Castleiney NS - **Bí Cineálta Policy** to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour in CNS

The Board of Management of Castleiney 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 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	Tuesday 3rd September 2024 Regular discussions throughout the school year Half Day closure	- Croke Park Hours - 1st draft read for review - Planned for August 2025
Pupils	Week of Sept 2nd 2024 Bí Cinealta Slide	- Google Form and in class discussions (Pupil Questionnaire) - weekly assembly followed by discussions
Parents	September 2024 4.4.25 8.4.25 11.4.25	- Initial information sent via email regarding the new Bí Cinealta procedures - 1st draft sent for review - Google Form for suggestions (Parent Questionnaire) - Feedback reviewed, acknowledged and acted upon where necessary
Board of Management	Week of September 2nd 2024 October 2024 9th April 2024 – Policy 1st draft shared and discussed 4th June 2025	- BOM informed of new changes via email - Google Form & discussion at 1st BOM Meeting 2024/2025 - Policy 1st draft shared and discussed - Policy discussed and ratified
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	N/A	
Date policy was approved: 04/06/2025		
Date policy was last reviewed: N/A		

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.

"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."

"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."

To effectively prevent various forms of bullying, including online bullying, homophobic and transphobic bullying, racist bullying, sexist bullying, and sexual harassment, our school's strategies are proactive, inclusive, and comprehensive. Below are ideas for prevention strategies in each area, aligning with the Bí Cineálta procedures:

1. General Prevention Strategies

Creating an Inclusive School Culture

- **Whole-School Anti-Bullying Policy**: Ensure the anti-bullying/BíCinéalta policy clearly defines and addresses all forms of bullying. The policy is widely accessible to pupils, parents, and staff.
- **School Mission and Values**: Embed respect, inclusion, and diversity into the school's mission statement and daily practices. Regularly communicate these values through assemblies, newsletters, and classroom activities.

SPHE/Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)

- **Fully Implement SPHE Program:** Our SPHE Curriculum includes Stay Safe, Walk Tall, RSE and other relevant programs, e.g. FUSE or teacher designed tasks
- **Incorporate SEL Programs**: Integrate SEL programs into the curriculum to teach pupils empathy, emotional regulation, and respectful communication. This can help prevent bullying by fostering a culture of kindness and understanding. E.g. Zippy's Friends (Junior end) & Weaving Wellbeing (Senior End)
- **Conflict Resolution Training**: Provide pupils with training on conflict resolution and effective communication skills to reduce the likelihood of conflicts escalating into bullying. E.g. Restorative Practice Approach (All teachers currently training in RP)

Be Kind Box (Bosca Cineáltas)

- The school will incorporate a confidential box where children can write a concern or bullying related experience that is troubling them. This box will be in the school and will be checked weekly – it will also be designed by our pupil council so the children have ownership.
- The box will be located in the hall outside Staff Room

- There will be paper and pencil located beside the box (alternatively children can use their own paper)
- The box will be checked each Friday morning before assembly by the principal
- The children can access the box at all times during the day

Whole School Assembly:

- Weekly whole school assemblies
- Bí Cinealta slide & discussion
- New topic each week
- Celebrate kindness, friendship, positive relationships & culture
- Weekly 'Fill the bucket' activity
- Communicated to parents' weekly

2. Prevention of Online Bullying (Cyberbullying)

Digital Citizenship Education

- **Curriculum on Digital Safety**: Integrate digital citizenship education into the curriculum, teaching pupils about responsible online behaviour, the consequences of cyberbullying, and how to protect themselves online using Webwise.ie resources
- **Workshops on Online Etiquette**: Offer workshops for pupils and parents on online etiquette, the risks of social media, and how to report cyberbullying. Include discussions on privacy settings and the importance of respectful online communication using Webwise resources (Online Safety Day)
- **TPL for teachers** – E.G. Online safety and Digital Citizenship, Cyber Bullying & AI in Education (Oide Technology & Education - Primary) Teachers will do one TPL per year on digital citizenship

Monitoring and Reporting

- **Monitoring School-Issued Devices**: Implement monitoring software on school-issued devices to detect and address inappropriate online behaviour. Ensure compliance with GDPR and other relevant privacy laws.

3. Education and Awareness
   - **Inclusive Curriculum**: Incorporate topics into the curriculum across subjects to normalise diverse identities and reduce stigma. Include literature, history, and SPHE content that reflects the experiences of all individuals. We will use picture books and online resources such as 'Different families, same love' to support this.

4. Cultural Competence Education
   - **Diverse Curriculum Content**: Ensure that the curriculum reflects a wide range of cultural perspectives and histories. Include lessons on diversity and the importance of equality (SPHE)
   - **Cultural Celebrations**: Celebrate cultural diversity through events, assemblies, and projects that highlight the different backgrounds represented in the pupil body. This can help to foster respect and appreciation for all cultures. E.g. Translations on assembly slides.

5. Clear Policies and Reporting Mechanisms

   - Bí Cineálta Policy will be kept up to date. All pupils, staff and parents will be confident and aware of the reporting procedures in the policies and steps taken to address bullying behaviour. These will be reviewed annually.

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):

1. Classroom Supervision and Structured Environment (See appendix 2: Responding to Bullying – Sanctions & Supportive Actions)

- **Teacher Presence**: Ensure that teachers are actively engaged and circulating the classroom during lessons, especially during group activities, to monitor interactions and prevent any form of bullying.
- **Seating Arrangements**: Regularly rotate seating arrangements to prevent cliques from forming and to encourage positive interactions among all students.
- **Circle Time**: Incorporate regular "circle time" or class meetings where students can express concerns in a safe environment, giving teachers insight into potential issues (Restorative Practice)

2. Playground and Common Area Monitoring (See appendix 3: Supervision & proactive prevention)

- **Rotating Supervision Duty**: Implement a schedule where teachers and staff take turns supervising different areas of the playground, corridors, and common areas during breaks and lunchtimes.

- **Playground Buddies**: Introduce a buddy system where older students are paired with younger ones to foster a caring environment and deter bullying (Playground leaders)

3. Active Staff Involvement and Training

- **Regular Staff Training**: Provide ongoing professional development for teachers and staff on how to identify, address, and prevent bullying.
- **Incident Reporting Procedures**: Staff will follow the steps outlined in the Bí Cineálta procedures in section C below.

4. Student Involvement and Peer Support

- **Student-Led Initiatives**: Encourage Pupil Council to take an active role in promoting kindness and inclusivity through campaigns, assemblies, and events.

6. Parental Involvement

- **Parent Workshops**: Offer workshops/signposts for parents on identifying the signs of bullying and how they can support their children both at home and in school (These may be online and sent to parents vis email)
- **Communication Channels**: Maintain open lines of communication with parents regarding the school's anti-bullying policies and procedures, and encourage them to report any concerns. (Parents receive Assembly PPT weekly to see what the children haven been learning around Bí Cineálta)

7. Evaluation and Review

- **Regular Policy Review**: The Bi Cineálta Policy and procedures will be reviewed annually and all stakeholders will be involved in the review process. This may be done earlier if the board determines that an urgent review is warranted.
- **Feedback Mechanisms**: Include feedback mechanisms for students, parents, and staff to assess the effectiveness of the supervision and monitoring strategies, using circles, surveys or suggestion boxes. (Appendix F)

"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:

All Class Teachers

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
- Listen to the views of the child who is accused of bullying and aim to resolve any situations using a restorative approach

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):**

6.1 Identifying if Bullying Behaviour has occurred

- Principal (or school/relevant person) assesses if bullying has occurred by referencing the definition of bullying in this policy.
- Teacher to consider 'What, where, when and why?'
- Ask the 3 questions:
    1. Is the behaviour targeted at a specific pupil or group of pupils?
    2. Is the behaviour intended to cause physical, social or emotional harm?
    3. Is the behaviour repeated?

*If the answer to each of these questions is yes, then the behaviour is bullying behaviour and should be addressed as such.

- A phonecall to parents of children involved to inform of the situation
- All parties to be met individually at first
- Thereafter, as a group, if appropriate.
- Each child asked for their individual account of the incident, either verbally and/or in written form
- Use definition of bullying to inform any decision
- Any incident not deemed to be a bullying incident but is hurtful or unacceptable will be dealt with in accordance with the schools' code of behaviour.

6.2 Where Bullying behaviour has occurred

(The school will always make an attempt to identify the 3 cohorts - pupils who display, witness and experience bullying behaviour and endeavour to support all 3.

***However, this may not always be possible. For example, there won't always be a witness, and that won't always mean bullying is not/has not occurred.**

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):

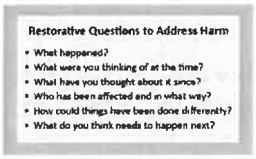
Supporting pupils who experience, witness, or display bullying behavior requires a multi-faceted approach that addresses the needs of each group.

This is how Castleiney NS will support these pupils, in alignment with the Bí Cineálta procedures:

Support for pupils Who Experience Bullying (See appendix 7 for more details on support)

Emotional and Psychological Support

- **Restorative Approach:** Using language and questions to support the pupil and to resolve the conflict and move forward, where possible.



- **Safe Spaces**: Create designated safe spaces within the school where pupils can go if they feel threatened or overwhelmed. These spaces could be supervised by trained staff who can offer immediate support (This may not always be possible, however the child will always be supervised and supported) ***Sensory Area inside & Buddy Bench outside**
- **Buddy Systems**: Pair the affected pupil with a peer mentor or buddy, especially during break times to provide social support and a sense of security.

Parental Involvement **(See appendix 7.2)**

- **Regular Communication**: Keep parents informed about the steps being taken to support their child and involve them in creating an action plan. This could include regular updates on the child's well-being and progress.
- **Workshops for Parents**: Sign Post workshops for parents on how to support their child at home, recognise signs of distress, and reinforce positive behaviours. Principal to keep an eye out for workshops run by Óide, Webwise, etc.

Support for Pupils Who Witness Bullying

Empowering Bystanders

- **Bystander Awareness**: Regular reminders for pupils on how to safely intervene when they witness bullying, including how to report incidents and support their peers. Reminders like this help transform bystanders into "upstanders." This will be done during assembly time or SPHE lessons
- **Anonymous Reporting**: Encourage witnesses to use anonymous reporting systems if they feel uncomfortable intervening directly. Ensure they know how to report incidents safely and discreetly. **'Bosca Bí Cineálta.'**

Emotional Support for Witnesses

- **Support**: Offer support to pupils who are distressed after witnessing bullying, helping them process their feelings and understand their role in creating a positive school environment.
- **Open Dialogue**: Facilitate classroom discussions or workshops where pupils can talk about the impact of bullying and the importance of standing up against it, helping them feel supported and understood. (Anti Bullying/Bí Cineálta Week)

Support for Students Who Display Bullying Behaviour **(See appendix 8 for more detailed list of sanctions & supports)**

Behavioural Interventions

- **Individualised Support Plans**: Develop an individualised behaviour support plan that addresses the root causes of the bullying behaviour, whether they are related to

issues at home, academic struggles, or social challenges

- **Restorative Practices**: Use restorative practice approaches to help the pupil understand the impact of their behaviour, make amends with those affected, and commit to positive change (See restorative questions above)
- **Behaviour Contracts**: Establish behaviour contracts that set clear expectations for behaviour improvement, with specific goals and consequences. These contracts should be monitored regularly by teachers and parents. (Max 20 days as per 6.4)
- **The teacher must engage with the pupils and parents involved no more than 20 school days after the initial discussion to review progress following the initial intervention**
- **After 20 Days:** If the bullying behaviour has not ceased, the teacher should review the strategies used and agree to meet again over an agreed time frame.

Parental Involvement

- **Engage with Parents**: Work closely with the parents of the pupil displaying bullying behaviour to ensure they are aware of the issues and are involved in the intervention process. This will include joint meetings with teachers to develop a unified approach.
- **Request to take no action**: Parents of the child that has experienced the bullying behaviour can request that no action be taken and this must be put in writing. However, while acknowledging the parents request, our school may decide that based on the circumstances it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour.
- **Parental Education**: Provide resources or sign posts for parents on managing challenging behaviours at home, effective discipline strategies, and ways to support their child's emotional and social development, e.g. FUSE AND WEBWISE.IE or NPC Training

1. **Reviewing and Reflecting on Support Strategies**

Regular Monitoring and Feedback

- **Check-Ins with Affected Pupils**: Regularly check in with pupils who have experienced or witnessed bullying, as well as those who have displayed bullying behaviour, to assess the effectiveness of the support strategies and make necessary adjustments. Even though the bullying may have ceased, it can take time for relationships to settle and ongoing supervision and support may be required.

Feedback from the School Community: Collect feedback from all involved parties, which will inform future practice.

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 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: Tom Meade Date: 4/6/25
(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: Jody Martin Date: 4/6/25
(Principal)