



# Scoil Mhuire Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

## **Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour**

The Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire NS 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 pupils who attend our school are kept safe from harm and that the wellbeing of our pupils is at the forefront of everything that we do. We recognise the negative impact that bullying behaviour can have on the lives of our pupils 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 pupils or staff on any of the nine grounds specified: gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.

We confirm that we will take all steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent all bullying or harassment of our students in whatever form and however motivated.

Catholic schools have a distinctive understanding of the human person, recognising that every person is created in God's image and likeness and has inherent dignity as a child of God. This is the basis for ensuring that everybody in our school is treated with respect and care, in accordance with the Catholic Schedule.

As a Catholic school, we are committed to respecting the dignity of every individual. No human person is to be devalued and everybody has a part to play in the school community, regardless of difference

## **Definition of bullying**

Bullying is defined in *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* and *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* as targeted behaviour, online or offline that causes harm. The harm caused can be physical, social and/or emotional in nature. Bullying behaviour is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power in relationships between two people or groups of people in society. The detailed definition is provided in Chapter 2 of the Bí Cineálta procedures.

Each school is required to develop and implement a Bí Cineálta policy that sets out how the school community prevents and addresses bullying behaviour. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour that is not bullying behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

## Section A: Development/review of our Bí Cineálta policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour

All members of our school community were provided with the opportunity to input into the development/review of this policy.

	Date consulted	Method of consultation
School Staff	18/06/2025	½ Day Closure for staff training
Pupils	01/06/2024 24/06/2025 24/06/2025 to 25/06/2025	Bullying surveys with children Bullying surveys with children In-class discussions with Principal and focus groups
Parents	01/06/2024  Sept 2024  25/06/2025	Bullying surveys with parents Information sessions with parents during PA AGM. Draft policy and draft child-friendly policy sent for feedback
Board of Management	08/05/2025 07/07/2025	Discussed by Board of Management Ratified by Board of Management
Patron	11/07/2025 08/10/2025	Submitted for approval Resubmitted for approval and approved
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	25/06/2025	Sent to Bus Escort & Bus Drivers for feedback
Date policy was first approved: 07/07/2025		
Date policy was last reviewed & re-approved: 16/10/2025		

## 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 & Environment

Scoil Mhuire NS adopts a whole-school approach to the prevention of bullying behaviour. In developing the preventative strategies which this school will use to prevent all forms of bullying behaviour, we come from the context of our Catholic ethos, where inclusivity permeates our school in a real way.

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 our board of management and staff meetings.

The dignity and the wellbeing of the individual person is of paramount concern in our Christian response. This school will listen closely to and dialogue with parents, thereby building a relationship of mutual understanding, respect, trust and confidence.

In continuing to develop prevention strategies, this school will listen to young people and parents, to help establish their particular context and needs. Frequent periods of reflection and further engagement by the school, young people and parents, will be used to discern appropriate supports for young people in this school and to help inform future prevention strategies.

We are a proud KiVa school. KiVa is an evidence-based anti-bullying programme developed by the University of Turku, Finland. It has two main elements:

- Monthly lessons with associated resources that build empathy, self-awareness, and bystander empowerment.
- A clear, structured response process for managing bullying incidents.

In Year 1 of programme implementation, all classes engaged with the monthly KiVa lessons. In subsequent years, the lessons are taught in 1st & 2nd and 4th & 5th classes.

Scoil Mhuire actively fosters a positive and inclusive school culture, where relationships are central. We place strong emphasis on building positive connections among:

- Pupils,
- Staff and pupils,
- Staff and parents,
- The wider school community.

Kindness, friendship, and empathy are recurring themes in our classroom practice and school assemblies. Our school community events strengthen relationships and support a sense of belonging, including:

- Welcome Days for new families,
- Grandparents Day,
- Sports Days,
- Tidy Towns participation,
- Open/Fun Days.

We have established clear, two-way communication channels with parents through phone calls, emails, Class Dojo, and home notes.

Pupil voice is actively promoted through our Pupil Council, Green Council, and Creative Council, and is embedded in classroom rule-setting and school decision-making.

We celebrate diversity in tangible ways, including our 'Free to Be Me' library and inclusive

events, such as our annual Talent Show & Well-Being Week, that reflect the backgrounds and identities of all pupils.

We strive to ensure that:

- Ours is a telling school,
- The school community knows who our KiVa anti-bullying team are,
- Bystanders and peers understand their critical role in response,
- Physical spaces are safe and welcoming,
- Supervision is adequate and responsive at all times.

## Curriculum

Our curriculum fosters inclusion, respect, and responsibility through a consistent and structured approach.

We aim to:

- Promote collaborative and respectful learning,
- Ensure a shared understanding of bullying, its impact, and the school's response strategy,
- Embed anti-bullying education across the curriculum.

How we achieve this:

- Pupils are taught how to work collaboratively and respectfully through group work and structured interaction.
- Anti-bullying education is delivered through SPHE, RSE, Stay Safe, and KiVa lessons.
- These lessons foster empathy, assertiveness, and personal responsibility.
- Anti-bullying messages are reinforced across the wider curriculum—e.g., through stories, drama, poetry, and music.
- The children are involved in creating our anti-bullying messages and associated posters and artwork etc
- Our engagement with these programmes has created a shared language and understanding of bullying prevention and intervention.

## Policy & Practice

Our practice is guided by this Bí Cineálta Policy and a pupil-friendly version. These are supported by the following school policies:

- Code of Behaviour
- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Acceptable Use Policy (AUP)
- SPHE and RSE Policies
- SEN Policy
- SSE Plan: Wellbeing in Education

Together, these ensure a consistent, whole-school approach to positive behaviour, respectful relationships, and pupil safety.

**Relationships & Partnerships:** We recognise the importance of strong relationships in preventing and addressing bullying. These are supported through:

- Pupil support teams,
- Pupil councils,
- School clubs and after-school activities,
- School assemblies and community events,
- Parents' association involvement,
- Collaborative learning opportunities.

We are committed to strengthening our connections with local organisations and developing new partnerships that support pupil wellbeing, inclusion, and anti-bullying education.

- Staff will actively assist families from a range of diverse backgrounds, if require, to support them in dealing with incidents of bullying based on their particular diversity.

**Specific Strategies to Prevent Online (Cyber) Bullying:**

- The SPHE and Digital Media Literacy programmes are implemented to teach respectful online behaviour, critical thinking and digital safety.
- A robust Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) governs technology use and has been communicated to pupils and parents.
- Internet Safety Day and themed workshops for pupils and parents raise awareness of cyberbullying and its impact. Parents are also informed about free courses provided by external providers.
- The school has a voluntary smartphone ban in place.
- Online behaviour standards are explicitly included in the Code of Behaviour.

**Strategies to Prevent Homophobic and Transphobic Bullying:**

- All pupils are taught about diversity, identity and respect, in an age-appropriate manner, through inclusive SPHE and RSE lessons.
- We have a library of inclusive books – 'Free to be Me' – that include representations of all types of relationships and of differing sexual orientations.
- Staff challenge gender stereotypes and model respectful language and behaviour.

**Strategies to Prevent Racist Bullying:**

- We create a school environment that reflects our cultural diversity, through displays, celebrations and inclusive books/resources such as our Free to Be Me library.
- We have a library of books and other reading materials in a range of languages

spoken throughout the school.

#### **Strategies to Prevent Sexist Bullying and Sexual Harassment:**

- Equality and gender respect are modelled by all staff and reinforced through inclusive practices in all school activities.
- Pupils are taught about healthy relationships, consent, and bodily autonomy through RSE.
- We have a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment, and pupils are taught that such behaviour is never “banter” or “messaging”.
- Staff actively challenge sexist language, or appearance-based comments, and support respectful dialogue among pupils.

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):

- **Active Supervision throughout the Day:** Staff members are timetabled to provide supervision at arrival, during morning and lunch breaks, and at dismissal.
- **Yard and Play Area Supervision:** Teachers and SNAs are rostered for structured supervision of outdoor spaces. Play areas are zoned, and visibility is maximised through positioning, regular movement, and reduced supervision blind spots.
- **Indoor Supervision on Wet Days:** Clear procedures are in place for indoor supervision when children remain in classrooms. Assigned supervisors rotate and are present in all classrooms or shared indoor spaces.
- **Supervision During Transitions and School Activities:** Staff supervise transitions between classrooms, assemblies, and extra-curricular activities.
- **Trusted Adult System:** All children are made aware of the trusted adults available to them. Staff members are encouraged to remain visible and approachable throughout the day.
- **Physical Environment Enhancements:** The school has improved visibility by removing unnecessary visual barriers and using signage and murals to reinforce the school’s culture of kindness and inclusion.
- **Concerns and Reporting Mechanisms:** Post boxes are located in classrooms and on corridors for pupils to report issues anonymously if they feel uncomfortable approaching an adult directly.
- **Professional Awareness and Training:** Staff are trained to identify locations, times, and behaviours where bullying is more likely to occur and take proactive steps to intervene and prevent incidents.
- **Engagement of Wider School Community:** Bus escorts, extracurricular coaches, and ancillary staff are made aware of the school’s procedures for supervising and reporting bullying behaviour.

## Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

Class teacher, KiVa team

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When bullying behaviour occurs, the school will:

- > ensure that the pupil 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 pupil 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):

### 1. Determining if Bullying Behaviour Has Occurred

The school follows a structured and fair approach to assess reported incidents, grounded in the definition from Bí Cineálta and the evidence-based principles of KiVa.

**Initial Listening:** The pupil who reports the concern (whether the target, bystander, or other) is listened to sensitively and with empathy. The emphasis is on reassurance and creating psychological safety.

**Use of the 3-Part Definition Test:** Teachers apply the three key questions to determine if bullying is occurring:

- Is the behaviour targeted?
- Is it repeated over time?
- Is there an imbalance of power?

**Individual and Group Interviews:** Using KiVa-informed interview protocols:

- Two members of the KiVa team meets individually with involved pupils to gather information.
- Group discussions may follow, particularly with peer supporters or the class

**Confidentiality and Record-Keeping:** The situation is documented without labelling any pupil prematurely. Written records are kept confidentially by the Principal.

### 2. Addressing Bullying Behaviour

If bullying behaviour is confirmed, the following steps are taken:

**Supportive Interventions, Not Blame:** Drawing on KiVa's restorative and solution-focused ethos, we prioritise restoring relationships and changing behaviour over assigning punishment.

Involving Parents Early: Parents/guardians of all involved pupils are informed in a timely, sensitive, and constructive manner.

Agreed Actions:

The pupil displaying bullying behaviour is supported to reflect, take responsibility, and agree to behaviour change steps.

The pupil who has experienced bullying is supported through regular check-ins.

The class group may engage in KiVa lessons or activities to rebuild a respectful, inclusive environment.

Team Approach: The class teacher works with the KiVa Team (if applicable) to coordinate response and follow-up.

### **3. Reviewing Progress and Follow-Up**

7-Day Review: A follow-up is conducted within 7 school days to assess:

- If the bullying behaviour has stopped.
- If all parties feel safe and supported.
- If further actions or interventions are needed.

Additional Check-ins: Ongoing informal or formal check-ins continue as necessary, especially where vulnerabilities exist or peer dynamics remain unsettled.

Whole-Class Monitoring: Where relevant, the class teacher monitors class climate and uses preventative lessons (e.g. from the KiVa programme, SPHE, Stay Safe).

Documentation: Outcomes and actions are recorded in line with school protocols and may be added to pupil support files if appropriate.

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):

#### **1. Supporting Pupils Who Experience Bullying Behaviour**

Reassurance and Listening: The pupil is listened to sensitively and supported in a way that affirms their voice and restores their sense of agency.

Safety Planning: Individualised strategies are developed to ensure the pupil feels safe in class, at break times, and in digital environments.

Ongoing Check-ins: Designated staff members (e.g. class teacher or KiVa team member) check in regularly to monitor wellbeing and rebuild confidence.

Restorative Support: Opportunities are created to restore peer relationships where appropriate, using restorative conversations or peer mediation (only if safe and agreed to by the pupil).

Access to Additional Support: Pupils may be referred for additional wellbeing supports (e.g. guidance, NEPS consultation, external services) as needed.

## 2. Supporting Pupils Who Witness Bullying Behaviour

Empowerment to Act: Witnesses are reassured that reporting is the right thing to do, and their courage is affirmed.

Bystander Education: Through SPHE, Stay Safe, and KiVa-informed lessons, pupils are taught how to safely intervene, offer peer support, or seek adult help.

Follow-Up Conversations: Where needed, teachers check in with witnesses to ensure they feel safe and are not targeted for telling.

Positive Reinforcement: Pupils who help to resolve conflict or support others are praised and their role as peer allies is highlighted.

## 3. Supporting Pupils Who Display Bullying Behaviour

Behaviour Change, Not Blame: The focus is on helping the pupil understand the impact of their actions, take responsibility, and commit to change.

Reflection Activities: The pupil is supported through guided reflection, social-emotional learning tasks, and adult-facilitated discussions.

Restorative Opportunities: Where appropriate, structured restorative processes are offered to repair harm.

Parental Involvement: Parents/guardians are engaged early in a non-judgemental manner to support behaviour change at home and school.

Individualised Support: Where patterns of behaviour are linked to unmet needs (e.g. emotional regulation, social skills), the pupil may access SEN or wellbeing support services.

Monitoring and Mentoring: A teacher or a KiVa team member may be assigned to support the pupil in implementing agreed actions and maintaining positive peer relationships.


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 pupils 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 pupil 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:  \_\_\_\_\_  
(Chairperson of board of management)

Date: 16/10/2025

Signed:  \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 16/10/2025

(Principal)