



Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of River Valley Community 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 Positive 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 April, 2025 January 2025	Microsoft Forms Survey Staff Meeting. Staff In-service
Students	April 2025	Paper Questionnaire
Parents	31 st March, 2025	Microsoft Forms Survey
Board of Management	24 th June 2025	Discussion at meetings
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	N/A	N/A
Date policy was approved: 24 th June 2025		
Date policy was last reviewed: N/A		

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 Board of Management of River Valley Community National School recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of pupils and is therefore fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour:

Culture and Environment

- A positive and inclusive school culture and environment which is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity.
- Is a 'telling' environment which encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment.
- Promotes and models respectful relationships across the school community.
- Sets high standards and expectations.
- A school-wide approach where each member of staff takes a consistent approach

to effective observation and addressing of bullying behaviour.

- Promoting kindness and inclusion in peer groups.
- Active partners in their child's education, fostering an environment where bullying is not tolerated through promoting empathy and respect.
- A 'trusted adult' who reassures and supports students they have done the right thing by reporting bullying behaviour.
- Creating safe, visible physical spaces in school.
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Curriculum - Teaching and Learning

- A shared understanding of what bullying is, its impact, and bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour.
- Monthly Anti Bullying Themes
- Implementation of education and prevention strategies, including awareness raising measures that:
 - Build empathy, respect, and resilience in pupils.
 - Promote inclusion and diversity.
 - Explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including homophobic, transphobic, racist, sexist bullying, and sexual harassment as appropriate.
 - Provide teaching and learning in SPHE that equips students with skills to build positive relationships, resolve conflicts, and recognise and deal with bullying behaviour.
- SPHE Curricular Programmes to include:
 - Online safety, digital citizenship, cyber bullying, healthy and unhealthy relationships, communication, help seeking, etc.
- SPHE methodologies to include:
 - Group work/Collaboration.
 - Role-play, acting out scenarios, case studies.
 - Extra-curricular activities to develop positive self-worth.
 - Co-operative games (particularly in P.E).

Policy and Planning

- Bí Cineálta Policy developed, communicated, implemented, and reviewed in consultation with all partners.
- Consistent recording, investigation, and follow-up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies).
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the Bí Cineálta Policy.
- Student Friendly Bí Cineálta Policy.
- Code of Positive Behaviour.
- Child Safeguarding Statement.
- Acceptable Use Policy.
- Digital Device Policy
- SPHE & RSE Policy.
- SEN Policy.

- Health and Safety Statement.
- Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils (both within school and on yard, unstructured activities, trips etc).
- Teacher Professional Learning and other such relevant supports for staff.

Relationships and Partnerships

- Strong interpersonal connections supported through a range of formal and informal structures such as Student Council, Parents' Association, focus groups etc.
- Student and parent/guardian active participation.
- Workshops and seminars for students, school staff, and parents to raise awareness of the impact of bullying.
- Promoting acts of kindness and activities that build empathy, respect, and resilience e.g. Random Acts of Kindness Day, Well Being Week
- Culture Month.
- Teaching problem-solving skills.
- Critical Thinking Skills.
- Promoting self-awareness and awareness of others.
- Encouraging peer tutoring and buddying.

Preventing Cyber Bullying Behaviour

Technology and social media have provided many positive opportunities for entertainment, social engagement, and education. However, the increase in the use of technology has led to students becoming increasingly vulnerable to cyberbullying or unacceptable online behaviour.

River Valley Community National School strives to proactively address these challenges by promoting digital literacy, digital citizenship, and fostering safe online environments.

Strategies to prevent cyberbullying behaviour include:

- Implementing the SPHE curriculum.
- Implementing the Digital Media Literacy curriculum which teaches students about responsible online behaviour and digital citizenship.
- Having regular conversations with students about developing respectful and kind relationships online.
- Developing and communicating an acceptable use policy for technology.
- Referring to appropriate online behaviour as part of the standards of behaviour in the Code of Positive Behaviour.
- Promoting or hosting online safety events for parents who are responsible for overseeing their children's activities online.
- Holding an Internet safety day to reinforce awareness around appropriate online behaviour.
- Taking part in Safer Internet Week

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 such as by displaying relevant posters, having gender neutral bathrooms, etc.
- Encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities.
- Challenging gender stereotypes.
- Conducting workshops and seminars for students, school staff, and parents to raise awareness of the impact of homophobic bullying behaviour.
- Encouraging students to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour.

Preventing Racist Bullying Behaviour

Strategies to prevent racist bullying behaviour include:

- Fostering a school culture where diversity is celebrated and where students “see themselves” in their school environment.
- Having the cultural diversity of the school visible and on display.
- Conducting workshops and seminars for students, school staff, and parents to raise awareness of racism.
- Encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities.
- Encouraging bystanders to report when they witness racist 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.
- Inviting speakers from diverse ethnic backgrounds.
- Ensuring that library reading material and textbooks represent appropriate lived experiences of students and adults from different national, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds.

Preventing Sexist Bullying Behaviour

Strategies to prevent sexist bullying behaviour include:

- 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 contribution of all students.
- Encouraging parents to reinforce these values of respect at home.

Preventing Sexual Harassment

River Valley Community National School promotes a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment. It strives to support this through a focus on education, awareness, and clear enforceable policies. Sexual harassment should never be dismissed as teasing or banter.

Strategies to prevent sexual harassment include:

- Promoting positive role models within the school community.
- Challenging gender stereotypes that can contribute to sexual harassment.

- Encouraging bystanders to report when they witness sexual harassment.

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):

Supervision:

Any incidents, patterns of concern or inappropriate behaviour will be logged and reported to the relevant staff as soon as possible, eg exclusion or intimidating behaviour.

- Teacher and SNAs present to supervise before school, at small break and lunch times
- Adequate teacher student ratios are in place for breaks
- Supervising personnel are deployed at strategic positions on buses, walks, trips etc to ensure adequate supervision and monitoring of interactions.
- Bathroom/changing room supervision in place
- Students are accompanied by at least two staff members on school trips
- Students are reminded where to play when out in the yard and what spaces to avoid
- Classes are assigned designated times on the yard to ensure age-appropriate interactions and ease of monitoring and observing of behaviour.
- Arrival – children go straight to their classroom and are supervised in their classroom by a teacher

Use of monitoring tools:

Incident logs:

- A record of all bullying incidents will be maintained, noting the time, location, individuals involved, and actions taken on the Bullying Record Form and passed to the principal. These will then be recorded in Appendix D BOM reporting form.
- Patterns of behaviour will be reviewed periodically to inform proactive measures

Student surveys and feedback:

- Anonymous surveys may be conducted periodically to gauge student experiences and identify areas of concern.
- Friendship and bullying will be taught through SPHE lessons to empower the children with language and tools to identify and report bullying behaviour.

Staff Training and Awareness:

All staff will receive training on:

- Recognising signs of bullying behaviour, including subtle and indirect forms.
- Effective intervention strategies to de-escalate and address incidents.
- Promoting inclusive and respectful behaviour among students.

Parental and Community Involvement:

- Parents will be encouraged to report concerns about bullying behaviour, whether observed or reported by their children.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

All teaching staff are responsible for addressing bullying behaviour

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 to determine if bullying behaviour has occurred:

1. Initial inquiry

- Teachers consider **what, where, when, and why** during the investigation.
- Interview individuals separately if multiple students are involved.
- Teacher can request children write a written account at this stage.

2. Group discussion

- After individual interviews, hold a group meeting to clarify everyone's perspective.
- Encourage each student to share their account to foster mutual understanding.

3. Written Accounts

- Request students to write down their accounts to ensure clarity and provide documentation

4. Defining bullying

- Refer to the definition of bullying in Chapter 2 of the *Bí Cineálta* procedures to and use the questions in **Appendix C** to assess if the behaviour meets the criteria.

5. Consideration of Context

- Distinguish between hurtful or unacceptable behaviour and bullying, referencing the school's Code of Behaviour for non- bullying issues.

Approaches to Address the Bullying Behaviour

1. Engagement with Students

- Meet promptly with students involved to ensure they feel listened to, supported, and reassured.
- Maintain privacy and conduct sensitive conversations appropriate to the age and ability of the students.

2. Support Mechanisms

- **For the student experiencing bullying:** Provide emotional support and involve them in deciding the next steps.
- **For the student displaying bullying behaviour:** Address underlying relational issues and provide strategies for improved behaviour.

3. Involvement of Parents

- Notify and consult parents at an early stage while addressing communication barriers (e.g, literacy or language challenges).
- Acknowledge requests for no action on behalf of the bullied child, but balance these with the need to address behaviour appropriately and the well-being of all involved.

4. Timely and Tailored Actions

- Take prompt action , ensuring measures align with the *Bí Cineálta* policy.
- Avoid actions that diminish the student's agency.

5. Strategies and training

- Utilise restorative practice, mediation, or other approaches where staff have been trained, and students consent to the process.

Refer to external supports such as NEPS, webwise, or the DCU Anti- bullying centre for guidance and training.

6. Sanctions

- Those displaying bullying behaviour must give an undertaking that the bullying behaviour will cease.
- Both parties (child being bullied and child engaging in bullying behaviour) will be involved in determining how to improve relations; eg 'how can we make this better?'
- Parents may be called to a meeting to discuss matters.
- Children engaging in bullying behaviour may be suspended from the school (see code of positive behaviour).

7. Addressing Complex Cases

- Handle cases involving external parties or off - campus bullying impacting school life through supportive interventions.
- Use the school's Code of Behaviour for ongoing or severe issues requiring disciplinary action up to and including suspension and expulsion.

Steps to Review Progress

1. **Follow - Up Review**

- Engage with students and parents within **20 school days** of the initial intervention.
- Assess the nature of bullying, effectiveness of strategies, and current relationships.

2. **Continuous monitoring**

- Supervise both the student experiencing bullying and the student displaying the behaviour to ensure ongoing support.
- Address lingering relational difficulties proactively.

3. **Adjustment as needed**

- If bullying persists, revise strategies with input from students and parents and schedule further reviews.
- Apply the school's **Code of Positive Behaviour** where necessary.

4. **Documentation**

- Maintain detailed records of incidents, actions taken, and follow ups.
- Update Student Support Files or Plans as applicable, ensuring consistency in addressing the issue.

5. **Final Assessment**

- Confirm if the behaviour has ceased.
- Document all engagements, including dates of resolution and any consultations with external services.

6. **Complaint and Support Resources**

- If parents are dissatisfied, guide them to the school's complaint process or external bodies like the Ombudsman for Children.
- Highlight supports available through NEPS, Oide, Webwise, NPC, and the DCU Anti- Bullying Centre for long- term resolution and prevention.

This approach ensures fairness, sensitivity, and clarity while addressing bullying effectively and promoting a safe school environment.

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):

Pupils who have been bullied, witness or engage in bullying behaviour will be supported by the school, within the limits of resources available in the school, through the provision of opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise self-esteem, to develop friendships and social skills and thereby build resilience and a sense of self-worth whenever this is needed.

Supporting Students who Experience Bullying Behaviour

- **Empowering Through Trusted Adults:** Encourage students to report incidents of bullying to a trusted adult within the school. Trusted adults will provide reassurance, listen attentively, and validate the student's experience.
- **Emotional Support:** Offer immediate support to help the student feel safe, listened to, and reassured. Support will be based on the needs of the individual child.
- **National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS):** Utilise NEPS, directly and indirectly, where appropriate to support the child's social, emotional and psychological wellbeing. NEPS can also assist staff in addressing the same.
- **Parental Involvement:** Engage parents early to ensure a supportive environment both at home and school. School will communicate outcomes and ongoing progress with parents.
- **Ongoing Monitoring and Follow-Up:** Maintain consistent communication with the student to ensure the effectiveness of interventions and adjust support strategies as needed.

Supporting Students who Witness Bullying Behaviour

- **Culture of Telling:** Encourage witnesses to report bullying incidents by emphasising their critical role in addressing such behaviour. Reinforce the concept of the *trusted adult* and *'Telling School'*. Confidentiality may be taken into account.
- **Education and Awareness:** Use the school's S.P.H.E programme and annual kindness week to educate students on the importance of standing against bullying and safe reporting methods, including online incidents.
- **Recognition and Validation:** Ensure that students who report bullying are acknowledged for their courage and supported throughout the process.

Supporting students who displays bullying behaviour

- **Individualised Support :** Identify the underlying causes of the behaviour and implement interventions to develop social and emotional skills, self-regulation, and

conflict resolution.

- **Parental Collaboration:** Involve parents in understanding the behaviour, its impact, and the steps required to encourage positive change.
- **Ongoing Supervision and Support:** Provide consistent oversight to ensure the student's progress in managing their behaviour and adapting to healthier interpersonal interactions.

School Wide Supports

- **Professional Development:** Use C.P.D to train teachers and staff on strategies to prevent and address bullying, including restorative practices and effective intervention methods.
Promotion of Digital Citizenship: Use Webwise resources, community garda and national events such as Internet Safety Week to teach students about responsible online behaviour, cyberbullying prevention, and digital wellbeing.
- **Inclusive and Safe Environment:** Actively promote a positive school culture where friendship, kindness and respect (school motto) are valued and encouraged across all interactions.

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.

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(Principal)