Bunscoil Mhuire Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

Statement of Commitment

The Board of Management of Bunscoil Mhuire 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 PostPrimary Schools 2024*.

These procedures relate to measures to prevent and address bullying behaviour that occurs between pupils.

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.
Ireland ratified the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child in September 1992. We are committed to promoting, protecting and fulfilling the rights of the children in our school. **Bullying is a children's rights issue. Bullying interferes with the following rights of the child as set out in the convention.**
- The right to freedom of expression (Article 13)
- The right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 14)
- The right to freedom of association and freedom of peaceful assembly (Article 15)
- The right to privacy (Article 16)
- The right to be protected from all forms of abuse and neglect (Article 19)
- The right to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health (Article 24)
- The right to education (Article 28)
- The right to enjoy their own culture, religion or language (Article 30)

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.

"Every child in our school will be encouraged and facilitated to reach their full potential as individuals, educationally, spiritually and emotionally, in all aspects of their life," our school's mission statement promises. At Bunscoil Mhuire, we promote a positive, inclusive, multi-cultural ethos and a respect for difference. We cater for pupils of all faiths and none.

Defining 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:*

"Bullying is **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".

Behaviour that is not bullying behaviour

A one-off instance of negative behaviour towards another pupil is not bullying behaviour. **However, a single hurtful message posted on social media can be considered bullying behaviour** as it may be visible to a wide audience and has a high likelihood of being shared multiple times and so becomes a repeated behaviour.

Disagreement between pupils, or instances where pupils don't want to be friends or to remain friends, is not considered bullying behaviour unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others including deliberate manipulation of friendship groups.

Some pupils with special educational needs may have social communication difficulties which may make them communicate their needs through behaviours that can hurt themselves or others. These 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 pupil experiencing the behaviour but unintended by the other pupil, 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 as criminal behaviour

Bullying behaviour can be considered criminal behaviour under certain circumstances and legal consequences can apply. The age of criminal responsibility in Ireland is 12 years.

Some online behaviour may be illegal, and pupils need to be aware of the far reaching consequences of posting inappropriate or harmful content online. In cases of intimate imagery, the Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020, also known as *Coco's Law*, criminalises the nonconsensual sharing of intimate images and also criminalises threatening to share these images.

If bullying behaviour involves physical violence or threats of violence, it *may* be considered assault. If bullying behaviour involves discrimination or hate speech targeting a student based on their race, religion, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation or membership of the Traveller community, it may be considered a hate crime under the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989[11], and those engaging in such behaviour may face criminal charges. If bullying behaviour involves sexual harassment or sexual assault, this may also be considered criminal behaviour.

An Garda Síochána is the appropriate authority to investigate alleged criminal behaviour.

Support v Bí Cineálta Process

Schools are not expected to deal with bullying behaviour that occurs when pupils are not under the care or responsibility of the school. However, where this bullying behaviour has an impact in school, we will support the pupils involved. Where the bullying behaviour continues in school, it will be dealt with in accordance with our Bí Cineálta policy.

Where the pupil displaying the bullying behaviour is not a pupil in the school, but the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour is a pupil in the school, the school will support the pupil who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as appropriate and engage with them and their parents to determine what steps can be taken.

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

A pupil's agency or sense of power can be decreased when they experience or witness bullying behaviour. When a pupil tells an adult that they feel that they are experiencing bullying behaviour they may feel that they are taking back some control over what is happening to them. It is very important that a pupil's agency is not decreased further by adults deciding what will happen next. We will listen to the pupil and involve them in deciding on the actions that will be taken.

The role of parents

We view parents as an integral part of the school community with an important role to play, in partnership with schools, in preventing and addressing bullying behaviour. Where bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved will 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 as outlined in this Bí Cineálta policy. In circumstances where a pupil expresses concern about their parents being informed, we will develop an appropriate plan to support the pupil and how their parents will be informed.

Section A:

Development 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	17/01/2025 26/02/2025 03/03/2025 10/03/2025 07/04/2025 08/04/2025	Whole school staff questionnaire Leadership meeting to discuss Bí Cineálta day and roles of group leaders. Half day closure- information sharing and small group feedback from whole school staff Meeting with special class teachers to discuss how we can include their children in our child friendly policy. Information on competition for teachers for classes to design a pupil friendly anti-bullying policy and poster. Bí Cineálta draft policy given to staff and feedback requested. Staff meeting – draft policy read to all school staff and feedback on policy discussed.
School Pupils	15/01/2025 17/01/2025 03/01/2025 10/01/2025 21/03/2025	Student Council meeting – information sharing, approach and ideas discussed. Whole school pupil questionnaire Student council meeting re pupil friendly charter. Student council give information on school art competition to design poster with key messages to all classes. Senior classes information and feedback sessions. Pupils learn about Bí Cineálta, the impact of bullying and gave feedback on how they and how we as a school can stop bullying.

Parents	10/12/2024 17/01/2025 26/02/2025 11/03/2025	In person meeting with Parents Association - information on new Bí Cineálta policy for schools given. Whole school parent questionnaire. Bí Cineálta day - Parents Association invited and gave feedback to school staff on parent survey results. Email to parents to invite them to attend an Anti-Bullying talk at the
	25/03/2025 31/03/2025 08/04/25 29/04/2025 02/05/2025 09/06/25	school and organised by the PA. Meeting with PA – next steps and how to invite PA and parental feedback on charter. Anti-Bullying information evening run by the Parent Council in the school. Feedback requested from the school to parents on any content that they have questions/concerns about. Staff meeting – small group review by all school staff of draft policy and feedback given and included in policy. Draft Bí Cineálta policy sent to PA members. Draft Bí Cineálta policy published on school website Email sent to all parents from PA requesting their feedback. Final Bí Cineálta policy published on website for all parents information.
Board of Management	/06/2025	Bí Cineálta draft policy given to BOM. Sign off on final Bí Cineálta policy.
Wider school community	07/01/2025 25/01/2025 26/02/2025	Barnardos Youghal invited to attend school for closure day. Met with Shirley and Siobhán to discuss next steps and brief on day. Barnardos Youghal representatives invited and attended day, included in feedback and gave information on how they can support parents and the school through parent support groups, courses and anti-bullying initiatives.

Date policy was approved: 26/06/2025

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.

Our Wellbeing Policy has been developed in line with the national Wellbeing Policy Statement of Framework for Practice and provides the following four key areas that are essential for a holistic, whole school approach to wellbeing promotion: Culture and Environment, Curriuclum (teaching and learning), Policy and Planning and Relationships and Partnerships.

These four areas have been considered by our school when developing measures to prevent bullying behaviour.

Culture and Environment

A Positive and Inclusive school culture

A positive and inclusive school culture and environment is essential to prevent and address bullying behaviour. The school environment should be a space where pupils and school staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported.
Relationships between all members of the school community should be based on respect, care, integrity and trust.
Open communication between the patron, boards of management, school staff, students and their parents help to foster a collaborative approach and shared responsibilities in relation to preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.
The school leadership team influences the school culture and set the standards and expectations for the school community when preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.
Each member of school staff has a responsibility to develop and maintain a school culture where bullying behaviour is unacceptable and to take a consistent approach to addressing bullying behaviour.
Pupils can shape the school culture by promoting kindness and inclusion within their peer group and maintain a positive and supportive school environment for all.
Parents, as active partners in their child's education, can help foster an environment where bullying behaviour is not tolerated through promoting empathy and respect.

A Telling Environment

At Bunscoil Mhuire, our school community supports a 'telling' environment. There is a persistent tendency not to report bullying incidents, according to recent research in Ireland. The reasons for this include, fear of retaliation, being seen as a "tell tale", thinking the adult will not deal appropriately with the situation or will make it worse, fear of being denied access to their phone, fear of the unknown and not being believed.

We will work to ensure that pupils feel comfortable to talk about concerns regarding bullying behaviour and will use strategies to ensure the key message is always "tell".

We want our school to be a safe environment where reporting of bullying behaviour is encouraged.

A Trusted Adult

At Bunscoil Mhuire, we support the strategy of "a trusted adult" and impress on pupils that they can and should talk to their teacher or any other trusted adult within or outside the school. The trusted adult will reassure the student that they have done the right thing by reporting the behaviour and, without delay, inform the class teacher who has responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour. The trusted adult will continue to support the pupil, as appropriate, while the behaviour is being addressed by the class teacher.

Safe physical spaces

The creation of safe physical spaces supports psychological safety and is an important measure to prevent bullying behaviour. At Bunscoil Mhuire, we include senior classes in the development and maintenance of our garden as this helps pupils to identify and feel a sense of responsibility for their school environment. Pupils feel a greater sense of belonging to a school community when they are given some ownership of their own space.

Supervision

We know that appropriate supervision is an important measure to help prevent and address bullying behaviour. We take all reasonable measures to ensure the safety of our pupils and to supervise pupils at all times during the school day and when pupils are attending school activities. Our school offers organised activities during break times to give some structure to play time. We have benches in the yard for quiet time and social interaction.

Bunscoil Mhuire takes a restorative approach in fostering a safe and inclusive environment.

- We model respectful behaviour and explicitly teach what respectful language and behaviour looks like, sounds like and feels like around the school.
- We "catch children being good" and acknowledge desired respectful behaviour with positive attention and a place on our Kindness Tree.
- We involve children in the development of key respect messages by coming up with posters that promote friendship and give positive advice. We display these child friendly messages around the school.
- There is a positive approach to discipline in Bunscoil Mhuire where issues are resolved with care, respect and consistency. We reward incidences of good and improved behaviour at whole school level through the presentation of pupil awards during assembly.
- We are a multicultural school, our children come from a variety of cultural backgrounds.
- We are a neurodiverse school. We celebrate World Down Syndrome day and Autism Awareness Day. We have five autism classes in our school.

- We strive to actively involve parents and communicate to them the supports that are available to promote the wellbeing of children. This is achieved through information emails and home/school SPHE and mindfulness activities, like Weaving Wellbeing.
- We organise and raise awareness about positive mental health through Amber Flag activities and events like the celebration of Wellbeing Week, Feel Good Friday and a mix of yoga, Zumba, samba band and school choir opportunities.
- We recognise the link between physical and psychological wellbeing and facilitate physical activity through the PE curriculum and regular movement breaks within the school environment.
- Opportunities are created for school staff, parents and children to have a voice in decisions relating to school life and school improvement at staff meetings, Parent Association meetings, Student Support Team meetings, Amber Flag and Student Council meetings.
- We have some buddy systems in place and pupils are given roles around the school that encourage ownership and belonging and a culture of peer respect and support.
- School staff enjoy opportunities for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to ensure we have the relevant knowledge and understanding to promote wellbeing and create a positive school environment. All staff attended workshops on *Dignity in the Workplace* at school and receive information on supports and resources available in this area.
- The school recognises that wellbeing is important for our school staff. School supports include termly staff breakfast, Christmas lunch, book club, samba band for adults and children, exercise classes of Zumba/yoga and social evenings,
- The school building is accessible for all children with lifts available and the physical environment is modified to meet the needs of all children. We have a school garden, sensory garden, basketball court, school hall, sensory room, specialised technology, climbing wall and buddy benches.
- The indoor space displays the works, talents and accomplishments of our children with display boards on all corridors, television in the school lobby with photos on a loop of different school activities, school social media posts and a website showcasing all our work and news.

Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)

Collaborative and respectful teaching and learning

- Pupils have regular opportunities to work in small groups with their peers, which can help build a sense of connection, belonging and empathy.
- Teachers' preparation for teaching and learning explicitly references teaching, learning and assessment approaches that promote collaborative learning, peer and

self- assessment and a sense of achievement. This is particularly evident during initiatives like Literacy Lift Off, Guided Reading, Ready Set Go Maths and Aistear.

- Teachers design and prepare teaching and learning approaches and assessment of learning outcomes that are differentiated for children providing appropriate access, challenge and opportunities for success.
- The curricular subjects offered to pupils provide opportunities to foster inclusion and respect for diversity. The SESE, SPHE and RSE curricula aim to foster students' wellbeing, self-confidence and sense of belonging and to develop students' sense of personal responsibility for their own behaviour and actions.
- Teachers use opportunities to promote wellbeing across the Visual Arts, Physical Education and Music curricula and pupils' social and emotional learning skills are developed through extra-curricular activities like the school choir and Samba band, school plays and performances, Zumba, yoga, chess, athletics, GAA, soccer and cookery lessons.
- We utilise supports and resources that adapt to individual learning, behavioural, social and emotional needs. These resources are evident in our autism classes, SSPP plans and programmes such as Reading Recovery.
- Pupils benefit from programmes like Stay Safe, Weaving Wellbeing, Fun Friends and Zippy's Friends which aim to develop personal safety skills and self-worth.
- We listen to the children in our care, have morning meetings and circle time and model and emphasise the importance of listening to all class members.
- We have introduced journal slips that will allow all pupils to subtly ask for informal teacher check-in.
- All staff are encouraged and facilitated to attend continuous professional development courses to meet the needs of our unique school population.
- All staff have up to date Children First certificates and understand their responsibility in relation to child protection in their roles.
- All staff attended workshops facilitated by Middletown Centre for Autism to increase our knowledge and understanding of autism in 2024.

Policy and Planning

The wellbeing of the school community is at the heart of school policies and plans.

There are a range of policies which support the development of our Bí Cineálta policy. The school's Acceptable Use Policy, ICT and Mobile Phone and Electronic Device policy, policy on Special Educational Needs, RSE and SPHE policy, Child Protection, our school's Code of Behaviour, Dignity in the Workplace and SSE Wellbeing in Education that support the implementation of our school's Bí Cineálta policy.

- The voice of children, parents and staff inform the development, review and updating of school policies. This is achieved at staff meetings and surveys circulated to parents and pupils.

- We have a Student Council who meet to discuss initiatives going on in the school. They survey children and school staff to gather feedback and are involved with the roll out of this Bí Cineálta policy and developing our pupil friendly policy.
- We believe that supporting the participation of pupils in the development and implementation of school policies and plans can help increase awareness and ensure effective implementation.
- Student support files (classroom support, school support, school support plus) are used to plan, record and review student progress
- We use the Education Passport (NCCA) for children transitioning to secondary school and facilitate transfer review meetings for children with additional/complex needs transitioning to secondary school.
- The school gathers and records information on risk factors such as bullying, absenteesism (NEWB) truancy and disruptive behaviours to inform the planning of the wellbeing programme.
- All school personnel are consulted in the development of policy and procedures in the school. We have a strong culture of continuous professional development and staff share their experiences and examples of best practice regularly.
- We are open to engaging with new programmes to facilitate best practice. We have applied to be part of the NCSE's new RELATE programme and are exploring opportunities for Restorative Practice training.
- The principal and anti-bullying policy co-ordinator recently attended Oide training on "Fostering an Inclusive School Culture in Primary Schools".

Relationships and Partnerships

Strong interpersonal connections are a vital part of effectively preventing and addressing bullying behaviour. These interpersonal connections are supported through a range of formal and informal structures in our school.

- School staff model openness, respect and listening in their relationship with each other, children and parents.
- Relationships and partnerships are supported through a range of agreed formal and informal structures such as the student council, buddy systems, assemblies, home and school journals and through teaching and learning.
- We support the active participation of pupils in school life through the Student Council and ensure those pupils interested in developing pupil voice in the school feel supported and can connect and engage with the school community.
- Pupils are supported to engage with school initiatives like the Amber Flag committee and the development and maintenance of the school garden.
- The Student Support team support pupils who may be at risk and aim to enhance equal access and opportunities for all.

- There are many extra-curricular activities supported by teachers to enhance pupil experiences and strengths including Sciath na Scol sports training, athletics, chess club, Samba band, Zumba, language learning and yoga classes at breaktimes.
- We work in partnership with groups and skilled coaches from local clubs who come to our school to develop pupils' interests and skills in cycling and sports like GAA and Rugby.
- We support the active participation of parents in school life. Our Parents Association play an active role in our school, meeting to discuss how we can continue to improve our school, teaching cookery classes and organising fundraising events.
- Our Board of Management and school leadership team support staff to upskill through continuous professional development and acknowledge the importance of staff wellbeing by recognising the value of staff contribution to the school.
- We have multiple classes at most levels in the school with class teachers having a good support network with their fellow teaching colleagues. Same class level teachers meet to plan and share resources together.
- Mentoring systems are in place where a teacher liaison offers advice and practical support to newly qualified teachers (Droichead)) and newly appointed staff members (Non-Droichead).
- We are also establishing an SNA mentoring system where experienced members of our SNA staff support newly appointed SNAs.
- Our school links with other education settings at important transition times, including early childhood care and education settings and other primary/post-primary schools to ensure smooth and successful transitions.
- The school has strong links with Department of Education support services including NEPS, NCSE, Oide.
- We email information to raise awareness of the supports parents can access from community based services like the Youghal Family Resource Centre, St Vincent de Paul and collaborate with such groups.

Preventing cyberbullying behaviour

Technology and social media have provided many positive opportunities for entertainment, social engagement and education. However, the increase in the use of technology has led to pupils becoming increasingly vulnerable to cyberbullying or unacceptable online behaviour. We proactively address these challenges by promoting digital literacy, digital citizenship, and fostering safe online environments.

- The Digital Media Literacy curriculum teaches students about responsible online behaviour and digital citizenship. It teaches children that they need to be savvy and understand that some online content has an agenda and may be unreliable.
- We have regular class discussions and conversations with students about developing respectful and kind relationships online.
- We role play scenarios as to what you should do in some situations online – don't reply, keep the message, block the sender, tell.
- Our Mobile Phone and Electronic Device policy "prohibits the possession and use of mobile phones while on school premises or when involved in school related activities".
- We have developed an Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) for technology which states that Internet sessions will always be supervised by a teacher and used for educational purposes only.
- As outlined in the School's Code of Behaviour, misuse of the Internet may result in disciplinary action which include written warnings, withdrawal of access and privileges, and, in extreme cases, suspension or expulsion.
- We promote initiatives like Internet Safety Day and Anti-Bullying Day to reinforce awareness around appropriate online behaviour and share up to date resources with all class teachers.
- Our fifth class pupils undertake a unit of learning on Cyberbullying, compiled by DCU's anti-bullying centre.
- We host an online safety talk, "Children of the Digital Age" for parents annually in the school in collaboration with our Parents Association as we know the importance of informing parents on the ever-changing online world so they can act responsibly and oversee their children's activities online. We send out information from the sessions to all parents in the school.
- The same host of these talks comes into the school and speaks with pupils from 3rd to 6th class about the importance of behaving responsibly online.
- We invite the community guard to school to speak about the dangers of the online world and how some behaviour online is now classed as criminal behaviour.
- Our Acceptable Use Policy encourages parents to regularly check their child's online activity and social media apps.
- We advise parents and guardians that there is a digital age of consent – a minimum age a user must be before a social media or internet company can collect, process or store their data. In Ireland, the digital age of consent is 16. Students between the ages of 13-16 years old 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 services it is 13 years old. Therefore technically, children under the age of 13 should not have a social media account.

Preventing homophobic/transphobic bullying behaviour

All staff and students including gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students, have a right to feel safe and supported at school.

- We encourage an open and welcoming environment and atmosphere that is accepting of all.
- We teach the Stay Safe programme to senior classes introducing pupils to the concept of identity as a right.
- We give children age-appropriate definitions and discuss that we should not speak negatively about how someone in school or someone they know chooses to identify.
- We use social stories and role play to explore different scenarios and to raise awareness of the impact identity bullying can have on a person.
- Our sixth class pupils undertake a unit of learning on identity- based bullying complied by DCU's anti-bullying centre.
- We appreciate the diversity of families and choose resources and programmes that reflect these differences.
- We create opportunities for collaborative work that encourages peer support and empathy building.
- We seek to challenge gender stereotypes.
- We encourage students to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour and to call out any incidents of same.

Preventing racist bullying behaviour

We are a multicultural school with our pupils coming from many different cultures and backgrounds.

- We foster a school culture where diversity is celebrated and where students "see themselves" in their school environment.
- We strive to involve parents from all backgrounds and cultures to become more active and visible in our school by inviting all to join our Parents Association.
- We celebrate "World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development" in May which is about recognising and understanding each other's differences and celebrating these to promote peace and harmony in the world.
- Pupils are educated about racism through the SESE and SPHE curricula.
- We raise awareness about the impact of racist bullying through the Stay Safe programme and use stories and videos as a stimulus to class discussion and understanding.
- We encourage bystanders to report when they witness racist behaviour.
- We use active teaching methodologies and small group work to allow for scaffolding and peer support when pupils are learning English as an additional language.

- We listen to music and select songs from around the world to explore different cultural styles.
- We have added to our library reading material so it represents appropriate lived experiences of our pupils from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

Preventing sexist bullying behaviour

Schools should focus on gender equality as part of the school's measures to create a supportive and respectful environment.

- As a school staff, we model respectful behaviour and teach appropriate interactions by treating all pupils equally irrespective of their sex.
- We believe in equality of opportunity and ensure all pupils have the same opportunities to engage in school activities irrespective of their sex.
- We celebrate diversity at school and acknowledge the contributions of all pupils.
- We challenge traditional gender stereotypes by looking at sexist advertisements from the past in the English curriculum.
- Through the SESE curriculum, we look at the role women played during the world wars alongside men and pupils learn about the suffragette movement and the fight for the right of women to vote.
- We encourage parents to reinforce these values of respect at home.

Preventing sexual harassment

Preventing sexual harassment requires an approach that focuses on education and awareness.

- We have a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment.
- We never dismiss sexual harassment as teasing or banter.
- As a school staff, we strive to model and teach appropriate and respectful interactions.
- Through the SPHE and RSE curricula, pupils learn how to treat each other with respect and kindness.
- We teach children the importance of respecting someone's personal space.
- We promote positive role models within the school community.
- We challenge gender stereotypes and assumptions that can contribute to sexual harassment.

The school has the following supervision and monitoring policies in place to prevent and address bullying behaviour:

At Bunscoil Mhuire, we seek to provide a safe environment for all of our pupils. We expect that pupils adhere to a standard of acceptable and respectful behaviour whether in the presence of a member of staff or not. We take all reasonable measures to ensure the safety of our pupils and to supervise pupils attending school or attending school activities. We have at least one adult to every ten pupils on school outings but we always look at the specific needs of a group when assigning supervision.

We have made great strides to increase visibility and improve the supervision of children in our care during break times. We introduced Junior and Senior break times this year. There are now only two class levels, Junior Infants and Senior Infants, First and Second Classes, Third and Fourth Classes and Fifth and Sixth classes on the same yard daily with a teacher and class assigned SNAs present. Class teachers may ask the teacher on yard or their SNA to observe children if any issue or concern has been noted or shared. We offer some organised activities during break times with a view to accommodating a range of interests.

The Board of Management confirms that appropriate supervision and monitoring policies and practices are in place to both prevent and deal with bullying behaviour and to facilitate early intervention where possible.

Section C:
Addressing Bullying Behaviour

The whole school community has a responsibility to prevent and address bullying behaviour. We will work in partnership with our patron, board of management, staff, pupils and their parents to develop and implement our Bí Cineálta policy.

The staff members responsible for addressing bullying behaviour in our school are:

- All school staff will be vigilant to bullying behaviours.
- The class teacher will be responsible for addressing and reporting any incidences of bullying behaviour among pupils in their class.
- The class teacher and the deputy principal/principal will be responsible for follow up procedures.
- The principal will inform the Board of Management of incidences of bullying behaviour.
- The anti-bullying policy co-ordinator will be available to provide information and supports if needed to assist class teachers in addressing any concerns.
- All school staff will adhere to the Bí Cineálta procedure guidelines outlined below to identify, investigate, address and report bullying behaviours in our school.

Approach

The primary aim in addressing reports of bullying behaviour will be to stop the bullying behaviour and to restore, as far as practicable, the relationships of the pupils involved.

When addressing bullying behaviour teachers will:

- ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour is listened to 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 on   how best to address the situation.
- take action in a timely manner.
- inform the 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:

Identifying if Bullying Behaviour has occurred.

To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour we will consider the questions of what, where, when and why. We will investigate:

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 will be addressed using the Bí Cineálta Procedures.

(Again, is it very important to note that: 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 such inappropriate behaviours are provided for and will be addressed within the school's Code of Behaviour.

When investigating if bullying behaviour has occurred:

- If a group of pupils are involved, each pupil will be engaged with individually at first.
- Two staff members can be present when engaging with children individually initially without parents' notification and presence.
- Two staff members can be present when engaging with a group of children to investigate what happened.
- thereafter, all pupils involved will be met as a group
- at the group meeting, each pupil will be asked for their account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's views

- each pupil will be supported as appropriate, following the group meeting
- the pupils involved may be asked to write down their account of the incident(s)

All interviews will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard for the age, ability and rights of all pupils involved. Teachers will act *"in loco parentis"* and exercise their professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred.

The approaches our school will take to address bullying behaviour.

Where bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the pupils involved will 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.

- We will listen to the views of the pupil who is experiencing the bullying behaviour when deciding how best to address the situation.
- A record will be kept of the engagement with all involved.
- This record will document the form and type of bullying behaviour and where and when it took place.
- The date of the initial engagement with the pupils involved and their parents will be recorded.
- The record will also include the views of the pupils and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour.

How the school will follow up and review progress if bullying behaviour has occurred.

- The teacher and deputy principal/principal will engage with the pupils involved and their parents again no more than 20 school days after the initial engagement.
- Factors that will be considered as part of this engagement will be the nature of the bullying behaviour, the effectiveness of the strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and the relationship between the pupils involved.
- The teacher will document the review with pupils and their parents to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased and the views of pupils and their parents in relation to this.

If the bullying behaviour has ceased, the teacher will document and record:

- The date that it is determined the bullying behaviour has ceased.
- Any engagement with external services/supports.
- If and what ongoing supervision and support may be/is needed for the pupils involved even where bullying behaviour has ceased.

If the bullying behaviour has not ceased, the teacher will:

- Review the strategies used in consultation with the pupils involved and their parents.
- A timeframe will be agreed for further engagement until the bullying behaviour has ceased.

If it becomes clear that the pupil who is displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behaviour, then the school will consider 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.

Requests to take no action

A pupil reporting bullying behaviour may ask that a member of staff does nothing about the behaviour other than "look out" for them. The pupil 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, the member of staff will show empathy to the pupil, deal with the matter sensitively and speak with the pupil 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 pupil 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. However, while acknowledging the parent's request, schools may decide that, based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour.

Complaint process

If a parent is not satisfied with how bullying behaviour has been addressed by the school, in accordance with these procedures, they will be referred to the school's complaints procedure. **Please see Bunscoil Mhuire Complaints Procedure**

If a parent is dissatisfied with how a complaint has been handled, they may make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

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. **Please see Bunscoil Mhuire Template for Reporting Bullying Behaviour**

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.*

Supports

National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), Oide, Webwise, National Parents Council, DCU Anti-Bullying Centre, Tusla.

The school will use the following approaches to support those who experience, witness and display bullying behaviour.

Approaches teachers have agreed to use when supporting pupils who experience or witness bullying behaviour in Bunscoil Mhuire.

1. We will listen calmly to the pupil without interrupting their story.
2. We will ensure the pupil feels that they are in a safe place to share their story.
3. We will reassure them that telling an adult was the right thing to do and that we will help.
4. We will be sensitive to the pupils' thoughts and feelings.
5. We will be supportive and ask the pupil what they would like to see happen next.
6. We will tell the pupil that we will contact their parents and organise a meeting to discuss next steps together with them.
7. We will consider the age and the ability of the children.
8. We will take action in a timely manner when investigating bullying behaviour.

Approaches pupils said they would use when supporting pupils who witness or experience bullying behaviour.

1. Check up on kids if they look sad and comfort them.
2. Be kind to them and make sure they are not alone.
3. Tell them they can trust you and not to mind them.
4. Let them know it's okay and check in on them.
5. Be an upstander – stand up for them.
6. Tell them to tell someone.
7. Tell a teacher or a trusted adult and get help.
8. Help them to find a solution.
9. Hang out with them.

Approaches teachers will use when supporting pupils who display bullying behaviour in Bunscoil Mhuire.

1. We will listen to the child and hear their side of the story.
2. We will talk to any other teachers/staff relevant to the incidents to understand what happened.
3. We will try to find out the root cause as to why the pupil is displaying bullying behaviour.
4. We will ask the pupil how they would deal with the behaviour and what consequences there should be for them.
5. We will contact the pupil's parents and invite them to the school as a support for the pupil and to discuss how they wish the behaviour to be addressed.
6. We may ask the class teacher to use social stories, role play and other active learning strategies during whole class SPHE classes to address the topic of bullying behaviour.
7. We may ask for individual intervention from the class level special education teacher to allocate some time for emotional regulation lessons.

Approaches pupils will use when supporting pupils who display bullying behaviour in our school.

1. Tell them to stop – that it's not funny or cool.
2. Tell them it's not nice to bully and help them to stop.
3. Talk to them and ask them if they need someone to talk to.
4. Ask them why they are being mean. Are they ok?
5. Treat them with kindness and include them in activities.
6. Talk to them about why they bully and why they think it is ok.
7. Let them know you are going to let an adult know.

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:

M Viel   Date: 26/06/2025

Chairperson of the Board of Management

Eoghan KONeill   Date: 26/06/2025

Principal