



Ballyvary NS Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Ballyvary Central NS 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 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

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

Each school is required to develop and implement a *Bí Cineálta* policy that sets out how the school community prevents and addresses bullying behaviour. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour, that is not bullying behaviour, are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

Section A: Development/review of our Bí Cineálta policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

All members of our school community were provided with the opportunity to input into the development/review of this policy.

	Date consulted	Method of consultation
School Staff	Croke Park Meetings 14 / March / 2025 09 / May / 2025	Discussion at meetings / Surveys ½ day closure event
Students	School year 5 th – 8 th March 2025 Meetings	Class Discussions Surveys Student Council
Parents	6 / March / 2025 14 / March / 2025	Surveys
Board of Management	29 / May / 2025	BOM Meeting
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers		
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 for more information on the sections outlined below):

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.

Culture & Environment:

- > A positive school culture and climate which: is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity; encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of any type of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment (A Telling Environment); and promotes respectful relationships across the school community.

- > Effective leadership
- > A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact
- > A Trusted Adult
- > Ensuring that we have created safe physical spaces in school.
- > Maintaining an inclusive physical environment such as by displaying relevant posters
- > Having the cultural diversity of the school visible and on display
- > Ensuring that library reading material and textbooks represent appropriate lived experiences of students and adults from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds
- > Ensuring all students have the same opportunities to engage in school activities irrespective of their sex
- > Promoting positive role models within the school community
- > Challenging gender stereotypes that can contribute to sexual harassment
- > Supervision on the yard and when students are attending school activities.
- > Ballyvary NS takes positive steps to ensure that the culture of the school is one which welcomes a respectful dialogue and encounter with diversity and difference by ensuring that prevention and inclusivity strategies are given priority and discussed regularly at our board of management and staff meetings.
- >

Curriculum – Teaching and Learning:

- > School Ethos (copies of which are displayed in each class room). One of the key elements of our Anti-Bullying policy has been the fostering of a school environment based upon mutual respect for all. Our belief is that everybody has the right to:
 - work / learn in a physically and psychologically safe environment
 - be treated with respect and dignity
 - to be treated with equality and fairness
 - have access to an appropriate and effective grievance process
- > Teaching and learning that is collaborative and respectful will be promoted. Students should have regular opportunities to work in small groups with their peers, which can help build sense of connection, belonging and empathy among students.
- > The curricular subjects offered to students provide opportunities to foster inclusion and respect for diversity. Schools are encouraged to provide opportunities for students to develop a sense of self worth through both curricular and extracurricular programmes.
- > The Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) curricula at primary level aim to foster students' wellbeing, self-confidence and sense of belonging and to develop students' sense of personal responsibility for their own behaviour and actions. Students' social and emotional learning (SEL) skills can be improved through the SPHE curriculum.
- > Stay Safe Programme – is a personal skills safety programme which seeks to enhance children's self-protection skills including the ability to recognise and cope with bullying
- > The Digital Media Literacy curriculum teaches students about responsible online behaviour and digital citizenship.
- > Safer Internet Day (Internet safety day) is held annually in February – the Webwise hub / website provides a wealth of information / resources for this event.
- > My Thoughts About School Checklist is carried out with students from 2nd to 6th class. Younger pupils give oral feedback on their Thoughts About School.
- > The Grow in Love Programme promotes the idea of treating all with respect.
- > Friends for Life and Fun Friends are part of social skills and resilience curriculum, that has been recognised by the World Health Organisation as an effective tool set to prevent anxiety for children.

Policy & Planning:

Implementation of the following policies:

- > Bí Cineálta Policy and Student Friendly Bí Cineálta Policy
- > Acceptable Use Policy
- > Supervision Policy
- > Special Education Teaching Policy
- > Code of Behaviour
- > SPHE Policy
- > RSE Policy

Relationships and Partnerships:

Strong interpersonal connections are a vital part of effectively preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.

- > Students Council & Role of Senior Pupils / Buddy Systems: Senior pupils take on the role of carers especially of younger and weaker children. They are encouraged to report to principal / class teacher if they feel that any child is being treated unfairly / bullied.
- > Class Meetings: Principal has class meetings with class group (Senior Classes or classes at risk) to discuss any issues which may arise in the class group.
- > School Assembly: At assembly we choose a type of behaviour to focus on e.g. courteous behaviour – saying please and thank you etc.
- > Anti-Bullying Week / Friendship Week – 4th Week in September (teachers focus on acceptable forms of behaviour and discuss school charter e.g. different types of bullying / cyber bullying etc)
- > Open Door Policy: Parents are encouraged to contact the school immediately if they become aware of any issue of bullying behaviour.
- > Conducting a parents / guardians evening on the Thursday night of Friendship Week to raise awareness of the impact of bullying.
- > Wellness Week – held in May of each school year. This week focuses on pupil wellbeing.
- > The dignity and the wellbeing of the individual person is of paramount concern in our Christian response. Ballyvary NS 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, Ballyvary NS 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

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):

- The Board of Management confirms that appropriate supervision and monitoring policies and practices are in place to both prevent and deal with bullying behaviour and to facilitate early intervention where possible.
- Implement the Code of Behaviour policy with emphasis on mutual respect and support
- Logging on-yard serious behavioural incidents on Aladdin
- Pupils are only allowed in the school at break times with an adult's permission
- Regular Assemblies repeat the message of the importance of speaking to an adult when something unkind is seen, heard or felt
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Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

Principal plus all teaching staff.

Non-teaching staff such as SNA's, secretaries, bus drivers, caretakers, cleaners are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the staff members.

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):

The primary aim in addressing reports of bullying behaviour should be to stop the bullying behaviour and to restore, as far as practicable, the relationships of the students involved, rather than to apportion blame.

In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved.

All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. In that way pupils will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It will 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.

Teachers will take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents.

- **Step 1-** Investigate Checklist (Appendix A)
- **Step 2-** If it is not considered bullying behaviour, the Code of Behaviour may be referenced.
- **Step 3-** If bullying behaviour has been deemed to have occurred, the following questions need to be considered

What happened? Where did it happen? When did it happen? Why did it happen?

- > *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 (through the possible pressures that they may face from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher)*
- > *It may be helpful to ask the students involved to write down their account of the incident(s)*

Underpinning these procedures, teachers should

- > *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 and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this way*
- > *Consider the age and ability of the students involved*
- > *Listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation*
- > *Make it clear to the pupil that has been engaged in bullying behaviour how they are in breach of the school's Bí Cineálta policy and efforts will be made to try and get them to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied*
- > *Make it clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parents) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parents and the school*

- > Take action in a timely manner
- > Inform parents of those involved at an early stage and explain the actions being taken (by reference to the school policy). The school will give parents an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports for their pupils.

Note: Student “requests that parents are not informed” A student may request that their parent is not informed – parents are an integral part of the process and must be informed. Develop an appropriate plan to support the student and for how their parents will be informed. It is important that the student who has experienced bullying behaviour feels safe.

Note: Parental “requests to take no action.” 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. While acknowledging the parent’s request, schools may decide that, based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour.

● **Step 4-** Appropriate action should be taken to prevent the bullying behaviour occurring in the future and sanctions/consequences outlined in the Code of Behaviour may be used, up to and including suspension/expulsion.

● **Step 5 –** Determining if the bullying behaviour has ceased

- > The teacher must engage with the students and parents involved no more than 20 school days after the initial discussion to review progress following the initial intervention
- > Ongoing supervision and support may be required for both the student who has experienced the bullying behaviour as well as the student who has displayed the behaviour
- > Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved will be arranged separately with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date if the pupil who has been bullied is ready and agreeable. This can have a therapeutic effect
- > In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the teacher will, as part of their professional judgement, take the following factors into account:
 - Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased
 - Whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable
 - Whether the relationships between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable, and
 - Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the school Principal or Deputy Principal
- > If the bullying behaviour has **not** ceased, the teacher should review the strategies used in consultation with the students and parents and agree to meet again over an agreed timeframe until the bullying behaviour has ceased.
- > Where it becomes clear that the student who is displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behaviour, then the school should consider 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.

Recording Bullying Behaviour:

- > 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*.

- > The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour will adhere to the following:
 - (i) While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the relevant teacher will use their professional judgement in relation to the records to be kept of these reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same:
 - (ii) If it is established by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher will keep appropriate written records which will assist their efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.
 - (iii) The relevant teacher will use the Incident Book / Template for recording Bullying Behaviour to record the bullying behaviour.

Complaint process:

- > Where a parent is not satisfied with how bullying behaviour has been addressed by the school, in accordance with these procedures, they should be referred to the school's complaints procedure.
- > In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school will advise the parents of their right to make a complaint to *The Office of the Ombudsman for Children*.

Referral of serious cases to Tusla:

- > In relation to bullying in schools, *Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2019* (Children First) and the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2023* provide that in "cases of serious instances of bullying where behaviour is regarded as possible abusive, you may need to make a referral to Tusla and/or An Garda Síochána".
- > Serious instances of bullying behaviour should, in accordance with the Children First and the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2023*, be referred to Tusla and /or Gardaí as appropriate.
- > The *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2023* also provide that where school personnel have concerns about a child but are not sure whether to report the matter to Tusla, the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) must seek advice from Tusla.

Please refer to section 2.4 of *Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* and Chapter 5 of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (Revised 2023)*.

The school will use the following approaches to support those who experience, witness and display bullying behaviour (see page 27 and Chapter 6 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

Students who witness bullying behaviour can also be impacted in a similar way to those who experience bullying behaviour. There can also be a negative impact on those who engage in bullying behaviour.

A programme of support for pupils who have been bullied must be in place. Such pupils may need counseling 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.

A programme of support for those pupils involved in bullying behaviour must also be part of the school's intervention process. Pupils involved in bullying behaviour need assistance on an ongoing basis. For those with low self-esteem, opportunities should be developed to increase feelings of self-worth. It is, therefore, important that the learning strategies applied within the school allow for the enhancement of the pupil's self-worth. Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour may need counseling to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others.

Our schools support for pupils affected by Bullying will include:

- > Class/Group/Individual will have specific class time/circle time to build and enhance self-esteem. Programmes used will include:
 - 'How to promote Childrens Social and Emotional Competence' by Carolyn Webster Stratton- which focuses on ways to encourage students' positive behavior and build their confidence and self-esteem
 - 'Talkabout' by Alex Kelly-which is a social communications skills package designed to be used with children with communication skills difficulties and provides teachers with a framework for the development of social skills
 - 'Stop, Think, Do' by Lindy Peterson with Allyson Adderly is a social skills Training Programme which aims to develop the social competence and emotional intelligence children need in order to make and keep friends.
 - Friends for Life is a social skills and resilience curriculum, that has been recognised by the World Health Organisation as an effective tool set to prevent anxiety for children.
- > Group Meetings/Individual Meeting-Principal/Teacher will meet with group/individual on a regular basis(weekly/fortnightly)
- > School Home Contact-Principal/Teacher will meet with parent/child in child's home (if it is deemed necessary and beneficial) and will have on-going communication with parent/child to assess how child is coping.
- > Extra Curricular Activities- children will be encouraged to get involved in extra curricular activities aimed at promoting self-confidence, self-esteem and self-discipline
- > Peers Support/School Alert- Pupils who observe incidents of bullying behaviour should be encouraged to discuss them with teachers. Pupils are encouraged to support and include any child who may have been subject to bullying behavior.
- > Outside agencies that offer support to help prevent and address bullying behaviour include:
 - National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)
 - Oide
 - Webwise
 - National Parents Council

- Dublin City University (DCU) Anti-Bullying Centre
- Tusla

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.

The Bí Cineálta Policy and Student-Friendly version are published on the school website and available in hardcopy on request. The student friendly version of this policy is displayed in the school. They are accessible to all members of the school community.

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

Identifying if Bullying Behaviour has Occurred

Factual Description of event(s)

Time and Date(s)	
Location(s)	
Action(s)	
Consequence(s)	
Child(ren) involved	
Adult(s) present	

The definition of bullying is:

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.

To determine if bullying has taken/is taking place the following questions must be answered- If a YES is recorded for **all** three answers then the behaviour will be addressed using the Bí Cineálta Procedures.

If the answer to any question is NO then the school's Code of Behaviour may contain strategies to deal with any potentially inappropriate behaviour.

	Yes	No
Is the behaviour targeted at a specific pupil/group of pupils?		
Is the behaviour intended to cause harm (physical, social or emotional)?		
Is the behaviour repeated?		

Based on the above record and answers provided:

Bullying has/is taking place and the Bí Cineálta Procedures will be enacted	
Bullying is/was not taking place and the Code of Behaviour may be used	

Appendix B

Review of the Bí Cineálta Policy

The Board of Management (the Board) must undertake an annual (calendar) review of the school's Bí Cineálta policy and its implementation in consultation with the school community. As part of the review, this document must be completed.

Bí Cineálta Policy Review

1. When did the Board formally adopt its Bí Cineálta policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour in accordance with the *Bí Cineálta Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*? Insert date when the Bí Cineálta policy was last adopted by the school. _____/_____/20_____
2. Where in the school is the student-friendly Bí Cineálta policy displayed?

3. What date did the Board publish the Bí Cineálta policy and the student-friendly policy on the school website? _____/_____/20_____
4. How has the student-friendly policy been communicated to students?

5. How has the Bí Cineálta policy and student-friendly policy been communicated to parents

6. Have all school staff been made aware of the, school's Bí Cineálta policy and the *Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*? ☐ Yes ☐ No
7. Does the Bí Cineálta policy document the strategies that the school uses to prevent bullying behaviour? ☐ Yes ☐ No

8. Has the Board received and minuted the Bullying Behaviour Update presented by the principal at every ordinary board meeting over the last calendar year? ☐ Yes ☐ No
9. Has the Board discussed how the school is addressing all reports of bullying behaviour. ☐ Yes ☐ No
10. Is the Board satisfied that all incidents of bullying behaviour are addressed in accordance with the school's Bí Cineálta Policy? ☐ Yes ☐ No
11. Have the prevention strategies in the Bí Cineálta policy been implemented? ☐ Yes ☐ No
12. Has the Board discussed the effectiveness of the strategies used to prevent bullying behaviour? ☐ Yes ☐ No
13. How have (a) parents, (b) students and (c) school staff been consulted with as part of the review of the Bí Cineálta Policy?
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-
-
14. Outline any aspects of the school's Bí Cineálta policy and/or its implementation that have been identified as requiring further improvement as part of this review:
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-
-
15. Where areas for improvement have been identified, outline how these will be addressed and whether an action plan with timeframes has been developed?
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-
-

16. Does the student-friendly policy need to be updated as a result of this review and if so why?

17. Does the school refer parents to the complaints procedures if they have a complaint about how the school has addressed bullying behaviour? ☐ Yes ☐ No

18. Has a parent informed the school that a student has left the school due to reported bullying behaviour? ☐ Yes ☐ No

19. Has the Office of the Ombudsman for Children initiated or completed an investigation into how the school has addressed an incident of bullying behaviour? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Signed: _____

(Chairperson of board of management)

Date: _____

Date of next review: _____

Signed: _____

(Principal)

Date: _____

Notification regarding the board of management's annual review of the school's Bí Cineálta Policy

The Board of Management of _____ confirms that the board of management's annual review of the school's Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour and its implementation was completed at the board of management meeting of _____ [date].

This review was conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Department of Education's *Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

Signed: _____

(Chairperson of Board of management)

Date: _____

Signed: _____

(Principal)

Date: _____

DRAFT