



## Bí Cinéalta

# School Policy to Prevent and Deal with Bullying Behaviour

- The Board of Management of Scoil Abán Naofa has adopted the following policy to prevent and deal with bullying behaviour.
- This policy fully complies with the requirements of Bí Cinéalta: Procedures for Preventing and Dealing with Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2024.
- The Board of Management recognises that bullying behaviour violates the rights of the child as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. We all have a responsibility, as a school community, to work together to prevent and deal with bullying behaviour and to deal with the negative impact that bullying behaviour has.
- We are committed to ensuring that every student who attends our school is kept free from harm and that the wellbeing of our students is at the forefront of everything we do. We recognise the negative impact that bullying behaviour can have on the lives of our students and are fully committed to preventing and tackling bullying behaviour.
- We confirm that we will, in accordance with our obligations under equality legislation, take all reasonably practicable steps to prevent harassment of students or staff on any of the nine grounds specified: gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and being a member of the Traveller Community.



## Definition of bullying:

- Bullying is defined in Kindness: An Action Plan on Bullying and Being Kind: Procedures for Preventing and Dealing with Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools as targeted behaviour, online or offline, that causes harm. The harm caused may be physical, social and/or emotional. Bullying behaviour continues over a period of time and involves an imbalance of power in the relationship between two or groups of people in society. The detailed definition is given in Chapter 2 of the Being Kind procedures.
- Each school must develop and implement a Being Kind policy that sets out how the school community prevents and addresses bullying behaviour. The school's Code of Behaviour provides strategies for dealing with inappropriate behaviour that is not bullying behaviour.



## **Section A: Development/review of our Bí Cinéalta policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour:**

	Consultation date	Consultation method
Staff	26 / 03 / 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Staff Meeting</li><li>• Google Form Questionnaire</li></ul>
Pupils	12 / 05 / 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Written Questionnaire</li><li>• Poster Design</li></ul>
Parents	01 / 05 / 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Google Form Questionnaire</li></ul>
Date Policy Approved:		
Date Policy Last Reviewed:		



## Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

### Culture and Environment:

- A positive and inclusive school culture and environment are essential to preventing and addressing bullying behaviour. The school environment should be a space where students and school staff feel a sense of belonging and where they 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, boards of management, school staff, students and their parents help to foster a collaborative approach and shared responsibilities in preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.
- The school leadership team influences the school culture and sets the standards and expectations for the school community when preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.
- It is the responsibility of all members of the school community to develop and maintain a school culture that does not tolerate bullying behaviour and to adopt a consistent approach to addressing bullying behaviour.
- Silence is not always a good thing: It is important that the school community supports an environment where it is understood that silence is not always a good thing. Research conducted in Ireland has shown that there is a persistent tendency not to report incidents of bullying. Students should feel comfortable talking about concerns about bullying behaviour.
- 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 can support this strategy by letting students know that they can talk to them.

- Creating safe physical spaces in schools: Creating safe physical spaces supports psychological safety and is an important measure to prevent bullying behaviour. It is easier for school staff to supervise students in spaces that are clearly visible.
- Supervision: Appropriate supervision is an important measure to help prevent and address bullying behaviour. Schools have a duty to take all reasonable steps to ensure the safety of their students and to supervise students when students are attending school or school events. At Scoil Abán Naofa there are two teachers on duty every morning from 09:00 a.m. until the bell rings. At lunchtime, there is one teacher and three SNAs in the yard.
- At Scoil Abán Naofa we will celebrate cultures from around the world. Students from different parts of the world can showcase their cultures to their peers.
- We provide equal opportunities for all children, regardless of culture, race, gender, etc.
- Our presentations are inclusive and sensitive to the needs of all our students.
- We invite speakers from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds to teach us about themselves
- We consider a wide range of cultures when selecting topics for projects in the senior classes



## Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)

- Collaborative and respectful teaching and learning should be promoted. Students should have regular opportunities to work in small groups with their peers, which can help to develop a sense of connectedness, belonging and empathy among students. For example, during Physical Education classes, Drama lessons etc.
- The curriculum materials provided to students provide opportunities to foster inclusion and respect for diversity. Schools are encouraged to provide opportunities for students to develop their sense of worth through curricular and extra-curricular programmes.
- The curricula for Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) at primary level aim to foster students' well-being, self-confidence and belonging and to develop students' sense of personal responsibility for their own behaviour and activities. Students' social and emotional learning skills can be enhanced through the SPHE curriculum. An example of resources that can be used as part of SPHE teaching is included in the Resource Guide that accompanies these procedures.
- As part of the SPHE curriculum we run the **Stay Safe, Walk Tall** and **Relationships & Sexuality Education** programmes in Scoil Abán Naofa.
- We will forward links to parents regarding online safety for our children when they come to us.
- Our Faith programme helps to teach themes such as Friendship, feelings, wellbeing, awareness of difference, equity and equality and diversity.



## Policy and Planning:

- There are a range of other policies, such as the acceptable use policy, the supervision policy, the special education teaching policy and the school's Code of Behaviour that can support the implementation of the school's Bí Cinéalta policy.
- Supporting student participation in the development and implementation of school policies can be helpful in raising awareness and ensuring effective implementation.

## Relationships and Partnerships:

- Strong interpersonal connections are crucial to preventing and effectively addressing bullying behaviour. These interpersonal connections are supported by a range of formal and informal structures such as student councils, school clubs, parent associations and student support teams.
- At Scoil Abán Naofa we:
  - Support the active participation of students in school life
  - Support the active participation of parents in school life, including those who may find it difficult or challenging to engage with the school due to lack of knowledge of the education system or due to language or cultural barriers
  - Run workshops or seminars for students, school staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of bullying
  - Support activities that develop empathy, respect and resilience
  - Encourage peer support such as peer mentoring
  - Promote acts of kindness
  - Teach problem-solving
  - Model positive behaviour
  - Implement '**Zones of Regulation**' and the '**incredible 5-point scale**'.



## Preventing Cyberbullying Behaviour:

- Technology and social media provide many positive opportunities for entertainment, social engagement, and education. Technology is a part of life that can affect even the youngest members of society. However, students are becoming increasingly vulnerable to cyberbullying or unacceptable online behaviour due to the increased use of technology. Strategies to prevent cyberbullying behaviour include, but are not limited to:
  - 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 fostering respectful and kind relationships online
  - developing and communicating an acceptable technology use policy
  - referencing appropriate online behaviour as part of the standards of behaviour in the Code of Conduct
  - promoting or holding online safety events for parents who are responsible for supervising their children's online activities
  - holding a safe internet day to raise awareness of appropriate online behaviour
- The age of digital consent is the minimum age at which a user must be must be before a social media or internet company can collect, process and store their data. In Ireland, the age of digital consent is 16.
- For data collection purposes, students aged between 13 and 16 must have parental permission to register with social media services where companies use the legal basis of consent to process and store user data.
- Most social media platforms and services have a minimum age requirement and the minimum age requirement for most of these services is 13. So, 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 child's use of technology, including smartphones and games consoles.



## **Preventing homophobic/transphobic bullying behaviour:**

- All students, including gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students, have the right to feel safe and supported at school. Strategies to prevent homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour include, but are not limited to:
  - fostering and maintaining an inclusive physical environment, such as displaying relevant posters
  - encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and activities that foster empathy
  - challenging gender stereotypes
  - holding workshops and seminars for students, school staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of homophobic bullying behaviour
  - encouraging students to speak up when they see homophobic behaviour taking place

## **Preventing racist bullying behaviour:**

- fostering a school culture where diversity is celebrated and where students “see themselves” in their school environment
- making the school’s cultural diversity visible and on display
- holding workshops and seminars for students, school staff and parents to raise awareness of racism awakening
- encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and activities that foster empathy
- encouraging those who witness racist behaviour to report it
- providing supports for school staff to respond to the needs of students whose home language is not Irish or English, and to communicate with their parents
- providing supports for school staff to support students from ethnic minorities, including students from the Traveller and Roma communities, and to encourage communication with their parents
- inviting speakers from diverse ethnic backgrounds
- ensuring that library and textbook reading material reflects the relevant life experiences of students and adults from diverse national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds



## **Preventing sexual bullying behaviour:**

- Schools should focus on gender equality as part of the school's measures to
- create a supportive and respectful environment
- Strategies to prevent sexual bullying behaviour include, but are not limited to:
  - ensuring that staff members display respectful behaviour and treat students equally regardless of their gender
  - ensuring that all students have the same opportunities to participate in school activities regardless of their gender
  - celebrating diversity in school and recognising the contribution of all students
  - organising awareness-raising campaigns, workshops and presentations on gender equality and respect
  - encouraging parents to reinforce these values of respect at home

## **Preventing sexual harassment:**

- Preventing sexual harassment requires an approach focused on education, awareness and clear and enforceable policies. Schools must make it clear that sexual harassment is not tolerated. Sexual harassment should never be trivialised as teasing or bullying.
- Strategies to prevent sexual harassment include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - using the updated SPHE specification at post-primary level to teach students about healthy relationships and how to treat each other in a respectful and kind manner
  - promoting positive role models within the school community
  - challenging gender stereotypes that may contribute to sexual harassment



## Section C: Dealing with Bullying Behaviour

**The teacher(s) responsible for dealing with bullying behaviour, when bullying behaviour occurs, the school will:**

- ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour is listened to and put at ease
- endeavour to ensure the privacy of those involved
- conduct all conversations sensitively
- consider the age and ability of those involved
- listen to the views of the student experiencing bullying behaviour on how best to deal with the situation
- take timely action
- inform the parents of those involved

**The following are the steps the school will take to establish whether bullying behaviour has occurred, the approaches to be taken to address the bullying behaviour and to review progress:**

The main aim should be when addressing reports of bullying behaviour, stop the bullying behaviour and, as far as possible, restore the relationship between the students involved.

**Identifying whether bullying behaviour has occurred:**

- When identifying whether bullying behaviour has occurred, the teacher should consider the following: what, where, when and why?
- If a group of students is involved, each student should be contacted individually first.
- Thereafter, each student involved should be met as a group.



- At the group meeting, each student should be asked to give their own 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 also be helpful to ask the students involved to write down their account of the incident(s).
- Clear criteria for schools to recognise bullying behaviour are set out under the definition of bullying in Chapter 2. The questions in Appendix C may provide further assistance to schools in this regard.
- Incidents may occur where unacceptable and hurtful behaviour is involved that is not bullying behaviour. The school's Code of Behaviour provides strategies for dealing with inappropriate behaviour that is not bullying behaviour.

**Where bullying behaviour has occurred:**

- School staff should know what to do when bullying behaviour is reported to them or when they witness bullying behaviour. The school's Bí Cinéalta policy and the policy that is appropriate for students should clearly outline the steps to be taken when bullying behaviour is reported. (See Chapter 4).
- A school is not expected to deal with bullying behaviour that occurs when students are not in the school's care or responsibility. However, where such bullying behaviour has an impact on the school, schools are obliged to support the students involved. Where bullying behaviour continues in the school, schools should deal with it in accordance with their Bí Cinéalta policy.
- Where the student exhibiting bullying behaviour is not a student from the school but the student experiencing bullying behaviour is a student from the school, the school should support the student experiencing bullying behaviour and engage in discussions with him/her and the parents to decide on the steps that can be taken.



### **Determining whether the bullying behaviour has stopped:**

- A discussion with the students involved and their parents should be held no later than 20 school days after the initial contact to review progress following the initial intervention. Important aspects to consider as part of the review include the nature of the behaviour, the effectiveness of the strategies used to address the bullying behaviour, and the relationship between the students involved.
- Even if the bullying behaviour has stopped, both the student who experienced the bullying behaviour and the student who displayed the behaviour may need ongoing supervision and support. It may take some time for the relationship to settle and for the supports to take effect. In some cases, the relationship may never be restored to the state it was in before the bullying behaviour.
- If the bullying behaviour has not stopped, the teacher should review the strategies used in consultation with the students and parents and agree to meet again over an agreed period of time until the bullying behaviour has stopped.
- If it is apparent that the student who is displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behaviour, the school should consider using the strategies for dealing with inappropriate behaviour as provided for in the school's Code of Conduct. If the use of sanctions is considered, this is a matter between the student concerned, his/her parents and the school.



### **Recording bullying behaviour:**

- All incidents of bullying behaviour should be recorded. The record should document the form and nature of the bullying behaviour, if known, where and when it occurred and the date of initial contact 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. The review with the students and their parents to determine whether the bullying behaviour has ceased and the views of the students and their parents in this regard should be documented. The date of each of these contacts should also be recorded and the date on which it was determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased. Any contact with external services/supports should also be noted.
- These records should be kept in accordance with the school's record keeping policy and in accordance with data protection regulations.
- Where a student has a Student Support Document, schools are advised to include a copy of the record with the student's support document. This will assist the school's student support team, where one exists, in providing a consistent, holistic response to support the wellbeing of the students concerned. Where a Student Support Plan exists, the plan should be updated to include response strategies and related supports.



### **Requests for no action:**

- A student who reports bullying behaviour may ask a staff member to do nothing about the behaviour other than to “watch out” for him/her.
- The student may not want to be identified as someone who has leaked information about the bullying behaviour to someone. He/she may feel that telling someone will make things more difficult for him/her. In this case, it is important for the staff member to show empathy to the student, deal with the situation sensitively and talk to the student to work out together what steps can be taken to address the situation and how his/her parents will be informed. It is important that the student who has experienced bullying behaviour feels safe.
- Parents may also inform schools of bullying behaviour that has occurred and specifically request that the school not take any action. Parents should make this request to the school in writing or should be facilitated to do so where there are literacy or digital literacy barriers or language barriers. However, in considering the parent’s request, schools may decide, depending on the circumstances, that it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour.

### **Complaints Process:**

- If a parent is not satisfied with the way in which the school has addressed the bullying behaviour, in accordance with these procedures, they should be referred to the school’s complaints procedure.
- Further information relating to the school’s complaints procedures is available at the following link: [Complaints Procedures for Schools](#)
- If a parent is unhappy with the way a complaint has been handled, the parent may make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children if they believe that the school’s actions have had a negative impact on the student.
- The Office of the Ombudsman for Children can be contacted at [ococplaint@oco.ie](mailto:ococplaint@oco.ie)



## Section D: Supervision:

- 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 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 including, where relevant, information relating to trends and patterns identified, strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and any broader strategies to prevent and address bullying behaviour. This update does not contain personal or identifying information. See Chapter 7 of the Bí Cinéalta procedures.
- This policy is available to the school community on the school website and in hard copy upon request. A student-friendly version of this policy is on display in the school and is also available on our website and in hard copy upon request.
- This policy and its implementation will be reviewed annually or as soon as practicable after a material change in any matter to which this policy refers.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

(Chairperson of the Board of Management)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

(Principal)

Date: