Bí Cineálta Policy

Sliabh a' Mhadra National School

To Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Sliabh a' Mhadra 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.

SECTIONS OF THIS POLICY

Section A: Development/ Review of the Bí Cineálta Policy

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

Section D: Oversight

Section A: Development/Review of our Bí Cineálta Policy

All members of our school community were provided with the opportunity to input into the development/review of this policy.

Stakeholder	Date consulted	Method of consultation
School Staff	29/5/25	Half day closure
	17/6/25	Staff Questionnaire
	27/8/25	Staff Meeting- discussion regarding Bí Cineálta Policy, final draft made available to all staff, plan for whole school activities for September/October provided to staff
		Definition of bullying/ steps to take distributed to each teacher to display in classroom
		Who/How to Tell posters to be displayed in each classroom

Students	17/6/25	Pupil Questionnaire
	18/6/25	Student Friendly Bí Cineálta Policy discussed with Student Council and presented to all classes
		Bí Cineálta mindful colouring sheets/ pictures representing kindness completed by all classes/ student Council created display on noticeboard
Parents	18/6/25	Parent Questionnaire
	16/09/25	Message to all parents to direct them to school website to view Bí Cineálta Policy
Board of Management	15/09/25	Bí Cineálta Policy discussed and ratified by B.O.M
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	15/09/25	Bí Cineálta Policy made available on school website

Date policy was approved: 15/09/2025

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 developing 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 the 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 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 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 environment
- A telling environment
- School Sports Teams, Choir
- Safe Physical spaces that are well supervised
- After school Clubs
- Breakfast Club
- Positive messaging on corridors
- Student Council
- Who to Tell/ how to Tell posters
- Monthly reminder from Wellbeing Committee to each classroom regarding Bí Cineálta
- Sensory Space/ garden in playground
- Good News Friday' read over intercom by Student's Council
- Good Deeds/acts of kindness read monthly over intercom by Wellbeing Committee
- Model respectful behaviour towards colleagues, pupils and visitors

Curriculum:

- Teaching and learning in SPHE
- RSE Curriculum & Lessons
- 'Friends for life' Programme in all classes/ Zippy's Friends (1st/2nd)
- Walk Tall, Stay Safe, RSE Programmes and Resources
- Promoting inclusion and diversity
- Extra-curricular activities
- Groupwork/collaboration
- Transition to Secondary School Programme

Policy and Planning:

- Bí Cineálta policy

- Student friendly Bí Cineálta Policy

- Code of Behaviour Policy

- Attendance Policy

- Religion Policy

- Child Safeguarding Statement

- Acceptable Use Policy

- Supervision Plan

- RSE Policy

- SEN policy

- Dignity in the Workplace Policy

- Equal Opportunity and Gender Equity Policy

- Data Protection Policy

- SSE Wellbeing in education

- Mobile Phone & Electronic Devices Policy

- Internet Safety Week

Relationships and Partnerships:

- Positive interactions and communication between staff, pupils, parents and the wider school community

- Student and Parent participation in school life

- Praise for students – Positive Reinforcement

- Student Council/ Wellbeing Committee

- Positive home links

- Parents' Association links

- Church/Parish Links with Priest and Parish Team Involvement of BOM, staff, pupils and parents in developing and implementing the review of the Bí Cineálta Policy

- Sports Day

- Catholic Schools Week

- Internet Safety Day

- Relationships with Secondary schools (Transition Year Pupils)

- Relationships with other schools in sports/choir.

- Outside agencies- Garda, Fire brigade

- Community links- GAA, Library, Gardaí

- Meeting with new families to the school Community

- Summer Programme

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

- Acceptable Use of the Internet policy

- Supervision Policy

- Special Educational Needs Policy

- Code of Behaviour

- Child Safeguarding Policy

Strong interpersonal connections are a vital part of effectively preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.

We aim to strengthen relationships and partnerships between members of the school community by using the following strategies:

- 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

- conducting workshops and seminars for students, school staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of bullying

- supporting activities that build empathy, respect and resilience

- encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring

- promoting acts of kindness

- teaching problem solving

Preventing Cyberbullying

Our School will actively try to prevent Cyberbullying by using the following strategies:

· implementing the SPHE curriculum

· having regular conversations with students about developing respectful and kind relationships online

· developing and communicating an acceptable use policy for technology

· referring to appropriate online behaviour as part of the standards of behaviour in our Code of Behaviour

· promoting online safety events for parents who are responsible for overseeing their children's activities online

· holding an Internet Safety Day to reinforce awareness around appropriate online behaviour

Preventing racist bullying behaviour

Our school will use the following strategies to help prevent racist bullying behaviour:

· 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 and organising 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 and to encourage communication with their parents

· inviting speakers from diverse ethnic backgrounds

Preventing Sexist Bullying Behaviour

Our school aims to create a supportive and respectful environment and will use the following strategies to prevent 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 contributions of all students

·   organising awareness campaigns, workshops and presentations on gender equality and respect

·   encouraging parents to reinforce these values of respect at home

Preventing Sexual Harassment

In our school there is a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is never dismissed as teasing or banter. We use the following strategies to prevent sexual harassment:

·   treating each other with respect and kindness

·   promoting positive role models within the school community

·   challenging gender stereotypes that can contribute to sexual harassment.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

- All staff

- The class teacher will oversee recording of bullying reports for students in their class. Principal will be informed of all incidents of bullying. Two teachers may present for interview to investigate allegations of bullying behaviour. Initially a pupil may be interviewed without parent's notification or presence.

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As outlined in Bí Cineálta, Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, schools are 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. If the bullying behaviour continues in school, schools should address it.

Where a 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.

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):

When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred the teacher should consider the following: **what, where, when and why?**

- Speak with the student involved and determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour by considering 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 above questions is Yes, then the behaviour is bullying behaviour and the behaviour should be address using the Bí Cineálta Procedures.

- If a group of students is involved, each student will 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 class teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying behaviour has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved.

- Non-teaching staff such as SNA/secretary are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed to them or mentioned to them.

- The relevant teacher must document all investigations of bullying behaviour using the school's official bullying behaviour report template.

- The relevant teacher/school management must inform the parents/guardians of all students involved and keep them informed throughout the process.

- Include in the written records, the views of the students and their parents/guardians regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour.

Follow- up:

- The relevant teacher/school management must engage with the student and their parents again no more than 20 school days after the initial engagement to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased.

- The relevant teacher/school management must document the review with students and their parents/guardians in the bullying behaviour report template.

- As part of this review, the relevant teacher/school management must consider and document the nature of the bullying behaviour, the effectiveness of the strategies used to address the bullying behaviour, the relationship between the students involved, any engagement with external services/supports and the date that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased.

- If the bullying behaviour has not ceased the relevant teacher/school management should review the strategies used in consultation with the student involved and their parents/guardians. A timeframe should be agreed for further engagement until the bullying behaviour has ceased.

- If the bullying behaviour has not ceased by the agreed timeframe, the relevant teacher/school management will address it through the Code of Behaviour.

- If parents/guardians are not satisfied with how the bullying behaviour has been addressed, in accordance with the Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, they must be referred to the school's complaints procedure

All other forms of unacceptable behaviour will be addressed by the School's Code of Behaviour.

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.**

Requests to take no action

A student reporting bullying behaviour may ask that a member of staff does nothing about the behaviour other than "look out" for them. The student may not want to be identified as having told someone about the bullying behaviour. They may feel that telling someone might make things more difficult for them. Where this occurs, it is important that the member of staff shows empathy to the student, deals with the matter sensitively and speaks with the student to work out together what steps can be taken to address the matter and how their parents will be informed of the situation. It is important that the student who has experienced bullying behaviour feels safe.

Parents may also make schools aware of bullying behaviour that has occurred and specifically request that the school take no action. Parents should put this request in writing to the school or be facilitated to do so where there are literacy, digital literacy or language barriers. However, while acknowledging the parent's request, schools may decide that, based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour.

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

Supporting Pupils experiencing Bullying:

- We provide a safe space where students feel heard, believed, and supported.
- All interactions with students are guided by restorative conversations that prioritise healing and resolution rather than blame.
- We develop individual support plans with measures tailored to the needs of students such as check-ins, mentors, nurture groups, safe spaces etc.
- Relevant staff are made aware of student relationships prior to adjusting class seating plans or organising group work and class activities.
- Consult with outside agencies if deemed necessary.
- We involve parents/guardians and collaborate on strategies to support the student.

Supporting pupils displaying bullying behaviour

- We engage with students displaying bullying behaviour to understand the root cause and to determine if there are underlying issues.
- We use restorative dialogue to help students take responsibility and repair harm.
- We implement behavioural supports such as behavioural plans, mentoring, or targeted interventions.
- We collaborate with parents to support positive behaviour change at home and in school.
- In serious cases, where a student is unable to regulate their behaviour the school may seek the support of the NEPS psychologist.

Whole-School Measures to Support All Students

- We continuously strive to promote a positive school culture by embedding kindness, inclusion, and respect in all aspects of school life.
- We ensure students and staff understand what bullying is, how to report it, and how it will be addressed.
- Through Bí Cineálta training we equip staff to recognise, respond to, and support students affected by bullying.

All bullying behaviour will be recorded (Templates attached and stored in the class Incident Book) 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*. When a review takes place, it will be noted if the bullying behaviour has ceased and the views of the pupil/parent in relation to this will be recorded.

Section D: Oversight

Board of Management Updates:

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.

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.

Implementation & Review:

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)

Appendix A
School Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Sliabh a' Mhadra N.S. 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.

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