Ballyhaunis Community School

Bí Cineálta Policy
to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

Ratified by the Board of Management on: _____

Signature: _____
                      (Chairperson of the Board of Management)

Commenced:	February 2025
Next review due:	April 2026

The Board of Management of Ballyhaunis Community School has adopted the following policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

This policy fully complies with the requirements of *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* 2024.

The board of management acknowledges that bullying 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.

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. The detailed definition is provided in Chapter 2 of the Bí Cineálta procedures.

Behaviour that is not bullying behaviour:

A one-off instance of negative behaviour towards another 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.

Disagreement between students, or instances where students don't want to be friends or to remain friends, is not considered bullying behaviour unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others including deliberate manipulation of friendship groups.

Some students with special educational needs may have social communication difficulties which may make them communicate their needs through behaviours that can hurt themselves or others. It is important to note that these behaviours are not deliberate or planned but, in certain situations, they are an automatic response which they can't control.

Bullying is not accidental or reckless behaviour. If the repeated harm is real for the student experiencing the behaviour but unintended by the other student, this is not bullying.

These behaviours, while not defined as bullying, can be distressing.

Criminal Behaviour:

Bullying behaviour can be considered criminal behaviour under certain circumstances and legal consequences can apply. The age of criminal responsibility in Ireland is 12 years.

Some online behaviour may be illegal, and students need to be aware of the far-reaching consequences of posting inappropriate or harmful content online. In cases of intimate imagery, the Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020, also known as Coco's Law, criminalises the non-consensual sharing of intimate images, criminalises threatening to share these images, and also sharing with the intent to cause harm.

If bullying behaviour involves physical violence or threats of violence, it may be considered assault.

If bullying behaviour involves discrimination or hate speech targeting a student based on their race, religion, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation or membership of the Traveller community, it may be considered a hate crime under the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989, and those engaging in such behaviour may face criminal charges.

If bullying behaviour involves sexual harassment or sexual assault, this may also be considered criminal behaviour.

An Garda Síochána is the appropriate authority to investigate alleged criminal behaviour.

Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour that is not bullying behaviour are provided for within the schools Code of Behaviour.

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

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

	Date consulted	Method of consultation
School Staff	16th May 2025	Questionnaire & half day school closure.
	27th May 2025	Draft policy emailed to staff for feedback/suggestions.
	30th May 2025	Discussion at staff meeting.
Students	28th April to 15th May 2025	Questionnaire & power point presentation
	1st May 2025	Consultation session with student council
Parents	8th April to 2nd May 2025	Questionnaire
Board of Management	24th June 2025	Review and ratifying of Draft Policy
Wider school community	15th May 2025	Consultation with HSCL

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at online bullying behaviour, homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour, racist bullying behaviour, sexist bullying behaviour and sexual harassment) that will be used by the school are as follows:

Culture and environment:
- A school-wide approach to the fostering of respect for all members of the school community.
- The promotion of the value of diversity and inclusion.
- The fostering and enhancing of the self-esteem of all our students through both curricular and extracurricular activities. Students will be provided with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth through formal and informal interactions.
- Whole staff professional development on bullying to ensure that all staff develops an awareness of what bullying is, how it impacts on students' lives and the need to respond to it in both prevention and intervention.
- School wide awareness raising and training on all aspects of bullying, to include students, parent(s)/guardian(s) and the wider school community.
- Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extra- curricular activities. Non-teaching and ancillary staff will be encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers. Supervision will also apply to monitoring student use of communication technology within the school.

- Involvement of the senior student mentors in contributing to a safe school environment that can help to support students and encourage a culture of peer respect and support.
- Development and promotion of a student *Bí Cineálta* policy for the school-to be included in student journals and displayed publicly in common areas of the school.
- The school's *Bí Cineálta* policy is discussed with students at the beginning of each school year and all parent(s)/guardian(s) during information evenings/enrolment. A copy of the policy is available on the school website.
- Ensuring that students know who to tell and how to tell.
- Implementation of whole school measures including: Poster Campaigns, Show Racism the red card initiative, School of Sanctuary initiatives, promotion of Diversity, Intercultural Day, Surveys etc.
- To create a 'telling school' environment where students feel free to speak to those in authority without fear of the stigma of 'telling tales'.
- Encourage parent(s)/guardian(s) to approach the school if they suspect that their child is being bullied.
- The Acceptable Use Policy in the school includes the necessary steps to ensure that the access to technology within the school is strictly monitored.
- Ongoing enforcement of the school's mobile phone ban.
- The following supports are being used in the school: Knock Counselling Service, CAHMS (Child and Adolescence Mental Health Services), Tusla, NCSE, EWO and NEPS, Mindspace, Jigsaw, Foróige, Family Support Worker, Family Resource Centre, HSCL, Reception Office IPAS Centre.
- Other supports available :
  - Webwise.ie
  - Oide.ie
  - Antibullyingcentre.ie/fuse/

Implementation of curricula:
- The full implementation of the SPHE, RSE and Wellbeing curricula.
- Promoting Digital Media Literacy in IT, teaching students about responsible online behaviour.
- Continuous Professional Development for staff in delivering these programmes.
- School wide delivery of lessons on various forms of bullying will be delivered using a wide variety of programmes at the discretion of the school.
- The school will specifically consider students with additional needs.

Policy & Planning:
The wellbeing of the school community is at the core of the schools policies and plans.
The school supports the participation of students in the development and implementation of school policies and plans, this helps increase awareness and ensure effective implementation.
School policies, practices and activities that are particularly relevant to bullying include the Code of Behaviour, Child Protection policy, Acceptable Use policy, Admissions policy, School Tours policy, Substance Use policy, RSE policy and Special Education Needs Policy.

Bullying Prevention aligned with Key Areas of Wellbeing Promotion:

Culture and Environment	Curriculum
- Open Door Policy - Student Care Team - Mentoring System - Establishment of a Safe Telling Environment - Seating Plans - Class contract agreed with students - Changing groups regularly - Positive classroom environment - Positive points - Visible Displays around the school - Display of students' work - Empowerment of student voice- Students' Council, Class reps and vice reps, Focus Groups - Designated areas for students - Split breaks, Games Club, Art Club, Trad Group, Lego Club, ASD unit, Sensory Room, Prayer room, etc. - Random Acts of Kindness e.g. Christmas Selection box, Valentines sweets, Easter Eggs, Ice Cream Truck, etc. - Promotion of Diversity & Inclusion - School of Sanctuary - Senior Mentors	- Various awareness events throughout the school calendar e.g. Wellness Week, Anti-Bullying, (Cyber Bullying), Internet safety day, Show racism the red card, Inter cultural day, Themed poetry poster competitions, Module on Coco's Law etc. - Peer Teaching - Wellbeing is at the Centre of all subject plans - Support for EAL/AEN students - Primary school visits - Culture of inclusion - Updates to staff from management, regular staff meeting updates, etc. - Staff CPD on area of anti-bullying - Whole school survey regarding bullying
Relationships and Partnerships	**Policy and Planning**
- Linking with external services e.g. NEPS, CAMHS, Tusla, Gardaí, Family Support Worker, NCSE, Translation service. - Linking with BOM, Parents Association, Students' Council, Local clubs, Subject specific CBAs e.g. CSPE Action Project, SPHE, CBA Class events, Green schools events, Fundraising events - Guest Speakers - Garda Visits - Extra-Curricular- Coaches, Choreographers, Artists, etc. - Planet Youth - Outdoor classroom area, e.g. poly tunnel - Walkway, Outdoor seating, Fragile life garden - Work experience placements	- Bí Cineálta Policy - Code of Behaviour Policy - Acceptable Use Policy - Child Safeguarding - Data Protection - Admissions policy - School Tours policy - Substance Use policy - RSE policy - Special Education Needs Policy - Staff aware that they are all mandated persons, and complete Children First E-Learning Programme. Reminders at staff meetings, Teacher Diary and Staff TEAM. - Principal & Deputy Principal(s) complete DLP/DDLP training and refreshers

In addition to all the practices identified above under Culture and Environment, Curriculum, Planning and Policy and Relationships and Partnerships Ballyhaunis Community School has the following supervision and monitoring policies to prevent and address bullying behaviour:

- Supervision during breaks and lunchtimes - A weekly schedule of student supervision on corridors and yard is developed to supervise students and monitor student behaviour and wellbeing. Any causes for concern are dealt with and reported through VSware to the Year Head to follow up.
- All staff are watchful and observe relationships between students in class, note absence patterns and let it be known that high standards of behaviour are always expected
- Survey of Students - Students are surveyed through an online form regarding bullying behaviour.
- Student Care Team – the student care team meet weekly and implement appropriate measures for students in need of support.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

All teacher(s),Year Heads, Axillary Staff, SNA's and/or Deputy Principal(s) and/or the Principal have the responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour in Ballyhaunis Community School.

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/guardians 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:

To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour the following questions will be considered:

1. Is the behaviour *targeted* at a specific student or group of students?
2. Is the behaviour intended to cause physical, social or emotional *harm*?
3. Is the behaviour *repeated*?

If the answer to each of the questions above is Yes, then the behaviour is bullying behaviour and the behaviour should will be addressed using the Bí Cineálta Procedures.

Note: One-off incidents may be considered bullying in certain circumstances. A single hurtful message posted on social media can be considered bullying behaviour as it has a high likelihood of being shared multiple times and thus becomes a repeated behaviour.

If the answer to any of these questions is No, then the behaviour is not bullying behaviour. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Positive Behaviour.

Procedures for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying:

Every effort will be made to ensure that all involved (including staff, students, parent(s)/guardian(s)) understand this approach from the outset.

Reporting bullying behaviour:
- Any student or parent(s)/guardian(s) may bring a bullying incident to any teacher in the school.
- All reports, will be investigated and dealt with by the Teacher/Year Head and/or Deputy Principal(s) and/or Principal.
- Teaching and non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), caretakers, cleaners must report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them.

Investigating and dealing with incidents:

When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred teachers should consider what, where, when and why?
- Parents/guardians are an integral part of the school community and play an important role, in partnership with the school, in addressing bullying behaviour. Where bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents/guardians of the parties will 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 as outlined in the school's Bí Cineálta policy.
- The school will consider communication barriers that may exist when communicating with parents/guardians, for example, literacy, digital literacy or language barriers.
- The school is obliged to fully investigate any alleged incidents of bullying which are reported by parents/guardians.
- 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.
- Any bullying incident will be recorded on VSware by the reporting staff member and dealt with by the Teacher/Year Head and/or Deputy Principal(s) and/or Principal.
- If a group of students is involved, each student should be engaged with individually at first, thereafter, all students involved should be met as a group.
- It may be appropriate to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s); If necessary students who are on the fringes of the incident will also be heard.
- At the group meeting, each student should be asked for their account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's views.
- Each student should be supported as appropriate, following the group meeting.
- A record will be kept of the engagement with all involved including the initial 'Record of Bullying Behaviour' (Appendix 1).
- This record will document the form and type of bullying behaviour, where and when it took place and the date of the initial engagement with the students involved and their parents/guardians.

- The record should include the views of the students and their parents/guardians regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour.
- It will be made clear to all involved (each set of students and parents/guardians) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the student being disciplined, his or her parents/guardians and the school.
- All parties will be offered support from a member of the Care Team and follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved will take place separately with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date if the students who has been bullied is ready and agreeable.

Follow – up where Bullying Behaviour occurred:

- The reporting staff members must engage with the students involved and their parents/guardians again within 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/Year Head and/or Deputy Principal(s) and/or Principal should document the review with students and their parents/guardians to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased and the views of students and their parents/guardians 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/Year Head and/or Deputy Principal(s) and/or Principal should review the strategies used in consultation with the students involved and their parents/guardians. 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 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/guardians and the school.
- If a parent/guardian 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/guardian 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.

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. Where this occurs, the member of staff will show empathy to the student and deal with the matter sensitively and speaks with the student to work out together what steps can be taken to address the matter and inform the students that

their parents/guardians will be informed of the situation. It is important that the student who has experienced bullying behaviour feels safe.

Parents/guardians may also make schools aware of bullying behaviour that has occurred and specifically request that the school take no action. Parents/guardians should put this request in writing to the school or will be facilitated to do so where there are literacy, digital literacy or language barriers. However, while acknowledging the parents/guardians request, the school may decide that, based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour.

The school will use the following approaches to support those who experience, witness and display bullying behaviour:

The school's programme of support for working with students affected by bullying is as follows:
- Students may need counselling and/or opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop their friendship and social skills and thereby build resilience.
- In this regard the relevant Student Care Team member will put in place a programme of support and work closely with the student to ensure they are actively supported in the school and to engage in school based activities they enjoy.
- The programme of support will be in conjunction with the relevant Year Head.
- The learning strategies applied within the school will also allow for the enhancement of the students self-worth

Students who display bullying Behaviour:

- Students who engage in bullying behaviour may need counselling to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others.
- The Year Head in conjunction with the relevant Student Care Team member will work closely with the student in this regard.

Outside agency support:

- The school in certain circumstances may also seek the support and advice of Knock Counselling Service, CAHMS, Tusla, NCSE, EWO and NEPS, Mindspace, Jigsaw, Foróige, Family Support Worker, Family Resource Centre, HSCL, Reception Office IPAS Centre, and any other agency deemed appropriate to support the school.
- Other supports available :
  - Webwise.ie
  - Oide.ie
  - DCU Anti-Bullying Centre - Antibullyingcentre.ie/fuse/
  - National Parents Council

Record-Keeping

All bullying behaviour will be recorded on the 'Record of Bullying Behaviour' (Appendix 1). 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, in the student journal.

Modification clause

The Board of Management in consultation with the school management team reserves the right to modify the details of this policy at short notice in response to events or circumstances that were not foreseeable when the policy was being first drafted or subsequently reviewed. 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. Any necessary revisions will be communicated to students, parents/guardians, and staff accordingly.

Appendix 1

Record of Bullying Behaviour

1. Name of student being bullied and class group

Name _____ Class_____

2. Name(s) and class(es) of student(s) engaged in bullying behaviour

_____

_____

3. Source of bullying concern/report
(tick relevant option(s))
Student concerned
Other Student
Parent
Teacher
Other

4. Location of incidents
(tick relevant option(s))
Playground
Classroom
Corridor
Toilets
School Bus
Other (specify)

Name of person(s) who reported the bullying concern :

_____

4. Type of Bullying Behaviour (tick relevant option(s))

Physical bullying behaviour
Verbal bullying behaviour
Written bullying behaviour
Extortion
Relational
Exclusion
Online bullying behaviour
Disablist bullying behaviour
Exceptionally able bullying

Gender identity bullying
Homophobic/transphobic(LGBTQ+) bullying behaviour
Physical appearance bullying
Racist bullying
Poverty bullying
Religious identity bullying
Sexist bullying
Sexual harassment bullying
Other (specify)

5. When Bullying occurred if known

_____

6. Date of initial engagement with student(s)/parent(s)

_____

7. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

8. Views of student(s)/parent(s) regarding the actions to be taken to address bullying behaviour

_____

_____

9. Details of actions taken

_____

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_____

10. Date of review with student(s)/parent(s) to determine if bullying behaviour has ceased and the views of students and their parents in relation to this, (no greater than 20 school days since the initial report).

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_____

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11. Engagement with external services/supports (if any)

_____

Signed:_____(Teacher)   Date _____

Signed:_____(Year Head) Date _____