Gusserane National School

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Gusserane 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 take all steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent all bullying or harassment of our students in whatever form and however motivated.
Catholic schools have a distinctive understanding of the human person, recognising that every person is created in God's image and likeness and has inherent dignity as a child of God. This is the basis for ensuring that everybody in our school is treated with respect and care, in accordance with the Catholic Schedule.
As a Catholic school, we are committed to respecting the dignity of every individual. No human person is to be devalued and everybody has a part to play in the school community, regardless of difference.

Definition of bullying

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

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

1

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	School Closure 2025/Ongoing consultation	Staff Meeting(s) & Digital Questionnaire
Students	March/April 2025/Ongoing consultation	Focus Groups & Digital Questionnaire
Parents	February/March 2025 Ongoing consultation	Digital Questionnaire via Aladdin/Parents Association Meeting
Board of Management	March//May 2025	Scheduled Meeting(s)- June 2025
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	June 2025	Publish on school website
Date policy was approved:		
Date policy was last reviewed:		

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

This section sets out the prevention strategies that will be used by this school to address all forms of bullying behaviour, in whatever form and however motivated, including online bullying behaviour, homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour, racist bullying behaviour, sexist bullying behaviour and sexual harassment.

Culture & Environment

- Create a positive school climate where all students feel safe respected, and valued

- Promote diversity and inclusion in all aspects of school life.

- Using circle practice in the classroom to build a positive culture and environment.

- Encourage open communication between students, staff, and parents, Encourage pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour

- Establish clear expectations for behaviour and enforce them consistently_

- Promote respectful relationships across the school community

- Open communication.
- Effective routines/transitions.

Curriculum (Teaching & Learning)

- Integrate anti-bullying messages into the school curriculum.

- Teach students about bullying and its effects,

- SPHE methodologies

- Provide opportunities for students to develop social and emotional skills.

- Incorporate lessons on respect, empathy, and diversity into the curriculum.

- An annual anti-bullying/friendship dav/week.

- The Stay Safe will be fully implemented at appropriate times and levels in the school.

- Behaviour charts in the classrooms

- Code of conduct for the classroom and pl ayground drawn up with the children in September

- Behaviour reflection sheets

- Buddy Benches in the playground

- Resources such as Mood Monsters, Weaving Wellbeing Programme, Social Stories e.g Behaviour matters by Sue Graves

- Explicit teaching and appropriate communication and emotional literacy Group work/Collaboration
- National Council for Special Education (NCSE) Relate

Policy & Planning

- Develop a clear and consistent anti-bullying policy that is enforced by all staff members.

- Review and update the anti-bullying policy regularly.

- Provide training for staff on how to recognize and respond to bullying.

- Establish clear procedures for reporting and responding to bullying incidents_

- The Acceptable Use Policy was developed in the school to include the necessary steps to ensure that access to technology within the school is strictly monitored.

- School Policies: The following policies, practices and activities that are particularly relevant to bullying include; Code of Behaviour, Child Safeguarding Statement, Risk Assessment* Supervision of Pupils, Acceptable Use Policy Attendance ,Communication Policy, SPHE, RSE, PE, SEN/Inclusion Policy, Pupil voice

- The school's approach to tackling and preventing bullying will take particular account of the needs of pupils with disabilities or with SEN, will join up with other relevant school policies and supports and will endeavor to ensure that all the services that provide for such pupils work together.

- Approaches to decreasing the likelihood of bullying for pupils with SEN include improving inclusion focusing on developing social skills, paying attention to key moments such as transitioning from primary to post-primary and cultivating a good school culture which has respect for all and helping one another as central.

- This school takes positive steps to ensure that the culture of the school is one which welcomes a respectful dialogue and encounter with diversity and difference by ensuring that prevention and inclusivity strategies are given priority and discussed regularly at our board of management and staff meetings.

- The dignity and the wellbeing of the individual person is of paramount concern in our Christian response. This school will listen closely to and dialogue with parents, thereby building a relationship of mutual understanding, respect, trust and confidence.

Relationships & Partnerships

- Encourage open communication between students, staff, and parents.

- Build positive relationships with students and familiy

- Implementation of education and prevention strategies including awareness raising measures that— Build empathy respect and resilience in pupils.

- TPL (Teacher Professional LearnIng)

- Collaborate with community organisations to provide additional support and resources.

- Guest speakers may be invited to address staff and parent groups at regular Intervals In relation to various types of bullying.

- Work with parents and students to educate them about the dangers of cyberbullving by facilitating outside speakers e.g. Digiwise. The programme Webwise will be taught on a regular basis the school. This programme teaches safe and responsible internet
  use.

- Active participation of students and parents/guardians in school life

- Bullying awareness workshops/initiatives

- Supporting activities that build empathy, respect and resilience

In developing the preventative strategies which this school will use to prevent all forms of bullying behaviour, we come from the context of our Catholic ethos, where inclusivity permeates our school in a real way.

Preventing Cyber Bullying Behaviour:
- Promoting Digital Citizenship
- Implementation of SPHE curriculum
- Implementation of resources relevant to cyber bullying e.g. www.webwise.ie
- Promotion amongst students of developing respectful and kind relationships online
- Promotion of online safety events for parents/guardians who are responsible for supervision of children's online activity

Preventing Homophobic/Transphobic Bullying Behaviour:

- Create a safe and inclusive environment for all students, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Maintaining an inclusive school environment- recognizing and celebrating difference
- Encourage peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
- Encourage students to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour

Preventing Racist Bullying Behaviour:
- Promotion of a school culture that celebrates diversity
- Conducting workshops and seminars for students, school staff and parents to raise awareness of racism
- Teach students about the history and impact of racism e.g. Show Racism the Red Card.
- Providing supports to school staff to support students from ethnic minorities and to encourage communication with parents/guardians
- Encourage bystanders to report when they witness racist behaviour
- Library books to include material that reflects the lives of students from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds

Preventing Sexist Bullying Behaviour:
- Staff modelling respectful behavior and equality irrespective of sex
- All pupils are given opportunity to engage in school activities irrespective of sex
- Celebration of diversity at school and acknowledge the contribution of all students

Preventing Sexual Harassment:
- Promotion of positive role models within the school community
- Challenging gender stereotypes that may contribute to sexual harassment

In continuing to develop prevention strategies, this school will listen to young people and parent to help establish their particular context and needs. Frequent periods of reflection and further engagement by the school, young people and parents, will be used to discern appropriate supports for young people in this school and to help inform future prevention strategies.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

- Class Teachers with the support of Special Education Teachers (SSF Pupils)
- Consultation with in school management (Principal/Deputy Principal) if required

---

When bullying behaviour occurs, the school will:

o   ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour is heard and reassured

o   seek to ensure the privacy of those involved

o   conduct all conversations with sensitivity

o   consider the age and ability of those involved

o   listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation

o   take action in a timely manner

o   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):

Core Definition of Bullying Behaviour

'Bullying is targeted behavior, online or offline that causes harm. The harm caused can be physical, social and/or emotional in nature. Bullying behavior is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power in relationships between two people or groups of people in society'.
(Chapter 2 Bí Cineálta Procedures)

Identifying if Bullying Behaviour has occurred:

The following three questions should be considered to determine if bullying has occurred:
1. Is the behavior targeted at a specific student or group of students?
2. Is the behavior intended to cause physical, social or emotional harm?
3. Is the behavior repeated?

If the answer to each of the above questions is 'Yes', the behavior is considered bullying behavior and should be addressed using the Bí Cineálta procedures as outlined in this policy.

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 the answer to any of these questions is **No**, then the behaviour is not bullying behaviour.

When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred teachers should consider what, where, when and why?

- If a group of students is involved, each student should be engaged with individually at first
- Thereafter, all students involved should be met as a group
- 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
- Each student should be supported as appropriate, following the group meeting
- It may be helpful to ask the students involved to write down their account of the incident(s)

Class teacher(s) will be fair and consistent in their approach when addressing bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents.

Interviews will be conducted outside the classroom in a fair and consistent way. If a group has been involved, each member will be interviewed individually at first and, thereafter, as a group when each child will be asked for his/her account of what happened. It may be
In some cases relationships may never be restored to how they were before.

Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

Requests to take no action

A student reporting bullying behaviour may ask that a member of staff does nothing about the behaviour other than "look out" for them. The student 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, it is important that the member of staff shows empathy to the student, deals with the matter sensitively and speaks 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. It is important that the student 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 or be facilitated to do so where there are literacy, digital literacy or language barriers. However, while acknowledging the parent's request, schools may decide that, based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour.

Recording bullying behavior
All incidents of bullying behaviour should be recorded. The record should document the form (Section 2.5) and type (See Section 2.7) of bullying behaviour, if known, where and when it took place and the date of the initial engagement with the students and their parents. The record should include the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour. It 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. It is important to document the date of each of these engagements and the date that it has been determined that the bullying behavior has ceased. Any engagement with external services/supports should also be noted. These records should be retained in accordance with the school's record keeping policy and in line with data protection regulations.

Where a Student Support File exists for a student, schools are encouraged to place a copy of the record on the student's support file. This will assist the school's student support team, where they exist, in providing a consistent and holistic response to support the wellbeing of the students involved. Where a Student Support Plan exists, the plan should be updated to incorporate response strategies and associated supports.

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*.

Determining if bullying behaviour has ceased
The teacher must engage with the students and parents involved no more than 20 school days after the initial discussion to review progress following the initial intervention.

Important factors to consider as part of the review are:
- the nature of the bullying behaviour
- the effectiveness of the strategies used to address the bullying behavior
- the relationship between the students involved

Even though the bullying behaviour may have ceased, ongoing supervision and support may be required for both the student who has experienced the bullying behaviour as well as the student who has displayed the behaviour.
It can take time for relationships to settle and for supports to take effect. In some cases, relationships may never be restored to how they were before the bullying behaviour occurred. If the bullying behaviour has not ceased, the teacher should review the strategies used in consultation with the students and parents and agree to meet again over an agreed timeframe until the bullying behaviour has ceased.
Where it becomes clear that the student who is displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behaviour, then the school should 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.

Complaint process
If a parent is not satisfied with how bullying behaviour has been addressed by the school, in accordance with these procedures, they should be referred to the school's complaints procedure. Additional Information relating to schools' complaint procedures are available at the following link: https://www.gov.ie/en/policyinformation/parentalcomplaints/ 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 if they believe that the school's actions have had a negative effect on the student. The Office of the Ombudsman for Children can be contacted at ococomplaint@oco.ie.

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):

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

Where bullying behaviour has occurred
A 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 this bullying behaviour has an impact in school, schools are required to support the students involved.

Where the bullying behaviour continues in school, schools should deal with it in accordance with our Bí Cineálta policy. Where the student displaying the bullying behaviour is not a student in the school, but the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour is a student in the school, the school should support the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as appropriate and engage with them and their parents to determine what steps can be taken.

It is important for school staff to be fair and consistent in their approach to address bullying behaviour. Both the student who is experiencing bullying behaviour and the student who is displaying bullying behaviour need support. It is important that the student who is experiencing bullying behaviour is engaged with without delay so that they feel listened to, supported and reassured. School staff should identify the supports needed for the student who is displaying bullying behaviour to better manage relational difficulties and ensure that their needs are met.

- Parents are an integral part of the school community and play an important role, in partnership with schools, in addressing bullying behaviour. 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

- 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

- a record should be kept of the engagement with all involved

- this record should document the form and type of bullying behaviour, if known (see Section 2.5 and 2.7 of the Bi Cineálta procedures), where and when it took place and the date of the initial engagement with the students involved and their parents

- the record should include the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour

External Supports

Supports are available to help prevent and address bullying behaviour.

These include the following:

- National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)

- Oide

- www.webwise.ie

- National Parents Council

- Tusla

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.

Signed: _____   Date: _____

(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: _____   Date: _____

(Principal)