Our Lady of Good Counsel BNS

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

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1. Introduction

The Board of Management of Our Lady of Good Counsel BNS 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.

This policy ensures that Our Lady of Good Counsel BNS is committed to creating a safe and supportive environment for all students, free from bullying behaviour.

2. Commitment

We acknowledge that bullying behaviour interferes with the rights of the child as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Our school community is committed to working together to prevent and address bullying behaviour and to deal with its negative impact.

We are committed to ensuring that all our students are kept safe from harm and that their well being is at the forefront of everything we do.

We will, in accordance with equality legislation, take reasonably practical steps to prevent the harassment of students or staff on any of the following grounds; **gender, marital status, family status, economic status, social status, age, ability/disability, sexual orientation, race, religion, ethnicity or membership of the Traveller community.**

3. Definition of Bullying

Bullying is defined as targeted behaviour, online or offline, that causes harm. The harm can be physical, social, and/or emotional in nature. Bullying behaviour is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power in relationships between individuals or groups.

Detailed definitions and examples are provided in Chapter 2 of the Bí Cineálta procedures.

4. Development and Review of Policy

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

Group	Date Consulted	Method of Consultation
School Staff	Friday 28th March	Half Day School Closure workshop and discussion
Students	January 8th 2025	Google Form
Parents	February 10th 2025	Google Form
Board of Management	Jan - June June 16th 2025	Ongoing discussion Raitification at BoM meeting

Date policy was approved: 16th June 2025

Date policy was last reviewed:

5. Preventing Bullying Behaviour

Our school employs the following strategies to prevent bullying behaviour:

Supervision and Monitoring:

Creating safe physical spaces in schools

- The school endeavors to maximise spaces that have a clear line of sight and minimise hidden spaces to make it easier for school staff to supervise and thus minimise the risk of bullying behaviour occurring.

Supervision

- Appropriate and adequate supervision is an important measure to help prevent and address bullying behaviour. We take all reasonable measures to ensure the safety of our students and to supervise them accordingly during break times, in classrooms and in other areas of the school. Non teaching staff are encouraged to be vigilant and report any issues to the relevant teachers.

Curriculum Integration:

Curriculum

- Teaching and learning that is collaborative and respectful should be promoted. Students should have regular opportunities to work in small groups with their peers. 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.
- School Programmes: SPHE Stay Safe, Welcome to Wellbeing, Weaving Wellbeing, RSE Programme, Cyber Safe Kids, WebWise, Grow in Love Religious Education Programme, Student Council, Pilot Start Smarter, Amber Flag Committee

Policy and planning

- The wellbeing of the school community should be at the heart of school policies and plans.
- 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.

<u>**Awareness Initiatives**</u>:

- Conducting workshops and seminars, holding talks on bullying, empathy, and respect
- Administration of a bullying questionnaire twice a year to all pupils from 2nd to 6th class. This will be done in late January and repeated in early June approximately.
- Displaying school's Bí Cinealta policy statements and posters in school foyer and other prominent places around the school environment.
- Aspects of bullying are discussed both in class and at school assemblies. A clear definition of what bullying is is used in age appropriate language. (What is bullying? What is not bullying? What to do if you feel you are being bullied? What to do if you see somebody else being bullied?

- STOP Signs are displayed in each class and on the corridors. These are discussed at assembly once a term at least. STOP= START TELLING OTHER PEOPLE and SEVERAL TIMES ON PURPOSE.

- Holding an annual Well Being and Friendship week for the school community. This will involve team building activities, circle time, group activities/projects for example and will endeavour to foster a sense of belonging, friendship, and togetherness.

- Conflict Resolution-Hidden Curriculum/Incidental Learning: Situations involving conflict amongst pupils, which may arise in the classroom/playground etc. can be used as a teaching tool where appropriate. Restorative practices questions will be implemented as appropriate.

- Involvement of the Student Council in contributing to a safe school environment e.g. the use of student designed activities that can help to support pupils and encourage a culture of peer respect and support.

- Modelling of respectful behaviour by teachers and staff. Promotion of extra-curricular activities which encourage co-operation among pupils

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
    - encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
    - challenging gender stereotypes
    - encouraging students to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour

Preventing racist bullying behaviour

- Students from diverse backgrounds may face discrimination and prejudice and may be subject to racist bullying behaviour.
- Strategies to prevent racist bullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:
    - fostering a school culture where diversity is celebrated and where students "see themselves" in their school environment
    - having the cultural diversity of the school visible and on display
    - encouraging peer support 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
    - providing supports to school staff to support students from ethnic minorities, including Traveller and Roma students, and to encourage communication with their parents
    - 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.

Digital Literacy:

Preventing cyberbullying behaviour

- Strategies to prevent cyberbullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:
    - promoting responsible online behaviour and digital citizenship.
    - implementing the SPHE curriculum, the use of Webwise lessons to support this
    - implementing the Digital Media Literacy curriculum and the digital literacy plan 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
    - holding an Internet safety day to reinforce awareness around appropriate online behaviour
    - It is important for their child's safety, that parents are aware of their children's use of technology including smartphones and gaming consoles.

Inclusive Environment:

School Culture:

- 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. Open communication between the Patron, Board of Management, School staff, students and their parents 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 set 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 address this.
- 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 as active partners in their child's education, can help foster an environment, where bullying behaviour is not tolerated through promoting empathy and respect.

- Displaying posters and materials that celebrate diversity and inclusion.
- Anti Bullying notice board.
- Sharing anti bullying materials at assembly.

A Telling Environment

- It is important that the school community supports a 'telling' environment. Encourage a culture of telling, with particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders. In that way pupils will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance. Bystanders can be the key to resolving bullying and if anyone witnesses bullying behaviour it should be reported. It should be made clear to all pupils that when they report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly. Remember – Your silence is the bully's greatest weapon. Staff should repeatedly reinforce the message that if anyone is the victim of bullying behaviour, they should not retaliate in any way, but they should tell an adult. Victims should be reassured that if they tell, something will be done about the bullying in a safe manner and all reported incidents will be dealt with.
- Teachers will ensure that class lessons to be provided to enable pupils "how and who to tell" (telling protocol) and also that they can inform the school by the following means:
  - Direct approach to the teacher/adult at an appropriate time, for example after class.
  - Hand note up.
  - Have another pupil tell on their behalf
  - Make a phonecall/send an email to the school or to a trusted adult in the school.
  - Get a parent(s)/guardian(s) or friend to tell on your behalf.
- According to research conducted in Ireland, there is a persistent tendency not to report bullying incidents. 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 the adult 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 Schools should take these reasons for not reporting into account when developing their strategies to

prevent and address bullying behaviour. Schools should be safe environments 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.

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 student councils, school clubs, parents' associations and student support teams.
- The following, which is not an exhaustive list, could 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
    - supporting the active participation of parents in school life, including those who may find it difficult or daunting to engage with the school due to being unfamiliar with the education system or due to language or cultural barriers
    - conducting workshops and seminars for students, school staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of bullying
    - supporting activities that build empathy, respect and resilience
    - encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring
    - promoting acts of kindness
    - teaching problem solving
    - hosting debates (Senior Classes)

6. Addressing Bullying Behaviour

A school is not expected to deal with bullying behaviour that occurs when students are not under the care or the responsibility of the school.

The teacher(s) responsible for addressing bullying behaviour are:

- Class teacher, Principal

The teacher will determine the who, what, when and why.

The school will 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 the bullying behaviour need support.

When bullying behaviour occurs, the school will:

- Ensure 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 experiencing bullying behaviour on how best to address the situation.

- Take action in a timely manner

- The relevant teacher must inform the Principal of all incidents being investigated.

- Inform parents of those involved. * *In circumstances where a student expresses concern about their parent being informed, the school should develop an appropriate plan to support the student and for how their parents will be informed*

- Record on Aladdin as appropriate.

Steps to Determine and Address Bullying Behaviour:

1. **Identify if Bullying Behaviour has Occurred**:

Engage with each student individually and then as a group. 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).

- 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
- Document the incident and actions taken in accordance with the Bí Cineálta template

2. **Support for Students**:
   - o Provide support for students experiencing, witnessing, and displaying bullying 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.

   - o Engage with parents and involve them in the process.Where bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents 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. This record should document the form and type of bullying behaviour, if known (see Section 2.5 and 2.7 of the Bi Cineálta procedures), where and when it took place and the date of the initial engagement with the students involved 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.

3. **Review Progress**:
   - o Follow up within 20 school days to review progress and determine if bullying behaviour has ceased. 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 the date that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased should also be recorded.

   - o Document the review and any further actions needed. 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 Behaviour. If disciplinary sanctions are considered, this is a matter between the relevant student, their parents 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

7. Oversight

The principal will present an update on bullying behaviour at each board of management meeting.
This update will include:

- The number of incidents reported since the last meeting.

- The number of ongoing incidents.

- The total number of incidents since the beginning of the school year.

8. Communication

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. It is also in the children's homework notebooks and is also available on our website and in hard copy on request.

9. Annual Review

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed, following input from our school community, each calendar year or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which this policy refers using Appendix E.

10: Ratification

This policy was ratified at the Board meeting.

Signed:_____ Date: 16th June2025

Michael Hunt
Chairperson of Board of Management

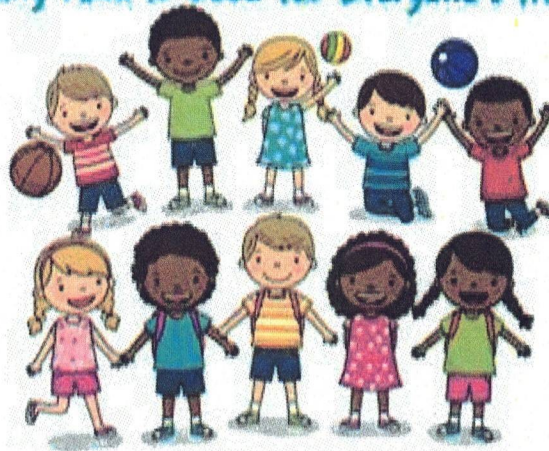Signed: Michelle Cotterell Date:16th June 2025

Michelle Cotterell

Principal

Bí Cineálta!

Being Kind is Good for Everyone's Mind!

Several
Times
On
Purpose

Start
Telling
Other
People

What is Bullying?

- Bullying is when someone is mean to you, again and again and it makes you feel sad or scared
- It can be mean words, mean actions, or even mean things online
- It's when someone uses their "power" or "control" to make someone else feel bad

How can we stop bullying?

- We watch out for everyone in the yard, in class, and everywhere else
- We learn about being kind and friendly in our classes
- We have special talks and activities to teach us about being nice to each other
- We learn how to be safe and kind online
- We put up posters and share stories about how great it is to be different and include everyone!
- If bullying is reported we will work out a plan together to look after everyone involved

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