



Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

1. Rationale

The Board of Management of Coláiste Bhríde 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.

2. Context

This policy complements the school's mission statement of "Caring, challenging and achieving together". It helps to build upon the KWETB core values of care, respect, community, equality and excellence in education. It supports the school's efforts in developing and maintaining a positive school culture and climate which:

- is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity
- encourages stakeholders to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a nonthreatening environment
- promotes respectful relationships across the school community (See Appendix A)
- shows effective leadership
- takes a collaborative approach
- has a shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact

- implements awareness-raising, education and prevention strategies
- supervises and monitors students effectively
- provides support for staff
- consistently records, investigates, monitors and follows up on bullying behaviour
- evaluates the efficacy of this Bí Cineálta policy on an ongoing basis

3. Other practices and policies

Effective practice includes measures which prevent and raise awareness of all aspects of bullying and involves strategies to enable students in addressing problems when they arise. In particular, such strategies build empathy, respect and resilience in students. As self-esteem is a major factor in determining behaviour, Coláiste Bhríde, through its curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular programmes, provides students with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth. Equally, our school focuses on opportunities for students to have input into decisions and policies that impact them including focus groups, student leadership initiatives and the student council. These serve to empower the learner voice and confidence levels of students in our school.

This policy works in conjunction with other policies and procedures in our school including:

- Behaviour Policy and Code of Behaviour
- ICT-Acceptable Usage Policy
- iPad Acceptable usage Policy
- Critical Incident Policy
- Student Support Team
- School Inclusion Policy • Pastoral Care Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Dignity and Respect in the Workplace

Education Programmes to combat bullying behaviour:

Coláiste Bhríde will endeavour at all times to ensure the safety of students in its care. Nevertheless, Coláiste Bhríde is conscious of parental responsibility. As a whole school cross-curricular initiative, all students in Coláiste Bhríde will participate in programmes to increase their awareness of the effects of bullying. Such programmes include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Promoting a positive and welcoming school culture
- Wellbeing programmes such as My Friends Youth
- Creating a culture of diversity, inclusivity, equality and awareness
- SPHE – Social, Personal and Health Education
- 'FUSE', an anti-bullying programme, (DCU Anti-Bullying Centre)
- 'Friends First', UNESCO Whole Education Approach to Anti-Bullying
- Anti-bullying workshops and seminars (including Safer Internet Day)

- Guest speakers for parents and students

Staff will also participate in relevant professional development.

**This list is not exhaustive*

4. 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 Appendix B (Chapter 2 of the Bí Cineálta procedures).

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

There are many different types of bullying behaviour. These can include the following which is not an exhaustive list:

- disablist bullying behaviour
- exceptionally able bullying
- gender identity bullying
- homophobic/transphobic (LGBTQ+) bullying
- physical appearance bullying
- racist bullying
- poverty bullying
- religious identity bullying
- sexist bullying
- sexual harassment

Isolated or once-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour, including a once-off offensive or hurtful text message or other private messaging, do not fall within the definition of bullying and should be dealt with, as appropriate, in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour. **However, in the context of this policy, placing a once-off offensive or hurtful public message, image or statement on a social network site or other public forum where that message, image or statement can be viewed and/or repeated by other people will be regarded as bullying behaviour.**

Negative behaviour that does not meet this definition of bullying will be dealt with in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour.

Additional information on different types of bullying is set out in *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2024 (Chapter 2)*.

5. How bullying behaviour occurs

Bullying behaviour can take many forms, which can occur separately or together. These can include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

Direct bullying behaviour:

Physical bullying behaviour:

- Physical bullying behaviour includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping students and throwing objects at others. It may also take the form of severe physical assault. While students can often engage in “mess fights” they can sometimes be used as a disguise for physical harassment or inflicting pain.
- Personal property can be a focus of attention for bullying behaviour. This may result in damage to clothing, mobile phone or other devices, schoolbooks and other learning material or interference with a student’s locker or belongings. The contents of school bags and pencil cases may be scattered on the floor. Items of personal property may be defaced, broken, stolen or hidden.

Verbal bullying behaviour:

- Continual name-calling directed at a student which hurts, insults or humiliates the student should be regarded as a form of bullying behaviour. Often name-calling of this type refers to physical appearance; for example, size or clothes worn or gender identity. It can also refer to a student’s accent, distinctive voice characteristics, academic ability, race or ethnic origin.

Written bullying behaviour:

- Written bullying behaviour includes writing insulting remarks about a student in public places, passing around notes about or drawings of a student.

Extortion:

- Bullying behaviour can involve extortion. Extortion is where something is obtained through force or threats.

Indirect bullying behaviour:

Exclusion:

- Exclusion bullying behaviour occurs where a student is deliberately and repeatedly isolated, excluded or ignored by a student or group of students.

Relational:

- Relational bullying behaviour occurs when a student’s attempts to socialise and form relationships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined. Common forms include control: “Do this or I won’t be your friend anymore”; a group of students ganging up against one student; nonverbal gesturing; malicious gossip; spreading rumours about a student; giving a student the “silent treatment”; and the deliberate manipulation of friendship groups to make someone unpopular.

6. Reporting bullying behaviour

All staff members are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying that they witness to a member of the teaching staff or school management. This includes administrative, caretaking, canteen, SNAs or school transport staff.

Students are encouraged to report incidents of bullying that they experience or witness to their year head or another trusted staff member either verbally or in writing. Alternatively, parents/guardians can report incidents to the school in writing, by phone call or by requesting a meeting with the relevant school personnel.

The school cannot act on anonymous reports of bullying.

7. Addressing reported bullying behaviour

The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying are: relevant year head and/or relevant deputy principal. When bullying behaviour is reported, all records and information pertaining to the report will be kept and communicated in line with GDPR guidelines and *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and PostPrimary Schools 2024*.

On receipt of a report of bullying the following steps should be taken:

1. The incident should be reported to the year head (YH) or relevant deputy principal (DP) by completing the 'Bullying Incident Report Form' (Appendix C)
2. The process to determine if bullying has taken place is initiated.
3. The student/s reported to be engaging in the bullying behaviour and the target/s of the bullying behaviour will be met by the YH or relevant personnel to establish the details.
4. When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the YH or relevant DP should seek answers to questions of *what, where, when, who and why*.
5. It may be appropriate to ask those involved to explain their account of the incident(s).
6. The relevant member of staff must keep appropriate written records which will assist their efforts to resolve the issue.
7. All reports of bullying received by a member of staff should be treated seriously and confidentially. The class tutor and /or YH should always be informed without delay.
8. The Bullying Incident Report Form (Appendix C) when completed by the YH or DP should be forwarded to the principal. A copy of the bullying incident will be filed (depending on the sensitivity of the incident) in the student's personal files. ***A written record of all reports must be kept.***
9. If deemed necessary, parents/relevant staff members will be informed.
10. The relevant school personnel will be informed of bullying related issues that can be addressed through existing school programmes.

11. In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant YH/DP will, as part of their professional judgement, take the following into account:
 - Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased
 - Whether the issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable
 - Whether the relationships between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable
 - Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the school principal
12. In cases where a resolution to the bullying behaviour has not been found within 20 days after they have determined that bullying behaviour occurred; an additional Report Form (Appendix D) will be completed.
13. Where a parent is dissatisfied with how the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents will be informed of the school's complaints procedures.
14. In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school will advise the parents of their right to make a complaint to the *Ombudsman for Children*.

8. Support and Prevention Strategies for Students:

Coláiste Bhríde will put in place a programme of support for students who have been involved in a bullying incident. This programme will involve the following elements:

Students who have been bullied will be:

- Offered appropriate counselling.
- Provided with opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop their social skills and to build their resilience.

Students who have engaged in bullying behaviour will be:

- Provided with support to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others.
- Provided with opportunities to build their self-esteem and feelings of self-worth.

Students who observe incidents of bullying behaviour will be encouraged to discuss them with relevant adults and to avail of counselling where they feel it may assist them to cope effectively with what they have experienced.

Where necessary Coláiste Bhríde will seek the assistance of and work with NEPS (National Educational Psychological Service), the HSE (Health Service Executive) and/ or the Gardaí, to combat bullying, identify the perpetrators and support the victims.

Support and Prevention Strategies for Parents:

If your child is being bullied:

The most important thing to do is to make sure that the bullying is stopped.

- Get full details of what is happening from your child.
- Keep written records/screenshots – day, date, details etc. of incidents and witnesses.

- Approach the child's year head or deputy principal. DO NOT approach the person engaging in the bullying behaviour or their family.
- Ensure that the child gets ongoing support at home. The school counsellor and/or relevant personnel are available to help both the victim and the person engaging in the bullying behaviour.

Please note that all information given to the school is treated in a confidential and sensitive manner which does not further endanger the victim.

REMEMBER, if we do not know it is happening, we cannot do anything about it...

If you discover your child is engaging in bullying behaviour:

- Remain calm – and avoid conflict
- Take time to talk with your child
- Try to find out why your child is bullying
- Ask your child to put themselves in the victim's place
- Make it clear that the behaviour must stop
- Seek professional support and help, if necessary
- Provide relevant literature for your child on bullying, its effects and other important information on bullying

Support and Prevention Strategies for School Personnel:

- Coláiste Bhríde's *Code of Behaviour* will be discussed at the beginning of each academic year. The *Code of Behaviour* underlines the school's aim of promoting the development of the school community and highlights the need for individuals to treat others with respect.
- Staff members should adopt a calm, unemotional, problem-solving, confidential, restorative approach when dealing with incidences of alleged bullying behaviour reported by students, staff or parents.
- Staff members should take all opportunities arising to emphasise to the students our collective responsibility for ensuring that no student or group of students is subjected to bullying behaviours.
- Action should be designed to ensure that the behaviour which led to the incident ends as soon as possible and that the 'victim' no longer feels insecure. It should be noted that in many instances the behaviour which is causing the difficulty is not intended to offend/hurt to the extent that it does.
- Senior students, especially the Meitheal Leaders, senior prefects and mentors should be asked to be alert for instances of bullying. Students are sometimes better placed than staff to identify bullying.
- All interviews should be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all students concerned.

- A follow-up meeting with the relevant parties involved may be arranged separately with a view to possibly bringing them together later if the student who has been bullied is ready and agreeable.

9. Supervision and Monitoring of Pupils

The Board of Management confirms that appropriate supervision and monitoring policies and practices are in place to both prevent and deal with bullying behaviour and to facilitate early intervention where possible.

10. Prevention of Harassment

The Board of Management confirms that the school will, in accordance with its obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the sexual harassment of pupils or staff or the harassment of pupils or staff on any of the nine grounds specified i.e., gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.

11. Board of Management

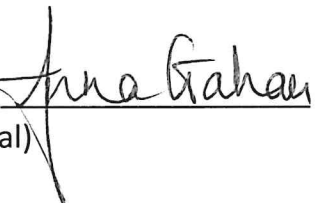
- The principal will provide a report to the Board of Management at least once in every school term setting out:
The number of bullying cases reported (by means of the *Bullying Incident Form* Appendix E).
- Confirmation that all of these cases have been or are being dealt with in accordance with Coláiste Bhríde's *Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour and AntiBullying Policy* and the *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2024*. The minutes of the Board of Management meeting will record the above but in doing so will not include **any identifying details of the students involved**.
- The Board of Management must undertake an annual review of the school's *Bí Cineálta Policy* and its implementation and complete the *Bí Cineálta Review* document accordingly (Appendix F). On completion of the annual review by the Board of Management the board will notify the school community of same by publishing notification on the school website and school app (Appendix G).
- Coláiste Bhríde will put in place an action plan to address any areas for improvement identified by the review. This will prioritise areas of focus as they arise through the review process or through feedback from students, parents or staff and will be documented in an *Areas for Focus* document for each ongoing academic year (Appendix H).
- A record of the review and its outcome will be made available to Kildare Wicklow Education Training Board and the Department of Education and Skills.

This reviewed policy was adopted by the Board of Management in August 2026.

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

12. This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year. Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, published on the school website, app and provided to the Parents' Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Signed: 
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: 
(Principal)

Date: 7.9.26

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Date of next review: May 2027