



# Scoil Náisiúnta na nAingeal Coimhdeachta 19335M

## School Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

### **Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour**

To be introduced at the start of the 2025-26 school year.

The Board of Management of Guardian Angels 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 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**

## Definition of bullying

*Bullying is targeted behaviour, online or offline, that causes harm. The harm caused can be physical, social and/or emotional in nature and can have lasting effects on the child experiencing the behaviour. Bullying behaviour is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power in relationships between two people or groups of people in society.*

### Targeted behaviour:

Bullying is deliberate, unwanted behaviour that causes harm to others and where the student displaying bullying behaviour knows that their behaviour is or will be perceived as harmful by the child experiencing this behaviour. Bullying is not accidental or reckless behaviour. The harm can be physical, social (exclusion/loneliness/withdrawal) and/or emotional (anxiety etc.). If the repeated behaviour is real for the student experiencing the behaviour but unintended by the other student, this is not bullying but must still be addressed under the school's Code of Behaviour.

### Repeated Behaviour:

Bullying behaviour takes the form of a systematic pattern of behaviour which is repeated over time. Single offline incidents of intentional negative behaviour are not considered bullying and should be addressed under the Code of Behaviour. Posting a single harmful message/image/video online which is highly likely to be shared/reposted can be seen as bullying behaviour.

### Imbalance of power:

In bullying incidents, the pupil experiencing the bullying behaviour finds it hard to defend themselves as a result of the abuse of a real or perceived imbalance of power. This can manifest itself through differences in size, strength, age, ability, peer group power, economic status, social status, religion, race, ethnic origin including membership of Traveller and/or Roma communities, sexual orientation, family circumstances, gender, gender identity, gender expression, experience of the care system, disability or receipt of special education, online technical proficiency/anonymity/possession of information etc.

### Behaviour that is NOT bullying:

A one-off instance of negative behaviour towards another pupil is not bullying behaviour. However, posting a single harmful message/image/video online which is highly likely to be shared/reposted can be seen as bullying behaviour.

Disagreements between friends or instances where pupils don't want to be/remain friends is not considered bullying unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.

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.

Bullying is not accidental or reckless behaviour or unintended behaviour even if the repeated harm is real for the pupil receiving the behaviour. It can still be distressing but it is not bullying. Inappropriate behaviour is dealt with under the school's Code of Behaviour.

Students with Special Educational Needs may have social communication difficulties which makes them communicate their needs through behaviours which can hurt others but it is important to note that these

behaviours are not deliberate or planned but are automatic responses which do not fit the definition of bullying.

### Types of Bullying:

There are many different types of bullying behaviour. These can include directing bullying at someone focused on the following: disability, exceptional ability, gender identity, LGBTQ+ , physical appearance, racism, poverty status, religious identity, sexism and sexual harassment. This is not an exhaustive list.

The harm can be :

- Physical ( e.g.: personal injury, damage to or loss of property)
- Social: ( e.g.: withdrawal, loneliness, exclusion)
- Emotional: (e.g.: low self esteem, depression, anxiety)

A one-off instance of negative behaviour towards a student is not bullying behaviour. However, a single hurtful message posted on social media can be considered bullying behaviour as it may be visible to a wide audience and has a high likelihood of being shared multiple times and so becomes a repeated behaviour.

Bullying can be :

Direct:

- Physical: pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping students. Physical assault. Destruction of personal property.
- Verbal: continual name calling which insults, humiliates the student – this may refer to physical appearance, sex, clothes, gender, accent, academic ability, race or ethnic origin.
- Written: Writing insulting remarks in public places, passing notes or drawings about the student.
- Extortion: where something is obtained through force or threats

Bullying can be :Indirect:

- Exclusion: where a student is deliberately and repeatedly isolated, excluded or ignored by a student or group of students.
- Relational: Where a student's attempts to form friendships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined, threats, non-verbal gesturing, malicious gossip, spreading rumours, silent treatment and manipulation of friend groups etc. can all form relational bullying for a student.

Online bullying behaviour:

Cyber bullying is carried out via text, direct messaging/instant messaging, social media platforms, email, apps, digital gaming sites, gaming consoles, chatrooms and other online technologies.

This can include:

- Sending or sharing of insulting and offensive or intimidating messages or images via online means as mentioned above.
- Posting information which is personal, private or sensitive without consent.
- Making and/or participating in fake profiles on a social network to impersonate and/or humiliate other students.
- Exclude/disrupt access to a student on purpose on online chat groups/access to accounts/from an online game.

Note: Schools are not expected to deal with bullying behaviour which occurs when students are not under the care or responsibility of the school. However, where this behaviour has an impact on school, schools are required to support the pupils concerned. If the bullying continues in school then schools deal with it as per the Bi Cinealta policy.

The types of bullying are listed in section 2.7 of the procedures and include disability, exceptionally able, gender identity, homophobic/transphobic (LGBTQ+), physical appearance, racist, poverty, religious identity, sexist bullying as well as sexual harassment.

## 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                   | 10/06/2026     | Staff Meeting – staff discussed and reviewed the current policy                 |
| Students                       | May/June 2026  | Consultation with the Student Council.                                          |
| Parents                        | May 2026       | Parents/Guardians invited to review and provide feedback on the current policy. |
| Board of Management            | 23 June 2026   | Board of Management reviewed and ratified the policy.                           |
| Date policy was approved:      |                |                                                                                 |
| Date policy was last reviewed: |                |                                                                                 |

## Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

This section sets out the prevention strategies that will be used by 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.

### Culture and Environment:

"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"

We strive to :

- Create a school culture where bullying behaviour is unacceptable and create a consistent approach to

addressing bullying behaviour.

- Involve parents as active partners in fostering an environment where bullying behaviour is not tolerated.
- Support the idea that our school is a telling environment.
- Promote the concept of a trusted adult – Stay Safe linkage – who to tell.
- Create safe spaces in our school building and yards – all staff members will be visible.
- Incorporate artwork and signs to promote our school values – creation of school expectations and creation of a school charter board for display promoting rights – equality, inclusion and respect.
- Encourage a sense of belonging with ownership over their own space through art and creativity.

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

- Staff are briefed on the uniform approach we must take to handle all reports of bullying,
- Kind and Caring Week activities such as Random acts of Kindness, Poster making, slogan making, etc.
- Playground helpers – students in higher classes volunteer to support younger classes on yard to help with games and positive interactions. School Buddy System.
- Child Friendly Bí Cinealta Policy was formed with pupil and parent input and is distributed to parents, children and staff to discuss. This policy outlines various ways to tell.
- Parents are kept informed of all matters relating to Bí Cinealta.
- Stay safe and SPHE lessons focusing on positive behaviour form part of curricular content in all classes.
- Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils. See below

Phones and wearable devices are to be turned off while on the school premises

*"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"*

### **Curriculum (teaching and learning)**

**We strive to:**

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

**Ways in which we work to achieve this:**

- Implementation of education and prevention strategies, (including awareness raising measures) that-
  - ✓ build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and
  - ✓ explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.
  - ✓ Teach SPHE and RSE content which fosters student's well-being and self confidence as well as promoting personal responsibility for their own behaviours and actions.
  - ✓ The Stay Safe & Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) programmes at primary level are personal safety skills programmes which seek to enhance children's self-protection skills including their ability to recognise and cope with bullying.
  - ✓ Curricular and Extra-curricular activities can help to develop a sense of self worth, working together, inclusion and respect. Circle Time is an integral and valuable methodology in the implementation of these programmes. The BoM is committed to the full implementation of the SPHE curriculum, the Walk Tall, RSE, Stay Safe Programmes as directed by the DE.
  - ✓ Various other social, health and media education programmes can further help to address the

problem of bullying behaviour. Furthermore, this work can be extended into many other areas such as Art, Drama, the Grow in Love programme and Physical Education.

- ✓ Co-operation and group enterprise are also promoted through team sports and school committees e.g. Student Council, Green Schools Committees and Active School initiatives.
- Model respectful behaviour towards colleagues, pupils and visitors in our school environment.
- Students are given regular opportunities to work in small groups with peers with in various lessons, which can help build a sense of connection, belonging and empathy.
- Acknowledgment of our diverse school population – celebrating diversity and culture in our school through art, displays, photographs, international week etc.

Supports for staff;

- ✓ On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the Bí Cinealta Policy

### Policy and planning

The aim of Guardian Angels NS Bi Cinealta policy is

- To raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with school management, teachers, school staff, pupils, parents/guardians.
- To promote a school ethos which encourages children to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To ensure appropriate supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of school activity are kept under observation.
- To develop procedures for noting, investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To implement a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and for those involved in bullying behaviour.
- To work with appropriate agencies in countering all forms of bullying and promoting anti bullying behaviour.

The Acceptable Use Policy, Supervision policy, Special Education Policy and Code of Behaviour as well as supervision policy are all part of the Bi Cinealta policy. Use of ICT is always monitored carefully: please also refer to the school's policy on 'Internet Acceptable Use' (AUP). Furthermore, pupils are educated on appropriate online behaviour and on how to stay safe while online.

Effective leadership is a key component with Principal, Deputy Principal, DLP, DDLP, and all middle management focused on supporting the implementation of this policy.

"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".

### Relationships and Partnerships

- Interpersonal connections are supported through a range of formal and informal structures such as our parents' association, our meet and greet every morning and afternoon by management, and various and multiple student committees and groups.
- Age and stage appropriate awareness initiatives that engage the student body in looking at their own behaviour – promoting acts of kindness and friendship, cybersafe kids, being an active help to others and

looking at the causes of and impact of bullying during SPHE lessons.

- Conducting workshops and seminars for students, staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of cyberbullying.
- Supporting active participation of students in school life and active participation of parents in school life also.
- Engaging parents and students in actively contributing to the formation of a Child Friendly Bi Cinealta Policy to make them active participants in promotion of and discussion of useful ways to identify and reduce bullying behaviour and highlight procedure and how to deal with it if it does occur.

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

We at Guardian Angels NS complete the following:

Creating a positive culture in school

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.

The creation of safe physical spaces supports psychological safety and is an important measure to prevent bullying behaviour. Our school is safe, bright, and all areas are supervised. Appropriate supervision is an important measure to help prevent and address bullying behaviour.

The school has a comprehensive supervision and monitoring policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour. Teachers assume a duty of care from 8;35 a.m., with formal supervision beginning at 8.50 a.m. and continuing until all pupils are collected at dismissal.

Yard supervision is strictly structured during both breaks, with designated duties, rules, and procedures in place, including restrictions on physical play and protocols for indoor supervision during inclement weather.

Teachers, SNAs, and senior pupils (under supervision) work collaboratively to monitor student behaviour. Concerns raised by parents are shared with all relevant staff. All incidents are managed according to the school's Code of Behaviour and recorded as needed.

We aim to create a positive school ethos and culture, where BÍ Cinealta flourishes, by monitoring the following:

- Implementation of the SPHE curriculum.
- Positive self-esteem is fostered among the pupils by celebrating individual differences, by acknowledging good behaviour and by providing opportunities for success.
- The school's BÍ Cinealta policy is discussed regularly with the pupils.
- All disclosed incidents of bullying are investigated thoroughly and consistently by following the correct procedures as outlined below.
- School wide awareness raising on all aspects of bullying, supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extracurricular activities.
- Foster a culture where diversity is celebrated and students "see themselves" in the school environment.
- Involvement of pupils in contributing to a safe school environment e.g. Wellness Week, and other activities that can help to pupils and encourage a culture of peer respect and support
- Ensuring that pupils know who to tell and how to tell.
- We endeavor to create a 'telling environment' where pupils feel comfortable to talk about concerns about bullying behaviour
- Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place.

## Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

We endeavor to create a 'telling environment' where pupils feel comfortable to talk about concerns about bullying behaviour.

When bullying behaviour occurs in school, 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

When bullying occurs outside of the school, the school will:

- > A school is 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. Where the bullying behaviour continues in school, schools should deal with it in accordance with their Bí Cineálta policy. See Section 6.2 of these procedures.
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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

#### Identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred:

The teacher will meet each student individually and consider the following: what, where, when and why.

Then the teacher meets the pupils as a group and each pupil is asked for an account of what happened to ensure everyone is clear on each other's views. Each student is supported as appropriate. It may be helpful to ask the pupils for a written account.

For bullying behaviour to have occurred the school/teacher must answer yes to ALL 3 of the following questions regarding the behaviour in question:

1. Is it targeted? (aimed at a specific student/group of students)
2. Harm? (Is the behaviour intended to cause physical/social/emotional harm?)
3. Repeated? (Did it occur more than once?)

If the answer is Yes to all 3 then bullying has occurred. If not, then the behaviour is dealt with under the school's Code of Behaviour.

#### Where bullying behaviour has occurred:

School staff should know what to do when bullying behaviour is reported to them/when they witness it.

The school's Bi Cinealta policy should clearly explain the actions to be taken. Consistency is vital. The following principles must be adhered to when addressing bullying behaviour:

- ensure the student experiencing the behaviour feels listened to and reassured.
- seek to ensure the privacy of those involved
- conduct conversations with sensitivity
- consider the age and ability of those involved
- listen to the views of the pupil experiencing the bullying behaviour on how best to address the situation
- take action in a timely manner
- inform parents of those involved (where a pupil expresses concern about parents being informed the school must support the pupil and consider how to inform the parents).

#### 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.

**Determining if bullying behaviour has ceased:**

The teacher must engage with the students and parents involved no more than 20 school days after the initial discussion to review progress following the initial intervention. Important factors to consider as part of the review 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.

Even though the bullying behaviour may have ceased, ongoing supervision and support may be required for both the student who has experienced the bullying behaviour as well as the student who has displayed the behaviour. It can take time for relationships to settle and for supports to take effect. In some cases, relationships may never be restored to how they were before the bullying behaviour occurred.

If the bullying behaviour has not ceased, the teacher should review the strategies used in consultation with the students and parents and agree to meet again over an agreed timeframe until the bullying behaviour has ceased.

**Recording of bullying behaviour:**

All incidents of bullying behaviour should be recorded. The record should document the form (Section 2.5) and type (See Section 2.7) of bullying behaviour, if known, where and when it took place and the date of the initial engagement with the students and their parents.

The record should include the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour. It 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. It is important to document the date of each of these engagements and the date that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased. Any engagement with external services/supports should also be noted.

These records should be retained in accordance with the school's record keeping policy and in line with data protection regulations.

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.

**Follow-Up Where Bullying Behaviour has Occurred:**

✓ 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 Positive Behaviour. If disciplinary sanctions are considered, this is a matter between the relevant student, their parents and the school.

### Complaint Process:

✓ 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 Office of the Ombudsman for Children can be contacted at [ococomplaint@oco.ie](mailto:ococomplaint@oco.ie).

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):

Supports the school may consider using include

- NEPS (psychologist)
- OIDE (CPD for staff)
- WEBWISE (online safety)
- NPC (Parents)
- TUSLA (Child Protection)
- DCU ANTI\_BULLYING CENTRE (advice and programmes)
- SETs can work with the pupil to build self-esteem and social skills.
- Cooperation with parents
- Peace circles and restorative practice to rebuild damaged relationships

### Record Keeping:

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.

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: Vincent Hayes Date: 23/6/26  
(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: Paddy O'Neill Date: 23/06/2026  
(Principal)