



Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of **Rice College, New Road, Ennis, Co.Clare**, 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.

Behaviour that is not bullying behaviour

A one-off instance of negative behavior towards another student is not bullying behavior. However, a single hurtful message posted on social media can be considered bullying behavior as it has a high likelihood of being shared multiple times and thus becomes a repeated behaviour.

Disagreement between two students, or instances where students don't want to be friends or to remain friends, is not considered bullying unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others including deliberate manipulation of friendship groups.

Some students with special educational needs may have social communication difficulties which may make them communicate their needs through behaviours that can hurt themselves or others. It is important to note that their behaviours are not deliberate or planned, but, in certain situations, they are an automatic response which they can't control.

Bullying behaviour that occurs outside of school

As per the BÍ Cineálta Procedures, Rice College is not expected to deal with bullying behaviour that occurs when students are not under the care and responsibility of the school. However, where bullying behaviour has an impact in Rice College, the school is required to support the students involved.

Examples of prohibited bullying behaviours that can occur outside the school (non-exhaustive list):

- Bullying behaviour that occurs in the area immediately outside the school, the local shops, the bus stops and the wider local area.
- Bullying behaviour that occurs on the journey to and from school.
- Bullying behaviour that occurs in organized clubs and groups outside of school such as sports clubs.
- Online bullying (cyberbullying) behaviour, along with other types of bullying behaviour can cause significant harm and have a lasting impact on students who experience this behaviour. Access to technology means that online bullying behaviour can happen any time and that the students home is no longer a safe place. The nature of these technologies means that digital content can be shared and seen by a wide audience almost instantly and the content is almost impossible to delete permanently.

Requests to take no action

A student reporting bullying behaviour may ask that a member of staff does nothing about the behaviour other than "look out" for them. The student may not want to be identified as having told someone about the bullying behaviour. They may feel that telling someone might 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 work out together what steps can be taken to address the matter and how their parents will be informed of the situation. It is important that the student who has experienced bullying behaviour feels safe. Parents may also make schools aware of bullying that has occurred and specifically request that the school take no action. Parents should put this request in writing to the school or be facilitated to do so where there are literacy, digital literacy or language barriers. However, while acknowledging the parent's request, schools have a right to act and may decide that, based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour.

Criminal Behaviour

Bullying behaviour can be considered criminal behaviour under certain circumstances and legal consequences can apply. The age of criminal responsibility in Ireland is 12 years.

Some online behaviour may be illegal, and students need to be aware of the far-reaching consequences of posting inappropriate or harmful content online. In cases of intimate imagery, the Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020, also known as *Coco's Law*, criminalises the non-consensual sharing of intimate images and also criminalises threatening to share these images.

If bullying behaviour involves physical violence or threats of violence, it *may* be considered assault.

If bullying behaviour involves discrimination or hate speech targeting a student based on their race, religion, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation or members of the Traveller community, it may be considered a hate crime under the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989, and those engaging in such behaviour may face criminal charges.

An Garda Síochána is the appropriate authority to investigate alleged criminal 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	6-5-26	Staff Meeting
Students	12-5-26	Student Council Meeting
Parents	9-3-26	Parents Association Meeting
Board of Management	17-6-26	BOM Meeting.
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	Continuous/Ongoing.	
Date policy was approved: 17-6-26		
Date policy was last reviewed: 18-6-25		

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):

Culture and Environment

- All staff will actively watch out for signs of bullying behaviour.
- A supervision roster is published at the beginning of each academic year and scheme members will actively supervise their allocated areas.
- Positive behaviour will be promoted through a points system on VSWare and rewarded throughout the school year.
- Provide a wide variety of extra-curricular activities to meet the needs and talents of all of our students.
- Active Mentoring program/ Cairdeas/ Buddy systems.
- Raise awareness of our Pastoral Care Team and Student Support Team via the student journals, year group assemblies, posters on walls and email correspondences.
- Provide an induction program for incoming 1st year students.
- Model respectful behaviour to all members of the school community at all times.
- Raising awareness of our anti-bullying procedures during anti-bullying week, by displaying posters on the walls of our school, and by discussing it in wellbeing classes.
- Highlighting our anti-bullying procedures and available supports in our student journal.
- Providing all students with our student friendly Bí Cineálta Policy and ensuring that they all know of the reporting process.
- Providing supervised safe spaces such as our school library, cubbie, canteen facilities and seating area.
- Fostering positive and respectful working relationships between the students, parents and staff.
- We are an inclusive school community welcoming all ethnicities.

Curriculum

- Various awareness weeks throughout the school year e.g. Anti-bullying Week (Cyber-bullying week), Internet Safety Week, Stand Up Awareness Week etc.
- Wellbeing is incorporated into our subject plans.
- All 1st year students complete a five-week anti-bullying and online safety program developed by DCU Anti-Bullying Centre called FUSE during their SPHE classes.
- Personal development classes raise awareness of the impact that bullying behaviour can have on a person and emphasizes the roles that the members of our school community play in its prevention.
- SSE - Staff engage in anti-bullying and restorative practice training.
- Pastoral Care meetings take place weekly and Student Support Team meetings take place once per term in order to identify those students in difficulty and to put the necessary supports in place.
- SEN/AEN meetings take place weekly to help our most vulnerable students.
- Seminars/Webinars/Workshops are presented by relevant professionals in relation to online safety and etiquette where students are encouraged to report behaviours of concern.

- We deliver on 400 hours of wellbeing at Junior Cycle in PE, SPHE, CSPE and Other Area's of Learning, where all students are educated on expected behaviour and the impact of bullying. All students develop their Physical, Social, Personal and Health education while engaging with these subjects.
- Promote inclusion in group work activities.

Policy and Planning

- We have our student friendly Bí Cineálta Policy prominently displayed around the school.
- Our Bí Cineálta Policy, Code of Behaviour, Cyber-bullying policy, Acceptable Use Policy, SEN policy, Student Support Policy, GDPR Data Protection Policy and Pastoral Care Policy are all published on our school website.
- Our Child Safety Statement is displayed at the school main reception and our school website with the names of our DLP and DDLP clearly visible.
- All teachers have successfully completed the TUSLA Children First E-learning Program and are mandated persons.

Relationships and Partnerships

- Year Group Assemblies.
- Student Support Team.
- SSE Focus groups – surveys for feedback on student/parents understanding of preventing bullying.
- Collaboration with our Student Council with regards to policy review/development.
- Cairdeas Program – to help integrate new students into our school community.
- Mentoring Program.
- Linking with external services e.g. TUSLA, NEPS, CAMHS, Gardaí etc.
- Linking with our B.O.M., Parents Association, Community and Sporting organisations, Transport authorities and local businesses.
- End of year Subject and Extra-Curricular Award Ceremonies.
- Promoting and Rewarding Positive Behaviour.
- Fundraising Initiatives.
- Check and Connect with students.
- School Wellbeing Team.
- Year Heads support, guide and direct their year group.
- Guidance Counsellor.
- TY'S linking with our local community and fundraising for those in need.

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 Roster
- Bí Cineálta Policy
- Student Friendly Bí Cineálta Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Child Safeguarding
- Acceptable Use Policy
- RSE Policy
- Pastoral Care Policy
- SPHE Policy
- Critical Incident Management Plan

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

Year Heads, supported by the Deputy Principals 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):

Approach

The primary aim in addressing reports of bullying behaviour should be to stop the bullying behaviour and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationship of the parties 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 as to how best to address the situation;
- Take action in a timely manner;
- Inform parents of those involved.

Step 1 – Identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred

“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.” (Ref. Pg.17 of BÍ Cineálta Procedures)

Where bullying behaviour is suspected, parents/guardians/students can report their concerns to the class teacher.

To determine whether the reported behaviour is bullying behaviour we will 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 is **Yes** to all three questions then the behaviour is bullying behaviour, and the behaviour should be addressed using the BÍ Cineálta Procedures.

If the answer is **No** to any one of the questions, then the behaviour is not bullying behaviour and should be addressed in line with our school Code of Behaviour.

Note: A one-off incident may be considered bullying behaviour 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.

1. When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred the teacher should consider the following: what, where, when and why?
2. If a group of students is involved, each student should be engaged with individually at first.
3. Thereafter, all students involved and the student who is reported to be experiencing the bullying behaviour should be met as a group.
4. 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.
5. It may be helpful to ask the students involved to write down their account of the incident.
6. Each student should be supported, as appropriate, following the group meeting.



Step 2 – Where bullying behaviour has occurred

1. 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 to address the behaviour.
2. It is important to listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation.
3. A record should be kept of the engagement with all involved.
4. This record should document the form and type of bullying behaviour, if known (see Section 2.5 and 2.7 of the BÍ Cineálta procedures), where and when it took place and the date of the initial engagement with the students involved and their parents.
5. The record should include the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour.

Step 3 – Follow up where bullying behaviour has occurred

1. The teacher must engage with the students involved and their parents again no more than 20 school days after the initial engagement.
2. Important factors to consider as part of this engagement are the nature of the bullying behaviour, the effectiveness of the strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and the relationship between the students involved.
3. The teacher should document the review with the students and their parents to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased and the views of students and their parents in relation to this.
4. The date that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased should also be recorded.
5. Any engagement with external services/supports should also be noted.
6. Ongoing supervision and support may be needed for the students involved even where bullying behaviour has ceased.
7. 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.



8. 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.
9. 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.
10. 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):

Students who experience bullying behaviour or witness bullying behaviour;

The student(s) may be referred to our Student Support Team, Guidance Counsellor and/or SENCO who may collaborate with the relevant Year Head in putting the necessary supports in place.

Students who display bullying behaviour;

Students who engage in bullying behaviour may need counselling to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others.

The relevant Year Head, in conjunction with the relevant Student Support Team, will work closely with the student(s) in this regard.

Outside agency support.

In certain instances, Rice College may seek support and advice from TUSLA, National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO), the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), the Health Service Executive (HSE), the Department of Education's support service for schools (OIDE), the National Parents Council (NPC), the Gardaí, program's/sites such as Webwise and FUSE etc. and any other agency deemed appropriate to support the school in dealing with incidents of bullying.

All of our staff are Garda Vetted through the Teaching Council and are certified mandated persons under the Children First Act 2015 having completed the Children First E-Learning Programme. They are also encouraged to attend training in Restorative Practices.



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:



John Burns,
Chairperson, Board of Management.

Date: 17/6/26.

Signed: 
(Principal)

Date: 17/6/26.