
Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

SCOIL MUIRE, CLONDRA, CO LONGFORD



The Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire, Clondra, Co Longford 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.

- The right to freedom of expression (Article 13)
- The right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 14)
- The right to freedom of association and freedom of peaceful assembly (Article 15)
- The right to privacy (Article 16)
- The right to be protected from all forms of abuse and neglect (Article 19)
- The right to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health (Article 24)
- The right to education (Article 28)
- The right to enjoy their own culture, religion or language (Article 30)

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.

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.

We are 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 our 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	03/03/2025 21/03/2025	School Management has undergone training in the Bí Cineálta Procedures. All school staff have familiarised themselves with the <i>Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour</i> document and have access to all associated materials and resources. Staff meeting was held to explain Bí Cineálta and to view and discuss the webinar. Half-day closure to discuss and begin to formulate new Bí Cineálta policy
Students	07/03/2025	Whole school assembly. Our student council has been tasked with adapting our child-friendly Bí Cineálta policy to reflect our school's identity and values. They will then bring this back to each of the classes.
Parents	27/02/2025 03/04/2025 10/04/2025	Links to the <i>Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour</i> sent to parents via our website and accompanying Aladdin Message. This Draft Bí Cineálta Policy was made available on our website and we invited parents to give their feedback/comments/suggestions. Our Newsletter, published and distributed 27/03/2025, features an explanation of Bí Cineálta and link to the 'Procedures' document.
Board of Management	25/02/25 09/04/25	The upcoming procedures were brought to the board's attention. A brief overview of what they entail was given. The board was informed that there would be some training in the area coming up. Draft policy discussed at the meeting and suggestions added.
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	24/03/25	Email sent to the local creche explaining the new procedures and that when our draft policy is ready we will send a copy of it to them.
Date policy was approved:		
Date policy was reviewed:		

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

This section sets out the prevention strategies that will be used by Scoil Mhuire Clondra. They are explained under each of the four key areas of wellbeing and also under the different types of bullying.

The four key areas identified in 'The Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice' as essential for a holistic, whole-school approach to wellbeing promotion are: Culture and Environment; Curriculum (Teaching and Learning); Policy and Planning; and Relationships and Partnerships. Our measures to prevent bullying behaviour have been developed with these key areas in mind.

Culture and Environment

We strive to :

- Create a school culture where bullying behaviour is unacceptable and a consistent approach to addressing bullying behaviour is implemented/present.
- Involve parents as active partners in fostering an environment where bullying behaviour is not tolerated.
- Support the idea that our school is a telling environment.
- Promote the concept of a trusted adult – stay safe linkage – who to tell.
- Create safe spaces in our school building and yards – visibility.
- Incorporate artwork and signs to promote our school values.
- Encourage a sense of belonging with ownership over their own space through art and creativity.
- Create a positive school culture and climate which is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity.

Curriculum (teaching and learning)

We strive to :

- Provide teaching and promote learning which is collaborative and respectful, fostering inclusion and respect for diversity.
- Display a shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact.
- Teach SPHE and RSE content which fosters students' well-being and self-confidence as well as promoting personal responsibility for their own behaviours and actions.
- Model respectful behaviour towards colleagues, pupils and visitors in our school environment.
- Promote curricular and extracurricular activities which can help to develop a sense of self-worth, working together, inclusion and respect.
- Students are given regular opportunities to work in small groups with peers, which can help build a sense of connection, belonging and empathy.
- Evaluate evaluation the on-going effectiveness of the Bí Cineálta policy.

Policy and planning

The aim of Scoil Mhuire Clondra's Bí Cineálta policy is

- To raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with school management, teachers, pupils and parents/guardians.
- To promote a school ethos which encourages children to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To ensure appropriate supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of school activity are kept under observation.
- To develop procedures for noting, investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.

- To implement a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and for those involved in bullying behaviour.
- To work with appropriate agencies in countering all forms of bullying and promoting anti bullying behaviour.

Relationships and Partnerships

- Interpersonal connections are supported through a range of formal and informal structures such as our parents' association and our various and multiple student committees and groups.
- Age and stage appropriate awareness initiatives that engage the student body in looking at their own behaviour – promoting acts of kindness and friendship, being
- an active help to others and looking at the causes of and impact of bullying during SPHE lessons.
- Encouraging peer mentoring and peer support.
- Supporting active participation of students in school life and active participation of parents in school life also.
- Engaging parents and students in actively contributing to the formation of a Child-Friendly BÍ Cineálta Policy to make them active participants in the promotion of and discussion of useful ways to identify and reduce bullying behaviour, and highlight the procedure and how to deal with it if it does occur.

Preventing cyberbullying behaviour

Technology and social media have provided many positive opportunities for entertainment, social engagement and education. Technology is a part of life that can impact even the youngest members of society. However, the increase in the use of technology has led to students becoming increasingly vulnerable to cyberbullying and unacceptable online behaviour.

Scoil Mhuire, Clondra will endeavour to proactively address these challenges by promoting digital literacy, digital citizenship and fostering safe online environments. Strategies to prevent cyberbullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- 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 Behaviour.
- promoting 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

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 the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- Maintaining an inclusive physical environment.
- Encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities.
- Challenging gender stereotypes.
- Encouraging students to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour.

Preventing racist bullying behaviour

Strategies to prevent racist bullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- 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
- encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
- encouraging students to speak up 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
- 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

Scoil Mhuire Clondra focuses 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, which is not an exhaustive list:

- 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
- Classroom jobs are rotated and not based on gender.

Preventing sexual harassment

Strategies to prevent sexual harassment include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- Teaching students about healthy relationships and how to treat each other with respect and kindness.
- Promoting positive role models who demonstrate respectful behaviour within the school community.
- Challenging gender stereotypes that can contribute to sexual harassment.
- Teaching the Stay Safe programme (every second year).

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.

Scoil Mhuire Clondra 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.

Scoil Mhuire Clondra has the following supervision and monitoring policies in place to prevent and address bullying behaviour

- Appropriate supervision is an important measure to help prevent and address bullying behaviour. Scoil Mhuire, Clondra takes all reasonable measures to ensure the safety of their students and to supervise students when students are attending school and attending school activities.
- We have a supervision rota in place and any incidents are recorded in our Yard Incident Book.
- Digital Learning Plan includes learning about responsible online behaviour and digital citizenship.
- Acceptable Use Policy also developed for technologies in our school.
- Children have adapted our Child-Friendly Bí Cineálta Policy to suit the needs of our school.
- Positive self-esteem is fostered among the pupils by celebrating individual differences, by acknowledging good behaviour and by providing opportunities for success.
- Staff are particularly vigilant in monitoring pupils who are considered at risk of bullying/ being bullied.
- All disclosed incidents of bullying are investigated thoroughly and consistently by following the correct procedure as outlined to staff and recorded on our shared drive using the template for this.
- Raising school-wide awareness on all aspects of bullying, and the supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extracurricular activities.
- Involvement of pupils in contributing to a safe school environment e.g. Kindness/ anti-bullying week, and other activities that can help pupils and encourage a culture of peer respect and support.
- Ensuring that pupils know who to tell and how to tell.
- Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place.
- Refer to appropriate online behaviour when using devices and in SPHE lessons.
- Promote online safety events or material for parents
- Development of a shared Google drive for staff with a bank of resources for teaching about bullying.

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

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

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

Scoil Mhuire Clondra is not expected to deal with bullying behaviour that occurs when students are not under the care or responsibility of the school. Where this bullying behavior has an impact on our school, we will support the students involved.

The teachers with responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour are as follows:

- The class teacher will oversee recording of bullying reports for students in their class – this includes using the procedure guidelines to investigate reports of bullying and recording bullying behaviour on the 'Recording Bullying Behaviour' document on our shared Google Drive. They will notify the Principal when a document is created.
- The Principal will follow up after twenty days to investigate if bullying has ceased.
- All staff will be vigilant to bullying behaviour.
- The Principal will inform the Board of Management of incidents of Bullying.

When bullying behaviour occurs, Scoil Mhuire Clondra 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 Scoil Mhuire Clondra to determine if bullying behaviour has occurred, the approaches taken to address the bullying behaviour and to review progress are as follows:

The primary aim in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved. With this in mind the school's procedures are as follows:

Identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred:

The definition of bullying provided in Chapter 2 of the Bí Cinealta Procedures document has set out clear criteria to help our school identify bullying behaviour:

Bullying is 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.

- When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred the teacher should refer to 'Incident Report/Checklist to determine whether bullying behaviour has occurred' (included here as Appendix 2) and consider the following: what, where, when and why.
- If a group of students is involved, each student will be engaged with individually at first. We may also ask the students involved to write down their account of the incident. Thereafter, all students will be met as a group.
- At the group meeting, each student will be asked for their account of what has happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's views. Each student will be supported, as appropriate, following the group meeting.
- Incidents can occur where behaviour is unacceptable and hurtful but the behaviour is not bullying behaviour. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour are clearly detailed in our school's Code of Behaviour.

Where bullying behaviour has occurred the following actions will be taken:

- Where the relevant teachers have determined that a pupil has engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the student friendly Bí Cineálta policy and efforts should be made to try to get him/her to see the perspective of the pupil being bullied.
- School staff will be fair and consistent in their approach to addressing bullying behaviour. Both the student who is experiencing bullying behaviour and the student who is displaying bullying behaviour will be supported. The student who is experiencing bullying behaviour will be engaged with, without delay so that they feel listened to, supported and reassured. School staff will identify the supports needed for the student who is displaying bullying behaviour to better manage relational difficulties and ensure that their needs are met.
- A student's agency or sense of power can be decreased when they experience or witness bullying behaviour. When a student tells an adult that they feel that they are experiencing bullying behaviour they may feel that they are taking back some control over what is happening to them. It is very important that a student's agency is not decreased further by adults deciding what will happen next but instead the student will be listened to and involved in deciding on the actions that will be taken.
- Parents are an integral part of Scoil Mhuire Clondra's school community and play an important role, in partnership with us, in addressing bullying behaviour. Where bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved will 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. In circumstances where a student expresses concern about their parents being informed, the school will develop an appropriate plan to support the student and for how their parents will be informed. Scoil Mhuire Clondra will consider communication barriers that may exist when communicating with parents, for example, literacy, digital

literacy or language barriers.

- Once the bully, victim and parents of both have been spoken to, strategies to deal with the bullying behaviour will be decided based on the nature of the offense. There will be a 20 day timeline from this point. The class teacher will check in daily with both parties and the principal will review after 20 days. Parents will also be consulted again at this point.

Determining if bullying behaviour has ceased:

- The progress review will commence no later than 20 school days after the initial discussion.
- At the review the teacher will consider the nature of the bullying behaviour, the effectiveness of the strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and the relationship between the students involved.
- If it is clear that the bullying behaviour has ceased, having consulted both parties and their parents, then the teacher will just continue to support both parties. It is important to note that the relationships of the parties involved may never be restored to how they were before bullying behaviour occurred.
- If the bullying behaviour has **not** ceased, the teacher will review the strategies previously used in consultation with the students and parents, and meet again within an agreed timeframe to see if the behaviour has ceased.
- Where it becomes clear that the student who is displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behavior, Scoil Mhuire Clondra will deal with the behaviour as provided for within our Code of Behaviour. Disciplinary sanctions will be considered.

Recording bullying behaviour:

- All incidents of bullying behaviour will be recorded. A record form is available to teachers at Appendix 3
- The record will document the following
 1. Form of bullying behaviour
 2. Type of bullying behaviour
 3. Where it took place
 4. When it took place
 5. Date of initial engagement with students
 6. Date of initial engagement with parents
 7. Actions to be taken & strategies to be used
 8. Views of the students regarding the actions to be taken
 9. Views of the parents regarding the actions to be taken
 10. Review date to establish if bullying has ceased
 11. Results of the review
 12. Engagement with external services/ supports if any
- Records will be retained in accordance with our record keeping policy and in line with data protection regulations.
- If a Student Support File exists for a student, a copy of the record will also be placed with this. The Support Plan should be updated to incorporate response strategies and associated supports.
- Scoil Mhuire has a recording template for both establishing **if** bullying behaviour has occurred (Appendix 2) and when bullying behaviour **has** occurred (Appendix 3).

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, the member of staff will show empathy to the student, deal with the matter sensitively and speak with the student to work out together what steps can be taken to address the matter and how their parents will be informed of the

situation. It is important that the student who has experienced bullying behaviour feels safe.

Parents may also make the school 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, Scoil Mhuire Clondra may decide that, based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour.

Complaint process

If a parent is not satisfied with how bullying behaviour has been addressed by Scoil Mhuire Clondra 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/parental-complaints/>

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.

Scoil Mhuire Clondra will use the following approaches to support those who experience, witness and display bullying behaviour:

Supports available to the school for resources and advice

Supports are available to help prevent and address bullying behaviour. These include the following:

- National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)
- Oide
- Webwise
- National Parents Council
- Dublin City University (DCU) Anti-Bullying Centre
- Tusla

The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying involves a whole-school approach. Given the complexity of bullying behaviour, no one intervention/support programme works in all situations.

Supporting pupils who have been bullied:

- Making sure the bullying behaviour ceases.
- Fostering respect for bullied pupils and all pupils.
- Fostering greater empathy towards and support for bullied pupils.
- Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through annual awareness-raising programmes.
- Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through the speedy identification of those responsible and speedy resolution of bullying situations,
- Making adequate counselling facilities available to pupils who need it in a timely manner (subject to available funding).
- Helping bullied pupils 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 and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school).
- Checking in with the pupil daily.

Supporting pupils who have been involved in bullying behaviour:

- Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are not always branded a bully and get a 'clean sheet'.
- Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are doing the right and honorable thing and giving them praise for this.
- Making adequate counseling facilities available (if available to the school at the time) to help those who need it learn other ways of meeting their needs besides violating the rights of others.
- Helping those who need to raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school).
- Using learning strategies throughout the school and the curriculum to help enhance pupils' feelings of self-worth.
- In dealing with negative behavior in general, encourage teachers and parents to focus on, challenge and correct the behaviour while supporting the child.
- In dealing with bullying behaviour seek resolution and offer a fresh start with a 'clean sheet' and no blame in return for keeping a promise to reform.

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.

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 by Mary Duignan and Melissa Hussey 25.09.2025

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Mary Duignan (Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Melissa Hussey (Principal)