

Coláiste Chiaráin



Bí Cineálta Policy

to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

Note: This policy is effective from: September 2025

Coláiste Chiaráin

Bí Cineálta Policy Document

Mission Statement

'We are An Inclusive Learning Community Committed to Excellence, Innovation and Opportunity'

Our mission is to be a place of excellence where all can achieve their full potential in personal, academic, creative, and skills development. We strive to provide a friendly and caring environment that values the unique natural talents and gifts of each student. We are committed to being a place of inclusion and justice, where students learn to respect themselves and others. Through a responsible partnership between teachers, students, and parents, and in a spirit of service, we work together for a better community.

In accordance with the requirements of the Education (welfare) Act 2000 and Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post Primary Schools, the board of Management of Coláiste Chiaráin has adopted the following Policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour in conjunction with and within the framework of the school's overall Code of 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*.

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: 1st October 2026
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed:  Date: 1st October 2026
(Principal)

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		• SLT Review of New Policy requirements and existing policy provision • Teaching Staff Meeting • Ancillary Staff Meeting • SNA Meeting • AP1 - Review Focus Group • AP2 - Review Focus Group
Students		• Focus Groups • Google classroom Surveys • Year Group Presentations
Parents		• Presentation of Policy Information emailed to parents • Consultation Survey • Parents Council Focus Group
Board of Management		• Presentation of Policy Information • Board review and Consultation
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers		• Policy Information shared on school website • Policy Document shared with all transport providers accompanied with feedback survey.
Date policy was First approved: September 22 nd 2025		
Date policy was last reviewed: October 1 st 2026 Previous Review Dates: September 22 nd 2025		

Link to Mission Statement & Key Principles of Best Practice

The Board of Management 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 ensuring that policy and practice in the school is guided by the four key principles of *Cineáltas*:

1. Prevention
2. Support
3. Oversight
4. Community

The Board of Management of Coláiste Chiaráin 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 of Coláiste Chiaráin 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.

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.

The core definition below sets out clear criteria to help school communities to prevent, correctly identify and address bullying among students. Alleged incidents of bullying are however often complex and must be considered on a case-by-case basis.

The core elements of the definition are further described below:

□ Targeted behaviour

Bullying is deliberate, unwanted behaviour that causes harm to others, and where the student displaying bullying behaviour knows that their behaviour is or will be perceived as harmful by the child or young person experiencing the behaviour. Bullying is not accidental or reckless behaviour. The harm can be physical (for example, personal injury, damage to or loss of property), social (for example withdrawal, loneliness, exclusion) and/or emotional (for example, low self-esteem, depression, anxiety) and can have a serious and long-term negative impact on the student experiencing the bullying behaviour. If the repeated harm is real for the student experiencing the behaviour but unintended by the other student, this is not bullying but, importantly, must still be addressed under the school's code of behaviour.

□ Repeated behaviour

Bullying takes the form of a systematic pattern of behaviour which is repeated over time. Single offline incidents of intentional negative behaviour involving an imbalance of power are not considered bullying but must still be addressed under the school's code of behaviour. Posting a single harmful message/image/video online, and which is highly likely to be reposted or shared with others can therefore be seen as bullying behaviour.

□ Imbalance of power

In incidents of bullying, the student experiencing the bullying behaviour finds it hard to defend themselves as a result of the abuse of a real or perceived imbalance of power. This imbalance of power may manifest itself through differences in size, strength, age, ability, peer group power, economic status, social status, religion, race, ethnic origin including membership of the Traveller and/or Roma communities, sexual orientation, family circumstances, gender, gender identity, gender expression, experience of the care system, disability or the receipt of special education. In incidents of online (or cyber) bullying, the imbalance of power may relate to online anonymity, technical proficiency and possession of information/images/video, and the inability of the targeted student to remove offensive online material or escape the bullying.

Behaviour that is not bullying behaviour

A one-off instance of negative behaviour towards another student is not bullying behaviour. However, a single hurtful message posted on social media can be considered bullying behaviour as it may be visible to a wide audience and has a high likelihood of being shared multiple times and so becomes a repeated behaviour.

Disagreement between students, or instances where students don't want to be friends or to remain friends, is not considered bullying behaviour unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others including deliberate manipulation of friendship groups.

Some students with special educational needs may have social communication difficulties which may make them communicate their needs through behaviours that can hurt themselves or others. It is important to note that these behaviours are not deliberate or planned but, in certain situations, they are an automatic response which they can't control.

Bullying is not accidental or reckless behaviour. If the repeated harm is real for the student experiencing the behaviour but unintended by the other student, this is not bullying.

These behaviours, while not defined as bullying, can be distressing. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

Criminal Behaviour

Bullying behaviour can be considered criminal behaviour under certain circumstances and legal consequences can apply. The age of criminal responsibility in Ireland is 12 years.

Some online behaviour may be illegal, and students need to be aware of the far-reaching consequences of posting inappropriate or harmful content online. In cases of intimate imagery, the Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020, also known as Coco's Law, ***criminalises the non-consensual sharing of intimate images and also criminalises threatening to share these images.***

If bullying behaviour ***involves physical violence or threats of violence***, it may be considered ***assault***.

If bullying behaviour involves ***discrimination or hate speech*** targeting a student based on their race, religion, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation or membership of the Traveller community, it may be ***considered a hate crime*** under the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989, and those engaging in such behaviour may face criminal charges.

If bullying behaviour ***involves sexual harassment or sexual assault***, this may also be ***considered criminal behaviour***.

An Garda Síochána is the appropriate authority to investigate alleged criminal behaviour.

Types of Bullying behaviour deemed to be inappropriate:

(this list is not exhaustive)

General behaviours which apply to all	● Harassment based on any of the nine grounds in the equality legislation e.g., sexual harassment, homophobic bullying, racist bullying etc. ● Physical aggression ● Damage to property ● Name calling ● Slagging ● The production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other materials aimed at intimidating another person ● Offensive graffiti ● Extortion ● Intimidation ● Insulting or offensive gestures ● The “look” ● Invasion of personal space ● A combination of any of the types listed. ● Exclusion ● No innocent bystander
Cyber	● Denigration: Spreading rumours, lies or gossip to hurt a person’s reputation ● Harassment: Continually sending vicious, mean or disturbing messages to an individual ● Impersonation: Posting offensive or aggressive messages under another person’s name ● Flaming: Using inflammatory or vulgar words to provoke an online fight ● Trickery: Fooling someone into sharing personal information which you then post online ● Outing: Posting or sharing confidential or compromising information or images ● Exclusion: Purposefully excluding someone from an online group ● Cyber stalking: Ongoing harassment and denigration that causes a person considerable fear for his/her safety ● Silent telephone/mobile phone call ● Abusive telephone/mobile phone calls ● Abusive text messages ● Abusive email ● Abusive communication on social networks e.g., Facebook/Instagram/Tik Tok/SnapChat/X/You Tube etc. or on games consoles ● Abusive website comments/Blogs/Pictures ● Abusive posts on any form of communication technology
Identity Based Behaviours	Including any of the nine discriminatory grounds mentioned in Equality Legislation (gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community).

Homophobic and Transgender	• Spreading rumours about a person's sexual orientation • Taunting a person of a different sexual orientation • Name calling e.g., gay, queer, lesbian ... used in a derogatory manner • Physical intimidation or attacks • Threats
Race, nationality, ethnic background and membership of the Traveller community	• Discrimination, prejudice, comments or insults about colour, nationality, culture, social class, religious beliefs, ethnic or traveller background • Exclusion on the basis of any of the above
Relational	This involves manipulating relationships as a means of bullying. Behaviours include: • Malicious gossip • Isolation & exclusion • Ignoring • Excluding from the group • Taking someone's friends away • "Bitching" • Spreading rumours • Breaking confidence • Talking loud enough so that the victim can hear • The "look" • Use of terminology such as "nerd" in a derogatory way
Sexual	• Unwelcome or inappropriate sexual comments or touching • Harassment
Special Educational Needs, Disability – Learning Difficulties and Gifted	• Name calling • Taunting others because of their disability or learning needs • Taking advantage of some pupils' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to recognise and defend themselves against bullying • Taking advantage of some pupils' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to understand social situations and social cues. • Mimicking a person's disability • Setting others up for ridicule

This Policy Applies:

- In class, between classes and while on the school premises
- While in school uniform
- On the way to and from school
- On school based activity, school tours etc.
- To anything done in the school name
- To any behaviour that adversely affects the school reputation or the education of any student in the school

Rights and Responsibilities of Each Member of the School Community

Right	Responsibility
I have the right to be safe in school	I have a responsibility to make our school a safe and secure place for others

Rights and responsibilities of students and staff

I have a right to be:	I have the responsibility to ensure that:
- Treated with respect - Physically safe and to expect my property to be safe at school - Free from all forms of bullying - Able to learn & teach without disruption	- Others are treated with respect - Others are physically safe and the property of others is safe - Others are free from all forms of bullying - Others/students are able to learn without disruption - Bullying behaviour is acted upon as appropriate

Rights and responsibilities of parents

I have a right to:	I have the responsibility to ensure that:
Expect that my child is safe in school and can learn without disruption	- I report bullying behaviour to the school - Co-operate fully with the implementation of school policy

Responsibilities of bystanders/witnesses

I should:	I should not:
- Say 'no' or 'stop' when you see or hear someone behaving unfairly - be assertive but not aggressive - Seek help immediately from an adult, if the situation is dangerous. - Tell when you know a student is being bullied.	- Join in bullying behaviour for example, laughing at, sneering, 'slagging' or fighting etc. - Cheer on somebody who is bullying. - Stay in a dangerous situation, e.g. a fight. - Bully the 'bully'.

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):

Bullying Prevention aligned with Key Areas of Wellbeing Promotion

Culture and Environment	Curriculum
• Open Door Policy • Active Student Support Team • Active Mentoring System • Establishment of a Safe Telling Environment • Seating Plans • Visible Displays around the school • Display of students' work • Empowerment of student voice - Students' Council • Designated areas for students - Split Breaks and lunches, Library, Autism Hub, social seating throughout school, pitches/courts/benches • Classroom Expectations displayed in all classrooms • Members of senior management on supervision morning & evening and links with bus drivers • School counsellors	• Various awareness weeks throughout the school calendar e.g. Friendship Week, Anti- Bullying (Cyber Bullying) Week, Stand Up Awareness Week, Internet Safety Week, Think Languages Campaign, Ethos Day/Week (Inclusion & Diversity) • Variety of programmes are run in SPHE and Wellbeing/Guidance Classes • Team Teaching • Wellbeing is at the centre of all subject plans • Wellbeing indicators addressed in all areas of Teaching & Learning • 1st year transition programme through SPHE/Wellness • Drama – School Show • AEN/ASD: Primary school visits, weekly AEN meetings, culture of inclusion, world dyslexia awareness day, updates to staff from management & AEN meetings, regular staff meeting updates, whole school AEN yearly meetings between AEN lead teachers and class teachers • Staff CPD on area of anti-bullying/cineáltas • Whole school survey regarding bullying

Relationships and Partnerships	Policy and Planning
● Linking with external services e.g. NEPS, CAMHS, Tusla, Gardaí ● Linking with BOM, PA, Students' Council, YSI Community Activities, Mini Projects, Subject specific CBAs e.g. CSPE Action Project, SPHE CBA Class events, Fundraising events ● Student Support Team ● Guest Speakers ● Garda Visits ● Extra-Curricular- Coaches, Choreographers, Artists, Creative Schools ● Jigsaw One Good School ● Positivity Board	● Bí Cineálta Policy ● Code of Behaviour Policy ● Acceptable Use Policy ● Child Safeguarding ● Data Protection ● Wellbeing Policy ● Staff aware that they are all mandated persons, child protection procedures refresher course ● Children First E-Learning Programme. ● Principal & Deputy Principal complete DLP/DDLP training and refreshers

Supervision & Monitoring

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

In addition to all the practices identified above under Culture and Environment, Curriculum, Planning and Policy and Relationships and Partnerships Coláiste Chiaráin has the following supervision and monitoring policies to prevent and address bullying behaviour:

- Appropriate supervision is maintained throughout the school day, with particular attention to transition periods between classes and break times.
- All staff follow a structured yard duty rota to ensure adequate coverage of inside and outdoor areas.
- Corridors, bathrooms and other common areas receive enhanced monitoring through strategically placed supervision points.
- The school building layout has been reviewed to inform our Supervision schedule, ensuring all areas are adequately monitored.
- Staff are trained to recognise early warning signs of bullying behaviour and to intervene promptly when concerning interactions are observed.
- Students are encouraged to report any concerns to any member of staff they are comfortable speaking to.
- The school building and campus is equipped with an extensive CCTV system to ensure student safety and assist with investigation of any reported incidents.
- Digital activity on school networks is monitored through our Acceptable Use policy, with appropriate filtering software in place.

Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

- Yearhead for each year group assisted by principal and deputy principals: Gerard O'Sullivan, Evelyn Canty, Gareth O'Connell, Cathal O'Connor, Thomas Feehan, Ellen Horgan, Sarah O'Brien, Fergal Moore, Edel Farrell.

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
- Act as appropriate in accordance with our Code of Behaviour

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):

When bullying behaviour is reported, our primary aim will be to stop the bullying behaviour and restore relationships between the parties involved using restorative practice approaches.

Our teachers will consider what, where, when and why the behaviour occurred. If a group of students is involved, each student will initially be engaged with individually before meeting as a group where necessary. During these conversations, each student will be asked for their account to ensure clarity about different perspectives.

Students may be asked to write down their account of incidents. To determine if bullying has occurred, we will assess: (1) if the behaviour is targeted at a specific student or group; (2) if it is intended to cause physical, social or emotional harm; and (3) if the behaviour is repeated.

Parents will be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and consult on actions to be taken.

The teacher will engage with the students and parents again within 20 school days to review progress and determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased.

If bullying behaviour persists, strategies will be reviewed in consultation with all parties.

All incidents will be recorded, documenting the form and type of bullying, location, timing and all engagements with students and parents

Recording of bullying behaviour

Those involved in investigating and resolving bullying behaviour will note and report developments as follows and, in doing so, they will comply with relevant data protection legislation. It is imperative that all recording of bullying incidents must be done in an objective and factual manner.

The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour are as follows:

- Record all incidents of bullying behaviour (using appendix B)
- Document the following details:
 - Type and form of bullying behaviour (if known).
 - Where and when it took place.
 - The date of the first engagement with the students and their parents.
- Include the views of students and parents on actions to address the bullying.
- Track the review process with students and parents to check if the bullying behaviour has stopped and get their feedback.
- Record the date of each engagement and when it is confirmed that the bullying has ceased.
- Note any involvement with external services or supports.
- Keep the records according to the school's record-keeping policy and in line with data protection rules.
- If there's a Student Support File, place a copy of the record there to help the support team provide consistent help for the student's wellbeing.

Follow up where bullying behaviour has occurred

Engagement with Students and Parents:

- The yearhead/deputy principal/principal must engage with the students involved in the bullying and their parents.
- This engagement should occur no later than 20 school days after the initial contact.

Factors to Consider:

- During this engagement, important factors to consider include:
 - o The nature of the bullying behaviour.
 - o The effectiveness of the strategies used to address the bullying.
 - o The relationship between the students involved.

Review of Strategies:

- If the bullying behaviour has not stopped, the year head/deputy principal/principal should:
 - o Review the strategies used to address the bullying.
 - o Consult with the students involved and their parents to determine next steps.

Agree on a Timeframe:

- A timeframe should be set for further engagement and follow-up until the bullying behaviour ceases.

Further Action if Bullying Continues:

- If the bullying behaviour continues, the school should consider using strategies from the school's Code of Behaviour to address the inappropriate behaviour.

Disciplinary Sanctions:

- If disciplinary sanctions are necessary, the matter should be handled between the student, their parents, and the school.

If Parents Are Unsatisfied:

- If a parent is not satisfied with how the bullying has been addressed, they should refer to the school's complaints procedures, as outlined in the *Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

Complaint to Ombudsman for Children:

- If a parent remains dissatisfied after the complaint process, they can contact the Ombudsman for Children if they believe the school's actions negatively affected the student.

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.*

Support

The school will use the following approaches to support those who experience, witness and display bullying behaviour:

- For students experiencing bullying behaviour, our approach centres on listening attentively to their concerns, ensuring they feel heard and reassured, while respecting their privacy and involving them in decisions about how best to address the situation.
- A trusted adult will be identified to provide ongoing support throughout the process.
- For witnesses to bullying behaviour, we acknowledge they may also be impacted and will encourage them to report incidents while reassuring them they've done the right thing.
- Group discussions, when appropriate, will help rebuild positive peer relationships.

- For students displaying bullying behaviour, we'll engage in a restorative approach that helps them understand the impact of their actions while addressing any underlying issues contributing to their behaviour.
- We recognise that all parties require support and will utilise appropriate interventions including individual counselling, social skills development, empathy-building activities and where beneficial, mediation sessions facilitated by trained staff.
- Parents will be actively involved in supporting all students affected, with clear communication channels maintained throughout.
- Follow-up monitoring will continue beyond the immediate resolution to ensure positive relationships are maintained and any potential recurrence is promptly addressed.

Outside agency support:

- The school in certain circumstances may also seek the support and advice of TUSLA, EWO, NEPS, NCSE, second level school support services, HSE and any other agency deemed appropriate to support the school in dealing with incidents of bullying.

Links with other policies:

- Code of Behaviour
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Wellbeing Policy
- Child Safeguarding Statement

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 been reported since the last meeting, 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
- any wider strategies to prevent and address bullying behaviour where relevant.
- If any serious incidents of bullying behaviour have occurred which have had a serious adverse impact on a student
- If a parent has informed the school that a student has left the school because of reported bullying behaviour
- If any additional support is needed from the board of management
- If the school's Bí Cineálta policy needs urgent review in advance of the annual review.

This update does not contain personal or identifying information.

The minutes of the board of management meeting will document the number of new incidents of bullying behaviour; the number currently ongoing and the total number of incidents of bullying behaviour since the beginning of the school year.

The minutes will also note where the board has considered the bullying behaviour, update and document when the board has decided that an urgent review of the policy is required.

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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.

This Policy was formally adopted on **22nd September 2025**. Date of next review: September 2027

Signed: _____ Date: **1st October 2026**
(Chairperson of board of management)

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(Principal)

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