

Ballymoney National School Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Ballymoney 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 behavior 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 well being of our students is at the forefront of everything that we do. We recognise the negative impact that bullying behavior 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 overtime 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 in to the development/review of this policy.

	Date consulted	Method of consultation
SchoolStaff	April 2025	Survey emailed to all staff
Students	May 2025	Survey completed by all pupils
Parents	March 2025	Survey emailed to all parents
Board of Management	May 2025	Policy was emailed to all members and discussed in detail at a Board of Management meeting
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	2025-26 school year	Published on the school website
Date policy was approved: 26/05/2025		
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 behavior and sexual harassment as appropriate.

When developing measures to prevent bullying behaviour we considered 4 key areas:

1 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 staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported. Relationships between all members of the school community should be based on respect, care, integrity and trust. Each member of staff has a responsibility to develop and maintain a school culture where bullying behaviour is unacceptable and to make 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 environment for all. Parents as active partners in their child's education, can help foster an environment where bullying behaviour is not tolerated through promoting empathy and respect. The school community will support a 'telling environment', ensure that the school has safe physical spaces and that there is appropriate supervision. Murals and artwork in the school will promote the school's values such as equality, diversity, inclusion and respect.

2. Curriculum:

Teaching and learning that is collaborative and respectful will be promoted. Students will have regular opportunities to work in small groups with their peers to help build a sense of connection, belonging and empathy among students. This happens organically in small schools. Opportunities to build whole school cohesiveness will be regularly provided.

The curricular subjects offered to the students provide opportunities to foster inclusion and respect for diversity. The Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE), Stay Safe and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) curricula aim to foster students' well being, self confidence and sense of belonging and to develop a sense of personal responsibility for their own behaviour and actions.

In Ballymoney NS we further augment the above with the following programmes- Friends for Life, Zippy's Friends, Lust for Life, Stay Safe and Webwise. We are part of the Changemaker network of schools whose 4 pillars are Empathy, Leadership, Creativity and Teamwork. In our school the staff are active in CPD throughout the year and are open to trying and adopting new programmes. The whole school staff are currently training in restorative practice. The school informs parents of courses that are available and the Parent Teacher Association have in the past and will continue to offer information evenings on relevant topics for example, internet safety and positive parenting.

3. Policy and Planning:

The well being of the school community is at the heart of school policies and plans. This policy was developed following staff training, discussion, engagement with students, parents and the Board of Management. A student friendly policy has also been developed; this policy uses language that is easy to understand and is displayed in the school where children will see it, in reception and in the classrooms. As with all policies, the Bí Cineálta policy is on the school website. The following policies support the Bí Cineálta policy, Enrolment, Code of Behaviour, RSE, SPHE, Acceptable use policy and SSE.

4. Relationships and Partnerships:

Strong interpersonal connections are a vital part of effectively preventing and addressing bullying behaviour. To strengthen relationships and partnerships between members of the school community in Ballymoney NS we support active participation in school life, encourage activities that support empathy, promote acts of kindness, celebrate special days such as birthdays, communion, confirmation in the lives of the children and teachers.

Whenever possible we invite parents to the school to engage with school life for example science night, helping in the garden, PTA initiatives and the end of year Pot Luck Supper. In Ballymoney National School we endeavor to be involved in community initiatives these include the Christmas Craft Fair, the Spring Clean, community carol service, community games and any activity hosted in the village suitable for school children. We have developed a fairy door trail, a free little library, planted trees in the park, easter egg hunt, community walk and a community leaflet in recent years.

5.5 Preventing cyberbullying behavior: The increase in the use of technology has led to students becoming increasingly vulnerable to cyberbullying or unacceptable online behaviour. Ballymoney NS will proactively address these challenges by promoting digital literacy, digital citizenship, and fostering safe online environments. Strategies to prevent cyberbullying behaviour include the following,

- > 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 who are responsible for overseeing their children's activities online

In Ireland the digital age of consent is 16. Most social media platforms have a minimum age requirement of 13, 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 are aware of their children's use of technology including smartphones and gaming consoles.

Preventing homophobic/transphobic bullying behavior: 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 are outlined in section 5.6 of the BÍ Cinealta procedures.

Preventing racist bullying behavior: Schools have become much more culturally diverse over the last number of decades. Students attending schools come from many different cultures and backgrounds. Students from diverse backgrounds may face discrimination and prejudice and may be subject to racist bullying behavior. Strategies to prevent racist bullying behaviour are outlined in section 5.7 of the BÍ Cinealta procedures.

Preventing sexist bullying behavior: In Ballymoney NS we focus on gender equality as part of the school's measures to create a supportive and respectful environment. Strategies to prevent sexist bullying behaviour are outlined in section 5.8 of the BÍ Cinealta procedures.

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

Staff members have a responsibility to ensure that supervision of pupils in class is effective and consistent. The yard is supervised during break time by teachers, a variety of activities can be availed of such as gardening, sport, imaginative play, sensory resources and the climbing wall to keep pupils active and engaged.

Office staff, SNA's and bus drivers are well placed to inform if any behavior which may constitute as bullying is noticed

Section C :Addressing Bullying Behaviour

The teachers with responsibility for addressing bullying behavior are as follows:

All teachers and SNAs

When bullying behaviour occurs, the school will:

- > Ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour is heard and reassured
- > listen to the views of the student displaying bullying behaviour
- > 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 behavior 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 behavior has occurred, the approaches taken to address the bullying behaviour and to review progress are as follows (see Chapter 6 of the BíCineálta procedures):

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

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 if bullying behaviour has occurred the following questions will be considered:

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 these questions is **yes** then the behaviour is bullying behaviour and the behaviour should be addressed using the Bí Cineálta procedures.

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 in the school's Code of Behaviour.

If a group of students is involved, each student will be engaged with individually at first, thereafter, all students involved will 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. An account of the incident should be written down.

The school is not expected to deal with bullying behaviour that occurs when the students are not under the care or responsibility of the school. However, where bullying behaviour has an impact in school, we are required to support the students involved. It is important for school staff to be fair and consistent in their approach to address bullying behaviour. Both the student who is experiencing bullying behaviour and the student who is displaying bullying behavior need support.

A student reporting bullying behaviour may ask that a member of staff does nothing about the behaviour. Where this occurs, it is important that empathy is shown and the matter is dealt with sensitively, the staff member and student should work together to work out what steps can be taken to address the matter and how their parent will be informed of the situation. If parents make the school aware of bullying behaviour that has occurred and request that no action is taken, this request must come in writing. However, while acknowledging the parent's request, the school may decide that, based on circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behavior.

Refer to **Appendix C** for a complete guide to addressing Bullying Behaviour



Supports available:

The following supports are available to prevent and address bullying behaviour:

National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)

Oide

Webwise

National Parents Council

Dublin City University (DCU) Anti -Bullying Centre

Tusla

All bullying behavior 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 behavior 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 hardcopy 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)

Appendices

Appendix A Student Friendly *Bí Cineálta* policy

Appendix B Guide to addressing Bullying Behaviour

Appendix C Guide to providing bullying Behaviour up date

Appendix D Review of the *Bí Cineálta* Policy

Appendix E Notification regarding the B.O.M's annual review of the *Bí Cineálta* policy