



Gortaleam National School, Dunmore, Co. Galway.
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Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Gortaleam 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.

We confirm that we will take all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the bullying or harassment of our students in whatever form and however motivated.

Catholic schools have a distinctive understanding of the human person, recognising that every person is created in God's image and likeness and has inherent dignity as a child of God. This is the basis for ensuring that each person in our school is treated with respect and care, in accordance with the Catholic Schedule.

As a Catholic school, we are committed to respecting the dignity of every individual. No human person is to be devalued, and all have an indispensable part to play in the school community, regardless of difference.

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	13/6/2025	Half day closure
Students	5/5/2025	Survey
Parents	30/05/2025	Online Survey
Board of Management	16/06/2025	Discussion
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	30/05/2025	Discussion
Date policy was approved: 16/06/2025		
Date policy was last reviewed: N/A		

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

This section sets out the prevention strategies that will be used by this school to address all forms of bullying behaviour, in whatever form and however motivated, including online bullying behaviour, homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour, racist bullying behaviour, sexist bullying behaviour and sexual harassment.

In developing preventative strategies which this school will use to prevent all forms of bullying behaviour, we come from the context of our Catholic ethos where inclusivity permeates the school in a real way.

This school takes positive steps to ensure that the culture of the school is one which welcomes a respectful dialogue and encounter with diversity and difference, by ensuring that prevention and inclusivity strategies are given priority and discussed regularly at board of management and staff meetings.

The dignity and the wellbeing of the individual person is of paramount concern in our Christian response. This school will listen closely to and dialogue with parents, thereby

building a relationship of mutual understanding, respect, trust and confidence. In continuing to develop prevention strategies, this school will listen to young people and parents, to help establish their particular context and needs. Frequent periods of reflection and engagement by the school, young people and parents, will be used to discern appropriate supports for young people in this school and to help inform future prevention strategies.

Culture and Environment

- A positive and inclusive school culture and environment which is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity.
- Is a 'telling' environment which encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment.
- Promotes and models respectful relationships across the school community.
- Sets high standards and expectations.
- A school-wide approach where each member of staff takes a consistent approach to effective observation and addressing of bullying behaviour.
- Promoting kindness and inclusion in peer groups.
- Active partners in their child's education, fostering an environment where bullying is not tolerated through promoting empathy and respect.
- A 'trusted adult' who reassures and supports students they have done the right thing by reporting bullying behaviour.
- Creating safe, visible physical spaces in school.

Curriculum - Teaching and Learning

- A shared understanding of what bullying is, its impact, and bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour.
- Implementation of education and prevention strategies, including awareness raising measures that:
 - Build empathy, respect, and resilience in pupils.
 - Promote inclusion and diversity.
 - Explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including homophobic, transphobic, racist, sexist bullying, and sexual harassment as appropriate.
 - Provide teaching and learning in SPHE that equips students with skills to build positive relationships, resolve conflicts, and recognise and deal with bullying behaviour.
- SPHE Curricular Programmes to include:
 - Online safety, digital citizenship, cyber bullying, healthy and unhealthy relationships, communication, help seeking, etc.
- SPHE methodologies to include:
 - Group work/Collaboration.
 - Role-play, acting out scenarios, case studies.
 - Extra-curricular activities to develop positive self-worth.
 - Co-operative games (particularly in P.E).

Policy and Planning

- Bí Cineálta Policy developed, communicated, implemented, and reviewed in consultation with all partners.
- Consistent recording, investigation, and follow-up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies).
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the Bí Cineálta Policy.
- Student Friendly Bí Cineálta Policy.
- Code of Behaviour.
- Child Safeguarding Statement.
- Additional Needs Policy.
- Care Team Policy.

- SPHE & RSE Policy.
- Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils (both within school and on yard, unstructured activities, trips, swimming etc).
- Teacher Professional Learning and other such relevant supports for staff.

Relationships and Partnerships

- Strong interpersonal connections supported through a range of formal and informal structures such as Amber Flag Committee and Parents' Association.
- DEIS Partnership with Parents and Others Plan.
- Student and parent/guardian active participation.
- Workshops and seminars for students, school staff, and parents to raise awareness of the impact of bullying.
- Promoting acts of kindness and activities that build empathy, respect, and resilience e.g. Random Acts of Kindness Day, Well Being Week, Stand Up week, Darkness into Light etc.
- Teaching problem-solving skills.
- Critical Thinking Skills.
- Promoting self-awareness and awareness of others.
- Encouraging peer tutoring and buddying.

Preventing Cyber Bullying Behaviour

Technology and social media have provided many positive opportunities for entertainment, social engagement, and education. However, the increase in the use of technology has led to students becoming increasingly vulnerable to cyberbullying or unacceptable online behaviour.

Gortaleam National School strives to proactively address these challenges by promoting digital literacy, digital citizenship, and fostering safe online environments.

Strategies to prevent cyberbullying behaviour include:

- 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.
- Taking part in Safer Internet Week, having safer internet ambassadors with Webwise.

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:

- 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.

Preventing Racist Bullying Behaviour

Strategies to prevent racist bullying behaviour include:

- o Fostering a school culture where diversity is celebrated and where students “see themselves” in their school environment.
- o Having the cultural diversity of the school visible and on display.
- o Encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities.
- o Encouraging bystanders to report when they witness racist behaviour.
- o 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.
- o Providing supports to school staff to support students from ethnic minorities, including Traveller and Roma students, and to encourage communication with their parents.
- o Ensuring that library reading material and textbooks represent appropriate lived experiences of students and adults from different national, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds.

Preventing Sexist Bullying Behaviour

Strategies to prevent sexist bullying behaviour include:

- o Ensuring members of staff model respectful behaviour and treat students equally irrespective of their sex.
- o Ensuring all students have the same opportunities to engage in school activities irrespective of their sex.
- o Celebrating diversity at school and acknowledging the contribution of all students.
- o Encouraging parents to reinforce these values of respect at home.

Preventing Sexual Harassment

Gortaleam NS promotes a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment. It strives to support this through a focus on education, awareness, and clear enforceable policies. Sexual harassment should never be dismissed as teasing or banter.

Strategies to prevent sexual harassment include:

- o Promoting positive role models within the school community.
- o Challenging gender stereotypes that can contribute to sexual harassment.
- o Encouraging bystanders to report when they witness sexual harassment.

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):

- Teacher and SNAs present to supervise before school, at small break and lunch times.
- Adequate teacher student ratios are in place for breaks.
- Supervising personnel are deployed at strategic positions on buses, walks, trips etc to ensure adequate supervision and monitoring of interactions.
- Students are accompanied by at least two staff members on school trips.
- Students are reminded where to play when out in the yard and what spaces to avoid.
- Classes/year groups are assigned designated areas on the yard/in the building to ensure age-appropriate interactions and ease of monitoring and observing of behaviour.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

Conor Burke (Principal)

Chloe Harte (Deputy Principal)

When bullying behaviour occurs, the school will:

1. ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour is heard and reassured
2. seek to ensure the privacy of those involved
3. conduct all conversations with sensitivity
4. consider the age and ability of those involved
5. listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation
6. take action in a timely manner
7. 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):

Identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred;

When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred the teacher will consider the following:

- What
- Where
- When
- 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 will be asked for their account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's views.

Each student 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 teacher will take note of the details.

Where bullying behaviour has occurred;

Where bullying behaviour has occurred the teacher will follow the schools Code of Behaviour.

The following principles will 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*

Both the student who is experiencing bullying behaviour and the student who is displaying bullying behaviour need support.

The student who is experiencing bullying behaviour will be 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.

Requests to take no action;

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.

Determining if bullying behaviour has ceased;

The teacher will 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 that will be considered 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.

Recording bullying behaviour;

All incidents of bullying behaviour will be recorded. The record will document the form and type of bullying behaviour, if known, where and when it took place and the date of the initial engagement with the students and their parents.

The record will include the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour. It will document the review with students and their parents to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased and the views of students and their parents in relation to this. It is important to document the date of each of these engagements and the date that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour

Complaint Process

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

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):

Pupils who have been bullied, witness or engage in bullying behaviour will be supported by the school, within the limits of resources available in the school, through the provision of opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise self-esteem, to develop friendships and social skills and thereby build resilience and a sense of self-worth whenever this is needed.

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

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.