Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Ballaghlea 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 such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the 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 each person 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 all have an indispensable 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.

This definition includes a wide range of hurtful, unwanted, targeted behaviour, whether verbal or written, whether physical, psychological or social, whether targeting person or property, whether carried out directly or indirectly or through any electronic or other medium, which could harm a pupil or undermine her/his self- esteem or self-confidence. All

forms of bullying can have serious negative emotional or psychological consequences for targeted pupils. Isolated or once-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour, including a once-off offensive or hurtful text message or other private messaging, do not fall within the definition of bullying and should be dealt with, as appropriate, in accordance with the school's code of behaviour. However, in the context of this policy, placing a once-off offensive or hurtful public message, image or statement on a social network site or other public forum where that message, image or statement can be viewed and/or repeated by other people will be regarded as bullying 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	16/10/24 8/11/24 15/11/24 03/03/25 24/03/25 01/05/25 26/05/25	On-line session ISL Team face to face Half Day closing Staff meeting Bí Cinealta Staff meeting Bí Cinealta Questionnaire Staff meeting Bí Cinealta
Students		• SPHE Activity sheet on trusted adult. • Definition of bullying
Parents		• Definition of bullying • Questionnaire
Board of Management	03/04/25 12/06/25	• Meeting / Discussion • Meeting/CPSMA Video
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	Jan 25	Informal discussion.
School Patron	June 2025	Email
Date policy was approved:12/06/25		
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.

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.

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

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.

<u>Prevention strategies to be used</u>

- Create a telling environment / school and home, through stay safe – who is the trusted adult.
- Utilize stay safe words / posters
- Creating safe spaces –staff wearing high viz on yard
- Supervision / staggered breaks / teachers on corridor

<u>Curriculum: Teaching & Learning.</u>

- Teaching and learning that is collaborative and respectful should be promoted
  - SPHE Curriculum-The anti-bullying module of the SPHE programme as it applies during each school year, particularly the relevant exercises from the "Walk Tall" and "Stay Safe" programmes.
  - Group learning in all subjects
  - RSE Curriculum
  - Whole school wellbeing initiatives
  - Fun friends / Friends for life
  - Religion
  - English literature / Poems / Stories
  - P.E. / Team play

<u>Policy & Planning</u>

- The wellbeing of the school commonly should be at the heart of school policies and plans
  - Supervision rota
  - SEN policy
  - P.E. Curriculum
  - Code of behaviour
  - School ethos /mission statement
  - Acceptable use policy

- Schol staff – courses
- Wellbeing & P.E (P.S. course)
- Inclusion – EAL – MOG / AMF
- Teaching playground games
- Active school
- Student Council

Relationships & Partnerships

- Strong interpersonal connections are a vital part of effectively preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.
  - Age-appropriate awareness initiatives that look at the causes and impacts of bullying
    - Friends for life / First Friends
    - Stay safe / Walk Tall
    - Web-wise
  - Supporting the active participation of students in school life
    - Active school / Green school / Student council
  - Supporting the active participation of parents in school life
    - Grandparents Day / Sponsored Walks/ Tea-parties
    - School Walks
    - EAL Signs / Enrolment nights
    - Regular feedback to parents re Anti-bullying work being done.
  - Conducting workshops for students, school staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of bullying
    - Internet safety week/Anti-bullying week
  - Supporting activities that build empathy, respect and resilience
    - SPHE / P.E / Religion
    - Join our Boys / Charity deeds / Building for children
  - Encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring
    - Buddy reading / Presenting projects
    - Assemblies / Stem peer mentoring
  - Teaching problem Solving
  - Hosting debates

Preventing specific types of bullying behaviour

- A school student support team
- Bus monitors / open communication with driver
- Music teacher / Language teacher
- Swim teachers / Dance teacher
- Child minders / After school providers
- Football trainer

Preventing Cyber Bullying behaviour

- Schools should proactively address these challenges by promoting digital literacy, digital citizenship and fostering safe online environments
  - SPHE / Safer internet week
  - Supervision of pupils using iPads policy / Hosting online safety events
  - Internet safety day

Preventing homophobic / transphobic bullying behaviour

- All students including gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students, have a right to feel safe and supported at school.
  - Maintaining an inclusive physical environment by displaying relevant posters

- Challenging gender-stereotypes
- Encouraging students to speak up when they witness homophobic behavour

Preventing racist bullying behaviour

- Fostering a school culture where diversity is celebrated and where students "see themselves" in their school environment
  - Bake sales / carol service
  - Having the cultural diversity of the school visible and on display
    - Display of languages
  - Conducting workshops and seminars for students, school staff and parents to raise awareness of racism
  - 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
  - Ensuring that library reading material and textbooks represent appropriate lived experiences of students and adults from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds
    - Library books

Preventing sexist bullying behaviour

- Schools should focus on gender equality as part of the school's measures to create a supportive and respectful environment
  - Ensuring all students have the same opportunities to engage in school activities irrespective of their sex. Children can take on any role in role play – Vet / Doctor etc in Aistear
  - Celebrating diversity at school and acknowledging the contributions of all students
  - Encouraging parents to reinforce these values of respect at home
  - Gender equality in school. Girls and boys' football / soccer / rugby teams
  - Job around school for boys and girls

Preventing sexual harassment

- Sexual harassment should never be dismissed as teasing or banter.

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

- Supervision Rota (displayed in all classrooms, office and staff room.
- Staggered breaks
- Supervising staff in high-viz jackets.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

The teacher(s) with responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour is (are) as follows:
Anne-Marie Farrell (Principal) Catriona Collins (Acting Deputy Principal)

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

Determine if bullying has occurred.

1. If a group of students are involved, each student should be engaged with individually at first, then met as a group. At the group meeting, each student should be asked for their views. Students could also write this down if appropriate.
2. 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. Bullying behaviour is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power in relationships between two people or groups of people in society.

- Ask the following questions.
    - 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 is yes, then bullying has occurred.
- A single hurtful message posted online can be considered bullying.
- If the answer to any of any of these questions is no, then the behaviour is not bullying .
- Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour are provided for within the schools code of behaviour.

Addressing Bullying Behaviour.

- Parents of those involved should be informed and consulted re actions to be taken to address the behaviour.
    - Engage with the students involved and their parents again be 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.
- On going 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 should consider 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 parent and the school
- If 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 Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary schools, they should be referred to the school's complaints procedures.
- If a parent is dissatisfied with how a complaint has been handled, they may make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children if they believe that the school's actions have had a negative effect on the student.

The school will use the following approaches to support those who experience, witness and display bullying behaviour (see Chapter 6 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

The primary aim in addressing reports of bullying behaviour should be to stop the bullying behaviour and restore, as far as practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.

Given the complexity of bullying behaviour it is generally acknowledged that that no one approach works in all situations.

- Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's Bí Cinealata policy and efforts should be made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied;
- It must also be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parent(s)/guardian(s)) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school;
- The Relevant Teacher does not apportion blame but rather treats bullying behaviour as a mistake that can and must be remedied, emphasising that the intention is not to punish perpetrators, but to talk to them, to explain how harmful and hurtful bullying is, and to seek a promise that it will stop. If that promise is forthcoming and is honoured, that will be the end of the matter and there will be no penalty. Pupils who report bullying therefore are not getting others into trouble, so much as enabling them to get out of trouble…
- If a pupil has signed such a promise but then chooses to break that promise and continue the bullying behaviour, this can then no longer be considered a 'mistake.' In this event parent(s)/guardian(s) will be informed and requested to countersign their daughter/son's promise. Breach of this additional promise by further bullying behaviour is regarded as a very grave matter and a serious sanction may be imposed by the school authorities (See sanctions below).

Sanctions;

Where a pupil has been found to be engaged in bullying behaviour, has formally promised to stop and has broken that promise, any of the following sanctions may be imposed.

- S/he may be required to sign another promise, this time countersigned by parent/guardian.
- Parent(s)/guardian(s), the relevant teacher and the Principal meet in a final effort to resolve the situation.
- The pupil may be suspended from the school.
- The case may be referred to the Board of Management and the pupil may be expelled from the school.

Established intervention strategies

- Teacher interviews with all pupils
- Negotiating agreements between pupils and following these up by monitoring progress. This can be on an informal basis or implemented through a more structured mediation process
- Working with parent(s)/guardian(s)s to support school interventions
- No Blame Approach
- Circle Time

In relation to bullying, NEPS psychologists can advise schools on best practice to address bullying when issues arise in schools / or provide training.

- In promoting resilience and skills in relationship repair between peers as appropriate.
- Avail of Oide's support and service for schools through wellbeing to address bullying behaviour.
- Engage with Webwise, the online safety initiative of the Department of Education. Increase awareness of the national parents council objective to ensure that all parents are supported and empowered to become effective partners in their children's learning journey.
- Tusla will be contacted for advice when it is considered that bullying behaviour is a child protection concern.

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

<u>Bullied pupils:</u>

- Ending the bullying behaviour,
- Changing the school culture to foster more respect for bullied pupils and all pupils,
- Changing the school culture to foster greater empathy towards and support for bullied pupils,
- Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through the awareness-raising programme,
- A speedy identification of those responsible and speedy resolution of bullying situations,
- After resolution, enabling bullied pupils to complete a victim-impact statement,
- Helping bullied pupils raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that help develop friendships and social skills
- If pupils require counselling or further supports the school will endeavour to liaise with the appropriate agencies to organise same, i.e. NEPS,

<u>Bullying pupils:</u>

- Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are not blamed or punished and get a 'clean sheet, and praised for doing the right thing.
- Making adequate counselling facilities available to help those who need to learn other ways of meeting their needs besides violating the rights of others,
- Helping those who need to raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that develop friendships and social skills
- Using learning strategies throughout the school and the curriculum to help enhance pupils' feelings of self-worth,
- In dealing with negative behaviour in general, encouraging teachers and parents to focus on, challenge and correct the behaviour while supporting the child,
- In dealing with bullying behaviour seeking resolution and offering a fresh start with a 'clean sheet' and no blame in return for keeping a promise to reform.

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.

The Board of Management confirms that the school will, in accordance with its obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps as are reasonably practicable to prevent the sexual harassment of pupils or staff or the harassment of pupils or staff on any of the nine grounds specified i.e. Gender including transgender, civil status,family status, sexual orientation,religion,age,disability,race and membership of the Traveller community.

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: Jim Grogan _____ Date: 12/06/25 _____

(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: Anne Marie Farrell _____ Date: 12/06/25 _____

(Principal)