

Hamilton High School

Bí Cinealta Policy To Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

June 2025

Hamilton High School

Mission Statement

We seek to promote a caring and committed school community which will facilitate the education of our students and where everyone is valued as a unique human being.

In accordance with the requirements of the Education (welfare) Act 2000 and Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post Primary Schools, the Board of Management of Hamilton High School has adopted the following Policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour in conjunction with and within the framework of the school's overall Code of 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.

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, annually or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which this policy refers.

Signed: _____Date: _____
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: _____Date: _____
(Principal)

Link to Mission Statement & Key Principles of Best Practice

The Board of Management recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of pupils and is therefore fully committed to ensuring that policy and practice in the school is guided by the four key principles of Cineáltas:

1. Prevention
2. Support
3. Oversight
4. Community

The Board of Management of Hamilton High 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 of Hamilton High School 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.

The core definition above sets out clear criteria to help school communities to prevent, correctly identify and address bullying among students. Alleged incidents of bullying are, however, often complex and must be considered on a case-by-case basis.

The core elements of the definition are further described below:

- ## Targeted behavior

  Bullying is deliberate, unwanted behaviour that causes harm to others, and where the student displaying bullying behaviour knows that their behaviour is or will be perceived as harmful by the child or young person experiencing the behaviour. Bullying is not accidental or reckless behaviour. The harm can be physical (for example, personal injury, damage to or loss of property), social (for example. withdrawal, loneliness, exclusion) and/or emotional (for example, low self-esteem, depression, anxiety) and can have a serious and long-term negative impact on the student experiencing the bullying behaviour. If repeated harm is real for the student experiencing the behaviour but unintended by the other student, this is not bullying but, importantly, must still be addressed under the school's code of behaviour.

- ## Repeated behaviour

  Bullying takes the form of a systematic pattern of behaviour which is repeated over time. Single offline incidents of intentional negative behaviour involving an imbalance of power are not considered bullying but must still be addressed under the school's code of behaviour. **Posting a single harmful message/image/video online, and which is highly likely to be reposted or shared with others can therefore be seen as bullying behaviour.**

- ## Imbalance of power

  In incidents of bullying, the student experiencing the bullying behaviour finds it hard to defend themselves as a result of the abuse of a real or perceived imbalance of power. This imbalance of power may manifest itself through differences in size, strength, age, ability, peer group power, economic status, social status, religion, race, ethnic origin including membership of the Traveller and/or Roma communities, sexual orientation, family circumstances, gender, gender identity, gender expression, experience of the care system, disability or the receipt of special education.

  In incidents of online (or cyber) bullying, the imbalance of power may relate to online anonymity, technical proficiency and possession of information/images/video, and the inability of the targeted student to remove offensive online material or escape the bullying.

Behaviour that is not bullying behaviour

A one-off instance of negative behaviour towards another 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 don't want to be friends or to remain friends, is not considered bullying behaviour unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others including deliberate manipulation of friendship groups.

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 can't 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, this is not bullying.

These behaviours, while not defined as bullying, can be distressing.

Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

Criminal Behaviour

Bullying behaviour can be considered criminal behaviour under certain circumstances and legal consequences can apply. **The age of criminal responsibility in Ireland is 12 years**.

Some online behaviour may be illegal, and students need to be aware of the far-reaching consequences of posting inappropriate or harmful content online. In cases of intimate imagery, the Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020, also known as Coco's Law, ***criminalises the non-consensual sharing of intimate images and also criminalises threatening to share these images.***

If bullying behaviour ***involves physical violence or threats of violence***, it may be considered ***assault.***

If bullying behaviour involves ***discrimination or hate speech*** targeting a student based on their race, religion, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation or membership of the Traveller community, it may be ***considered a hate crime*** under the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 198911, and those engaging in such behaviour may face criminal charges.

If bullying behaviour ***involves sexual harassment or sexual assault***, this may also be ***considered criminal behaviour.***

An Garda Síochána is the appropriate authority to investigate alleged criminal behaviour.

Types of Bullying behaviour deemed to be inappropriate:

(this list is not exhaustive)

General behaviours which apply to all	• Harassment based on any of the nine grounds in the equality legislation e.g., sexual harassment, homophobic bullying, racist bullying etc. • Physical aggression • Damage to property • Name calling • Slagging • The production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other materials aimed at intimidating another person • Offensive graffiti • Extortion • Intimidation • Insulting or offensive gestures • The "look" • Invasion of personal space • A combination of any of the types listed. • Exclusion • No innocent bystander
Cyber	• **Denigration**: Spreading rumors, lies or gossip to hurt a person's reputation • **Harassment**: Continually sending vicious, mean or disturbing messages to an individual • **Impersonation**: Posting offensive or aggressive messages under another person's name • **Flaming**: Using inflammatory or vulgar words to provoke an online fight • **Trickery**: Fooling someone into sharing personal information which you then post online • **Outing**: Posting or sharing confidential or compromising information or images • **Exclusion**: Purposefully excluding someone from an online group • **Cyber stalking**: Ongoing harassment and denigration that causes a person considerable fear for his/her safety • Silent telephone/mobile phone call • Abusive telephone/mobile phone calls • Abusive text messages • Abusive email • Abusive communication on social networks e.g., Facebook/Instagram/Tik Tok/Be Real/Twitter/You Tube etc. or on games consoles • Abusive website comments/Blogs/Pictures • Abusive posts on any form of communication technology
Identity Based Behaviours	**Including any of the nine discriminatory grounds mentioned in Equality Legislation** (gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community).

Homophobic and Transgender	• Spreading rumours about a person's sexual orientation • Taunting a person of a different sexual orientation • Name calling e.g., gay, queer, lesbian ... used in a derogatory manner • Physical intimidation or attacks • Threats
Race, nationality, ethnic background and membership of the Traveller community	• Discrimination, prejudice, comments or insults about colour, nationality, culture, social class, religious beliefs, ethnic or traveller background • Exclusion on the basis of any of the above
Relational	This involves manipulating relationships as a means of bullying. Behaviours include: • Malicious gossip • Isolation & exclusion • Ignoring • Excluding from the group • Taking someone's friends away • "Bitching" • Spreading rumours • Breaking confidence • Talking loud enough so that the victim can hear • The "look" • Use of terminology such as "nerd" in a derogatory way
Sexual	• Unwelcome or inappropriate sexual comments or touching • Harassment
Special Educational Needs, Disability – Learning Difficulties and Gifted	• Name calling • Taunting others because of their disability or learning needs • Taking advantage of some pupils' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to recognise and defend themselves against bullying • Taking advantage of some pupils' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to understand social situations and social cues. • Mimicking a person's disability • Setting others up for ridicule

This Policy Applies

• In class, between classes and while on the school premises

• While at matches, school events, guest speakers at school etc

• On the way to and from school within school hours

• On school-based activity, school tours etc.

• To anything done in the school name

• To any behaviour that adversely affects the school reputation or the education of any student in the school

Rights and Responsibilities of Each Member of the School Community

Right	Responsibility
• I have the right to be safe in school	• I have a responsibility to make our school a safe and secure place for others

Rights and responsibilities of students and staff

I have a right to be:	I have the responsibility to ensure that:
• Treated with respect • Physically safe and to expect my property to be safe at school • Free from all forms of bullying • Able to learn & teach without disruption	• Others are treated with respect • Others are physically safe and the property of others is safe • Others are free from all forms of bullying • Others/students are able to learn without disruption • Bullying behaviour is acted upon as appropriate

Rights and responsibilities of parents

I have a right to:	I have the responsibility to ensure that:
• Expect that my child is safe in school and can learn without disruption	• I report bullying behaviour to the school • Co-operate fully with the implementation of school policy

Responsibilities of bystanders/witnesses

I should:	I should not:
• Say 'no' or 'stop' when you see or hear someone behaving unfairly - be assertive but not aggressive • Seek help immediately from an adult, if the situation is dangerous. • Tell when you know a student is being bullied.	• Join in bullying behaviour for example, laughing at, sneering, 'slagging' or fighting etc. • Cheer on somebody who is bullying. • Stay in a dangerous situation, e.g. a fight. • Bully the 'bully'.

Preventing Bullying Behaviour- **Everyone** is **Responsible**

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):

Bullying Prevention aligned with Key Areas of Wellbeing Promotion

Culture and Environment	Curriculum
• Open Door Policy • Active Student Support Team/Big Brother System • Active Mentoring System • Establishment of a Safe Telling Environment • Seating Plans • Visible Displays around the school • Display of students' work • Designated area to report bullying issues- Student Voice Post Box/Email • Empowerment of student voice- Students' Council, Class Captains, Prefects, Caride, Student representatives on BOM, PA & School Development Committees, Spotlight Initiative, Focus Groups • Designated areas for students- Base room plan for each year group, separate toilets for JC and LC, Friendship Benches, Games Cupboard, Track 2 Group, Sports Blitz and Bonding days/School Tours, Autism 'Hub', • Random Acts of Kindness e.g. Christmas Hampers, Easter Eggs, Blue Monday, Ice Cream Truck • Club na nÓg • Respect charter displayed in all classrooms • Member of senior management and staff linked to escort and bus service companies • School counsellor and availability of Pastoral Care Team • bekind@hamiltonhighschool.ie	• Various awareness weeks throughout the school calendar e.g. Anti- Bullying (Cyber Bullying) Week, Stand Up Awareness Week, Internet Safety Week, Ethos Day/Week (Inclusion & Diversity), Wellfest Week • Variety of programmes are run in SPHE and Wellbeing/Guidance Classes e.g. The Decider, Lockers, Fuse, Alert, The Respect Effect, Be in Ctrl etc... • Peer Teaching • Wellbeing goal agreed by each subject department in subject plans • Wellbeing indicators addressed in all areas of Teaching & Learning • 1st year transition programme through SPHE/Wellbeing/buddy system • AEN/ASD: Primary school visits, weekly AEN meetings, school, culture of inclusion, updates to staff from management & AEN meetings, regular staff meeting updates, whole school AEN, yearly meetings of AEN lead teachers and class teachers • Staff CPD on area of anti-bullying • Whole school survey regarding bullying per term

Relationships and Partnerships	Policy and Planning
• Linking with external services e.g. NEPS, CAMHS, Tusla, Gardaí • Linking with BOM, PA, Students' Council, Local clubs, YSI Community Activities, Mini Projects, Subject specific CBAs e.g. CSPE Action Project, SPHE CBA Class events, Fundraising events • Student Support Team • Guest Speakers • Garda Visits • Extra-Curricular- Coaches, Musicians, Artists, Art Club • Jigsaw One Good School • Planet Youth • Credits/Points System – for all • Positive behaviour awards • Noting acts of kindness	• Bi Cineálta Policy • Code of Behaviour Policy • Acceptable Use Policy • Child Safeguarding • Data Protection • IPad Acceptable use policy • Internet Acceptable use policy • Social Media Policy • Pastoral Care Policy – Check & Connect • Wellbeing Policy • Staff aware that they are all mandated persons, child protection procedures handed out each year as reminder and complete. Update of same as necessary. • Principal & Deputy Principal complete DLP/DDLP training and refreshers

Supervision & Monitoring

The school has the following supervision and monitoring policies in place to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

In addition to all the practices identified above under Culture and Environment, Curriculum, Planning and Policy and Relationships and Partnerships Hamilton High School has the following supervision and monitoring policies to prevent and address bullying behaviour:

- Yard and Breaktime supervision- A weekly schedule of student supervision at both breaktimes is developed to monitor student behaviour and wellbeing. Any causes for concern are dealt with and reported to school management.
- All staff are watchful and observe relationships between students in class, note absence patterns and let it be known that high standards of behaviour are always expected.
- Survey of Students - Students are surveyed by their Year Head throughout the year regarding bullying behaviour as part of the school's mentoring sessions.
- Student Support Team/Pastoral Care Team – the student support team meet weekly and operate a check and connect system where teachers meet students where concerns may have been brought to their attention.

Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

- Year Head for each year group assisted by Principal and Deputy 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):

- Where a member of the teaching staff has a concern about a student being bullied, either as a result of a personal observation or as a result of receiving a report from a third party, **the teacher should without delay refer the matter to the Year Head, Deputy Principal or Principal.**
- In investigating bullying behaviour or addressing bullying behaviour in any way, Year Heads are welcome to **seek the assistance and support of the Principal, the Deputy Principal** or the student support team at any time. Indeed, given the extent to which the Principal and Deputy Principal are privy to all kinds of personal information about students, it would be prudent for year heads to check in with either of them before taking any action in relation to bullying behaviour.
- The School reserves the right to investigate allegations of bullying (and to take disciplinary action where necessary) where bullying is perpetrated by a member of the school community and it impinges on the work or well-being of a student in the school.
- **The School reserves the right, in accordance with Section 6 Bi Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post Primary Schools to seek the assistance of agencies such as NEPS, the HSE, and the Gardaí,** where it deems such

assistance is necessary to dealing effectively with bullying behaviour. In any case, where the School/College deems bullying behaviour to be potentially abusive (Section 2 Bi Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post Primary Schools) it will consult with the HSE's Children and Family Services to assist it in drawing up an appropriate response or to obtain advice or to make a formal child protection report to the HSE or the Gardaí (as appropriate) in accordance with the DES Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary (revised 2023)

- Concerns about or allegations of bullying will be investigated and addressed in accordance with Section 6 Bi Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post Primary Schools. These are summarised as follows:
    - ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour feels listened to 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*

***Parents are an integral part of the school community and play an important role, in partnership with the school, in addressing bullying behaviour.** Where bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties will be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and to consult with them on the actions to be taken to address the behaviour as outlined in the school's Bí Cineálta policy.

When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred relevant teachers will consider: what, where, when and why?

- If a group of students is involved, each student will be engaged with individually at first.
- Thereafter, all students involved will be met as a group.
- At the group meeting, each student should be asked for their account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's views.
- Each student should be supported as appropriate, following the group meeting.
- It may be helpful to ask the students involved to write down their account of the incident(s).

In circumstances where a student expresses concern about their parents being informed, the school will develop an appropriate plan to support the student and for how their parents will be informed.

The school will consider communication barriers that may exist when communicating with parents, for example, literacy, digital literacy or language barriers.

Recording of bullying behaviour

Those involved in investigating and resolving bullying behaviour will note and report developments as follows and, in doing so, they will comply with relevant data protection legislation. It is imperative that **all recording of bullying incidents must be done in an objective and factual manner.**

The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour are as follows:

- Record all incidents of bullying behavior (using appendix B)
- Document the following details:
    - Type and form of bullying behavior (if known).
    - Where and when it took place.
    - The date of the first engagement with the students and their parents.
- Include the views of students and parents on actions to address the bullying.
- Track the review process with students and parents to check if the bullying behavior has stopped and get their feedback.
- Record the date of each engagement and when it is confirmed that the bullying has ceased.
- Note any involvement with external services or supports.
- Keep the records according to the school's record-keeping policy and in line with data protection rules.
- If there's a Student Support File, place a copy of the record there to help the support team provide consistent help for the student's wellbeing.

Follow up where bullying behaviour has occurred

Engagement with Students and Parents:

- The year head/Deputy Principal/Principal must engage with the students involved in the bullying and their parents.
- **This engagement should occur no later than 20 school days after the initial contact**.

Factors to Consider:

- During this engagement, important factors to consider include:
    - The nature of the bullying behavior.
    - The effectiveness of the strategies used to address the bullying.
    - The relationship between the students involved.

Review of Strategies:

- If the bullying behavior has not stopped, the year head/Deputy Principal/Principal should:
    - Review the strategies used to address the bullying.
    - Consult with the students involved and their parents to determine next steps.

Agree on a Timeframe:

- A timeframe should be set for further engagement and follow-up until the bullying behavior ceases.

Further Action if Bullying Continues:

- **If the bullying behavior continues, the school should consider using strategies from the school's Code of Behaviour to address the inappropriate behavior**.

Disciplinary Sanctions:

- If disciplinary sanctions are necessary, the matter should be handled between the student, their parents, and the school.

If Parents Are Unsatisfied:

- If a parent is not satisfied with how the bullying has been addressed, they should refer to the school's complaints procedures, as outlined in the Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.

Complaint to Ombudsman for Children:

- If a parent remains dissatisfied after the complaint process, they can contact the Ombudsman for Children if they believe the school's actions negatively affected the student.

Requests to take no action

A student reporting bullying behaviour may ask that a member of staff does nothing about the behaviour other than "look out" for them. The student may not want to be identified as having told someone about the bullying behaviour. They may feel that telling someone might make things more difficult for
them. Where this occurs, it is important that the member of staff shows empathy to the student, deals with the matter sensitively and speaks 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. **It is important that the student who has experienced bullying behaviour feels safe.**

Parents may also make schools aware of bullying behaviour that has occurred and specifically request that the school take no action. *Parents should put this request in writing to the school or be facilitated to do so where there are literacy, digital literacy or language barriers.* ***However, while acknowledging the parent's request, schools may decide that, based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour.***

Support

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

Students who experience Bullying or Witness Bullying:

The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows:

- **Pupils may need counselling** and/or opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop their friendship and social skills and thereby build resilience

  whenever this is needed.

- In this regard the relevant **Student Support Team will work closely with the student to ensure they are actively supported** in the school and to engage in school based activities they enjoy. They **may be placed on our school's focus in/out support list and/or engage in check and connect.**

- The **schools guidance department will also put in place a program of support** in conjunction **with the Year Head**.

- The learning strategies applied within the school will also allow for the enhancement of the pupil's self-worth.

Students who display bullying Behaviour:

- **Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour may need counselling to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others.**

- The Year Head in conjunction with the relevant Student Support Team will work closely with the student in this regard.

Outside agency support:

- **The school in certain circumstances may also seek the support and advice of TUSLA, EWO, NEPS, NCSE, second level school support services, HSE and any other agency deemed appropriate to support the school in dealing with incidents of bullying.**