An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Bí Cineálta

Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools

June 2024

QUAL
INCLUSIVE
True Best

Equality
peace
joy!
SLAY

Cineáltas
Kindness

Cineáltas
Kindness

Cineáltas
Kindness

Cineáltas

Cineáltas Flag
Cineáltas
Kindness

Cineáltas
Kindness

Peace
Trust
Safe Spaces
Teach everyone.

Contents

Foreword from Minister Norma Foley TD

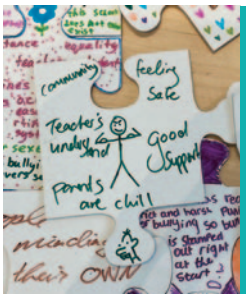
Page 4

Foreword from Secretary General Bernie McNally

Page 5

Chapter 1:
Introduction

Page 6

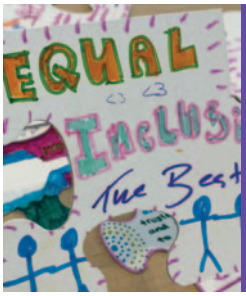


Chapter 2:
Bullying Behaviour

Page 16

Chapter 3:
Impact of Bullying Behaviour

Page 25



Chapter 4:
School Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

Page 29

Chapter 5:
Preventing Bullying Behaviour

Page 32

Chapter 6:
Addressing Bullying Behaviour

Page 42

Chapter 7:
Oversight

Page 49

Summary of Appendices

Bibliography

Page 53

Foreword from Minister Norma Foley TD

I am pleased to publish the *Bí Cineálta* procedures to prevent and address bullying behaviour for primary and post-primary schools, which will guide our school communities to work together to prevent and address bullying behaviour in our schools.

The *Bí Cineálta* procedures are the result of an extensive consultation process, including with a range of children and young people, across varied education settings, which includes mainstream schools in both English and Irish-medium, Gaelscoileanna, DEIS and special schools. This document has benefited hugely from their input, along with contributions from a large range of education stakeholders, parents and advocacy groups.

Reflecting *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying*, these procedures take a whole of education approach to preventing and addressing bullying behaviour. As an education community we must work together to try and stop bullying behaviour, which if left unchecked could have a lifelong impact on our children and young people.

Ireland has become more diverse over the last two decades and our schools are a mirror of our society, with a wide range of cultures and backgrounds represented. Diversity enriches the educational experience of our children and young people, and we must continue to work together to ensure that our schools continue to be welcoming places for all pupils and students.

The sweeping increase in the reach of technology has offered children and young people access to a wealth of information, making learning engaging and effective. However, we must recognise that technology can also be a tool used to cause hurt and pain. We therefore will embrace the positives of technology but we equally need to armour ourselves and the children in our care against the negative impacts.

These procedures are called "*Bí Cineálta*" which means "Be Kind". Showing kindness and being kind to each other underpins these procedures and supports school environments that foster empathy and understanding. The focus in these procedures on restoring relationships after bullying behaviour has been displayed will help to rebuild trust, encourage accountability and a supportive school culture.

I acknowledge the extensive work that is being done across our schools to prevent and address bullying behaviour every single day and these procedures will support schools as they continue this important work.

I welcome the enhanced focus on reporting and oversight of incidents of bullying behaviour. Information becomes knowledge when it is collected and interpreted. This knowledge will empower schools to understand and to make informed decisions around measures needed to prevent bullying behaviour and to support students affected by bullying behaviour.
I firmly believe that we can, together, actively support every child and young person to reach their full potential in an environment free from bullying behaviour.

Norma Foley TD
Minister for Education

Foreword from Secretary General Bernie McNally

Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying, our whole-education approach to preventing and addressing bullying in schools, was published in December 2022. Cineáltas is dedicated to the prevention and addressing of bullying, including cyber bullying, racist bullying, gender identity bullying and sexual harassment in schools. It is centred on a children's rights-based approach and provides a collective vision and clear roadmap for how the education community and society can work together to prevent and address bullying in our schools.

Cineáltas incorporates each of the nine components of UNESCO's Whole Education Approach to prevent and address bullying. The five-year implementation plan for Cineáltas was published in April 2023 and implementation commenced immediately. A key action in Cineáltas has been to update the 2013 anti-bullying procedures for primary and post-primary schools.

These *Bí Cineálta* procedures are the result of significant levels of engagement and participation with and by all the education partners, and extensive consultation with children and young people through the Cineáltas process.

The *Bí Cineálta* procedures aim to support school communities to prevent and address bullying behaviour. They have been developed with the four key principles of Cineáltas in mind: prevention; support; oversight and community. These procedures will ensure that every school's *Bí Cineálta* policy is developed and reviewed in consultation with the school community and they will provide for enhanced oversight of measures to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

Significant progress has been made in implementing the 61 actions contained in Cineáltas. Under Cineáltas, we are piloting a programme of counselling supports for primary schools, we have established a Student Participation Unit in the Department, we have developed an inspection model for wellbeing promotion in schools and we are developing training resources to help schools prevent and address bullying behaviour. A Cineáltas flag was given to all schools as a symbol to remind the whole school community of the importance of kindness, respect, equality, and inclusion. The Cineáltas flag recognises the good work that schools are already doing, and will do, to prevent and address bullying and to promote equality, inclusion, diversity and wellbeing. These are just some of the many actions that have been taken under Cineáltas.

A Resources Guide will be published to provide schools and parents with up-to-date information on supports available to assist schools in preventing and addressing bullying behaviour. Implementation of these procedures will be supported by extensive continuous professional development.

I would like to thank the education partners for their hard work and commitment and for the collaborative approach they have taken to develop these procedures. I would also like to thank everyone who provided input as part of the consultation process; school leaders, school staff, parents, and in particular, children and young people, whose views have heavily informed these procedures.

I look forward to continuing to work with you to build on the good work already being done in schools across the country to ensure that all our students are kept safe from harm and that their wellbeing is at the forefront of everything we do.

Bernie McNally
Secretary General

1 | Introduction

1.1 Our vision

The vision of the Department of Education is to provide an education system where every child and young person feels valued and is actively supported and nurtured to reach their full potential. The Department's *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice* 2019 provides a blueprint for our vision that the experience of children and young people, through their lifetime in the education system, will be one that enhances, promotes, values and nurtures their wellbeing.

To achieve this, we need to work together towards an inclusive Irish society where bullying is not tolerated and where individual difference is acknowledged, valued and celebrated.

Bullying is an experience that no child or young person should have to endure. It can affect engagement with school, self-confidence, and the child or young person's sense of self and belonging.[1] Bullying behaviour can impact a child's agency and their ability to take effective action.

Bullying is a children's rights issue. Bullying interferes with the following rights of the child set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child[2]:

- the right to freedom of expression (Article 13)
- the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 14)
- the right to freedom of association and freedom of peaceful assembly (Article 15)
- the right to privacy (Article 16)
- the right to be protected from all forms of abuse and neglect (Article 19)
- the right to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health (Article 24)
- the right to education (Article 28)
- the right to enjoy their own culture, religion or language (Article 30)

1.2 Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying

Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying[3] is Ireland's whole-education approach to preventing and addressing bullying in schools. Cineáltas contains 61 actions which are aimed at helping us all to work together towards an inclusive Irish society free from bullying in all its forms and where all our children and young people can feel happy and safe in our schools.

The development of Cineáltas was heavily informed by the views of children and young people, their parents and school staff.

Cineáltas is grounded in UNESCO's Whole Education Approach[4] to prevent and address bullying and is aligned with the four key areas for wellbeing promotion[5] as outlined in the *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice:* Culture and Environment; Curriculum

1 O'Higgins Norman, J, (2020) Tackling bullying from the inside out: Shifting paradigms in bullying research and interventions. *International Journal of Bullying Prevention*, 2(3), 161–169.

2 Convention on the Rights of the Child https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child

3 Cineáltas Action Plan on Bullying 2022 https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/52aaf-cinealtas-action-plan-on-bullying/

4 International Conference on School Bullying (2020) UNESCO https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374794

5 Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018-2023 (Revised 2019) 24725_07cc07626f6a426eb6eab4c523fb2ee2 (1).pdf

(Teaching and Learning); Policy and Planning; and Relationships and Partnerships. These four areas ensure that wellbeing is promoted through all areas of school life. *See Figure 1*.

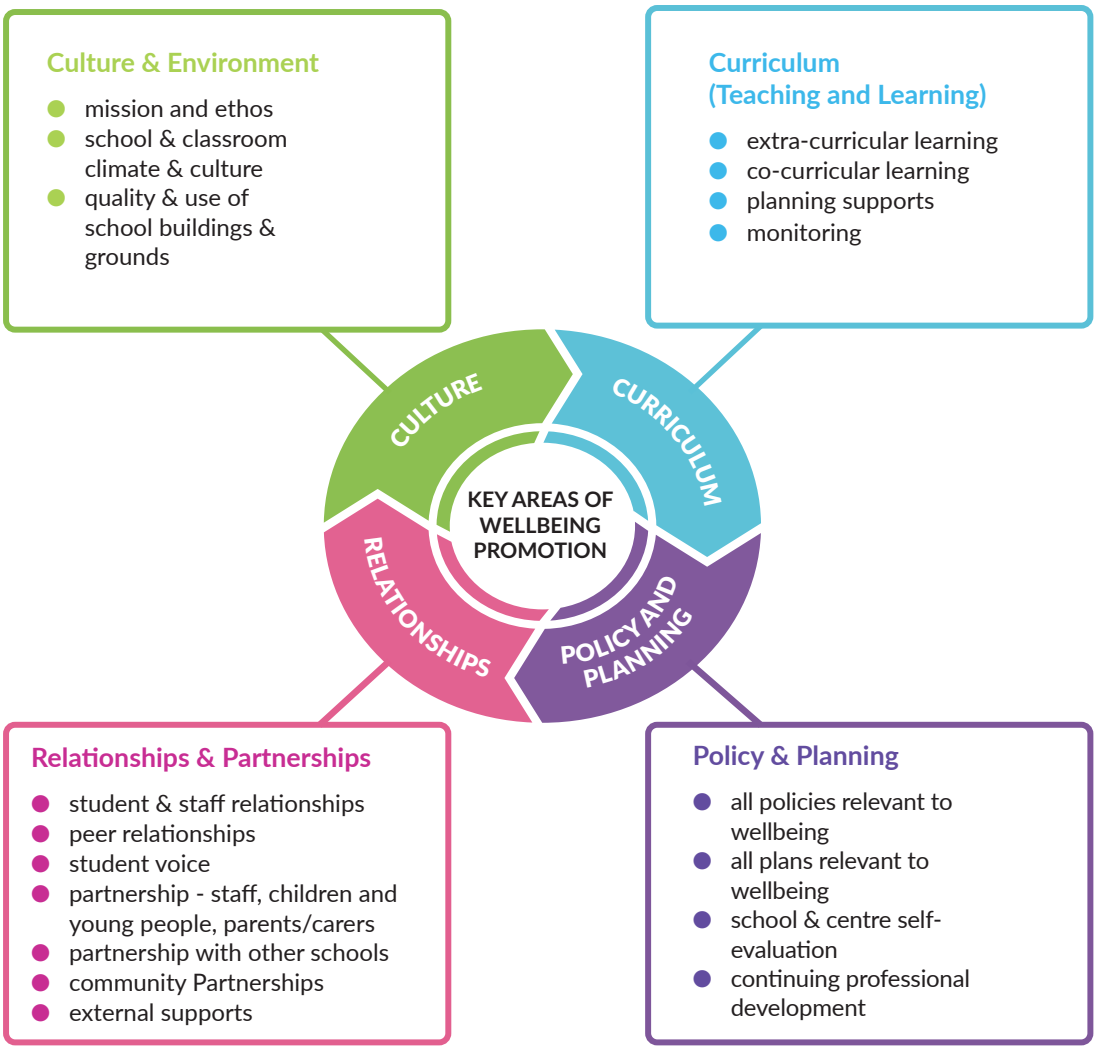


Figure 1

Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying is rooted in the four key principles of prevention, support, oversight and community. *Cineáltas* provides a collective vision and clear roadmap for how the whole education community and society can work together to prevent and address bullying in our schools.

Figure 2

Department of Education roadmap for preventing and addressing bullying

Key Areas of Wellbeing

Culture and Environment

Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)

Policy and Planning

Relationships and Partnerships

Prevention

Education and empathy generation are the foundations for knowledge, respect and inclusion

Support

Tangible and targeted supports provide a framework for school communities to work together

Community
Inclusive school communities that are connected build positive relationships and partnerships
Accountability & Inclusion
Oversight
Visible leadership inspires positive environments for children and the school community

1.3 Anti-bullying procedures

These procedures replace the 2013 *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*. They apply to all recognised primary and post-primary schools and to centres for education, as defined in the Education Act 1998, which are attended by students under the age of 18 years.

These procedures provide direction and guidance to schools, in relation to measures to prevent and address bullying behaviour in schools. They have been developed with the four key principles of Cineáltas in mind: prevention; support; oversight and community.

The implementation of these procedures will build on the work already being done to ensure that all the students who attend our schools are kept safe from harm and that the wellbeing of our students is at the forefront of everything that we do.

Throughout this document the term school(s) will be used to refer to recognised primary and post-primary schools and to centres for education. The term student(s) will be used as defined in the Education Act 1998 which, in relation to a school, means a person enrolled at the school, and in relation to a centre for education, means a person registered as a student in that centre.

The term parent(s) will be used as defined in the Education Act 1998, which includes a foster parent, a guardian appointed under relevant guardianship of children legislation, or other person acting in loco parentis who has a child in his or her care subject to any statutory power or order of a court and, in the case of a child who has been adopted under relevant adoption legislation, or where a child has been adopted outside the State means the adopter or adopters or the surviving adopter.

These procedures relate to measures to prevent and address bullying behaviour that occurs between students. Allegations of bullying behaviour by students towards school staff may be addressed through the school's Code of Behaviour. Allegations of bullying behaviour by school staff towards students may be addressed by the principal or chairperson of the board of management through the disciplinary procedures for staff.

1.4 Responsibilities of the school community

The school community has a responsibility to prevent and address bullying behaviour. Schools should work in partnership with their patron, board of management, staff, students and their parents to implement their Bí Cineálta policy.

Boards of management must have oversight of the development, implementation and review of their school's Bí Cineálta policy and ensure that the appropriate preventative strategies are in place and are effective.

School staff can prevent and address bullying behaviour by promoting empathy, intervening promptly and implementing policies that create a positive and inclusive environment that fosters kindness among students. The primary aim in addressing bullying behaviour is to stop the bullying behaviour and to restore, as far as practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.

Students have an important role to play by supporting their peers, reporting incidents of bullying behaviour and working in partnership with their school community.

Parents also have an important role to play. Collaboration between parents and school staff is essential to effectively prevent and address bullying behaviour. Schools should promote active partnership with parents which can help reinforce values that discourage bullying behaviour.

1.5 Legal basis

These procedures are underpinned by a range of legislation which includes the following:

The Education Welfare Act 2000[6] provides that *the board of management of a recognised school shall, after consultation with the principal of, the teachers teaching at, the parents of students registered at, and the educational welfare officer assigned functions in relation to, that school, prepare, in accordance with subsection (2), a code of behaviour in respect of the students registered at the school.* The Code of Behaviour Guidelines for Schools[7] requires schools to have an anti-bullying policy as part of the school's Code of Behaviour.

Schools have an obligation under the Equal Status Acts 2000–2018[8] to prevent harassment (including sexual harassment) on the grounds of gender, marital status, family status, age, disability, sexual orientation, race, religion, and membership of the Traveller community.

The Children First Act 2015[9] places a statutory obligation on schools to ensure, as far as practicable, *that each child attending the school is safe from harm while attending school or otherwise participating in school activities.*

The Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020[10] also known as Coco's Law provides *that a person who distributes, publishes or threatens to distribute or publish an intimate image of another person (a) without that other person's consent, and (b) with intent to cause harm to, or being reckless as to whether or not harm is caused to, the other person, is guilty of an offence.*

1.6 How these procedures were developed

The Department of Education conducted an extensive consultation process for the development of Cineáltas and the same process was used to develop these Bí Cineálta procedures to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

- 4,600 responses were received to the public consultation questionnaire
- 78 written submissions were received from the public request for submissions
- 41 school staff and board of management members across primary and post-primary schools participated in school focus groups
- 170 students engaged in focus groups including students with special educational needs, Traveller and Roma students, students from Ukraine, and children in the international protection system

6 Education (Welfare) Act 2000 Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 (irishstatutebook.ie).

7 Developing a Code of Behaviour Guidelines for Schools 2008 www.tusla.ie/guidelines_school _codes

8 Equal Status Acts 2000-2018 https://adsdatabase.ohchr.org/IssueLibrary/IRELAND_Equal%20Status%20Act.pdf

9 Children First Act 2015 – https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2015/act/36/enacted/en/pdf

10 Harassment Harmful Communications & Related Offences Act 2020 https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2020/act/32/enacted/en/pdf

1.7 What students say about what should be done to prevent and address bullying behaviour

2 | Bullying Behaviour

2.1 Definition of bullying behaviour as outlined in *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying*

Core definition of 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.

Building on many years of international research, the core definition above sets out clear criteria to help school communities to prevent, correctly identify and address bullying among students. Alleged incidents of bullying are however often complex and must be considered on a case-by-case basis.

There are many different methods of bullying behaviour, including physical, verbal and relational forms, and it can take place online and offline. There are also many different motives for bullying behaviour which can be understood on an individual level (for example, desire for dominance, status, revenge) and/or on a societal level (for example, identity-based bullying such as racist, disablist, sexist or LGBTQ+ bullying). Bullying behaviour in schools is often strongly influenced by attitudes, behaviours, norms and power dynamics that are deeply engrained in our society.

The core elements of the definition are further described below:

> Targeted behaviour

Bullying is deliberate, unwanted behaviour that causes harm to others, and where the student displaying bullying behaviour knows that their behaviour is or will be perceived as harmful by the child or young person experiencing the behaviour. Bullying is not accidental or reckless behaviour. The harm can be physical (for example, personal injury, damage to or loss of property), social (for example. withdrawal, loneliness, exclusion) and/or emotional (for example, low self-esteem, depression, anxiety) and can have a serious and long-term negative impact on the student experiencing the 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 still be addressed under the school's code of behaviour.

> Repeated behaviour

Bullying takes the form of a systematic pattern of behaviour which is repeated over time. Single offline incidents of intentional negative behaviour involving an imbalance of power are not considered bullying but must still be addressed under the school's code of behaviour. Posting a single harmful message/image/video online, and which is highly likely to be reposted or shared with others can therefore be seen as bullying behaviour.

> Imbalance of power

In incidents of bullying, the student experiencing the bullying behaviour finds it hard to defend themselves as a result of the abuse of a real or perceived imbalance of power. This imbalance of power may manifest itself through differences in size, strength, age, ability, peer group power, economic status, social status, religion, race, ethnic origin including membership of the Traveller and/or Roma communities, sexual orientation,

family circumstances, gender, gender identity, gender expression, experience of the care system, disability or the receipt of special education. In incidents of online (or cyber) bullying, the imbalance of power may relate to online anonymity, technical proficiency and possession of information/images/video, and the inability of the targeted student to remove offensive online material or escape the bullying.

2.2 Behaviour that is not bullying behaviour

A one-off instance of negative behaviour towards another student is not bullying behaviour. However, a single hurtful message posted on social media can be considered bullying behaviour as it may be visible to a wide audience and has a high likelihood of being shared multiple times and so becomes a repeated behaviour.

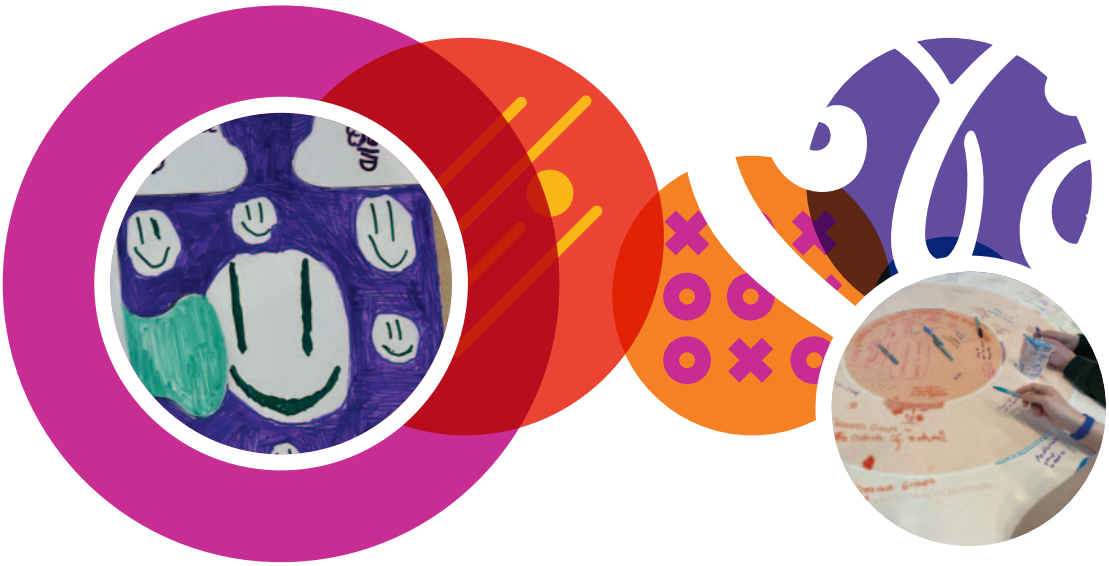
Disagreement between students, or instances where students don't want to be friends or to remain friends, is not considered bullying behaviour unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others including deliberate manipulation of friendship groups.

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 can't control.

Bullying is not accidental or reckless behaviour. If the repeated harm is real for the student experiencing the behaviour but unintended by the other student, this is not bullying.

These behaviours, while not defined as bullying can be distressing.

Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.



2.3 Criminal behaviour

Bullying behaviour can be considered criminal behaviour under certain circumstances and legal consequences can apply. The age of criminal responsibility in Ireland is 12 years.

Some online behaviour may be illegal, and students need to be aware of the far-reaching consequences of posting inappropriate or harmful content online. In cases of intimate imagery, the Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020, also known as *Coco's Law*, criminalises the non-consensual sharing of intimate images and also criminalises threatening to share these images.

If bullying behaviour involves physical violence or threats of violence, it *may* be considered assault.

If bullying behaviour involves discrimination or hate speech targeting a student based on their race, religion, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation or membership of the Traveller community, it may be considered a hate crime under the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989[11], and those engaging in such behaviour may face criminal charges.

If bullying behaviour involves sexual harassment or sexual assault, this may also be considered criminal behaviour.

An Garda Síochána is the appropriate authority to investigate alleged criminal behaviour.

11 Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989
https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1989/act/19/enacted/en/print.html

2.4 When bullying behaviour becomes a child protection concern

Section 10 of the Children First Act, 2015 places a statutory obligation on schools, as a "provider of a relevant service" to ensure, as far as practicable, that each child attending the school is safe from harm while attending school or otherwise participating in school activities.

Teachers registered with the Teaching Council are Mandated Persons under the Children First Act. They have a legal obligation under the Act to report harm of children that meets or is above a defined threshold to Tusla, and also to assist Tusla if requested, in assessing a concern which is the subject of a mandated report. If the concern does not reach the threshold for mandated reporting, but a teacher feels that it is a reasonable concern about the welfare or protection of a child, a report should be made to Tusla under the Children First National Guidance. The Children First National Guidance applies to everyone. All school staff and volunteers must report reasonable concerns to Tusla.

The *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (Revised 2023)* provide that all school staff should report reasonable concerns to the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) who may take advice and/or report the concerns to Tusla. If the staff member is a registered teacher and the concern is at or above the threshold of harm at which a mandated report must be made the concern shall be submitted as a mandated report to Tusla jointly by the DLP and the registered teacher. See Chapter 5 of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (Revised 2023)*.

The Children First Act defines harm as assault, ill-treatment, neglect or sexual abuse and covers single and multiple instances.

The threshold of harm is reached where the mandated person believes that a child's health, development or welfare have been, or are being seriously affected, or are likely to be seriously affected.

The Children First National Guidance document 2017 is the national, overarching guidance with regard to child safeguarding. The Guidance provides that in cases of serious instances of bullying where the behaviour is regarded as possibly abusive, a referral may need to be made to Tusla or An Garda Síochána as appropriate.

Generally, bullying behaviour can be addressed without the involvement of Tusla. However, bullying behaviour may become a child protection concern when it results in significant physical or emotional harm, or where it becomes a persistent and severe problem and measures taken to address it are not effective.

In determining when bullying behaviour should be reported to Tusla the following factors should be considered:

- the impact on the child
- protective/appropriate action taken by the parents
- protective/appropriate action taken by the school
- engagement of child/family with support services such as NEPS

If there is doubt about whether bullying behaviour is a child protection concern schools should contact Tusla's social work department for advice. This will enable the social worker to explore the situation with school staff and provide advice on the best course of action.

Contact details for Tusla are included in the Resources Guide which accompanies these procedures.

Click here for more information on the Department's Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools[12]:

Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools

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. 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 bicycle. 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.

12 Child Protection Procedures https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/d7be05-child-protection/

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; non-verbal 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.

Online bullying behaviour:

Online bullying behaviour (cyberbullying) is carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as text or direct messaging/instant messaging, social media platforms, e-mail, apps, digital gaming sites, gaming consoles, chatrooms and other online technologies.

This form of bullying behaviour can include:

- sending or sharing nasty, insulting, offensive, and/or intimidating messages or images via text messages, emails, direct messages or other websites or apps
- posting information considered to be personal, private and sensitive without consent
- making and/or participating in fake profiles on a social network to impersonate and/or humiliate other students
- excluding or disrupting access to a student on purpose from online chat groups, access to accounts or from an online game

Even though a message may be posted online just once by a student it can be considered bullying behaviour as it may be seen by a wide audience where it is intended to be shared or has a likelihood of being shared multiple times and is thus repeated.

As online bullying uses technology to carry out bullying behaviour and does not require face-to-face contact it can occur at any time. Many types of bullying behaviour can be facilitated through online bullying. In many cases online bullying can relate to an "offline" experience with someone known to the student. This type of bullying may involve forms of sexual exploitation including but not limited to, sextortion and the non-consensual sharing of intimate images. The sharing or threatened sharing of images without consent is a criminal offence.

2.6 Where bullying behaviour can occur

Bullying behaviour can happen anywhere, online or offline and at any time, but there are certain places and times where bullying behaviour can be more likely to occur. These can include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

Inside School

School physical environments can have a significant influence on social relationships among students and can impact on the ability of school staff to effectively prevent and address bullying. Well-designed school environments play a vital role in preventing bullying behaviour and promoting inclusion, positive relationships, and a safe and supportive learning environment.

School yard: Bullying behaviour can take place in the school yard. School grounds with hidden or obscure parts may provide an environment where bullying behaviour is more likely to occur. Many common school yard games present opportunities for bullying behaviour because of their physical nature. Continuing provocation may lead to a physical fight and in some cases the student experiencing bullying behaviour may appear to be the aggressor as they give vent to their frustration.

In the classroom: Bullying behaviour can take place in class. It may occur subtly through glances, looks, sniggers or may take the more overt form of physical intimidation or deliberate isolation. Bullying behaviour may also occur between class periods when the students or the teacher moves.

Other areas: Bullying behaviour can take place in other areas such as toilets, corridors, cloakrooms, locker areas, changing rooms, showers, gym, canteen and assembly hall.

Outside School

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, schools should deal with it in accordance with their Bí Cineálta policy. See Section 6.2 of these procedures.

Coming to and from school: Bullying behaviour can occur in the area immediately outside the school, the local shops and the wider local area. Bullying behaviour can take place at the bus-stop or on the journey to and from school whether the students are walking, cycling or on school buses.

Bullying behaviour can also take place in organised clubs and groups outside of school such as sports clubs.

Online bullying (cyberbullying) behaviour, along with all other types of bullying behaviour, can cause significant harm and can have a lasting impact on students who experience this behaviour. Access to technology means that online bullying behaviour can happen anytime, and the student's home is no longer a safe place. The nature of these technologies means that digital content can be shared and seen by a very wide audience almost instantly and the content is almost impossible to delete permanently.

2.7 Types of bullying behaviour

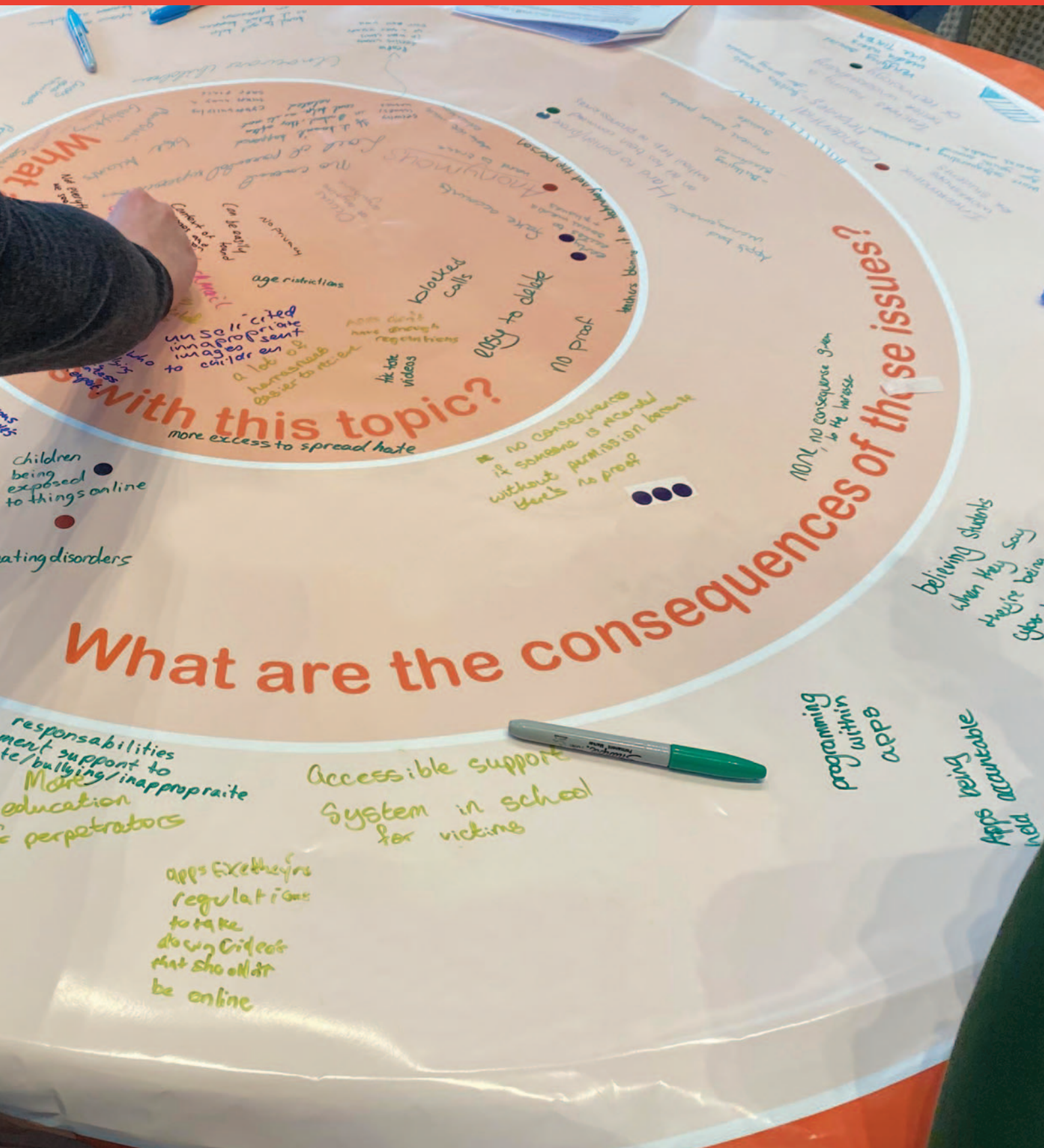
There are many different types of bullying behaviour. These can include the following which is not an exhaustive list:

- **disablist bullying behaviour:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of a perceived or actual disability or additional need
- **exceptionally able bullying:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their high academic ability or outstanding talents
- **gender identity bullying:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their perceived or actual gender identity
- **homophobic/transphobic (LGBTQ+) bullying:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their perceived or actual membership of the LGBTQ+ community
- **physical appearance bullying:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their physical appearance. Students who "look different" can be mocked or criticised about the shape, size or appearance of their body
- **racist bullying:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their race or ethnic origin which includes membership of the Traveller or Roma community. Racism is defined in the *National Action Plan Against Racism*[13] as "a form of domination which manifests through those power dynamics present in structural and institutional arrangements, practices, policies and cultural norms, which have the effect of excluding or discriminating against individuals or groups, based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin"[14]
- **poverty bullying:** behaviour that intends to humiliate a student because of a lack of resources
- **religious identity bullying:** behaviour that intends to harm a student because of their religion or religious identity
- **sexist bullying:** behaviour that intends to harm a student based on their sex, perpetuating stereotypes that a student or a group of students are inferior because of their sex
- **sexual harassment:** any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature or other conduct based on sex which affects the dignity of the student

13 National Action Plan Against Racism 2023-2027 can be accessed here https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/d157a-minister-obrien-announces-publication-of-irelands-national-action-plan-against-racism-2023-2027/

14 ibid, p8.

3 | Impact of Bullying Behaviour



3.1 Impact of experiencing bullying behaviour

When students experience bullying behaviour, it can have a severe and profound impact on them in both the short and long term. Students may develop feelings of stress, insecurity, humiliation and anxiety and therefore become more vulnerable. Experiencing bullying behaviour can have a detrimental effect on their experience of education and education outcomes[15]. The student's self-confidence may be damaged with a resulting lowering of their self-esteem which can continue into adulthood. While they may not talk about what is happening to them, their suffering can be indicated through changes in mood and behaviour. Extreme cases of bullying behaviour may contribute to mental health difficulties[16].

Online or cyberbullying can be a hidden form of bullying behaviour. It can often go unnoticed as much online activity is not subject to adult supervision and the student who displays the behaviour can be offered a degree of anonymity that could protect them from being detected. It can also involve a wider audience and can be difficult to have offensive comments or material removed.

3.2 Signs of when a student may be experiencing bullying behaviour

Signs that may indicate that a student is experiencing bullying behaviour include but are not limited to the following:

- anxiety about travelling to and from school; for example, requesting parents to drive or collect them, changing travel routes, avoiding regular times for travelling to and from school
- not wanting to go to school, refusal to attend
- a change in how the student performs in school, loss of concentration and loss of enthusiasm and interest in school
- pattern of physical illnesses for example, headaches, stomach aches
- unexplained changes either in mood or behaviour which may be particularly noticeable before returning to school after weekends or after school holidays
- visible signs of anxiety or distress for example, stammering, withdrawing, nightmares, difficulty in sleeping, crying, not eating, vomiting, bedwetting
- spontaneous out-of-character comments about either students or teachers
- possessions missing or damaged
- increased requests for money or stealing money
- unexplained bruising or cuts or damaged clothing
- reluctance and/or refusal to say what is troubling them

The above signs do not necessarily mean that a student is experiencing bullying behaviour. However, if these signs occur over a period of time or if a number occur together, it may be an indication that the student is experiencing bullying behaviour.

15 James, D. J., Sofroniou, N., & Lawlor, M. (2003). The response of Irish adolescents to bullying. Irish Journal of Psychology, 24, 22–34.

16 Foody, M., McGuire, L., Kuldas, S., & O'Higgins Norman, J. (2019). Friendship quality, gender and their role in cyberbullying involvement and psychological well-being. Frontiers in Psychology https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01723/full

3.3 Students who may be more at risk of experiencing bullying behaviour

It is important to note that bullying behaviour can be experienced by anyone. Bullying behaviour can be directed at individuals for no obvious reason, or it can be more overt based on a student's identity or societal issues.

Some students with special educational needs may have difficulties recognising bullying behaviour has occurred. Some students with complex needs may lack awareness of social dynamics leading them to trust others implicitly. Consequently, these students may be more at risk of experiencing bullying behaviour.

Schools should consider the composition of their student population when identifying who may be more at risk of experiencing bullying behaviour so that preventative strategies can be tailored to support students at risk. At-risk groups can include:

- students who have additional learning needs
- students with disabilities
- students from an ethnic minority background and migrant students
- students who are members of the Traveller and Roma communities
- students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ+)
- students who practise or display a religious faith
- students experiencing homelessness
- students experiencing health or mental health issues

3.4 Impact of witnessing bullying behaviour

Students who witness bullying behaviour can also be impacted in a similar way to those who experience bullying behaviour[17]. These students may be afraid to tell someone because of a fear of reprisals for telling or a fear of making the situation worse.

Students who witness bullying behaviour may feel guilt or anxiety for not helping the student who is experiencing bullying behaviour. For example, they can feel vulnerable particularly in the case of racist or identity-based bullying behaviour if they share the same race or identity as the student who is experiencing the behaviour.

3.5 Impact of engaging in bullying behaviour

There can also be a negative impact on those who engage in bullying behaviour. Those who engage in bullying behaviour can display aggression, anti-social behaviour and lower academic achievement.[18] Students who display bullying behaviour often fail to recognise the impact of their actions and may lack empathy. They may avoid responsibility and deny or minimise their actions when confronted.

17 Doumas, D.M., Midgett, A.,Watts, A.D. (2019). The Impact of a Brief, Bullying Bystander Intervention on Internalizing Symptoms: Is Gender a Moderator of Intervention Effects? School Psychology International, v40 n3 p275-293 Jun.

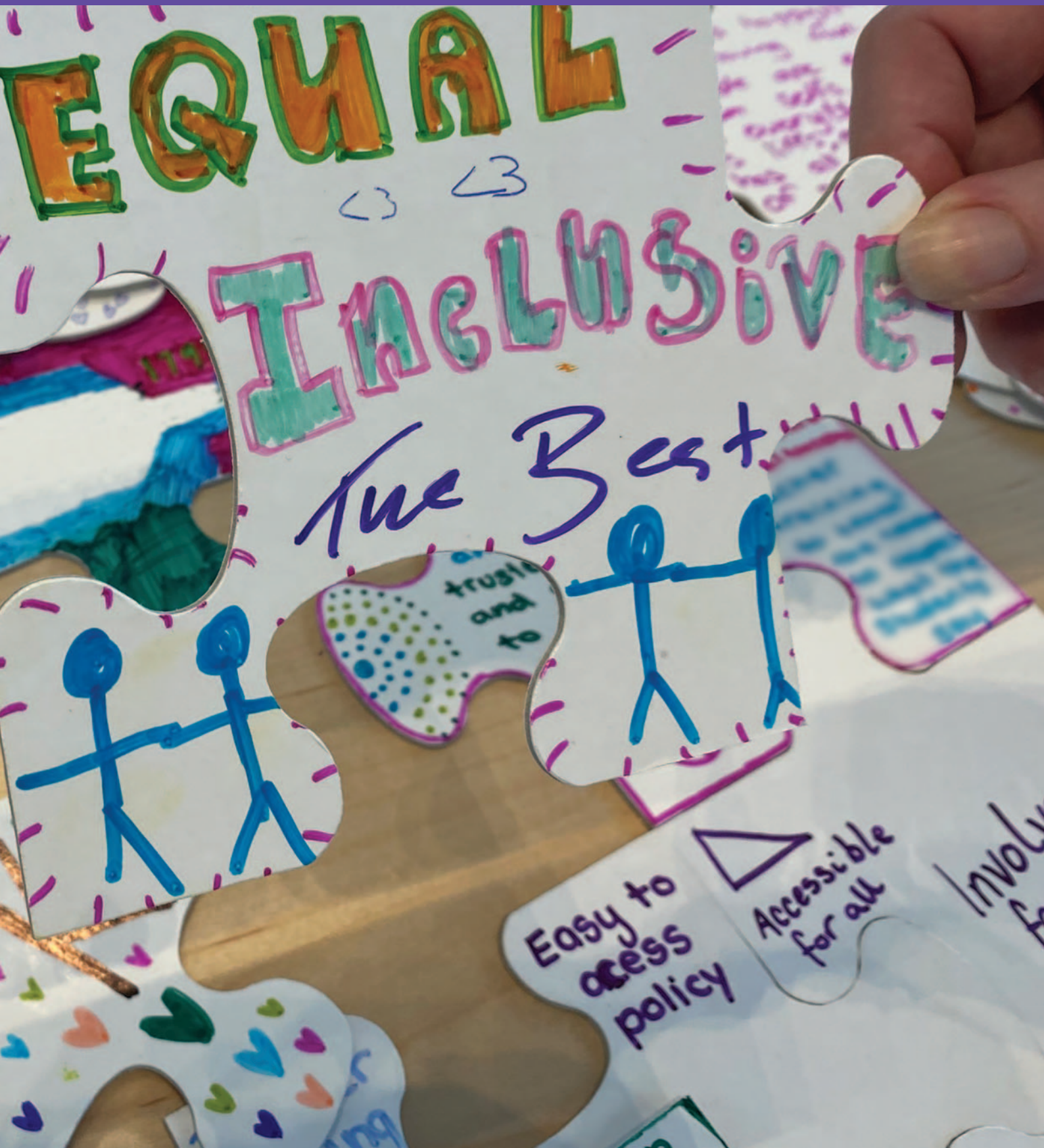
18 Rodkin, P.C., Espelage, D.L., & Hanish, L. (2015). A Gendered, Relational Framework for Understanding Bullying: Developmental Antecedents and Outcomes, American Psychologist, Pages 70, 311–321.

Long term, these students may find it hard to form long term relationships and they may express feelings of isolation and depression.[19]

The lived experience of some students may cause students to engage in bullying behaviour. Some students who engage in bullying behaviour have learned attitudes and behaviours which can undermine their ability to integrate themselves into their peer group. They may suffer from low self-esteem or insecurity and may have been bullied themselves. Students may also display or engage in bullying behaviour out of ignorance or because they are uncomfortable with another student's perceived difference.

19 Sigurdson, J.F, Wallander, J., Sund, A.M. (2014) Is involvement in school bullying associated with general health and psychosocial adjustment outcomes in adulthood?, Child Abuse & Neglect, Volume 38, Issue 10; Wolke, D. & Lereya, S.T. 2015. Long-term effects of bullying. Archives of Disease in Childhood, Vol. 100.

4 | School Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour



4.1 Bí Cineálta policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour

Bullying behaviour is not acceptable, and this should be communicated to all members of the school community. The school community includes the board of management, staff, students and their parents. The school community has a responsibility to work together in partnership to prevent and address bullying behaviour and to deal with the negative impact of bullying behaviour.

Each school is required to develop and implement a Bí Cineálta policy that sets out how the school community prevents and addresses bullying behaviour.

Schools should engage with their school community to develop and review their policy. The content of the policy should be communicated to the school community and the patron and should be published on the school's website.

The following information must be contained in the school's Bí Cineálta policy:

- a statement of the school's commitment to prevent and address bullying behaviour
- a statement acknowledging that bullying behaviour interferes with the rights of the child
- the core definition of bullying behaviour as provided in Section 2.1 of these procedures
- how the school engaged with the school community to develop the policy
- how the school engaged with the school community to review the polic
- how the school prevents bullying behaviour (based on Chapter 5 of these procedures)
- how the school supports students who experience, witness and display bullying behaviour
- what happens when bullying behaviour is reported
- the teacher(s) in the school responsible for addressing incidents of bullying behaviour*
- how oversight of bullying behaviour will be managed
- how the school will communicate its Bí Cineálta policy

*While every staff member has a responsibility to implement their school's Bí Cineálta policy, the school's Bí Cineálta policy must clearly indicate the teachers in the school who are responsible for addressing bullying behaviour. The teacher(s) does not need to be referenced by name. However, it must be sufficiently clear which teachers in the school have this responsibility; for example, at primary level, this teacher could be the class teacher. At post-primary level, this could be a member of the student support team, year head or the deputy principal.

A template document which **must** be used by all schools as a basis for developing their Bí Cineálta Policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour is contained in Appendix A.

4.2 A student-friendly version of the Bí Cineálta policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour

Each school is required to develop and implement a-student-friendly, easy to understand version of their Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour.

Schools should engage with their school community to develop and review their student-friendly policy. The content of the policy should be communicated to the school community and should be published on the school's website.

The student-friendly policy should use language that is easy for students and parents to understand. Schools may decide to translate this document into languages other than English to support students and parents who do not have English as their first language.

The student-friendly policy should be displayed where students and their parents can see it – for example at students' eye level in classrooms, in the school reception, in student journals. Schools could communicate this policy through short presentations or by printing it as a leaflet or handout that can be distributed and discussed at school assemblies or in class.

A student-friendly policy template document is contained in Appendix B. Schools **can** use this template document as the basis for their student-friendly policy and amend accordingly.

5 | Preventing Bullying Behaviour

The *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice* provides the following four key areas that are essential for a holistic, whole-school approach to wellbeing promotion: Culture and Environment; Curriculum (Teaching and Learning); Policy and Planning; and Relationships and Partnerships.

These four areas should be considered by a school when developing measures to prevent bullying behaviour.

5.1. Culture and environment

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

Relationships between all members of the school community should be based on respect, care, integrity and trust. Open communication between the patron, boards of management, school staff, students and their parents help to foster a collaborative approach and shared responsibilities in relation to preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.

The school leadership team influences the school culture and set the standards and expectations for the school community when preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.

Each member of school staff has a responsibility to develop and maintain a school culture where bullying behaviour is unacceptable and to take a consistent approach to addressing bullying behaviour.

Students can shape the school culture by promoting kindness and inclusion within their peer group and maintain a positive and supportive school environment for all.

Parents, as active partners in their child's education, can help foster an environment where bullying behaviour is not tolerated through promoting empathy and respect.

A Telling Environment

It is important that the school community supports a 'telling' environment.

According to research conducted in Ireland, there is a persistent tendency not to report bullying incidents[20]. Students should feel comfortable to talk about concerns regarding bullying behaviour.

The reasons why students may not report include the following:

- fear of retaliation from the student displaying the bullying behaviour or their friendship group
- concerns about being seen as a "tell-tale" for reporting bullying behaviour
- fear that the adult may make the situation worse
- fear that the adult doesn't have the knowledge and skills to deal appropriately with the bullying behaviour
- fear that the adult may deny access to their smart phone

20 Foody, M. Samara, M., O'Higgins Norman, J (2017) Bullying and cyberbullying studies in the school-aged population on the island of Ireland: A meta-analysis Bullying and cyberbullying studies in the school-aged population on the island of Ireland: A meta-analysis – Foody – 2017 – British Journal of Educational Psychology – Wiley Online Library.

- not knowing what will happen when they report bullying behaviour
- fear that they will not be believed
- concerns about "getting into trouble" for reporting bullying behaviour
- not having evidence to back up the allegation of bullying behaviour, this can be seen particularly with relational bullying behaviour

Schools should take these reasons for not reporting into account when developing their strategies to prevent and address bullying behaviour. Schools should be safe environments where reporting of bullying behaviour is encouraged.

A Trusted Adult

The concept of "a trusted adult" can be an effective strategy to encourage students to report if they or another student is experiencing bullying behaviour. Staff could support this strategy by letting students know that they can talk to them.

Students who witness bullying behaviour should be supported and encouraged to report the behaviour to a trusted adult in the school so that the behaviour can be addressed. Students who witness bullying behaviour on social media have an important role in helping to address the behaviour by reporting the witnessed behaviour to a trusted adult.

The trusted adult should reassure the student that they have done the right thing by reporting the behaviour. The trusted adult should, without delay, inform the member of staff who has responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour. At primary level this may be the class teacher. At post-primary level this may be the deputy principal, year head, or a member of the student support team. If unsure who to inform, the trusted adult should inform the principal or deputy principal. The trusted adult should continue to support the student, as appropriate, while the behaviour is being addressed by the relevant member of staff.

Creating safe physical spaces in schools

The creation of safe physical spaces supports psychological safety and is an important measure to prevent bullying behaviour. Spaces that have a clear line of sight make it easier for school staff to supervise students. Hidden spaces in hallways, around staircases and in the schoolyard can be areas where there is a greater risk for bullying behaviour to occur. School could consider increasing visibility in these areas such as by the use of mirrors, planting shrubs to avoid students congregating in these areas or increasing supervision.

Schools could take the following measures to create safe physical spaces:

- ensure good lighting is present to avoid dark corners or spaces
- remove visual barriers from windows such as posters
- install mirrors to improve visibility and reduce blind spots
- improve the visibility of school staff who are supervising at break times including during yard duty
- murals, artwork and signage can help schools to promote the school's values such as equality, diversity, inclusion and respect

Students can feel a greater sense of belonging to a school community when they are given ownership of their own space through art and creativity[21]. This helps students to identify and to feel a sense of responsibility for their school environment. The inclusion of spaces within schools for collaborative learning can also play a part in fostering a sense of belonging. It is important that the school grounds are well maintained to promote a sense of ownership and respect in the school community.

Supervision

Appropriate supervision is an important measure to help prevent and address bullying behaviour. Schools are required to take all reasonable measures to ensure the safety of their students and to supervise students when students are attending school or attending school activities.

Some schools offer a mix of organised activities during break-times and schools are encouraged to continue to do this with a view to accommodating a range of preferences and interests.

21 Danko, S., Evans G., & Platten Killeen J., (2003). The Role Of Permanent Student Artwork In Students' Sense Of Ownership In An Elementary School. *Environment and Behaviour* (2): 250–263.

5.2 Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)

Teaching and learning that is collaborative and respectful should be promoted. Students should have regular opportunities to work in small groups with their peers, which can help build sense of connection, belonging and empathy among students.

The curricular subjects offered to students provide opportunities to foster inclusion and respect for diversity. Schools are encouraged to provide opportunities for students to develop a sense of self-worth through both curricular and extra-curricular programmes.

The Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) curricula at primary level aim 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. Examples of resources that can be used as part of teaching SPHE are included in the Resources Guide which accompanies these procedures.

At post-primary level, the updated SPHE specifications aim to help students to feel empowered to create, nurture and maintain respectful and healthy relationships with themselves and others. The RSE strand of the specification also provides space for post-primary students to examine and consider relationships and human sexuality which can foster an understanding of diversity which may help to reduce gender and identity-based bullying as well as sexism and sexual harassment.

Students can also consider diversity and inclusion through the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment's Religious Education specifications/syllabus. As well as this, diversity and inclusion can be experienced via Patron's Curricula which aim to encourage respect and understanding of different beliefs, perspectives and ways of living. In Civic Social and Political Education (CSPE), there is a focus on the interdependence of people in communities, at local as well as national and international levels. History and, at Senior Cycle, Politics and Society can be used to raise awareness of racism and colonialism. By examining historical and contemporary examples of racial discrimination and colonial legacies, students can develop an understanding of the root causes of bias and prejudice. Resources and materials are also available to support incorporating Traveller culture and history across all areas of the curriculum.

See the Resources Guide which accompanies these procedures.

5.3 Policy and planning

The wellbeing of the school community should be at the heart of school policies and plans. Chapter 4 details the requirements of a school's Bí Cineálta policy and student-friendly Bí Cineálta policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

There are a range of other policies such as the school's acceptable use policy, supervision policy, special education teaching policy and Code of Behaviour that can support implementation of a school's Bí Cineálta policy.

Supporting the participation of students in the development and implementation of school policies and plans can help increase awareness and ensure effective implementation.

Engaging in appropriate teacher professional learning courses can support school staff to prevent and address bullying behaviour. School staff should also share their experiences and examples of best practice. There is a range of training available for school staff which relates to promoting inclusion and diversity in schools.

See the Resources Guide which accompanies these procedures.

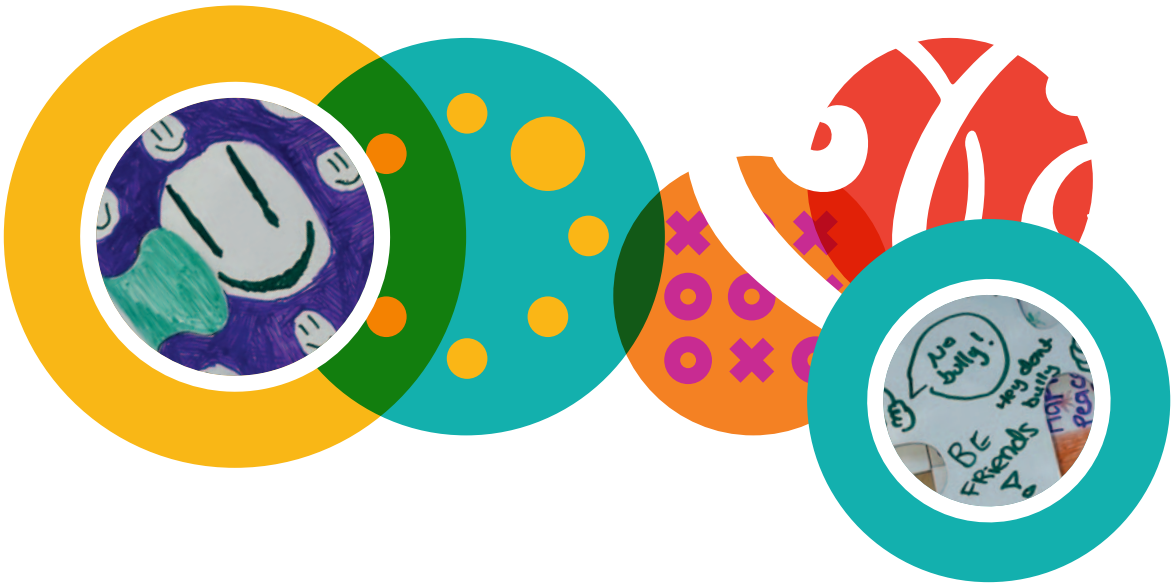
5.4 Relationships and partnerships

Strong interpersonal connections are a vital part of effectively preventing and addressing bullying behaviour. These interpersonal connections are supported through a range of formal and informal structures such as student councils, school clubs, parents' associations and student support teams.

The following, which is not an exhaustive list, could be considered to strengthen relationships and partnerships between members of the school community:

- age-appropriate awareness initiatives that look at the causes and impacts of bullying behaviour including those dealing with navigating friendships, identity-based bullying, racist bullying, homophobic/transphobic bullying, sexism and sexual harassment
- supporting the active participation of students in school life
- supporting the active participation of parents 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
- supporting activities that build empathy, respect and resilience
- encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring
- promoting acts of kindness
- teaching problem solving
- hosting debates

Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying recognises the importance of positive relationships across the whole education community to promote empathy, understanding and respect. The meaningful involvement of the board of management, staff, students and their parents in the development, implementation and review of their school's Bí Cineálta policy and student-friendly version is essential to effectively prevent and address bullying behaviour.



Preventing specific types of bullying behaviour

It should be noted that there is a variety of prevention strategies that can be implemented. A school's Student Support Team can support the development, implementation and review of the school's strategies to prevent bullying behaviour. When implementing a prevention strategy schools should consider engaging with members of the wider school community who are in regular contact with students, such as the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- school bus drivers
- education welfare officers
- home-school community liaison officers
- school completion project workers
- Traveller and Roma community education workers
- traffic wardens
- local businesses that are close to the school

These members of the wider school community can be encouraged to report any bullying behaviour to the school as appropriate.

5.5 Preventing cyberbullying behaviour

Technology and social media have provided many positive opportunities for entertainment, social engagement and education. Technology is a part of life that can impact even the youngest members of society. However, the increase in the use of technology has led to students becoming increasingly vulnerable to cyberbullying or unacceptable online behaviour.

Schools should proactively address these challenges by promoting digital literacy, digital citizenship, and fostering safe online environments. Strategies to prevent cyberbullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- implementing the SPHE curriculum
- implementing the Digital Media Literacy curriculum which teaches students about responsible online behaviour and digital citizenship
- having regular conversations with students about developing respectful and kind relationships online
- developing and communicating an acceptable use policy for technology
- referring to appropriate online behaviour as part of the standards of behaviour in the Code of Behaviour
- promoting or hosting online safety events for parents who are responsible for overseeing their children's activities online*
- holding an Internet safety day to reinforce awareness around appropriate online behaviour

The digital age of consent is the minimum age a user must be before a social media or internet company can collect, process and store their data. In Ireland the digital age of consent is 16.

For the purposes of data collection, students between the age of 13 and 16 years old must have parental permission to sign-up to social media services where companies use the legal basis of consent to collect process and store users' data. Most social media platforms and services have a minimum age requirement and for the majority of these services it is 13 years' old. Therefore technically, children under the age of 13 should not have a social media account.

It is important for their child's safety, that parents are aware of their children's use of technology including smartphones and gaming consoles.

*Resources have been developed to support parents and parent associations that wish to develop voluntary codes regarding smartphone use among primary school children. These are contained in the Resources Guide which accompanies these procedures.

5.6 Preventing homophobic/transphobic bullying behaviour

All students including gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students, have a right to feel safe and supported at school.

Strategies to prevent homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- maintaining an inclusive physical environment such as by displaying relevant posters

- encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
- challenging gender-stereotypes
- conducting workshops and seminars for students, school staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of homophobic bullying behaviour
- encouraging students to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour

5.7 Preventing racist bullying behaviour

Schools have become much more culturally diverse over the last number of decades. Students attending schools come from many different cultures and backgrounds. Students from diverse backgrounds may face discrimination and prejudice and may be subject to racist bullying behaviour.

Strategies to prevent racist bullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- fostering a school culture where diversity is celebrated and where students "see themselves" in their school environment
- having the cultural diversity of the school visible and on display
- conducting workshops and seminars for students, school staff and parents to raise awareness of racism
- encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
- encouraging bystanders to report when they witness racist behaviour
- 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
- inviting speakers from diverse ethnic backgrounds[22]
- ensuring that library reading material and textbooks represent appropriate lived experiences of students and adults from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds

5.8 Preventing sexist bullying behaviour

Schools should focus on gender equality as part of the school's measures to create a supportive and respectful environment.

Strategies to prevent sexist bullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- ensuring members of staff model respectful behaviour and treat students equally irrespective of their sex

22 Schools should refer to Circular 0042/2018 and 0043/2018 for guidance on the use of programmes and external facilitators in the promotion of wellbeing https://circulars.gov.ie/pdf/circular/education/2018/42.pdf https://circulars.gov.ie/pdf/circular/education/2018/43.pdf

- ensuring all students have the same opportunities to engage in school activities irrespective of their sex
- celebrating diversity at school and acknowledging the contributions of all students
- organising awareness campaigns, workshops and presentations on gender equality and respect
- encouraging parents to reinforce these values of respect at home

5.9 Preventing sexual harassment

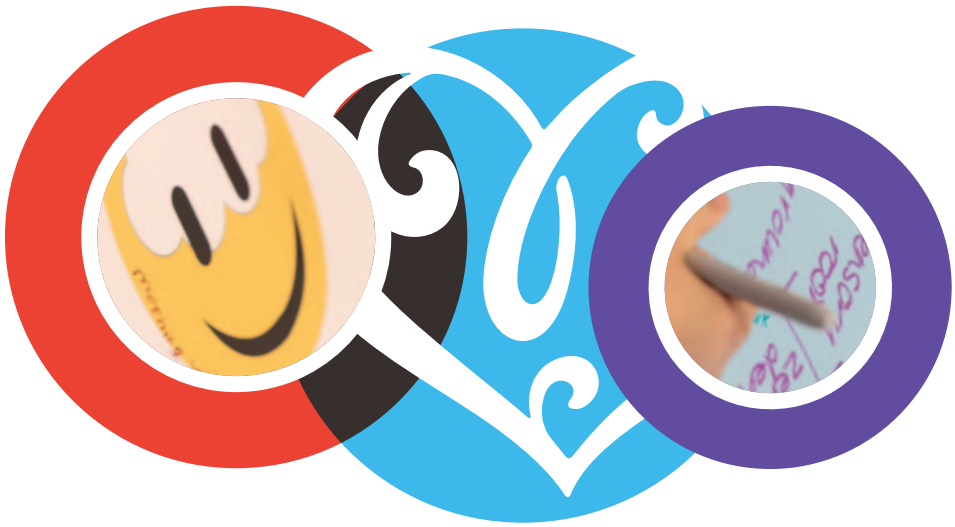
Preventing sexual harassment requires an approach that focuses on education, awareness and clear enforceable policies. Schools must make it clear that there is a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment. Sexual harassment should never be dismissed as teasing or banter.

Strategies to prevent sexual harassment include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

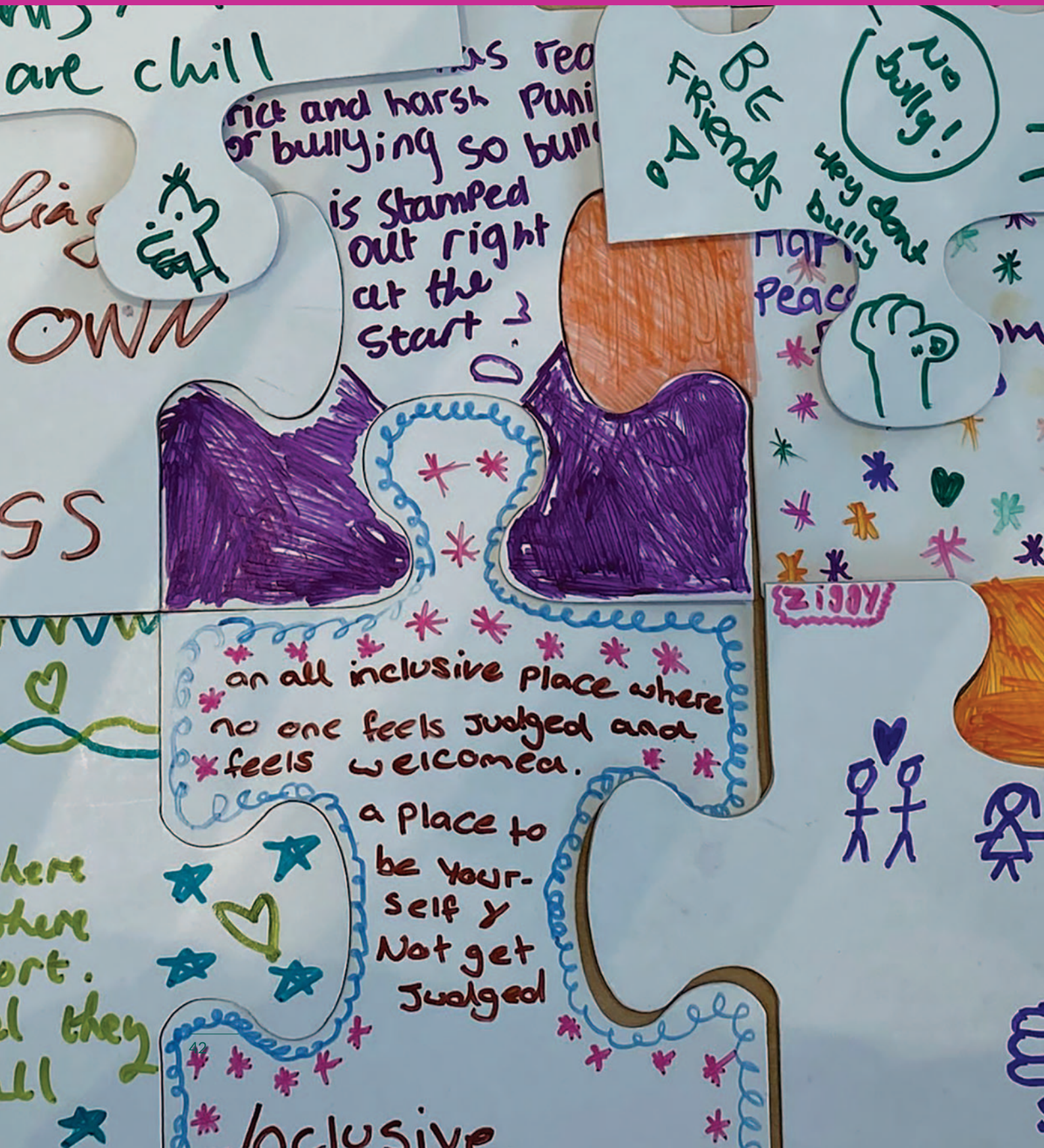
- using the updated SPHE specifications at post-primary level to teach students about healthy relationships and how to treat each other with respect and kindness
- promoting positive role models within the school community
- challenging gender stereotypes that can contribute to sexual harassment

Many of the preventative strategies listed above can be implemented by schools to prevent all types of bullying behaviour.

Resources to support schools to prevent bullying behaviour are contained in the Resources Guide which accompanies these procedures.



6 | Addressing Bullying Behaviour



The primary aim in addressing reports of bullying behaviour should be to stop the bullying behaviour and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.

The guide at Appendix C may be helpful for schools to use to address bullying behaviour.

6.1. Identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred

When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred the teacher should consider the following: what, where, when and why?

If a group of students is involved, each student should be engaged with individually at first. Thereafter, all 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 also be helpful to ask the students involved to write down their account of the incident.

The definition of bullying provided in Chapter 2 sets out clear criteria to help schools to identify bullying behaviour. The questions included in Appendix C can further assist schools in this regard.

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 school's Code of Behaviour.

6.2 Where bullying behaviour has occurred

School staff should know what to do when bullying behaviour is reported to them or when they witness bullying behaviour. The school's Bí Cineálta policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour and the student-friendly policy should clearly explain what actions will be taken when bullying behaviour is reported. (See Chapter 4).

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, schools should deal with it in accordance with their Bí Cineálta policy.

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

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. It is important that the student who is experiencing bullying behaviour is engaged with without delay so that they feel listened to, supported and reassured. School staff should identify the supports needed for the student who is displaying bullying behaviour to better manage relational difficulties and ensure that their needs are met.

A student's agency or sense of power can be decreased when they experience or witness bullying behaviour. When a student tells an adult that they feel that they are experiencing bullying behaviour they may feel that they are taking back some control over what is

happening to them. It is very 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 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
- 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*

*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 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.

Given the complexity of bullying behaviour it is generally acknowledged that that no one approach works in all situations. International and national research also continues to evolve in this area and the effectiveness of particular approaches continues to be reviewed. Each school must therefore decide on an approach that is best suited to its own circumstances.

Approaches such as restorative practice and mediation should only be used to address bullying behaviour when the teachers involved have been trained in how to engage in these methods and the students involved have agreed to their use. To ensure clarity among the school community about how instances of bullying behaviour will be dealt with, the approaches that will be used by the school must be specified in the school's Bí Cineálta policy. Section 6.7 outlines the supports that are available and the Resources Guide which accompanies these procedures may be of assistance.

6.3 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. It is important that the student who has experienced bullying behaviour feels safe.

Parents may also make schools aware of bullying behaviour that has occurred and specifically request that the school take no action. Parents should put this request in writing to the school or be facilitated to do so where there are literacy, digital literacy or language barriers. However, while acknowledging the parent's request, schools may decide that, based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour.

6.4 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.

6.5 Recording bullying behaviour

All incidents of bullying behaviour should be recorded. The record should document the form (Section 2.5) and type (See Section 2.7) 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.

6.6 Complaint process

If 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.

Additional Information relating to schools' complaint procedures are available at the following link: Complaint Procedures for Schools.

In the event that a student and/or parent is dissatisfied with how a complaint has been handled, a student and/or parent 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.

6.7 Supports

Supports are available to help prevent and address bullying behaviour.

These include the following:

National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)

The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) of the Department of Education provides a comprehensive, school-based psychological service to all primary and post-primary schools to support the wellbeing, academic, social and emotional development of all students. The NEPS model of service is a consultative, capacity-building model, in which there is a balance between casework and support and development work.

The psychological services which NEPS provides for students are differentiated in terms of whether the service involves the psychologist's direct involvement with the student, known as Direct Casework, or involves the psychologist working through teachers or teachers/parents to provide a psychological service for a student, known as Indirect Casework. NEPS staff can support schools with issues around bullying through this direct or indirect case work service.

In relation to bullying, NEPS psychologists often advise schools on best practice to prevent and address bullying when issues arise in schools and/or provide training in preventative initiatives, such as developing social and emotion skills, social skills, executive function skills, promoting resilience and skills in relationship repair between peers as appropriate.

More information on the supports provided by NEPS is included in the Resources Guide which accompanies these procedures.

Oide

Oide is the Department of Education's support service for schools, and it supports professional learning for primary and post-primary school leaders and teachers in recognised schools and centres for education.

Oide fosters a culture of continuing professional learning among school leaders and teachers encouraging lifelong learning, reflective and enquiry-based practices. The work of Oide contributes to school improvement by providing high quality professional learning experiences, supports and resources relating to curricular developments, broader educational goals and national priorities, such as wellbeing which includes preventing and addressing bullying.

Oide provides continuing professional learning support to schools to support implementation of these procedures. More information on the supports provided by Oide is included in the Resources Guide which accompanies these procedures.

Webwise

Webwise is the online safety initiative of the Department of Education and is co-funded by the European Commission. Webwise promotes safer, better internet use through awareness raising and education initiatives targeting teachers, students and parents. Webwise develops and disseminates resources that help teachers integrate digital citizenship and online safety into teaching and learning in their schools. Webwise also provides information, advice, and tools to parents to support their engagement in their children's online lives. With the help of the Webwise Youth Advisory Panel, Webwise develops youth-oriented awareness raising resources and training programmes that promote digital citizenship and address topics such as online wellbeing and cyberbullying.

More information on the supports provided by Webwise is included in the Resources Guide which accompanies these procedures.

National Parents Council

The National Parents Council (NPC) is the representative organisation for parents of children in early years, primary and post-primary education. NPC was established as a charitable organisation in 1985, under the programme for Government, as the representative organisation for parents of children attending school. It received statutory recognition in the Education Act 1998.

The NPC works to ensure that all parents are supported and empowered to become effective partners in their children's education. NPC seeks to achieve true partnership and deliver better outcomes for all students.

The NPC delivers online and in-person courses to support parents of both primary and post-primary students to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

Details on these programmes are included in the Resources Guide which accompanies these procedures.

Dublin City University (DCU) Anti-Bullying Centre

The DCU Anti-Bullying Centre is a university-designated research centre located in DCU's Institute of Education. The centre is known globally for its research in bullying and online safety. The Anti-Bullying Centre offers a range of modules as part of its FUSE programme for the entire school community that can be used to help to promote a positive school culture and assist in preventing and addressing bullying behaviours. Details on these programmes are included in the Resources Guide which accompanies these procedures.

Tusla

Schools should contact Tusla directly for advice in cases where it is considered that bullying behaviour is a child protection concern. See section 2.4 for guidance on when bullying behaviour becomes a child protection concern.

Contact details for Tusla are included in the Resources Guide which accompanies these procedures.

7 | Oversight

Supportive
encourging
Inclusive
I always feel happy and safe in that school
non-discrimitive
A school where everyone is accepted!
Peace
exceptance
trust
helplines
safe spaces
LGBTQ+ safe!
Teacher's
parents
People

7.1 Bullying behaviour update to board of management

At each meeting of the board of management the principal must present an update on the number of incidents of bullying behaviour and the measures taken to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

The purpose of the update is to inform discussion at board level on the effectiveness of the measures that the school is taking to prevent and address bullying behaviour and the effectiveness of the school's Bí Cineálta Policy.

The update must include the following:

- the number of incidents of bullying behaviour that have been reported since the last meeting
- the number of incidents of bullying behaviour that are currently ongoing
- the number of incidents of bullying behaviour that have been reported since the beginning of the school year

Where incidents of bullying behaviour have been reported since the last meeting, the update must include a verbal report which should include the following information where relevant:

- the trends and patterns identified such as the form of bullying behaviour, type of bullying behaviour if known, location of bullying behaviour, when it occurred
- the strategies used to address the bullying behaviour
- any wider strategies to prevent and address bullying behaviour
- if any serious incidents of bullying behaviour have occurred which have had a serious adverse impact on a student
- if a parent has informed the school that a student has left the school because of reported bullying behaviour
- if any additional support is needed from the board of management
- if the school's Bí Cineálta policy requires urgent review in advance of the annual review

This update should not include any personal information or information that could identify the students involved.

It is important that the minutes of the board of management meeting documents the number of new incidents of bullying behaviour, the number currently ongoing and the total number of incidents of bullying behaviour since the beginning of the school year as reported by the principal. The minutes should also note where the board has considered the bullying behaviour verbal update and document when the board has decided that an urgent review of the school's Bi Cineálta policy is required.

The guide included at Appendix D may be helpful to assist the principal in preparing the update.

7.2 Review of a school's Bí Cineálta policy

A school's Bí Cineálta policy must be reviewed each calendar year or as soon as practicable where the board of management determines that a review is warranted.

The review should be completed with input from the school community which includes the board of management, staff, students and their parents and members of the wider school community (as appropriate).

Schools should engage with their student council (where one exists) and their parents association (where one exists) to obtain their views on the content and effectiveness of the school's Bí Cineálta Policy.

The template contained in Appendix E must be completed to confirm that all aspects of the annual review are completed.

Aside from the annual review, it is good practice for schools to seek feedback on the implementation of their Bí Cineálta policy on a regular basis. Open discussions with school staff, students and parents around approaches taken to prevent and address bullying behaviour can help support effective implementation.

Where bullying behaviour has had a serious adverse impact on a student, schools must review the measures that they took to prevent and address bullying behaviour, with a view to identifying lessons that could be learned, so as to prevent a similar situation arising in the future. This may require an update to the school's Bí Cineálta policy.

The school community must be given notice that the annual review has taken place and the form included at Appendix F can be used for this purpose. This confirmation should be published on the school website once the annual review has taken place.

7.3 Annual reporting of bullying behaviour

To effectively prevent and address bullying behaviour it is important that information on the prevalence of bullying behaviour and effective strategies to prevent and address bullying behaviour is available at a national level.

As part of the implementation of *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* the Department is progressing the development of a national database to facilitate data on bullying behaviour being collated in an anonymised manner with a view to informing an annual national report on bullying behaviour in schools. This information will not identify individual schools or students.

This information is important to inform continuing professional learning, programmes to prevent and address bullying behaviour, further research in the area, awareness raising campaigns and the development and review of national policy such as *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* and the *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice*.

Schools will be required to submit anonymised data on incidents of bullying behaviour. Schools will receive notification of the process for data submission once the system has been developed and the process is launched.

7.4 Use of templates

These procedures require schools to use a number of templates which are included in the Appendices section. These templates may be updated by the Department in the future. Accordingly, schools must ensure that the most up-to-date version of the template as published on the gov.ie website is used. The department will advise schools when the templates are updated.

7.5 Role of the Inspectorate

The Inspectorate evaluates both compliance and quality in the implementation of the Bí Cineálta procedures to prevent and address bullying behaviour in primary and post-primary schools. All inspection models, including unannounced inspections, incorporate checks to ensure that schools comply with these procedures.

SPHE subject and curriculum inspections assess the quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in various SPHE topics including preventing and addressing bullying along with evaluating the planning and overall school support for the subject.

As part of Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections the Inspectorate monitors how effectively students learn about bullying. During these inspections the policies and procedures that schools have in place to prevent and address bullying behaviour are also reviewed.

As part of the wellbeing focus in Whole School Evaluations inspectors consider a broader assessment of how schools implement procedures to prevent and address bullying, including examining the initiatives and programmes in place to create a positive school environment that help to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

A new inspection model focusing on promoting wellbeing in schools will also include specific checks related to schools' measures to prevent and address bullying behaviour. Schools will receive notification of the parameters for these inspections once the appropriate framework has been developed and the model is launched in late 2024.

During school inspections, inspectors may require access to some or all of the documents and records that are required to be utilised and retained by the school under these procedures. Accordingly, schools should have these documents, including minutes of board of management meetings, available in the school at all times and must make them available to the inspector(s) on request.

Summary of Appendices

Appendix A	Bí Cineálta Policy	Template document **must** be used as a basis for each school's Bí Cineálta Policy.
Appendix B	Student-friendly Bí Cineálta Policy	Easy to understand policy **must** be developed by each school and template **can** be used by schools for this.
Appendix C	Guide to Addressing Bullying Behaviour	Guide **can** be used to address bullying behaviour.
Appendix D	Guide to providing bullying behaviour update to board of management	Guide **can** be used to assist Principals in providing bullying behaviour update to board of management.
Appendix E	Review of Bí Cineálta Policy	The Review template **must** be completed when the Bí Cineálta policy is reviewed.
Appendix F	Notification of Annual Review	The template **can** be used to notify the school community that the annual review has been completed.
Appendix G	Bí Cineálta – Overview of the Procedures	This is an overview of the key areas of change from the 2013 anti-bullying procedures for schools.

Appendix A
School Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of _____ 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		
Students		
Parents		
Board of management		
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers		
Date policy was approved:		
Date policy was last reviewed:		

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):

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):

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

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 school will use the following approaches to support those who experience, witness and display bullying behaviour (see Chapter 6 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

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: _____

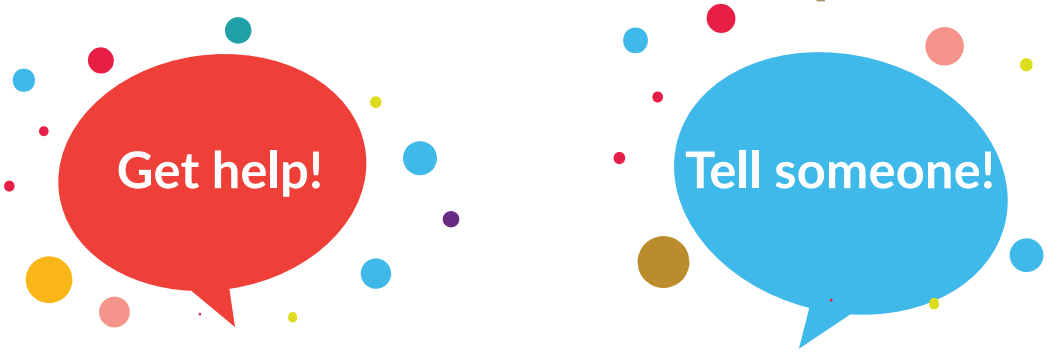
(Principal)

Appendix B
Student-Friendly Bí Cineálta Policy

Bí Cineálta!

We want everyone at our school to feel safe and happy.

If you think that you are being bullied or someone else is being bullied, you need to tell a teacher or another adult that you trust. They will know what to do to help.



If a student tells a staff member that they think they are being bullied, we will:

- talk with the student
- ask the student what they want to happen
- work out a plan together
- talk to their parents
- talk to the other student(s) involved
- talk with the other student's parents

Bullying behaviour is when someone keeps being mean or hurtful to others on purpose over and over again.

Please
tell someone if you
think that you are
being bullied or
someone else is
being bullied.

Our school
has a Bí Cineálta policy to try
to stop bullying behaviour.

We look at this policy every year to
see what is working well or what could
work better.

We will ask you what
you think.

When it happens a lot.
Not just once.

Appendix C
Guide to Addressing Bullying Behaviour

The whole school community has a responsibility to prevent and address bullying behaviour. Schools should work in partnership with their patron, board of management, staff, students and their parents to develop and implement their Bí Cineálta policy.

This appendix is intended as a guide to addressing bullying behaviour. It is based on the information contained in Chapter 6 of the *Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

Approach

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

When addressing bullying behaviour teachers should:

- 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 the students 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

Identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred

Bullying is defined in *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying and Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* as targeted behaviour, online or offline that causes harm. The harm caused can be physical, social and/or emotional in nature. Bullying behaviour is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power in relationships between two people or groups of people in society. The detailed definition is provided in Chapter 2 of the Bí Cineálta procedures.

To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour you should consider the following questions:

1. Is the behaviour targeted at a specific student or group of students?
2. Is the behaviour intended to cause physical, social or emotional harm?
3. Is the behaviour repeated?

If the answer to each of the questions above is **Yes**, then the behaviour is bullying behaviour and the behaviour should be addressed using the Bí Cineálta Procedures.

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 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)

Where bullying behaviour has occurred

- 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 students 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
- it is important to listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation
- a record should be kept of the engagement with all involved
- this record should document the form and type of bullying behaviour, if known (see Section 2.5 and 2.7 of the Bi Cineálta procedures), where and when it took place and the date of the initial engagement with the students involved 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

Follow up where bullying behaviour has occured

- the teacher must engage with the students involved and their parents again no more than 20 school days after the initial engagement
- important factors to consider as part of this engagement are the nature of the bullying behaviour, the effectiveness of the strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and the relationship between the students involved
- the teacher 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

- the date that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased should also be recorded
- any engagement with external services/supports should also be noted
- ongoing supervision and support may be needed for the students involved even where bullying behaviour has ceased
- if the bullying behaviour has not ceased the teacher should review the strategies used in consultation with the students involved and their parents. A timeframe should 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 the school consideration should be given to using the strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour as provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour. If disciplinary sanctions are considered, this is a matter between the relevant 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 should be referred to the school's complaints procedures
- if a 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

Appendix D
Guide to Providing Bullying Behaviour Update

Guide to providing Bullying Behaviour Update for board of management meeting of DD/MM/YYYY

Having reviewed the details of the incidents of bullying behaviour that have been reported since the previous board of management meeting, the principal must provide the following information at each ordinary meeting of the board of management:

Total number of **new** incidents of bullying behaviour reported since the last board of management meeting.	
Total number of incidents of bullying behaviour currently ongoing.	
Total number of incidents of bullying behaviour reported since the beginning of this school year.	

Where incidents of bullying behaviour have been reported since the last meeting, the update must include a verbal report which should include the following information where relevant:

- the trends and patterns identified such as the form of bullying behaviour, type of bullying behaviour if known, location of bullying behaviour, when it occurred etc
- the strategies used to address the bullying behaviour
- any wider strategies to prevent and address bullying behaviour
- if any serious incidents of bullying behaviour have occurred which have had a serious adverse impact on a student
- if a parent has informed the school that a student has left the school because of reported bullying behaviour
- if any additional support is needed from the board of management
- if the school's Bí Cineálta policy requires urgent review in advance of the annual review

This update should not include any personal information or information that could identify the students involved.

Appendix E
Review of the Bí Cineálta Policy

The Board of Management (the Board) must undertake an annual (calendar) review of the school's Bí Cineálta policy and its implementation in consultation with the school community. As part of the review, this document must be completed.

Bí Cineálta Policy Review

1. When did the Board formally adopt its Bí Cineálta policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour in accordance with the *Bí Cineálta Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools? Insert date when the Bí Cineálta policy was last adopted by the school.* _____/_____/20_____
2. Where in the school is the student-friendly Bí Cineálta policy displayed?
3. What date did the Board publish the Bí Cineálta policy and the student-friendly policy on the school website? _____/_____/20_____
4. How has the student-friendly policy been communicated to students?

   _____

   _____

   _____
5. How has the Bí Cineálta policy and student-friendly policy been communicated to parents

   _____

   _____

   _____
6. Have all school staff been made aware of the, school's Bí Cineálta policy and the *Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools?* ☐ Yes ☐ No

   _____

   _____

   _____
7. Does the Bí Cineálta policy document the strategies that the school uses to prevent bullying behaviour?

   _____

   _____

   _____
8. Has the Board received and minuted the Bullying Behaviour Update presented by the principal at every ordinary board meeting over the last calendar year? ☐ Yes ☐ No

   _____

   _____

   _____

9. Has the Board discussed how the school is addressing all reports of bullying behaviour. ☐ Yes ☐ No

10. Is the Board satisfied that all incidents of bullying behaviour are addressed in accordance with the school's Bí Cineálta Policy? ☐ Yes ☐ No

11. Have the prevention strategies in the Bí Cineálta policy been implemented? ☐ Yes ☐ No

12. Has the Board discussed the effectiveness of the strategies used to prevent bullying behaviour? ☐ Yes ☐ No

13. How have (a) parents, (b) students and (c) school staff been consulted with as part of the review of the Bí Cineálta Policy?

14. Outline any aspects of the school's Bí Cineálta policy and/or its implementation that have been identified as requiring further improvement as part of this review:

15. Where areas for improvement have been identified, outline how these will be addressed and whether an action plan with timeframes has been developed?

16. Does the student-friendly policy need to be updated as a result of this review and if so why?

17. Does the school refer parents to the complaints procedures if they have a complaint about how the school has addressed bullying behaviour? ☐ Yes ☐ No

18. Has a parent informed the school that a student has left the school due to reported bullying behaviour? ☐ Yes ☐ No

19. Has the Office of the Ombudsman for Children initiated or completed an investigation into how the school has addressed an incident of bullying behaviour? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Signed: _____ Signed: _____

(Chairperson of board of management) (Principal)

Date: _____ Date: _____

Date of next review: _____

Appendix F

Notification regarding the board of management's annual review of the school's Bí Cineálta Policy

The Board of Management of _____ confirms that the board of management's annual review of the school's Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour and its implementation was completed at the board of management meeting of_____ [date].

This review was conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Department of Education's *Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

Signed: _____	Signed: _____
(Chairperson of Board of management)	(Principal)
Date: _____	Date: _____

Appendix G
Overview of the Bí Cineálta Procedures for Preventing and Addressing Bullying Behaviour

The following is a guide to the main changes between the requirements of the *2013 Anti-bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* and the requirements of the 2024 *Bí Cineálta procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, which replace the 2013 procedures. This is not an exhaustive list.

Chapter 1	Responsibilities of the school community	All members of the school community must work together in partnership to prevent and address bullying behaviour at school.
	Legal basis	Legislation underpinning Bí Cineálta: Children First Act 2015. Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020 also known as Coco's Law.
Chapter 2	What is bullying behaviour?	Updated definition of bullying behaviour based on Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying (2022).
	Criminal behaviour	Updated information on when bullying behaviour can be considered criminal behaviour.
	Child protection concerns	Updated information relating to when bullying behaviour becomes a child protection concern.
Chapter 3	Impacts of bullying behaviour	Updated information on how bullying behaviour can impact students who experience bullying behaviour, students who witness the behaviour and students who engage in bullying behaviour.
Chapter 4	Bí Cineálta Policy	Schools must engage with the whole school community to develop their Bí Cineálta policy, using the template in Appendix A. The policy must list preventative strategies that are used including those to specifically prevent cyberbullying behaviour, homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour, racist bullying behaviour, sexist bullying behaviour and sexual harassment as appropriate. Schools must list specific support strategies for individuals experiencing bullying behaviour, those who witness bullying behaviour and those displaying bullying behaviour. All incidents of bullying behaviour must be recorded. The school principal is required to provide a bullying behaviour update at each ordinary board of management meeting. The school's Bí Cineálta policy must be reviewed in collaboration with the whole school community once each calendar year and sooner if a serious incident occurs and the board of management determines an urgent review is required.

Chapter 4	Appendix A Bí Cineálta Policy	This template document must be used as a basis for each school's Bí Cineálta Policy.
	Student-Friendly Bí Cineálta Policy	Every school must develop a student-friendly version of its Bí Cineálta policy and display it where students and the school community can see it.
	Appendix B Student- Friendly Bí Cineálta Policy	This template document can be used by schools as a basis for their student-friendly policy.
Chapter 5	Preventing Bullying Behaviour	Prevention measures are linked to the four areas of Wellbeing Promotion. Importance of fostering a "telling environment" in schools and the role of the trusted adult. Prevention strategies must be provided relating to specific types of bullying behaviour including cyberbullying behaviour, homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour, racist bullying behaviour, sexist bullying behaviour and sexual harassment, as appropriate.
Chapter 6	Appendix C Guide to Addressing Bullying Behaviour	Guide can be used to address bullying behaviour.
	Remit of the school in addressing bullying behaviour	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, schools should deal with it in accordance with their Bí Cineálta policy.
	Requests to take no action	Guidance for schools on how requests by students and parents to "take no action" should be addressed.
	Engagement with students involved in bullying behaviour and their parents	Schools must engage with students who have experienced bullying behaviour to decide the actions to be taken to address the incident of bullying behaviour. Schools must also engage with their parents. Schools must engage with students who have displayed bullying behaviour as well as their parents when deciding actions to be taken. Schools must engage with all involved when reviewing progress and determining whether bullying behaviour has ceased.
	Recording Incidents of Bullying Behaviour	All incidents of bullying behaviour must be recorded by the teacher addressing the behaviour.

Chapter 7	Update to the board of management	Principal must provide an update to the board of management at each ordinary board meeting. This report includes the number of incidents of bullying behaviour reported since the last board meeting, the number of incidents ongoing and the total number reported since the beginning of the school year. The principal must provide a verbal update which will include, where relevant, trends and patterns, the strategies used to address the incidents and whether an urgent review of the policy is needed. The update is to inform discussion at each ordinary board of management meeting regarding the effectiveness of the preventative strategies used by the school and the overall effectiveness of the Bí Cineálta Policy.
	Appendix D Guide to providing bullying behaviour update to the board of management	Guide can be used to assist principals in providing bullying behaviour update to board of management.
	Review of Bí Cineálta Policy	The Bí Cineálta policy must be reviewed once each calendar year, in collaboration with the whole school community, and earlier if the Board determines an urgent review is warranted.
	Appendix E Review of the Bí Cineálta policy.	The Review template must be completed when the Bí Cineálta policy is reviewed.
	Appendix F Notification of Annual Review	The template can be used to notify the school community that the annual review has been completed.

Bibliography

Children First Act (2015) https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2015/act/36/enacted/en/pdf

Data Protection Commission *Children's data and parental consent* Retrieved October 20, 2023 from https://www.dataprotection.ie/en/dpc-guidance/my-childs-data-protection-rights

Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (2023) *National Access Plan Against Racism 2023-2027* https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/d157a-minister-obrien-announces-publication-of-irelands-national-action-plan-against-racism-2023-2027/

Department of Education (2018) *Best practice guidance for primary schools in the use of programmes and/or external facilitators in promoting wellbeing consistent with the Department of Education and Skills' Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice* Circular 0042/2018 https://circulars.gov.ie/pdf/circular/education/2018/42.pdf

Department of Education (2018) *Best practice guidance for post primary schools in the use of programmes and/or external facilitators in promoting wellbeing consistent with the Department of Education and Skills' Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice* Circular 0043/2018 https://circulars.gov.ie/pdf/circular/education/2018/43.pdf

Department of Education (2019) *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice* https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/851a8e-wellbeing-in-education/

Department of Education (2022) *Cineáltas Action Plan on Bullying* https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/52aaf-cinealtas-action-plan-on-bullying/

Department of Education (2023) *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/d7be05-child-protection/

Doumas, D.M., Midgett, A.,Watts, A.D. (2019). *The Impact of a Brief, Bullying Bystander*

Intervention on Internalizing Symptoms: Is Gender a Moderator of Intervention Effects? School Psychology International, v40 n3 p275-293 Jun

Education (Welfare) Act (2000) Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 (irishstatutebook.ie)

Equal Status Acts (2000–2018) https://adsdatabase.ohchr.org/IssueLibrary/IRELAND_Equal%20Status%20Act.pdf

Foody, M., McGuire, L., Kuldas, S., & O'Higgins Norman, J. (2019). *Friendship quality, gender and their role in cyberbullying involvement and psychological well-being. Frontiers in Psychology* https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01723/full

Foody, M. Samara, M., O'Higgins Norman, J (2017) Bullying and cyberbullying studies in the school-aged population on the island of Ireland: A meta-analysis Bullying and cyberbullying studies in the school-aged population on the island of Ireland: A meta-analysis – Foody – 2017 – British Journal of Educational Psychology – Wiley Online Library

Harassment Harmful Communications & Related Offences Act (2020) https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2020/act/32/enacted/en/pdf

James, D. J., Sofroniou, N., & Lawlor, M. (2003). The response of Irish adolescents to bullying. Irish Journal of Psychology, 24, 22–34.

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2023) *Traveller culture and history Research report*: traveller-culture-and-history-research-report_en.pdf (ncca.ie)

O'Higgins Norman, J, (2020) *Tackling bullying from the inside out*: Shifting paradigms in bullying research and interventions. *International Journal of Bullying Prevention*, 2(3), 161–169.

Platten, J., Evans G., & Danko S.,Platten Killeen J., (2003). The Role Of Permanent Student Artwork In Students' Sense Of Ownership In An Elementary School. Environment and Behaviour (2): 250–263

Professional Development Services for Teachers *Restorative Practice* retrieved October 13, 2023 from https://www.pdst.ie/post-primary/health-wellbeing/restorative-practice

Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989
https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1989/act/19/enacted/en/print.html

Rodkin, P.C., Espelage, D.L., & Hanish, L. (2015). A Gendered, Relational Framework for Understanding Bullying: Developmental Antecedents and Outcomes, American Psychologist, Pages 70, 311–321

Sigurdson, J.F, Wallander, J., Sund, A.M. (2014) Is involvement in school bullying associated with general health and psychosocial adjustment outcomes in adulthood?, Child Abuse & Neglect, Volume 38, Issue 10

Tusla (2008) *Developing a Code of Behaviour Guidelines for Schools*
www.tusla.ie/guidelines_school _codes

UNICEF UK. (1989). *The United Nations convention on the rights of the child.*
https://downloads.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/UNCRC_PRESS200910web.pdf?_ga=2.78590034.795419542.1582474737-1972578648.1582474737

Wolke, D. & Lereya, S.T. 2015. Long-term effects of bullying. Archives of Disease in Childhood, Vol. 100

Be Kind