Scoil O Curnáin
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Co. Luimnigh

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Courtenay National School
Newcastle West
Co. Limerick

Principal: Laura Horgan
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BÍ CINEÁLTA POLICY
TO PREVENT AND ADDRESS BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

The Board of Management of Courtenay 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.

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.

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 Bi 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	10/03/2025	Croke Park Meeting to carry out a prevention strategies audit and to engage with Bí Cineálta Procedures
	26/03/2025	Bí Cineálta half day closure to engage with the new proceudres, review our old Anti-Bullying Policy and draft new policy with input and feedback from all school staff
	31/03/2025	Staff Questionnaire sent via google forms, feedback informed this policy
Students	12/03/2025	Pupil Questionnaire sent via google forms and completed as part of homework, feedback informed this policy
	May/June	Focus Group to design child friendly Bí Cineálta policy with child friendly wording and imagery

Parents	03/04/2025	Parent Questionnaire sent via google forms, feedback informed this policy
Board of Management	07/05/2025	Draft policy shared with Board Members for review
Wider School Community	19/05/2025	Draft policy shared with Bus Éireann, Bus Escorts, After-School Providers for review.
Date Policy was approved	26/06/2025	
Date policy was last reviewed	26/06/2025	

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

This section sets out the prevention strategies that will be used by this school to address all forms of bullying behaviour, in whatever form and however motivated, including online bullying behaviour, homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour, racist bullying behaviour, sexist bullying behaviour and sexual harassment as appropriate (see Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

In developing the preventative strategies which Courtenay National 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. With this in mind, at Courtenay National School we will strive to prevent bullying by using many strategies, including:

Culture and environment
- A Whole-School Bí Cineálta policy that is a living policy, implemented and referenced daily
- Bí Cineálta noticeboard with visible Bí Cineálta child friendly policy in a prominent location
- Create a positive school environment with welcoming staff present at the gate each morning and in breakfast club
- Create a school culture where bullying behaviour is unacceptable and where there is a consistent approach to addressing bullying behaviour
- Promote the idea that our school is a telling environment, underpinned by discretion
- Promote the concept of a trusted adult – stay safe linkage – who to tell
- Create safe spaces in our school building and yards – visibility
- A living representation of the school mission statement
- Consistent and whole school approach to routine, supervision and structure in relation to transitions to and from the classroom
- Strategies to reduce the potential for bullying in the school toilets through appropriate supervision and rules
- Wellbeing Promotion; Anti-Bullying/Friendship Campaigns
- Create a positive school culture and climate which;
  - is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity
  - encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment
  - promotes respectful relationships across the school community

Curriculum and teaching

- The full implementation of the mandatory aspects of the SPHE curriculum, RSE and Stay Safe Programmes. CPD for staff relative to these programmes.
- Ongoing professional development of staff and school leaders in relation to bullying. Engaging staff and pupils in discussion in relation to the types of bullying on a day to day basis.
- School wide delivery of lessons on bullying from evidence based programmes;
  - Stay Safe
  - Walk Tall
  - RSE
  - Zippy's Friends
  - Friend for Life/Fun Friends
  - Zones of Regulation
  - Webwise
- Delivery of the Garda SPHE Programmes. These lessons, delivered by Community Gardai, cover issues around personal safety and cyber-bullying
- The school will specifically consider the additional needs of SEN pupils with regard to programme implementation and the development of skills and strategies to enable all pupils to respond appropriately.
- School Completion Programme
- Pupil Voice including monitoring of pupil wellbeing through teacher observation, assessment and monitoring
- Consistency in relation to use of "show me 5" and the incredible years approach to behaviour management

Policy and planning

- Discussion of Bí Cineálta policy with pupils and sharing of policy on school website and with parents
- Student friendly Bí Cineálta policy visible on notice board in a prominent location
- Code of behaviour implemented
- SPHE Policy is reviewed regualrly
- School Supervision Policy
- Child Safeguarding Procedures and Practices
- Acceptable Use Policy
- School Attendance Policy
- Care Plans and School Support Plans
- Care and Intimate Care Needs Policy
- Positive Handling training??
- Risk Assessment??
- Whole staff training in 'Cyberbullying in Primary Schools'
- Other Initiatives and policies developed and communicated by the In-School Leadership and Management Team – In particular AP2 (Wellbeing and SPHE, Wellbeing and PE) and AP1 (STEM Co-Ordinator)

Relationships and partnerships

- Home School Community Liaison
- School Completion Liaison
- Parent and Teacher meetings
- Aladdin Connect facility
- Parent's Association
- After school clubs; chess, soccer, hurling, football, tennis, rugby
- School Newsletter sent each week informing parents
- School website, instagram page and local newspaper
- Working relationships with outside agencies (West Limerick Children's Services, NEPS, Túsla, CAMHS, SENO, PHN)
- Working relationships with local GAA, Tidy Towns
- Annual Grandparent's Day Mass and celebration
- Annual Graduation Ceremony
- Transitions

Online bullying behaviour

(Note - the digital age of consent is the minimum age a user must be before a social media or internet company can collect, process and store their date. In Ireland the digital age of consent is 16. Children between 13 and 16 must have parental permission to sign up to social media services. Most social media platforms have a minimum age requirement and for the majority of these it is 13 years old. Therefore children under the age of 13 should not have a social media account)

- Acceptable use policy incorporating the use of any or all electronic devices at school by staff, pupils and visitors. (Appendix A)
- Digital Citizenship Education Programme for pupils and staff - Webwise – All aboard for Digitown, HTML Heroes
- SPHE curriculum
- Visits from community Garda
- Open conversations with students about developing respectful and kind relationships online
- Promoting online safety events for parents who are responsible for overseeing their children's activities online
- Internet safety day
- SCP life skills programme

Homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour
- Inclusive physical environment
- Challenging gender stereotypes
- Open conversations about gender choice and acceptance
- Busy bodies programme
- Deal with incidents of homophobic and transphobic bullying incidentally as they arise

Racist bullying behaviour
- Zero tolerance of racist bullying behaviour
- Staff model respectful behaviour
- Anti-Racism initiatives including Anti-Racism Week

- Celebrating cultural diversity
- Reading material, print and resources evident in the school environment that acknowledge ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity and relate particularly to the diverse backgrounds of our school community
- Integrate and teach about different cultures through other subjects such as music and religion
- Encouraging pupils to speak, write and read multi-lingually when appropriate

Sexist bullying behaviour and sexual harrassment
- RSE lessons to raise awareness
- Equal opportunites in activities
- Liaising with TUSLA and the HSA when necessary

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):

The school supervision policy is reviewed regularly throughout the school year as issues arise available at Appendix B.
Bullying hotspots are identified as incidents of bullying behaviour are identified and in consultation with parents.

The following hotspots have been identified in feedback received from parents, staff and pupils in the development of this policy:
- School Toilets
- Walking to the yard in the Líne
- After-School

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.

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 on the correct form on Aladdin
- The DLP will follow up after twenty days to investigate if bullying has ceased
- All supervision staff will be vigilant to bullying behaviour on yards
- Principal will inform Board of Management of incidences of bullying
- Principal / Deputy principal / SENCO / Assistant Principal 2 Bí Cineálta co-ordinator will collaborate with Class Teacher and provide up to date information and guidance to assist with the ongoing monitoring and investigation of allegations of bullying behaviour

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):

- *Identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred*
When investigating whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour, a class teacher in consultation with others (SET, SNA) 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.

When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred teachers should consider what, where, when and why?

- if a group of students is involved, each student should be engaged with individually at first
- thereafter, all students involved should be met as a group
- at the group meeting, each student should be asked for their account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's views
- each student should be supported as appropriate, following the group meeting
- it may be helpful to ask the students involved to write down their account of the incident(s)

2   *Where bullying behaviour has occurred*

- parents are an integral part of the school community and play an important role, in partnership with schools, in addressing bullying behaviour. Where bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the students involved must be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and to consult with them on the actions to be taken to address the behaviour
- listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation
- a record should be kept of the engagement with all involved using recording template on Aladdin
- this record should document the form and type of bullying behaviour, if known (see Section 2.5 and 2.7 of the Bi Cineálta procedures), where and when it took place and the date of the initial engagement with the students involved and their parents
- the record should include the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour. Follow up where bullying behaviour has occurred

3. *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.

4. *Determining if bullying behaviour has ceased*

- the teacher must engage with the students involved and their parents again no more than 20 school days after the initial engagement

- important factors to consider as part of this engagement are the nature of the bullying behaviour, the effectiveness of the strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and the relationship between the students involved
- the teacher should document the review with students and their parents to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased and the views of students and their parents in relation to this
- the date that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased should also be recorded
- any engagement with external services/supports should also be noted
- ongoing supervision and support may be needed for the students involved even where bullying behaviour has ceased
- if the bullying behaviour has not ceased the teacher should review the strategies used in consultation with the students involved and their parents. A timeframe should be agreed for further engagement until the bullying behaviour has ceased
- if it becomes clear that the student who is displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behaviour, then the school consideration should be given to using the strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour as provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour. If disciplinary sanctions are considered, this is a matter between the relevant student, their parents and the school

5. _Recording bullying behaviour_
- All incidents of bullying behaviour should be recorded. The record should document the form (Section 2.5) and type (See Section 2.7) of bullying behaviour, if known, where and when it took place and the date of the initial engagement with the students and their parents.
- The record should include the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour. It should document the review with students and their parents to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased and the views of students and their parents in relation to this. It is important to document the date of each of these engagements and the date that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour 45 Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and PostPrimary Schools has ceased. Any engagement with external services/supports should also be noted. These records should be retained in accordance with the school's record keeping policy and in line with data protection regulations. Where a Student Support File exists for a student, schools are encouraged to place a copy of the record on the student's support file. This will assist the school's student support team, where they exist, in providing a consistent and holistic response to support the wellbeing of the students involved. Where a Student Support Plan exists, the plan should be updated to incorporate response strategies and associated supports.

6. _Complaint Process_
- If a parent is not satisfied with how bullying behaviour has been addressed by the school, in accordance with these procedures, they should be referred to the school's complaints procedure.
- Additional Information relating to schools' complaint procedures are available at the following link: Complaint Procedures for Schools.

- In the event that a student and/or parent is dissatisfied with how a complaint has been handled, a student and/or parent may make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children if they believe that the school's actions have had a negative effect on the student.
- The Office of the Ombudsman for Children can be contacted at ocomplaint@oco.ie.

7. *Supports*

Support services that are available to help advise the school in preventing and addressing bullying behaviour include:
- NEPS
- Oide
- Webwise
- NPC
- DCU Anti-Bullying Centre
- TUSLA

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.

For those experiencing bullying behaviour:
- One-to-One support from a teacher with particular knowledge of and experience with working with pupils affected by bullying.
- If pupils require counselling of further supports the school, in consultation with the parents/guardians of that pupil will work to identify and liaise with appropriate agencies to organise same. This may be for the pupil affected by bullying or any pupil involved in identified cases of bullying
- Advice will be sought from professional agencies in relation to the identified affects on certain pupils. (For example NEPS, Primary Care Psychology, Play Therapists etc.)
- Pupils will be reassured that they have done the right thing and will be supported throughout the process.
- Strategies will immediately be put in place to reduce the potential for bullying to continue to re-occur.

For those who witness bullying behaviour:
- Understand that a bystander is someone who 'stands by' and watches something happen – like bullying – without doing anything to stop it.
- Encourage the positive approach to telling. Understand that it's not telling tales. It's being responsible and helping to make someone's life better.
- Whole school approach to teaching children what to do if they witness bullying behaviour;
  o Distract from the situation: ask the person who is being bullied a question or invite them to join you in an activity
  o Calmly tell the person displaying bullying behaviour to stop

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.

POLICY RATIFICATION

This policy was reviewed by the Board of Management of *Courtenay National School* in Term 3 of 2025. It was ratified at its meeting held on 26th June 2025.

Signed: _____   Signed: _____

Richard Collins, Chairperson, Board of Management   Laura Horgan, Principal

Date: _____   Date: _____

PATRONS APPROVAL

This policy has been approved by St. Senan's Education Office, acting on behalf of the Patron *Bishop Brendan Leahy.*

Official Stamp