



Scoil Mhuire Muigheo
Mayo, Crettyard,
Co. Laois
R93H799
17271C
P: 056 4442555
E: mayonsovs@gmail.com
www.mayons.ie

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire, Muigheo has adopted the following policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour. This policy fully complies with the requirements of *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2024*.

The board of management acknowledges that bullying behaviour interferes with the rights of the child as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. We all, as a school community, have a responsibility to work together to prevent and address bullying behaviour and to deal with the negative impact of bullying behaviour.

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

We confirm that we will, in accordance with our obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the harassment of students or staff on any of the nine grounds specified: gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.

Definition of Bullying

Bullying is defined in *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* and *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* as targeted behaviour, online or offline that causes harm. The harm caused can be physical, social and/or emotional in nature. Bullying behaviour is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power in relationships between two people or groups of people in society. The detailed definition is provided in Chapter 2 of the *Bí Cineálta* procedures.

Each school is required to develop and implement a *Bí Cineálta* policy that sets out how the school community prevents and addresses bullying behaviour. Strategies to

deal with inappropriate behaviour that is not bullying behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

Section A: Development/review of our Bi 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		Staff Questionnaire
Students		Student Questionnaire
Parents		Parent Questionnaire
Board of Management		
Wider school community as appropriate		
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):

- Model respectful behaviour to all members of the school community at all times
- Explicitly teach pupils what respectful language and respectful behaviour looks like, acts like, sounds like and feels like in class and around the school
- Ensure the school community supports a ‘telling’ environment.
- Staff support the strategy of tell a ‘trusted adult’ by letting students know that they can talk to them if they or another student is experiencing bullying behaviour.
- Undertake the following measures to create safe physical spaces:
 - ensure good lighting is present to avoid dark corners or spaces
 - remove visual barriers from windows such as posters
 - improve the visibility of school staff who are supervising at break times including during yard duty
- Take all reasonable measures to ensure the safety of their students and to supervise students when students are attending school or attending school activities.
- Use SPHE programmes to develop students’ sense of personal responsibility for their own behaviour and actions.
- Ensure the wellbeing of the school community is at the heart of school policies and plans. A range of other policies such as the school’s acceptable use policy, supervision policy, special education teaching policy and Code of Behaviour can support implementation of the school’s Bí Cineálta policy.
- Engaging in appropriate teacher professional learning courses where applicable can support school staff to prevent and address bullying behaviour.
- The following, which is not an exhaustive list, could be considered to strengthen relationships and partnerships between members of the school community:
 - Age-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
 - supporting the active participation of students in school life
 - supporting the active participation of parents in school life
 - conducting workshops and seminars for students, school staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of bullying
 - supporting activities that build empathy, respect and resilience
 - encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring
 - promoting acts of kindness
 - teaching problem solving
- Strategies to prevent cyberbullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:
 - implementing the SPHE curriculum
 - implementing the Digital Media Literacy curriculum which teaches students about responsible online behaviour and digital citizenship
 - having regular conversations with students about developing respectful and kind relationships online

- developing and communicating an acceptable use policy for technology
- 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
- Strategies to prevent homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:
 - maintaining an inclusive physical environment such as by displaying relevant posters
 - encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
 - challenging gender stereotypes
 - conducting workshops and seminars for students, school staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of homophobic bullying behaviour
 - encouraging students to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour
- Strategies to prevent racist bullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:
 - fostering a school culture where diversity is celebrated and where students "see themselves" in their school environment
 - having the cultural diversity of the school visible and on display
 - conducting workshops and seminars for students, school staff and parents to raise awareness of racism
 - encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities > encouraging bystanders to report when they witness racist behaviour
 - providing supports to school staff to respond to the needs of students for whom English is an additional language and for communicating with their parents
 - providing supports to school staff to support students from ethnic minorities, including Traveller and Roma students, and to encourage communication with their parents
 - inviting speakers from diverse ethnic backgrounds
 - ensuring that library reading material and textbooks represent appropriate lived experiences of students and adults from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds
- Strategies to prevent sexist bullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:
 - ensuring members of staff model respectful behaviour and treat students equally irrespective of their sex
 - ensuring all students have the same opportunities to engage in school activities irrespective of their sex
 - celebrating diversity at school and acknowledging the contributions of all students
 - organising awareness campaigns, workshops and presentations on gender equality and respect
 - encouraging parents to reinforce these values of respect at home
- Strategies to prevent sexual harassment include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- promoting positive role models within the school community
 - challenging gender stereotypes that can contribute to sexual harassment
-

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):

- Ensure all staff actively watch out for signs of bullying behaviour and report it as necessary
- Ensure there is adequate playground/school yard/outdoor supervision
- School staff can get pupils to help them to identify bullying 'hot spots' and 'hot times' for bullying in the school
 - Hot spots tend to be in the playground/school yard/outdoor areas, changing rooms, corridors and other areas of unstructured supervision
 - Hot times again tend to be times where there is less structured supervision such as when pupils are in the playground/school yard or moving classrooms.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

The teacher(s) with responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour is (are) Class Teachers.

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):

Identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred

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.

To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour you should consider the following questions:

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.

Note: 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 becomes a repeated behaviour.

If the answer to any of these questions is No, then the behaviour is not bullying behaviour.

Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour. The teachers should use correct language to use

when speaking to parents and pupils

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

- if a group of students is involved, each student should be engaged with individually at first
- thereafter, all students involved should 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
- may be helpful to ask the students involved to write down their account of the incident(s)

Where bullying behaviour has occurred

- parents are an integral part of the school community and play an important role, in partnership with schools, in addressing bullying behaviour. Where bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the students involved must 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
- it is important to listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation
- a record should be kept of the engagement with all involved
- this record should document the form and type of bullying behaviour, if known (see Section 2.5 and 2.7 of the Bi Cineálta procedures), where and when it took place and the date of the initial engagement with the students involved and their parents
- the record should include the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour

Follow up where bullying behaviour has occurred

- the teacher must engage with the students involved and their parents again no more than 20 school days after the initial engagement
- important factors to consider as part of this engagement are the nature of the bullying behaviour, the effectiveness of the strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and the relationship between the students involved
- the teacher should document the review with students and their parents to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased and the views of students and their parents in relation to this
 - the date that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased should also be recorded
 - any engagement with external services/supports should also be noted
 - ongoing supervision and support may be needed for the students

involved even where bullying behaviour has ceased

- if the bullying behaviour has not ceased the teacher should review the strategies used in consultation with the students involved and their parents. A timeframe should be agreed for further engagement until the bullying behaviour has ceased
- if it becomes clear that the student who is displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behaviour, then the school consideration should be given to using the strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour as provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour. If disciplinary sanctions are considered, this is a matter between the relevant student, their parents and the school
- if a parent(s) is not satisfied with how the bullying behaviour has been addressed by the school, in accordance with the BÍ Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools. they should be referred to the school's complaints procedures
- if a parent is dissatisfied with how a complaint has been handled, they may make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children if they believe that the school's actions have had a negative effect on the student

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):

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.

- School staff to be fair and consistent in their approach to address bullying behaviour. The student who is experiencing bullying behaviour, witness bullying behaviour and the student who is displaying bullying behaviour need support.
- It is important that the student who is experiencing bullying behaviour is engaged with without delay so that they feel listened to, supported and reassured.
- School staff should identify the supports needed for the student who is

displaying bullying behaviour to better manage relational difficulties and ensure that their needs are met

- The following principles must be adhered to when supporting pupils regarding bullying behaviour:
 - 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
- Use supports available from the following, if applicable:
 - NEPS
 - OIDE
 - Webwise
 - National Parents Council
 - DCU Anti-Bullying Centre
 - Tusla

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: _____ Date: _____
(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(Principal)

Appendix A

Guide to providing Bullying Behaviour Update for board of management meeting of DD/MM/YYYY

Having reviewed the details of the incidents of bullying behaviour that have been reported since the previous board of management meeting, the principal must provide the following information at each ordinary meeting of the board of management:

Total number of new incidents of bullying behaviour reported since the last board of management meeting.	
Total number of incidents of bullying behaviour currently ongoing.	
Total number of incidents of bullying behaviour reported since the beginning of this school year.	

Where incidents of bullying behaviour have been reported since the last meeting, the update must include a verbal report which should include the following information where relevant:

- > the trends and patterns identified such as the form of bullying behaviour, type of bullying behaviour if known, location of bullying behaviour, when it occurred etc.
- > the strategies used to address the bullying behaviour
- > any wider strategies to prevent and address bullying behaviour
- > if any serious incidents of bullying behaviour have occurred which have had a serious adverse impact on a student
- > if a parent has informed the school that a student has left the school because of reported bullying behaviour
- > if any additional support is needed from the board of management
- > if the school's Bí Cineálta policy requires urgent review in advance of the annual review

This update should not include any personal information or information that could identify the students involved.