# Bí Cineálta Anti-Bullying Policy



# Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Walterstown 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 take all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the 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 each person 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 all have an indispensable 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.

There are many different methods of bullying behaviour, including physical, verbal and relational forms, and it can take place online and offline. There are also many different motives for bullying behaviour which can be understood on an individual level (for example, desire for dominance, status, revenge) and/or on a societal level (for example, identity based bullying such as racist, disablist, sexist or LGBTQ+ bullying). Bullying behaviour in schools is often strongly influenced by attitudes, behaviours, norms and power dynamics that are deeply ingrained in our society.

## 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 has a high likelihood of being shared multiple times and thus becomes a repeated behaviour.

Disagreement between two students, or instances where students don't want to be friends or to remain friends, is not considered bullying 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 their 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.

These behaviours, while not defined as bullying, can be distressing. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

## Bullying behaviour that occurs outside of school

As per the Bí Cineálta Procedures, a school is not expected to deal with bullying behaviour that occurs when students are not under the care or responsibility of the school. However, where bullying has an impact in school, schools are required to support the student involved.

Examples of prohibited bullying behaviours that can occur outside of school (non-exhaustive list):

1. Bullying behaviour that occurs in the area immediately outside the school, the local shops and wider local area.
2. Bullying behaviour that occurs on the journey to and from school.
3. Bullying behaviour that occurs in organised clubs and groups outside of school such as sports clubs.
4. Online bullying (cyberbullying) behaviour, along with other types of bullying behaviour can cause significant harm and have a lasting impact on students who experience this behaviour. Access to technology means that online bullying behaviour can happen any time and that the student's home is no longer a safe place. The nature of these technologies means that digital content can be shared and seen by a wide audience almost instantly and the content is almost impossible to delete permanently.

## 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.

| People Consulted | Date consulted | Method of consultation |
|---|---|---|
| School Staff | 29/08/2025 | Online survey |
| Students | 09/09/2025 | Online survey |
| Parents | 02/09/2025 | Online survey |
| Board of Management | 18/09/2025 | Online survey |
| Wider school community as appropriate | TBC | Via email - email will be sent with final policy attached and also invited to ask questions if they have any |
| Date policy was approved | 29/09/2026 | |
| Date policy was last reviewed | 24/11/25 (Anti Bullying Policy) | |

## 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 (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.

**Culture and Environment:** 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.

- Model respectful behaviour to all members of the school community at all times. • Consistently promote positive and inclusive language in our school.

- Systems of encouragement and rewards to promote desired behaviour and compliance with the school rules and routines may be used where

appropriate. • All staff actively watch out for signs of bullying behaviour.
- The Student Council watches out for signs of bullying behaviour.
- Promote acts of kindness and celebrate "Friendship February" annually.

**Curriculum:**

- Explicitly teach pupils what respectful language and respectful behaviour looks like, acts like, sounds like and feels like in class and around the school.
- The implementation of the Social Physical and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum according to the school plan, including the Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) and Stay Safe Programme.
- School-wide delivery of lessons on bullying from evidence-based programmes eg. Stay Safe Programme, programmes to learn about cyberbullying (eg. Website teachers' resources and lessons from www.cybersafekids.ie).
- Explicitly teach pupils about the appropriate use of social media
- Organise talks given by relevant professionals to older pupils and to parents/guardians, focusing on educating pupils on appropriate online behaviour, how to stay safe online and also on developing a culture of reporting any concerns about cyber-bullying.
- Use of programmes such as Friends for Life (which looks at social skills and resilience)
- Celebrating Safer Internet Day
- 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

**Policy and Planning:** In Walterstown National School we use the following policies and planning to prevent and address bullying behaviour:

- Acceptable Usage Policy
- Bí Cineálta School Policy
- Bí Cineálta Child Friendly Policy
- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Code of Behaviour
- Health and Safety Policy
- Wellbeing SSE
- SEN Policy
- Staff ensure that they are well informed and up to date with Child Protection Guidelines
- Staff engage in appropriate teacher professional learning courses. This can support school staff to prevent and address bullying behaviour. School staff share their experiences and examples of best practice. Any relevant CPD courses are regularly shared on the Staff Handbook Padlet
- Resources on the school website to address bullying behaviour and offer support

**Relationships and Partnerships:** 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.

Strong interpersonal connections are an integral part of effectively preventing and addressing bullying behaviour. These connections are supported through:

- Our Student Council
- Parents Association
- Committees eg. Green Schools Committee, Creative Schools Committee, Active Committee, Lámh Committee
- Social Committee (staff)
- Friendship February
- Buddy Reading

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

1. Acceptable Usage Policy
2. Code of Behaviour and Discipline
3. Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment

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 support for young people in this school and to help inform future prevention strategies.

## Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

The teachers with responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour are as follows:

Mainstream class teachers and SET's (where appropriate). The Principal/Deputy Principal will provide support and advice and will become involved where appropriate.

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. Identify if bullying has occurred - What? Where? When? Why?**

- When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred the teacher should consider the following: **what, where, when and why?**
- If a group of students is involved, each student should be engaged 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. To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour you should carefully consider the following questions: **Is the behaviour targeted at a specific student or group of students? Is the behaviour intended to cause physical, social or emotional**

**harm? Is the behaviour repeated?** If the answer to each of these questions is **Yes**, then the behaviour is bullying behaviour and the behaviour should be addressed using the Bí Cineálta Procedures outlined below. If it is **No**, you should refer to the Code of Behaviour.

- Each student should be supported, as appropriate, following the group meeting. It may also be helpful to ask the students involved to write down their account of the incident.
- The definition of bullying provided in Chapter 2 sets out clear criteria to help schools to identify bullying behaviour. The questions included in Appendix C can further assist schools in this regard.

**2. Where Bullying Behaviour has occurred the school will:**

We take all instance of bullying behaviour on a case - by case basis, but we may use the following approaches generally (see Chapter 6 of the Bí Cineálta Procedures)

- 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 view of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation
- take action in a timely manner
- inform parent of those involved
- record bullying behaviour
- determine if bullying has ceased
- use resources, as appropriate - including those developed by NEPS (National Educational Psychological Service), Oide (support service for schools) and from programmes/sites such as Webwise and FUSE. Links to these resources can be found on our school website.

**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.

3. **Recording bullying behaviour:**

All incidents of bullying behaviour should be recorded. The record should record the following:

- the form and type of behaviour if known (see pages 20-24, Section 2.5 and 2.7 of the Bí Cineálta procedures for description/examples of the forms and types of bullying behaviour)
- where and when it took place
- the date of initial engagement with the students and their parents
- the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour
- a review with students and their parents to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased and the views of the students and their parents in relation to this
- the date of each of these engagements and the date that has been determined that the bullying behaviour 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
- place a copy of the record on the student's file

4. **Determining if Bullying Behaviour has ceased:**

- The teacher must engage with the students and parents involved no more **than 20 school days** after the initial discussion to review progress following the initial intervention
- Important factors to consider as part of the review 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
- Ongoing supervision and support may be needed by both the student experiencing the bullying behaviour and the student displaying the behaviour
- If the bullying behaviour has not ceased, the teacher should review the strategies used in consultation with the students and parents and agree to meet again over an agreed timeframe until the bullying behaviour has ceased. If, after an agreed timeframe, bullying behaviour is still taking place, we may have to implement sanctions/strategies outlined in our Code of Behaviour

## 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: 29/09/2026
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: _____ Date: 29/09/2026
(Principal)

## Template for Recording Bullying Behaviour

This template is only to be used when bullying behaviour has been identified, in line with the Bí Cineálta Procedures.

Date of initial engagement with pupil(s) and parent(s)

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Initials of pupils who has experienced bullying behaviour and class group

Initials.....

Class..... Initials and

class(es) of pupil(s) engaged in bullying behaviour

Initials.....

Class(es).....

| Source of bullying concern/report (tick relevant box(es) * | | Location of incidents (tick relevant box(es) |
|---|---|---|
| Pupil concerned | | Yard |
| Other pupil<br>Parent | | Classroom<br>Corridor |
| Teacher | | Toilets |
| Other | | Other (specify) |

Initials of person(s) who reported the bullying concern and/or relationship to the pupil(s)

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Dates of when the bullying occurred

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Form of Bullying Behaviour (tick relevant box/boxes) See page 21

| Physical Bullying Behaviour | | Exclusion Bullying Behaviour |
|---|---|---|
| Verbal Bullying Behaviour | | Relational Bullying Behaviour |
| Written Bullying Behaviour | | Online Bullying Behaviour |

Extortion Other (specify)

Type of Bullying Behaviour (tick relevant box/boxes)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Disablist Bullying Behaviour | | Homophobic/Transphobic (LGBTQ+) Bullying Behaviour |
| Exceptionally Bullying Behaviour | | Physical Appearance Sexual Harassment |
| Gender Identity Bullying Behaviour | | Racist bullying Behaviour |
| Sexist Bullying Behaviour Sexual Harassment | | Religious Identity Bullying Behaviour |
| Poverty Bullying Behaviour | | Other (specify) |

Brief description of bullying behaviour and its impact

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Views of pupil(s) and parent(s) regarding the actions to be taken

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|---|
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| | |
|---|---|
| Date of review with pupil(s) and parent(s) (within 20 days) | |
| Has bullying behaviour ceased? | |
| View of pupil(s) and parents in relation to this | |

| | |
|---|---|
| If bullying behaviour has not ceased, set an agreed timeframe to meet again and review strategies | |
| Engagement with external services or supports (if any) | |

*If bullying behaviour continues beyond the review timeframes, the school's Code of Behaviour is to be used.*

Signed ..... (Relevant Teacher)

Date .....

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal

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