Knockminna N.S.
Bí Cineálta Policy

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Knockminna 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	February 2025	Google Form Survey Staff Meeting
Students	February 2025	Google Form Survey
Parents	February 2025	Google Form Survey
Board of Management	March 2025	Board of Management Meeting
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	February 2025	Secretary SNAs

Date policy was approved:
Date policy was last reviewed:

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

This section sets out the prevention strategies that will be used by the school. These include strategies specifically aimed at preventing online bullying behaviour, homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour, racist bullying behaviour, sexist bullying behaviour and sexual harassment as appropriate (see Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

(a) Culture and Environment

A positive and inclusive school culture and environment which is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity is essential to prevent and address bullying behavior. This school encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behavior in a non-threatening environment and promotes respectful relationships across the school community. Knockminna N.S. strives to be a space where students and school staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported.

Knockminna National School is a Bí Cineálta school. We follow these anti-bullying procedures (2024) and we consider the following to be key elements of a positive school culture:

➤ We acknowledge the right of each member of the school community to enjoy school in a secure environment

- ➢ We acknowledge the uniqueness of each individual and their worth as a human being
- ➢ We promote self- respect, self -discipline and responsibility among all our members.
- ➢ We actively discourage vulgar, offensive, sectarian, sexist or other aggressive behaviour by any of our members
- ➢ We have a clear commitment to promoting equity in general and gender equity in particular in all aspects of our functioning.
- ➢ We have the capacity to change in response to our pupils' needs
- ➢ We identify aspects of our curriculum through which positive and sustainable influences can be exerted towards forming pupils' attitudes and values
- ➢ We take particular care of 'at risk' pupils and use systems to identify needs and facilitate early intervention where necessary —thus responding to the needs, fears & anxieties of individual members in a sensitive manner.
- ➢ Knockminna National School recognises the need to work in partnership with and keep parents informed on procedures to improve relationships within the school community.
- ➢ We recognise the right of parents to share in the task of equipping pupils with a range of life skills.
- ➢ We recognise the role of other community agencies in preventing and dealing with bullying
- ➢ We promote habits of mutual respect, courtesy and an awareness of the interdependence of people in groups and communities
- ➢ We promote qualities of social responsibility, tolerance and understanding among its members both in school and outside of school.
- ➢ Staff members share a collegiate responsibility, under the direction of the Principal, to act in preventing bullying/aggressive behaviour by ANY MEMBER of the school community

Effective leadership

The BOM has overall responsibility to ensure that this policy is effective, Sustainable and measured. The BOM must ensure that accountability is of the highest standard and frequently appraise the outcomes of the strategies and measures contained within the policy

ISM Team - have a clear role to act in a leadership capacity within the school community, instigating a whole school approach to preventing and tackling bullying — and modelling best practice.

The Principal of Knockminna National School as key leader strongly influences attitudes and sets standards in relation to dealing with bullying

Teachers must act as good role models but be fair, clear and consistent in their approach to addressing bullying behavior.

A school-wide approach

A whole community approach to the problem of bullying is required and Knockminna NS community comprises of management, teachers, non-teaching staff, pupils and parents/guardians. Students can shape the school culture by promoting kindness and inclusion within their peer group and maintain a positive and supportive school environment for all.

(b) Telling Environment

It is important that the school community supports a 'telling' environment and that pupils are encouraged to tell a member of staff (in the classroom / yard) immediately. The relevant staff member will investigate at an appropriate time

Beyond the school community, bullying behaviour may extend to outside of school. Where this negatively impacts on a school - parents and pupils have a responsibility to support the school in helping to address the issue. This applies particularly (but not exclusively) to cyber bullying.

The assistance of Gardaí, Tusla and Community Workers may be required in some cases.

Collective vigilance is needed throughout the whole school/community sector to identify and deal with issues around bullying in a fair and equitable manner
A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact is vital.

Knockminna National School endeavours to put in place appropriate systems to ensure that ALL relevant members of the school community (parents, pupils, staff and the wider community) have a shared understanding of what constitutes bullying behaviour as defined in this policy (Section 2 of Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2024)

(c) A Trusted Adult

The concept of "a trusted adult" can be an effective strategy to encourage students to report if they or another student is experiencing bullying behaviour. Staff could support this strategy by letting students know that they can talk to them. Students who witness bullying behaviour should be supported and encouraged to report the behaviour to a trusted adult in the school so that the behaviour can be addressed. Students who witness bullying behaviour on social media have an important role in helping to address the behaviour by reporting the witnessed behaviour to a trusted adult.

The trusted adult should reassure the student that they have done the right thing by reporting the behaviour. The trusted adult should, without delay, inform the member of staff who has responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour. At primary level this may be the class teacher.

(d) Creating safe physical spaces in our school

The creation of safe physical spaces within the school supports psychological safety and is an important measure to prevent bullying behaviour. Spaces that have a clear line of sight make it easier for school staff to supervise students. Staff need to be aware of any hidden spaces in hallways and in the schoolyard where there is a greater risk for bullying behaviour to occur.

School could consider increasing visibility in these areas such as by the use of mirrors, planting shrubs to avoid students congregating in these areas or increasing supervision.
Schools could take the following measures to create safe physical spaces:
➢ ensure good lighting is present to avoid dark corners or spaces
➢ remove visual barriers from windows such as posters
➢ install mirrors to improve visibility and reduce blind spots

- ➢ improve the visibility of school staff who are supervising at break times including during yard duty
- ➢ murals, artwork and signage can help schools to promote the school's values such as equality, diversity, inclusion and respect

Students can feel a greater sense of belonging to a school community when they are given ownership of their own space through art and creativity. This helps students to identify and to feel a sense of responsibility for their school environment. The inclusion of spaces within schools for collaborative learning can also play a part in fostering a sense of belonging. It is important that the school grounds are well maintained to promote a sense of ownership and respect in the school community.

(e) Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils

Staff members have a vital role in ensuring that supervision of pupils in class is effective and consistent.
Supervision in playground areas are managed and conducted effectively, with particular attention given to 'hot spots' or 'hot times' e.g. arrival & dismissal Office, Ancillary Staff, SNAs and Bus Drivers are well placed to notice and to inform if any behaviour which may constitute bullying has occurred.

Regular discussion and review of policy and procedures is essential to support staff on a continuous basis in their capacity as supervisor

All staff have a clear interpretation of what is expected in relation to bullying, how to identify possible bullying behaviours, and how to deal effectively with incidents of bullying.

Staff are aware that supporting one another is a key aspect of prevention and new/inexperienced members of staff must be given every opportunity to discuss concerns and model best practice

CPD in relation to Anti Bullying Strategies regularly occurs in Knockminna National School for all members of staff

Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies)

On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

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

Preventing cyberbullying behaviour (Bí Cineálta procedures)

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 or unacceptable online behaviour.

Schools should 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 or hosting online safety events for parents who are responsible for overseeing their children's activities online
  ➢ holding an Internet safety day to reinforce awareness around appropriate online
  ➢ behaviour
  ➢ In Ireland the Digital Age of Consent age of consent is 16. Therefore, children under the age of 13 should not have a social media account.

Preventing homophobic/transphobic bullying behavior

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 such as 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

Preventing racist bullying behavior

Schools have become much more culturally diverse over the last number of decades. Students attending schools come from many different cultures and backgrounds. Students from diverse backgrounds may face discrimination and prejudice and may be subject to 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

- ➢ conducting workshops and seminars for students, school staff and parents to raise awareness of racism
- ➢ encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
- ➢ encouraging bystanders to report when they witness racist behaviour
- ➢ providing supports to school staff to respond to the needs of students for whom English is an additional language and for communicating with their parents
- ➢ providing supports to school staff to support students from ethnic minorities, including Traveller and Roma students, and to encourage communication with their parents
- ➢ inviting speakers from diverse ethnic backgrounds
- ➢ ensuring that library reading material and textbooks represent appropriate lived experiences of students and adults from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds

Preventing sexist bullying behavior

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

Preventing sexual harassment

Preventing sexual harassment requires an approach that focuses on education, awareness and clear enforceable policies. Schools must make it clear that 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, which is not an exhaustive list:
- ➢ using the updated SPHE specifications at primary level to teach students about healthy relationships and how to treat each other with respect and kindness
- ➢ promoting positive role models within the school community
- ➢ challenging gender stereotypes that can contribute to sexual harassment

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

The Class Teacher

When bullying behaviour occurs, the school will:

> ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour is heard and reassured

> seek to ensure the privacy of those involved

> conduct all conversations with sensitivity

> consider the age and ability of those involved

> listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation

> take action in a timely manner

> inform parents of those involved

The steps that will be taken by the school to determine if bullying behaviour has occurred, the approaches taken to address the bullying behaviour and to review progress are as follows (see Chapter 6 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

Identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred

- When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred the teacher should consider the following: 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 also be helpful to ask the students involved to write down their account of the incident.

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

  Is the behaviour targeted at a specific student or group of students?

  Is the behaviour intended to cause physical, social or emotional harm?

  Is the behaviour repeated?

- Incidents can occur where behaviour is unacceptable and hurtful but the behaviour is not bullying behaviour. Strategies that deal with inappropriate behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

Where bullying behaviour has occurred

School staff should know what to do when bullying behaviour is reported to them or when they witness bullying behaviour. The school's Bi Cineàlta policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour and the student friendly policy should clearly explain what actions will be taken when bullying behaviour is reported.

The following principles must be adhered to when addressing bullying behaviour:
- It is important for school staff to be fair and consistent in their approach to address bullying behaviour.
- Both the student who is experiencing bullying behavior and the student who is displaying bullying behavior need support.
- 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 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.

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. 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. However, while acknowledging the parent's request, schools may decide that, based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour.

6.4   Determining if bullying behaviour has ceased

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

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

If the bullying behaviour 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 behaviour has ceased.
Where it becomes clear that the student who is displaying the bullying behaviour is confinuing to display the behaviour, then the school should consider 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.

6.5   Recording bullying behaviour
All incidents of bullying behaviour should be recorded. The record should document the form (Appendix F) and type (See Section 2.7) of bullying behaviour, if known, where and when it took place and the date of the initial engagement with the students and their parents.

Where a Student Support File exists for a student, a copy of the record will be attached to the student's support file.

6.6   Complaint process
•   Where a parent(s)/guardian(s) is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parent(s)/guardian(s) must be referred, as appropriate, to the scho ol's complaints procedures
Additional Information relating to schools' complaint procedures are available at the following link: https://www.gov.ie/en/policyinformation/parentalcomplaints/
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.

"'Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post Primary Schools (See Appendix A)

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

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The following principles must be adhered to when addressing bullying behaviour:
ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour feels listened to and reassured
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> take action in a timely manner inform parents of those involved

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"'Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post Primary Schools (See Appendix A)

Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools

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)