

Howth Road Mixed National School

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

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The Board of Management of Howth Road Mixed 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 well-being 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	April 11th 2025	Bí Cineálta Training with all staff.
Students	2 nd September 2025	6 th Class Buddies Meeting
Parents	10 th September 2025	Email consultation
Board of Management	10 th September 2025	Meeting
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	N/A	
Date policy was approved: 10 th September 2025		
Date policy was last reviewed: 10 th September 2025		

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):

1. Culture and Environment: At HRNS we create a school culture and environment where bullying behaviour is unacceptable. We create a positive school culture and climate which is: welcoming of difference and diversity; is based on inclusivity; encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment; and promotes respectful relationships across the school community. We promote the following:

- a. A telling environment: we support the idea that our school is a telling environment.
- b. A trusted adult: we promote the concept of a trusted adult – Stay Safe
- c. Safe physical spaces in school: we create safe spaces in our school building and yard by ensuring good lighting is present to avoid dark corners or spaces, removing visual barriers from windows such as posters, ensuring the visibility of school staff who are supervising at break times, display murals, artwork and signage to promote the school's value and encourage a sense of belonging.
- d. Supervision: we take all reasonable measures to ensure the safety of students and to supervise students when they are attending school and school activities.

2. Curriculum (Teaching and Learning): HRNS promotes teaching and learning that is collaborative and respectful. Students have regular opportunities to work in small groups with their peers, which can help to build a sense of connection, belonging and empathy. The curricular subjects offered to students provide opportunities to foster inclusion and respect for diversity. The school provides opportunities for students to develop a sense of self-worth through both curricular and extracurricular programmes.

The Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) curricula aim to foster students' wellbeing, self-confidence, sense of belonging and sense of personal responsibility for their own behaviour and actions. Students' social and emotional learning (SEL) skills can be improved through the SPHE curriculum.

- Teaching and learning in SPHE
- RSE Curriculum
- Friends for Life
- Student participation
- Promoting inclusion and diversity
- Extra - curricular activities to develop positive self - worth
- Group work/ Collaboration
- Role-play, acting out scenarios
- Circle time
- School assembly
- Clear classroom rules in classrooms and in school journal

3. Policy and Planning: The well-being of the school community is at the heart of our school policies and plans:

- Bí Cineálta policy
- Student-friendly Bí Cineálta policy
- Code of behaviour
- Child safeguarding statement
- Acceptable use policy
- Intimate care policy
- Supervision Policy
- RSE Policy
- SEN policy
- SSE Wellbeing in education (2025)
- Appropriate TPL (Teacher Professional Learning)

Effective leadership is a key component of the policy with focused on supporting the implementation of this policy.

4. 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 open communication between teachers and parents. The school fosters positive relationships with parents and involves parents as active partners in promoting an environment where bullying behaviour is not tolerated.
- Age and stage-appropriate awareness initiatives that engage the student body in looking at their own behaviour – promoting acts of kindness and friendship, being an active help to others and looking at the causes and impacts of bullying during SPHE lessons.
- Conducting workshops and seminars for students, staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of bullying.
- Encouraging peer mentoring and peer support- Buddy system, assemblies, school teams, sports for fun
- Supporting active participation of students in school life and active participation of parents in school life also-Parents Association, fundraisers, policy development
- Supporting activities that build empathy, respect and resilience
- Promoting acts of kindness
- Teaching problem-solving and conflict resolution
- Engaging parents and students in actively contributing to the formation of a Child Friendly Anti Bullying Policy to make them active participants in promotion of and discussion of useful ways to identify and reduce bullying behaviour and highlight procedure and how to deal with it if it does occur.

5. Preventing cyber bullying

The increase in the use of technology has led to students becoming increasingly vulnerable to cyberbullying or unacceptable online behaviour. HRNS proactively addresses these challenges by promoting digital literacy, digital citizenship, and fostering safe online environments. The following strategies are adopted:

- implementing the SPHE curriculum
- implementing the Digital Media Literacy curriculum, which teaches students about responsible online behaviour and digital citizenship
- implementing Digital Media Plan (Google Classroom)
- 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
- liaising with the Parents Association to run awareness raising events and seminars for parents.

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.

6. Preventing homophobic/transphobic bullying behaviour

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:

- maintaining an inclusive physical environment
- challenging gender stereotypes
- report inappropriate behaviour of all kinds
- deal with issues as they arise in line with school ethos and broader bullying policy

7. Preventing racist bullying behaviour

Strategies to prevent racist bullying behaviour include:

- 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
- 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
- ensuring that library reading material and textbooks represent appropriate lived experiences of students and adults from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds

8. Preventing sexist bullying behaviour

Strategies to prevent sexist bullying behaviour include:

- 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
- encouraging parents to reinforce these values of respect at home.

9. Preventing sexual harassment

Strategies to prevent sexual harassment include:

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

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:

- A designated number of staff (including at least one teacher) are present to supervise at break and lunch time. Staff are visible at all times during breaks.
- Children are supervised in their classes at all times.
- Visitor supervision: visitors to the school are supervised at all times. They should not be left alone with children.
- Entrance and exit of children are supervised
- Children are accompanied by two staff members on school outings and activities.
- Children are told where to play when at yard and what spaces to avoid

Monitoring:

The class teacher investigates all incidents of reported or suspected bullying behaviour promptly with a view to establishing the facts and making a record.

The Board of Management confirms that appropriate supervision and monitoring policies and Practices are in place to both prevent and deal with bullying behaviour and to facilitate early intervention where possible.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

All Staff are responsible for addressing bullying behaviour beginning with Class teachers

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
- > keep records

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 will consider the following: what, where, when and why? If a group of students is involved, each student will be engaged with individually at first. Thereafter, all students involved will 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.

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

The following principles must be adhered to when addressing bullying behaviour:

- 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 who reports bullying behaviour may ask a member of staff not to do anything and just “look out” for them due to not wanting to be identified as having told someone about the bullying behaviour. They might feel that telling someone could 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 decide together what steps can be taken to address the behaviour. It must be made clear to the pupil that other parties may need to be informed for their welfare.

Parents may also make the school aware of bullying behaviour and specifically request that no action is to be taken by the school. Parents should put this in writing to the school. However, schools may decide that based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour through the Bí Cineálta procedures and/or the Code of Behaviour where appropriate.

Determining if bullying behaviour has ceased

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

Factors to consider in the review include:

- the nature of the bullying
- the effectiveness of strategies used to address the bullying behaviour
- the relationship between the students involved

Ongoing supervision of both the child experiencing bullying behaviour and the child displaying bullying behaviour may be required, as well as continued support.

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 will consider using strategies within the school's Code of Behaviour. If disciplinary sanctions are considered, this is a matter between the school in line with Code of Behaviour.

Recording bullying behaviour (see record sheet)

All incidents of bullying behaviour should be recorded. The following details are included on the record:

- form (see section 2.5 of Bí Cineálta procedures)
- type (see section 2.7 of Bí Cineálta procedures)
- where and when (if known)
- the date of initial engagement with the students and their parents
- the views of the students and their parents* regarding the action to be taken to address the bullying behaviour (*only in relation to their own child)
- when a review takes place, it should be noted if the bullying behaviour has ceased and the views of the students and parents in relation to this.
- date of reviews and engagements
- date that the bullying behaviour has ceased
- any engagement with external services/ supports should also be noted
- all records of bullying are stored for all pupils on the school database

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 parental complaints procedures. In the event that a student and/or parent is dissatisfied following the complaints procedure, they may make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

Supports:

NEPS

Oide

Webwise

National Parents Council

DCU Anti bullying centre

Tusla

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):

Where bullying behaviour has occurred:

A school is not expected to deal with bullying behaviour that occurs when students are not under the care or responsibility of the school. However, where this bullying behaviour has an impact in school, schools are required to support the students involved.

It is important for staff to be fair and consistent in their approach to address bullying behaviour. Both the student who is experiencing bullying behaviour and the student who is displaying bullying behaviour need support. The school will engage with the student who is experiencing bullying without delay. School staff should identify the supports needed for the student who is displaying bullying behaviour to better manage relational difficulties.

It is important that a student's agency is not decreased further by adults deciding what will happen next without listening to the student and involving them in deciding on the actions that will be taken.

The following principles must be adhered to when addressing bullying behaviour:

- ensure the child 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 view 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

Parents of both parties 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 as outlined in the school's Bí Cineálta policy. In circumstances where a student expresses concern about their parents being informed, the school will support the student in relation to how their parents will be informed.

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: S McConkey
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Date: 10th September 2025

Signed: M Woolmington
(Principal)

Date: 10th September 2025__