Coláiste Pobail Fóla

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

Reviewed and Ratified by the Board of Management 18/11/2026

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The Board of Management of **Coláiste Pobail Fóla** 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.

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.

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		
Students		
Parents		
Board of Management		
Wider School Community		
Date policy was approved:		
Date policy was last reviewed:		

There are many different methods of bullying behaviour, including **physical, verbal** and **relational forms,** and it can take place **online** and **offline**. Bullying behaviour in schools is often strongly influenced by attitudes, behaviours, norms and power dynamics that are deeply engrained in our society. The core elements of the definition are further described below:

Targeted behaviour

Bullying is deliberate, unwanted behaviour that causes harm to others, and where the student displaying bullying behaviour knows that their behaviour is or will be perceived as harmful.

Repeated behaviour

Bullying takes the form of a systematic pattern of behaviour which is repeated over time.

Imbalance of power

In incidents of bullying, the student experiencing the bullying behaviour finds it hard to defend themselves as a result of the abuse of a real or perceived imbalance of power.

Behaviour that is not bullying behaviour

A one-off instance of negative behaviour towards another 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.

Disagreement between students, or instances where students don't want to be friends or to remain friends, is not considered bullying behaviour unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others including deliberate manipulation of friendship groups.

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 can't control.

Bullying is not accidental or reckless behaviour. If the repeated harm is real for the student experiencing the behaviour but unintended by the other student, this is not bullying.

Criminal behaviour

Bullying behaviour can be considered criminal behaviour under certain circumstances and legal consequences can apply. The age of criminal responsibility in Ireland is 12 years. Some online behaviour may be illegal, and students need to be aware of the far-reaching consequences of posting inappropriate or harmful content online. In cases of intimate imagery, the Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020, also known as Coco's Law, criminalises the nonconsensual sharing of intimate images and also criminalises threatening to share these images.

If bullying behaviour involves physical violence or threats of violence, it may be considered assault.

If bullying behaviour involves discrimination or hate speech targeting a student based on their race, religion, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation or membership of the Traveller community, it may be considered a hate crime under the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 198911, and those engaging in such behaviour may face criminal charges.

If bullying behaviour involves sexual harassment or sexual assault, this may also be considered criminal behaviour.

An Garda Síochána is the appropriate authority to investigate alleged criminal behaviour.

Types of bullying behaviour

There are many different types of bullying behaviour. These can include the following which is not an exhaustive list:

- disablist bullying behaviour
- exceptionally able bullying:
- gender identity bullying:
- homophobic/transphobic (LGBTQ+) bullying
- physical appearance bullying:
- racist bullying
- poverty bullying
- religious identity bullying:
- sexist bullying
- sexual harassment

How bullying behaviour occurs

Bullying behaviour can take many forms, which can occur separately or together. These can include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

Direct	
Physical bullying	• Physical bullying behaviour includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping students. It may also take the form of severe physical assault. While students can often engage in "mess fights" they can sometimes be used as a disguise for physical harassment or inflicting pain.
	• Personal property can be a focus of attention for bullying behaviour. This may result in damage to clothing, mobile phone or other devices, schoolbooks and other learning material or interference with a student's locker or bicycle. The contents of school bags and pencil cases may be scattered on the floor. Items of personal property may be defaced, broken, stolen or hidden.
Verbal Bullying	• Continual name-calling directed at a student which hurts, insults or humiliates the student should be regarded as a form of bullying behaviour. Often name-calling of this type refers to physical appearance; for example, size or clothes worn or gender identity. It can also refer to a student's accent, distinctive voice characteristics, academic ability, race or ethnic origin.
Written Bullying	• Written bullying behaviour includes writing insulting remarks about a student in public places, passing around notes about or drawings of a student.
Extortion	• Bullying behaviour can involve extortion. Extortion is where something is obtained through force or threats
Indirect	
Exclusion	Exclusion bullying behaviour occurs where a student is deliberately and repeatedly isolated, excluded or ignored by a student or group of students

Direct	
Relational	Relational bullying behaviour occurs when a student's attempts to socialise and form relationships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined. Common forms include control: "Do this or I won't be your friend anymore"; a group of students ganging up against one student; nonverbal gesturing; malicious gossip; spreading rumours about a student; giving a student the "silent treatment"; and the deliberate manipulation of friendship groups to make someone unpopular.
Online	Online bullying behaviour (cyberbullying) is carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as text or direct messaging/instant messaging, social media platforms, email, apps, digital gaming sites, gaming consoles, chatrooms and other online technologies. This form of bullying behaviour can include: • sending or sharing nasty, insulting, offensive, and/or intimidating messages or images via text messages, emails, direct messages or other websites or apps • posting information considered to be personal, private and sensitive without consent • making and/or participating in fake profiles on a social network to impersonate and/or humiliate other students • excluding or disrupting access to a student on purpose from online chat groups, access to accounts or from an online game
Online Bullying	Even though a message may be posted online just once by a student it can be considered bullying behaviour as it may be seen by a wide audience where it is intended to be shared or has a likelihood of being shared multiple times and is thus repeated. As online bullying uses technology to carry out bullying behaviour and does not require Face-to-face contact it can occur at any time. Many types of bullying behaviour can be facilitated through online bullying. In many cases online bullying can relate to an "offline" experience with someone known to the student.

Where bullying behaviour can occur

Bullying behaviour can happen anywhere, online or offline and at any time, but there are certain places and times where bullying behaviour can be more likely to occur. These can include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- Inside School
- School yard
- In the classroom:
- Other areas: toilets, corridors, cloakrooms, changing rooms, assembly hall.
- Outside School e.g. sports clubs
- Coming to and from school:
- Online bullying (cyberbullying)

Impact of experiencing bullying behaviour

When students experience bullying behaviour, it can have a severe and profound impact on them in both the short and long term. Students may develop feelings of stress, insecurity, humiliation and anxiety and therefore become more vulnerable. Experiencing bullying behaviour can have a detrimental effect on their experience of education and education outcomes. The student's self-confidence may be damaged with a resulting lowering of their self-esteem which can continue into adulthood. While they may not talk about what is happening to them, their suffering can be indicated through changes in mood and behaviour. Extreme cases of bullying behaviour may contribute to mental health difficulties

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Online or cyberbullying can be a hidden form of bullying behaviour. It can often go unnoticed as much online activity is not subject to adult supervision and the student who displays the behaviour can be offered a degree of anonymity that could protect them from being detected. It can also involve a wider audience and can be difficult to have offensive comments or material removed.

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

The Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice provides the following four key areas that are essential for a holistic, whole-school approach to wellbeing promotion: Culture and Environment; Curriculum (Teaching and Learning); Policy and Planning; and Relationships and Partnerships. These four areas were considered by our school when developing measures to prevent bullying behaviour.

Prevention Strategies	
Culture & Environment	• Open Door Policy • Active Mentoring System - student check in • Establishing a safe telling environment - students are encouraged to speak out • Seating plans in each classroom • Visible displays around the school - DDLETB Core Value, CPF ethos - Connect, Progress, Flourish • Displays of student's work • Visible QR codes to report bullying • Encouraging student voice - Student Council, Prefects, Committees • Designated areas for students of different year groups during break times • Student support team - Check & Connect Programme
Supervision	• Yard, Corridors, Hall - Weekly schedules of student supervision is developed to monitor student behaviour and wellbeing. • Students are monitored entering onto the premises and after school. • Students are monitored between class changeover. Teachers aim to be visible on the corridors and at classroom doors. • Students are supervised during toilet breaks • Students are supervised during lunch time, in classrooms and open areas. • Students are supervised during lunch time clubs. A teacher is always present. • Students are supervised during all extra curricular activities that take place after school. • Staff are observant of relationships between students within classes, absences and encourage high standards of behaviour. Any causes for concern are reported

Prevention Strategies	
Curriculum - Teaching & Learning	• Awareness weeks throughout the school calendar e.g. Anti-bullying week, Stand Up Awareness Week, Internet Safety Week, Active Schools Week • Well-being indicators addressed in all areas of teaching and learning • SPHE empowers students to create, nurture and maintain respectful and healthy relationships with themselves and others. • RSE - enables students to understand human diversity which may help to reduce identity and gender based bullying. • FUSE Programme - Anti-bullying and online safety programme • School culture of inclusion • CSPE - a specific focus on the interdependence of people in communities, at a local, national and international level • Digital Media Literacy - responsible online behaviour and digital citizenship

Prevention Strategies	
Relationships & Partnerships	• Linking with external services e.g. PSS ,Tusla, Gardaí, Jigsaw • Linking with BOM, Parents Association, Student Council, Local clubs, CBAs e.g. CSPE Action Project, SPHE CBA • Regular assemblies to reinforce rules and behaviour expectations • Class events, Fundraising events • Student Support Team • Guest Speakers • Garda Visits • Extra-Curricular- Coaches, Choreographers, Artists, Creative Schools • Support active participation of parents in school life e.g Parents' Association • Support active participation of students in extra- curricular activities - sports and clubs • Linking senior and junior students together through prefect system
Policy and Planning	
	• Bi Cineálta Policy - student friendly displays around the school • Code of Behaviour Policy • Acceptable Use Policy - Phones are to be switched off at all times • Child Safeguarding • Data Protection • IPad Acceptable Use Policy • Internet Acceptable use policy • Pastoral Care Policy – Check & Connect • Wellbeing Policy • Staff aware that they are all mandated persons, child protection procedures handed out each year as reminder and complete Children First E-Learning Programme. • Principal & Deputy Principal complete DLP/DDLP training and refreshers

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

Step 1. Identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred

To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour the Year Head should consider the following questions:

1. Is the behaviour targeted at a specific student or group of students?
2. Is the behaviour intended to cause physical, social or emotional harm?
3. Is the behaviour repeated?

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

Note: One-off incidents may be considered bullying in certain circumstances. A single hurtful message posted on social media can be considered bullying behaviour as it has a high likelihood of being shared multiple times and thus becomes a repeated behaviour.

If the answer to any of these questions is No, then the behaviour is not bullying behaviour. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

Step 2. Where bullying behaviour has occurred

When bullying behaviour occurs, 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

Recording of bullying behaviour

Those involved in investigating and resolving bullying behaviour will note and report developments as follows and, in doing so, they will comply with relevant data protection legislation. It is imperative that all recording of bullying incidents must be done in an objective and factual manner.

The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour are as follows:

- Record all incidents of bullying behaviour (using appendix B)
- Document the following details:
  - Type and form of bullying behaviour (if known).
  - Where and when it took place.
  - The date of the first engagement with the students and their parents.
- Include the views of students and parents on actions to address the bullying.
- Track the review process with students and parents to check if the bullying behaviour has stopped and get their feedback.
- Record the date of each engagement and when it is confirmed that the bullying has ceased.
- Note any involvement with external services or supports.
- Keep the records according to the school's record-keeping policy and in line with data protection rules.
- If there's a Student Support File, place a copy of the record there to help the support team provide consistent help for the student's wellbeing.

Step 4 Follow up where bullying behaviour has occurred

Engagement with Students and Parents:

- The year head/deputy principal/principal must engage with the students involved in the bullying and their parents.
- This engagement should occur no later than 20 school days after the initial contact.

Factors to Consider:

- During this engagement, important factors to consider include:
  - The nature of the bullying behaviour.
  - The effectiveness of the strategies used to address the bullying.
  - The relationship between the students involved.

Review of Strategies:

- If the bullying behaviour has not stopped, the year head/deputy principal/principal should:
  - Review the strategies used to address the bullying.
  - Consult with the students involved and their parents to determine next steps.

Agree on a Timeframe:

- A timeframe should be set for further engagement and follow-up until the bullying behaviour ceases.

Further Action if Bullying Continues:

- If the bullying behaviour continues, the school should consider using strategies from the school's Code of Behaviour to address the inappropriate behaviour.

Disciplinary Sanctions:

- If disciplinary sanctions are necessary, the matter should be handled between the student, their parents, and the school.

If Parents Are Unsatisfied:

- If a parent is not satisfied with how the bullying has been addressed, they should refer to the school's complaints procedures, as outlined in the Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.

Complaint to Ombudsman for Children:

- If a parent remains dissatisfied after the complaint process, they can contact the Ombudsman for Children if they believe the school's actions negatively affected 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.

Support

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):Students who experience Bullying or Witness Bullying:

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

- Students may need counselling and/or opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop their friendship and social skills and thereby build resilience whenever this is needed.
- In this regard the relevant Student Support Team will work closely with the student to ensure they are actively supported in the school and to engage in school based activities they enjoy. They may be placed on our school's focus in/out support list and/or engage in check and connect.
- The schools guidance department will also put in place a program of support in conjunction with the Year Head
- The learning strategies applied within the school will also allow for the enhancement of the pupil's self-worth

Students who display bullying Behaviour:

- Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour may need counselling to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others.
- The Year Head in conjunction with the relevant Student Support Team will work closely with the student in this regard.

Outside agency support:

- The school in certain circumstances may also seek the support and advice of TUSLA, EWO, NEPS, NCSE, second level school support services, HSE and any other agency deemed appropriate to support the school in dealing with incidents of bullying.

Links with other policies:

- Code of Behaviour
- Internet Acceptable Use Policy
- iPad Acceptable Use Policy
- Wellbeing Policy
- Child Safeguarding Statement

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 BÌ Cinealta 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.

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.

Alleged Bullying Incident Student Statement Form

DATE: _____

STUDENT: _____

DETAILS: Include time, place, names of alleged perpetrators, names of bystanders. Detail here both sides of the event

Guide to providing Bullying Behaviour Update for Board of Management meeting of Coláiste Pobail Fóla

Having reviewed the details of the incidents of bullying behaviour that have been reported since the previous board of management meeting, the principal must provide the following information at each ordinary meeting of the board of management:

Total number of new incidents of bullying behaviour reported since the last board of management meeting.	
Total number of incidents of bullying behaviour currently ongoing.	
Total number of incidents of bullying behaviour reported since the beginning of this school year	

Where incidents of bullying behaviour have been reported since the last meeting, the update must include a verbal report which should include the following information where relevant:

• the trends and patterns identified such as the form of bullying behaviour, type of bullying behaviour if known, location of bullying behaviour, when it occurred etc

• the strategies used to address the bullying behaviour

• any wider strategies to prevent and address bullying behaviour

• if any serious incidents of bullying behaviour have occurred which have had a serious adverse impact on a student

• if a parent has informed the school that a student has left the school because of reported bullying behaviour

• if any additional support is needed from the board of management

• if the school's Bí Cineálta policy requires urgent review in advance of the annual review

This update should not include any personal information or information that could identify the students involved.

Review of the Bí Cineálta Policy

The Board of Management (the Board) must undertake an annual (calendar) review of the school's Bí Cineálta policy and its implementation in consultation with the school community. As part of the review, this document must be completed.

Bí Cineálta Policy Review

1. When did the Board formally adopt its Bí Cineálta policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour in accordance with the *Bí Cineálta Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools? Insert date when the Bí Cineálta policy was last adopted by the school.* _____/_____/20_____

2. Where in the school is the student-friendly Bí Cineálta policy displayed?

_____

3. What date did the Board publish the Bí Cineálta policy and the student- friendly policy on the school website? _____/_____/20_____

4. How has the studentfriendly policy been communicated to students?

_____

_____

5. How has the Bí Cineálta policy and studentfriendly policy been communicated to parents?

_____

_____

6. Have all school staff been made aware of the, school's Bí Cineálta policy and the Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools? Yes No

7. Does the Bí Cineálta policy document the strategies that the school uses to prevent bullying behaviour?

_____

_____

8. Has the Board received and minuted the Bullying Behaviour Update presented by the principal at every ordinary board meeting over the last calendar year? Yes No

_____

_____

9. Has the Board discussed how the school is addressing all reports of bullying behaviour. Yes No

_____

_____

10. Is the Board satisfied that all incidents of bullying behaviour are addressed in accordance with the school's Bí Cineálta Policy? Yes No

11. Have the prevention strategies in the Bí Cineálta policy been implemented? Yes No

12. Has the Board discussed the effectiveness of the strategies used to prevent bullying behaviour? Yes No

13. How have (a) parents, (b) students and (c) school staff been consulted with as part of the review of the Bí Cineálta Policy? Yes No

14. Outline any aspects of the school's Bí Cineálta policy and/or its implementation that have been identified as requiring further improvement as part of this review:

15. Where areas for improvement have been identified, outline how these will be addressed and whether an action plan with timeframes has been developed?

16. Does the student friendly policy need to be updated as a result of this review and if so why? Yes No

17. Does the school refer parents to the complaints procedures if they gave a complaint about how the school addressed bullying behaviour? Yes No

18. Has a parent informed the school that a student has left the school due to reported bullying behaviour? Yes No

_____

_____

19. Has the Office of the Ombudsman for Children initiated or completed and investigation into how the school has addressed an incident of bullying behaviour? Yes No

_____

_____

Signed: _____

(Chairperson of the board of management).

Date: _____

Signed: _____

(Principal) _____

Date: _____

Date of next review: _____

Notification regarding the board of management's annual review of the school's Bí Cineálta Policy

The Board of Management of Coláiste Pobail Fóla confirms that the board of management's annual review of the school's Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour and its implementation was completed at the board of management meeting of _____[date].

This review was conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Department of Education's *Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.*

Signed: _____

(Chairperson of the board of management).

Date: _____

Signed: _____

(Principal) _____

Date: _____