under the care or responsibility of the school. However, where this bullying behaviour has an impact in school, schools are required to support the students involved.

Behaviour that is not bullying behaviour (see section 2.2 of Bí Cineálta Procedures)

- A one-off instance of negative behaviour towards a student is not bullying behaviour. However, a single hurtful message posted on social media can be considered bullying behaviour as it may be visible to a wide audience and has a high likelihood of being shared multiple times and so becomes a repeated behaviour.
- Disagreement between students, or instances where students do not want to be/remain friends, is not considered bullying unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.
- Some students with special educational needs, may have social communication difficulties which may make them communicate their needs through behaviours that can hurt themselves or others. It is important to note that these behaviours are not deliberate or planned, but in certain situations, they are an automatic response which they cannot control.
- Bullying is not accidental or reckless behaviour. If the repeated harm is real for the student experiencing the behaviour but unintended by the other student(s), this is not bullying.

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	28/08/24 15/10/24 18/11/24 27/11/24 26/11/24 23/05/25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff meeting • Bí Cineálta Webinar viewed by Mr Ó Fearaigh • ISL meeting to discuss the Bí Cineálta Policy • Staff meeting: Feedback & review of Bí Cineálta Policy & Procedures • Professional Learning Event: Bí Cineálta Training in Drumcondra Education Centre attended by Mr Ó Fearraigh & Mr Ó Dúill <p>Staff Survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questionnaire prepared by ISL team • Reviewed at staff meeting • Half Day School Webinar
Students	29/11/24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed at whole school assembly • Questionnaire prepared • Child friendly policy devised
Parents	19/5/25	<p>Parent Survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent survey distributed to parents
Board of Management	16/12/24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bí Cineálta Policy & requirements of the BOM discussed • Template for recording bullying behaviour reviewed • Draft policy reviewed
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	27/11/24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ancillary staff informed of new procedures by Mr Ó Fearraigh
Date policy was approved:		

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 the 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 our school in a real way.

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

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

Culture and Environment (see section 5.1 of Bí Cineálta Procedures)

- A school-wide approach to the fostering of respect for all members of the school community.
- Recognition for acts of kindness/friendship each Friday at tionól.
- The promotion of the value of diversity to address issues of prejudice and stereotyping and highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour.
- The fostering and enhancing of the self-esteem of all our pupils through both curricular and extracurricular activities. Pupils will be provided with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth and a sense of belonging through formal and informal interactions.
- Whole staff professional development on bullying to ensure that all staff develop an awareness of what bullying is, the prevention and intervention strategies, how it impacts on pupils' lives and the need to respond to it.
- School wide awareness raising and training on all aspects of bullying, to include pupils, parents/guardians and the wider school community.
- Visibility of staff. Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extracurricular activities. Non-teaching and ancillary staff will be encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers. Supervision will also apply to monitoring student use of communication technology within the school.

- There is adequate lighting throughout the school and this is monitored/checked at regular intervals throughout the year.
- Promotion of pupil voice and other student support activities that can help to support pupils and encourage a culture of peer respect and support e.g. Student Council, Green School Committee, Buddy System.
- Development and promotion of a Bí Cineálta code for the school to be displayed publicly in classrooms and in common areas of the school. The school's Bí Cineálta Policy is discussed with pupils and all parents/guardians are given a copy as part of the Code of Behaviour of the school on enrolment. The implementation of regular (e.g. per year) whole school awareness measures e.g. a dedicated notice board on the promotion of friendship, and bullying prevention; annual Anti bullying Week/Friendship week; parents/guardians seminars organised by P/A.; annual student surveys; regular class visits by principal.
- Encourage a culture of telling, with particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders. In that way pupils will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It should be made clear to all pupils that when they report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.
- Use of worry boxes/monsters
- Ensuring that pupils know who to tell and how to tell
- Direct approach to teacher at an appropriate time, for example after class.
- Hand note up with homework.
- Worry box
- Get a parent/guardian or friend to tell on your behalf.
- Staff reinforce the concept of a "trusted adult" by letting pupils know that they can talk to them
- Identify clear protocols to encourage parents/guardians to approach the school if they suspect that their child is being bullied. The protocol should be developed in consultation with parents.
- The continued promotion of an Acceptable Use Policy in the school to include the necessary steps to ensure that the access to technology within the school is strictly monitored. Mobile phones are not permitted in school.
- Teachers' classroom organisation and seating plan is considered. Handover meetings between teachers at the end of the year to highlight concerns/issues etc.

Preventing cyberbullying (see Section 5.5/p.39 of the Bí Cineálta Procedures)

- Implementing the SPHE curriculum.
- Implementing the Website programme which teaches students about responsible online behaviour.
- Having regular conversations with students about developing respectful and kind relationships online.

- referring to appropriate online behaviour as part of the standards of behaviour in the Code of Behaviour
- promoting or hosting online safety events for parents who are responsible for overseeing their children's activities online
- holding an Internet Safety Day to reinforce awareness around appropriate online Behaviour

** In Ireland the digital age of consent is 16. Most social media platforms and services have a minimum age requirement and for the majority of these services it is 13 years old.*

Therefore technically, children under the age of 13 should not have a social media account. It is important for their child's safety, that parents are aware of their children's use of technology including smartphones and gaming consoles.

Curriculum (Teaching and Learning) (see section 5.2 of Bí Cineálta Procedures)

- There are a number of curriculum components and programmes which are particularly relevant to the prevention of bullying and the promotion of respect for diversity and inclusiveness. The SPHE curriculum makes specific provision for exploring bullying as well as the inter-related areas of belonging and integrating, communication, conflict, friendship, personal safety and relationships. The Stay Safe & RSE programmes at primary level are personal safety skills programmes which seek to enhance children's self-protection skills including their ability to recognise and cope with bullying. The Religious Education programme - Grow in Love emphasises respect for self and others.
- The work may be extended into many other areas such as Art, Drama and Physical Education. Co-operation and group enterprise can be promoted through team sports as well as through practical subjects

Policy and Planning: (see section 5.3 of Bí Cineálta Procedures)

- To raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with school management, teachers, pupils, parents/guardians.
- To promote a school ethos which encourages children 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 anti bullying behaviour.

- Advice on bullying is in the Homework Journal given to each child every year. This informs children and parents what to do in a bullying situation.
- Discussion of the underlying principles of the school's Anti-bullying Policy and Code of Behaviour will be discussed at staff meetings
- The Acceptable Use Policy, Supervision policy, Special Education Policy and Code of Behaviour all support the implementation of the Bí Cineálta policy
- Effective leadership is a key component with Principal, Deputy Principal, and all middle management focused on supporting the implementation of this policy.

Relationships and Partnerships: (see section 5.4 of Bí Cineálta Procedures)

- Interpersonal connections are supported through a range of formal and informal structures:
 - parents' association
 - our various and multiple student committees and groups eg Student Council, Green Schools Committee
 - Grandparents' Day
 - Age and stage appropriate awareness initiatives that look at the causes and impacts of bullying behaviour including those dealing with navigating friendships, identity based bullying, racist bullying, homophobic/transphobic bullying, sexism and sexual harassment
 - Engage the student body in looking at their own behaviour – promoting acts of kindness and friendship, being helpful 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.
 - Supporting activities that build empathy, respect and resilience.
 - Highlighting positive behaviour
 - Using Check -Ins, Circle Time, Class Contracts to support the development of positive relationships/partnerships
 - Encouraging peer mentoring and peer support
 - Buddy system
 - Supporting active participation of students in school life and active participation of parents in school life also.
 - Engaging parents and students in actively contributing to the formation of a Child Friendly Anti Bullying 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):

- Code of Behaviour
- Supervision Policy
- Acceptance Use Policy
- Digital Devices Policy
- GDPR
- SEN Policy
- Substance Misuse
- SPHE Policy
- Religion
- Health and Safety Statement
- Child Safeguarding Statement & Risk Assessment
- Friendship Week

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

- The class teacher

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):

It is imperative that bullying incidences are recorded in an objective and factual manner. Noting and reporting of bullying behaviour is to be documented using the **Template for Recording Bullying Behaviour** on Aladdin. **All records must be** maintained in accordance with relevant data protection legislation. The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour will adhere to the following:

Recording bullying behaviour:

All incidents of bullying behaviour should be recorded.

The following details should be included on the record:

- form (see section 2.5 of Bí Cineálta procedures)
- type (see section 2.7 of Bí Cineálta procedures)
- where and when (if known)
- the date of initial engagement with the students and their parents
- the views of the students and their parents* regarding the action to be taken to address the bullying behaviour (*only in relation to their own child)
- When review takes place, it should be noted if the bullying behaviour has ceased and the views of the students and parents in relation to this.
- note the date of reviews and engagements
- note the date that the bullying behaviour has ceased
- any engagement with external services/ supports should also be noted
- if a Student Support File exists for a pupil involved, schools are encouraged to place a copy of the record on the student's support file

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):

Identifying if Bullying Behaviour Has Occurred (see Section 6.1/p.43 of the Bí Cineálta Procedures)

The teacher gathers information by considering the what, where, when, and why of the reported incident.

If multiple students are involved, each is interviewed individually first before conducting a group meeting.

During the group meeting, each student provides their account to clarify the situation and ensure mutual understanding.

Students may also be asked to write down their version of events for documentation if deemed appropriate by the teacher.

The school's definition of bullying, and the following guiding questions, will be used to assess whether bullying has occurred:

1. *Is the behaviour targeted at a specific student or group of students?*
2. *Is the behaviour intended to cause physical, social or emotional 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. If the answer to any of these questions is No, then the behaviour is not bullying behaviour.

- Some incidents may involve inappropriate but non-bullying behaviour, which will be addressed using the school's Code of Behaviour.

Addressing Confirmed Bullying Behaviour (see Section 6.2/p.43 of the Bí Cineálta Procedures)

School staff act according to the Bí Cineálta policy and student-friendly policy.

When is bullying behaviour *not* dealt with under the Bí Cineálta Policy/procedures:

- A school is not expected to deal with bullying behaviour that occurs when students are not under the care or responsibility of the school.
- Where this bullying behaviour has an impact in school, schools are required to support the students involved.

Where the bullying behaviour continues in school, schools should deal with it in accordance with their Bí Cineálta Policy.

- If the bullying behaviour involves a student from another school, the school will support the affected student and engage with their parents to explore solutions.
- The response is fair and consistent, ensuring both the student experiencing bullying and the student displaying the behaviour receive support.
- The affected student is engaged with immediately to reassure them and determine their preferred approach to resolving the issue. The teacher listens to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation.
- A record is kept by the teacher of engagement with all parties (See Appendix 1 or click here)
- Parents of all involved students are informed by the teacher at an early stage.
- Privacy and sensitivity are maintained in all discussions, considering the students' age and ability.
- Action is taken promptly, and students are actively involved in decisions about resolving the situation.
- Approaches such as restorative practice or mediation may be used only if staff have received training and student's consent.

Handling Requests to Take No Action (see Section 6.3/p.45 of the Bí Cineálta Procedures)

- A student may request that no action be taken beyond staff monitoring the situation. Where this occurs, the member of staff will speak with the student to work out together what steps can be taken to address the matter and how their parents will be informed of the situation.
- The staff member acknowledges the student's feelings and works with them to determine appropriate next steps.
- Parents may also make schools aware of bullying behaviour and specifically request that no action be taken. Where parents request that a school take no action, parents

should put this request *in writing* to the school. However, while acknowledging the parent's request, schools may decide that, based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour.

Reviewing Progress and Ensuring Behaviour Has Ceased (see Section 6.4/p.45 of the Bí Cineálta Procedures)

The teacher conducts a follow-up review within 20 school days of the initial intervention. The review considers:

- The nature and impact of the bullying behaviour.
- The effectiveness of strategies used.
- Changes in relationships between students involved.
- Even if bullying has ceased, ongoing support/supervision may be needed for both students.
- If the bullying behaviour persists, strategies are reviewed with students and parents, and additional actions are planned within an agreed timeframe.
- If the student displaying bullying behaviour continues their actions, the school may apply disciplinary measures under the Code of Behaviour.

Recording and Documentation (see Section 6.5/p.45 of the Bí Cineálta Procedures)

Note, the recording template is available on Aladdin and each teacher must provide the principal with a hard copy.

All incidents are recorded, including:

- The form and type of bullying behaviour.
- The date, time, and location of incidents. o Initial engagement details with students and parents.
- Student and parent perspectives on actions taken are documented.
- A review meeting is recorded, including whether the bullying has stopped.

If applicable, records are stored in the Student Support File and used to inform future support strategies.

Even if bullying has ceased, ongoing support may be needed for both students.

Records are kept in compliance with the school's data protection policies. A copy of the record will be shared with the school principal and stored in the office.

Complaint Process (see Section 6.6/p.46 of the Bí Cineálta Procedures)

- If a parent is dissatisfied with how the bullying behaviour has been handled, they may use the school's Parental Complaints Procedure.
- If unresolved, they may escalate the complaint to the Ombudsman for Children (ococomplaint@oco.ie)

The school will use the following approaches to support those who experience, witness and display bullying behaviour (see Chapter 6 - Section 5.7/p.46 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

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

Supporting pupils experiencing bullying behaviour:

- Ending the bullying behaviour
- Fostering respect for bullied pupils and all pupils
- Fostering greater empathy towards and support for bullied pupils
- Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through annual awareness-raising programmes
- Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through the speedy identification of those responsible and speedy resolution of bullying situations
- Helping bullied pupils 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).
- Buddy/peer mentoring programme
- Continued contact with parents
- Continued monitoring of particular situations

Supporting pupils engaging in bullying behaviour:

- Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are not blamed or punished and get a 'clean sheet'
- Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are doing the right and honorable thing and giving them praise for this
- Helping the pupils who engage in bullying behaviour to 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 pupils' feelings of self-worth
- In dealing with negative behaviour 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
- Continued contact with parents
- Continued monitoring of particular situations

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 Schools*.

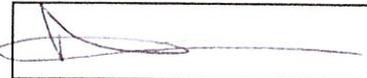
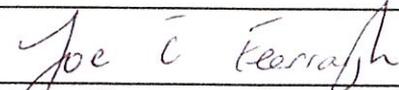
Section D: Oversight

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 and Dated:

	
Chairperson of the Board of Management	Principal/Secretary to the Board of Management
Date: 16/6/25	Date: 16/6/25