



Réalt na Mara BNS Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Réalt na Mara BNS 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 well being 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 *targeted behaviour*, either online or offline, that causes harm. It is:

- **Deliberate** and **unwanted**, not accidental or reckless.
- **Repeated over time** and involves an **imbalance of power** in relationships.
- Harmful in nature, with the potential for long-lasting effects on the student.

Types of Harm Caused by Bullying

Bullying can cause harm that is:

- **Physical** – e.g. personal injury, damage to or loss of property.
- **Social** – e.g. withdrawal, loneliness, exclusion.
- **Emotional** – e.g. low self-esteem, depression, anxiety.
- **Note:** A one-off instance of negative behaviour is *not* bullying. However, a **single hurtful message posted online** may be considered bullying due to its wide visibility and potential for repetition through sharing.

Direct Bullying

- **Physical** – pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking, tripping, assault, destruction of personal property.

- **Verbal** – repeated name-calling, insults, humiliation based on appearance, size, clothing, gender, accent, ability, ethnicity.
- **Written** – derogatory notes or drawings, graffiti, messages in public spaces.
- **Extortion** – obtaining something through threats or force.

Indirect Bullying

- **Exclusion** – intentional and repeated isolation by individuals or groups.
- **Relational** – manipulation of relationships and friend groups, including:

Repeated rejection, silent treatment, non-verbal threats or gestures, malicious gossip, spreading rumours

Online Bullying (Cyberbullying)

Cyberbullying occurs via text, messaging apps, social media, email, games, or other online platforms, and includes:

- Sending or sharing **offensive, insulting, or threatening** content.
- Posting **private or sensitive** information without consent.
- Creating **fake profiles** to impersonate or humiliate others.
- **Exclusion or disruption** of a student's access to online groups, accounts, or games.

Parents please note:

The legal age for WhatsApp is 16+ years and 13 years for having a social media account. Social networking sites, including TikTok, Instagram, YouTube and all others, have associated risks and dangers to your child and others.

Parental supervision is essential. Use of the internet and social media accounts (at home) fall under parental responsibility. If your child has a device which connects to the internet, parents should be aware of, and have control of, the websites/ platforms visited and people contacted. They should also be aware of messages sent and received.

Behaviour That Is Not Bullying

- One-off negative actions are *not* considered bullying.
- A one-off instance of negative behaviour towards a 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.
- Friendship issues or disagreements are not bullying unless they involve *deliberate, repeated harm or exclusion*.
- Students with special educational needs may display *unintentional harmful behaviours* due to communication difficulties; these are not considered bullying. These behaviours are not deliberate or planned but in certain situations they are an automatic response which they cannot control.
- Bullying requires intent and repetition—accidental or unintentional harm, even if distressing, is not classified as bullying.

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	11/4/2025	Half day closure for staff using materials provided by Oide. Staff questionnaires, reviewing current anti bullying policy.
Students	First two weeks in May June 2025	All classes had 3 lessons on Bullying. The new definition for bullying was explored with the children and used in the child friendly policy. The childrens' identified hot spots and made suggestions for dealing with bullying behaviour which were taken into account when drafting this policy. All feedback emailed back to lead teachers MS Milne and Ms Callan. Our new child friendly policy introduced and discussed at our school assembly
Parents	3/6/2025 9/6/2025	Parent questionnaire Attention drawn to our policy available on our school website and child friendly policy Bí Cinealta draft policy shared with our Parent Association New Policy distributed to parents via Aladdin
Board of Management	10/6/2025 9/6/ 2025	New policy reviewed and discussed at the Board of management meeting. Training for Board of Management on new guidelines
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	June 2025	A copy of the new policy given to bus drivers and ancillary staff. New policy on school website
Date policy was approved: 10th June 2025		
Date policy was last reviewed:		

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

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).

Culture and Environment

- Pupils will be encouraged to build friendship and self-esteem through the use of evidence-based programmes such as *Weaving Wellbeing*.
- Kindness is taught explicitly through the *Grow in Love* religion programme but also modeled consistently by all staff members. Every day, staff work collaboratively to create a respectful and empathetic atmosphere.
- We celebrate acts of kindness through the *Caught You Being Good* initiative. These certificates are awarded 'on the spot' by staff members who witness moments of compassion, cooperation, or thoughtfulness, fostering a culture of mutual respect and care.
- Teachers are vigilant and will respond sensitively and caringly to pupils who disclose incidents of bullying, and will investigate all such incidents following the procedures given in this document.
- Encourage a culture of telling, with a particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders. All reports of bullying, including anonymous reports, must be investigated by the class teacher. In that way, pupils will be given confidence in 'telling'. The 'confidence' factor is vital. It will be made clear to pupils that when they report incidents of bullying they are not telling tales but are behaving responsibly.

Explicitly teaching pupils the steps to take to tell and how to tell:

- Tell the teacher. Discuss ways the child can communicate with the teacher discreetly e.g. after class, lunchtime, tell the Principal/Deputy Principal or trusted teacher e.g. when they see Ms Campbell/Ms Brennan in the morning, on yard, around the school.
- Parents/Guardians make a phone call to the school or write a note to the Teacher in their Homework Journal.
- Comment Box in the classroom.
- Ensure pupils are aware of their role and power as a bystander. Bystanders can play a key role in preventing and stopping bullying.
- Anti-bullying posters can be seen around the school.
- Anti-bullying issues will be raised every year and in every class through the implementation of the Social Personal and Health Education Curriculum through the *Relationships and Sexuality* components of the programme and Stay Safe lessons on bullying behaviour are explicitly taught to children in Junior Infants, 1st, 3rd and 5th Class.
- Programmes such as *Friends for Life* and the *Incredible Years Programme* (NEPS) will be used as an intervention for particular classes.
- *Prim-Ed* resources, *Bullying and Conflict Resolution*, deal very specifically with the topic of bullying and provide tools to empower pupils to resolve conflict. These publications are available in the

school for 1st–6th classes.

- Pupils are rewarded at assemblies throughout the school year for living our ethos which focuses on kindness and social justice.

Preventing Cyberbullying, Homophobic and Racist Behaviour

- In partnership with the Parents' Association, parents are invited to attend an information evening on cyber-bullying at the school at least once during their time as parent of a child in Réalt na Mara BNS.
- Our Community Gardaí are invited annually to talk to all classes covering a variety of themes including *Being Kind Online*, *Consequences of my Behaviour*, *My Neighbours*.
- Staff are updated on anti-bullying strategies through professional development workshops, including the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Course facilitated by DCU Anti-Bullying Centre.
- Tips for dealing with cyber-bullying are advertised in the school's newsletter and available on the school website.
- *Safer Internet Day* is annually acknowledged. Targeted delivery of lessons exploring cyber bullying e.g. Zeeko, Webwise.
- Foster a culture where diversity is celebrated and where pupils 'see themselves in their school environment' e.g. different languages around our school, celebration of foods from around the world, culture day.
- A variety of picture books – to challenge gender stereotypes, explore themes of exclusion, bullying, discrimination, racism and empathy – are available to staff to supplement the delivery of the SPHE Curriculum where appropriate.
- Ensuring the library reading material and textbooks represent appropriate lived experiences of pupils and adults from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.
- Through the delivery of elements of the SESE Curriculum e.g. *World War II*, pupils are offered a structured opportunity to engage in scaffolded discussions exploring social justice and discrimination.
- Encourage children to speak up about racist, homophobic, discriminatory bullying behaviour.
- The listing of supports currently being used in the school and the identification of other supports available to the school e.g.
 - www.tacklebullying.ie
 - www.antibullyingcentre.ie/fuse
 - www.webwise.ie

Policy and Planning

- Our Acceptable Use Policy and Code of Behaviour support the implementation of the *Bí Cineálta* Policy.
- Staff are responsible for ensuring that supervision in class is effective and consistent.
- Supervision in the playground is effective, consistent and regularly reviewed with particular attention given to 'hot spots'.
- Ancillary staff and Bus Drivers are well placed to report/inform Principal and/or parents of bullying behaviour.
- Embed procedures for noting, investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.
- Professional learning in relation to anti-bullying procedures.

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:
 - our student council
 - lunchtime/after-school clubs
 - our parents' association
 - Community Garda

Other strategies include:

- Promoting acts of kindness
- Peer mentoring:
 - 6th class buddies (morning and lunchtime)
 - transition year/6th class leadership workshop
 - collaborative projects between classes e.g. reading buddies, chromebooks
- Classrooms, including our Nurture Room, foster kindness and empathy through activities that build empathy, respect and resilience.
- Active participation of students in school life.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

Responsibility

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

- The class teacher will investigate and oversee recording of bullying reports for students in their class – this includes using the procedure guidelines to investigate reports of bullying (see Appendix

1 *Is it Bullying?*) and recording bullying behaviour on the correct form on Aladdin.

- The DDLP will follow up after twenty days to investigate if bullying has ceased.
- All staff will be vigilant to bullying behaviour.
- The principal will inform the Board of Management of incidents of bullying.

Initial Actions When Bullying Behaviour Occurs

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
- Reports of bullying behaviour either from parents or staff members must be recorded in writing. The teacher should investigate and act appropriately, with a view to resolving the issues and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.

Investigation Procedures

- Teachers will take a calm, unemotional, problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff, or families.
- Where possible, investigations will be conducted outside the classroom to ensure the privacy of all involved. However, classroom discussions may take place to tease out the intricacies of the situation.
- All parties involved will have the opportunity to be heard. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide useful information giving context to the situation.
- The teacher will use the restorative practice question framework to seek answers: What? Where? When? Who? Why?
- If the teacher suspects that bullying occurred, the Principal/Deputy Principal should be informed.
- The teacher may ask those involved to write down an account of the incident.
- If a group is involved, each member will be interviewed individually. Thereafter, all those involved should meet as a group.
- The teacher must use the recording template at Appendix 2 on Aladdin to record the bullying

behaviour.

Involvement of Parents and Cooperation

- In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved should be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken. Parents will then be given an opportunity to discuss the matter with the teacher.
- Parents and pupils are required to cooperate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving any issues and restoring, as far as practical.
- Parents will have an opportunity to discuss ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the support for their pupils.
- A record should be kept of how the matter was handled and the outcome. When the class moves on, the succeeding teacher should be informed of any problems that exist.

Addressing the Behaviour

- Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to him how he is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts should be made to try to get him to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil experiencing bullying behaviour.
- The school Code of Behaviour applies to bullying behaviour. After discussions with the teacher, a Reflection Form will be completed to help the pupil engaged in bullying behaviour to see things from the victim's point of view.
- The pupil will sign a behaviour contract together with their parents and teachers promising to stop the bullying behaviour. A fresh start is offered to those who change their behaviour and make amends.
- Incidents of bullying behaviour will be used as opportunities for reinforcing the anti-bullying policy of the school.
- Follow-up meetings may be arranged to assess progress and/or restore relationships.
- In any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his parents and the school.
- In cases where the relevant teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, it must be recorded, by the relevant teacher, in the recording template at Appendix 2.

To determine whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed, the relevant teacher must consider:

- whether the bullying behaviour has ceased
- whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable

- whether the relationships between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable
- any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the school Principal or Deputy Principal

Complaints Process

Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures.

Support for Pupils Involved in Bullying Behaviour

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):

- Ending the bullying behaviour
- A formal programme of support (*Friends for Life, Prim-Ed Bullying Lessons*) will be implemented at the earliest possible opportunity to facilitate all pupils involved or affected by bullying behaviour

Supporting all of the students involved emotionally:

- Indicating clearly that the bullying behaviour is not the fault of the targeted pupil.
- Assuring him that the school community will help them and put monitoring procedures in place to safeguard them.
- Any pupil who is involved in retaliation against a pupil who reports bullying behaviour will be subject to the school Code of Behaviour.
- Parents/guardians will be informed of what has happened and of the measures being taken to help their child, encouraging them to report further incidents if they occur.
- Speaking with the child involved in bullying behaviour to discover why they became involved
- Seeking a resolution and offering a fresh start to those who change their behaviour and make amends.
- Promote a positive school culture where students feel safe, valued and respected through circle time and morning check-ins, promoting honest discussion in class.
- Encourage pupils to get involved in activities that promote friendships and social skills.

Serious or Ongoing Concerns

- If the school has serious concern regarding the ongoing behaviour of a pupil involved in a bullying incident, the advice of NEPS will be sought.
- In accordance with our Child Protection Policy, where the incident is serious and behaviour is regarded as potentially abusive, the school will consult the HSE Children and Family Social Services.

- Serious incidents will also be reported to the Gardaí where appropriate.
- In cases where staff have concerns but are unsure whether to report to the HSE, the Designated Liaison Person must seek advice from the HSE Children and Family Social Services.

Requests to Take No Action

- A student reporting bullying behaviour may ask that a member of staff does nothing other than “look out” for them.
- The student may not want to be identified as having told someone about the bullying.
- Staff must show empathy and work with the student to agree on steps and inform parents sensitively.
- Parents may also request that no action be taken. Parents should put this request in writing.
- While the school acknowledges the request, it may still take appropriate action depending on circumstances.

Bullying Behaviour Oversight and Update to Board of Management

The principal must present an update at each Board of Management meeting, including:

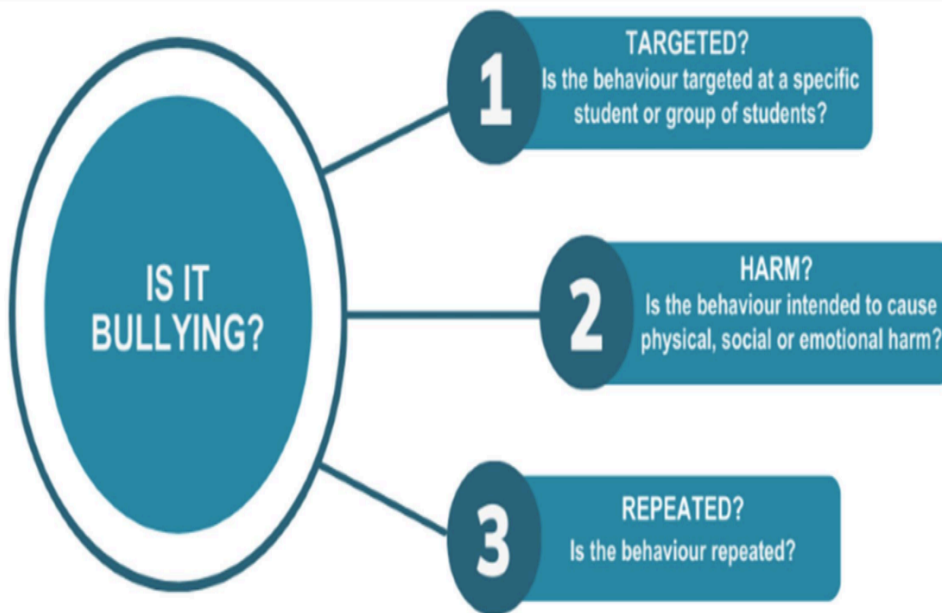
- the number of incidents of bullying behaviour reported since the last meeting
- the number currently ongoing
- the number reported since the start of the school year

Where incidents have been reported, the verbal report must include:

- trends and patterns identified
- type of bullying (if known), location, and time
- strategies used to address bullying behaviour
- wider strategies to prevent bullying
- if serious incidents have had a serious adverse impact on a student
- if a student has left due to bullying
- if additional support is needed from the board
- if the *Bí Cineálta* policy requires urgent review

Signed: _____ Date: _____ (Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: _____ Date: _____ (Principal)



If the answer to each of the questions is **Yes**, then the behaviour is bullying behaviour and the behaviour should be addressed using the Bí Cineálta Procedures.

If the answer to any of the 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.



Template for recording bullying behaviour

1. Name of pupil being bullied and class group

Name_____ Class_____

2. Name(s) and class(es) of pupil(s) engaged in bullying behaviour

3. Source of bullying concern / report

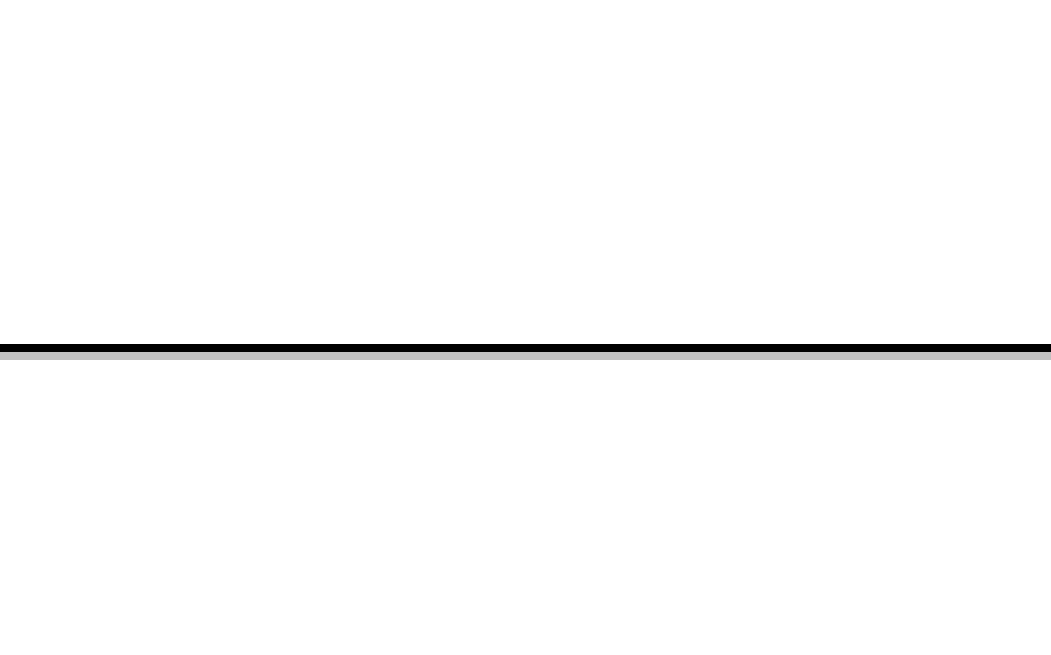
Pupil concerned	
Other pupil	
Parent	
Teacher	
Other	

4. Name of person(s) reporting the bullying concern?

5. Where and when did incidents occur?

6. Type of bullying – (see fig 2.5 and 2.7) on the back of the page. Is it direct / indirect etc.

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[illegible]

10. Date of review _____ Has the bullying behaviour ceased? _____

Date submitted to Principal / Deputy Principal _____