

GAELSCOIL SHLIABH RUA

Bí Cineálta Policy

to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour



Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Gaelscoil Shliabh Rua has adopted the following policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

This policy fully complies with the requirements of *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2024*.

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

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

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

Definition of bullying

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

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

Section A: Development/review of our *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	April '25	Survey
Students	April '25	Survey
Parents	April '25	Survey
Board of Management	May '25	B.o.M meeting
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	June' 25	Published on school Website
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):

In line with the Department of Education's *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice (2019)* the school has considered the four main areas that are essential for a holistic, whole-school approach to wellbeing promotion:

Culture and Environment:

- Create a school culture where bullying behaviour is unacceptable and take a consistent approach to addressing bullying behaviour.
- Involve parents as active partners in fostering an environment where bullying behaviour is not tolerated.
- Support the idea that our school is a telling environment.
- Promote the concept of a trusted adult – stay safe linkage – who to tell.
- Create safe spaces in our school building and yards – visibility
- Incorporate artwork and signs to promote our school values – creation of a school charter promoting rights – equality, inclusion and respect.
- Encourage a sense of belonging and ownership over their own space through art and creativity.
- Create a positive school culture and climate which is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity; which encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment; and which promotes respectful relationships across the school community

Ways in which we work to achieve these goals are as follows:

- Staff are briefed on the uniform approach we must take to handle all reports of bullying – this is distributed to staff and a copy is displayed on the Staff Room notice board for ease of access also.
- Anti Bullying week activities such as Random acts of Kindness homework, Poster making, slogan making, etc
- Playground helpers – students in higher classes volunteer to support younger classes on the yard to help with games and positive interactions. Minders at lunchtime also.

- The Child Friendly Anti- Bullying Policy was formed with pupil and parent input and is distributed to parents, children and staff to discuss. This policy outlines various ways to tell.
- Parents receive information at times regarding useful information on Anti Bullying.
- Stay safe and SPHE lessons focusing on positive behaviour form part of curricular content in all classes.
- Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils.
- Class and School Charter development as well as notice board to promote kindness and build responsibility amongst pupils.

Curriculum (Teaching and Learning):

- Provide teaching and promote learning which is collaborative and respectful, fostering inclusion and respect for diversity.
- Display a shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact.

Ways in which we work to achieve this:

- Teach SPHE and RSE content which fosters student's well-being and self confidence as well as promoting personal responsibility for their own behaviours and actions.
- Model respectful behaviour towards colleagues, pupils and visitors in our school environment.
- Curricular and Extra-curricular activities can help to develop a sense of self worth, working together, inclusion and respect.
- Students are given regular opportunities to work in small groups with peers, which can help build a sense of connection, belonging and empathy.
- Acknowledgment of our diverse school population – celebrating diversity and culture in our school through art, displays, photographs, international events.
- Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and to explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including, in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.
- Supports for staff
- Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies)
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

Policy and planning we strive to:

- Raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with school management, teachers, pupils, parents/guardians.
- Promote a school ethos which encourages children to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.
- Ensure appropriate supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of school activity are kept under observation.
- Develop procedures for noting, investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.
- Implement a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and for those involved in bullying behaviour.
- Liaise with appropriate agencies in countering all forms of bullying and promoting anti bullying behaviour.
- Our Child Protection Policy, Smart Phone Policy (Acceptable Use Policy), Special Education Policy and Code of Behaviour all support the implementation of the Bí Cinealta policy.
- Effective leadership is a key component with Principal (DLP), Deputy Principal (DDL) and all middle management focused on supporting the implementation of this policy.

Relationships and Partnerships

- Interpersonal connections are supported through a range of formal and informal structures such as our parents' association (CSR), our various and multiple student committees and groups and special events in the school calendar (e.g. maidin caife, lá na seanthuismitheoirí etc.)
- Age and stage appropriate awareness initiatives that engage the student body in looking at their own behaviour – promoting acts of kindness and friendship, being an active help to others and looking at the causes of and impact of bullying during SPHE lessons.
- Conducting workshops and seminars for students, staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of bullying.
- Encouraging peer mentoring and peer support
- Supporting active participation of students in school life and active participation of parents in school life also.
- Engaging parents and students in actively contributing to the formation of a Child Friendly Anti Bullying Policy to make them active participants in promotion of and discussion of useful ways to identify and reduce bullying behaviour and highlight procedure and how to deal with it if it does occur.

Preventing cyber bullying behaviour: The digital age of consent is the minimum age a user must be before a social media or internet company can collect, process and store their data. In Ireland the digital age of consent is 16. Children between 13 and 16 must have parental permission to sign up to social media

services. Most social media platforms have a minimum age requirement and for the majority of these, it is 13 years old. Therefore children under the age of 13 should not have a social media account.

- ❖ Promoting digital citizenship
- ❖ Implementing SPHE curriculum
- ❖ Open conversations with students about developing respectful and kind relationships online
- ❖ Referring to appropriate online behaviour as part of the standards of behaviour in the Code of Behaviour
- ❖ Promoting online safety events for parents who are responsible for overseeing their children's activities online
- ❖ Holding internet safety day
- ❖ Internet safety workshops (CSR parent based/ in-school workshops with senior classes)

Preventing homophobic/ transphobic bullying behaviour

- ❖ Maintaining an inclusive physical environment such as displaying relevant posters
- ❖ Encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities challenging gender-stereotypes

Preventing racist bullying behaviour

- ❖ Fostering a school culture where diversity is celebrated and where students "see themselves" in their school environment
- ❖ 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 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
- ❖ Ensuring that a range of multicultural and multiethnic toys and learning materials are used in every classroom.

Preventing sexist bullying behaviour:

- ❖ Ensuring members of staff model respectful behaviour and treat students equally irrespective of their sex
- ❖ Ensuring all students have the same opportunities to engage in school activities irrespective of their sex
- ❖ Celebrating diversity at school and acknowledging the contribution of all students
- ❖ Encouraging parents to reinforce these values of respect at home

Preventing sexual harassment:

- ❖ Promoting positive role models within the school community
- ❖ Challenging gender stereotypes that can contribute to sexual harassment

The school has the following supervision and monitoring policies in place to prevent and address bullying behaviour (see Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

In addition to the prevention strategies mentioned above, the school has the following in place to prevent and address bullying:

- Staff at all times endeavour to encourage pupils to show respect for each other.
- Implementation of the SPHE curriculum.
- Positive self-esteem is fostered among the pupils by celebrating individual differences, by acknowledging good behaviour and by providing opportunities for success.
- The school's anti-bullying policy is discussed regularly with the pupils.
- Helping Hands Bullying Prevention Programme. Started in Sep 2023. Class dynamic explored and strategies put in place to help vulnerable children. Aim to improve class culture and relationships.
- Staff are particularly vigilant in monitoring pupils who are considered at being bullied. (Helping hands initiative)
- All disclosed incidents of bullying are investigated thoroughly and consistently by following the correct procedure as outlined to staff in the Bí Cineálta policy and are recorded.
- School wide awareness raising on all aspects of bullying, supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extracurricular activities.
- Involvement of pupils in contributing to a safe school environment e.g. annual friendship week, Amnesty International week and our Inclusivity Committee all of which aim to encourage a culture of peer respect and support.
- Ensuring that pupils know who to tell and how to tell (Cúigear lontaofa)
- Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling a trusted adult witness or know that bullying is taking place.
- Refer to appropriate online behaviour when using devices in lessons.
- Liaise with CSR to promote online safety events/materials for parents
- Challenge gender- stereotypes – equal participation of all. Equal recognition.
- Raise awareness of the impact of homophobic bullying behaviour and encourage students to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour.
- To tackle homophobic and transphobic bullying, the inclusion of 'Different Families, Same Love' resources from INTO. (RSE and SPHE). Lessons from these resources will be integrated into 'Myself and my Family' strand of SPHE
- Staff are trained in Restorative Practice and use this approach when managing conflict

- Foster a culture where diversity is celebrated and students “see themselves” in the school environment.
- Ensuring the library has material that reflects our diverse school population from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.
- Modelling of respectful behaviour by staff of all irrespective of sex.
- Ensuring all students have the same opportunities to engage in school activities irrespective of sex.
- Making clear that our school has a zero tolerance approach to sexual harassment of any kind with enforceable policy - See Code of Behaviour.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

- The class teacher will oversee the initial inquiry of the bullying incident.
- If required the múinteoir cuí will support the class teacher with the inquiry. The múinteoirí cuí are; James Ó Baoill & Eoghan Ó Neill.
- The múinteoir cuí will liaise with the class teacher after 20 days to investigate if bullying has ceased.
- The Principal will also be informed of all investigations and oversee where necessary
- The SENCO will also be informed of all investigations involving students with additional needs and will oversee where necessary

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 relevant teacher (Class teacher/múinteoir cuí/SENCO/príomhoide) will use the key restorative questions when investigating reported or suspected bullying behaviour. The school will use the designated “Bí Cineálta Taifead” to investigate the alleged case of bullying (Appendix A).

Time to Think: Using Restorative Questions

- What happened?
 - What were you thinking of at the time?
 - What have you thought about since?
 - Who has been affected by what you have done?
 - In what way have they been affected?
 - What do you think you need to do to make things right?
-
- The School, through the ‘Relevant Teacher’ reserves the right to ask any pupil to write an account of what happened, as part of an investigation. This will be a standard procedure and does not necessarily imply that a pupil is guilty of misbehaviour.
 - Pupils who are alleged to have been involved in bullying behaviour are interviewed by the ‘Relevant Teacher’ to establish the nature and extent of the behaviour and any reasons for it. In the event that they have been involved in bullying behaviour they are asked to sign a binding promise that they will treat all pupils fairly, equally and respectfully including the targeted pupil(s).
 - The ‘Relevant Teacher’ does not apportion blame but rather treats bullying behaviour as a "mistake" that can and must be remedied. S/he 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. Pupils who report bullying therefore are not getting others "in trouble" so much as enabling them to get out of trouble into which they may ultimately get if the bullying continues.
 - 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.
 - The relevant teacher must use the recording template to record the bullying in cases where he/she considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within

20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour occurred; and **When the recording template is used, it must be retained by the relevant teacher in question and a copy maintained by the principal. These records will be kept in the office. The principal will have access to the files.**

- If a pupil has signed such a promise but then chooses to break that promise and continue the bullying behaviour, this can then no longer be considered a "mistake." In this event the parent(s)/guardian(s) will be informed and requested to countersign their daughter/son's promise. Breach of this additional promise by further bullying behaviour is regarded as a very grave matter and a serious sanction may be imposed by the school authorities (See sanctions below).
- All documentation regarding bullying incidents and their resolution is retained securely in the school.

Sanctions:

Where a pupil has been found to be engaged in bullying behaviour, has formally promised to stop and has broken that promise the following sanctions will be imposed:

1. Parent(s)/guardian(s) will be contacted by the 'Relevant Teacher' and informed of the nature and extent of the bullying behaviour with a view to putting an end to the bullying behaviour.
2. If bullying behaviour continues parent(s)/guardian(s) invited to a meeting with the 'Relevant Teacher'
Signing of another promise, this time countersigned by a parent/guardian
3. Should the bullying behaviour continue parent(s)/guardian(s) invited to a meeting with the 'Relevant Teacher' and the Principal
4. If bullying behaviour persists referral to Board of Management
5. Next step, suspension
6. Final Step, expulsion

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

The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows:

Bullied pupils

- Ending the bullying behaviour,
- Changing the school culture to foster more respect for bullied pupils and all pupils,
- Changing the school culture to foster greater empathy towards and support for bullied pupils,
- Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through the awareness-raising programme,
- 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,
- After resolution, enabling bullied pupils to complete a victim-impact statement,
- Making adequate counselling facilities available to pupils who need it in a timely manner,
- 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).
- Implementing a "buddy system" in the school,

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 honorable thing and giving them praise for this
- Making adequate counseling 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,
- Following the Code of Positive Behaviour
- In dealing with negative behavior 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.

Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and PostPrimary Schools

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)