

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 Garrydoolis 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 steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent all 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 everybody 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 everybody has a 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	March 2025	Online Questionnaire
Students	March 2025	Written Questionnaire
Parents	March 2025	Online Questionnaire (only 3 responses)
	May 2025	Written questionnaire
Board of Management	March and May 2025	Discussion
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	March 2025	Discussion with music teacher
	May 2025	Discussion with GAA coach
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 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.

<p>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):</p> <p>In developing the 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 our school in a real way.</p>
<p>In relation to the prevention of cyberbullying behavior:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school proactively addresses challenges by promoting digital literacy, digital citizenship, and fostering safe online environments. Strategies to prevent cyberbullying behaviour include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 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

In relation to the prevention of homophobic/ transphobic 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:
 - 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
 - encouraging students to speak up if they witness homophobic behaviour

In relation to 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
 - encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
 - encouraging bystanders to report when they witness racist behaviour
 - ensuring that library reading material and textbooks represent appropriate lived experiences of students and adults from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds

In relation to sexist bullying behaviour:

- The school focusses on gender equality as part of the measures to create a supportive and respectful environment.
- Strategies to prevent sexist bullying behaviour include the following:
 - 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
 - organising awareness campaigns, workshops and presentations on gender equality and respect
 - encouraging parents to reinforce these values of respect at home

In relation to preventing sexual harassment:

- The school makes 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:
 - promoting positive role models within the school community
 - challenging gender stereotypes that can contribute to 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):

The following four areas are considered when developing measures to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

Culture and environment:

- Create a positive and inclusive school culture and environment in order to prevent and address bullying behaviour. The school environment is a space where students and school staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported.
 - 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 takes responsibility in developing and maintaining a school culture where bullying behaviour is unacceptable and to take a consistent approach to addressing bullying behaviour.
 - Students 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, help foster an environment where bullying behaviour is not tolerated through promoting empathy and respect.
- Create and support a "telling" environment. Students must feel comfortable to talk about concerns regarding bullying behaviour.
- Encourage students to report to a "trusted adult" if they or another student is experiencing bullying behaviour. Staff support this strategy by fostering an environment in which students know that they can talk to them. The trusted adult reassures the student that they have done the right thing by reporting the behaviour. The trusted adult, without delay, informs the member of staff who has responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour. The trusted adult should continue to support the student, as appropriate, while the behaviour is being addressed by the relevant member of staff.
- The creation of safe physical spaces supports psychological safety and is an important measure to prevent bullying behaviour, taking into account the following:
 - good lighting is present to avoid dark corners or spaces
 - removal of visual barriers from windows such as posters
 - installation of mirrors to improve visibility and reduce blind spots
 - visibility of school staff who are supervising at break times including during yard duty
 - murals, artwork and signage which help in the promotion of the school's values such as equality, diversity, inclusion and respect
- Appropriate supervision helps prevent and address bullying behaviour. The school takes all reasonable measures to ensure the safety of students and to supervise students when they are attending school or attending school activities.

Curriculum::

- Teaching and learning that is collaborative and respectful is promoted. Students have regular opportunities to work in small groups with their peers, which can help build sense of connection, belonging and empathy among students.
- School provides opportunities for students to develop a sense of self-worth through both curricular and extracurricular programmes.

- The Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) curricula aim to foster students' wellbeing, self-confidence and sense of belonging and to develop students' sense of personal responsibility for their own behaviour and actions.

Policy and Planning:

- The wellbeing of the school community is at the heart of school policies and plans.
- 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 share their experiences and examples of best practice.

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.
- Activities designed to strengthen relationships and partnerships between members of the school community are promoted, such as:
 - age appropriate awareness initiatives that look at the causes and impacts of bullying behaviour including those dealing with navigating friendships, identitybased 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

This school also 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 our 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 further 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.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

Heidi Jordan (Principal), and in her absence, Tina Hickey (Deputy)

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):

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.
- 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.

Where bullying behaviour has occurred

- School staff 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 clearly explain what actions will be taken when bullying behaviour is reported.
- The 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, the school is required to support the students involved. Where the bullying behaviour continues in school, it will be dealt with 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 will 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 will 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.

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.

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.

Recording bullying behaviour

- All incidents of bullying behaviour should be recorded. The record should 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 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, the school will place a copy of the record on the student's support file. This will assist the school's student support team in providing a consistent and holistic response to support the wellbeing of the students involved. Where a Student Support Plan exists, the plan will be updated to incorporate response strategies and associated supports.
- 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.

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):

Supports are available to help prevent and address bullying behaviour.

National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)

The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) of the Department of Education provides a comprehensive, schoolbased psychological service to all primary and postprimary schools to support the wellbeing, academic, social and emotional development of all students. The NEPS model of service is a consultative, capacitybuilding 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.

Oide

Oide is the Department of Education's support service for schools, and it supports

professional learning for primary and postprimary 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 enquirybased 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.

Webwise

Webwise is the online safety initiative of the Department of Education and is cofunded 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 youthoriented awareness raising resources and training programmes that promote digital citizenship and address topics such as online wellbeing and cyberbullying.

National Parents Council

The National Parents Council (NPC) is the representative organisation for parents of children in early years, primary and postprimary 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 students to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

Dublin City University (DCU) AntiBullying Centre

The DCU AntiBullying Centre is a universitydesignated research centre located in DCU's Institute of Education. The centre is known globally for its research in bullying and online safety. The AntiBullying 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.

Tusla

The school authorities will contact Tusla directly for advice in cases where it is considered that bullying behaviour is a child protection concern.

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.

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: Tina Hickey (Acting Chairperson)

Date: 28/05/25

(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: Heidi Jordan

Date: 28/05/25

(Principal)