

Bí Cineálta Policy

**Drimoleague N.S.
Uimhir Rolla 18296A**

Introduction and Rationale

The Board of Management of Drimoleague 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.

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, 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

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 if following the definition of bullying above.

Online bullying behaviour:

Cyber bullying is carried out via text, direct messaging/instant messaging, social media platforms, email, apps, digital gaming sites, gaming consoles, chatrooms and other online technologies.

This can include:

- Sending or sharing of insulting and offensive or intimidating messages or images via online means as mentioned above.
- Posting information which is personal, private or sensitive without consent.
- Making and/or participating in fake profiles on a social network to impersonate and/or humiliate other students.
- Exclude/disrupt access to a student on purpose on online chat groups/access to accounts/from an online game.

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 2025	Discussion at staff meetings Analysis of information from parents and pupils questionnaires, and feedback from Student Council
Students	March 2025	Questionnaire for all students Focus group discussion with Student Council on March 14th Student Council were involved in the drafting of the student friendly version of the Bi Cinealta policy on 24/03/25
Parents		Questionnaire sent out to all parents on 10/03/25
Board of Management		Board of Management meeting in May 2025
Date policy was approved	April 29th 2025, implementation from the start of the 25/26 school year	
Date policy was last reviewed	April 29th 2025	

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

The staff of Drimoleague National School endeavour to create a learning environment that promotes a culture of kindness and respect for oneself and others ensuring that there is an appreciation of diversity in all its forms. We believe that when a culture of kindness and respect for all is promoted throughout the school, both in the formal and informal curriculum, many incidents of bullying can be prevented.

The following are the strategies that will be used by the school in the prevention of bullying. 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.

Culture and Environment

- The school will engage in a variety of initiatives such as Blue Star, WellBeing Week, Chess Club and other extra curricular activities that promote a culture/environment of kindness within the school.
- Staff model positive relationships throughout the school and set high expectations for pupil relationships e.g. SPHE lessons, Rewards systems and group work.
- Staff model effective leadership and expect the same from pupils by taking ownership of their own culture of kindness within the school environment
- Promotion and encouragement of open communication, where honesty and freedom to speak are championed.
- Pupils are taught programmes which highlight the importance of opening up to a trusted adult at school and at home e.g. Stay Safe, Weaving Wellbeing.
- Making use of safe physical spaces e.g. sensory room, school garden for open discussion.
- Children and staff create safe physical spaces amongst themselves e.g. on yard, in the classroom. This can be achieved through supervision and self monitoring, which reflects the school's rules.
- Pupils are continuously supervised by staff but students are also encouraged to report issues that they might see. It is important that they tell a member of staff if they see someone experiencing bullying behaviour.
- Ensuring that minority groups are represented in pictures, texts and posters throughout the school and having the cultural diversity of the school celebrated and on display.
- Challenging gender stereotypes

Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)

- Teaching & learning in SPHE lessons - encouraging active participation in all lessons.
- Targeting Bí Cinealta lessons - explicitly teaching anti-bullying lessons - (Stay Safe, Web Wise, Weaving Well Being etc.
- Time will be dedicated at the start of each school year in September to make pupils aware of the child friendly version of our Bí Cineálta policy. This will be explored by each class as part of SPHE and children will discuss ways to contribute to a Bí Cineálta school.
- A Bí Cineálta day will be held at the end of Well-Being week annually to enhance and remind pupils of our Bí Cineálta policy.
- Programmes that specifically deal with diversity issues, e.g. Show Racism the Red Card
- Promoting inclusion and diversity through targeted lessons and displays.
- Outside speaker to inform students of effects and consequences of bullying (e.g. Community Garda)
- Group Work and collaboration - mixed yard groups - in class group work and whole school board games / chess / quizzes - working collaboratively.
- Student participation in extracurricular activities to increase self worth - inclusion in school quiz teams, in school committees (Green Schools, Amber Flag, Active Schools, School Garden, Student Council etc.)
- Using the School Self-Evaluation process and the School Improvement Plan to foster and encourage positive relationships. The current focus of School Self-Evaluation in Drimoleague N.S. is the development of social skills.
- Monitoring student learning through questioning, observing, student questionnaires, and listening to the student voice.

Policy and Planning

- Ensuring that the pastoral care of students remains a live issue during the course of staff meetings.

- Regular updating and review of policies that relate to kindness and relationships, e.g. Acceptable Usage policy, Code of Behaviour, Supervision policy, SEN policy, etc.
- Involving the student voice in policies that directly affect them, through the Student Council, to ensure that students' views are taken into account when developing school policy.
- Using the School Self-Evaluation framework to implement plans relating to relationships and pupil well-being.
- Regular review of supervision procedures in the school.
- Ensuring that there are clear and robust recording procedures in relation to bullying behaviour and that these are stored securely and centrally.
- Effective leadership in ensuring that teachers are supported in dealing with incidents of bullying and to ensure that there is consistency of approach across different classes.
- Ensuring that the development of a culture of kindness throughout the school remains a target in school development planning.
- Regular review of the school culture and atmosphere informally during the course of staff meetings.
- When selecting initiatives as part of the whole school initiatives plan, the potential of initiatives to foster and develop positive relationships will be used as a selection criteria.
- We aim to host a Bí Cineálta day each year to tie into Wellbeing Week. Staff will devise a plan to celebrate kindness throughout the school on this day, as a reminder of the ongoing responsibility on each pupil to promote and show kindness as part of school life.

Relationships and Partnerships

- Programmes that promote positive relationships among different groups and classes
- Modelling of positive communication skills and interactions throughout the school
- Bullying awareness initiatives: Well-being Week, Bí Cineálta Day, arranging for outside speaker on the topic of bullying, Internet Safety Day
- Encouraging the student voice in promoting kindness throughout the school, through interactions, presentations, etc.
- Facilitating dialogue between home and school based on the topic of kindness and bullying through homework tasks and the circulation of the Bí Cineálta child friendly policy at the beginning of the school year.
- Staff training and upskilling in areas relevant to Bí Cineálta, e.g. restorative practice training, morning meetings
- Creating opportunities for pupils to mix and interact with those in other classes and outside of their immediate friendship group, e.g. mixed yard groupings, whole school activities such as quizzes, board games, etc.
- Use of the curriculum to promote critical thinking skills to enable pupils to discuss, reflect and problem solve situations that involve bullying.
- Use of the student council to promote the student voice
- Collaborative learning opportunities to ensure pupils are given opportunities to interact with each other
- Explicit teaching of social skills under the current School Improvement Plan
- Engaging with local and community groups to promote an awareness of citizenship and roles and responsibilities, e.g. West Cork Food Bank
- Peer support and peer mentoring opportunities, e.g. peer teaching opportunities between older and younger classes
- Conducting workshops for parents, teachers and pupils to raise awareness of the impact of bullying, e.g. Community Garda
- Supporting the active participation of pupils in school life.
- Maintaining and developing links between the Junior School and secondary schools to ensure information is shared on pupils' social progress and in particular, to identify certain pupils who may be 'at risk' of bullying.

The school has the following supervision and monitoring policies in place to prevent and address bullying behaviour:

- Adequate supervision on the yard at break time
- Procedures to ensure that there are few children in the bathrooms at any one given time.
- Supervision during outside trips and activities ensuring there is an appropriate pupil - teacher/SNA ratio
- Teacher on corridor supervises classes during eating time.

- Regular review of the supervision policy, or increasing the numbers of teachers on yard supervision if staff feel that there is potential for bullying issues to arise.
- Staff position themselves amongst pupils when travelling on buses.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

The teachers with responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour are as follows:

- All staff will be vigilant to bullying behaviour
- The class teacher will oversee the investigation and recording of bullying incidents.
- The principal and class teacher will jointly determine whether the behaviour in question constitutes bullying.
- The principal and/or class teacher will determine the appropriate course of action and possible consequences for the pupil(s) engaging in bullying behaviour.
- The principal and class teacher will oversee the monitoring of the situation to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased.

While all measures will be taken to address any alleged bullying behaviour as soon as possible, it must be noted that teachers in Drimoleague N.S. have a duty of care towards all children in their class. Any investigations that take place involve the teacher engaging with children outside of the classroom to ensure the privacy of all involved, while teaching and learning is still taking place. Sometimes it may not be possible to address any alleged bullying behaviour that takes place until such time that cover, by another teacher, for the rest of the class can be arranged. This is to ensure that the teacher(s) involved have the time and space to properly investigate the incidents while being temporarily released from their classroom duties.

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.

A. Approach

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

B. Identifying if bullying behaviour has taken place

Staff in Drimoleague National School will determine if bullying has taken place by considering 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?*
4. *Is there an imbalance of power between the people or groups of people involved?*

If the answer to each of the questions above is **Yes**, then the behaviour is bullying behaviour. 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 teachers should consider what, where, when and why?

- if a group of students is involved, each student will be engaged with individually at first
- thereafter, all students involved will be met as a group on a staged approach and with the consent of the person being bullied, if teachers feel that this would lead to a successful outcome.

Teachers will use their discretion based on the age, ability and needs of the pupils involved as there may be situations where this step may not be appropriate at an early stage.

- at the group meeting, each student will be asked for their account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's views
- each student will 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)

C. Where bullying behaviour has occurred

- The parents 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
- The views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour will be listened to as to how best to address the situation
- A record will be kept of the engagement with all involved
- This record will 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 involved and their parents
- The record will include the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour

D. Follow up where bullying behaviour has occurred

- The teacher will engage with the students involved and their parents again no more than 20 school days after the initial engagement
- Important factors that will be considered 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 will 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
- The date that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased will also be recorded
- Any engagement with external services/supports may 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 will review the strategies used in consultation with the students involved and their parents. A timeframe may 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 will 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 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 may be referred to the school's complaints procedures if all procedures under this policy have been exhausted.
- If a parent is dissatisfied with how a complaint has been handled, and having exhausted steps in the Grievance Procedures, they may then make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

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

A. Supporting pupils who are victims of bullying

Restoring the well-being of the victim of bullying is a priority following any incidents of bullying in Drimoleague N.S. The following is a menu of strategies will be used:

- 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 following the procedures in this policy.
- 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).
- Changing seating arrangements to ensure victims are seated close to friends
- Rearranging yard groupings to ensure that victims of bullying have an opportunity to build social relationships

B. Supporting pupils who have engaged in bullying behaviour

It is also our aim to support the pupil(s) who have engaged in bullying behaviour to ensure that they can empathise with the victim and to minimise any recurrence. The following is a menu of strategies that will be used.

- Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform get a 'clean sheet'
- Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are doing the right and honourable thing and giving them praise for this
- Availing of outside services 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 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 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 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.

Communication

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.

Ratification and Review

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 policy will be communicated to long-term substitutes, temporary teachers and all staff members

This policy was formulated in March 2025 and will be implemented from the beginning of the 2025/ 2026 school year.

Ratified by Board of Management on April 29th 2025.