Rathfarnham Parish National School

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Rathfarnham Parish National School has adopted the following policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

This policy fully complies with the requirements of *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* 2024.

The board of management acknowledges that bullying behaviour interferes with the rights of the child as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. We all, as a school community, have a responsibility to work together to prevent and address bullying behaviour and to deal with the negative impact of bullying behaviour.

We are committed to ensuring that all students who attend our school are kept safe from harm and that the wellbeing of our students is at the forefront of everything that we do. We recognise the negative impact that bullying behaviour can have on the lives of our students and we are fully committed to preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.

We confirm that we will, in accordance with our obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the harassment of students or staff on any of the nine grounds specified: gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.

Definition of bullying

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

targeted behaviour, online or offline that causes harm.

The harm caused can be physical, social and/or emotional in nature.

Bullying behaviour is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power in relationships between two people or groups of people in society.

The detailed definition as provided in Chapter 2 of the Bí Cineálta procedures is set out below:

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.

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.

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.

Relational:

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

Online bullying behaviour:

Online bullying behaviour (cyberbullying) 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.

Bullying behaviour that occurs outside of school

As per the Bí Cinealta Procedures, 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 bullying behaviour has an impact in school, schools are required to support the students involved.

Examples of prohibited bullying behaviours that can occur outside of school (non-exhaustive list):

- Bullying behaviour that occurs in the area immediately outside the school, the local shops and the wider local area.

- Bullying behaviour that occurs on the journey to and from school.

- Bullying behaviour that occurs in organised clubs and groups outside of school such as sports clubs.

- Online bullying (cyberbullying) behaviour, along with other types of bullying behaviour can cause significant harm and have a lasting impact on students who experience this behaviour.

This Bí Cineálta policy sets out how our 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	05/03/2025 16/05/2025 21/05/2025 11/06/2025	Bí Cinealta Half-Day Closure Draft Policy discussed at In-School Management meeting Shared with all staff at School Self-Evaluation meeting Final discussion at staff meeting
Students	27/03/2025 28/04/2025 14/05/2025	Student Council meeting to prepare language for Student Policy Whole school discussion at assembly about the Student Policy. Classes engaged in discussion and and creation of potential student policies. Student Council meeting to decide on final Student Policy.
Parents	19/05/2025 20/05/2025	Draft Policy shared with PTA Discussion and feedback at PTA meeting
Board of Management	Ongoing 18/06/2025	Regular updates of progress at BOM meetings Draft policy brought to Board for ratification
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers		

Date policy was approved: **26/06/2025**

Date policy was last reviewed:

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

This section sets out the prevention strategies that will be used by Rathfarnham Parish National 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):

Rathfarnham Parish N.S. recognises the importance of the wellbeing of everyone in our school, and the important role this plays in 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
- Relationships and Partnerships

Culture and Environment:

Rathfarnham Parish N.S. promotes a positive and inclusive school culture and environment by:

- Encouraging positive relationships
- Demonstrating effective leadership
- Promoting a telling environment
- Recognising the importance of "a trusted adult"
- Fostering a culture of respect for all members of the school community
- Creating safe physical spaces in school
- Rewarding desired and respectful behaviour
- Promoting positive and important values each week through assemblies.
- Promoting the values of diversity
- Promoting the right of every member of the school community to be safe in school
- Displaying key messages around the school
- Arranging appropriate supervision of yard times, trips and other schools events.
- Developing a sense of pride in the school, its grounds and its community.
- Themed weeks such as Neurodiversity Week, Wellbeing Week and Active Week

Curriculum (Teaching and Learning):

Rathfarnham Parish NS recognises the importance of teaching and learning in preventing bullying behaviour by:

- Providing collaborative and respectful teaching and learning across the curriculum
- Facilitating regular opportunities for students to work in small groups with their peers
- Providing opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth through both curricular and extra-curricular activities.
- Promoting inclusion and diversity
- Encouraging student voice through the Student Council and other committees
- Fostering students' wellbeing, self-confidence and sense of belonging through Social, Political and Health Education, Relationship and Sexuality Education and programmes such as Stay Safe and Weaving Wellbeing.

- Developing student's sense of personal responsibility for their own behaviour and actions.

Policy and Planning:

The following policies and procedures support the implementation of the Bí Cinealta policy in Rathfarnham Parish N.S.:

- Student version of Bí Cinealta, displayed around the school,
- Code of Behaviour
- Child safeguarding statement and Risk Assessment
- RSE Policy
- SPHE Policy
- SEN Policy
- Wellbeing in School Self-Evaluation
- Acceptable User Policy
- Playground Supervision Rotas
- School Tour Policy
- Appropriate Teacher Professional Learning as required.

Relationships and Partnerships:

Rathfarnham Parish N.S. recognises the importance of strong interpersonal connections in preventing bullying behaviour. These are fostered in our community through:

- Age-appropriate awareness initiatives, such as Cybersafety Talks for parents and children and staff alike
- Supporting the active participation of students in school life, through initiatives like the Student Council.
- Supporting the active participation of parents in school life; Parent information meetings in September, Come-and-See days each Friday, Parent teacher meetings, and regular communication via newsletter and email.
- Supporting activities that build empathy, respect and resilience
- Encouraging peer support through peer mentoring, for example our school buddy system.
- Promoting acts of kindness

Preventing Cyberbullying Behaviour:

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

- Promoting digital citizenship
- Encouraging a positive relationship with technology; school gmail accounts, cybersafety talks, internet safety days
- Communicating an acceptable user policy for school devices at the beginning of each year.
- Having regular conversations with students about developing respectful and kind relationships online
- Promoting and hosting online safety events for parents who are responsible for overseeing their children's activities online
- Having a Smartphone Policy which is regularly reviewed and updated
- Engaging with the whole school community through the Voluntary Smartphone Code

Preventing homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour:

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 and our school Pride Flag
- Challenging gender stereotypes through a range of strategies e.g. literacy stories, picture books.
- Promoting open discussions and teaching respectful language
- Gender neutral bathrooms throughout the school
- Encouraging students to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour
- Celebrating Pride Day every year

Preventing 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 the school environment
- Celebrating Multicultural week each year.
- Having general cultural diversity visible and on display
- Encouraging bystanders to report when they witness racist behaviour
- Having toys, materials, resources and books in classrooms and libraries to represent diversity
- Encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities

Preventing Sexist Bullying Behaviour:
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
- Ensuring all students have the same opportunities to engage in school activities irrespective of their sex
- Using the RSE and SPHE curriculum in full
- No uniform in school
- Celebrating diversity at school and acknowledging the contribution of all students
- Encouraging parents to reinforce these values of respect at home

Preventing Sexual Harassment:
Strategies to prevent sexual harassment include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:
- Promoting positive role models within the school community
- Teaching personal space and consent from infants onwards, through the Stay Safe programme and other routines
- Challenging gender stereotypes that can contribute to sexual harassment

Rathfarnham Parish N.S. has the following supervision and monitoring policies in place to prevent and address bullying behaviour:

- Children are supervised at break times as per the playground duty rota. Any incidents are recorded in yard duty books/on Aladdin as necessary.
- Children are supervised on trips and school outings as per the School Tour Policy.
- Children are supervised in classrooms, corridors, on the school grounds and during extra-curricular activities. All staff are encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers. Supervision will also apply to monitoring student use of technology within the school, as per the Acceptable User Policy.
- A culture of telling is fostered and encouraged, with an emphasis on the importance of bystanders. It should be made clear to pupils that when they report incidents of bullying, they are not telling tales but are behaving responsibly.
- The student council is an important student voice and can be used to identify problematic elements of school practice or procedures as it pertains to student wellbeing .
- School assemblies are used to emphasise the importance of positive behaviour and looking after one another, as per our school values system.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

Class Teachers, Deputy Principal and Principal.

When bullying behaviour occurs, the school will:

> **ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour is heard and reassured**

> **seek to ensure the privacy of those involved**

> **conduct all conversations with sensitivity**

> **consider the age and ability of those involved**

> **listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation**

> **take action in a timely manner**

> **inform parents of those involved**

The steps that will be taken by Rathfarnham Parish N.S. to determine if bullying behaviour has occurred, the approaches taken to address the bullying behaviour and to review progress are as follows:

Reporting Bullying Behaviour:

- Any pupil(s) or parent(s)/guardians(s) may report a bullying incident to any teacher or member of staff in the school
- Teaching and non-teaching staff such as secretaries, SNAs and caretakers, must report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, to the relevant teacher.

Request to take no action:

- A student who reports bullying behaviour may ask a member of staff not to do anything and just "look out" for them due to not wanting to be identified as having told someone about the bullying behaviour. They might 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 behaviour. It must be made clear to the pupil that other parties may need to be informed for their welfare.
- Parents may also make the school aware of bullying behaviour and specifically request that no action is to be taken by the school. Parents should put this in writing to the school. However, schools may decide that based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour through the Bí Cinealta procedures and/or the Code of Behaviour where appropriate.

Identifying if Bullying Behaviour has occured:

- The class teacher, Deputy Principal or Principal will lead any investigation into a report of bullying behaviour
- To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour the relevant teacher(s) will 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 above questions is Yes, then the behaviour is bullying behaviour and should be addressed using the Bí Cinealta procedures.
- If the answer to any of these questions is No, then the behaviour is not bullying behaviour.
- Where possible incidents should be investigated outside the classroom to ensure the privacy of all involved.
- 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.
- Other pupils and witnesses may also be interviewed to get a clear picture. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information. Interviews will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned.
- When analysing incidents of bullying, the relevant teacher will seek answers to questions of "what", "when", "who", "where" and "why"? This should be done in a calm manner, setting an example of dealing with conflict in a non-aggressive manner.

Where bullying behaviour has occurred:
- School staff act according to the Bí Cineálta policy and student-friendly policy.
- If the bullying occurs outside of school but affects the student within the school environment, appropriate support is provided.
- If the bullying involves a student from another school, the school will support the affected student and engage with their parents to explore solutions.
- In cases where bullying has been determined, the student displaying bullying behaviour will be informed that his/her behaviour is unacceptable and in breach of the Bí Cinealta policy and efforts should be made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the child being bullied.
- The response is fair and consistent, ensuring both the student experiencing bullying and the student displaying the behaviour receive support.
- The affected student is engaged with immediately to reassure them and determine their preferred approach to resolving the issue.
- Parents of all involved students are informed at an early stage, unless a student has concerns about this, in terms of child protection etc. Parents will be given the opportunity to discuss ways in which they can reinforce the actions taken by the school and support the pupils.
- Privacy and sensitivity are maintained in all discussions, considering the students' age and ability.
- Action is taken promptly, and students are actively involved in decisions about resolving the situation.
- Approaches such as restorative practice or mediation may be used only if staff have received training and students consent.

Determining if bullying behaviour has ceased:

- The teacher must engage with the students and parents involved no more than 20 days after the initial discussion to review progress. Factors to consider in the review include:
    1. the nature of the bullying
    2. the effectiveness of strategies used to address bullying behaviour
    3. 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, the school should consider using the strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour as provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour. If disciplinary sanctions are considered, this is a matter between the relevant student, their parents and the school.

Recording Bullying Behaviour:

All incidents of bullying behaviour should be recorded. The following details should be included on the record:
- The form of bullying behaviour
- The type of bullying behaviour
- Where and when (if known)
- Date of the initial engagement with students and their parents

- The views of the students and their parents regarding the action to be taken to address the bullying behaviour (only in relation to their own child)
- Details of the review with students and their parents to determine if bullying has ceased, and the views of the students and their parents in relation to this.
- The date of further reviews and engagements as necessary
- Any engagement with external service and supports as necessary
- If a Student Support File exists, a copy of the record will be placed on the student's file.
- If a Student Support Plan exists, the plan should be updated to incorporate response strategies and associated supports.

Complaints Process:

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

In the event that a student and/or parent is dissatisfied with how a complaint has been handled under the complaints procedure, they may make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

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

The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows

- a programme of support for pupils who have been bullied will be agreed. This might include counselling and/or opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise self-esteem, to develop friendships and social skills and build resilience.
- a programme of support for pupils involved in bullying behaviour will be part of the school's intervention process. This may include counselling and activities to improve the pupil's self worth.
- children involved in bullying who are deemed to need specific support will, with parental permission, be referred to the National Educational Psychological Services for support.
- serious instances of bullying behaviour will be referred to Tusla and/or the Gardaí as appropriate in accordance with the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary schools.* Where school personnel have concerns about a child but are unsure how to proceed, the Designated Liaison Person will seek advice from the Tusla.
- pupils involved in bullying behaviour will be encouraged to see the situation from the perspective of the child being bullied
- efforts will be made where practicable to resolve issues with a view to improving and/or restoring the relationship between the pupils

Supports:

Supports are available to help prevent and address bullying behaviour. These include the following:
- NEPS
- Oide

- Webwise
- National Parents Council
- DCU Anti-Bullying Centre
- Tusla

All bullying behaviour will be recorded. This will include the type of behaviour, where and when it took place, and the date of the engagement with students and parents. The actions and supports agreed to address bullying behaviour will be documented. If the bullying behaviour is a child protection concern the matter will be addressed without delay in accordance with *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.*

Section D: Oversight

The principal will present an update on bullying behaviour at each board of management meeting. This update will include the number of incidents of bullying behaviour that have been reported since the last meeting, the number of ongoing incidents and the total number of incidents since the beginning of the school year. Where incidents of bullying behaviour have occurred, the principal will also provide a verbal update which will include where relevant, information relating to trends and patterns identified, strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and any wider strategies to prevent and address bullying behaviour where relevant. This update does not contain personal or identifying information. See Chapter 7 of the Bí Cineálta procedures.

This policy is available to our school community on the school's website and in hard copy on request. A student friendly version of this policy is displayed in the school and is also available on our website and in hard copy on request.

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed, following input from our school community, each calendar year or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which this policy refers.

Signed: _____   Date: 28/08/2025

(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: _____   Date: 28/08/2025

(Principal)