School Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

June 2025

The Board of Management of Castlerock NS has adopted the following policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

This policy fully complies with the requirements of *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* 2024.

The board of management acknowledges that bullying behaviour interferes with the rights of the child as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. We all, as a school community, have a responsibility to work together to prevent and address bullying behaviour and to deal with the negative impact of bullying behaviour.

We are committed to ensuring that all students who attend our school are kept safe from harm and that the wellbeing of our students is at the forefront of everything that we do. We recognise the negative impact that bullying behaviour can have on the lives of our students and we are fully committed to preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.

We confirm that we will, in accordance with our obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the harassment of students or staff on any of the nine grounds specified: gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.

Definition of bullying

Bullying is defined in *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* and *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* as targeted behaviour, online or offline that causes harm. The harm caused can be physical, social and/or emotional in nature. Bullying behaviour is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power in relationships between two people or groups of people in society. 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	16th January 2025	Full day Leadership Training
	23rd May 2025	½ day training on new Procedures
	26th May 2025	Staff Survey
Students	26th May 2025	Pupil Survey
Parents	26th May 2025	Parental Survey
Board of Management	February 2025	Discussion with BoM
	June 2025	Discussion based on Stakeholder Feedback
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	n/a	n/a
Date policy was approved: 10th June 2025		
Date policy was last reviewed: 10th June 2025		

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

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

Prevention Strategies for Bullying Behaviour

General Strategies for All Types of Bullying

1. **Promote a Kindness Culture:**

    o Monthly affirmations and recognition of acts of kindness.
    o Introduce "Kindness Monitors" among students to model inclusive and respectful behaviour.
2. **Storytelling and Role-Play:**

- o Regular story time sessions that feature diverse characters and situations highlighting empathy, respect, and inclusion - Appendix 1
- o Role-play activities during SPHE lessons to build students' social and emotional skills.

3. **Creating a Telling Environment:**

- o Teach and promote the school mantra "We are a telling school" in class and during school assemblies. The mantra will be displayed in all classrooms.
- o Make it clear to pupils that reporting bullying is a responsible act and is not considered telling tales.
- o Designate trusted adults (teachers, SNAs, etc) whom students can approach about bullying concerns.
- o Pupils are taught multiple ways to report incidents: direct approach to a teacher, asking a parent or friend to tell on their behalf.
- o Display posters promoting positive behaviours and relationships around the school.
- o School staff regularly remind pupils to report bullying and reassure them that incidents will be dealt with safely.
- o Catch Them Being Good: Notice and acknowledge respectful behaviour and acknowledge this to the pupils.
- o Promote outdoor furniture such as the buddy bench (or a location on the yard) and display murals promoting friendship, wellbeing, and anti-bullying throughout the school.
- o Reinforce the school's Code of Behaviour daily, e.g., school rules are displayed in all classes and in the school yard.

4. **Playground Inclusion:**

- o Lunchtime games/activities to support and reduce exclusion will be introduced e.g. Sand box, Connect 4, Outdoor shop and kitchen, Buddy Bench.

Strategies to Prevent Online Bullying

1. **Digital Literacy Lessons:**

- o Teach students about safe online behaviour, privacy settings, and recognising/reporting harmful content.
- o Use interactive apps or tools that demonstrate appropriate online communication.

2. **Acceptable Use Policy (AUP):**

- o Implement and review the school's AUP regularly, emphasising kindness and respect online.
- o Parents must provide consent to the AUP *at the time of initial enrolment.*

3. **"Think Before You Click" Campaign:**

- o Display posters around the school and conduct interactive sessions to discuss responsible online behaviour.

4. **Online Safety Days:**

- o Host annual Safer Internet Day with workshops and activities focused on cyber safety.

5. **Parental Involvement:**

- o Provide parents with resources and guidance on monitoring their children's online activities and setting boundaries.
- o Send Webwise information booklets to parents and make resources available on the school's website.
- o Organise a parent information evening promoting the importance of Internet Safety.
- o Include parents in the formulation of a policy banning the use of and access to personal mobile phones by pupils during the school day.

6. **External Support:**

- o Organise talks with external experts and annual visits from local Gardaí to discuss internet safety and cyberbullying with senior classes.

Strategies to Prevent Homophobic and Transphobic Bullying

1. **Inclusive Environment:**

- o Display posters and materials that celebrate diversity throughout the school.
- o Ensure that library books and resources reflect a variety of family structures and identities.

2. **Awareness Workshops:**

- o Conduct age-appropriate workshops on empathy and respecting differences in gender identity and expression

3. **Challenge Gender Stereotypes:**

- o Use toys, activities and discussions that avoid reinforcing traditional gender roles.

4. **Supportive Language:**

- o Encourage respectful and inclusive language in all interactions, correcting and discussing discriminatory terms if they arise.

Strategies to Prevent Racist Bullying

1. **Celebrate Cultural Diversity:**
   - o Host cultural days where students share traditions, food, and stories from their heritage (Link with International Day Celebrations)
   - o Incorporate lessons on different cultures into the curriculum.

2. **Representation Matters:**

- o Ensure classroom materials, books, and posters reflect the diversity of the student body and society.

3. **Anti-Racism Workshops:**

- o Use role-play and discussions to help students understand the impact of racism and how to stand up against it.

4. **Inclusive Activities:**

   o Encourage group activities that mix students from different backgrounds to promote understanding and teamwork.

5. **Bystander Empowerment:**

   o Teach students how to safely intervene or report when witnessing racist behaviour.

Strategies to Prevent Sexist Bullying

1. **Equality in Activities:**
   o Ensure all activities, from sports to classroom tasks, are open to all students regardless of gender.
   o Highlight achievements of both male and female role models in various fields.

2. **Education on Gender Equality:**

   o Discuss stereotypes and encourage students to question traditional gender norms.
   o Use stories and lessons to highlight the value of everyone's contributions.

3. **Classroom Discussions:**

   o Facilitate conversations about respect and fairness in how students interact and collaborate.

4. **Awareness Campaigns:**

   o Organise poster contests or assemblies on gender equality and mutual respect.

5. **Parental Engagement:**

   o Share resources with parents on promoting gender equality and addressing biases at home.

Strategies to Prevent Sexual Harassment

1. **Education Through SPHE:**
   o Integrate lessons on personal boundaries, respect, and healthy relationships into SPHE.

2. **Empathy Building:**

   o Use storytelling and discussions to help students understand the impact of unwanted behaviour on others

3. **Positive Role Models:**

   o Invite speakers or use examples that highlight respectful and kind behaviour in relationships.

4. **Reporting Channels:**

   o Ensure students know how to report incidents and feel supported throughout the process, e.g., using our school mantra 'We are a telling school.'

Curriculum Integration

1. **SPHE Programme:**

   o Follow the agreed two year SPHE Plan including the Stay Safe Programme and Walk Tall Programme.
   o Teach lessons on bullying every year and integrate related topics into other subjects like English, SESE and Art

2. **Annual Events:**

   o Organise and promote a whole-school Wellbeing activities throughout the year.
   o Run an anti-bullying poster competition annually (January) with winning entries displayed throughout the school.

3. **Accessible Resources:**

   o SPHE policy and resources available on the school website.
   o Ensure suitable apps are downloaded on school devices and internet access is monitored.

Supervision and Monitoring

1. **Staff Vigilance:**
   o Regular review of the supervision rota and identification of bullying "hot-spots" and "hot-times."
   o Encourage non-teaching staff to report observed incidents.

2. **Record and Report:**

   o Log incidents in the incident book and notify the principal.
   o Follow steps in the school's Code of Behaviour and Bí Cineálta Policy and Procedures.

Staff Professional Development

1. **Regular Training:**

   o Include anti-bullying as an agenda item at least twice per year in staff meetings.
   o Provide CPD opportunities on programmes relevant to whole school wellbeing promotion

2. **New Staff Induction:**

   o Systematic induction for new staff on the Bí Cineálta Policy.
   o Ensure all staff are aware of the pastoral dimension of their roles.

Pupil Wellbeing

1. **Celebratory Events:**

   o   Celebrate weekly acts of wellbeing and International Days.
   o   Recognise Random Acts of Kindness

2. **Inclusive Activities:**

   o   Use outdoor seating in allocated area on the school yard and promote activities and sports for all students.

Signed:_____ Date:___10/6/2025___
(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed:___Carmel Burke_____ Date:___10/6/2025___
(Principal)

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. **Supervision and Monitoring:** Enhanced supervision and monitoring measures are mandated to ensure all areas of school activity are observed, reducing opportunities for bullying behaviour. This includes regular reviews of supervision schedules, CCTV and identifying potential hotspots for bullying in our school.

2. **Reporting and Recording:** All incidents of bullying behaviour are recorded systematically. The school principal provides a bullying behaviour update at each ordinary board of management meeting, ensuring ongoing oversight and accountability.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

Carmel Burke (Principal), Dolores Marren (Deputy Principal) and

Bernie Cunnane (Class Teacher)

When bullying behaviour occurs, the school will:
> ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour is heard and reassured
> seek to ensure the privacy of those involved
> conduct all conversations with sensitivity
> consider the age and ability of those involved
> listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation
> take action in a timely manner
> inform parents of those involved

The steps that will be taken by the school to determine if bullying behaviour has occurred, the approaches taken to address the bullying behaviour and to review progress are as follows (see Chapter 6 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

Steps Taken by the School to Address and Review Bullying Behaviour

1. Identifying <u>if</u> Bullying Behaviour Has Occurred -

- **Investigation**: The **investigating teacher must** consider what, where, when, and why the incident occurred.
- **Individual Engagement**: Engage with each student involved individually to understand their account.
- **Group Meeting**: Convene a meeting of all involved students to clarify their perspectives and ensure understanding among the group.
- **Written Accounts**: Students may be asked to document their accounts of the incident.
- **Criteria**: Use the definition of bullying from Chapter 2 and the questions in Appendix C to determine if the behaviour meets the criteria for bullying.
- **Distinction**: Identify whether the behaviour is unacceptable but not bullying and address it per the school's Code of Behaviour.
- *Where the investigation does not identify bullying behaviour, the teacher should respond to the matter using the Code of Behaviour and record the details.*

2. Addressing Bullying Behaviour

- **Immediate Action**: School staff follow the Bí Cineálta Policy to prevent and address bullying when incidents occur under the school's care.
- **Support**:
    - Engage with the student experiencing bullying behaviour promptly to provide reassurance and listen to their views.
    - Offer support to the student displaying bullying behaviour to address relational difficulties and meet their needs.
- **Parental Involvement**: Inform and consult with the parents of the students involved, while respecting privacy and any concerns the student may have about this communication.
- **Fair and Consistent Approach**: Ensure sensitivity, privacy, and age-appropriate communication throughout the process.
- **Flexible Strategies**: Utilise evidence-based methods such as restorative practice or mediation, provided staff are trained and students consent.

3. Reviewing Progress

- **Follow-Up**: Review progress with students and parents no later than 20 school days after the initial intervention.
- **Ongoing Support**: Provide continuous supervision and support for both parties even after bullying has ceased to ensure relationships improve over time.
- **Further Action**: If bullying persists:
    - Reassess strategies in consultation with all parties.
    - Consider disciplinary measures if the student displaying bullying behaviour continues.

4. Recording Bullying Behaviour

- **Documentation**: Record all incidents, including:
    - Form and type of bullying behaviour.
    - Locations, dates, and times.
    - Views of students and parents on actions taken.
    - Reviews of progress and outcomes.
    - Any engagement with external supports or services.

- **Retention**: Store records per the school's <u>data protection</u> and record-keeping policies.
- **Student Support Files**: Save the documented record of the bullying behaviour to the student's Aladdin file. Where a Support Plan already exists for the student, the plan should be updated to incorporate response strategies and associated supports.

Complaint Process

- **Dissatisfaction**: If parents or students are unsatisfied with how bullying behaviour is addressed, refer them to the *Parent Complaints Procedure.*
- **External Escalation**: Complaints can be raised with the Ombudsman for Children if the school's actions negatively impact the student.

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):

Support for Students Who Experience Bullying Behaviour:

1. **Listening and Reassurance**:
   - Ensure students feel listened to and reassured.
   - Take action promptly to restore a sense of control and safety.
2. **Tailored Interventions**:
   - Provide appropriate supports such as counselling or student support plans.
   - Engage with parents to develop a collaborative plan for addressing the situation.
3. **Maintaining Privacy**:
   - Ensure the privacy of students involved to minimise further distress.
4. **Empowerment**:
   - Encourage agency by involving students in decisions about how to address the behaviour.

Support for Students Who Witness Bullying Behaviour:

1. **Encouragement to Report**:
   - Promote a "telling environment" (school mantra - We are a telling school) where students feel safe to report bullying.
   - Ensure students understand their role in addressing bullying and provide guidance on how to report safely.
2. **Emotional Support**:
   - Acknowledge the emotional impact of witnessing bullying and provide access to counselling or peer support programs as needed.
3. **Education and Awareness**:
   - Engage students in awareness-raising activities to build empathy and understanding of the impact of bullying.

Support for Students Who Display Bullying Behaviour:

1. **Understanding the Root Cause**:
   o Identify and address underlying issues contributing to the behaviour, such as low self-esteem or prior victimisation.
2. **Restorative Practices**:
   o Use trained methods such as mindfulness or restorative practice, with the consent of all parties.
3. **Behavioural Interventions**:
   o Implement specific strategies from the school's Code of Behaviour to manage and reduce harmful behaviours.
4. **Parental Engagement**:
   o Work closely with parents to develop a plan for behaviour change and monitor progress.
5. **Continuous Monitoring**:
   o Provide ongoing supervision and support to help the student make positive changes and reintegrate successfully into the school community.

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

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

Signed: _____ Date: _____

(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: _____ Date: _____

(Principal)