



## **Bí Cineálta Policy**

Ratified at BOM Meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2025

Signed: Verna Barron

Chairperson of Board of Management

Signed: Noel Reilly

Principal

Date of next review: September 2027



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

The Board of Management of Rush and Lusk Educate Together 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. As a school community, we have a responsibility to work together to prevent and address bullying behaviour and to deal with the negative impact of bullying.

We are committed to ensuring that all children who attend our school are kept safe from harm and that the wellbeing of our children is at the forefront of everything that we do. We recognise the negative impact that bullying behaviour can have on their lives and we are fully committed to preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.

The Board of Management confirms that the school, in accordance with our obligations under equality legislation, will take all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the harassment of children or staff on any of the nine grounds specified in the Equal Status Acts, namely: 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.

One-off incidents may be considered bullying in certain circumstances. A single hurtful message posted on social media can be considered bullying behaviour as it has a high likelihood of being shared multiple times and thus becoming repeated behaviour.

Our school has developed a Bí Cineálta policy that sets out how our school community prevents and addresses bullying behaviour. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour that is not considered to be bullying are provided for within the school's existing 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
<b>School Staff</b>	May 2025  September 2025	Staff meeting (half-day school closure) to introduce Bí Cineálta  Presentation at staff meeting re: Bí Cineálta procedures
<b>Students</b>	Several dates throughout May/June 2025	Focus groups from 4th - 6th class
<b>Parents</b>	June 2025	Draft policy given for feedback
<b>Board of Management</b>	September 2025	Draft policy for amendment and ratification
<b>Wider school community (e.g. bus drivers/escorts, sports coaches, music teachers)</b>	From September 2025 as required	Summary sheet outlining our policy provided as necessary
Date policy was approved:		
Date policy was last reviewed:		

## Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

In Rush and Lusk Educate Together, the following four areas are considered integral to prevent bullying:

### B1. Culture and Environment

#### ***A Telling Environment:***

- We endeavour at all times to make our school a safe environment where reporting of bullying behaviour is encouraged. It is made clear to all children (including bystanders) that when they report incidents of suspected bullying, they are not considered to be telling tales, but are behaving responsibly.
- Children are encouraged to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment.
- Clear protocols are in place to encourage parents/guardians to approach the school if they suspect that their child is being bullied.

#### ***A Trusted Adult:***

- Children who witness bullying behaviour are supported and encouraged to report the behaviour to a trusted adult in the school.
- The trusted adult reassures the child that they have done the right thing by reporting.
- The trusted adult informs the member of staff who has responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour, and continues to support the child, as appropriate, while the behaviour is being addressed

#### ***Creating Safe Physical Spaces:***

- The outdoor environment is constantly being developed to promote a sense of ownership and respect in the school community.
- The Board of Management has a Safety, Health and Welfare at Work policy, which includes regularly updated risk assessments of the building and grounds.
- Good lighting is present throughout the school to avoid dark corners or spaces.
- All storage areas are out of bounds for children unless accompanied by an adult.
- Murals, artwork and signage promote our school's values, including equality, diversity, inclusion and respect.

#### ***Supervision:***

- Appropriate supervision and monitoring practices are in place to both prevent and deal with bullying behaviour and to facilitate early intervention where possible.
- School staff (both teachers and SNAs) who are supervising at break times are vigilant and highly visible to children by wearing orange high-vis jackets.
- When children are entering and exiting the building throughout the day, adults are stationed in the corridors and on the stairs.
- The school yards have clear lines of sight for supervision.
- Areas with visual barriers or blind spots are out of bounds for children.
- Additional guidance re: supervision is provided for staff in relation to bringing children off campus to the Hub.
- Supervision is also a high priority during school tours and extra-curricular activities.

## **B2. Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)**

- Collaborative and respectful relationships are promoted throughout the school.
- Children have regular opportunities to work in small groups, which builds a sense of connection, belonging and empathy.
- A child-friendly version of the Bí Cineálta policy is regularly referred to and is visible in every classroom (**Appendix D**).
- The SPHE curriculum, including the Relationships and Sexuality Education Programme, fosters children's wellbeing, self-confidence and sense of belonging, as well as developing a sense of personal responsibility for their behaviour and actions.
- The Learn Together Ethical Education curriculum develops an understanding and awareness of right and wrong.
- School-wide delivery of lessons on bullying is provided from evidence based programmes (e.g. Stay Safe Programme, Walk Tall Programme).
- Programmes to enhance children's self-esteem and resilience, as well as promoting a culture of friendship, empathy and respect are delivered as appropriate to the children's age and developmental stage (e.g. Mindful Matters, Friends for Life).
- Continuous Professional Development is provided as appropriate to assist staff to effectively deliver these programmes.
- There are regular discussions at staff meetings on bullying and its impact.
- Whole school awareness measures are implemented - these include Friendship/Anti-Bullying Week, Anti-Bullying Campaign class surveys, and regular school/class assemblies promoting our core values in order to address issues of prejudice, stereotyping or unacceptable behaviour.
- The primary school internet safety teaching resource WEBWISE is used to promote online safety, along with relevant workshops from outside providers.

The school culture at Rush and Lusk ETNS is based on inclusivity and is welcoming of difference and diversity. Any differentiation/adaptations which are required for children with special educational needs are considered. Our aim is to enable all children to develop the skills and strategies to engage and respond appropriately in all areas of life within school and the wider community.

## **B3. Policy and Planning**

The wellbeing of the school community is at the heart of all our school policies and plans. A range of school policies support the implementation of our Bí Cineálta policy. These include our:

- Code of Behaviour
- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Internet Acceptable Use Policy
- Special Education Needs Policy
- Curriculum policies (e.g. SPHE, Learn Together, RSE)
- Equality Policy
- Substance Use Policy

## **B4. Relationships and Partnerships**

- We recognise the importance of positive relationships across our whole school community to promote empathy, understanding and respect.
- We encourage meaningful involvement of the Board of Management, staff, children and parents/guardians in our school.
- Parents/guardians are actively encouraged to support their child's time in school by getting involved with the PGTA.
- Through the PGTA's membership of the National Parent's Council, parents/guardians have access to online safety and anti-bullying workshops along with other resources.
- Parents/guardians and children are requested to sign the Certificate of Cooperation with the school Code of Behaviour upon enrolment.
- Age appropriate awareness initiatives organised by outside agencies (such as Zeeko workshops) look at the causes and impacts of bullying behaviour.
- Workshops with Community Gardaí or other relevant organisations covering issues such as personal safety and cyber-bullying are welcomed.
- Children are encouraged to take an active part in school life by becoming involved in the Student Council and other committees.

In addition to measures in these four areas, the school has strategies in place specifically aimed at preventing online bullying, homophobic/ transphobic, racist and sexist bullying behaviour and sexual harassment. These are outlined in further detail in **Appendix E**.

## Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

Any child/parent/guardian may bring an alleged bullying incident to any teacher in the school. Non-teaching staff (SNAs, secretaries, caretakers, cleaners) are made aware that they should report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to a mandated person (**Appendix H**).

All teachers, as mandated persons, have a responsibility for addressing bullying behavior. However, the ultimate responsibility lies with the principal and deputy.

When bullying behaviour occurs, the school will:

- ensure that the child experiencing the bullying 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
- take action in a timely manner
- inform the parents/guardians of those involved
- listen to the views of the child who is experiencing the bullying behaviour in eliciting how best to address the situation.

The primary aim in addressing reports of bullying behaviour is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved. Every effort is made to ensure that all involved (including children/parents/guardians) understand this approach from the outset. Parents/guardians and children are expected to cooperate with and assist the school in resolving any issues.

### **C1. Steps taken by the school to determine if bullying behaviour has occurred**

Detailed guidance is provided to teachers for exploring allegations of bullying behaviour (**see Appendices A and B**). All staff are aware of the current definition of bullying as well as the various forms and types of bullying behaviour, as described in Chapter 2 of *Bi Cinealta*.

Recording of suspected bullying incidents is done in an objective manner having listened to all involved. Teachers closely follow the guidelines and exercise their professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved. The following steps are followed:

- When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred the teacher considers the following questions: what, where, when and why?
- Where possible, incidents are investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.
- Notes of all conversations with the children involved are kept by teachers in the Class Behaviour Book, which is for internal school use only. These conversations are conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all children concerned. Children who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information.
- If a group is involved, each member is engaged with individually at first. Following this, all those involved are met as a group if appropriate. It may be useful for those involved to write down their account.

- At the group meeting, each member is asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's views. Each member of a group is supported, as appropriate, following the group meeting.
- At any stage the teacher may seek the help and support of a member of the In-School Leadership Team.
- Incidents which are of a serious nature, or which involve children from a number of classes may be referred to the principal immediately. The principal then determines if bullying has occurred.
- In establishing if the behaviour should be considered bullying, there are three key questions to be considered:
  1. Is the behaviour targeted at a specific child or group of children?
  2. Is the behaviour intended to cause physical, social or emotional harm?
  3. Is the behaviour repeated?

If the answer to **all three** questions is **Yes**, then the behaviour is considered bullying. A Bullying Report form and Record of Engagement (**Appendix C**) is completed by the teacher and the principal is informed. The file is securely maintained in the principal's office, in accordance with the school's record keeping policy and in line with data protection regulations.

## **C2. Approaches taken to address the bullying behaviour:**

- In cases where it has been determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents/guardians of those involved are contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken.
- The school gives parents/guardians an opportunity to discuss ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the support provided to the children.
- It is made clear to the child who engaged in bullying behaviour how they are in breach of the school's Bí Cineálta policy. Efforts are made to try to get them to see the situation from the perspective of the child being bullied.
- Sanctions may include the following:
  - Letter of apology and an undertaking to stop the bullying behaviour
  - Loss of yard time or Golden Time
  - Meetings with principal/parents
  - Loss of field trip opportunity
  - Withdrawal from representing school (e.g. playing sport, choir)
  - Temporary exclusion from classroom under supervision
  - Request for parental supervision on the way to and from school.

If the bullying behaviour poses a child protection concern the matter will be addressed without delay in accordance with *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

### ***Requests to take no action***

Children/parents/guardians may make the school aware of bullying behaviour that has occurred and specifically request that the school take no action. This request should be put in writing to the school. However, while acknowledging the request, schools may decide that, based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour.

## **C3. Review of progress:**

Following the initial intervention, the principal or relevant teacher engages with the children involved and their parents/guardians no more than 20 school days after the initial discussion to review progress.

In determining whether a bullying incident has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant staff must use their professional judgement to establish:

- Whether or not the bullying behaviour has ceased
- Whether or not any issues between the parties have been resolved
- If the relationships between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable

This review with the children and their parents/guardians is documented to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased. The date that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased is recorded.

If the bullying behaviour has not ceased, the strategies utilised are reviewed, in consultation with the children and their parents. A timeframe is agreed for further

engagement until the bullying has ceased. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour as provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour may be considered.

Where a parent/guardian is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with this policy, they are referred to the school's Complaints procedures. In the event that they have exhausted the school's Complaints procedures and are still not satisfied, the child/parent/guardian is advised of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

#### **C4. Support for those who experience, witness and display bullying behaviour:**

- Follow-up meetings with the parties involved are arranged separately with a view to bringing them together at a later date if the child who has been bullied is ready and agreeable. A restorative practice approach is applied to try to restore relationships where possible.
- The school is committed to supporting any child who has experienced bullying behaviour, and engage with them and their parent/guardian without delay so that they feel listened to, supported and reassured.
- School staff also identify the supports needed for the child displaying the bullying behaviour to better manage relational difficulties.
- Where necessary and appropriate, the school engages with NEPS for advice or training.
- Preventative initiatives, such as developing social and emotional skills, promoting resilience and relationship repair between peers are engaged in as appropriate.

## Section D: Oversight

The principal presents an update on bullying behaviour at each Board of Management meeting (**Appendix F**). This update includes 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 also provides a verbal update which includes where relevant:

- information relating to trends and patterns identified
- strategies used to address the bullying behaviour
- any wider strategies to prevent and address bullying behaviour where relevant.
- any serious incidents of bullying behaviour
- incidents which have had a serious adverse impact on a child (including school refusal)
- If a parent has informed the school that a child has left because of bullying behaviour
- any additional support needed from the Board of Management
- If the school's BÍ Cineálta policy requires urgent review in advance of the annual review.

This update does not contain personal or identifying information.

The BÍ Cineálta policy and its implementation is reviewed annually, or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which this policy refers. The review is completed with input from the school community, including the Student Council and the Parent/Guardian/Teacher Association. The template for this review and its notification to the wider school community are found in **Appendix G**.

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.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

(Chairperson of board of management)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

(Principal)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## List of Appendices

- A. Guidelines for determining if bullying has taken place
- B. Is it bullying? (Oide)
- C. Bullying Report form and Record of Engagement
- D. Children's version of Bí Cineálta
- E. Prevention strategies for specific types of bullying behaviour
- F. Principal's update re: bullying to the Board of Management
- G. Annual review of Bí Cineálta and notification to the school community
- H. Summary of policy