

St. Brendan's NS,

*The Square,
Eyrecourt,
Ballinasloe,
Co. Galway.
H53 R772*



Scoil Bhreandáin

*Naofa,
An Chearnóg,
Dún an Uchta,
Béal Átha na Sluaighe,
Co. na Gaillimhe.
H53 R772*

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of St. Brendan's NS, Eyrecourt 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	January 2025	Staff survey Staff meetings and review of draft policy
Students	March, April, May 2025	Student surveys Student focus groups
Parents	May 2025	Parent surveys Engagement with Parents Association
Board of Management	February 2025 June 2025	Communication on policy development Review of draft policy
Date policy was approved: 08/07/2025		
Date policy was last reviewed: N/A		

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):

Appropriate supervision is an important measure to help prevent and address bullying behaviour.

At St. Brendan's NS the following procedures are in place regarding supervision;

- Before classes begin each morning, during all breaks and after school ends, teachers fulfil a supervisory role in the school grounds, corridors and classrooms.
- All organised in-school activities at break times, before or after school are supervised by a teacher.
- Teachers remain with their class during coaching or teaching by external facilitators.
- Yard supervision by rota with teacher and SNA on yard daily.

All trips out of the school grounds are supervised by teachers.

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.

The education and prevention strategies used by this school include the following:

- The anti-bullying module of the SPHE programme as it applies during each school year, particularly the relevant exercises from the *"Walk Tall"* and *"Stay Safe"* programmes,
- Awareness-raising exercises from the 'Awareness-Raising' strand of the *Anti-Bullying Campaign* programme, pro-actively explaining the nature and variety, causes, negative consequences and unacceptability of bullying.

Using a combination of exercises from these programmes on a monthly basis, pupils will experience approximately 10 short awareness-raising exercises in each year they are in primary school. In the process:

- Pupils are helped to examine the issue of bullying in a calm rational way, outside of the tense context of particular bullying situations and so become more aware of the nature of bullying and the various forms that it can take.
- Pupils are made aware that the consequences of bullying behaviour are always bad for those who are targeted, even if this is not always obvious at the time.
- Pupils are encouraged to recognise and reject bullying behaviour and to report it to teachers, either spontaneously or through surveys that are regularly used in the school each year – e.g. a survey of all pupils who can read and write every half-term.
- An annual anti-bullying/friendship week.

Through presentations or other exercises, the school staff and parents/guardians are made aware of the nature and impact of bullying and the signs that might indicate that a pupil is being bullied. They are encouraged to be vigilant in watching out for signs of bullying and to report any suspicion of bullying they may have to the class teacher (in the case of staff members) or any staff member (in the case of parents/guardians).

Through regular reports in school newsletters and other communications, as well as at meetings with parent/guardian groups, parents/guardians are regularly informed of the anti-bullying activities of the school and encouraged to support this work.

Appendix 5 gives a comprehensive list of the combined awareness raising exercises available from the "Stay Safe," "Walk Tall" and *Anti-Bullying Campaign* programmes.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

The **class teacher** has the responsibility of addressing allegations of bullying behaviour following the procedures outlined in this policy.

When bullying behaviour has been identified following investigation, 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, empathy and respect for the child/children
- > 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
- > act in a timely manner
- > inform parents of those involved
- > provide support for all those involved

At St. Brendan's NS, the following steps will be taken to identify if bullying behaviour has occurred:

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.

Reporting bullying behaviour

- Any pupil or parent(s)/guardian(s) may bring a bullying incident to any teacher in the school
- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying, will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher (class teacher)
- Teaching and non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), should report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher (class teacher)

Investigating and dealing with incidents:

In investigating and dealing with bullying, the relevant teacher will exercise her/his professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved.

To do so, the teacher should consider the definition of bullying provided in the BÍ Cineálta policy and ask has the behaviour met 3 criteria: is the behaviour **targeted**, causing **harm** and **repeated**?

- Parent(s)/guardian(s) and pupils are required to co-operate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving any issues and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved as quickly as possible.
- Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach, with the aim of establishing the facts while providing a supportive environment for children involved.
- Where possible incidents should be investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.
- All interviews should be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this way.
- When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher should seek answers to questions of what?, where?, when?, who? and why?. This should be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive, empathetic and supportive manner.
- If a group is involved, each member should be interviewed at first. Thereafter, all those involved should be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member should be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements.
- Each member of a group should be supported through possible pressures that may face them from the other members of the group after the interview by the teacher.
- It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s).
- Record keeping is very important during the investigation stage. Written records should be kept, and the teacher should remain impartial in their recording of details disclosed by parties involved. Ideally 2 teachers should be present, one to take notes and one to investigate.

At St. Brendan's NS the following steps will be taken to address bullying behaviour when it has occurred:

- In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the parties involved should be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken (by reference to the school policy).
- The school should give parent(s)/guardian(s) an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports provided to the pupils.
- Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to them how they are in breach of the school's BÍ Cineálta policy and efforts should be made to try to explain the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied.

- 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 Bí 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.

At St. Brendan's NS, the following steps will be taken to review progress if 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 record should include the following:
 - 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

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.

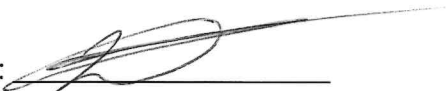
Parents may also make schools aware of bullying behaviour that has occurred and specifically request that the school take no action. Parents should put this request in writing to the school or be facilitated to do so where there are literacy, digital literacy or language barriers. However, while acknowledging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

Section D – Oversight

The principal will present an update on bullying behaviour at each board of management meeting (*Appendix 1*). 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, for further 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 (*Appendix 2 and 3*).

Signed: 
(Chairperson of Board of management)

Date: 5/11/25

Signed: Éilís Treacy
(Principal)

Date: 5/11/25