



Bí Cineálta Policy to Address & Prevent Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Letterkenny Educate Together 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

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	Term 2 (2025) 11.04.25	Survey - all staff members were asked to complete an online survey and the responses used to inform our Bí Cineálta policy and training. Staff training - all staff participated in a half day training session in school
Students	Term 2 (2025)	Focus Groups with children from 1st - 3rd class Survey - completed online by all students from 4th - 6th class
Parents	Term 2 (2025) September 2025	Survey - all parents were invited to participate in an on-line survey and the results were used to inform our Bí Cineálta policy The Bí Cineálta policy was shared with parents by the Principal at all class meetings during September
Board of Management	25.03.25	Meeting - Bí Cinealta policy was discussed
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	Term 3 (2025)	Principal uses regular check-ins with bus drivers to ensure any issues are highlighted to parents in a timely manner
Date policy was approved:		

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):

Culture & Environment

- **Fostering a Positive and Inclusive School Culture**
Promoting respect, diversity, and a sense of belonging for all students and staff.
- **Encouraging Positive Relationships**
Building respectful, supportive connections among students, staff, and the wider school community.
- **Demonstrating Effective Leadership**
Ensuring school leaders model and enforce expectations around respectful behavior and address bullying consistently.

- **Cultivating a Supportive School Environment**
Creating a school climate that values safety, inclusion, and mutual respect.
- **Promoting a "Telling" Culture**
Encouraging students and staff to speak up about bullying, knowing their concerns will be taken seriously and handled appropriately.
- **Ensuring Access to Trusted Adults**
Guaranteeing every student has at least one adult they feel safe approaching for support.
- **Providing Safe and Accessible Physical Spaces**
Designing and maintaining school facilities that enhance physical safety and accessibility for all.
- **Maintaining Active Supervision**
Ensuring staff presence and oversight in key areas to prevent and respond to incidents of bullying.

Curriculum (Teaching & Learning)

- **SPHE (Social, Personal and Health Education)**

Aims to foster students' well being, self confidence and sense of belonging and to develop students' sense of personal responsibility for their own behaviour and actions. Students' social and emotional learning (SEL) skills can be improved through the SPHE curriculum. Programmes used include : Weaving Well-being, Stay Safe, Roots of Empathy, Life Skills, Minding Media, 5 chairs 5 choices and the Learn Together curriculum.

- **Delivery of the RSE Curriculum**

We aim to implement the Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) curriculum in a comprehensive, inclusive, and age-appropriate manner, fostering respect, understanding, and informed decision-making.

- **Active Student Engagement**

Students are encouraged to actively participate in their learning experiences, fostering a sense of ownership, voice, and personal connection to the content. Opportunities are provided to engage with the Student Council, Green Team and Active Schools committee to achieve this aim.

- **Use of Student-Centred SPHE Methodologies**

Teachers employ a range of inclusive, experiential, and participatory teaching methods to support the development of critical thinking, empathy, and personal skills.

- **Promotion of Inclusion and Diversity**

Teachers ensure that the Learn Together curriculum, SPHE content and activities reflect and celebrate the diverse identities, backgrounds, and needs of the school community, promoting equity and respect for all.

- **Supportive Extra-Curricular Opportunities**

Providing extracurricular programmes and activities that build confidence, resilience, and a positive sense of self-worth among students.

- **Collaborative Learning and Group Work**

Staff encourage cooperative learning through structured group work that builds social

interaction, communication skills, and mutual respect.

- **Role-Play and Scenario-Based Learning**

Teachers use drama-based strategies to help students explore real-life situations, build empathy, and practice appropriate responses in a safe and supportive environment.

- **Circle Time**

Teachers facilitate structured group discussions that promote open communication, emotional expression, active listening, and a sense of belonging.

Policy & Planning

- To develop our Bí Cineálta policy which aims to raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with school management, staff, pupils, parents/guardians and the wider school community.
- To develop a Student friendly Bí Cineálta policy
- To develop procedures for noting, investigating, recording and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour
- To implement supports for those affected by bullying behaviours and those displaying bullying behaviours
- To work with appropriate agencies in countering all forms of bullying and promoting kindness
- The Acceptable Use Policy has been developed to ensure that access to technology within school is strictly monitored
- To promote effective leadership, which is a key component of this policy, with the Principal, Deputy Principal, Designated Liaison Person, Deputy Designated Liaison Person and all members of the in-school leadership team focused on supporting the implementation of this policy.

The following policies support the implementation of the Bí Cineálta policy:

- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Child Safeguarding Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Supervision Policy
- SEN Policy
- SPHE Policy
- Learn Together Policy

Relationships & Partnerships

- Encourage open communication between students, staff and parents
- Implement awareness initiatives: Bí Cineálta Week, Friendship Week
- Providing workshops for parents to further understand the Bí Cineálta Policy
- Teacher Professional Learning
- Supporting the active participation of students in school life
- Supporting the active participation of parents/guardians in school life, including those who may find it difficult or daunting to engage with the school due to being unfamiliar with the education system or due to language or cultural barriers
- Conducting workshops and seminars for students, school staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of bullying
- Accessing supports from the Schools Completion programme

- Building links with local post-primary schools and pre-schools to support transitions for the pupils
- Support activities that build empathy, respect and resilience
- Encourage peer support such as peer mentoring
- Promote acts of kindness
- Teach problem solving skills when navigating friendship difficulties
- Engaging parents/guardians and pupils in actively contributing to the development of a child-friendly version of the Bí Cinéalta policy

Preventing Cyber Bullying Behaviour

- Implement the SPHE curriculum
- Implementation of the 'Go Phone Free' initiative
- Implement the Digital Media Literacy curriculum which teaches students about responsible online behaviour and digital citizenship
- Have regular conversations with students about developing respectful and kind relationships online
- Communicate the acceptable use policy for technology
- Refer to appropriate online behaviour as part of the standards of behaviour in the Positive Behaviour Policy
- Promote and host online safety events for parents/guardians who are responsible for overseeing their children's activities online
- Communicating to parents/guardians when issues are brought to our attention in specific class groups
- Holding an Internet safety day to reinforce awareness around appropriate online behaviour

Preventing Homophobic/Transphobic Bullying Behaviour

- Maintain an inclusive physical environment such as by displaying relevant posters
- Create a safe and inclusive environment for all pupils regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity
- Encourage peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
- Challenge gender stereotypes
- Host workshops for students, school staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of homophobic/transphobic bullying behaviour
- Encourage bystanders to report when they witness homophobic/transphobic behaviour

Preventing Racist Bullying Behaviour

- Fostering a school culture where diversity is celebrated and where students "see themselves" in their school environment
- Have the cultural diversity of the school visible and on display
- Conduct workshops and seminars for students, school staff and parents to raise awareness of racism
- Encourage peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
- Encouraging bystanders to report when they witness racist behaviour
- Provide supports to school staff to respond to the needs of students for whom English is an additional language and for communicating with their parents
- Provide supports to school staff to support students from ethnic minorities, including Traveller and Roma students, and to encourage communication with their parents
- Invite speakers from diverse ethnic backgrounds
- Ensure that library reading material and textbooks represent appropriate lived experiences of students and adults from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds

Preventing Sexist Bullying Behaviour

- Ensure members of staff model respectful behaviour and treat students equally irrespective of their gender
- Ensure all students have the same opportunities to engage in school activities irrespective of their gender
- Celebrate diversity at school and acknowledging the contributions of all students
- Organise awareness campaigns, workshops and presentations on gender equality and respect
- Encourage parents to reinforce these values of respect at home

Prevent Sexual Harassment

- Promote positive role models within the school community
- Challenge gender stereotypes that can contribute to sexual harassment

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):

- All teachers are assigned supervision duties.
- It is the policy of the school to supervise the school yard at all times during regular lunch breaks i.e. 10.40am to 11am and 12.40pm to 1.00pm.
- Teachers assume a duty of care at 9.00am.
- The Board of Management informs parents that the school does not accept responsibility for pupils dropped off earlier than 8.45am
- On the rare occasion when a teacher needs to leave his or her classroom, their door should be left open and arrangements should be made with the nearest teaching colleague to supervise the class for a short period of time.
- If the teacher needs to leave the classroom for an extended period of time (e.g. to attend a meeting), the Principal/class teacher will arrange additional supervision.
- A Rota for supervision is drawn up by the Deputy Principal in consultation with the Principal/staff and this Rota is displayed on the staff room notice board.
- Rules of the school yard are reviewed and revised continually and communicated to children regularly
- Designated play areas are in operation depending on the class group of the pupils e.g. Junior Play area for Junior & Senior Infants etc..
- If parents indicate a worry about a particular child on the yard all teachers rostered for yard duty are informed of the concern so that the particular concerns can be addressed satisfactorily
- Teachers on yard duty remain with the classes until the class teacher returns from break. For planned absences (e.g. E.P.V.) staff members are asked to make alternative arrangements with a colleague, to minimise disruption.
- If a teacher is unexpectedly absent a volunteer colleague will assume his/her duties in a reciprocal arrangement
- At least 7 Special Needs Assistants are on duty during lunch breaks. While these Assistants provide individual supervision for designated children, they can act in an observing and reporting capacity, bringing instances of misbehaviour to the attention of the teacher on yard duty. The schools anti-bullying/discipline policy covers incidents of misbehaviour
- If children remain uncollected after 2.40pm, the school always ensures that a duty of care is provided until a parent/guardian calls

- At all other times each teacher is responsible for the supervision of all children under their care.
- The Principal, Deputy Principal, post holders and HSCL teacher supervise the playground for the fifteen minutes preceding admission time each day (8.45am – 9am). This is done without prejudice, as the school does not officially take responsibility for children before admission time.
- At dismissal time in the evening the Principal and Deputy Principal supervise the outside of the school, to see children safely off the premises where possible. No supervision is provided outside the school gate.
- Unless unavoidable, teachers should never leave their classroom unsupervised.
- Young children, depending on their maturity, who are withdrawn from their mainstream classroom for additional support may be collected at the classroom door by the relevant teacher.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

Class Teachers, AP I post holder with responsibility for guidance on the Bí Cinéalta policy, Principal & Deputy Principal

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 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 definition of bullying sets out clear criteria to help schools to identify bullying behaviour.
Bullying is 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 following questions will assist in this regard.
 - 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. Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and PostPrimary
- 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.
- *Incidents can occur where behaviour is unacceptable and hurtful but the behaviour is not bullying behaviour. Strategies that deal with inappropriate behaviour are provided for within the Positive Behaviour Policy.*
- *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.*
- When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred teachers should consider what, where, when and why?
 - > 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
 - > 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)

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 will be informed of the situation.
- 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, depending on the circumstances, action may be taken.

Determining if bullying behaviour has ceased

- The teacher must engage with the students and parents involved no more than 20 school days after the initial discussion to review progress following the initial intervention.
- Important factors to consider as part of the review 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. Even though the bullying behaviour may have ceased, ongoing supervision and support may be required for both the student who has experienced the bullying behaviour as well as the student who has displayed the behaviour.
- It can take time for relationships to settle and for supports to take effect. In some cases, relationships may never be restored to how they were before the bullying behaviour occurred.
- If the bullying behaviour has not ceased, the teacher should review the strategies used in consultation with the students and parents and agree to meet again over an agreed timeframe until the bullying behaviour has ceased.
- Where it becomes clear that the student who is displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behaviour, then the school should consider using the strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour as provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.
- If disciplinary sanctions are considered, this is a matter between the relevant student, their parents and the school.

Recording bullying behaviour

- All incidents of bullying behaviour should be recorded. The record should document the form and type of bullying behaviour, if known, where and when it took place and the date of the initial engagement 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.
- It should document the review with students and their parents to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased and the views of students and their parents in relation to this.

- It is important to document the date of each of these engagements and the date that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased. Any engagement with external services/supports should also be noted.
- 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 student, schools are encouraged to place a copy of the record on the student's support file. This will assist the school's student support team, where they exist, in providing a consistent and holistic response to support the wellbeing of the students involved
- Where a Student Support Plan exists, the plan should be updated to incorporate response strategies and associated supports.

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):

Where bullying behaviour has occurred:

- A school is not expected to deal with bullying behaviour that occurs when students 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, then school can deal with it in accordance with Bí Cineálta policy.
- It is important for staff to be fair and consistent in their approach to address bullying behaviour.
- Both the student who is experiencing bullying behaviour and the student who is displaying bullying behaviour need support.
- Engage with the student who is experiencing bullying without delay.
- School staff should identify the supports needed for the student who is displaying bullying behaviour to better manage relational difficulties.
- It is important that a student's agency is not decreased further by adults deciding what will happen next without listening to the student and involving them in deciding on the actions that will be taken.
- The following principles must be adhered to when addressing bullying behaviour:
 - ensure the child experiencing bullying behaviour feels listened to 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 view 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 of those involved
- Parents of both parties 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 as outlined in the school's Bí Cineálta policy.
 - In circumstances where a student expresses concern about their parents being informed, the school should develop an appropriate plan to support the student and for how their parents will be informed.

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: 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: _____ Date: _____
(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(Principal)