

Aughadreena N.S.

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

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The Board of Management of Aughadreena 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. *Chapter 2 of the Bí Cineálta procedures (2.1 Definition of Bullying Behaviour as outlined in Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying)*.

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 elements of the definition are that;

Bullying behaviour is:

Targeted

- Bullying is deliberate, unwanted behaviour that causes harm to others. It is not accidental or reckless behaviour.
- The harm can be:
 - Physical (e.g. including personal injury, damage to or loss to property)
 - Social (e.g. withdrawal, loneliness, exclusion)
 - Emotional (e.g. low self-esteem, depression, anxiety)
- If the repeated harm is real for the student experiencing the behaviour, but unintended by the other student, this is not bullying, but,
- importantly, must be addressed under the school 's code of behaviour.

Repeated

- Bullying is a pattern of behaviour which is repeated over time.
- Single offline incidents of intentional negative behaviour are not considered bullying.
- However, a single hurtful message posted online 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.

Imbalance of Power

- An imbalance of power may manifest itself through in physical, social, emotional, educational, economical, sexual, religious, racial differences where the student experiencing the bullying behaviour finds it hard to defend themselves.

Behaviour that is *not* bullying behaviour:

- A one-off instance of negative behaviour towards a student is not bullying behaviour. However, a single hurtful message posted on social media can be considered bullying behaviour as it may be visible to a wide audience and has a high likelihood of being shared multiple times and so becomes a repeated behaviour.
- Disagreements 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 verbal and physical behaviours that can hurt themselves or others. It is important to note that these behaviours are not deliberate or planned, but in certain situations, they are an automatic response which they cannot control.
- Bullying is not accidental or reckless behaviour. If the repeated harm is real for the student experiencing the behaviour but unintended by the other student, 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.
- If there is doubt about whether bullying behaviour is a child protection concern schools should contact Tulsa for advice.

How Bullying Behaviour Occurs:

There are many forms of bullying, which can occur separately or together. These can include repeated behaviours of the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

Bullying can be: Direct:

- Physical: pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping students. Physical assault. Destruction of personal property.
- Verbal: continual name calling directed at a student which hurts, insults, humiliates the student
- Written: Writing insulting remarks about a student
- Extortion: where something is obtained through force or threats

Bullying can be: Indirect:

- Exclusion: where a student is deliberately and repeatedly isolated, excluded or ignored by a student or group of students.
- Relational: Where a student's attempts to socialise and form friendships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined.

Online Bullying Behaviour:

Online bullying behaviour (cyberbullying) is carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as text or direct messaging/instant messaging, social media platforms, email, apps, digital gaming sites, gaming consoles, chatrooms and other online technologies.

This form of bullying behaviour can include:

- sending or sharing nasty, insulting, offensive, and/or intimidating messages or images via text messages, emails, direct messages or other websites or apps
- posting information considered to be personal, private and sensitive without consent
- making and/or participating in fake profiles on a social network to impersonate and/or humiliate other students
- excluding or disrupting access to a student on purpose from online chat groups, access to accounts or from an online game

*Even though a message may be posted online just once by a student it can be considered bullying behaviour as it may be seen by a wide audience where it is intended to be shared or has a likelihood of being shared multiple times and is thus repeated.

Where Bullying Behaviour Can Occur:

Bullying behaviour can happen anywhere, online or offline and at any time.

Inside School:

- School Yard: Bullying behaviour can take place in the school yard or grounds. Many school yard games present opportunities for bullying behaviour because of their physical nature.
- In the Classroom: Bullying behaviour can occur in the classroom through subtle glances, looks, sniggers or may take the form of physical intimidation or deliberate isolation.

Outside School:

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

- Coming To and From School: Bullying behaviour can occur outside the immediate areas of the school or on the school bus. It may also occur in organised clubs outside of school such as sports clubs.

Section A: Development 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	7 th October 2024	FR informed the staff of the new Bí Cineálta guidelines and she would attend online training via zoom on Tuesday 22 nd October. At a staff meeting CL was nominated to attend Bí Cineálta training with FR.
	11 th November 2024	Staff were made aware of lesson plans and teacher notes that they could use during Anti-bullying Week. The Bí Cineálta was displayed at a prominent location at the main entrance of the school to remind the school community to 'Be Kind'.
	15 th January 2025	FR and CL attended Bí Cineálta training day in the Kilmore Hotel, Cavan
	5 th February 2025	Staff were provided with an online questionnaire to determine their current knowledge of the school's anti-bullying policies and procedures. This information will be taken into account when drafting the new Bí Cineálta Policy.
	13 th February 2025	FR and CL met to develop a draft new Bí Cineálta policy in preparation for our half-day school closure.
	27 th February 2025	FR and CL amended policy appendices and prepared resources in preparation for our half-day school closure.
	14 th March 2025	½ day school closure to facilitate whole school staff training to engage with new Bí Cineálta procedures and policy development.
Students	12 th March 2025	Students were given a child-friendly questionnaire to seek their input into developing an Anti-Bullying policy. The findings were then discussed with a focus group. The questionnaire findings together with the focus group feedback and suggestions were all taken into account when drafting this Policy. *See Appendix H
Parents	3 rd March 2025	Parents were invited to complete an online questionnaire to seek their feedback and input into developing our new Bí Cineálta Policy. *See Appendix I
Board of management	Ongoing	Updated on Bí Cineálta developments, training and planning
	June 2025	Policy will be reviewed by the staff in consultation with the children and parents leading to ratification of the policy by the BOM.
Wider school community	September 2025	Whole school community will be informed that the new policy is available on the school website
Date policy was approved:		28.05.2025
Date policy was last reviewed:		15.10.2025

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

Prevention Strategies

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):

Culture and Environment:

A positive and inclusive school culture and environment is essential to prevent and address bullying behaviour. The school environment is a space where students and school staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported with open communication between all partners in the school community. Staff at all times endeavour to encourage pupils to show respect for each other.

Teachers have a role to play in the promotion of a *positive self-concept* in pupils. This can be achieved, for example, by rewarding effort as well as success, using praise in a meaningful way; giving responsibility and asking for opinions. We ensure that all students have the same opportunities to engage in school activities celebrating and acknowledging the contributions of all students.

Telling Environment

It is important that the school community supports a 'telling environment'. Students should feel comfortable to talk about concerns regarding bullying behaviour. We ensure that the pupils know who and how to tell. We ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place.

Trusted Adult

The idea of having "a trusted adult" is a helpful approach to motivate students to report if they or someone else is experiencing bullying. Staff can reinforce this by letting students know they can come to them for support. This concept will be taught through the Stay Safe Programme.

Students who observe bullying are encouraged and supported to report it to a trusted adult within the school so the situation can be properly addressed.

Creating safe physical spaces in our school

Safe physical spaces support psychological safety. The visibility of school staff who are supervising at break times will be ensured. We endeavour to ensure that our school building and yards provide a safe space for all children. Students have a greater sense of belonging when given ownership of their school environment through art and creativity. This will be enhanced by engaging with the Creative Schools Programme.

Supervision

All reasonable measures will be taken to ensure the safety of the students and to supervise students when they are attending school or school related activities.

The school offers a mix of organised and free-play activities during break times to accommodate a range of preferences and interests.

Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)

Teaching and learning are collaborative and respectful, promoting a sense of connection, belonging and empathy.

The Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE), Geography curricula and Grow In Love Religion Programme foster students' wellbeing, self-confidence and sense of belonging and develop students' sense of personal responsibility for their own behaviour and actions. Students' social and emotional learning skills can be improved through the SPHE curriculum.

The SPHE curriculum makes specific provision for exploring bullying as well as the inter-related areas of belonging and integrating, communication, conflict, friendship, personal safety and relationships.

The Stay Safe Programme is taught to all pupils in the school. It is a personal safety skills programme which seeks to enhance children's self-protection skills including their ability to recognise and cope with bullying

Online Learning

Staff implement the Digital Learning Plan which teaches students about responsible online behaviour and the use of technology.

The Digital Media Policy includes learning about responsible online behaviour and digital citizenship. An AUP is also developed for technology in our school.

Our school ensures appropriate online behaviour as part of the Code of Behaviour.

We inform parents of online safety events and materials for parents who are responsible for overseeing their children's activities online.

Policy and Planning

The wellbeing of our school community is at the heart of our school policies and plans.

The participation of students in the development and implementation of school policies and plans is encouraged to increase awareness and ensure effective implementation, through class discussions, focus groups, surveys and committees such as the Creative Schools Committee.

Engaging in appropriate teacher professional learning courses can support school staff to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

Relationships and Partnerships

Relationships and partnerships between members of the school community will continue to be strengthened by:

- Age and stage appropriate awareness initiatives that engage students in looking at their own behaviour during SPHE lessons.
- Support the active participation of students in school life
- Support the active participation of parents through the parent's association.
- Accommodate seminars to raise awareness of the impact of bullying
- Support activities that build empathy, respect and resilience
- Promoting acts of kindness
- Teaching problem solving
- Hosting debates

Supervision and Monitoring

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 Bí Cineálta initiative focuses on fostering kindness and addressing bullying in schools. Effective monitoring and supervision strategies are key to its success. The school will take all reasonable measures to supervise our students to ensure their safety. Here are some approaches used in our school. These strategies aim to create a safe and nurturing environment for all students. This list is not exhaustive;

- Staff supervision rota ensures effective supervision at all times. They act in 'loco parentis'.
- There is a school wide awareness on all aspects of bullying, supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extracurricular activities. Staff member/s provide supervision on all school trips and outings.
- A teacher and SNAs supervise at arrival, small break, lunch-time and dispersal of the children daily
- All yard areas are visible by a member of staff at all times.
- There is a yard rota where specific yards are allocated to all classes on a rotational basis to ensure safety and in a matter of fairness.
- The yard rota is discussed and created with the needs of the children to ensure effective monitoring and supervision. This is monitored on an on-going basis throughout the year.
- A yard book is maintained to record all accidents and incidents so that all staff are aware and informed at all times.
- A Bí Cineálta box in each classroom and in the main corridor will be an accessible for students to report bullying in an anonymous format or as identified as they choose.
- The Board of Management are informed of the 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

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

- In the first instance, the class teacher will oversee recording of bullying reports for students in their class. This includes using the procedure guidelines to investigate reports of bullying and recording bullying behaviour on the correct form.
- The Anti- Bullying Policy co-ordinator is available to provide up to date information and supports if needed to assist the class teacher in addressing a bullying behaviour concern.
- The principal will be informed of the investigation into the bullying behaviour.
- As a small staff, all staff will be vigilant to bullying behaviour.
- Principal will inform Board of Management of incidences of bullying.

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

Determining if Bullying behaviour has Occurred:

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 (Chapter 6 of the *Bí Cineálta* procedures)

The school's procedures for investigation, follow-up and recording of bullying behaviour and the established intervention strategies used by the school for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour are as follows:

In most instances, the relevant teacher will be the class teacher. In instance of a sub teacher the DLP will be informed by the sub teacher.

- a. While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the 'Relevant Teacher (s)', the 'Relevant Teacher(s)' will use his/her/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.
- b. If it is established by the 'Relevant Teacher(s)' that bullying has occurred, the 'Relevant Teacher(s)' must keep appropriate written records which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.
- c. The 'Relevant Teacher(s)' must record the bullying incident on the school information management system (Aladdin) by adding an Alleged Bullying Behaviour Report to the relevant pupil's file which will be visible on files on all other pupils named. The 'Relevant Teacher' must inform the Principal.

The primary aim in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame). With this in mind the school's procedures are as follows:

- In investigating and dealing with bullying the relevant teacher(s) will exercise his/her/their judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred, what type if it has and how best the situation might be resolved.
- When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred the relevant teacher should consider the following: what, where, when and why?
- To determine whether the behaviour is bullying behaviour the following questions should be considered by the relevant teacher. If the answer to each of the questions is **Yes**, then the bullying behaviour and the behaviour should be addressed using the *Bí Cineálta Procedures*. If the answer to any of these questions is **No**, then the behaviour is not bullying behaviour. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour are outlined within our schools *Code of Behaviour*.
 - 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?**

*NOTE: One-off instances 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.
- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the 'Relevant Teacher(s)'. In that way pupils will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It should be made clear to all pupils that when they report instances of bullying, they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.
- Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, SNAs, caretakers and cleaners are encouraged to report any incidences of bullying behaviour witnessed by them or mentioned to them to the Class Teacher.

- Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents.
- On being informed of an alleged incident of bullying, the teacher dealing with the report will first interview the victim(s) and discuss the feelings which the victim(s) experienced because of the bullying behaviour.
- Initial investigations of bullying may be done in class if the teacher deems it relevant.
- Some incidents may be best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.
- When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the 'Relevant Teacher(s)' should seek answers to questions of what, where, who, when and why. This should be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner. Where this responsibility is that of a class teacher, supervision will be arranged for his/her class to allow for the matter to be investigated.
- If a group is involved each member should be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved should be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member should be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about the other's statements.
- Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that they may face from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher.
- It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s).
- Where the 'Relevant Teacher(s)' has/have determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts should be made to try to get him/her to see the perspective of the pupil being bullied.
- The 'Relevant Teacher(s)' emphasises that the intention is not to punish perpetrators but to talk to them, to explain how harmful and hurtful bullying is and to seek a promise that it will stop. If that promise is forthcoming and is honoured there will be no penalty and that will be the end of the matter.
- When an investigation is completed and/or a bullying situation is resolved the 'Relevant Teacher' will complete a report, to include the findings of the investigation, the strategy adopted and the outcome of the intervention, as well as any other relevant information. This may be recorded on Aladdin under the *Bí Cineálta* tab and uploading a file "Bullying Behaviour Report".
- If a pupil chooses to continue the bullying behaviour, this can then no longer be considered a once off occurrence. In this event parent(s)/guardian(s) will be contacted. The school should 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 the pupil.
- Repeated incidents of bullying behaviour will result in the imposition of sanctions provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour. Such sanctions will be proportionate to the seriousness of the bullying behaviour. It must be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parents) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required that this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parents and the school.
- Where a parent 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*, they should be referred to the school's complaint procedures.
- In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parents of their rights to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.
- The School will maintain care for the victim over time. This will be done by speaking to the child to ensure their continuing welfare. The child's parents will also be consulted.

Approaches to Support

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

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

Supporting Bullied pupils:

- Ending the bullying behaviour,
- Fostering respect for bullied pupils and all pupils,
- Fostering greater empathy towards and support for bullied pupils.
- Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through awareness-raising programmes and through our SPHE curriculum.
- Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through the speedy identification of those responsible and speedy resolution of bullying situations.
- Helping bullied pupils raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that help develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school and social skills groups).

Supporting Bullying pupils:

- Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are not blamed or punished and get a 'clean sheet'
- Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are doing the right and honourable thing and giving them praise for this.
- Making adequate counselling facilities available to help those who need it learn other ways of meeting their needs besides violating the rights of others.
- Helping those who need to raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school),
- Using learning strategies throughout the school and the curriculum to help enhance pupils' feelings of self-worth.
- In dealing with negative behaviour in general, encouraging teachers and parents to focus on, challenge and correct the behaviour while supporting the child. In dealing with bullying behaviour seeking resolution and offering a fresh start with a 'clean sheet' and no blame in return for keeping a promise to reform.

Request to take no action:

- If a child makes a report of bullying but asks that nothing is to be done about it, the relevant teacher will support the child appropriately to explore how it will be handled sensitively and how parents may be notified.
- If a parent makes the school aware of bullying behaviour that has occurred and specifically requests that the school takes no action, parents must submit this request in writing. (Bí Cineálta 6.3)

Determining if bullying behaviour has ceased:

- The teacher must engage with the students and parents involved no more than 20 school days after the initial discussion.
- Even though the bullying behaviour may have ceased, 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. It can take time for relationships to settle and for supports to take effect.
- 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.

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 on the Report Form (Appendix J). Reference that this report form has been completed will be recorded on the relevant student/s log of actions on Aladdin. The hard copy of the report form can be accessed in the Bí Cineálta Report Folder.
- 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