Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

Caherea National School

The Board of Management of Caherea National School 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.

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	March 2025 Reviewed September 2026	Staff meeting; Collective Review of Policy Half Day Staff Training
Students	March 2025 Reviewed September 2026	SPHE & Stay Safe Lessons; Surveys with the Senior Room; Focus group with the Junior Room
Parents	March 2025	Surveys
Board of Management	March 2025 September 2026	Board meeting Board meeting
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	September 2026	Professional conversation with the manager of the before and after school service E-mail notifying parents of reviewed policy with an opportunity to feed back before publishing on the school website.
Date policy was approved: 29.09.26- 26/27 school year		
Date policy was last reviewed: 25/26 school year		

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

This section sets out the prevention strategies that will be used by this school to address all forms of bullying behaviour, in whatever form and however motivated, including online bullying behaviour, homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour, racist bullying behaviour, sexist bullying behaviour and sexual harassment (see Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures).

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.

This school 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.

The dignity and the wellbeing of the individual person is of paramount concern in our Christian response. This school 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, this school 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.

Culture and Environment

- Positive and inclusive school culture
- Forming positive relationships between staff and pupils
- Effective leadership
- Promotion of a telling environment
- Promotion of having a trusted adult
- Safe physical areas
- Supervision
- School vision and values spoken about at assemblies
- Opportunities to participate in class and whole-school activities to raise self-esteem
- School Self-Evaluation with focus on wellbeing
- Wellbeing Week

Curriculum

- Teaching and learning in SPHE
- SPHE Methodologies
- RSE curriculum
- Stay Safe curriculum
- Use of the following programmes: Friends For Life; Zones of Regulation; Weaving Wellbeing
- Student participation in class activities
- Extra-curricular activities to develop positive self-worth
- Group work and collaboration
- Circle time
- Le Chéile time

Policy and Planning

- Bí Cineálta Policy
- Student-Friendly Bí Cineálta Policy
- Code of Behaviour

- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Acceptable Usage Policy
- Safety Statement including Supervision Procedures
- SPHE Curricular Plan
- Stay Safe Policy
- RSE Policy
- SEN policy
- SSE with focus on wellbeing
- Attendance Policy

Relationships and Partnerships

- Focus on strong interpersonal connections between staff and pupils
- Clear channels of communication with parents
- Student Council
- Monthly assemblies
- Le Chéile time
- Staff CPD
- Promoting acts of kindness
- Promoting problem solving approach
- Promoting peer support
- Supporting activities that build empathy, respect and resilience
- Network of local schools for collaboration
- Professional learning groups for school leaders

Preventing Cyber Bullying Behaviour

(Note - 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.)

- Stay Safe Curriculum
- Implementing SPHE curriculum
- Using resources on webwise.ie
- Promoting digital citizenship
- 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
- Inviting speakers, including An Garda Síochána, to speak with pupils and parents

Preventing Homophobic/Transphobic Bullying Behaviour

- Stay Safe Curriculum
- SPHE Curriculum
- Encourage peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
- Challenge gender-stereotypes
- Use teaching material to include all identities

- Stock libraries to include all identities

Preventing Racist Bullying Behaviour

- Stay Safe Curriculum
- SPHE Curriculum
- Teaching of history and geography to reference learn about other cultures, our own diverse country and important historical figures
- Fostering a school culture where diversity is celebrated and where students "see themselves" in their school environment
- Challenge racist thinking
- Encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
- Providing supports to school staff to support students from ethnic minorities, including Traveller and Roma students, and to encourage communication with their parents
- Using teaching material to include all identities
- Stocking libraries to include all identities

Preventing Sexist Bullying Behaviour

- Ensuring members of staff model respectful behaviour and treat students equally irrespective of their sex
- Ensuring all student 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
- Gender Equality Policy

Preventing Sexual Harassment

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

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):

Supervision of Pupils

- The Board of Management and staff are responsible for the supervision of pupils between 9:05am and 2:00pm (infants) and 3:10pm (all other classes).
- Parents/Guardians are responsible for the supervision of children before and after these times.
- Pupils may enter the school grounds at 9:05am and stay on the yard until the bell is rung. In the case of adverse weather, pupils will enter the school at 9:05am and staff will supervise.

Breaks and Lunch Periods

- Children will be supervised by a member of staff during morning break and lunch break periods.
- Children will be informed regularly of yard rules which will be consistently enforced.
- The practice of children returning to classrooms during breaks is not allowed.
- Children who need to use the toilet during breaks must ask the permission of the adult on yard.
- During all breaks there will be a member of staff at the first aid station (staff room) to deal with any incidents that may arise.

Normal School Hours

- Teachers are responsible for the supervision of children during normal school working hours.
- In the event that the class teacher may have to leave their classroom, they must arrange cover for their class.
- When this is not possible, the class teacher must inform the principal or a staff member who can supervise the class.

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.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

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 whole school community has a responsibility to prevent and address bullying behaviour. Caherea National School works in partnership with their patron, board of management, staff, students and their parents to develop and implement their Bí Cineálta policy.

Approach

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.

When addressing bullying behaviour 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
- 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
- take action in a timely manner
- inform parents of those involved

Identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred

Bullying is defined 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.

To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour you should 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 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
- 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 be helpful to ask the students involved to write down their account of the incident(s)

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.
- It is important to listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation.
- A record should be kept of the engagement with all involved.
- This record documents the form and type of bullying behaviour, if known, where and when it took place and the date of the initial engagement with the students involved and their parents.
- The record includes 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 occured

- 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 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.

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 strives to create a culture of support and empowerment for all children, and particularly those impacted by bullying behavior. Given the complexity of bullying behavior, no one intervention/support programme works in all situations. Below are approaches used in our school:

- Addressing the bullying behaviour in line with this policy
- School values and culture to foster respect for all members of the school
- Use of social stories to aid those impacted
- Promotion of having a trusted adult to discuss concerns with
- Communication with parents
- Development of relationship between pupil and staff
- Teacher pupil check-ins
- Staff observation of pupil in class and on yard
- Time given to discuss social progress of identified pupils at staff meetings
- Use of social games and activities for success to build confidence and self-esteem
- Allocate SET time to develop social and emotional skills
- Revisiting certain SPHE lessons
- Use of programmes – Zones of Regulation, Friends for Life, Weaving Wellbeing
- Involvement of outside agencies if required – eg. NEPS

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: 29/09/26

(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed:  Date: 29/09/26

(Principal)