Appendix A
School Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire Naofa, Rathfeigh (17964K) 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.

Each school is required to develop and implement a Bí Cineálta policy that sets out how the school community prevents and addresses bullying behaviour. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour that is not bullying behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

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	March – May 2025	Regular review of the "Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools" at after-school planning meetings.
	March 28th 2025	Half day school closure to discuss the Bí Cineálta procedures with the Parents' Association.
	May 26th 2025	Draft " Bí Cineálta" Policy given to staff for feedback
Students	May 1st 2025	Pupil Questionnaires on Anti-Bullying given to pupils in 1st – 6th class.
Parents	May 1st 2025	Parental/Guardian Questionnaires on Anti-Bullying.
	May 29th 2025	Draft Bí Cineálta" Policy e-mailed to parents/guardians for feedback.
Board of Management	May 29th 2025	Draft Bí Cineálta" Policy e-mailed to Board of Management for feedback
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	May 29th 2025	Draft "Bí Cineálta" policy given to the bus driver for feedback.

Date policy was approved: 25th September 2025

Date policy was last reviewed: This policy was ratified firstly on 25th September 2025 and will be reviewed yearly (September).

Section B

Preventing Bullying Behaviour

This section sets out the prevention strategies that will be used by the school. These include strategies specifically aimed at preventing online bullying behaviour, homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour, racist bullying behaviour, sexist bullying behaviour and sexual harassment as appropriate (see Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

Preventing Bullying Behaviour

Culture and Environment

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

- Involve parents/guardians as active partners in fostering an environment where bullying behaviour is not tolerated.

- Support the idea that our school is a **telling environment**.

- Promote the concept of a trusted adult who to tell.

- Create safe spaces in our school building and yards – visibility

- Incorporate artwork and signs to promote our school values – creation of a school charter promoting rights – equality, inclusion and respect.

- Encourage a sense of belonging with ownership of their own space through art and creativity.

- Create a positive school culture and climate which
  - is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity.
  - encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment.
  - promotes respectful relationships across the school community.

Teaching and Learning

- A termly Anti-Bullying/Friendship week.

- Explicitly teach pupils what respectful language and respectful behaviour looks like, acts like, sounds like and feels like in class and around the school.

- Explicitly teach pupils about the appropriate use of social media.

- Provide teaching and promote learning which is collaborative and respectful.

- fostering inclusion and respect for diversity.

- Display a shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact.

- Teach SPHE and RSE content which fosters student's well-being and self-confidence as well as promoting personal responsibility for their own behaviour and actions.

- Model respectful behaviour towards colleagues, pupils and visitors in our school environment.

- Encourage the children to participate in Curricular and Extra-curricular activities which can help to develop a sense of self-worth.

- Acknowledgment of our diverse school population – celebrating diversity and culture in our school through art, displays, photographs, and international events.

- Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils.

Policy and Planning

- Review the Bí Cineálta Anti-Bullying Policy with staff regularly and a review of the Bí Cineálta Anti-Bullying Policy with the Board of Management annually.

- To raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with school management, teachers, pupils, parents/guardians.

- Have the Bí Cineálta Anti-Bullying policy on display prominently around the school.

- To promote a school ethos which encourages children to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.

- To ensure appropriate supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of school activity are kept under observation.

- To develop procedures for noting, investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.

- To implement a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and for those involved in bullying behaviour.

- The Internet Acceptable Usage Policy, Special Education Policy, Code of Behaviour Policy and Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment policies support the implementation of the Bí Cineálta policy.

- Effective leadership is a key component with Principal, Deputy Principal, teachers, SNA's, secretary and Board of Management focused on supporting the implementation of this policy.

Relationships and Partnerships

- Interpersonal connections are supported through a range of formal and informal structures such as our Parents' Association and our Students' Council.

- Conducting workshops with pupils in the various classes to raise their awareness of the school's Bí Cineálta Anti-Bullying policy and to give them the opportunity to discuss issues of concern in relation to bullying.

- Supporting active participation of students in school life and active participation of parents in school life also.

- Engaging parents/guardians and students in actively contributing to the formation of a Child Friendly Bí Cineálta Anti Bullying Policy and to make them active participants in the promotion and

- Discussion of useful ways to identify and reduce bullying behaviour and highlight procedures on how to deal with it if it does occur.

- Work with parents/guardians and students to educate them about the dangers of cyber-bullying by facilitating outside speakers e.g. Zeeko

Preventing homophobic/transphobic bullying behaviour

All pupils including gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender pupils, have a right to feel safe and supported at school. Strategies to prevent homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour may 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
- Conducting workshops and seminars for students, school staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of homophobic bullying behavior
- Encouraging students to speak up when they witness homophobic behavior.

Preventing racist bullying behaviour

Schools have become much more culturally diverse over the last number of decades. Students attending schools come from many different cultures and backgrounds. Students from diverse backgrounds may face discrimination and prejudice and may be subject to racist bullying behaviour. Strategies to prevent racist bullying behavior may 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
- Conducting workshops and seminars for students, school staff and parents/guardians to raise awareness of racism
- 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/guardians
- 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

Preventing sexist bullying behavior

Schools should focus on gender equality as part of the school's measures to create a supportive and respectful environment. Strategies to prevent sexist bullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

➢ Ensuring members of staff model respectful behaviour and treat students equally irrespective of their sex
➢ Ensuring all students have the same opportunities to engage in school activities irrespective of their sex
➢ Celebrating diversity at school and acknowledging the contributions of all students
➢ Organising awareness campaigns, workshops and presentations on gender equality and respect
➢ Encouraging parents to reinforce these values of respect at home

Preventing cyberbullying behaviour

Technology and social media have provided many positive opportunities for entertainment, social engagement and education. Technology is a part of life that can impact even the youngest members of society. However, the increase in the use of technology has led to students becoming increasingly vulnerable to cyberbullying or unacceptable online behaviour. Schools should proactively address these challenges by promoting digital literacy, digital citizenship, and fostering safe online environments. Strategies to prevent cyberbullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

➢ Implementing the SPHE curriculum
➢ Having regular conversations with students about developing respectful and kind relationships online
➢ Reviewing the school's Internet Acceptable Usage policy regularly and communicating it to the pupils and parents/guardians.
➢ 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

The digital age of consent is the minimum age a user must be before a social media or internet company can collect process and store their data. In Ireland the digital age of consent is 16. For the purposes of data collection, students between the age of 13 and 16 years old must have parental permission to sign-up to social media services where companies use the legal basis of consent to collect process and store users' data. Most social media platforms and services have a minimum age requirement and for the majority of these services it is 13 years' old. Therefore 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 children's use of technology including smartphones and gaming consoles.

The school has the following supervision and monitoring policies in place to prevent and address bullying behaviour (see Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

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Supervision

As per our Statement of Strategy for School Attendance Policy the school opens at 8.50am daily. The children are supervised in their classrooms by the class teacher before school formally starts at 9am. The Board of Management doesn't accept responsibility for children inside the school gates before 8.50am. The children have two "break times" daily (10.45am to 11am and 12.35pm to 1pm). We have two teachers on yard duty for both breaks daily. Our two SNAs are also present during "break times". **The Yard Duty roster is on display in the staffroom.**

At home-time for the Junior Infants/Senior Infants (1.40pm) the children are collected by their parents/guardians/child-minders from the school door closest to the Infant classroom. The children in 1st-6th class go home at 2.40pm. The class teachers bring their classes outside. We have a teacher supervising the children (**roster in the staffroom**) in the event parents/guardians are delayed in collecting their children at home-time.

Parents/Guardians must sign the "Sign-In/Sign-Out" book at reception if their children are late arriving to school or if they are being collected early from school.

The following policies are in conjunction with our Bí Cineálta Policy:
➢ Code of Behaviour Policy
➢ Internet Acceptable Usage Policy
➢ School Tours/Outings Policy
➢ Special Education Needs Policy

Section C

Addressing Bullying Behaviour

The teacher(s) with responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour is (are) as follows:

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Class teacher and the Principal/Deputy Principal

The Principal will inform the Board of Management of incidences of bullying.

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 (see Chapter 6 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

Stage 1 - Identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred

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 Bi Cineálta procedures.

Where bullying behaviour is suspected, parents/guardians report it to the class teacher. To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour we will consider the following questions:

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 be addressed using the Bí Cineálta Procedures.

Note: One-off incidents may be considered bullying behaviour 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 Behaviour.**

- When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred (Stage 1), teachers should consider what, where, when and why? (Note that these steps are required – as outlined in the Procedures):

- Where one student is reported to be involved, the student should be engaged with individually at first.

- Thereafter, this student and the student who is reported to be experiencing the bullying behaviour should be met together.

- If a group of students is involved, each student should be engaged with individually at first. Thereafter, all students involved and the student who is reported to be experiencing the bullying behaviour should be met as a group.

- 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. It may be helpful to ask the students involved to write down their account of the incident(s).

- Parents/Guardians will be supported by the school, if needed, with recommendations for useful resources/guides to help them support their children

Stage 2 - Where bullying behaviour has occurred

- Parents/Guardians are an integral part of the school community and play an important role, in partnership with schools, in addressing bullying behaviour. Where bullying behaviour has occurred the parents/guardians of the students involved 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.

- 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.

- All bullying behaviour will be recorded. This will include the form and type of behaviour if known (see pages 20-24, Section 2.5 and 2.7 of the Bí Cineálta procedures for descriptions/examples of the forms and types of bullying behaviour), where and when it took place, and the date of the engagement with students and parents/guardians.

- 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.

- The record should be shared with the Principal.

Stage 3 - Follow up where bullying behaviour has occurred

- The teacher will engage with the students involved and their parents/guardians again no more than 20 school days after the initial engagement. Important factors to consider as part of this engagement are the nature of the bullying behaviour, the effectiveness of the strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and the relationship between the students involved.

- The teacher should document the review with students and their parents/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 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 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 (available on our website).

- 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. The student may not want to be identified as having told someone about the bullying behaviour. They may feel that telling someone might make things more difficult for them. Where this occurs, it is important that the member of staff shows empathy to the student, deals with the matter sensitively and speaks with the student to work out together what steps can be taken to address the matter and how their parents/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 be facilitated to do so where there are literacy, digital literacy or language barriers.** However, while acknowledging the parent's/guardians request, schools 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 (see Chapter 6 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):
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The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying involves a whole school approach. Given the complexity of bullying behaviour, no one intervention/support programme works in all situations.

Supporting pupils who experience bullying behaviour:

➢ Ending the bullying behaviour

➢ Fostering respect for bullied pupils and all pupils

➢ Fostering greater empathy towards and support for bullied pupils

➢ Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through annual awareness-raising programmes

➢ Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through the speedy identification of those responsible and speedy resolution of bullying situations

➢ Making adequate counselling facilities available to pupils who need it in a timely manner (subject to available funding)

➢ Helping bullied pupils raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that help develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school)

➢ Ensuring that relevant staff are aware of particular children's difficulties so that they can provide extra support or supervision as appropriate

➢ Advising parents/guardians to bring the child to counselling or other appropriate professional services if deemed appropriate (in exceptional circumstances)

➢ Co-operating with relevant professionals/outside agencies etc. to ensure that children can access the necessary help (in accordance with data protection considerations)

➢ When necessary, additional support may be sought from external agencies such as NEPS and Tusla

Supporting pupils who display bullying behaviour:

➢ Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are not blamed or punished and get a clean sheet

➢ Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are doing the right and honorable thing and giving them praise for this

➢ Making adequate counseling facilities available to help those who need it 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 (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school)

➢ 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/guardians 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

<u>**Oversight**</u>

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. See Chapter 7 of the Bí Cineálta procedures.

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.

Chairperson Board of Management

Date: 25th September 2025

Principal

Date: 25th September 2025