

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Kilkenny School Project NS 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 Traveler 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	Monthly Staff meetings and Half day closure in May2025	Croke Park hour Staff survey School Closure Day
Students	March to May 2025	Whole Class Discussion JI Focus Groups SI to 2 nd , Survey 3 rd to 6 th SPHE classes Student Council
Parents/guardians		Focus Group Meeting 2025 Parent Questionnaire 29/05
Board of Management	Monthly Meetings	Board of Management discussion
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers		
Date policy was approved:		
Date policy was last reviewed:		

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour in Kilkenny School Project N.S.

The Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice provides the following four key areas that are essential for a holistic, whole school approach to wellbeing promotion:

- Culture and Environment
- Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)
- Policy and Planning
- Relationships and Partnerships

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 KSP community should be based on respect, care, integrity and trust.

Open communication between the Executive, the Board of Management, The Parent Teacher Association (PTA) school staff, students and their parents/guardians help to foster a collaborative approach and shared responsibilities in relation to preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.

The school leadership team influences the school culture and 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 can shape the school culture by promoting kindness and inclusion within their peer group and maintain a positive and supportive school environment for all.

Parents/guardians, as active partners in their child's education, can help foster an environment where bullying behaviour is not tolerated through promoting empathy and respect.

A Telling Environment It is important that the school community supports a 'telling' environment. Students should feel comfortable to talk about concerns regarding bullying behaviour.

The reasons why students may not report include the following:

- > Fear of retaliation from the student displaying the bullying behaviour or their friendship group
- > Concerns about being seen as a "tell-tale" for reporting bullying behaviour
- > Fear that the adult may make the situation worse
- > Fear that the adult doesn't have the knowledge and skills to deal appropriately with the bullying behaviour
- > Fear that their parents/guardians may deny access to their smart phone
- > Not knowing what will happen when they report bullying behaviour
- > Fear that they will not be believed
- > Concerns about "getting into trouble" for reporting bullying behaviour
- > Not having evidence to back up the allegation of bullying behaviour (this can be seen particularly with relational bullying behaviour)

KSP staff should take these reasons for not reporting into account. The KSP should be a safe environment where reporting of bullying behaviour is encouraged.

A Trusted Adult

The concept of "a trusted adult" can be an effective strategy to encourage students to report if they or another student is experiencing bullying behaviour. Staff could support this strategy by letting students know that they can talk to them. Students who witness bullying behaviour should be supported and encouraged to report the behaviour to a trusted adult in the school so that the behaviour can be addressed. Students who witness bullying behaviour on social media have an important role in helping to address the behaviour by reporting the witnessed behaviour to a trusted adult. The trusted adult should reassure the student that they have done the right thing by reporting the behaviour. The trusted adult should, without delay, inform the member of staff who has responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour. If unsure who to inform, the trusted adult should inform the class teacher, principal or deputy principal. The trusted adult should continue to support the student, as appropriate, while the behaviour is being addressed by the relevant member of staff.

Creating safe physical spaces in schools

The creation of safe physical spaces supports psychological safety and is an important measure to prevent bullying behaviour. Spaces that have a clear line of sight make it easier for school staff to supervise students. Hidden spaces in hallways, and in the schoolyard can be areas where there is a greater risk for bullying behaviour to occur.

The KSP will take the following measures to create safe physical spaces:

- > Ensure good lighting is present to avoid dark corners or spaces
- > Remove visual barriers from windows such as posters
- > Improve the visibility of school staff who are supervising at break times including during yard duty
- > Murals, artwork and signage can help schools to promote the school's values such as equality, diversity, inclusion and respect
- > Students can feel a greater sense of belonging to a school community when they are given ownership of their own space through art and creativity. This helps students to identify and to feel a sense of responsibility for their school environment. The inclusion of spaces within schools for collaborative learning can also play a part in fostering a sense of belonging. It is important that the school grounds are well maintained to promote a sense of ownership and respect in the school community.

Supervision

Appropriate supervision is an important measure to help prevent and address bullying behaviour. Schools are required to take all reasonable measures to ensure the safety of their students and to supervise students when students are attending school or attending school activities. The KSP ensures that there is adequate supervision in the morning, at break times and afterschool. The KSP offers a mix of organised activities during break times and are encouraged to continue to do this with a view to accommodating a range of preferences and interests.

Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)

Teaching and learning that is collaborative and respectful should be promoted. Students should have regular opportunities to work in small groups with their peers, which can help build a sense of connection, belonging and empathy among students. The curricular subjects offered to students provide opportunities to foster inclusion and respect for diversity.

Schools are encouraged to provide opportunities for students to develop a sense of self-worth through both curricular and extracurricular programmes.

The Learn Together, Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) curricula aims to foster students' wellbeing, self-confidence and sense of belonging and to develop students' sense of personal responsibility for their own behaviour and actions. Students' social and emotional learning skills can be improved through the SPHE curriculum.

Policy and planning

The wellbeing of the school community is at the heart of school policies and plans.

There are a range of other policies such as the school's acceptable use policy, supervision policy, special education teaching policy, Acceptable Use Policy and Code of Behaviour that can support implementation of a school's Bí Cineálta policy.

Supporting the participation of students in the development and implementation of school policies and plans can help increase awareness and ensure effective implementation.

Engaging in appropriate teacher professional learning courses can support school staff to prevent and address bullying behaviour. School staff should also share their experiences and examples of best practice. There is a range of training available for school staff which relates to promoting inclusion and diversity in schools.

Relationships and partnerships

Strong interpersonal connections are a vital part of effectively preventing and addressing bullying behaviour. These interpersonal connections are supported through a range of formal and informal structures such as the Student Councils, Environmental Committee, school clubs, and the Parent Teacher Association. The following, which is not an exhaustive list, will be considered to strengthen relationships and partnerships between members of the school community:

- > 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- Environmental Committee, Student Council etc
- > Supporting the active participation of parents/guardians 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/guardians to raise awareness of the impact of bullying
- > Supporting activities that build empathy, respect and resilience
- > Encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring, (Leigh le Chéile, Swimming Partners, etc.)
- > Promoting acts of kindness
- > Teaching problem solving
- > Hosting discussions on Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying recognises the importance of positive relationships across the whole education community to promote empathy, understanding and respect.
- > PTA Winter Fayre
- > PTA Family Picnic
- > Executive Family Fun Run

The meaningful involvement of the board of management, staff, students and their parents/guardians 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.

Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

When implementing a prevention strategy will consider engaging with members of the wider school community who are in regular contact with students, such as the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- > School bus drivers/ escorts
- > Education welfare officers
- > Traveller and Roma community education workers

- > These members of the wider school community can be encouraged to report any bullying behaviour to the school as appropriate.

Preventing cyberbullying behaviour

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.

The KSP will proactively address these challenges by promoting digital literacy, digital citizenship, and fostering safe online environments.

Strategies to prevent cyberbullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- > Implementing the SPHE curriculum
- > Implementing the Digital Media Literacy curriculum which teaches students about responsible online behaviour and digital citizenship
- > 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 the Code of Behaviour
- > Promoting or hosting online safety events for parents/guardians who are responsible for overseeing their children's activities online*
- > Holding an Internet safety day to reinforce awareness around appropriate online 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. For the purposes of data collection, students between the ages of 13 and 16 years old must have parental permission to sign up to social media services where companies use the legal basis of consent to collect, process and store users' data. Most social media platforms and services have a minimum age requirement and for the majority of these services it is 13 years' old. Therefore technically, children under the age of 13 should not have a social media account. It is important for their child's safety, that parents/guardians are aware of their children's use of technology including smartphones and gaming consoles.

The Parent Teacher Associations are currently interested in developing a voluntary code regarding smartphone use among the KSP students.

Preventing homophobic/transphobic bullying behaviour

All students, including gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender 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:

- > Maintaining an inclusive physical environment such as by displaying relevant posters challenging gender stereotypes
- > Encouraging students to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour

Preventing racist bullying behaviour

The KSP is an equality-based school, where all students are treated with care and equal treatment regardless of their socio-economic, cultural or religious background. Students are free to be themselves.

They are exposed to different beliefs and perspectives in a respectful way which encourages critical thinking. This affirms each student's identity and encourages them to see diversity and different world views in a positive light.

Strategies to prevent racist bullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- > Students are taught an Ethical Education curriculum, The Learn Together Programme. This curriculum includes learning about morality and spirituality; equality and justice; belief systems and an ethical approach to the environment. It teaches students about different belief systems without promoting any one worldview over another.
- > The KSP aims to have a culturally responsive environment, where diversity is recognised and celebrated. Teaching staff work to create a learning environment that is engaging and accessible to students of all backgrounds and abilities.
- > A culture of curiosity is promoted, where students are encouraged to learn about differing beliefs and cultures, the various cultures represented in the school, and in the world at large.
- > Classrooms should be spaces where cultural differences are perceived as learning opportunities and questioning is encouraged and welcomed. Students should be empowered to voice their opinions and critically analyse events within the school as well as locally and globally.
- > Fostering a school culture where students "see themselves" in their school environment
- > Having the cultural diversity of the school visible and on display
- > Conducting workshops and seminars for students, school staff and parents/guardians to raise awareness of racism and unconscious biases.
- > 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/guardians
- > Providing supports to school staff to support students from ethnic minorities, including Traveller and Roma students, and to encourage communication with their parents/guardians
- > Inviting speakers from diverse ethnic backgrounds
- > 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

Gender equality as part of the school's ethos creates a supportive and respectful environment.

Strategies to prevent sexist bullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- > All staff actively promote values and actions which challenge gender inequalities and the ways gender interacts with other inequalities. Staff are mindful of gender issues in the language they use and in their expectations for learners.
- > 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/guardians to reinforce these values of respect at home

Preventing sexual harassment

Preventing sexual harassment requires an approach that focuses on education, awareness and clear enforceable policies. There is a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment should never be dismissed as teasing or banter.

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

- > promoting positive role models within the KSP.
- > challenging gender stereotypes that can contribute to sexual harassment
- >

Resources that will help to implement our prevention strategies

- > Friends for Life
- > Zippy's Friends
- > Class Charters
- > Posters
- > Stay Safe
- > Walk Tall
- > RSE Programme
- > Guidelines for Well-Being in Primary Schools
- > Weaving Well-Being
- > Web wise
- > Mindful Matters
- > Assemblies
- > KSP Day
- > Learn Together Programme & Resource Bank
- > The Ethos Guidance Platform
- > Emotional Coaching
- > Nurture Room
- > Seomra Sonas
- > Circle Time
- > Yard Rules
- > Bí Cineweek
- > Staff relations - what the children see/observe in their daily environment, not just what is specifically taught
- > Class rules- drawn up with the students and repeated reminders of these throughout the year

- > Use of story

The KSP has the following supervision and monitoring policies and strategies in place to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

- > Supervision Policy
- > Acceptable Use of the Internet Policy
- > Code of Behaviour
- > Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment
- > Wellbeing Statement
- > Safety Statement

Supervision

- > Staff supervision: All staff members should be trained to recognise and respond to bullying behaviour. They should be present and visible in common areas and playgrounds during break times.
- > Student supervision: Class teachers should supervise students during class time and break times. They should be aware of what is happening in their classrooms, in the playground, corridors, school grounds, school tours and other school activities.

- > Visitor supervision: Visitors to the school should be always supervised.
- > Arrival and Departure time: Parents/guardians are advised to strictly adhere to the Drop-off time in the morning. The principal supervises the assembly time and the ISLT supervise the evening pick up time. SNAs support the supervision of children when deemed necessary.

Monitoring

- > Incident reporting: The class teacher investigates all instances of reported or suspected bullying behaviour with a view to establishing the facts and records on an incident report form.
- > Incident investigation: All reports of bullying should be investigated promptly and thoroughly. The investigation should include interviews with the student who reported the incident, the student who was allegedly bullied, and any witnesses.
- > Follow-up: The school should take appropriate: action to address the bullying behaviour.

Yard Supervision

- > All areas of the yard should be supervised by a member of the teaching staff at all times and should, under no circumstances, be left unsupervised.
- > A yard duty rota is circulated to all staff at the beginning of each term / year or when deemed necessary.
- > Yard duty is regularly placed on the Staff Meeting Agenda.
- > Teachers on yard duty should ensure they have a Yard Incident Book with them for the duration of the supervision period. Teachers report incidents that could possibly be defined as bullying to the class teacher. On occasion, the class teacher may request that a certain child/ren be monitored and reported directly to them to support a child's behaviour plan.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

The teacher(s) with responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour is (are) as follows:
the Class Teacher, Special Education Teacher, Principal, Deputy Principal, In School Leadership Team

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/guardians of those involved

Identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred

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.

To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour the following questions will be considered:

- Is the behaviour targeted at a specific student or group of students?**
- Is the behaviour intended to cause physical, social or emotional harm?**
- 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/guardians 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/guardians 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 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/guardians.

The record should include the views of the students and their parents/guardians 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/guardians 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/guardians to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased and the views of students and their

parents/guardians 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/guardians. 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/guardians 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

Approaches to support those who experience, witness and display bullying behaviour

Where a Student Support File exists for a student, schools are encouraged to place a copy of the record on the student's support file. This will assist the school's student support team, where they exist, in providing a consistent and holistic response to support the wellbeing of the students involved. Where a Student Support Plan exists, the plan should be updated to incorporate response strategies and associated supports.

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

- > Managing the bullying behaviour.
- > Supporting the pupils who have experienced bullying behaviour, displayed bullying behaviour and witnessed bullying behaviour.
- > Promote positive school culture where pupils' feel safe, respected and valued,
- > Raising awareness of the appropriate programmes and teacher professional development.
- > Helping pupils raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that help develop friendships and social skills by participation in group work in class, team activities during or after school, small social groups with SET
- > Making it clear that adopting the strategies is a positive step towards
- > Creating a more respectful and inclusive school environment.
- > In dealing with challenging behaviour. encouraging teachers and parents/guardians to focus on positive reinforcement
- > Circle time on a regular basis in all classes

- > Engaging with External Supports when deemed appropriate:
National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)
Oide,
Webwise.
The National Parents/guardians Council (NPC)
Dublin City University (DCU) AntiBullying Centre
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/guardians. 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.

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: Helena O'Glynn Date: 18/05/25
(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: Ann Marie O'Keefe Date: 18/05/25
(Principal)