

Cnoc Mhuire Secondary School

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Cnoc Mhuire 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 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. Bullying behaviour can be considered criminal behaviour under certain circumstances and legal consequences can apply. The age of criminal responsibility is 12 years.

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 Positive 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	Nov/ Dec 2024	3 meetings with the Policy team to plan for Staff Day
	8/12/2024	Questionnaire to staff on Dec 8th
	13/12/ 2024	Half day closure
	24/02/2025	API meeting
	08/05/2025	Staff Consultation
Students	23/10/2024	Whole school assembly introducing <i>Bí Cineálta</i>

	Nov - Dec 2024 16/01/2025 13/03/2025	Student questionnaires to random classes 1st -6th yr Student Voice meeting Student Voice meeting- student reps to report to classes
Parents	28/11/2024 16/01/2025 26/03/ 2025 06/05/2025	Questionnaire. and invitation to all parents to attend Bí Cinéalta day Invited 11 parents into an evening meeting Invited 11 parents into an evening meeting 2025 incoming 1st yr parents
Board of Management	19/04/2024 18/09/2024 09/10/2024 10/12/2024 26/02/2025 /05/2025	Presentation of proposed Programme, Consultation, discussion and decision. Ratified
Wider school community as appropriate, eg, bus drivers		
Date policy was approved:		
Date policy was last reviewed:		

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

Culture and Environment

A positive and inclusive school culture and environment is essential to prevent and address bullying behaviour. The school environment should be a space where students and school staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported. Relationships between all members of the school community are underpinned by respect, care, integrity and trust. Open communication between Ceist, Board of management, school staff, students and their parents help to foster a collaborative approach and shared responsibilities in relation to preventing and addressing bullying behaviour. The school leadership team models the behaviours which promote a positive school culture and thus sets the standards and expectations for the school community when preventing and addressing bullying behaviour. Each member of school staff has a responsibility to develop and maintain a school culture where bullying behaviour is unacceptable and to take a consistent approach to addressing bullying behaviour. Students are guided to shape the school culture by promoting kindness and inclusion within their peer group and maintain a positive and supportive school environment for all. Parents, as active partners in their child's education, can help foster an environment where bullying behaviour is not tolerated through promoting empathy and respect.

There is a Student Support Team in place which comprises Deputy Principal, Year Heads, Guidance Counsellor, Tutor and AEN Coordinator. **The school community aims to prevent cyberbullying, homophobic and transphobic bullying, racist bullying, sexist bullying and sexual harassment as outlined in sections 5.5, 5.6, 5.7, 5.8 and 5.9 of the Bí Cineálta procedures. These include:

- Promotion of a positive and inclusive school climate and culture where RESPECT is key
- Effective Leadership at all levels
- Whole-school approach
- Fair and transparent Code of Positive Behaviour
- Internet Acceptable Use Policy
- Digital Awareness
- Encouraging Peer Support through Helping Hands initiative

- Encouraging empathy among students
- Encouraging a "Telling environment"-
- Promote awareness of bullying (Wellbeing, CSPE, SPHE AND RSE Programmes)
- Implementing the No Mobile phone policy
- Support for EAL students - student friendly translated policy
- DCU -Fuse anti bullying programme 2nd yrs
- 6th yr Mentors for 1st year students
- Anti-Bullying workshops/guest speakers
- Use of anti bullying audits/ surveys
- Friendship Week, health and wellbeing weeks , themed days/ events and awareness initiatives eg Stand Up awareness week/ cultural awareness/ diversity eg Culture Day
- Restorative Practice
- Effective supervision and monitoring of students (before/ after/ during school.
- Consistent recording, investigation and follow-up of bullying behaviour
- Ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the Cineáltas Procedures

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

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. A proactive approach is encouraged during periods of supervision. Supervision is provided 20 minutes before school and 5 minutes after school and at morning and lunch breaks . Students are assigned designated areas in which to socialise and eat.

There are a variety of lunch time extracurricular activities and school clubs that take place and are supervised by teachers

At Junior Cycle, each base class has a Tutor who will be their SPHE teacher. At senior cycle, the tutor will meet the base class at organised assemblies. Each year group has an Assistant Principal as year head.

Other policies that help prevent and address bullying are:

Code of Positive Behaviour policy which is printed in school journal/ available on website

The school's Internet Acceptable Use Policy which is printed in school journal/ available on website

The school has a Whole school Inclusion policy (outlining the school's provision of additional educational support for students with S.E.N.)

No Mobile Phones- mobiles to be switched off during the school day.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

The primary aim in addressing reports of bullying behaviour is to stop the bullying behaviour and to restore, as far as practicable, the relationships of the students involved, rather than to apportion blame. All staff (class teachers, class tutors, year heads, guidance counsellor, Deputy Principal, principal, Student Support Team) have a responsibility to report suspected incidents of bullying. These should be brought to the attention of the Year Head who will complete a Bullying Incident Report Form. 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 to inform them of the matter regarding their child's involvement

Identifying if Bullying Behaviour has Occurred

Bullying is defined in the *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, 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 Positive Behaviour. 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
- students involved may be asked to write down their account of the incident(s)
- thereafter, all students involved should be met as a group if the group are willing to engage in finding solutions and creating accountability
- 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

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 using restorative questions. Parents will be informed we use Restorative Strategies to find solutions, to heal the hurt and to restore relationships.
- The school is obliged to fully investigate any alleged incidents of bullying which are reported by parents.

- It is important to listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour. Restorative questions will be used to help the student who may be experiencing bullying behaviour to identify their needs.
- A record should be kept of the engagement with all involved including the initial 'Bullying Incident Report Form' (Appendix 1).
- This record should document the form and type of bullying behaviour, if known (see Section 2.5 and 2.7 of the Bí 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 Positive 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.

Supports

The school may seek the support of any of the following when working with students (who experience, witness or display bullying behaviour) affected by bullying

- ☐ Counselling service (through guidance or external chaplain)
- ☐ Building self-esteem and developing social skills
- ☐ Use of restorative practices to re-build and maintain relationships

- ☐ Co-operation with parents
- ☐ Referral to outside agencies (if necessary) in co-operation with parents
- ☐ National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)
- ☐ Oide
- ☐ Webwise
- ☐ National Parents Council
- ☐ Dublin City University (DCU) Anti-Bullying Centre
- ☐ Tusla

Record-Keeping

All bullying behaviour will be recorded on the 'Bullying Incident Report Form' (Appendix 1). 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 including the restorative actions taken. 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: 14th May 2025
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed:  Date: 14-5-25
(Principal)