

# 1. Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

We confirm that we will take all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the bullying or harassment of our pupils in whatever form and however motivated.

Catholic schools have a distinctive understanding of the human person, recognizing 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 each person 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 all have an indispensable part to play in the school community, regardless of difference.

## 2. 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.

### 3. Development/Review of Bí Cineálta Policy

	Date consulted	Method of consultation
School Staff	19 <sup>th</sup> November 28 <sup>th</sup> March ongoing	Bí Cineálta training for Principal + 1 Half day school closure, staff meeting, webinar Discussed at Croke Park meetings
Students	From 28 <sup>th</sup> March throughout Term 3	Class teachers to complete surveys, circle time, focus groups Topic at assemblies
Parents	Term I 2025/2026	Survey via Aladdin
Board of Management	19 <sup>th</sup> November 2024, 10 <sup>th</sup> December 2024, 25 <sup>th</sup> February 2025 13 <sup>th</sup> May	Item on BOM agenda, discussed changes to policy Policy ratified by BOM
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers		Policy posted on school website
Date policy was approved: 13 <sup>th</sup> May 2025		
Date policy was last reviewed:		

## 4. Preventing Bullying Behaviour

Herbertstown NS will use the prevention strategies listed below with the aim of preventing bullying behaviour among their cohort of pupils. These strategies are specifically aimed at preventing online bullying behaviour, homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour, racist bullying behaviour, sexist bullying behaviour and sexual harassment and all other forms of bullying as appropriate (*see Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta Procedures*)

### **Prevention Strategies used in Herbertstown NS**

- Following and implementing the Bí Cineálta procedures/policy
- Creating safe physical spaces with trusted adults who children can talk to
- Teachers strive to create welcoming, safe, happy learning environments, ensuring successful learning experiences for all pupils
- All yards are supervised by teachers and SNAs.
- Curriculum: Stay Safe, Walk Tall, RSE, Socially Speaking, Lust for Life, Transition Programme for sixth, Webwise, Fuse.
- Extra-curricular activities promoted throughout our school, such as art competitions, handwriting competitions, quizzes, music groups, hurling, camogie, boys and girls football, soccer, swimming, athletics, futsal.
- Pupil led initiatives implemented throughout the school: Active Flag, Green Schools
- Small group intervention social groups supported by the SET Team.
- SSE in Wellbeing; Buddy system, Buddy Bench,
- Teacher training in Restorative Practice and Wellbeing.
- Regular Child Safeguarding training completed through Tusla for all staff.
- Designated DLP and DDLP.
- Create a positive school climate where all students feels safe, respected and valued
- Promote diversity and inclusion in all aspects of school life
- Encourage open communication between pupils, 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
- Anti bullying signs and messages will be displayed around the school. Positive messages that promote friendship and caring attitudes will also be displayed.
- Teacher Professional Learning
- Collaborate with community organisations to provide additional support and resources
- Guest speakers may be invited to address staff and parents groups at regular intervals in relation to various types of bullying
- Work with parents and pupils to educate them about the dangers of cyberbullying by facilitating outside speakers eg Digiwise
- The programme 'Webwise' will be taught on a regular basis in school
- Clear protocols are in place to encourage parents/guardians to approach the school if they suspect their child is being bullied.

**The school has the following supervision and monitoring policies in place to prevent and address bullying behaviour**

- SET Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Enrolment Policy
- Supervision Policy
- Wellbeing Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Split Class Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Complaints Procedures
- Child Protection Policy

**Monitoring:**

- Staff: All staff members should be trained to recognize and respond to bullying behaviour. They should be present and visible in common areas and playgrounds during breaktime
- Pupil Supervision: Class teachers should supervise pupils during class time and break times. They should be aware of what is happening in their classrooms and on the playground
- Visitor Supervision: Visitors to the school should be accompanied at all times. They should not be left alone with pupils
- Incident reporting: The class teacher investigates all instances of reported or suspected bullying behaviour with a view to establishing the facts and records on an incident report form.
- Incident investigation: All reports of bullying should be investigated promptly and thoroughly. The investigation should include interviews with the pupils who reported the incident, the pupil who has allegedly bullied and any witnesses
- Follow-up: The school should take appropriate action to address the bullying behaviour

## 5. Addressing and Preventing Bullying Behaviour

The whole school community has a responsibility to prevent and address bullying behaviour. Schools should work in partnership with their patron, BOM, staff, pupils and their parents to develop and implement their Bí Cineálta policy. This is intended as a guide to addressing bullying behaviour.

### 5.1 Approach

The primary aim in addressing reports of bullying behaviour should be to stop the bullying behaviour and to restore, as far as practicable, the relationships of the pupils involved, rather than to apportion blame.

When addressing bullying behaviour teachers should:

- ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour feels listened to and reassured
- seek to ensure the privacy of those involved
- conduct all conversations with sensitivity
- consider the age and ability of the students 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.

### 5.2 Identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred.

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.

To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour you should consider the following questions:

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 all three of the questions above is Yes, then the behaviour is bullying behaviour and the behaviour should be addressed using the Bí Cineálta Procedures. If the answer to any of these questions is No, then the behaviour is not bullying behaviour.

**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.**

Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour. When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred teachers should consider what, where, when and why?

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

### ***5.3 Where bullying behaviour has occurred***

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.

See Appendices 2 & 3 for record templates.

#### ***5.4 Follow up where bullying behaviour has occurred***

- The teacher must engage with the students involved and their parents again no more than 20 school days after the initial engagement.
- Important factors to consider as part of this engagement are the nature of the bullying behaviour, the effectiveness of the strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and the relationship between the students involved.
- The teacher 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.
- The date that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased should also be recorded.
- Any engagement with external services/supports should also be noted.
- Ongoing supervision and support may be needed for the students involved even where bullying behaviour has ceased.
- If the bullying behaviour has not ceased the teacher should review the strategies used in consultation with the students involved and their parents. A timeframe should be agreed for further engagement until the bullying behaviour has ceased.
- If it becomes clear that the student who is displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behaviour, then the school consideration should be given to 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.
- If a parent(s) is not satisfied with how the bullying behaviour has been addressed by the school, in accordance with the Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary 8 and Post-Primary Schools, they should be referred to the school's complaints procedures.
- If a parent is dissatisfied with how a complaint has been handled, they 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.

All bullying behaviour will be recorded using the Bí Cineálta Record Template (See Appendix 2). 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. It will also document a date for review of the behaviour. The review will be recorded using the Bí Cineálta Review Template (See Appendix 8), identifying if the behaviour has improved or ceased, no more than 20 days after the initial engagement.

**All records will be retained in accordance with the school's record keeping policy and in line with data protection regulations.**

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.

## 6. Monitoring and reviewing this policy

The principal will present a Bullying Behaviour Update (See Appendix 5) 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 (See Appendix 4) is displayed in the school and is also available on our website. 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. See Appendices 4 & 5 for template to assist staff and the BOM in the reviewing of this policy annually.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*(Chairperson BOM)*

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*(Principal)*



