

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The board of management of Ashton 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.

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.

School Partner	Date consulted	Method of consultation
School Staff	25/2/2025 05/03/2025 03/04/2025 XX/4/2025	Email invitation to submit input for draft Invitation for input at staff meeting Staff training/planning on Bí Cineálta Email consultation on draft policy
Students & Student Council	25/2/2025 02/04/2025 XX/4/2025	Email invitation to submit input for draft Whole-school assembly on Bí Cineálta Email consultation on draft policy
Parents	25/2/2025 XX/4/2025	Email invitation to submit input for draft Email consultation on draft policy
Board of Management	25/2/2025 XX/4/2025	Email invitation to submit input for draft Email consultation on draft policy
Wider school community	XX/4/2025	Website consultation on draft policy
Date policy was approved:		
Date policy was last reviewed:		

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

Culture and Environment

Ashton School promotes a positive and inclusive school culture and environment where students and school staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported. Relationships are based on respect, care, integrity and trust. The school adopts a collaborative approach with school partners to prevent and address 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.

Ashton School promotes and supports 'a telling environment'. The school understands that there are many reasons why students may not report bullying which include fear of retaliation or the situation becoming worse, concerns about being a 'tell-tale', fear of not being understood or believed, concerns about 'getting into trouble' or not having sufficient evidence to back up their allegation. Ashton School promotes the concept of 'a trusted adult' and encourages students to identify to whom they would report if they or another student is experiencing bullying behaviour.

Teaching and Learning

Ashton School promotes collaborative and respectful teaching and learning where students have regular opportunity to work in groups with their peers which helps to build a sense of connection,

belonging and empathy among students. In particular, students are empowered to create, nurture and maintain respectful and healthy relationships, with consideration of sexuality and diversity, through the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE), Religious Education (RE) and Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE).

Policies and Planning

Ashton School puts student wellbeing at the heart of school policy and plans. In particular, student wellbeing is supported by the school's Code of Behaviour and Discipline, Internet and Digital Technology Acceptable Use Policy, Special Education Policy, and a comprehensive student supervision plan.

Relationships and Partnerships

Ashton School supports interpersonal connections through formal and informal structures such as the Student Council, school clubs and groups, the Parents Association and the school's Student Support Team. The school actively promotes positive relationships and partnerships between members of the school community by organising age-appropriate awareness initiatives for students, supporting active participation of students and their parents in school life, conducting workshops for students, staff and parents to raise awareness of bullying, providing activities that build empathy, respect and resilience, encouraging peer mentoring and support, and promoting acts of kindness. The school also engages with the wider school community as appropriate where a report of bullying has been received.

Specific Prevention Strategies

Ashton School proactively aims to prevent cyberbullying behaviour by implementing the SPHE curriculum, teaching digital skills, implementing its Internet and Digital Technology Acceptable Use Policy as part of the school's Code of Behaviour and Discipline, promoting and hosting online safety events for parents, and actively engaging in Safer Internet Day. The school understands that the digital age of consent is 16, that students between the ages of 13 and 16 must have parental permission to use social media, and that students under the age of 13 should not have a social media account.

Ashton School proactively aims to prevent homophobic/transphobic bullying behaviour by maintaining an inclusive physical environment, encouraging peer support and empathy building activities, conducting workshops and/or seminars to raise awareness of the impact of homophobic/transphobic bullying, and encouraging students to speak up where they witness homophobic/transphobic behaviour.

Ashton School proactively aims to prevent racist bullying behaviour by fostering a school culture where diversity is celebrated and where students 'see themselves' in their school environment, having the cultural diversity of school visible and on display, conducting workshops and/or seminars to raise awareness of racism, encouraging peer support and empathy building activities, and encouraging bystanders to report when they witness racist behaviour.

Ashton School proactively aims to prevent sexist bullying behaviour by expecting school staff to model respectful behaviour and treat students equally, ensuring all students have the same opportunities to engage in school activities, celebrating diversity, acknowledging the

contributions of all students, conducting workshops and/or seminars on gender equality and respect, and encouraging parents to reinforce the values of respect at home.

Ashton School proactively aims to prevent sexual harassment by demonstrating a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment and never dismissing it as teasing or banter, teaching students about healthy relationships, respect and kindness through SPHE, and promoting positive role models within the school community.

Supervision and Monitoring

Ashton School creates an annual supervision plan to ensure the safety of students. The school aims to create safe physical spaces to support psychological and physical safety to prevent bullying behaviour. Internal and external bounds for student circulation during class and breaktimes are clearly identified and communicated. The school library also provides a safe supervised space for students during breaktimes. Student breaktime behaviour is regularly monitored to ensure any bullying-type behaviour is addressed. The effectiveness of the school's supervision plan is also regularly monitored and adapted as necessary.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

Ashton School recognises that the whole school community has a responsibility to prevent and address bullying behaviour. All school partners are expected to work together to implement the school's Bí Cineálta policy.

The teachers with responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour are the year heads.

Approach

Ashton School's primary aim in addressing reports of bullying behaviour is 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 will:

- 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
- inform the Student Support Team

Identifying Bullying Behaviour

To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour, the answers to the following questions will 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 will be addressed using the Bí Cineálta Procedures. 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. Where it is established that inappropriate behaviour has occurred, sanctions are provided in the school's Code of Behaviour and Discipline.

When identifying whether bullying behaviour has occurred teachers will consider what, where, when and why? Students may be asked to write down their account of the incident(s). If a group of students is involved, each student will be engaged with individually at first. Thereafter, all students involved will be met as a group during which each student will be asked for their account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's views. Students will be supported as appropriate, following individual and group meetings.

Dealing with Bullying Behaviour

Where bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the students involved will 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. The views of the student experiencing the bullying behaviour will be taken into account in determining how best to address the situation. A record will be kept of the engagement with all involved. The record will document the form and type of bullying behaviour, where and when it took place and the date of the initial engagement with the students involved and their parents. The record will include the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour.

Schools are not expected to deal with bullying behaviour that occurs when students are not under the care or responsibility of the school. However, where the bullying behaviour outside school has an impact in school, Ashton School will support the students involved.

Requests for No Action

Where a student reporting bullying behaviour asks that a member of staff does nothing about the behaviour other than "look out" for them, the teacher will speak 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.

Where a parent makes the school aware of bullying behaviour that has occurred and specifically requests that the school takes no action, the parent must put this request in writing to the school and will be facilitated in doing so where there are literacy, digital literacy or language barriers. While acknowledging the parent's request, the schools will decide, based on the circumstances, whether it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour.

Following up Bullying Behaviour & Student Support

The teacher will engage with the students involved and their parents again no more than 20 school days after the initial engagement. Consideration will be given to the nature of the bullying behaviour, the effectiveness of the strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and the relationship between the students involved. The teacher will 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

If upon review it is determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased, the date that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased will be recorded. Any engagement with external services/supports will also be noted. Where necessary, ongoing supervision and support will be provided by the teacher for the students involved in or affected by the bullying behaviour. If upon review it is determined that the bullying behaviour has not ceased, the teacher will review the strategies used in consultation with the students involved and their parents. A timeframe will 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 will consider appropriate sanctions to deal with inappropriate behaviour as provided in the school's Code of Behaviour and Discipline. Where disciplinary sanctions are considered, it is a matter between the relevant student, their parents and the school.

Complaints

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 will 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.

Records and Reporting

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: _____ Date: _____
(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(Principal)

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