



Bí Cinéalta Policy:
Our Lady of Good Counsel GNS
Johnstown

September 2025

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1) **Bí Cineálta: A Policy to Prevent Bullying Behaviour:**

The Board of Management of 'Our Lady of Good Counsel Girls' National School 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 steps that are reasonably predictable to prevent all bullying or harassment of our students in whatever form and however motivated.

Catholic schools have a distinctive understanding of the human person recognising that every person is created in God's image and likeness and has inherent dignity as a child of God. This is the basis for ensuring that everybody in our school is treated with respect and care, in accordance with the Catholic schedule.

As a Catholic school we are committed to respecting the dignity of every individual. No human person is to be devalued and everybody has a part to play in the school community regardless of difference.

2) **Rationale:**

The policy as outlined was put in place to;

- Identify Our Lady of Good Counsel GNS commitment to the prevention of bullying behaviour
- Identify the positive strategies that we have in place in every class in order to prevent any incident of targeted and repeated behaviour.
- Outline the support we have in place for pupils who experience hurtful behaviour
- Outline the support we have in place for pupils who engage in bullying behaviour.

- Identify strategies for a shared way forward for both parties.
- Clarify procedures for pupil, staff, management and parental engagement.

3) **Aims of this policy:**

The aims and objectives of the policy can be summarized as follows:

- To outline strategies to prevent bullying behaviour.
- To heighten the community awareness of our practice and rationale.
- To define bullying behaviour.
- To outline strategies and procedures when dealing with bullying behaviour.

4) **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.

5) **Examples of Bullying Behaviour:**

Physical Aggression	Pushing; poking; punching; kicking; etc	Verbal	Name-calling; humiliating; mimicking; etc
Written	In public places/ passed notes/ drawings	Extortion	Something obtained through force or threat
Relational	Non-verbal gestures, malicious gossip; 'silent treatment'; manipulation of friendship groups to make someone unpopular; "do this or I won't be your	Online	Sending/ sharing nasty/ offensive/ intimidating/ insulting messages/images; posting private/ sensitive content; impersonation;

	friend anymore”; etc		exclusion
Exclusion	Deliberately isolated/ ignored/ excluded	Personal Property	Damage to/hiding of/stealing of/ interference with belongings

6) 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	• 11th February 2025 • 28th March 2025 • April 2025	• Staff meeting: Bí Cineálta- overview of the programme following leaders training. • Staff training day: half day school closure- consultation in groups and written feedback given • Online staff survey completed (11th April 2025- completion date)
Students	• 3rd April 2025 • May 2025 • May 2025	• Student council- focus group meeting. • Student survey- 3rd- 6th class • Student council to complete student friendly survey
Parents	• April 2025	• Parent online survey- completed 11th April 2025
Board of Management	• 23rd May 2025	• In person meeting.
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	N/A	
Date policy was approved: 23 rd May 2025		
Date policy was last reviewed: Previous Anti Bullying Policy: September 2024		

7) 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):

This school is committed to adopting a school-wide approach to fostering respect for all members of the school community. We pride ourselves on being an inclusive school where bullying of any kind will not be accepted. In developing the preventative strategies which this school will use to prevent all forms of bullying behaviour we come from the context of our Catholic ethos where inclusivity permeates our school in a real way.

Below are prevention strategies in place to address bullying behaviour.

Prevention Strategies:

This school takes positive steps to ensure that the culture of the school is one which welcomes respectful dialogue and encounter with diversity and difference by ensuring that prevention and inclusivity strategies are given priority and discussed regularly at our board of management and staff meetings.

The dignity and the well-being of the individual person is of paramount concern in our Christian response. This school will listen closely to and dialogue with parents, thereby building a relationship of mutual understanding, respect, trust and confidence.

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

Creating a culture of "telling":

- A culture of telling will be encouraged, with particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders. In that way pupils will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance. Bystanders can be the key to resolving bullying and if anyone witnesses bullying behaviour it should be reported. It should be made clear to all pupils that when they

report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.

- Teachers should repeatedly reinforce the message that if anyone is the victim of bullying behaviour, they should not retaliate in any way, but they should tell an adult. Victims should be reassured that if they tell, something will be done about the bullying in a safe manner and all reported incidents will be dealt with.
- Teachers will ensure that class lessons will be provided to enable pupils "how to tell" (**telling protocol**) and also that they can inform the school by the following means:
 - Direct approach to teacher at an appropriate time, for example after class.
 - Hand note up with homework/copies.
 - Have another pupil tell on their behalf.
 - Leave a note in the "worry box" (or similar strategy) that will be placed in a designated area.
 - Ask a parent(s)/guardian(s) or friend to tell on your behalf.

Raising the awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour by:

- Displaying the school's children friendly Bí Cineálta policy in school foyer and other prominent places around the school environment.
- Teaching the children about our school's student friendly policy.
- Having a **Wellbeing Week** each September to revise the key messages.
- The Stay Safe programme will be used to raise awareness of cyber-bullying and safety strategies for pupils when using IT.
- The Weaving Wellbeing programme will also be used to revise key friendship and anti-bullying messages.

A Trusted Adult:

- The concept of "a trusted adult" should be introduced by each class teacher.
- Staff could support this strategy by letting students know that they can talk to them or the SNA in the room or the SET teacher or indeed a member of management.

- 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 for that particular child.

Curriculum (Teaching and Learning):

- Aspects of bullying are discussed in class and at school assemblies. (What is bullying? What is not bullying? What to do if you feel you are being bullied? What to do if you see somebody else being bullied? Where are the hot spots for bullying? What are the hot topics for bullying?)
- Each class teacher will engage in formal teaching within the class setting through **SPHE and RE programmes**. Cyber-bullying awareness workshops and information evenings will be arranged in conjunction with our Parents' Association for all members of the school community.
- The following programmes will be used each year to actively teach the children in our school about bullying: Weaving Wellbeing, Stay Safe, RSE, Flourish, Cyber Safe Kids (2nd-6th).
- The school will also engage in modules of the Fuse programme with the senior end of the school (4th-6th).
- Hidden Curriculum/Incidental Learning: Situations involving conflict amongst pupils, which may arise in the classroom/playground etc. can be used as a teaching tool where appropriate.
- Professional development for staff will take place as required. For example; Restorative Practice training.
- Restorative practice approaches will be used by staff such as check in circles.
- Positive reinforcement will be used by all class teachers.

Policy and planning:

- The school is committed to the review of our Bí Cineálta and student friendly Bí Cineálta policy. This review will take place each school year and will be reviewed and sanctioned by the Board of Management on a yearly basis.
- Other school policies which link with our Bí Cineálta policy are:
 - Acceptable use of Technology Policy
 - Wellbeing/SSE Policy
 - Code of Behaviour
 - Child Safeguarding
 - SEN/ Inclusion Policy

Relationships and partnerships:

- Strong interpersonal connections are a vital part of effectively preventing and addressing bullying behaviour. These interpersonal connections are supported through a range of formal and informal structures such as student councils, school clubs, parents' associations and student support teams.
- Through the work of the following committees the school is actively encouraging student voice:
 - The Student Council
 - The Green School Committee
 - The Gealbhratach Coiste
 - The school principal and deputy principal also operate an open-door policy where student can make an appointment or drop in for a chat/ check in. Each child also calls to the office on their birthday to receive a birthday treat and a principal award sticker as a way of fostering relationships.
 - Through the work of our wellbeing plan greater parent involvement is encouraged at school events and initiatives to promote stronger relationships; gardening club, cake sale, Christmas fair, Confirmation and Communion receptions, fundraising events and parent evenings.

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):

Supervision:

- Appropriate supervision is an important measure to help prevent and address bullying behaviour.
- Staff supervision is key at all times. Class teachers should not leave the class unattended at any time.
- All staff are responsible for; recognising, responding to and reporting suspected bullying behaviour.
- Yard supervision: staff should divide out in the designated areas of the yard and should actively walk around and observe and supervise the children. Close attention should be given to children or groups of children where friendship difficulties have occurred.
- The class teacher should inform the relevant staff members who are supervising if there are any current issues between children so close supervision can take place.
- Visitors to the school will be supervised at all times. They should not be left alone with the students.

Monitoring and Investigating Bullying Behaviour:

Incident Reporting:

- Class teachers are responsible for investigating all instances of suspected or reported bullying behaviours in their class.
- All incidents must be reported to the **relevant class teacher**.

Incident Investigation:

- In determining if a bullying incident has taken place, the teacher will apply restorative practice approaches to see how best to resolve the situation. The teacher will also view the incidents with the code of behaviour in mind.
- The class teacher will use the resource 'Is It Bullying?' provided during their Bí Cineálta training day to determine if bullying behaviour has occurred. This guide should be kept on class teachers' notice boards/ on desk for easy reference.

- **All staff must keep a written record of any significant incidents** witnessed by them or notified to them. If an incident is deemed serious after all investigations take place, a record of this written record should be passed on to next years teacher so close supervision/ observation can take place.
- While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the relevant teacher must keep a **written record of the reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same.**
- Parents should be notified and their assistance may be sought in aiding the child to resolve the matter.
- Teachers endeavour to engage in interviews with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved may also be called upon to provide relevant information. Parents will be informed if **an investigation** is taking place.
- The relevant teacher must inform the principal/deputy principal of all incidents being investigated.
- 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. Restorative questions should be used to guide this discussion.
- Thereafter, all students involved should be met as a group. Following the restorative practice approach.
- 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. Restorative questions should be used to guide this meeting.
- 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)
- Supervision will be given to classes so teachers can take time to investigate. Where supervision is not available, it may be necessary to talk to children during yard times.
- Schools are not expected to deal with bullying behaviour that occurs when students are outside of school and online. The school will support students as needed. This support may take the form of a check in from the class teacher. Investigation of these incidents will not take place unless the bullying behaviour has an impact in school.
- We remind parents that we do not support the use of social media apps and groups for children of primary school age. We ask parents to monitor the use of such technology very closely.

8) **Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour:**

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

The class teacher: responsible for investigation stage one and two. Also responsible for follow up within twenty days if bullying has occurred.

Deputy Principal and Principal kept informed during stage one and stage two. If bullying does not cease after pupil promise is signed will become involved in meeting parents and children.

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):

Stage One: 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'

- To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour teachers 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 and the investigation should move to stage two.

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.

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.

Stage Two: 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 straight away 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. The deputy principal will provide teachers with a recording template.
- This record should be uploaded to the Aladdin system.

- This record should document the form and type of bullying behaviour, if known, 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.
- The child/ children involved will be asked to sign "**Pupil Behaviour Promise 1**" which is filed in the principal's office.
- The code of behaviour will be invoked in circumstances where it is deemed appropriate by the relevant teacher and school principal/ deputy principal.
- If parents are still concerned that the bullying has not stopped, they may request to speak further with the Deputy Principal/ Principal.

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.
- 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. It can take time for relationships to settle and for supports to take effect. In some cases, relationships may never be restored to how they were before the bullying behaviour occurred.
- 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 continuing 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.

Complaint process:

- If a parent is not satisfied with how bullying behaviour has been addressed by the school, in accordance with these procedures, they should be referred to the school's complaints procedure.
- Additional Information relating to schools' complaint procedures are available on the Department of Education and Skills website.
- 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.

9) **Supporting Students After Bullying Behaviour has Occurred:**

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):

- By creating a 'listening school'. Children will be encouraged to 'tell'.
- By supporting all those who have experienced bullying behaviour, displayed bullying behaviour and witnessed bullying behaviour.
- By promoting a positive school culture where pupils feel safe, respected and valued.
- By raising awareness of the appropriate programmes and staff training.
- By using fairness in ensuring all parties are listened to using the restorative practice approach.

10) **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*.

11) **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)



Bí Cineálta

Stand up, Speak out. Say no to Bullying!

What is bullying?



Bullying is when someone does something to hurt you, on purpose more than once.

What do I do if I think someone is being bullied?

If I think bullying is happening, I should tell a trusted adult. We are a telling school. Speaking to a trusted adult will help my school to find out if bullying is taking place and they can help me and the people involved. My trusted adult could be a parent, my teacher, a SNA, my school principal or my school deputy principal.

How can I talk to a trusted adult?

- I can ask to speak to my teacher or SNA privately in class or in yard
- I can write a note and put it in one of the worry boxes in my class or around my school
- I can put a note in my school diary to show to my teacher
- My family can send a message to my teacher on Aladdin



What will happen?

My teacher will be told so that they can investigate. They will ask themselves three questions:

1. Has it happened on purpose?
2. Did it happen more than once?
3. Is it hurtful?

If the answer is YES to all of these questions, the teacher will know that bullying is happening and can then investigate it. If the answer is NO, the teacher will say bullying is not happening and will do a different kind of investigation.

My teacher will speak to the person being bullied as well as the person that has been doing the bullying. Both people will get support from my teacher to help it stop and for everyone to feel safe and happy. My teacher will check in with both people to make sure things are ok. The parents of both people will also be told. If it happens again, my school principal and deputy principal will also talk to everyone involved

We are a telling school! Say no to bullying!



My school is a restorative school, that means that everyone in my school wants us to feel safe, happy and to make sure we try to fix any harm that has happened. We will try to forgive, learn and grow.



Bí Cineálta

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- I can put a note in my school diary to show to my teacher
- My family can send a message to my teacher on Aladdin



What will happen?

My teacher will investigate and support everyone involved. The parents will also be told about what is happening. My teacher will check in with everyone involved.

We are a telling school! Say no to bullying!



Appendix F

Notification regarding the board of management's annual review of the school's Bí Cineálta Policy

The Board of Management of Our Lady of Good Counsel confirms that the board of management's annual review of the school's Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour and its implementation was completed at the board of management meeting of _____ [date]. 8/09/2025

This review was conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Department of Education's *Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

Signed: _____ (Chairperson of Board of management)	 _____	Signed: _____ (Principal)	 _____
Date: <u>8/9/2025</u>		Date: <u>8/9/2025</u>	