



Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

Four Masters National School



School Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Four Masters 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.

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.

1. 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	11 th June 2025	Half Day School Closure
Students	Week of 12 th May 2025	Whole school survey
Parents	Week of 12 th May	School Survey
Board of Management		BOM Meeting
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	May 2025	Conversation with Bus Drivers
Date policy was approved:		
Date policy was last reviewed:		

2. 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):

Preventing Cyber Bullying behaviour:

- ❖ Implementation of the SPHE curriculum > Focusing on the theme of bullying- Different programmes implemented in each class such as Stay Safe and Walk Tall
- ❖ Implementation of the Digital Media Literacy curriculum which teaches students about responsible online behaviour and digital citizenship. In the Four Masters NS using resources such as www.webwise.ie and www.childnet.com
- ❖ 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
- ❖ Parents association organise yearly an Internet safety night to reinforce awareness around appropriate online behaviour
- ❖ No mobile phones, smart phones or any other smart technology e.g. iPad (except those provided by the school) iPod or smart watch allowed in pupil's possession during school day or when pupils are away on school trips. If a mobile phone is absolutely necessary the school must receive a written request from parents and the phone in question must be left in the school office by the child each morning and collected by the child at the end of the school day. If a mobile phone or any other smart device is found in pupils' possession during school day it will be confiscated and left in the principal's office for collection by parent/guardian.
- ❖ It is important for their child's safety that parents/guardians are aware of their children's use of technology including smartphones and gaming consoles.

Preventing homophobic/transphobic bullying behaviour

- ❖ 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

- ❖ Fostering a school culture where diversity is celebrated and where students "see themselves" in their school environment
- ❖ Celebrating the cultural diversity of the school by visible displays and regular celebrations of same
- ❖ Conducting workshops and assemblies 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 behaviour

- ❖ 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

Preventing sexual harassment

- ❖ Promoting positive role models within the school community
- ❖ Challenging gender stereotypes that can contribute to sexual harassment

Other strategies we use in Four Masters NS to prevent bullying are

- ❖ Every year a “Friendship Week” will be held in the school to highlight the importance of friendship for its own sake and also as a means of building resilience, empathy and respect in pupils and reinforcing positive relationships
- ❖ Assemblies to promote kindness and Christian values and to highlight the unacceptability of bullying and/or racism in our school.

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 and Monitoring Policies

Classroom

- ❖ Proactive teacher observations
- ❖ Formal anti-bullying lessons/class contract (concept of trusted adult)
- ❖ Telling school culture (upstander/bystander)
- ❖ Routine well-being surveys
- ❖ Consultation with parents regard concerns of bullying
- ❖ Code of behaviour

Yard

- ❖ Teacher supervision and communication
- ❖ Structured activities - Friendship squad
- ❖ One at a time to the toilet
- ❖ Informal conversation about yard issues

Cyber-bullying

- ❖ Webwise workshops
- ❖ Reminder emails regarding use of suitable age appropriate apps for children
- ❖ Internet security when using ipads

- ❖ No phones/smartwatches
- ❖ Communication with parents regarding cyber bullying

Environment

- ❖ Safe physical spaces
- ❖ Good lighting
- ❖ Removal of visual barriers from windows

3. Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

Siobhan Lee (Principal)

John Britton(Deputy 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 (outlined in Chapter 6 of the Bí Cineálta Procedures.)

Guide to Addressing Bullying Behaviour

The whole school community has a responsibility to prevent and address bullying behaviour. Schools should work in partnership with their Patron, Board of Management, staff, students and their parents to develop and implement their Bí Cineálta policy.

Approach

The primary aim in addressing reports of bullying behaviour should be to stop the bullying behaviour and to restore, as far as practicable, the relationships of the students involved, rather than to apportion blame.

When addressing bullying behaviour teachers should:

- ❖ ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour feels listened to and reassured
- ❖ seek to ensure the privacy of those involved
- ❖ conduct all conversations with sensitivity
- ❖ consider the age and ability of the students involved
- ❖ listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour
- ❖ take action in a timely manner
- ❖ inform parents of those involved

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. The detailed definition is provided in Chapter 2 of the Bí Cineálta procedures.

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

- 1. Is the behaviour targeted at a specific student or group of students?**
- 2. Is the behaviour intended to cause physical, social or emotional harm?**
- 3. Is the behaviour repeated?**

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

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

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

Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred teachers should consider what, where, when and why?

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

Where bullying behaviour has occurred

- ❖ Parents are an integral part of the school community and play an important role, in partnership with schools, in addressing bullying behaviour. Where bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the students involved must be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and to consult with them on the actions to be taken by the school to address the behaviour.
- ❖ it is important to listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour.
- ❖ a record should be kept of the engagement with all involved.
- ❖ this record should document the form and type of bullying behaviour, if known (see Section 2.5 and 2.7 of the Bi Cineálta procedures), where and when it took place and the date of the initial engagement with the students involved and their parents.

Data protection legislation must be adhered to.

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 (such as special monitoring procedures during break times) and the relationship between the students involved.
- ❖ the teacher should document the review with students and their parents to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased and the views of students and their parents in relation to this
- ❖ the date that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased should also be recorded
- ❖ any engagement with external services/supports should also be noted

- ❖ ongoing supervision and support may be needed for the students involved even where bullying behaviour has ceased
- ❖ if the bullying behaviour has not ceased the teacher should review the strategies used in consultation with the students involved and their parents. A timeframe should be agreed for further engagement until the bullying behaviour has ceased
- ❖ if it becomes clear that the student who is displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behaviour, then the school consideration should be given to 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
- ❖ if a parent(s) is not satisfied with how the bullying behaviour has been addressed by the school, in accordance with the *Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*. They should be referred to the school's complaints procedures
- ❖ if a parent is dissatisfied with how a complaint has been handled, they may make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children if they believe that the school's actions have had a negative effect on the student

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

- ❖ Pupils will be encouraged to approach their teacher or another trusted adult (SNA, SET, principal) if they need to talk (those who have experienced, witnessed or displayed bullying behaviours).
- ❖ Both the person that has been bullied and the person displaying bullying behaviours will be given opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise self-esteem, to develop friendship and social skills, thereby building resilience in the pupil (pupils) in question.
- ❖ The child displaying bullying behaviour will have access to social skills/SPHE/nurturing activities, so that they will feel supported in their personal issues.
- ❖ Their low self-esteem will be targeted by teachers and counselling may also be recommended.
- ❖ The school will have a Whole School Approach to dealing with bullying and promoting *Bi Cinealta* content throughout the school.
- ❖ There will be regular school assemblies on *Bi Cinealta*.
- ❖ If a pupil (pupils) has been affected by bullying, the school will make parents aware of counselling services available to them.

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. The Report Form is appended to this policy.

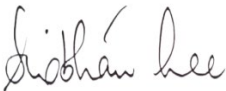
4. Oversight


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.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management at a meeting in October 2025.

Signed:  (Principal) Date: 08/10/2025

Signed:  (Chairperson) Date: 08/10/2025

Appendix – Report of bullying incident

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

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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. Investigation Steps

10. Communication with Parents/ Guardians

11. Summary of actions taken

12. Follow up / Review Date

Signed _____ (Relevant Teacher) Date _____

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal _____

Appendix D

Guide to Providing Bullying Behaviour Update

Guide to providing Bullying Behaviour Update for board of management meeting of

Having reviewed the details of the incidents of bullying behaviour that have been reported since the previous board of management meeting, the principal must provide the following information at each ordinary meeting of the board of management:

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.	

Where incidents of bullying behaviour have been reported since the last meeting, the update must include a verbal report which should include the following information where relevant:

- > the trends and patterns identified such as the form of bullying behaviour, type of bullying behaviour if known, location of bullying behaviour, when it occurred etc
- > the strategies used to address the bullying behaviour
- > any wider strategies to prevent and address bullying behaviour
- > if any serious incidents of bullying behaviour have occurred which have had a serious adverse impact on a student
- > if a parent has informed the school that a student has left the school because of reported bullying behaviour
- > if any additional support is needed from the board of management
- > if the school's Bí Cineálta policy requires urgent review in advance of the annual review

This update should not include any personal information or information that could identify the students involved.

Appendix E

Review of the Bí Cineálta Policy

The Board of Management (the Board) must undertake an annual (calendar) review of the school's Bí Cineálta policy and its implementation in consultation with the school community. As part of the review, this document must be completed.

Bí Cineálta Policy Review

1. When did the Board formally adopt its Bí Cineálta policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour in accordance with the *Bí Cineálta Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*? Insert date when the Bí Cineálta policy was last adopted by the school.
_____/_____/20____

2. Where in the school is the student-friendly Bí Cineálta policy displayed?

3. What date did the Board publish the Bí Cineálta policy and the student-friendly policy on the school website? ____/____/20____

4. How has the student-friendly policy been communicated to students?

5. How has the Bí Cineálta policy and student-friendly policy been communicated to parents

6. Have all school staff been made aware of the, school's Bí Cineálta policy and the *Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post- Primary Schools*?

☐ Yes ☐ No

7. Does the Bí Cineálta policy document the strategies that the school uses to prevent bullying behaviour?

☐ Yes ☐ No

8. Has the Board received and minuted the Bullying Behaviour Update presented by the principal at every ordinary board meeting over the last calendar year? ☐Yes ☐No

9. Has the Board discussed how the school is addressing all reports of bullying behaviour? ☐Yes ☐No

10. Is the Board satisfied that all incidents of bullying behaviour are addressed in accordance with the school's Bí Cineálta Policy? ☐Yes ☐No

11. Have the prevention strategies in the Bí Cineálta policy been implemented? ☐Yes ☐No

12. Has the Board discussed the effectiveness of the strategies used to prevent bullying behaviour? ☐Yes ☐No

13. How have (a) parents, (b) students and (c) school staff been consulted with as part of the review of the Bí Cineálta Policy?

14. Outline any aspects of the school's Bí Cineálta policy and/or its implementation that have been identified as requiring further improvement as part of this review:

15. Where areas for improvement have been identified, outline how these will be addressed and whether an action plan with timeframes has been developed?

16. Does the student-friendly policy need to be updated as a result of this review and if so, why?

17. Does the school refer parents to the complaints procedures if they have a complaint about how the school has addressed bullying behaviour?

☐ Yes ☐ No

18. Has a parent informed the school that a student has left the school due to reported bullying behaviour?

☐ Yes ☐ No

19. Has the Office of the Ombudsman for Children initiated or completed an investigation into how the school has addressed an incident of bullying behaviour?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Appendix F

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

The Board of Management of [redacted] 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 [redacted] [date].

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: [redacted]

Date: [redacted]

Date of next review: [redacted]