Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

2025-2026

Table of Contents:

1. Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Portumna Community 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.

2. Scope

This policy applies to the school student community in their relationships. Given the commitment of Portumna Community School to the highest standard of education we recognize that a stable, secure learning environment is necessary and that bullying undermines the quality of education and results in harm to the person; therefore, bullying will be positively and firmly addressed.

The entire school community has co-developed this policy in the belief that the resulting solidarity will be the best way to ensure the policy is implemented.

3. Relationship to Mission and Ethos

The Mission Statement of the school states that the school will seek to develop the potential of the students in their social, physical, intellectual and spiritual development. Such development demands that students be supported appropriately, challenged effectively and learn to respect the differences between them. The revised code of conduct accepts the equality of students and the need for a variety of responses to situations that may arise from time to time. This anti bullying policy seeks to provide students with a secure foundation so that their potential may be realised.

In keeping with the Circular letter 55/2024 the Board of Management recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of pupils and is therefore fully committed to the following Policy.

4. 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.

5. 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		
Students		
Parents		
Board of management		
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers		
Date policy was approved:		
Date policy was last reviewed:		
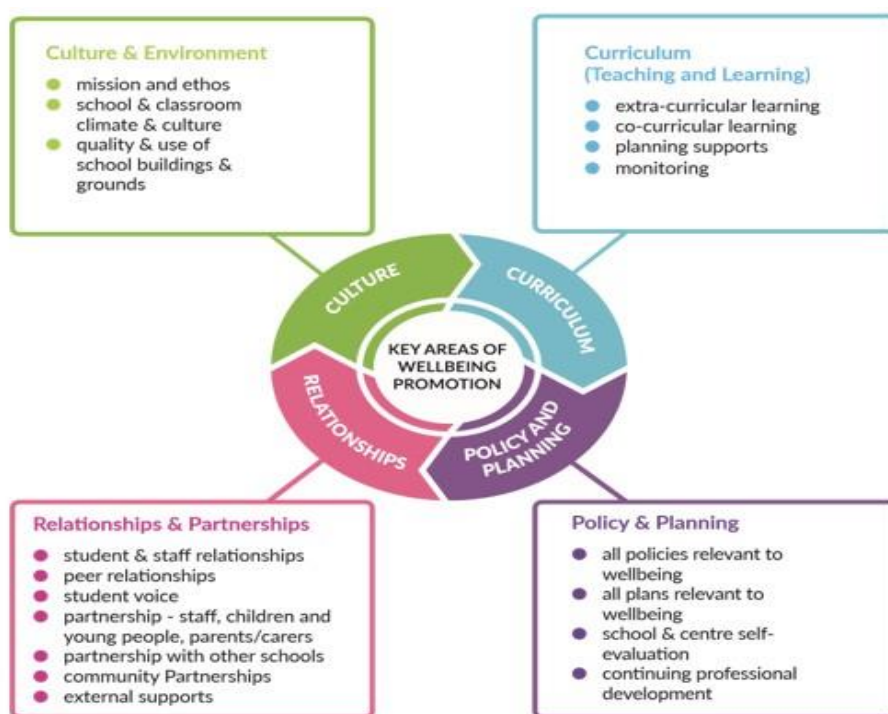
6. Preventing Bullying Behaviour

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:
> Promotion of a whole-school environment where respect and kindness are key, and effective leadership from staff and students creates a positive school culture.
> Creation and maintenance of a telling environment, with staff and students made aware of all this entails.
> Encouraging the culture of students having a trusted adult within the PCS Community.
> Creation and maintenance of safe physical spaces in PCS, with an emphasis on the mission statement and ethos.
> Supervision of the PCS school and grounds.

Curriculum (teaching and learning):
> The principles of prevention of bullying behaviour to be addressed through the School's Wellbeing programme, including CSPE, SPHE, PE, RE, RSE and Senior Cycle Wellbeing
> Cross-curricular, co-curricular, extra-curricular, and the Summer Provision Programme reinforce the values of the school as well as providing access to information and processes to maintain and enhance student safety.
> Year Head assemblies which address (among other things) positive behaviours, PCS' identity as a Telling School and promote kindness.

> Expert speakers, regularly reviewed for maximum impact and relevance.
> The facilitation within the curriculum of regular opportunities for students to feed back about Bí Cineálta generally in the school, and specifically for their year group.
> Promotion of positive behaviours through targeted interventions and through the School's wellbeing programme.
> Promotion of AEN and An Cuan within the whole-school.

Policy and planning:
> Supporting student voice and student participation in School policies, including the Code of Behaviour and Child Protection
> Engaging staff in professional learning and development, and recognising the role of all school staff in identifying and preventing bullying behaviour
> Maintenance, planning and development of buildings
> A focus on the wellbeing of all students involved where bullying behaviour is determined to have taken place.
> Review of the School's Bí Cineálta policy each year, or more frequently as necessary.

Relationships and partnerships:
Strengthening relationships and partnerships, including;
> Whole-school Bí Cineálta week
> supporting the active participation of students in school life
> 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
> providing education for students, school staff and parents aimed at raising awareness of the impact of bullying
> encouraging students to be up-standers and not by-standers
> supporting activities, and a School ethos, which builds empathy, respect and resilience
> encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring, chairde, and prefix
> a focus on building and maintaining positive relationships throughout and across the PCS community through surveys and feedback
> PCS support and strenghten relationships through the SST and care list

7. Prevention Strategies

1. **Whole-School Awareness Campaigns**
   a. Bí Cineálta and Diversity Awareness Weeks.
   b. Display inclusive posters and resources throughout the school.
   c. Highlight diversity through assemblies, newsletters, and school social media.
2. **Curriculum Integration**
   a. Use SPHE, CSPE, and RSE classes to teach about:
      i. Digital citizenship and online safety.
      ii. Respect for diversity and LGBTQ+ inclusion.
      iii. Challenging stereotypes and addressing racism and sexism.

3. **Student Voice & Leadership**
   a. Bí Cineálta working group in collaboration with Student Council.

       b. Cairde and Prefects.

       c. Enable students to contribute to school policy reviews and campaigns.

       d. Use anonymous suggestion, reporting boxes, and surveys.

4. Staff Training & Development

       a. Regular CPD for all staff on:

              i. Recognising and responding to all forms of bullying.

              ii. Supporting LGBTQ+ students and those from minority backgrounds.

              iii. Understanding how online platforms can be used to target peers.

5. Inclusive School Culture

       a. Celebrate cultural diversity and LGBTQ+ inclusion through events.

       b. Have gender-neutral facilities and ensure respectful use of names/pronouns.

       c. Embed a culture of respect and restorative practice.

       d. School clubs

6. Parental Engagement

       a. Host parent information sessions on online safety and bullying awareness.

       b. Provide guidance on recognising signs of bullying at home.

       c. Gather feedback through surveys and questionnaires.

7. Clear Reporting Mechanisms

       a. Ensure students understand how to report concerns confidentially.

       b. Ensure students understand the personnel to report to.

8. Examples of Bullying Behaviour:

General behaviours which apply to all	Harassment based on any of the nine grounds in equality legislation – e.g., sexual harassment, homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying, racist bullying, racist and ethnic identity-based bullying etc. • Physical aggression. • Damage to property. • Name calling. • Slagging. • The production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other materials aimed at intimidating another person. • Offensive graffiti. • Extortion. • Intimidation. • Insulting or offensive gestures. • Invasion of personal space. • A combination of any of the types listed.
Cyber	• Denigration: Spreading rumours, lies or gossip to hurt a person's reputation. • Harassment: Continually sending vicious, mean, or disturbing messages to an individual. •

	Impersonation: Posting offensive or aggressive messages under another person's name.
	• Flaming: Using inflammatory or vulgar words to provoke an online fight.
	• Trickery: Fooling someone into sharing personal information which you then post online.
	• Outing: Posting or sharing confidential or compromising information or images.
	• Exclusion: Purposefully excluding someone from an online group.
	• Cyber stalking: Ongoing harassment and denigration that causes a person considerable fear for their safety.
	    • Silent phone calls.
	    • Abusive phone calls.
	    • Abusive text messages.
	    • Abusive email.
	    • Abusive communication on social media/communication technology.

Identity based behaviours	Including any of the nine discriminatory grounds mentioned in Equality Legislation (sexual orientation, gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, age, disability, race, and membership of the Traveller community). (Equal Status Acts 2000-2018).
Homophobic, biphobic, gender identity and transgender	• Spreading rumours about a person's sexual orientation. • Taunting a person of a different sexual orientation. • Name calling language used in a derogatory manner. • Physical intimidation or attacks. • Threats.
Race, nationality, ethnic background, and membership of the Traveller community	• Discrimination, prejudice, comments, or insults about skin colour, nationality, culture, social class, religious beliefs, ethnic or Traveller background. • Exclusion based on any of the above.
Relational	This involves manipulating relationships as a means of bullying. Behaviours include: • Malicious gossip. • Isolation and exclusion. • Ignoring. • Excluding from the group. • Repeated spiteful and critical comments. • Spreading rumours. • Breaking confidence.
Sexual	• Unwelcome or inappropriate sexual comments or touching. • Harassment.

	• Sexting – i.e., the sharing of explicit text and images about or of students or other without their permission.
Special Educational Needs; Disability	• Name calling. • Taunting others because of their disability or learning needs. • Taking advantage of some students' vulnerabilities. • Mimicking a person's disability. • Setting others up for ridicule.

9. **Bullying as 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 nonconsensual sharing of intimate images and 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 membership 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. If bullying behaviour involves sexual harassment or sexual assault, this may also be considered criminal behaviour. An Garda Síochána is the appropriate authority to investigate alleged criminal behaviour.

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):

10. Supervision and Monitoring Policies

1. **Supervision of Key Areas**
   a. Regular teacher presence in corridors, bathrooms, lunch areas, and school gates.
   b. Timetable supervision duties to ensure all "hotspots" are covered.
2. **Monitoring of Online Activity (as appropriate)**
   a. Monitor school-issued devices and platforms (e.g. Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams) for inappropriate use.
   b. Provide a clear Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) for students and staff.
3. **Review of Behavioural Data**
   a. Regular review of incident logs and student concerns to identify patterns or risk areas.
   b. Use wellbeing surveys to monitor school climate and bullying prevalence.
4. **Collaboration with External Agencies**

a. Link with Garda Schools Programme, Webwise, and LGBT Ireland for training and workshops, ISPCC, Youth Advocacy Worker GRETB, Drugs Task Force, Tusla, CAMHS, Family Resource Centers etc
5. **Restorative and Reflective Practices**
    a. Use restorative conversations and peer mediation for early intervention.
    b. Ensure consistent follow-up after bullying reports to prevent reoccurrence.
6. **Student Support Structures**
    a. Year heads, tutors, guidance counsellors, and special education teams collaborate to monitor vulnerable students.
    b. Provide regular check-ins for those previously affected by bullying.
    c. SST
    d. An Cuan

11. Addressing Bullying Behaviour

The teacher(s) with responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour is (are) as follows:
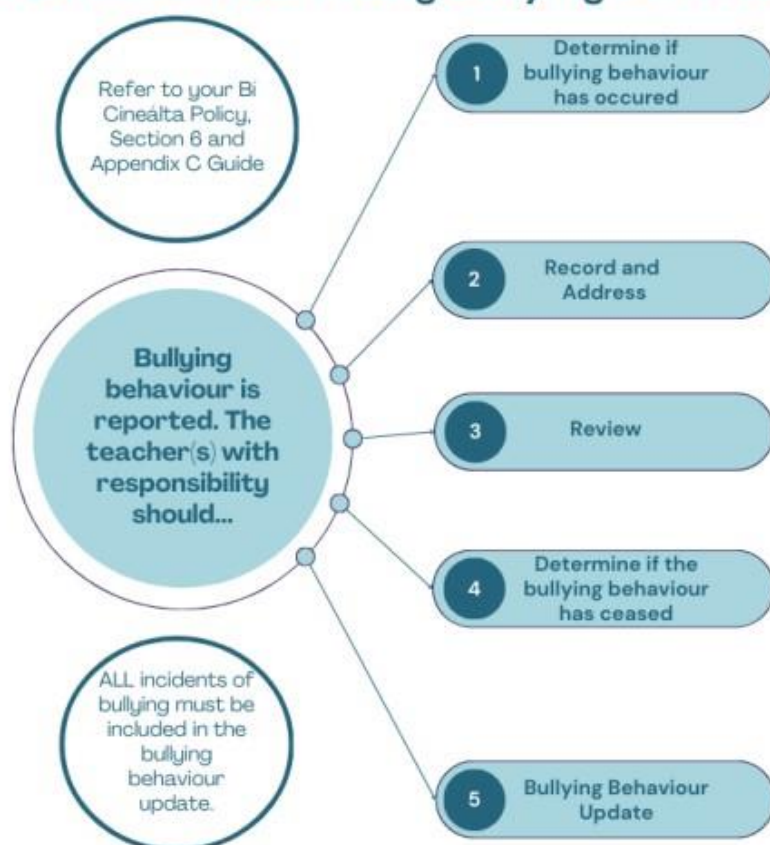
- Subject Teacher and/or any member of staff they are comfortable telling.
- Chaplain
- Guidance Counsellor
- Year Head
- Deputy Principal
- Principal

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):

Bí Cineálta: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

Refer to your Bi Cineálta Policy, Section 6 and Appendix C Guide

Bullying behaviour is reported. The teacher(s) with responsibility should...

ALL incidents of bullying must be included in the bullying behaviour update.

1. Determine if bullying behaviour has occured
2. Record and Address
3. Review
4. Determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased
5. Bullying Behaviour Update

1) Determining if Bullying Behaviour has Occurred:

- All reports of bullying will be taken seriously and recorded promptly.
- The relevant school personnel (typically the teacher or a designated staff member) will gather all relevant information through interviews with the target(s), alleged perpetrator(s), and any witnesses.
- The school will use the definition of bullying as outlined in the *Bí Cineálta* procedures to assess whether the behaviour meets the threshold for bullying (i.e., repeated, harmful, and targeted behaviour).
- A calm, fair and objective investigation process will be followed, ensuring due process and respect for all involved.

2) Approaches to Address and Record Bullying Behaviour:

- A restorative approach will be encouraged where appropriate, supporting accountability and the repair of relationships.
- Interventions will be tailored to the individual circumstances, with consideration of the needs of both the target and the person engaged in bullying behaviour.

- Support will be provided to the target to ensure they feel safe and supported within the school environment.
- The person who engaged in bullying behaviour will be helped to understand the impact of their actions and supported in changing their behaviour.
- Disciplinary measures, where necessary, will be proportionate, consistent, and in line with the school's Code of Behaviour.
- The relevant template for reporting bullying incidences will be completed by the relevant personnel.

3) Reviewing Progress:
- A clear plan will be put in place to monitor the situation, with regular follow-up meetings scheduled with the target and the perpetrator to review progress.
- Communication with parents/guardians will be maintained throughout the process, where appropriate.
- The effectiveness of the intervention and support strategies will be reviewed and adapted if needed.
- All incidents and follow-up actions will be recorded in accordance with the school's anti-bullying record-keeping procedures.

12. Programme of Support:

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)

Whole-School Approach: We will create a culture of kindness, respect, and inclusion by embedding anti-bullying strategies into the daily life of the school. All members of the school community will be actively involved in fostering positive relationships.

Support for Those Who Experience Bullying:

- Provide a safe space for the student to talk and be listened to with empathy.
- Ensure a prompt, supportive response that affirms the student's right to feel safe and respected.
- Engage parents/guardians in a collaborative manner.
- Monitor the Student's well-being through regular check-ins and access to additional supports if needed, such as guidance counselling or pastoral care.

Support for Those Who Witness Bullying:

- Encourage and empower students to report incidents and to act as allies.
- Acknowledge the courage of bystanders and support them in understanding their role in promoting a safe and respectful environment.

- Provide education and guidance to build empathy, confidence, and assertiveness skills.

Support for Those Who Display Bullying Behaviour:

- Respond with empathy and understanding, focusing on helping the student take responsibility and learn from their behaviour.
- Implement a restorative approach to repair harm and rebuild relationships.
- Provide targeted interventions, including social and emotional learning supports.
- Engage with parents/guardians to support positive behavioural change at home and in school.

Restorative Practices: Where appropriate, restorative conversations and meetings will be used to rebuild trust and relationships among those involved.

Ongoing Monitoring and Review: We will follow up within 20 days with all parties to ensure the bullying behaviour has ceased, relationships are being repaired, and all students feel safe and supported.

Staff Training and Student Education: Continuous professional development and curriculum-based teaching will reinforce understanding of bullying, its impacts, and how to prevent it.

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*.

13. 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)

14. Appendix:

Appendix A:

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.

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. 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

Signed: (Chairperson of board of management)

Date:

Signed: (Principal)

Date:

Date of next review:

Appendix F

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

The Board of Management of 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   [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)

Date:

Signed: (Principal)

Date: