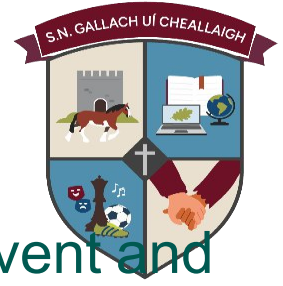


Castleblakeney National School

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School Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Castleblakeney 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. Ireland ratified the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child in September 1992. In doing so, we committed to promote, protect and fulfil the rights of children. Bullying is a children's rights issue. Bullying interferes with the following rights of the child:

- ✓ The right to freedom of Expression (article 13)
- ✓ The right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 14)
- ✓ The right to freedom of association and freedom of peaceful assembly (Article 15)
- ✓ The right to privacy (Article 16)
- ✓ The right to be protected from all forms of abuse and neglect (Article 19)
- ✓ The right to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health (Article 24)
- ✓ The right to education. (Article 28)
- ✓ The right to enjoy their own culture, religion or language (Article 30)

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.

It is behaviour which is deliberate in nature and is unwanted. It is not accidental or reckless behaviour.

The harm can be:

Physical – personal injury, damage to or loss of property.

Social – withdrawal, loneliness, exclusion

Emotional – low self-esteem, depression, anxiety

A one-off or isolated instance of negative behaviour towards a student is not bullying behaviour. However, a single hurtful message posted on social media can be considered bully 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.

Behaviour that is not bullying behaviour:

If the repeated harm is real for the student experiencing the behaviour, but unintended by the other student, this is not bullying, but, importantly, must be addressed under the school's code of behaviour.

Disagreements between students is not considered bullying **unless** it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.

Some students with special educational needs, may have social communication difficulties which may make them communicate their needs through behaviours that can hurt themselves or others. It is important to note that these behaviours are not deliberate or planned, but in certain situations, they are an automatic response which they cannot

control.

Types of Bullying

There are many different types of bullying behaviour. These can include directing bullying at someone focused on the following: disability, exceptional ability, gender identity, LGBTQ+, physical appearance, racism, poverty status, religious identity, sexism and sexual harassment. This is not an exhaustive list.

Bullying can be: Direct:

Physical: pushing, showing, punching, kicking, poking and tripping students. Physical assault, Destruction of personal property.

Verbal: continual name calling which insults, humiliates the student – this may refer to physical appearance, clothes, gender, accent, academic ability, race or ethnic origin.

Written: Writing insulting remarks in public places, passing notes or drawings about the student.

Extortion: where something is obtained through force or threats.

Bullying can be: Indirect

Exclusion: where a student is deliberately and repeatedly isolated, excluded or ignored by a student or group of students.

Relational: Where a student's attempts to form friendships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined, threats, non-verbal gesturing, malicious gossip, spreading rumours, silent treatment and manipulation of friend groups etc can all form relational bullying for a student.

Online bullying behaviour:

Cyber bullying is carried out via text, direct messaging/instant messaging, social media platforms, email, apps, digital gaming sites, gaming consoles, chatrooms and other online technologies.

This can include:

Sending or sharing of insulting and offensive or intimidating messages or images via online means as mentioned above.

Posting information which is personal, private or sensitive without consent.

Making and/or participating in fake profiles on a social network in impersonate and/or humiliate other students.

Exclude/disrupt access to a student on purpose on online chat groups/access to accounts/from an online game.

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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/February 2025	Stage 1 Staff meeting – staff provided with the opportunity to discuss the new Bí Cineálta policy and action plan.
Students	March/April 2025	Students were given a questionnaire to seek their input in developing an Anti-Bullying policy in Child Friendly Format. Findings attached
Parents	March/April 2025	Feedback sought from parents and children in formation of a Child friendly Anti Bullying policy. Findings attached
Board of Management	June 2025	
Date policy was approved: 11 th 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):

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 school has the following supervision and monitoring policies in place to prevent and address bullying behaviour (see Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

- Staff at all times endeavor to encourage pupils to show respect for each other.
- Implementation of the SPHE curriculum.
- Positive self esteem is fostered among the pupils by celebrating individual differences, by acknowledging good behaviour and by providing opportunities for success.
- Acceptable Use Policy, Parental permission regarding the use of school social media usage.
- School's Anti- bullying policy is discussed with children at the beginning of each school year and reference is made to same during the year.
- Staff are particularly vigilant in monitoring pupils who are considered at risk of bullying/being bullied.
- All disclosed incidents of bullying are investigated thoroughly and consistently by following the correct procedure as outlined to staff and recorded by the class teacher.
- School wide awareness raising on all aspects of bullying, supervision and monitoring of classrooms, school grounds, school tours and extracurricular activities.
- Involvement of pupils in contributing to a safe school environment e.g. Kindness/anti bullying awareness days and encourage a culture of peer respect and support.
- Ensuring pupils know who to tell and how to tell.
- Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place.
- Refer to appropriate online behaviour when using devices and in SPHE lessons.
- Promote online safety events or materials for parents.
- Challenge gender stereotypes – equal participation of all. Equal recognition.
- Foster a culture where diversity is celebrated and students 'see themselves' in the school environment.
- Ensure the library in each classroom has material which reflects diversity of culture, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.
- Modelling of respectful behaviour by staff of all irrespective of sex.
- Ensuring all pupils have the same opportunities to engage in school activities irrespective of sex.
- Make clear that our school has a zero tolerance approach to sexual harassment

of any kind.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

- ✓ The teacher(s) with responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour is (are) as follows:
- ✓ The class teacher will oversee recording of bullying reports for students in their class – this includes using the procedure guidelines to investigate reports of bullying and recording bullying behaviour.
- ✓ The DDLP will follow up after twenty days to investigate if bullying has ceased.
- ✓ All staff will be vigilant to bullying behaviour
- ✓ Principal will inform the Board of Management of incidences of Bullying.

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):

The school's procedures for investigation, follow-up and recording of bullying behaviour and the established intervention strategies used by the school for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour are as follows:

- While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the Class Teacher/Relevant Teacher, the class teacher will use his/her/their professional judgement in relation to the records to be kept of these reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same.
- If it is established by the Class Teacher/Relevant Teacher that bullying has occurred, the Class Teacher must keep appropriate written records which will assist his/her/their efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.
- The Class Teacher/Relevant Teacher must record the bullying incidentDatabiz, Student file
- The primary aim in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to resorte as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved rather than to apportion blame. With this in mind the school's procedures are as follows:
- In investigating and dealing with bullying the teacher will exersive his/her/their judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred, what type if it has and how best the situation might be resolved.
- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the Class Teacher/Relevant Teacher. In that way pupils will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It should be made clear to all pupils that when they report instances of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.
- Non-teaching staff such as secretary and SNAs are encouraged to report any incidence of bullying behaviour witnessed by them or mentioned them to the Class Teacher. It remains the duty of the Class teacher to deal with any reporting as they see fit.
- Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents.
- On being informed of an alleged incident of bullying, the teacher dealing with the report will first interview the victim(s) and discuss the feelings which the victim(s) experienced because of the bullying behaviour.
- Initial investigations of bullying will be done in class where possible but some incidents might be best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.
- When analysiing incidents of bullying behaviour the Class Teacher /Relevant Teacher should seek answers to question of What, Where, Who, When and Why. As when dealing with all incidents of misbehavior/bullying this should be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner.

- If a group is involved each member should be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved should be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member should be asked for his/her/their account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about the other's statements.
- Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that they may face from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher.
- Where the Class Teacher/ Relevant Teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to him/her/them how he/she/they is in breach of the school's anti bullying policy and efforts should be made to try to get them to see the perspective of the pupil being bullied.
- The Class Teacher/Relevant Teacher does not apportion blame but should make an effort to try to get them to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied. Emphasises should be on that the intention is not to punish perpetrators but to talk to them, to explain how harmful and hurtful bullying is and to seek a promise that it will stop. If that promise is forthcoming and is honoured there will be no penalty and that will be the end of the matter.
- When an investigation is completed and/or a bullying situation is resolved the Class Teacher/Relevant Teacher will complete a report, to include the findings of the investigation, the strategy adopted and the outcome of the intervention, as well as any other relevant information. This may be recordedand upload a file under child's name 'Alleged Bullying Behaviour'.
- If a pupil chooses to continue the bullying behaviour, this can then no longer be considered a once off occurrence. In this event parent(s)/guardian(s) will be contacted. The school should give the parents an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports for the pupil.
- Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved may be arranged separately with a view to bringing them together at a later date if the pupil who has been bullied is ready and agreeable.
- Depending on the seriousness of the bullying some interventions deemed appropriate may be implemented.
- Repeated incidents of bullying behaviour will result in the imposition of sanctions. Such sanctions will be proportionate to the seriousness of the bullying behaviour. It must be made clear to all involved – pupils and parents that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required that this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, their parents and relevant school staff.
- Where a parent is not satisfied with how the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parent must be referred to the school's complaints procedure.
- In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parents of their rights to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.
- The school will maintain care for the victim over time. This will be done by speaking to the child a number of weeks after the incident to check on their continuing welfare. The child's parents will also be consulted.

- If a child makes a report of bullying but asks that nothing is to be done about it, the Class teacher/Relevant Teacher will support the child appropriately to explore how it will be handled sensitively and how parents may be notified. If a parent does so, they must submit in writing that they require no further action to be taken, but even so, the school may still deem it necessary to be investigated and handled appropriately.

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 school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying involves a whole school approach. Given the complexity of bullying behaviour, no one intervention/support programme works in all situations.

Supporting Bullied Pupils.

- Ending the bullying behaviour
- Fostering respect for bullied pupils and all pupils,
- Fostering greater empathy towards and support for bullied pupils
- Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through annual awareness raising programmes
- Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through the speedy identification of those responsible and speedy resolution of bullying situations.
- Making adequate counselling facilities available to pupils who need it in a timely manner – this is subject to available funding.
- Helping bullied pupils raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that help develop friendships and social skills. – participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school.

Supporting Bullying Pupils

- Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are not blamed or punished and get a 'clean sheet'.
- Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are doing the right and honorable thing and giving them praise for this.
- Making adequate counseling facilities available to help those who need it learn other ways of meeting their needs besides violating the rights of others.
- Helping those who need to raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that 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.)
- Using learning strategies throughout the school and the curriculum to help enhance pupils' feelings of self-worth.
- In dealing with negative behaviour in general, encouraging teachers, school staff and parents to focus on, challenge and correct the behaviour while supporting the child.
- In dealing with bullying behaviour seeking resolution and offering a fresh start with a 'clean sheet' and no blame in return for keeping a promise to reform.

Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and PostPrimary 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: _____

Date: 11th June 2025

(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: _____

Date: 11th June 2025 (Principal)