



Aughacasla National School,
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Aughacasla School Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Aughacasla 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 Behavior.

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	25/11/2024	Online Survey
Students	25/11/2024	Online Survey
Parents	20/11/2024 to 25/11/2024	Online Survey
Board of Management	16/6/2025	BOM Meeting
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	20/03/2025	Conversation
Date policy was approved: 16/06/2025		
Date policy was last reviewed:		

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.

Stay Safe

RSE

Walk Tall

Anti Bullying Week

Cyber Safety Week

School Supervision Policy

Acceptable Use Policy

Special Education Teaching Policy

Code of Behaviour

Child Safeguarding Statement

Discussions at Staff Meetings

Students Council

Parents Association

Links with local agencies, Local Garda,

Board of Management

Wellbeing Framework

FUSE Anti Bullying Programme

Preventing homophobic/transphobic bullying behaviour:

Strategies to prevent homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour include the following

- > 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
- > Teaching lessons from the Stay Safe Programme encouraging students to identify and speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour

Preventing racist bullying behaviour

Strategies to prevent racist bullying behaviour include the following:

- > 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
- > 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
- > 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

- > 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
- > celebrating diversity at school and acknowledging the contributions of all students

> encouraging parents to reinforce these values of respect at home

Preventing sexual harassment

> Lessons across the SPHE curriculum to teach students about healthy relationships and how to treat each other with respect and kindness

> promoting positive role models within the school community

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):

Supervision Policy

Bí Cineálta Policy

Acceptable Use Policy

Ag Obair le Chéile

Child Safeguarding Statement

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

The teacher(s) with responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour are as follows: The Class Teachers supported by a member of the in-school management team.

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):

To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour the teacher 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? (Systematic Pattern repeated over time as per section 2.1)

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 occurred

- > 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

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 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 will:

- > ensure that the pupils 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

As per Section 6.2 of the Bí Cineálta Procedures, given the complexity of bullying behaviour it is generally acknowledged that no one approach works in all situations.

In addition, as per Section 6.2, a school is not expected to deal with bullying behaviour that occurs when pupils 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.

As per section 6.3 of the procedures, Parents should put any requests to take no action 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, the school may decide that, based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour.

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

- Ending the bullying behaviour,
- Changing the school culture to foster more respect for bullied pupils and all pupils,
- Changing the school culture to foster greater empathy towards and support for bullied pupils,
- Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through the awareness-raising programme.
- Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the bullied pupil through the speedy identification of those responsible and speedy resolution of bullying situations.
- After resolution, enabling bullied pupils to complete a victim-impact statement.
- Helping bullied pupils raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that help develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school)

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

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: Sheila O'Donnell

(Chairperson of board of management)

Date: 1-7-2025

Signed: David Doyle

(Principal)

Date: 1-7-2025