



THE OLD BOROUGH NATIONAL SCHOOL

Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

School Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

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The Board of Management of the Old Borough National School has adopted the following policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

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

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

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

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

Definition of bullying

Bullying is defined in *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* and *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* as targeted behaviour, online or offline that causes harm. The harm caused can be physical, social and/or emotional in nature. Bullying behaviour is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power in relationships between two people or groups of people in society. The detailed definition is provided in Chapter 2 of the Bí Cineálta procedures.

Each school is required to develop and implement a Bí Cineálta policy that sets out how the school community prevents and addresses bullying behaviour. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour that is not bullying behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

Section A: Development/review of our Bí Cineálta policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour

All members of our school community were provided with the opportunity to input into the development/review of this policy.

	Date consulted	Method of consultation
School Staff	4 th March 2025	Bí Cineálta Half Day Closure Meeting Teacher Questionnaire
Students	24 th March – 29 th March 2025	Student Questionnaires
Parents	5 th March – 14 th March 2025	Parents Questionnaires
Board of Management	7 th April 2025 19 th May 2025	Board of Management Questionnaire Board of Management Meeting
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	4 th March 2025	Bí Cineálta Half Day Closure Meeting Staff Questionnaire
Date policy was approved: 26/05/2025		

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 as appropriate (see Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

The *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice* provides the following four key areas that are essential for a holistic, whole-school approach to wellbeing promotion:

1. Culture and Environment

A positive school culture and environment is essential to prevent and address bullying behaviour. The school environment in the Old Borough NS is a space where students and school staff should feel a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected, supported, and valued.

Relationships between all members of the Old Borough NS school community are based on respect, care, integrity and trust. Open communication between the patron, Board 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 the 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.

Students in the Old Borough NS can shape the school culture by promoting kindness and inclusion within their peer group and maintaining 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.

The Old Borough NS encourages a 'telling' environment. While research conducted in Ireland

reveals there is a persistent tendency not to report bullying behaviour, the Old Borough NS encourages staff and students to tell if they see bullying behaviour. Students should feel comfortable to talk about concerns regarding bullying behaviour. The staff are aware of the reasons why a student may not report bullying behaviour but encourage students to speak up if they are aware that these behaviours are occurring.

The school believes in the concept of a 'trusted adult' as an effective strategy to encourage students to report if they or another student is experiencing bullying behaviour. Staff support this strategy by letting students know that they can talk to them.

The school aims to support students who witness bullying behaviour and encourage them to report the behaviour to a trusted adult in the school so that the behaviour can be addressed.

The trusted adult should reassure students that they have done the right thing by reporting the bullying behaviour and should, without delay, inform the member of staff who has responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour i.e. the class teacher. If a staff member is unaware of the trusted adult that they should inform, they should inform the principal or deputy principal.

The school commits to providing a safe physical space for students as they support psychological safety and helps to prevent bullying behaviour. The staff have identified areas of the school which are possible areas in which bullying may take place and continue to monitor and supervise these areas with care and diligence.

Students art and schoolwork are displayed in the school to create a greater sense of belonging. This also helps students to identify and to feel a sense of responsibility for their school environment. The school building and grounds are well maintained to promote a sense of ownership and respect in the school community.

Supervision is an important measure to help prevent and address bullying behaviour. The Old Borough NS takes all reasonable measures to ensure the safety of the students and to supervise students when they are attending school or school activities (see below for further details)

2. Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)

The Old Borough NS promotes collaborative and respectful teaching and learning. Students are given regular opportunities to work in small groups with their peers, helping to build connection, belonging and empathy among students.

The curricular subjects offered to students provide opportunities to foster inclusion and respect for diversity. Opportunities to develop a sense of self-worth through both curricular and extra-curricular programmes are provided within the school.

The Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) curricular 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. Students' social and emotional learning (SEL) skills can be improved through the SPHE curriculum.

The Follow Me programme also aims to encourage respect and understanding of different beliefs, perspectives and ways of living.

Subjects such as History and Geography are used to raise awareness of different cultures, groups, ethnicities, and beliefs. They can be used to raise awareness of racism, colonialism, and the root causes of bias and prejudice.

3. Policy and Planning

The wellbeing of the school community is at the heart of the Old Borough NS's policies and plans. A range of policies, including the school's Acceptable Use Policy (AUP), Supervision Policy, Special Education Teaching Policy, Code of Behaviour and Cyberbullying Policy support the implementation of the school's Bí Cineálta Policy.

The students of the Old Borough NS have participated in the development and implementation of this policy, thus helping to increase their awareness and ensure effective implementation.

Teachers and ancillary staff have also engaged in the development and implementation of this policy. Advice and feedback from all staff, students, parents, and the Board of Management has helped to shape this policy.

The staff have engaged in a half day school closure to ensure that they understand how best to prevent and address bullying behaviour. Opportunities for additional training are provided to staff.

4. Relationships and Partnerships

Strong interpersonal connections are a vital part of effectively preventing and addressing bullying behaviour. Connections are supported through a range of formal and informal structures, such as student councils/committees, the Parent Teacher Association and student support teams.

Relationships are further strengthened and supported in the school through the following (non-exhaustive) list of activities:

- Age-appropriate awareness initiatives that look at the causes and impacts of bullying behaviour e.g. Digiducks, Webwise programme, etc.
- Supporting the active participation of students in school life.
- Supporting the active participation of parents in school life, including those who may find it difficult or daunting to engage with the school due to being unfamiliar with the education system or due to language or cultural barriers.
- Supporting activities that build empathy, respect and resilience.
- Encouraging peer support
- Promoting and rewarding acts of kindness
- Teaching problem-solving strategies
- Weekly assemblies

The following strategies are used to prevent different types of bullying from occurring in the Old Borough NS. These lists are not exhaustive and are reviewed on a yearly basis to ensure that the strategies remain relevant and effective.

Preventing Cyberbullying Behaviour

The school is proactive in addressing Cyberbullying through promotion of digital literacy, digital citizenship, and fostering safe online environments. Strategies to prevent cyberbullying behaviour include:

- Voluntary Smartphone Charter
- Implementing the Digital Media Literacy curriculum which teaches students about responsible online behavior and digital citizenship i.e. Digiducks, Webwise programme.
- The school has a cyberbullying policy which is reviewed and ratified yearly.
- Phones and smartwatches are not allowed in school (unless the parents have written specifically to the Board of Management to request having a phone in school for health and safety reasons. Phones must be handed up to the teacher upon arrival at school and will be returned at home time). Phones must be turned off upon arrival to school.
- Visits from the community Garda Síochána to discuss internet safety.
- Implementing the SPHE curriculum in all classes.
- Hosting an Internet Safety Day to reinforce awareness around appropriate online behavior.
- Developing and communicating an Acceptable Use Policy (AUP), which is signed by students/parents to ensure that students are aware of how to use the school's digital resources in a safe and responsible manner.
- The school's internet is controlled to prevent the children gaining access to inappropriate content that may be shared.
- The school uses Weaving Wellbeing to improve children's confidence and self-esteem.

Preventing Homophobic/Transphobic Bullying Behaviour

All students including gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender students have a right to feel safe and supported at school. Strategies to prevent homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour include:

- Maintaining an inclusive physical environment.
- Encouraging peer support through empathy building activities and lessons.
- Encouraging students to speak up when they witness bullying behaviour.
- Implementing the SPHE curriculum in all classes, thus enabling students to develop

understanding, empathy, and to develop their wellbeing.

- Implementing RSE lessons in all classes.

Preventing Racist Bullying Behaviour

Students attending schools come from many different cultures and backgrounds. Students from diverse backgrounds may face discrimination and prejudice and may be subject to racist bullying behaviour. Strategies to prevent racist bullying behaviour include the following:

- Fostering a school culture where diversity is celebrated and where students “see themselves” in their school environment e.g. posters, displays, etc.
- Having the cultural diversity of the school visible and on display.
- Encouraging peer support through empathy building activities and lessons.
- Encouraging students to speak up when they witness bullying behaviour.
- Providing supports to school staff to respond to the needs of students for whom English is an additional language and for communicating with their parents.
- Providing supports to school staff to support students from ethnic minorities, including Traveller and Roma students, and to encourage communication with their parents.
- Ensuring that library reading material and textbooks represent appropriate lived experiences of students and adults from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.
- The school celebrates differences and actively encourages students to discuss their experiences and cultures on a day-to-day basis.
- Project work and teaching various subjects is used to raise awareness of different places, cultures, ethnicities, and religions.
- Inclusive teaching practices are used to encourage children to feel safe and supported while talking about their experiences and cultures.

Preventing Sexist Bullying Behaviour

Schools should focus on gender equality as part of the school’s measures to create a supportive and respectful environment. Strategies to prevent sexist bullying behaviour include the following:

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

irrespective of their sex.

- Celebrating diversity at school and acknowledging the contributions of all students.
- Encouraging parents to reinforce these values of respect at home.
- Challenging inappropriate behaviour in school and ensuring that students are aware of unacceptable behaviours.
- Implementing the SPHE curriculum in all classes, thus enabling students to develop understanding, empathy, and to develop their wellbeing.
- Implementing RSE lessons in all classes.

Preventing Sexual Harassment

Preventing sexual harassment require an approach that focuses on education, awareness and clear enforceable policies. The school is clear that there is a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment. Sexual harassment should never be dismissed as teasing or 'banter'. Strategies to prevent sexual harassment include the following:

1. Promoting positive role models within the school community.
2. Challenging gender stereotypes that can contribute to sexual harassment.
 - Implementing the SPHE curriculum in all classes, thus enabling students to develop understanding, empathy, and to develop their wellbeing.
 - Implementing RSE lessons in all classes.
3. The school's Protected Disclosure Policy ensures that members of staff cannot be penalized for raising concerns about possible wrongdoing in the workplace. Staff are encouraged to speak out if they see any unacceptable practices occurring in the school.

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):

Staff members have a distinct responsibility to ensure that supervision of students in school is effective and consistent.

Supervision in playground areas is managed and conducted effectively, with particular attention given to 'hot spots' or 'hot times', such as arrival and dismissal.

The school has an assigned yard duty roster to ensure that there is adequate supervision on the yard at all times. New staff are informed of yard duty procedures to ensure the children's safety during yard times. Once the children have entered the yard from their classroom, they are not allowed to return to their classroom. Should they need to use toilets, they must ask the teacher on duty and may only enter the Infant room to do so. Only one child is allowed to go to the bathroom at a time.

The children are aware of 'no-go' areas in the school and the yard e.g. they cannot go up the stairs towards the Parish entrance, they cannot climb the railings, they are not allowed in the car park during school time, they cannot go past the main entrance.

Children are accompanied by at least one staff member per class on school trips. Before going on a school trip, parents are informed that the students will be leaving the school on that day. Staff must inform the principal of the destination and the number of adults attending to ensure that the appropriate supervision is in place.

Staff are mindful of interpersonal relationships and will organize groups for collaborative work/teams with a view to ensuring that respectful learning will take place.

Office, ancillary staff, Special Needs Assistants and Classroom Assistants are well placed to inform if any behaviour which may constitute bullying is noticed. All members of staff have been informed of procedures if any instances of bullying are identified.

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

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

Class Teachers

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):

Identifying if Bullying Behaviour has Occurred

Bullying is defined in Chapter 2 of the *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*. To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour, the following three questions should be considered:

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**, the behaviour is bullying behaviour and should be addressed using the *Bí Cineálta* Procedures.

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 the questions above is **No**, then the behaviour is not bullying behaviour and will be dealt with as per the school's Code of Behaviour.

Teachers should consider **what, where, when and why** when identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred.

The following steps should be followed when identifying if bullying has occurred:

1. If a group of students is involved, each student should be engaged with individually at first.
2. After meeting students individually, students should be met as a group.
3. 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.
4. Each student should be supported, as appropriate, following the group meeting.
5. Students may write down their account of the incident(s) if it is deemed necessary and they are able to.

Where Bullying Behaviour has Occurred

1. Where bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the students involved must 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.
2. It is important to listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation.
3. A record should be kept of the engagement with all involved. Records should be factual and to the point at all times.

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):

The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying involves a whole school approach. Given the complexity of bullying behavior, no one intervention/support programme works in all situations. The school will endeavour to support the student who has been bullied, as well as the student who has displayed the bullying behaviour.

Supporting Bullied Pupils

- Working with the student(s) to ensure that the bullying behaviour comes to an end.
- Supporting pupils who have experienced bullying behaviour, displayed bullying behaviour and witnessed bullying behaviour.
- Fostering respect for all pupils and promoting a culture where pupils feel safe, respected, and valued.
- Fostering empathy towards and support for all pupils.
- Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil.
- Helping affected pupils to raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that help develop friendships and social skills e.g. participation in group work in class, Tea and Toast, SET support if necessary).
- Circle Time may be used to discuss emotions and to share opinions.
- The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) provides a comprehensive, school-based psychological service to all schools to support the wellbeing, academic, social and emotional development of pupils. NEPS psychologists may advise schools on best practice to prevent and address bullying and/or provide training in preventative initiatives e.g. developing social and emotional skills, social skills, executive function skills, promoting resilience and skills in relationship repair between peers as appropriate.
- Oide is the Department of Education's support service for schools and it supports professional learning for school leaders and teachers in recognized schools. It provides continuing professional learning support to schools to support implementation of the Bí Cineálta procedures.
- Webwise is the online safety initiative of the Department of Education and it promotes safer, better internet use through awareness raising and education initiatives.
- The National Parents Council (NPC) delivers online and in-person courses to support parents to prevent and address bullying behaviour.
- Dublin City University (DCU) Anti-Bullying Centre offers a range of modules as part of its FUSE programme that can be used to help to promote a positive school

culture and assist in preventing and addressing bullying behaviours.

- TUSLA may be contacted for advice in cases where it is considered that bullying behaviour is a child protection concern.

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

Section D: Oversight

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

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

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

