

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Coill Dubh NS is committed to preventing and addressing bullying behaviour and has adopted the following policy.

This policy is in place to ensure that students and staff enjoy studying and working in a respectful and supportive environment that is in keeping with the mission and characteristic spirit of a Catholic school.

At its heart our policy seeks to promote an orderly, harmonious and effective setting for teaching and learning, so that every student and staff member feels at home in the school.

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.***

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.

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	19 February	Meeting/ half day closure
Students		
Parents	16 May 2025	Online call for input
Board of Management	25 Feb & 13 May 2025	Meeting
Wider School Community		
Date policy was approved		
Date policy was 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.

Culture and Environment

Our mission statement sets out the culture which our school promotes. These are the values that should be embraced by the entire school community in their dealings with each other.

This is our school
All are welcome here
We feel safe here
We respect each other
We learn here
It is a happy place

A telling environment is encouraged, and concerns are listened to and acted upon when appropriate by all staff, this helps foster the concept of a trusted adult. Care is taken to create safe supervised spaces and practices within the school.

Curriculum

The Webwise, Stay Safe, Walk Tall and RSE programs are all thought as part of the SPHE curriculum. These programs aim to foster student's wellbeing, self-confidence and sense of belonging as well as developing a sense of responsibility for their own behaviour and actions.

Policy and Planning

Value is placed on our wellbeing framework and all policy and planning decisions are examined through this lens to ensure that regard is taken of the wellbeing of the entire school community in all school activities.

Relationships and Partnerships

Strong interpersonal connections are a vital part of effectively preventing and addressing bullying behaviour. Our Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying recognises the importance of positive relationships across the whole education community to promote empathy, understanding and respect. The meaningful involvement of the board of management, staff, students and their parents in the development, implementation and review of their school's Bí Cineálta policy and student friendly version is essential to effectively prevent and address bullying behaviour.

There are many different types of bullying behaviour. These can include the following which is not an exhaustive list:

- **disablist bullying behaviour:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of a perceived or actual disability or additional need
- **exceptionally able bullying:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their high academic ability or outstanding talents
- **gender identity bullying:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their perceived or actual gender identity
- **homophobic/transphobic (LGBTQ+) bullying:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their perceived or actual membership of the LGBTQ+ community
- **physical appearance bullying:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their physical appearance. Students who “look different” can be mocked or criticised about the shape, size or appearance of their body
- **racist bullying:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their race or ethnic origin which includes membership of the Traveller or Roma community. Racism is defined in the National Action Plan Against Racism¹³ as “a form of domination which manifests through those power dynamics present in structural and institutional arrangements, practices, policies and cultural norms, which have the effect of excluding or discriminating against individuals or groups, based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin”
- **poverty bullying:** behaviour and language that intends to humiliate a student because of a lack of resources
- **religious identity bullying:** behaviour and language that intends to harm a student because of their religion or religious identity
- **sexist bullying:** behaviour and language that intends to harm a student based on their sex, perpetuating stereotypes that a student or a group of students are inferior because of their gender

The following, which is not an exhaustive list, could be considered to strengthen relationships and partnerships between members of the school community and could help prevent bullying behaviour from arising.

- 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, including those who may find it difficult or daunting to engage with the school due to being unfamiliar with the education system or due to language or cultural barriers
- supporting activities that build empathy, respect and resilience
- encouraging peer support, encourage children to be positive bystanders and promote a telling environment
- promoting acts of kindness
- teaching problem solving

Preventing Cyber Bullying

Technology and social media have provided many positive opportunities for entertainment, social engagement and education. Technology is a part of life that can impact even the youngest members of society. However, the increase in the use of technology has led to students becoming increasingly vulnerable to cyberbullying or unacceptable online behaviour.

Coill Dubh NS does not permit its students to bring phones to school and operates an Internet Acceptable Use Policy. It should be noted that children under the age of 13 are not legally permitted to have social media accounts.

The following types of bullying behaviour are highlighted in the Bí Cinéalta guidelines and some strategies to prevent their behaviour are included here for quick access.

Preventing homophobic/transphobic bullying behaviour

All students have a right to feel safe and supported at school. Strategies to prevent homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- encouraging peer support and empathy building activities
- challenging gender stereotypes
- encouraging students to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour

Preventing racist bullying 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
- 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
- ensuring that library reading material and textbooks represent appropriate lived experiences of students and adults from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds

Preventing sexist bullying behaviour

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 gender
- ensuring all students have the same opportunities to engage in school activities irrespective of their gender
- celebrating diversity at school and acknowledging the contributions of all students

Preventing sexual harassment

There is a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment in Coill Dubh NS. Sexual harassment should never be dismissed as teasing or banter.

Strategies to prevent sexual harassment include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- Using the SPHE curriculum to show students how to treat each other with respect and kindness
- 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.

Coill Dubh NS has a supervision policy in place. This is published on the school website.

Supervision rotas are drawn up, given to staff and are on display in the tearoom and school office. Staff are assigned to supervise the same groups all year so that patterns of unwanted behaviour are easier to detect, monitor and address.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

All teachers are responsible for addressing bullying behaviour. The principal (Mr. Leacy) and in his absence a member of the ISL Team (Ms. Leacy, Ms. Linehan, Ms. Jackson, Ms. Coyne.) should be informed if an allegation of bullying occurs.

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:

When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred the teacher should consider the following:

- 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. It may also be helpful to ask the students involved to write down their account of the incident.
- The definition of bullying provided in Chapter 2 sets out clear criteria to help schools to identify bullying behaviour. The questions included in Appendix C can further assist schools in this regard.
- Incidents can occur where behaviour is unacceptable and hurtful, but the behaviour is not bullying behaviour. Strategies that deal with inappropriate behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour

The following principles must be adhered to when addressing 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*

The school will use the following approaches to support those who experience, witness and display bullying behaviour

A school is not expected to deal with bullying behaviour that occurs when students are not under the care or responsibility of the school. However, where this bullying behaviour has an impact in school, schools are required to support the students involved. Where the bullying behaviour continues in school, schools should deal with it in accordance with their Bí Cineálta policy.

Where the student displaying the bullying behaviour is not a student in the school, but the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour is a student in the school, the school should support the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as appropriate and engage with them and their parents to determine what steps can be taken.

It is important for school staff to be fair and consistent in their approach to address bullying behaviour. Both the student who is experiencing 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.

A student's agency or sense of power can be decreased when they experience or witness bullying behaviour. When a student tells an adult that they feel that they are experiencing bullying behaviour they may feel that they are taking back some control over what's happening to them. It is very important that a student's agency is not decreased further by adults deciding what will happen next without listening to the student and involving them in deciding on the actions that will be taken.

Supports are available to help prevent and address bullying behaviour. These include NEPS, Oide, Webwise, NPC, DCU Anti Bullying Centre and 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)