



Bí Cineálta Policy (to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour)

INTRODUCTION:

The Board of Management of Good Shepherd National School has adopted the following policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour. It 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. Everyone in our school community has 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 steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent all 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 everybody 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 everybody has a part to play in the school community, regardless of difference.



DEFINITION OF BULLYING

Bullying is defined in *Cineálta: Action Plan on Bullying* and *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools Chapter 2* as:

- Targeted and intentional 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.

A one-off instance of negative behaviour towards a student is not bullying behaviour. However, a single hurtful message posted online on social media/ messaging groups 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.

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

Chapter 2 of the *Bí Cineálta* procedures also outlines discretion that can be taken for children with additional needs. As Good Shepherd NS has for special classes and many children with additional needs in every mainstream class it is imperative to highlight the following in our policy:

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.

These behaviours are dealt with on a case-by-case basis.



SECTION A DEVELOPMENT / REVIEW OF OUR BÍ CINEALTA POLICY

All members of our school community were provided with the opportunity to input into the development of this policy (see table below). Our previous Anti- Bullying policy was reviewed as part of this process.

Who?	Date consulted	Method of consultation
School Staff	Feb 2025 April 2025	Staff informed of the training and asked to join/ contribute to a committee Half day closure for all staff to attend Bí Cineálta training.
Students	March 2025 April 2025 May 2025	Questionnaire circulated to all students Student committee formed to offer their insights and opinions Student committee met to discuss the policy and form a 'child friendly' version.
Parents	March 2025 April 2025	Open invitation to attend and contribute to an information morning, forming a committee. Questionnaire circulated to all parents Draft policy provided to parents on the committee
Board of Management	May 2025	Policy reviewed and ratified by the board
Wider school community inc. bus drivers/ escorts	May 2025	Drivers/ Escorts briefed on new Bí Cineálta policy
Date policy was approved: January 2026		

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).

In developing the 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 our school in a real way.



1. CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

We strive to create a positive, child- centred learning environment where everyone feels safe, valued, supported and motivated to learn with high expectations and respect for all. Developing positive relationships in our school community is at the heart of our mission.

We aim to do this by:

- Encouraging a sense of belonging and inclusion in the school community through positive and encouraging interactions with staff and pupils,
- whole school initiatives such as Friendship Week, Wellbeing Week etc. and SPHE lessons and specific programmes such as Walk Tall, Stay Safe, Friends for Life
- Creating a 'telling (sharing) environment' where sharing an incident with an adult is seen positively to support all the pupils involved, ensuring that each child feels listened to
- Developing trust between the children and adults in the school, providing opportunities for the children to speak to adults and ensuring the child feels supported and believed
- Teachers model respectful behaviour towards colleagues, pupils and visitors in our school environment.
- 'Buddy system' on yard and other initiatives such as reading, where older children model friendships and appropriate behaviours
- Maintaining open safe spaces in the school and yard
- Ensuring adequate supervision in the school, at yard time and on trips

2. CURRICULUM (TEACHING AND LEARNING)

- Foster a learning environment that is inclusive and respectful of everyone's differences, providing opportunities for collaboration developing connection and empathy in pupils.
- Teaching the SPHE and RSE curricula e.g. Walk Tall, Stay Safe, Grow in Love
- Teaching additional programmes that promote resilience and confidence building e.g. Friends for Life, Living My Best Life, public speaking
- External speakers to talk to classes about online safety and bullying
- Permanent teachers trained in Incredible Years to promote a positive learning environment across the school



3. POLICY AND PLANNING

- Regular reviewing of policies in place in the school
- Policies in place across the school including the Acceptable Use Policy, Code of Behaviour, Child Safeguarding and RSE policy.
- Appealing for the input on the wider school community in formulating policies
- Effective leadership is a key component with Principal (DLP), Deputy Principal (DDLP), and all staff members focused on supporting the implementation of this policy.
- Whole school planning in place for when each additional SPHE curriculum will be taught in the school year and in what class group

4. RELATIONSHIPS AND PARTNERSHIPS

- Effective communication with parents and the wider school community.
- We recognise the rights of parents to share in the task of equipping pupils with a range of life skills and supporting parents to be the primary educators of their children.
- Effective Partnerships through Home School Community Liaison teacher.
- Encouraging child's active involvement in school life - both in class and extracurricular activities
- Parental Involvement in school life e.g. parents' courses, Parents Association, class performances, coffee mornings etc.
- Promoting the Voice of the Child through committees, newsletters and assemblies
- External speakers to talk to parents of all age groups about the dangers of the online world and the impact it can have on their children
- Parents Association and HSCL disseminate information to school community about talks or courses to upskill and inform parents

Our Parents Association are involved in a raising awareness campaign highlighting the negative aspects of smart devices and are appealing to parents to hold off giving smart devices to their children.

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):



Supervision and Monitoring:

- Children are adequately supervised at all times of the day
- Yard - there are multiple adults on yard duty at any one time with every section of the yard observed by a designated SNA or teacher
- Class - children are always supervised in class, if the teacher must step out they will arrange cover for the time they will be absent
- Outings - adequate supervision is always arranged for any trips or outings, usually to include the class teacher, SNA and/or support teacher
- Children will be monitored when using iPads or technology in class. Where necessary, iPad numbers will be assigned to children and history checks will be carried out. Children should close any tabs they have used before returning iPads.
- Children are not permitted to have phones or smart watches/devices on their person or in their bags during the school day. Any child who has a phone in school must leave it switched off with their teacher until school finishes; it may only be turned back on outside the school gates.

Preventing Cyber Bullying:

- Have regular conversations with children both formally and informally of the dangers of online safety, reminding them of precautions to take and how to manage it if certain situations arise
- Implement the SPHE and Stay Safe curricula
- Friendship Week and Wellbeing Week to promote online safety, positive relationships on and offline and encourage children to put down devices
- Remind the children that appropriate behaviour online is part of the standards of the Code of Behaviour
- Workshops with expert advisory groups for pupils and parents e.g.; Zeeko, Cyber Safety Ireland, Barnardos etc
- Disseminate talks or podcasts to parents
- Implementation of the Acceptable Use Policy
- Remind children and parents of the legal age requirement to have specific social media accounts (13-16 years with parental permission, 16 years without parental permission)
- Remind children and parents that the legal age of responsibility is 12 years old



Preventing homophobic/ transphobic bullying behaviour:

- Challenge gender- stereotypes – equal participation of all. Equal recognition.
- Maintaining an inclusive physical environment such as by displaying relevant posters.
- Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that homophobic/ transphobic bullying is taking place.

Preventing racist bullying behaviour:

- Foster a culture where diversity is celebrated and students “see themselves” in the school environment. Every child represented in the school.
- Celebrate diversity with Intercultural Day
- Ensuring the library has material that reflects the diversity of the world population and embrace opportunities to discuss these in curricular areas (at class appropriate levels).
- Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that racist bullying is taking place.
- Encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
- 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

Preventing sexist bullying behaviour:

- Ensuring all students have the same opportunities to engage in school activities irrespective of sex.
- Ensuring members of staff model respectful behaviour and treat students equally irrespective of their sex
- Challenge gender- stereotypes – equal participation of all. Equal recognition.

In developing the 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 our 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 our 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 further 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.

SECTION C ADDRESSING BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

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

- The Class Teacher has the responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour.
- Class teachers will be supported and advised by Principal, Ms Veale (DLP), and Deputy Principal, Ms Lynch, (DDLP), when dealing with any incidents of bullying behaviour.

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):

INVESTIGATING THE REPORTED BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

The Class Teacher investigates all instances of reported or suspected bullying behaviour, with a view to establishing the facts and bringing any such behaviour to an end.



Each child involved should be given a chance to recall their version of events individually, they should be listened to without prejudice and asked questions to gain insight to what happened and how different individuals were / might have been feeling.

All individuals involved should then come together as a group and repeat their account to ensure everyone in the group is clear about each other's views. Each child should be supported appropriately after the meeting. Children may also be asked to document their answer.

To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour teachers should consider the following questions when listening to the children's accounts of the behaviour.

1. Is the behaviour targeted and intentional at a specific student/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 Cinealta procedures.

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.

The school will specifically consider the age and ability of children with additional special educational needs regarding the implementation of this policy. Certain situations may need to be addressed via the Individual Student Support Plan of the child concerned. Insofar as is appropriate for the individual child, this policy will be adhered to.

Advice may be sought from Ms Veale or Ms Lynch throughout the process.

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.

Where bullying has taken place outside the care of the school but involves children in the school it is not the responsibility of the school to investigate or act. Teachers are required to support the



child(ren) involved. Parents may be informed and advised to contact the Garda (online bullying) or relevant agencies e.g. sports club. If the bullying continues in school, the school will apply the Bí Cineálta policy.

WHERE BULLYING BEHAVIOUR HAS OCCURRED:

It is important for school 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 to better manage relational difficulties and ensure that their needs are met.

Incidents of bullying behaviour will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. However, the following principles must be adhered to:

- ensure that the student 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, with consideration given to any pupils with additional needs.
- listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation
- act in a timely manner
- inform parents of those involved*

*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 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 a 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. Schools should consider communication barriers that may exist when communicating with parents, for example, literacy, digital literacy or language barriers.

REQUESTS TO TAKE NO ACTION:

Where a student requests that no action be taken, 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.

Where a parent wishes for no action to be taken, this request should be put in writing or parents should be facilitated to do so. However, while acknowledging the parents request, the school may decide that based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour.

REVIEW OF BULLYING BEHAVIOUR:

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. This review should be documented in the Bullying Record Document.

If the behaviour has ceased, additional supports and supervision may remain in place for a certain length of time to ensure everything has completely settled.

If the 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 (Appendix 2). The record should document

- the form and type of bullying behaviour, if known,
- where and when it took place
- the date of the initial engagement with the students and their parents.
- the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour.
- 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.

Records are kept on file securely by the Principal and/or Deputy Principal in line with GDPR for the following purposes:

- Any incidents of bullying are highlighted at every BOM meeting.
- Information on incidents of bullying will be given to the DES on request
- Relevant information will be shared among staff when changing class/teacher to facilitate following up of all involved.
- All incidents of bullying are dealt with according to this policy.

COMPLAINTS PROCESS

If a parent is not satisfied with how bullying behaviour has been addressed by the school, in accordance with these procedures, they should be referred to the school's complaints procedure. If a student and/or parent 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.

The Office of the Ombudsman for Children can be contacted at ococomplaint@oco.ie

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):

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 BULLIED PUPILS:

- Observe, monitor and record observations where relevant.
- Involving and updating parents
- Ongoing contact between the parents and the HSCL teacher where necessary
- Use all resources available to build the self-esteem
- Informing all relevant staff.
- Check ins with the pupil.
- Encouraging peer support and positive friendships.



- Social group support where appropriate.
- Referral to the care team if necessary.
- Referral to SCP if necessary.

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- Observe, monitor and record observations where relevant.
- Involving and updating parents
- Ongoing contact between the parents and the HSCL teacher where necessary
- Use all resources available to build the self-esteem
- Informing all relevant staff.
- Check ins with the pupil.
- Encouraging peer support and positive friendships.
- Social group, emotional regulation support/ co-regulation where appropriate.
- Referral to care team if necessary.
- Referral to SCP if necessary.

PROFESSIONAL SUPPORTS THAT ARE AVAILABLE (If appropriate)

- National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)
- Oide
- Webwise - can be recommended to parents
- National Parents Council - can be recommended to parents
- DCU Anti Bullying Centre
- Tusla

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.

This Bí Cinealta Policy was ratified by the Board of Management in January 2026. It will be reviewed in May 2026.

Signed: Brian Swan
Brian Swan

Chairperson

Signed: Órlaith Veale
Órlaith Veale

Principal



Appendix A

List of Bi Cinealta useful resources

<https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/appendix-c-guide-to-addressing-bullying-behaviour.pdf>

<https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/appendix-d-guide-to-providing-bullying-behaviour-update.pdf>

<https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-education/policy-information/b%C3%AD-cine%C3%A1lta-procedures-to-prevent-and-address-bullying-behaviour-for-primary-and-post-primary-schools/#appendices-available-for-download-and-editing-where-applicable>

<https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/appendix-f-notification-regarding-the-board-of-managements-annual-review-of-the-school.pdf>

<https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/appendix-g-overview-of-the-bi-cinealta-procedures-for-preventing-and-addressing-bullying.pdf>



Appendix 2

BÍ CINEÁLTA PROCEDURES

Template for Recording Bullying Behaviour

This template is only to be used when bullying behaviour has been identified, in line with the Bí Cineálta Procedures.

1. Date of initial engagement with pupil(s) and parent(s) _____

2. Initials of pupil who has experienced bullying behaviour and class group

Initials: _____ Class: _____

3. Initials and class(es) of pupil(s) engaged in bullying behaviour

Initials: _____ Class(es): _____

4. Source of bullying concern/report (tick relevant box(es)*)	5. Location of incidents (tick relevant box(es)*)
Pupil concerned	Yard
Other pupil	Classroom
Parent	Corridor
Teacher	Toilets
Other (specify)	Other (specify)

6. Initials of person(s) who reported the bullying concern and/or relationship to the pupil(s)

7. Dates of when the bullying behaviour occurred

8. Form of Bullying Behaviour (tick relevant box/boxes) See page 21 of the Procedures

Physical Bullying Behaviour	Exclusion Bullying Behaviour
Verbal Bullying Behaviour	Relational Bullying Behaviour
Written Bullying Behaviour	Online Bullying Behaviour
Extortion	Other (specify):

9. Type of Bullying Behaviour (tick relevant box/boxes)

Disablist Bullying Behaviour	Homophobic/Transphobic (LGBTQ+) Bullying Behaviour
Exceptionally Bullying Behaviour (e.g., based on special needs)	Physical Appearance Bullying Behaviour/
Gender Identity Bullying Behaviour	Religious Identity Bullying Behaviour
Sexist Bullying Behaviour/ Sexual Harassment	Racist Bullying Behaviour
Poverty Bullying Behaviour	Other (specify):



10. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact

11. Views of pupil(s) and parent(s) regarding the actions to be taken

12. Date of review with pupil(s) and parent(s) (within 20 days)		
13. Has bullying behaviour ceased? (Circle)	Yes	No
14. Views of pupil(s) and parents in relation to this		
15. Agreed timeframe for next review:		
16. Engagement with external services or supports (if any)		

If bullying behaviour continues beyond the review timeframes, the school's Code of Behaviour is to be used.

Signed: _____
(Relevant Teacher)

Date: _____

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal