

Whitecross National School

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Whitecross N.S. Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of **Whitecross N.S.** 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 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	Feb 10th 2025 Feb 24th 2025 May 2025 June 2025	Staff meeting, discussions
Students	Feb 10th 2025	Small group discussions
Parents	Feb 18th 2025	PT meeting (online)
Board of Management	June 3rd 2025	Discussion
Date policy was approved: June 3rd 2025		
Date policy was last reviewed: (not applicable, new policy)		

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

<p>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 (from Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):</p>
<p>The school has a positive and inclusive school culture. Each individual is valued and thus students and staff experience a sense of belonging as they feel safe, connected and supported. Relationships between all members of the school community are based on respect, care, integrity and trust.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All staff foster a collaborative approach with shared responsibilities in relation to preventing and addressing bullying behavior. ● The In-School Leadership & Management Team influence school culture and set the standards and expectations for the school community when preventing and addressing bullying behavior. ● All staff develop and maintain a school culture where bullying behavior is unacceptable and ensure that a consistent approach is taken to addressing bullying behavior. ● Students promote kindness and inclusion among their friends and classes and maintain a positive and supportive school environment for all. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Random Act of Kindness Awards □ Promotion of positive behavior at Monthly Assembly □ Friendship week (October each year) □ Promotion of Restorative Practice within the school, and all the values that underpin this approach (Fairness, Respect, Inclusivity, Empathy, Nurturing, Safety)

- The Building Resilience Programme by the ISPC is covered in 6th class
- Student friendly Bí Cineálta procedure displayed in school entrance hallway (Appendix 2)
- Parents help foster an environment where bullying behavior is not tolerated through promoting empathy and respect.

The school community supports a **“telling” environment**. The school continually strives to create and maintain a safe supportive environment where reporting of bullying behavior is encouraged.

A Trusted Adult. Students are encouraged to report if they or another student is experiencing bullying behavior. Students are regularly reminded of who they can talk to if they have experienced or witnessed bullying behavior. The trusted adult will always reassure the child that they have done the right thing by reporting the behavior. The trusted adult should, without delay inform the member of staff who has responsibility for addressing bullying behavior. This is generally the class teacher but may include any member of the school Leadership & Management Team. The trusted adult should continue to support the student, as appropriate, while the behavior is being addressed by the relevant staff member.

Strategies aimed at preventing cyberbullying behavior:

Whitecross N.S. proactively addresses the challenges encountered by use of technology and social media by promoting digital literacy, digital citizenship and fostering safe online environments.

Strategies used to prevent bullying behavior include:

- Implementing the SPHE Curriculum
 - 5th & 6th Classes are taught the FUSE anti-bullying and online safety programme.
 - 3rd & 4th Classes are taught the Webwise Be Kind Online programme
- Implementing the Digital Media Curriculum which teaches students about responsible online behavior 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 behavior as part of the standards in the Code of 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 behavior
 - “Don’t be mean behind the screen” workshops every second year for 3rd to 6th class

Note: *The digital age of consent is the minimum age a user must be before a social media or internet company can collect, process and store their data. In Ireland, the digital age of consent is 16. Children between 13 and 16 must have parental permission to sign up to social media services. Most social media platforms have a minimum age requirement and for the majority of these it is 13 years old. Therefore, children under the age of 13 should not have a social media account.*

Strategies aimed at preventing homophobic/transphobic bullying behavior:

All students in Whitecross N.S. have a right to feel safe and supported at school. Strategies to prevent homophobic and transphobic bullying include the following:

- maintaining an inclusive physical environment such as by displaying relevant posters
- 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

Strategies aimed at preventing racist bullying behavior:

Students attending Whitecross N.S. come from many different cultures and backgrounds. Students from diverse backgrounds may face discrimination and prejudice and may be subject to racist bullying behavior. Strategies to prevent racist behavior include the following:

- 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 (including a Culture Day)
- 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

Strategies aimed at preventing sexist bullying behaviour:

Whitecross N.S. focuses on gender equality as part of the school’s measure to create a supportive and respectful environment. Strategies to prevent sexist bullying behaviour include the following:

- 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
- organising awareness campaigns, workshops and presentations on gender equality and respect
- encouraging parents to reinforce these values of respect at home

Strategies aimed at preventing sexual harassment:

In Whitecross N.S. there is a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment. Sexual harassment should never be dismissed as teasing or banter. Strategies to prevent sexual harassment include the following:

- promoting positive role models within the school community
- challenging gender stereotypes that can contribute to sexual harassment

The school has the following **supervision and monitoring policies** in place to prevent and address bullying behaviour (from Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

Whitecross N.S. has a proactive approach to supervision as the creation of safe physical spaces supports psychological safety and is an important measure to prevent bullying behavior. The following supervision and monitoring procedures are in place to prevent and address bullying behavior:

- Each class level is assigned to a dedicated yard space at break times. This dedicated yard space is clearly marked out and there is a clear line of sight to make it easier for school staff to supervise students. (Dedicated yard spaces change twice a year when weather permits playing on the grass.)
- A supervision roster is in place where one teacher is assigned to each yard area. SNAs work with the children they are assigned to during break times. Both teachers and SNA's are encouraged to promote playground games and inclusion.
- Some children from the Autism Classes integrate with their associated class at break times. This integration is supported by a SNA from the Autism Class and the progress of this integration is regularly reviewed.
- The visibility of staff on supervision duty is a priority and staff are encouraged to wear high-vis vests.
- Children from the senior classes are rostered for mediating at break times with the junior classes. Mediators assist:
 - ✓ Younger children to socialize and join games
 - ✓ Children to learn playground games
 - ✓ The teacher on yard duty to ensure that no child is left out.
 - ✓ The teacher on yard duty by alerting them to disagreements as they occur.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

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 (from Chapter 6 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

Core definition of Bullying Behaviour:

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

Approach:

The primary aim in addressing reports of bullying behavior should be to stop the bullying behavior and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.

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

Identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred:

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 each of the questions above is **Yes**, then the behaviour is bullying behaviour and the behaviour should be addressed using the Bí Cineálta Procedures.

Note: One-off incidents may be considered bullying in certain circumstances. A single hurtful message posted on social media can be considered bullying behaviour as it has a high likelihood of being shared multiple times and thus becomes a repeated behaviour.

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

- if a group of students is involved, each student should be engaged with individually at first
- thereafter, all students involved should be met as a group
- at the group meeting, each student should be asked for their account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's views
- each student should be supported as appropriate, following the group meeting
- it may be helpful to ask the students involved to write down their account of the incident(s)

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 & Appendix 1), 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

Requests to take no action:

Students who report bullying behaviour may not want to be identified as having told someone about the bullying behaviour. In this situation the staff member is required to show empathy and 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 experienced the bullying behaviour feels safe.

In situations where a parent makes the school aware of bullying behaviour that has occurred and specifically requests that the school take no action, the parent will be requested to put this in writing to the school. While acknowledging the parent's request, the school may decide it is appropriate to address the bullying behavior.

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

Determining if Bullying Behaviour has ceased:

The teacher must engage with the students and parents involved no more than 20 days after the initial discussion to review progress following the initial intervention.

Even though the bullying behavior may have ceased, ongoing supervision and support may be required for both the student who has experienced the bullying behavior as well as the student who has displayed the behavior.

If the bullying behavior has not ceased, the teacher should review the strategies used in consultation with the students and parents and agree to meet again over an agreed timeframe until the bullying behavior has ceased.

Where it becomes clear that the student who is displaying the bullying behavior is continuing to display the bullying behavior, then the school should consider using the strategies to deal with inappropriate behavior as outlined in the school's Code of Behaviour. If disciplinary sanctions

are considered, this is a matter between the relevant student, their parents and the school.

Recording Bullying Behaviour:

All incidents of bullying behavior should be recorded. The record should document the form and type of bullying behavior, if known where and when it took place and the date of initial engagement with the students and their parents. (See appendix 1) Records of students accounts of what happened, notes of meetings with parents and details of any follow-up meetings with parents should also be attached to this form. These records should be saved in a confidential folder on Aladdin with restricted access to relevant staff.

Where a Student Support File exists, a note of the record will be attached to the Student Support File.

Complaints Process:

- Where a parent 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 and Post-Primary Schools, they should be referred to the school's complaints procedures. The Parental Complaints Procedure is available at the following link:
<https://www.cpsma.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Parental-Complaints-Procedure-Updated-Dec-2023.pdf>
- In the event 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. The Office of the Ombudsman for Children can be contacted at the following link: <https://www.oco.ie/complaints/>

The school will use the following approaches to support those who experience, witness and display bullying behaviour (from Chapter 6 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

- **Listening**
Teachers/ staff will listen without judgement to the pupil(s) involved, and allow them to explain the situation and circumstances. Try to establish the facts. It is important that staff make notes on these conversations so there is a log of events.
- **Showing empathy**
Pupils should feel that their voice is heard and be assured that appropriate action will be taken. It is important they know that it is not their fault.
- **Reassuring the student**
Staff members can reassure the pupil(s) that their bravery in speaking up is the first important step in working towards a resolution. It is important that pupils know the next step in the course of action (see steps in previous section, and visual from Appendix 3).
- **Asking them to let them know if the bullying behaviour occurs in school.**
It is important that pupils understand that staff need to be informed of any bullying behaviour in school.
- **Devising appropriate “check in” mechanisms**
Pupils should be monitored if they have been involved in bullying behaviour. Regular monitoring can be formal and pre-planned, or informal check-ins by the staff members involved. Even when a situation has been resolved, it is important to check back in with pupils.
- **Discussing how the student can inform their parents of the situation if they haven't already done so.**
The pupils may need support and direction on how to inform their parents. As Bí Cineálta is a partnership approach, it is important that parents are told at the earliest possible stage, even if pupils are reluctant for them to be informed.

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)

Appendix 1: Record of the Bullying Behavior – Where Bullying has occurred

Name of Student: _____

Name of other students involved: _____

Date: _____

Staff Member: _____

How I became aware of this bullying behavior.

Form of bullying behavior that occurred: *Please refer to section 2.5 & 2.7 of the BÍ Cinealta procedures.*

Direct Bullying Behaviour				Indirect Bullying Behaviour	
Physical	Verbal	Written	Extortion	Exclusion	Relational

Type of bullying behavior. *Please refer to section 2.5 & 2.7 of the BÍ Cinealta procedures.*

Disablist bullying behavior	
Exceptionally able bullying	
Gender identity bullying	
Homophobic/transphobic (LGBYQ+) bullying	

Physical appearance bullying	
Racist bullying	
Poverty bullying	
Religious identity bullying	
Sexist bullying	
Sexual harassment	

Where the bullying occurred.

Inside school	School yard	Classroom	Other area	Outside school	Journey to/from school

Notifying parents (initial engagement):

Date/Time/By whom: _____

Type of notification (meeting/phone call/email): _____

Actions taken (including engaging with external agencies/supports):

Details of scheduled follow up with parents (This should be no more than 20 days after the initial engagement):

Has the bullying behavior ceased?

This record was completed by: _____

Date: _____

Please ensure that the following records are kept with this form:

- *records of engagement with all involved including any written records from students*
- *records of further meetings/engagement with students and parents*