

Ardpatrick NS Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

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The Board of Management of **Ardpatrick NS** 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 ***Bí Cineálta: Action Plan on Bullying*** and ***Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2024*** 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:	02/05/2025	Staff meeting - Half day closure
Students:	09/05/2025	Questionnaire to Student Council

Parents:	16/06/2025	Google Forms questionnaire
Board of Management:	June 2025	Discussion at Meeting
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers:	N/A/	
Date policy was approved: 24/ June / 2025		
Date policy was last reviewed:		

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

This section sets out the prevention strategies that may 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)

Prevention Strategies

Culture and Environment

- Create a positive school climate where all students feel respected, and valued
- Promote diversity and inclusion in all aspects of school life,
- Using circle practice in the classroom to build a positive culture and environment.
- Encourage open communication between students, staff, and parents eg. Class Dojo and email.
- Encourage pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour
- Establish clear expectations for behaviour and enforce them consistently.
- Promote respectful relationships across the school community eg. Active Flag, Amber Flag, Green Flag.
- Effective routines/transitions- access to Butterfly Room (sensory space)
- Anti-bullying signs and messages will be displayed around the school
- Positive messages that promote friendship and caring attitude will also be displayed.

Curriculum (Teaching & Learning)

- Integrate anti-bullying messages into the school curriculum.
- Teach students about bullying and its effects.
- SPHE methodologies
- Provide opportunities for students to develop social and emotional skills- music on yard, non-competitive games, buddy reading system.
- Incorporate lessons on respect, empathy, and diversity into the curriculum.
- An annual anti-bullying/friendship day/week.
- The Stay Safe will be fully implemented at appropriate times and levels in the school.
- Classroom contracts for the classroom and playground devised by the students.
- **Buddy Benches in the playground**
- Resources such as Weaving Wellbeing Programme, and Social Stories- Social Detective and SuperFlex
- Explicit teaching and appropriate communication and emotional literacy
- Group work/Collaboration
- Sensory Walk for emotional regulation breaks

Policy & Planning

- Develop a clear and consistent BÍ Cinealta policy that is enforced by all staff members.
- Review and update the policy regularly
- Provide training for staff on how to recognise and respond to bullying.
- Establish clear procedures for reporting and responding to bullying incidents.
- The Acceptable Use Policy was developed in the school to include the necessary steps to ensure that access to technology within the school is strictly monitored
- School Policies: The following policies, practices and activities that are particularly relevant to bullying include; Code of Behaviour, Child Safeguarding Statement, Risk Assessment, Acceptable Use Policy, Attendance, Communication Policy, SPHE, RE, PE, SEN/Inclusion Policy
- Pupil voice- Student Council
- The school's approach to tackling and preventing bullying will take particular account of the needs of pupils with disabilities or with SEN, will join up with other relevant school policies and supports and will endeavour to ensure that all the services that provide for such pupils work together.
- Approaches to decreasing the likelihood of bullying for pupils with SEN include improving inclusion, focusing on developing social skills, paying attention to key moments such as transitioning from primary to post-primary and cultivating a good school culture which has respect for all and helping one another as central.

Relationships & Partnerships

- Encourage open communication between students, staff, and parents eg Classroom Dojo
- Build positive relationships with students and families.
- Implementation of education and prevention strategies including awareness raising measures that build empathy respect and resilience in pupils.
- TPL (Teacher Professional Learning)
- Collaborate with community organisations to provide additional support and resources- GAA, Tidy Town, Hillside Players (Drama group)
- Guest speakers may be invited to address staff and parent groups at regular intervals in relation to various types of bullying.
- Work with parents and students to educate them about the dangers of cyberbullying by facilitating outside speakers e.g. Digiwise. The programme Webwise will be taught on a regular basis in the school. This programme teaches safe and responsible internet use.
- Clear protocols are in place to encourage parents/guardians to approach the school if they suspect that their child is being bullied- INTO complaints' procedures.

Preventing Cyberbullying Behaviour

- Explicitly teach the issues of cyberbullying and the importance of using technology safely
- Monitor student use of technology in the classroom and on school grounds through the use of safe internet.
- Develop a social media policy for students.
- Work with parents and students to educate them about the dangers of cyberbullying by facilitating outside speakers e.g. Digiwise

Preventing Homophobic/Transphobic Bullying Behaviour

- Create a safe and inclusive environment for all students, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Educate students about the importance of respecting all people, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Encourage peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities

Preventing Racist Bullying Behaviour

- Teach students about the history and impact of racism e.g., Show Racism the Red Card.
- Promote diversity and inclusion in the classroom.
- Provide support to students who have been targeted by racist bullying.
- Ensure that library reading material represents appropriate lived experiences of students and adults from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

Preventing Sexist Bullying Behaviour

- Teach students about the importance of gender equality eg. modelling behaviour.
- Celebrate diversity at school and acknowledge the contributions of all students.

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

- Staff supervision: All staff members should be trained to recognise and respond to bullying behaviour. They should be present and visible in common areas and playgrounds during break times.
- Student supervision: Class teachers should supervise students during class time and break times. They should be aware of what is happening in their classrooms and on the playground.
- Visitor supervision: Visitors to the school are supervised at all times.

Monitoring

- Incident reporting: The class teacher investigates all instances of reported or suspected bullying behaviour with a view to establishing the facts and records on an incident report form.
- Incident investigation: All reports of bullying should be investigated promptly and thoroughly. The investigation should include interviews with the student who reported the incident, the student who was allegedly bullied, and any witnesses. Follow-up: The school should take appropriate action to address the bullying behaviour.

By implementing these policies, **Ardpatrick NS** can create a safer and more positive school environment for all students.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

Class Teachers 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):

The school's procedures for investigation, follow-up and recording of bullying behaviour and the established intervention strategies that may be used by the school for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour are as follows:

1. Class teacher(s) investigates all instances of reported or suspected bullying behaviour with a view to establishing the facts and managing the behaviour.
2. In investigating and dealing with the reported allegation, the class teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved. Class teacher(s) should consider the following: what, where and when? Cf Appendix re Bullying.
3. Class teacher(s) will be fair and consistent in their approach when addressing bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents
4. Interviews will be conducted outside the classroom in a fair and consistent way by two staff members. If a group has been involved, each member will be interviewed individually at first and, thereafter, as a group when each child will be asked for his/her account of what happened and write down their account of the incident.

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

- I. Ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour feels listened to and reassured.
- II. Seek to ensure the privacy of those involved
- III. Conduct all conversations with sensitivity
- IV. Consider the age and ability of those involved.
- V. Listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation.
- VI. Take action in a timely manner.
- VII. Inform parents of those involved

Non-teaching staff such as special needs assistants (SNAs), caretakers and cleaners are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to a class teacher

School staff should know what to do when bullying behaviour is reported to them.

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. Where the bullying behaviour continues in school, schools should deal in accordance with their BÍ Cineálta policy.

Both the student who is experiencing bullying behaviour and the student who is displaying bullying behaviour need support,

Parents are an integral part at the school community and play an important role, in partnership with schools, in addressing bullying behaviour.

The primary aim of the class teacher(s) investigating bullying is to resolve issues and to restore relationships. 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 bullying behaviour. In some cases, relationships may never be restored as to how they were before.

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):

The parents/guardians of the parties involved will be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken. The school will give parents/guardians an opportunity to discuss ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the support provided to the pupils. It must also be made clear to all involved (each of pupils and parents/guardians) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter (under GDPR) between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parents/guardians and the school.

When an investigation is completed and/or a bullying situation is resolved the teacher(s) will complete a report, to include the findings of the investigation, the strategy adopted and the outcome of the intervention, as well as any other relevant information.

Behaviour reflection sheets filled out by pupils to be kept in pupil folders which will be passed onto the next class teacher(s).

The incident will be recorded and stored in pupil files. Where a Student Support Plan exists, the plan should be updated to incorporate response strategies and associated supports.

The class teacher(s) must engage with the students and parents involved no more than 20 days after the initial discussion to review progress following the initial intervention.

If the bullying behaviour has not ceased the class teacher(s) 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 on a case by case basis.

If it becomes clear that the student who is displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behaviour, then 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)/guardian(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 School, 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's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying behaviour is as follows:

- Managing the bullying behaviour.
- Supporting the pupils who have experienced bullying behaviour, displayed bullying behaviour and witnessed bullying behaviour.
- Promote a positive school culture where pupils feel safe, respected and valued
- Raising awareness of the appropriate programmes and teacher training.
- Helping pupils raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that help develop friendships and social skills e.g. participation in group work in class, team activities during or after school, and small social groups with SET
- Making it clear that adopting the strategies is a positive step towards creating a more respectful and inclusive school environment.
- In dealing with challenging behaviour, encouraging teachers and parents to focus on positive reinforcement
- Circle time

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 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 Bi 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.

Appendix A: Definition of bullying

Bullying is 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 core elements of the definition are further described below:

- **Targeted behaviour**


Bullying is deliberate, unwanted behaviour that causes harm to others, and where the student displaying bullying behaviour knows that their behaviour is or will be perceived as harmful by the child or young person experiencing the behaviour. Bullying is not accidental or reckless behaviour. The harm can be physical (for example, personal injury, damage to or loss of property), social (for example, withdrawal, loneliness, exclusion) and/or emotional (for example, low self-esteem, depression, anxiety) and can have a serious and long-term negative impact on the student experiencing the bullying behaviour. If the repeated harm is real for the student experiencing the behaviour but unintended by the other student, this is not bullying but, importantly, must still be addressed under the school's code of behaviour.

- **Repeated behaviour**

Bullying takes the form of a systematic pattern of behaviour which is repeated over time. Single offline incidents of intentional negative behaviour involving an imbalance of power are not considered bullying but must still be addressed under the school's code of behaviour. Posting a single harmful message/image/video online, and which is highly likely to be reposted or shared with others can therefore be seen as bullying behaviour.

- **Imbalance of power**

In incidents of bullying, the student experiencing the bullying behaviour finds it hard to defend themselves as a result of the abuse of a real or perceived imbalance of power. This imbalance of power may manifest itself through differences in size, strength, age, ability, peer group power, economic status, social status, religion, race, ethnic origin including membership of the Traveller and/or Roma communities, sexual orientation, family circumstances, gender, gender identity, gender expression, experience of the care system, disability or the receipt of special education. In incidents of online (or cyber) bullying, the imbalance of power may relate to online anonymity, technical proficiency and possession of information/images/video, and the inability of the targeted student to remove offensive online material or escape the bullying.

Signed:  Date: 26 Jun 2025
(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed:  Date: 24 June 2025
(Principal)

