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Bí Cineálta

**Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour
September 2025**

The Board of Management of Ahane National 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.

We confirm that we will take all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the bullying or harassment of our students in whatever form and however motivated.

Catholic schools have a distinctive understanding of the human person, recognising that every person is created in God's image and likeness and has inherent dignity as a child of God. This is the basis for ensuring that each person in our school is treated with respect and care, in accordance with the Catholic Schedule.

As a Catholic school, we are committed to respecting the dignity of every individual. No human person is to be devalued, and all have an indispensable part to play in the school community, regardless of difference.

Definition of bullying

Bullying is defined in *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* and *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* as targeted behaviour, online or offline that causes harm.

The harm caused can be physical, social and/or emotional in nature.

Bullying behaviour is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power in relationships between two people or groups of people in society.

- It is behaviour which is deliberate in nature and is unwanted. It is not accidental or reckless behaviour.

The harm can be:

- Physical (eg: personal injury, damage to or loss of property)
 - Social: (eg: withdrawal, loneliness, exclusion)
 - Emotional: (eg: low self-esteem, depression, anxiety)
- A one-off instance of negative behaviour towards a 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.

Behaviour that is not bullying behaviour:

- If the repeated harm is real for the student experiencing the behaviour, but unintended by the other student, this is not bullying, but, importantly, must be addressed under the school's code of behaviour.
- 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 cannot control.
- Disagreement between students is not considered bullying unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.

Types of Bullying:

There are many different types of bullying behaviour.

These can include directing bullying at someone focused on the following: disability, exceptional ability, gender identity, LGBTQ+, physical appearance, racism, poverty status, religious identity, sexism and sexual harassment. This is not an exhaustive list.

Bullying can be: Direct:

- Physical: pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping students. Physical assault. Destruction of personal property.
- Verbal: continual name calling which insults, humiliates the student – this may refer to physical appearance, size, clothes, gender, accent, academic ability, race or ethnic origin.
- Written: Writing insulting remarks in public places, passing notes or drawings about the student.
- Extortion: where something is obtained through force or threats

Bullying can be: Indirect:

- Exclusion: where a student is deliberately and repeatedly isolated, excluded or ignored by a student or group of students.
- Relational: Where a student's attempts to form friendships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined, threats, non-verbal gesturing, malicious gossip, spreading rumours, silent treatment and manipulation of friend groups etc can all form relational bullying for a student.

In accordance with requirements Ahane National School has developed and will 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 behavior

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	January 31 st , 2025 February - March 2025	Staff in-service Review of Draft Bí Cineálta Policy at staff meetings. Consultation and finalization
Students	January and February 2025	Student Council with teacher Therese Tuohey
Parents	March and April 2025	Circulation of Draft Policy on Aladdin to all families with feedback requested via email to School Office. Circulation to Parents Association for discussion at meeting and feedback via PA Chairperson to Principal
Board of Management	February - May 2025 June 2025	Circulation of draft at meetings and discussion St. Senan's Education Office (additional wording inclusion)
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	N/A	
Date policy was approved: 13 th May 2025		
Date policy was last reviewed:		

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

This section sets out the prevention strategies that will be used by this school to address all forms of bullying behaviour, in whatever form and however motivated, including online bullying behaviour, homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour, racist bullying behaviour, sexist bullying behaviour and sexual harassment as appropriate (see Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures)

Prevention Strategies

In developing preventative strategies which this school will use to prevent all forms of bullying behaviour, we come from the context of our Catholic ethos where inclusivity permeates the school in a real way.

This school takes positive steps to ensure that the culture of the school is one which welcomes a respectful dialogue and encounter with diversity and difference, by ensuring that prevention and inclusivity strategies are given priority and discussed regularly at board of management and staff meetings.

The dignity and the wellbeing of the individual person is of paramount concern in our Christian response. This school will listen closely to and dialogue with parents, thereby building a relationship of mutual understanding, respect, trust and confidence.

In continuing to develop prevention strategies, this school will listen to young people and parents, to help establish their particular context and needs. Frequent periods of reflection and engagement by the school, young people and parents, will be used to discern appropriate supports for young people in this school and to help inform future prevention strategies.

1. Culture and Environment

A positive and inclusive school culture and environment is essential to prevent and address bullying behaviour. The school environment is a space where pupils and school staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported.

Relationships between all members of the school community are based on respect, care, integrity and trust. Open communication between the Patron, Board of Management, school staff, pupils and their parents helps 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 addressing bullying behaviour.

Pupils 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.

2. A Telling Environment

The school community supports a 'telling' environment. Pupils should feel comfortable talking about concerns regarding bullying behaviour. The concept of "a trusted adult" is used as an effective strategy to encourage pupils to report if they or another pupil is experiencing bullying behaviour. Staff support this strategy by letting pupils know that they can talk to them. Pupils who witness bullying behaviour are supported and encouraged to report the behaviour to a trusted adult in the school so that the behaviour can be addressed.

Pupils 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. The trusted adult should reassure the pupil that they have done the right thing by reporting the behaviour. The trusted adult should, without delay, inform the class teacher of pupil who has responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour.

3. Creating safe physical spaces in schools

The creation of safe physical spaces supports psychological safety and is an important measure to prevent bullying behaviour. Spaces that have a clear line of sight make it easier for school staff to supervise pupils.

Appropriate supervision is an important measure to help prevent and address bullying behaviour.

4. Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)

Teaching and learning that is collaborative and respectful is promoted. Pupils have regular opportunities to work in small groups with their peers, which can help build a sense of connection, belonging and empathy among pupils. The school provides opportunities for pupils to develop a sense of self-worth through both curricular and extracurricular programmes. The Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) curricula aim to foster pupils' wellbeing, self-confidence and sense of belonging and to develop pupils' sense of personal responsibility for their own behaviour and actions.

5. Policy and Planning

The wellbeing of the school community is at the heart of school policies and plans. There are a range of other policies such as the school's acceptable use policy, supervision policy, special education teaching policy and Code of Behaviour that support implementation of a school's Bí Cineálta policy.

6. 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 teams, and parents' associations.

The following are used 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 (Friendship February, A Lust for Life, Cool Calm and Confident, Smart Moves)
- supporting the active participation of pupils in school life
- supporting the active participation of parents in school life,
- conducting workshops and seminars for pupils , school staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of bullying
- supporting activities that build empathy, respect and resilience (Weaving Wellbeing)
- encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring (Buddy Groups in yard)
- promoting acts of kindness
- teaching problem solving

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):

7. In addition to the above-mentioned strategies, the school has the following in place to prevent and address bullying:

- Code of Behaviour
- Child Protection Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Supervision Policy
- School Tours Policy
- Swimming Policy
- Health & Safety Policy

8. 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 pupils becoming increasingly vulnerable to cyberbullying or unacceptable online behaviour. We proactively address these challenges by promoting digital literacy, digital citizenship, and fostering safe online environments.

Strategies to prevent cyberbullying behaviour include the following,

- implementing the SPHE curriculum having regular conversations with pupils 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

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.

9. Preventing homophobic/transphobic bullying behavior

All pupils including gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students, have a right to feel safe and supported at school. Strategies to prevent homophobic and transphobic bullying behavior include

- maintaining an inclusive physical environment
- encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
- encouraging students to speak up when they witness homophobic behavior

10. Preventing racist bullying behavior

Ahane National School has become much more culturally diverse over the last number of years. Pupils attending the school come from many different cultures and backgrounds. Pupils from diverse backgrounds may face discrimination and prejudice and may be subject to racist bullying behavior. Strategies to prevent racist bullying behavior include the following

- fostering a school culture where diversity is celebrated and where students "see themselves" in their school environment
- encouraging bystanders to report when they witness racist behavior
- ensuring that library reading material and textbooks represent appropriate lived experiences of pupils and adults from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds

11. Preventing sexist bullying behavior

Ahane National School focuses on gender equality as part of the school's measures to create a supportive and respectful environment.

Strategies to prevent sexist bullying behaviour include

- 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 pupils
- encouraging parents to reinforce these values of respect at home

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

The teachers with responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour are as follows

- The class teacher will oversee recording of bullying reports for pupils in their class – this includes using the procedure guidelines to investigate reports of bullying and recording bullying behaviour on the document on Aladdin
- The DDLP will follow up after twenty days to investigate if bullying has ceased.
- All staff will be vigilant to bullying behaviour.
- Principal is available to provide support if needed to assist class teacher in addressing bullying behavior.
- Principal will inform Board of Management of incidences of Bullying.

When bullying behaviour occurs, the school will:

- ensure that the pupil 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 pupil who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation
- take action in a timely manner
- inform parents of those involved

The steps that will be taken by the school to determine if bullying behaviour has occurred, the approaches taken to address the bullying behaviour and to review progress are as follows (see Chapter 6 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

The whole school community has a responsibility to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

Ahane National School will work in partnership with our Patron, Board of Management, staff, pupils and their parents to develop and implement our Bí Cineálta policy.

The Policy is based on the information contained in *Chapter 6 of the Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

The **primary aim** in addressing reports of bullying behaviour is to stop the bullying behaviour and to restore, as far as practicable, the relationships of the pupils involved, rather than to apportion blame.

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.

To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour you should 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 behavior and the behaviour should be addressed using the BÍ Cineálta Procedures. Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post Primary Schools

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 Behaviour.

When identifying if 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 engaged with individually at first.
- Thereafter, all pupils involved should be met as a group.
- At the group meeting, each pupil should be asked for their account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's views.
- Each pupil should be supported, as appropriate, following the group meeting.

The definition of bullying earlier in the Policy sets out clear criteria to help the school to identify bullying behaviour.

Where bullying behaviour has occurred

School staff will follow the procedures when bullying behaviour is reported to them or when they witness bullying behavior

It is important for school staff to be fair and consistent in their approach to address bullying behaviour.

- Parents 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 of the pupils 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
- Both the pupil who is experiencing bullying behaviour and the pupil who is displaying bullying behaviour need support.
- It is important that the pupil who is experiencing bullying behaviour is engaged with without delay so that they feel listened to, supported and reassured.
- a record should be kept of the engagement with all involved
- 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 pupils involved and their parents
- The record should include the views of the pupils and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behavior
- School staff should identify the supports needed for the pupil who is displaying bullying behaviour to better manage relational difficulties and ensure that their needs are met.
- The school is not expected to deal with bullying behaviour that occurs when pupils are not under the care or responsibility of the school.
- However, where this bullying behaviour has an impact in school, schools are required to support the students involved.
- Where the bullying behaviour continues in school, schools should deal with it in accordance with their *Bí Cineálta* policy.

- Where the pupil displaying the bullying behaviour is not a pupil in the school, but the pupil who is experiencing the bullying behaviour is a pupil in the school, the school should support the pupil who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as appropriate and engage with them and their parents to determine what steps can be taken.

Follow up where bullying behaviour has occurred and determining if the bullying has ceased

The teacher must engage with the students involved and their parents 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 pupils involved
- the teacher should document the review with pupils and their parents to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased and the views of students and their parents in relation to this
- the date that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased should also be recorded
- any engagement with external services/supports should also be noted
- ongoing supervision and support may be needed for the pupils 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 pupils involved and their parents. A timeframe should be agreed for further engagement until the bullying behaviour has ceased
- if it becomes clear that the pupil who is displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behaviour, then 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 pupil, 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 they may make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children if they believe that the school's actions have had a negative effect on the student. The Office of the Ombudsman for Children can be contacted at ococomplaint@oco.ie.

Requests to take no action

A pupil reporting bullying behaviour may ask that a member of staff does nothing about the behaviour other than "look out" for them. The pupil 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 pupil , deals with the matter sensitively and speaks with the pupil to work out together what steps can be taken to address the matter and how their parents will be informed of the situation. It is important that the pupil who has experienced bullying behaviour feels safe.

Parents may also make schools aware of bullying behaviour that has occurred and specifically request that the school take no action. Parents 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 request, schools may decide that, based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behavior

Recording bullying behaviour

All incidents of bullying behaviour should be recorded in accordance with items above in **follow up where bullying behavior has occurred**

- These records should be retained in accordance with the school's record keeping policy and in line with data protection regulations.
- Where a Student Support File exists for a pupil, the school will place a copy of the record with the student's support file documents . This will assist the school in providing a consistent and holistic response to support the wellbeing of the pupils

involved. Where a Student Support Plan exists, the plan should be updated to incorporate response strategies and associated supports.

- 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*

Supports are available to help prevent and address bullying behaviour.

These include the following:

- National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)
- Oide, the Department of Education's support service for schools.
- Webwise promotes safer, better internet use through awareness raising and education initiatives targeting teachers, students and parents.
- National Parents Council The National Parents Council (NPC)
- Dublin City University (DCU) AntiBullying Centre.
- Tusla

The School will maintain care for the victim over time. This will be done by speaking to the child a number of weeks after the incident to check on their continuing welfare. The child's parents will also be consulted.

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):

Given the complexity of bullying behaviour, no one intervention/support programme works in all situations.

The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying involves a whole school approach including

- Supporting Bullied pupils: - 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 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 support available to pupils who need it in a timely manner
- 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).
- The School uses the Stay Safe Programme to promote personal safety awareness and to develop personal safety strategies.
- Pupils also work on Weaving Wellbeing Programme and Smart Moves Initiative to develop emotional resilience
- Friendship February is promoted annually.
- The School has achieved the Amber Flag for Promotion and development of Mental Health Awareness.
- The School completes the Mission Possible Initiative to further self- esteem and resilience.
- Pupils participate in the Walk in my Shoes initiative.
- Wellness Week is held annually.
- No Mobile Phone Voluntary Charter.

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. 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.


Signed: Tony Harnett **Date:** 13.05.2025
(Chairperson of Board of Management) 16.09.2025

Signed: Siobhán Kennedy **Date:** 13.05.2025
Principal Siobhán Kennedy 16.09.2025
Additional wording ratified.

