

# School Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

## Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Davidstown PS 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. 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  |                |                        |
| Students  |                |                        |
| Parents   |                |                        |
| Board of Management   |                |                        |
| Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers |                |                        |
| Date policy was approved:                                       |                |                        |
| Date policy was last reviewed:                                  |                |                        |

## Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

This section sets out the prevention strategies that will be used by the school. These include strategies specifically aimed at preventing online bullying behaviour, homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour, racist bullying behaviour, sexist bullying behaviour and sexual harassment as appropriate (see Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

- Culture and Environment
  - o A telling environment – where children feel empowered to tell if they need help
  - o A trusted adult – that the children know of an adult that they can trust and talk to
  - o Safe, physical spaces – ensuring that the school is a safe environment
  - o Supervision – good quality supervision
  - o Effective leadership – school leadership with a commitment to preventing bullying behaviour
  - o Respectful language – an emphasis on respectful language in all interactions

Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)

- o The anti-bullying module of the SPHE programme Stay Safe, and the Walk Tall programme.
- o The SPHE curriculum gives opportunities for role playing and conflict resolution Pupils are helped to examine the issue of bullying in a calm rational, age-appropriate manner, outside of the tense context of particular bullying incidents. In the process they are made more aware of the nature of bullying and the various forms that it can take.

- o Through presentations (PDST seminars, Parents' Association talks, etc.) or other exercises, the school staff and parents/guardians are made aware of the nature of bullying and the signs that might indicate that a pupil is being bullied. They are encouraged to be vigilant in watching out for signs of bullying and to report any suspicion of bullying they may have to the 'Relevant Teacher' (in the case of staff members) or any staff member (in the case of parents/guardians).

- o Pupils are made aware that the consequences of bullying behaviour are always bad for those who are targeted, even if this is not always obvious at the time.

- Policy and Planning

- o Bí Cineálta policy

- o ISM meetings

- o Staff meetings

- o Oide and PDST

- o SSE

- Effective policies and procedures.

- o Student-friendly Bí Cineálta policy

- o School AUP

- o Wellbeing policy

- o Supervision policy

- o Staff Inservice

- o Beginning of year staff meetings and An Plean Scoile

- o Guidance for subs

- o Board of management training.

- Relationships and Partnerships

- o Adults modelling good behaviour, kindness, thoughtfulness, inclusion and celebrating diversity.

- o Awareness-raising exercises (assembly, Garda visits, celebrating student success, golden time, classroom rules, positive reinforcement, student council, Green Schoolsetc.) during the school year pro-actively explaining the nature and variety, causes, consequences and unacceptability of bullying.

- o Visits classes to talk about the school ethos and Christian values.

- o Promoting acts of kindness.

- o Teaching problem-solving.

- o Supporting activities that build empathy, respect and resilience.

- o Liaising with the bus drivers.

- Preventing Cyberbullying Behaviour

- o Webwise from the Irish Internet Safety Awareness Centre, accessed at [www.webwise.ie](http://www.webwise.ie)

- o MySelfie and the Wider World (5th and 6th class), HTML Heroes (1<sup>st</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> class)

- o Safer Internet Day each year.

- o Smartphone-Free Childhood School

- Preventing Homophobic/Transphobic Bullying Behaviour

- o Fostering a school culture where diversity is celebrated.

- o Challenging gender stereotypes.

- o Encouraging children to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour.

- Preventing Racist Bullying Behavior

- o Fostering a school culture where diversity is celebrated.

- o Ensuring that library reading material and textbooks represent appropriate lived experiences of students and adults from different national, ethnic and cultural

backgrounds.

- o Encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities.
- o Encouraging bystanders to report when they witness racist behaviour.

- Preventing Sexist Bullying Behaviour

- o Ensuring members of staff model respectful behaviour and treat students equally irrespective of their sex.
- o Ensuring all students have the same opportunities to engage in school activities irrespective of their sex.
- o Celebrating diversity at school and acknowledging the contributions of all students.

- Preventing Sexual Harassment

- o Promoting positive role models within the school community.
- o Challenging gender stereotypes that can contribute to sexual harassment.

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):

At least two adults are on yard duty for each break

- Active yard duty rota
- Children not allowed inside during breaktimes
- Pre-school supervision (9.10 – 9.20)
- After-school supervision at the school gate.
- School supervision policy.

No chromebooks on wet day play

Areas of low visibility have been identified by staff and are prohibited

## Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

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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):

To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour you 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.

If the answer to any of these questions is No, then the behaviour is not bullying behaviour.

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.

When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred teachers should consider

- What?
  - Where?
  - When ?
- and
- Why?

#### Dealing with a Group of Students

- ❖ If a group of students is involved, each student should be engaged with individually at first
- ❖ Thereafter, all students involved may 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)

#### Steps in Identifying if Bullying Behaviour Has Occurred

1. If an unwanted behaviour is reported, the child's class teacher will conduct an initial investigation to establish the facts insofar as possible. Pupils may be asked to write an account of their behaviour (Pupil's Account of Incident - see Appendix B). Pupils may be asked to elaborate on answers in the account or provide more detail.
2. If the school rules are found to have been broken, and the unwanted behaviour does not meet the criteria of bullying (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 by the child or young person experiencing the behaviour, repeated over time.), then the incident will then be dealt with in accordance with the school's code of behaviour. The pupil(s) engaged in the unwanted behaviour will also be reminded of the school rules and educated on how to behave correctly.
3. If a parent reports unwanted behaviour as bullying and it does not meet the criteria of bullying, the child's class teacher will complete an Investigation Report (Appendix A) and submit it to the principal as well as contacting the parent with the outcome of the investigation.
4. If the unwanted behaviour appears to meet the criteria of bullying (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 by the child or young person experiencing the behaviour, repeated over time), then the behaviour will be further investigated by the child's class teacher. The principal may support the class teacher if he deems it necessary or appropriate.

#### Where Bullying Behaviour Has Occurred

5. If the investigation establishes that the incident meets the criteria for bullying (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 by the child or young person experiencing the behaviour, repeated over time), and the pupils involved in the bullying behaviour accept that they have broken the school rules and would like to make amends for their behaviour, then the incident will be treated as such and restorative practice will be used to help all move past the incident(s).

6. The relevant staff member will explain how harmful and hurtful bullying is, educate about correct behaviour, and seek an undertaking that it will stop. If that undertaking is forthcoming and is honoured there will be no penalty, parents will be informed and hopefully the relationship can be restored or supported to the point of being able to get along.

7. It is important to listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation.

8. The parents of the parties involved must be contacted to inform them of the matter and to consult with them on the actions to be taken to address the behaviour and the ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school.

9. The child's class teacher will fill out the Investigation Report and submit it to the principal. The principal will then fill out the template for recording bullying behaviour (Appendix C) and file it in the anti-bullying/Bí Cineálta folder.

10. If a pupil who has given an undertaking but then chooses to break that undertaking and continue the bullying behaviour, this can then no longer be considered a 'poor choice' or 'not on purpose'. In this event parent(s)/guardian(s) will be informed.

Further bullying behaviour is regarded as a very grave matter and a serious sanction in line with the Code of Behaviour may be imposed by the school authorities, up to and including suspension and expulsion. The parents of the bullied child will also be informed. A meeting will be arranged for the child's class teacher and principal/deputy principal to speak to the parents of the bullied child and the school's programme for supporting pupils who have been bullied will also be discussed. A plan of action will be decided.

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):

Both the student who is experiencing bullying behaviour and the student who is displaying bullying behaviour need support. It is important that the student who is experiencing bullying behaviour is engaged with without delay so that they feel listened to, supported and reassured. School staff should identify the supports needed for the student who is displaying bullying behaviour to better manage relational difficulties and ensure that their needs are met.

### **Requests to Take No Action**

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. If a child requests that no action be taken, the school will support the child sensitively but will also contact the child's parents.

### **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. The teacher will use the document in Appendix D of this policy.

Even though the bullying behaviour may have ceased, ongoing supervision and support may be required for both the student who has experienced the bullying behaviour as well as the student who has displayed the behaviour.

It can take time for relationships to settle and for supports to take effect. In some cases, relationships may never be restored to how they were before the bullying behaviour occurred. 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.

Where it becomes clear that the student who is displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behaviour, then the school should consider using the strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour as provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour, up to and including suspension and expulsion. If disciplinary sanctions are considered, this is a matter between the relevant student, their parents and the school.

### **Recording Bullying Behaviour**

Bullying behaviour will be recorded using the template for recording bullying behaviour in Appendix C. A review of the bullying behaviour will take place within 20 school days of the initial investigation and will be recorded on the review of progress template in Appendix D. Where a Student Support File exists for a student, schools a copy of the record will be incorporated into the student's support file. The plan should be updated to incorporate response strategies and associated supports.

### **Complaints 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. 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 [ococomplaint@oco.ie](mailto:ococomplaint@oco.ie).

### **Supports**

Supports available to the school include:

- National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)
- TUSLA
- Oide
- Webwise



- Dublin City University (DCU) Anti-Bullying Centre
- National Parents Council

All bullying behaviour will be recorded. This will include the type of behaviour, where and when it took place, and the date of the engagement with students and parents. The actions and supports agreed to address bullying behaviour will be documented. If the bullying behaviour is a child protection concern the matter will be addressed without delay in accordance with *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

## Section D: Oversight

The principal will present an update on bullying behaviour at each board of management meeting. This update will include the number of incidents of bullying behaviour that have been reported since the last meeting, the number of ongoing incidents and the total number of incidents since the beginning of the school year. Where incidents of bullying behaviour have occurred, the principal will also provide a verbal update which will include where relevant, information relating to trends and patterns identified, strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and any wider strategies to prevent and address bullying behaviour where relevant. This update does not contain personal or identifying information. See Chapter 7 of the Bí Cineálta procedures.

This policy is available to our school community on the school's website and in hard copy on request. A student friendly version of this policy is displayed in the school and is also available on our website and in hard copy on request.

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed, following input from our school community, each calendar year or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which this policy refers.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal)