

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Scoil Mholainge Listerlin 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 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 2024* 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.

Alleged incidents of bullying are however often complex and must be considered on a case-by-case basis.

The detailed definition is provided in Chapter 2 of the *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2024*. The core elements of the definition are further described below:

Targeted Behaviour

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. Bullying is not accidental or reckless behaviour. The harm can be physical (for example, personal injury, damage to or loss of property), social (for example, withdrawal, loneliness, exclusion) and/or emotional (for example, low self-esteem, depression, anxiety) and can have a serious and long-term negative impact on the student experiencing the bullying behaviour. If the repeated harm is real for the student experiencing the behaviour but unintended by the other student, this is not bullying but, importantly, must still be addressed under the school's code of behaviour.

Repeated Behaviour

Bullying takes the form of a systematic pattern of behaviour which is repeated over time. Single offline incidents of intentional negative behaviour involving an imbalance of power are not considered bullying but must still be addressed under the school's code of behaviour. Posting a single harmful message/image/video online, and which is highly likely to be reposted or shared with others can therefore be seen as bullying behaviour.

Imbalance of Power

In incidents of bullying, the student experiencing the bullying behaviour finds it hard to defend themselves as a result of the abuse of a real or perceived imbalance of power. This imbalance of power may manifest itself through differences in size, strength, age, ability, peer group power, economic status, social status, religion, race, ethnic origin including membership of the Traveller and/or Roma communities, sexual orientation, family circumstances, gender, gender identity, gender expression, experience of the care system, disability or the receipt of special education. In incidents of online (or cyber) bullying, the imbalance of power may relate to online anonymity, technical proficiency and possession of information/images/video, and the inability of the targeted student to remove offensive online material or escape the bullying.

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 may be visible to a wide audience and has a high likelihood of being shared

multiple times and so becomes a repeated behaviour. In Ireland, the digital age of consent is 16. Therefore, our students (who are aged 13 or under) should not have a social media account.

Disagreement between students, or instances where students 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 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 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 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.

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 students 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 non-consensual 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, 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.

Like all schools, Scoil Mholainge Listerlin 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.

Types of Bullying

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 or LGBTQ+ bullying). Bullying behaviour in schools is

often strongly influenced by attitudes, behaviours, norms and power dynamics that are deeply engrained in our society.

Types of bullying behaviour deemed to be inappropriate (this is not an exhaustive list):

General Behaviours which apply to all	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Harassment based on any of the nine grounds in the equality legislation e.g., sexual harassment, homophobic bullying, racist bullying etc.- Physical aggression - may include pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping students. Physical assault.- Damage to property- Continual name calling which insults and/or humiliates the student – this may refer to physical appearance, size, clothes, gender, accent, academic ability, race or ethnic origin- Slagging in a derogatory way- The production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other materials aimed at intimidating another person. May include writing insulting remarks in public places, passing notes or drawings about the student- Extortion - where something is obtained through force or threats- Intimidation- Insulting or offensive gestures- Intimidating looks or stares- Invasion of personal space- A combination of any of the types listed.- Exclusion- No innocent bystander
Cyber	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Denigration: Spreading rumors, lies or gossip to hurt a person's reputation- Sending or sharing of insulting and offensive or intimidating messages or images via online means- Harassment: Continually sending vicious, mean or disturbing messages to an individual- Impersonation: Posting offensive or aggressive messages under another person's name- Posting information which is personal, private, compromising or sensitive without consent

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Making and/or participating in fake profiles on a social network to impersonate and/or humiliate other students- Flaming: Using inflammatory or vulgar words to provoke an online fight- Exclude/disrupt access to a student on purpose on online chat groups/access to accounts/from an online game- Trickery: Fooling someone into sharing personal information which you then post online- Cyber stalking: Ongoing harassment and denigration that causes a person considerable fear for his/her safety- Silent telephone/mobile phone call- Abusive telephone/mobile phone calls- Abusive text messages- Abusive email- Abusive communication on social networks e.g., Facebook/Instagram/Tik Tok/Be Real/Twitter/YouTube etc. or on games consoles- Abusive website comments/Blogs/Pictures- Abusive posts on any form of communication technology
Identity-Based	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Including any of the nine discriminatory grounds mentioned in Equality Legislation (gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community).- Spreading rumours about a person's sexual orientation- Taunting a person of a different sexual orientation- Name calling e.g., gay, queer, lesbian ... used in a derogatory manner- Physical intimidation or attacks- Threats- Discrimination, prejudice, comments or insults about colour, nationality, culture, social class, religious beliefs, ethnic or traveller background- Exclusion on the basis of any of the above
Relational	<p>This involves manipulating relationships as a means of bullying, where a student's attempts to form friendships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined. Behaviours include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Malicious gossip- Non-verbal gesturing- "Silent" treatment- Isolation & exclusion- Ignoring

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Excluding from the group - Taking someone's friends away - Talking about someone in a negative way behind their back - Spreading rumours - Breaking confidence - Talking negatively about a person loud enough so that the victim can hear - Use of name-calling in a derogatory way
Sexual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unwelcome or inappropriate sexual comments or touching - Harassment
Special Educational Needs, Disability – Learning Difficulties and Gifted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Name calling - Taunting others because of their disability or learning needs - Taking advantage of some pupils' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to recognise and defend themselves against bullying - Taking advantage of some pupils' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to understand social situations and social cues. - Mimicking a person's disability - Setting others up for ridicule

Section A: Development/Review of our Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

	Date Consulted	Method of Consultation
School Staff	April-May 2025	Staff meetings and surveys Half day closure in May 2025
Students	March-April 2025	Students surveyed using school iPads
Parents	March-April 2025	Survey
Board of Management	May 2025	Board of Management meeting
Wider School Community	June 2025	Published on school website

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		- feedback can be submitted via email to teachers@listerlinns.com
Date policy was approved: June 2025		
Date policy was last reviewed: N/A		

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

Chapter 5 of the *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2024* outlines how the four areas of the *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice* should be considered by a school when developing measures to prevent bullying behaviour. These four areas are:

- 1) Culture and Environment
- 2) Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)
- 3) Policy and Planning
- 4) Relationships and Partnerships

Scoil Mholainghe Listerlin will use the following strategies in order to prevent bullying behaviour. 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.

- 1) Culture and Environment
 - Welcoming environment in our school
 - Wellbeing Week including activities that promote friendship eg “Secret Friend” and “Compliments Challenge”
 - Ethos - Our motto is “Go raibh Sonas ar ár nDaltaí”(That our children may be happy)
 - Promotion of home-school links and positive relationships
 - High expectations for positive student behaviour
 - Displays of student work

- Seating plans
- Student-friendly Bí Cineálta policy to be displayed in the school
- Anti-Bullying Week involving projects, poster making etc
- Organising Internet Safety talks for our pupils and their parents
- Linkage with community groups like the Parents' Association, Tullogher GAA and Camogie clubs, Tidy Towns etc
- Collaboration with external agencies as appropriate eg An Garda Síochána, TUSLA
- Effective leadership to ensure promotion of a shared understanding of bullying through Croke Park hours
- Promotion of diversity and inclusion in all aspects of school life

2) Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)

- Teach SPHE and RSE content which fosters student's well-being and self confidence as well as promoting personal responsibility for their own behaviours and actions. Programmes used include Stay Safe, Walk Tall and RSE.
- Staff always model respectful behaviour towards colleagues, pupils and visitors including coaches in our school environment.
- Curricular and Extra-curricular activities can help to develop a sense of self worth, working together, inclusion and respect.
- Students are given regular opportunities to work in small groups with peers, which can help build a sense of connection, belonging and empathy.
- Subjects like Religion, Drama and History can build a sense of empathy with others.

- Various awareness weeks throughout the school calendar e.g. Wellbeing Week, Internet Safety Week, Anti- Bullying Week
- Some children can access additional supports for the development of positive, appropriate social skills with our Special Education Teachers and Special Needs Assistants
- Incorporating lessons and resources across the curriculum which reflect diversity

3) Policy and Planning

- Development and review of Bí Cineálta policy
- Student-friendly Bí Cineálta policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Equality of Access and Participation Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Providing opportunities for Teacher Professional Learning
- Teacher's Cúntas Míósúil to reflect SPHE content taught
- Staff are aware that they are all mandated persons and complete the Children First E-Learning Programme.
- Principal & Deputy Principal complete DLP/DDLP training and refreshers

4) Relationships and Partnerships

- Internet Safety Speaker - for parents and students
- Communications with parents through Aladdin Connect (which can also be used to request phone calls or meetings if needed)

- Collaboration with local community groups to provide additional support and resources
- Opportunities for peer teaching, student participation and presentations
- Inviting parents and grandparents to participate in school occasions
- Facilitating opportunities to bring classes/whole school together eg for SPHE, sports, World Book Day etc
- Supporting transitions in Junior Infants and 6th Class through links with pre-schools and post-primary schools
- On-going communications with the Board of Management and the Parents' Association
- Links with external professionals and organisations like Educational Welfare Officers, TUSLA, NEPS

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

- Yard - A weekly schedule of student supervision on yard is developed to monitor student behaviour and wellbeing. Any causes for concern are dealt with and reported to relevant teachers.
- All staff are watchful and observe relationships between students in class, note absence patterns and let it be known that high standards of behaviour are always expected.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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 (based on Chapter 6 and Appendix C of the *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2024*):

The teacher with responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour is the class teacher.

When bullying behaviour occurs, the school will:

- Ensure that the student experiencing the bullying behaviour is heard and reassured
- Seek to ensure the privacy of those involved
- Conduct all conversations with sensitivity
- Listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best address the situation
- Take action in a timely manner
- Inform the parents of those involved once the teacher is notified of an incident

Identifying if Bullying Behaviour has Occurred

Teachers will use their professional judgement to determine whether or not the behaviour report is bullying behaviour.

They will 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 all of the questions above is Yes, then the behaviour is bullying behaviour and is addressed using our 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.

If a group of students is involved, each student should be engaged with individually at first. Two staff members can be present at this stage. Thereafter, all students involved should be met with as a group if the staff members deem this appropriate. 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. Students may also be asked to write down their account of the incident. The school staff members may engage with students individually and in groups initially to gain an understanding of the alleged behaviour, without parental notification and presence.

The 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 the bullying behaviour has an impact in school, the school is required to support the students involved. The school may support these students by listening, showing empathy and re-assuring them. We will discuss

how the student can inform their parents of the situation if they haven't already done so. We will ask the student if the bullying behaviour occurs in school.

Where Bullying Behaviour has Occurred

Where the student displaying the bullying behaviour is not a student in the school, but the student experiencing the bullying behaviour is one of our students, we will support our student as appropriate and engage with them and their parents to determine steps which can be taken.

Where Bullying Behaviour has not Occurred

Incidents can occur where behaviour is unacceptable and hurtful but the behaviour is not bullying behaviour. Strategies that deal with inappropriate behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

Follow up where bullying behaviour has occurred

The teacher must engage with the students involved and their parents again, no more than 20 school days after the initial engagement. Important factors to consider as part of this engagement are the nature of the bullying behaviour, the effectiveness of the strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and the relationship between the students involved. The teacher should document the review with students and their parents to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased and the views of students and their parents in relation to this.

The date of each engagement and the date that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased should be recorded. Any engagement with external services/supports should also be noted.

If the bullying behaviour has not ceased, the teacher should review the strategies used in consultation with the students involved and their parents. A timeframe should be agreed for further engagement until the bullying behaviour has ceased. If it becomes clear that the student who is displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behaviour, consideration may be given to using the strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour as provided for within the Code of Behaviour. If such sanctions are considered, this is a matter between the relevant student, their parents and the school.

If a parent is not satisfied with how the bullying behaviour has been addressed by the school, in accordance with the *Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, they may find further information at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-education/policy-information/schools-complaint-procedures-additional-information-for-parents-and-students/>

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. The Office of the Ombudsman for Children can be contacted at: ococomplaints@oco.ie

The school will use the following approaches to support those who experience, witness and display bullying behaviour (based on Chapter 6 of the *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2024*):

- Managing the bullying behaviour
- Helping pupils raise their self-esteem through encouraging them to become involved in activities that help to develop their friendships and social skills eg participating in group work in class, team activities during or after school, small social groups with Special Education Teacher
- Fostering respect for all pupils
- Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through annual awareness-raising initiatives
- Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through the speedy identification of those responsible and speedy resolution of bullying situations
- Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are doing the right and honorable thing and giving them praise for this
- In dealing with negative behavior in general, encouraging teachers and parents to focus on, challenge and correct the behaviour while supporting the child
- In dealing with bullying behaviour seeking resolution and offering a fresh start with a ‘clean sheet’ and no blame in return for keeping a promise to reform
- Linkage with external supports eg NEPS, Oide, Webwise, DCU Anti-Bullying Centre, TUSLA, National Parents’ Association

Requests to take no action

A student reporting bullying behaviour may ask that a member of staff does nothing about the behaviour other than to “look out” for them. If this is the case, the staff member will show empathy to the student, deal with the matter sensitively and speak 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.

Parents may also make the school aware of bullying behaviour that has occurred and specifically request that the school takes no action. Parents must put such a request in writing. However, while acknowledging the parent’s request, the school may decide that based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour.

All bullying behaviour will be recorded. This will include the type of behaviour, where and when it took place, and the date of the initial engagement with students and the parents. The record should include the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the 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*.

Section D: Oversight

The principal will present an update on bullying behaviour at all board of management meetings. This update will include the number of incidents of bullying behaviour that have been reported since the last meeting, the number of on-going incidents and the total number of incidents since the beginning of the school year. Where incidents of bullying behaviour

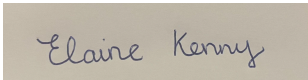
have occurred, the principal will also provide a verbal update which will include, where relevant, information relating to trends and patterns identified, strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and any wider strategies to prevent and address bullying behaviour where relevant. This update does not contain personal or identifying information (see Chapter 7 of the *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2024*).

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: 29/05/25

(Chairperson of the Board of Management)

Signed:  Date: 29/05/25

(Acting Principal)