Coolick National School

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Coolick 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.

This policy was drafted by the staff in consultation with pupils and parents in during the 2024/25 school year and ratified by the Board of Management on the 16th of June 2025

We confirm that we will take all steps that are reasonably practicable 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.

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	23rd of January 2025	Staff Meeting
	11th of March 2025	Middle Management Meeting
	7th to 11th of April 2025	Google Form
	6th of May 2025	Staff Meeting
	30th of May 2025	½ day closure - Staff Meeting - Bí Cinéalta Policy discussion & development
Students	3rd of April 2025	Student Council Focus Group Questionnaire (3rd - 6th Classes)
	8th of April 2025	Whole School Assembly
	9th to 13th of June 2025	Whole School Bí Cinealta Poster event
Parents	23rd of October 2025	Parents Association Meeting
	7th to 11th of April 2025	Google Form
Board of Management	24/25 School Year	BOM Meetings
	16th of June 2025	Ratification of policy
	8th of December 2025	Amended and ratified Policy
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	n/a	n/a
Date policy was approved: 16th of June 2025		
Date policy was last reviewed:		

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

This section sets out the prevention strategies that will be used by this school to address all forms of bullying behaviour, in whatever form and however motivated, including online bullying behaviour, homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour, racist bullying behaviour, sexist bullying behaviour and sexual harassment.

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.

This school takes positive steps to ensure that the culture of the school is one which welcomes a 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.

➢ *Culture and Environment*

A positive and inclusive school culture and environment is essential to prevent and address bullying behaviour. The school environment should be a space where students and school staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported. Relationships between all members of the school community should be based on respect, care, integrity and trust. Open communication between the patron, boards of management, school staff, students and their parents help to foster a collaborative approach and shared responsibilities in relation to preventing and addressing bullying behaviour. The school leadership team influences the school culture and sets the standards and expectations for the school community when preventing and addressing bullying behaviour. Each member of school staff has a responsibility to develop and maintain a school culture where bullying behaviour is unacceptable and to take a consistent approach to addressing bullying behaviour. 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. Parents, as active partners in their child's education, can help foster an environment where bullying behaviour is not tolerated through promoting empathy and respect.

A Telling Environment: It is important that the Coolick National School community supports a 'telling' environment. Students should feel comfortable to talk about concerns regarding bullying behaviour. Schools should strive always to be safe environments where reporting of bullying behaviour is encouraged.

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 of Coolick NS will support this strategy by letting students know that they can talk to them.

Students who witness bullying behaviour will 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.

Creating safe physical spaces: The creation of safe physical spaces 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. Hidden spaces in hallways, around staircases and in the schoolyard can be areas where there is a greater risk for bullying behaviour to occur.Coolick NS make every effort to increase visibility and uses the following measures to create safe physical spaces:

> ensure good lighting is present to avoid dark corners or spaces

 > removes visual barriers from windows such as posters

> 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

➢ spaces are provided for collaborative learning.
➢ the school grounds are well maintained to promote a sense of ownership and respect in the school community.

Supervision: Appropriate supervision is an important measure to help prevent and address bullying behaviour.

➢ Staff at Coolick NS will take all reasonable measures to ensure the safety of their students and to supervise students when students are attending school or attending school activities.
➢ Coolick NS offers a mix of organised activities during break times and schools are encouraged to continue to do this with a view to accommodating a range of preferences and interests.
➢ Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extracurricular activities.

- ➤ Non-teaching and ancillary staff will be encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers.
- ➤ Supervision also applies to monitoring student use of communication technology within the school adhering to the school's Internet & Acceptable Use Policy.

- ➤ *Curriculum Teaching & Learning*
- ➤ Teaching and learning that is collaborative and respectful should be promoted.
- ➤ Pupils in Coolick NS have regular opportunities to work in small groups with their peers, which can help build a sense of connection, belonging and empathy among students.
- ➤ The curricular subjects and Plean Scoile offer pupils opportunities to foster inclusion and respect for diversity.
- ➤ Coolick NS provides opportunities for students to develop a sense of self worth through both curricular and extra-curricular programmes.
- ➤ The Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) curricular policies in Coolick NS aim to foster pupils' well being, self confidence and sense of belonging and to develop pupils' sense of personal responsibility for their own behaviour and actions.
- ➤ Pupils' social and emotional learning (SEL) skills can be improved through the SPHE curriculum.
- ➤ *Policy and Planning*

  The wellbeing of the school community should be at the heart of school policies and plans. Other school policies in Coolick NS including

- Acceptable Use Policy
- Special Education Policy
- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Health and Safety Statement
- Code of Behaviour
- SPHE Policy
- School Self Evaluation/ School Improvement Plans
- Protected Disclosures Policy
- Social Media Policy
- School Tours and Outings Policy

  support implementation of Coolick NS' *Bí Cineálta* policy. Supporting the participation of students in the development and implementation of school policies and plans can help increase awareness and ensure effective implementation. This Bí Cineálta policy will also be available in a *child-friendly version* to support and prevent bullying behaviour.

- ➤ *Relationships and Partnerships*

Strong interpersonal connections are a vital part of effectively preventing and addressing bullying behaviour. These interpersonal connections are supported in Coolick NS through a range of formal and informal structures such as student councils, school committees, parents' association, school extra curricular teams.

The following, which is not an exhaustive list, strengthen relationships and partnerships between members of the Coolick NS school community:

> age--appropriate awareness initiatives that look at the causes and impacts of bullying behaviour including those dealing with navigating friendships, identity-based bullying, racist bullying, homophobic/transphobic bullying, sexism and sexual harassment for example lessons covered as part of SPHE programme.

> supporting the active participation of students in school life, for example school committees, teams, buddy/ peer systems.

> supporting the active participation of parents in school life, including those who may find it difficult or daunting to engage with the school due to being unfamiliar with the education system or due to language or cultural barriers

> conducting workshops and seminars for students, school staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of bullying

> supporting activities that build empathy, respect and resilience

> encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring, promoting acts of kindness

> teaching problem solving

> hosting debates

Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying recognises the importance of positive relationships across the whole education community to promote empathy, understanding and respect. The meaningful involvement of the Coolick NS Board of Management, staff, students and parents in the development, implementation and review of the school's Bí Cineálta policy and student friendly version is essential to effectively prevent and address bullying behaviour

It should be noted that there are a variety of prevention strategies that can be implemented. Coolick NS school's Student Support Team supports the development, implementation and review of the school's strategies to prevent bullying behaviour. When implementing a prevention strategy Coolick NS engages with members of the school community. These members of the school community are encouraged to report any bullying behaviour to the school as appropriate.

- ● *Preventing cyberbullying behaviour :*

Strategies to prevent cyberbullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

> implementing the SPHE curriculum

> implementing the school's Internet & Acceptable Use Policy

> having regular conversations with students about developing respectful and kind relationships online

> 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*

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. For the purposes of data collection, students between the ages of 13 and 16 years old must have parental permission to sign up to social media services where companies use the legal basis of consent to collect, process and store users' data. Most social media platforms and services have a minimum age requirement and for the majority of these services it is 13 years' old. Therefore technically, children under the age of 13 should not have a social media account. It is important for their child's safety, that parents are aware of their children's use of technology including smartphones and gaming consoles.

>Coolick NS promotes the *'Smart School Pledge'* in conjunction with 21 other schools in the Killarney area.

- *Preventing homophobic/transphobic bullying behaviour:*

Strategies to prevent homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

> implementing the SPHE curriculum

> maintaining an inclusive physical environment

> encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities

> challenging gender -stereotypes

> encouraging students to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour

- *Preventing 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

> 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

> 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 behaviour*

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

- *Preventing sexual harassment*

Strategies to prevent sexual harassment include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

> 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

Resources to support schools to prevent bullying behaviour are contained in the Resources Guide which accompanies these procedures (see link below):

https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/a4148-resources-for-primary-schools/

- ***Supervision***

    Appropriate supervision is an important measure to help prevent and address bullying behaviour. Staff at Coolick NS will take all reasonable measures to ensure the safety of their students and to supervise students when students are attending school or attending school activities. Coolick NS offers a mix of organised activities during break times and schools are encouraged to continue to do this with a view to accommodating a range of preferences and interests. Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extracurricular activities. Non-teaching and ancillary staff will be encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers. Supervision will also apply to monitoring student use of communication technology within the school adhering to the school's Internet & Acceptable Use Policy.

Strategies in place in Coolick NS to ensure adequate and appropriate supervision:

- Yard Supervision timetable
- Split Breaks consequently only half the amount of pupils on the yard at any one time thus increasing supervision ratio.
- Morning and evening supervision timetable
- Awareness of hidden spaces where potential bullying behaviours can take place
- Pupils not left unattended e.g. with outside coaches, school tours etc.

The dignity and the wellbeing 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 prevention 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 prevention strategies.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

Relevant class teachers, deputy principal and principal.

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):

Investigating and dealing with incidents:

1. In investigating and dealing with incidents of a bullying nature, the teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved;

2. Parent(s)/guardian(s) and pupils are required to co-operate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving any issues and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved as quickly as possible;

3. Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach.

4. Where possible incidents should be investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved;

5. All interviews should be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this way;

6. When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher should seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This should be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner;

7. If a group is involved, each member should be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved should be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member should be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements;

8. Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that may face them from the other members of the group after the interview by the teacher;

9. In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the parties involved should be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken (by reference to the school policy).

 The school should give parent(s)/guardian(s) an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports provided to the pupils;

10. Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts should be made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied;

11. It must also be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parent(s)/guardian(s)) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school;

NB: To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour the answers to the following should be considered:

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.

The definition of bullying provided in Chapter 2 of the Bí Cineálta Guidelines, sets out clear criteria to help schools to identify bullying behaviour. This should be consulted and considered in determining whether or not bullying has occurred.

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 Coolick NS Code of Behaviour.

Follow up and Recording: In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant teacher must, as part of his/her professional judgement, take the following factors into account:

- Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased;
- Whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable;
- Whether the relationships between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable;
- Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parent(s)/guardian(s) or the school Principal or Deputy Principal

- Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved should be arranged separately with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date if the pupil who has been bullied is ready and agreeable.
- 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 school's complaints procedures.
- In the event that a parent(s)/guardian(s) has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parent(s)/guardian(s) of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children at ococomplaint@oco.ie.

Recording of Bullying Behaviour: It is imperative that all recording of bullying incidents must be done in an objective and factual manner. The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour are as follows:

All staff keep a written record of any incidents witnessed by them or notified to them in their Incident Log Book.

The following details should be included on the record:

● form of bullying (see section 2.5 of Bí Cineálta procedures)

● type of bullying behaviour (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 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.

● note the date of reviews and engagements

● note the date that the bullying behaviour has ceased

● any engagement with external services/ supports should also be noted

● if a SSF exists for a pupil involved, schools are encouraged to place a copy of the record on the student's support file (on Log of Actions - Aladdin where relevant)

All incidents must be reported to the relevant teacher.

While all 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.

The relevant teacher must inform the principal of all incidents being investigated.

Determination That Bullying Has Occurred:

If it is established by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher must keep appropriate written records which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.

The school in consultation with the relevant teacher/s has a specific storage location of all records retained by the relevant teacher (office filing cabinet).

The relevant teacher must use the recording template devised by the school to record the bullying behaviour. (see appendix 1)

All incidents of that may be determined as bullying and determined bullying behaviour will be recorded as outlined above. The actions and supports agreed to address bullying behaviour will also 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*

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):

Established intervention strategies and supports:

- Teacher interviews with all pupils
- Negotiating agreements between pupils and following these up by monitoring progress. This can be on an informal basis or implemented through a more structured mediation process
- Working with parent(s)/guardian(s) to support school interventions
- No Blame Approach
- Circle Time
- Restorative practice and interviews
- Restorative conferencing
- SPHE and nurture group activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop friendships and social skills and build resilience and to support restoration of peer relationships.
- Buddy / Peer mentoring systems
- Group work such as circle time, social groups, pupil committees e.g. Student Council etc.

Supports from External Agencies:

Counselling or further supports the school will endeavour to liaise with the appropriate agencies (e.g. NEPS, Oide, Webwise, National Parents Council, DCU Anti Bullying Centre & TUSLA) to organise same.

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 www.coolickns.ie 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.

_____   _____
Ciara Irwin Foley   Gearóid O Sullivan
Chairperson, Board of Management   Principal & Secretary of Board of Management
08/12/2025   08/12/2025

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Appendix 1 -Recording Bullying Behaviour

1.Name of pupil being bullied and class group

Name _____Class_____

2. Name(s) and class(es) of pupil(s) engaged in bullying behaviour

3. Source of bullying concern/report
(tick relevant box(es)

Pupil concerned	
Other Pupil	
Parent	
Teacher	
Other	

4. Location of incidents (tick relevant box(es))

Playground	
Classroom	
Corridor	
Toilets	
School Bus	
Other	

5. Name of person(s) who reported the bullying concern

6. Type of Bullying Behaviour (tick relevant box(es)

Physical Aggression		Cyber-bullying	
Damage to Property		Intimidation	
Isolation/Exclusion		Malicious Gossip	
Name Calling		Other (specify)	

7. Where behaviour is regarded as identity-based bullying, indicate the relevant category:

Homophobic	Disability/SEN related	Racist	Membership of Traveller community	Other (specify)

8. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact

9. Details of actions taken

Signed _____ (Relevant Teacher) Date _____

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal _____

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Appendix 2 -Board of Management Report Template

Having reviewed the details of the incidents of bullying behaviour (if any) that have been reported since the previous board of management meeting, the following information is presented to this meeting:

Total number of new incidents of bullying behaviour reported since the last board of management meeting.	
Total number of incidents of bullying behaviour currently ongoing.	
Total number of incidents of bullying behaviour reported since the beginning of this school year.	

_____   _____

Gearóid O Sullivan
Principal & Secretary of Board of Management   Date