



# **Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour**

**June 2025**

## **Portlaoise College**

### **Mission Statement**

*"Portlaoise College is committed to providing all students with a high-quality holistic education that enables them to achieve their maximum potential in an engaging, challenging and student centred environment that celebrates diversity in partnership with all stakeholders."*

## 1.0 Introduction

The Board of Management of Portlaoise College 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.

## 1.1 Scope of this policy

Our Bí Cineálta Policy outlines the measures we have in place within the school to prevent and address bullying behaviour, the roles and responsibilities of staff members, the channels through which bullying behaviour can be reported and the actions that will be taken when bullying behaviour is reported. This policy is complimented by a student friendly version which can be found in Appendix C.

Our Bí Cineálta policy addresses incidents of bullying behaviour that occur when students are under the supervision or responsibility of our school. It also applies to situations where bullying behaviour that takes place outside of school continues within the school environment.

As a school we recognise that all bullying behaviour regardless of location, be it in school or outside of school can have a negative impact on students experience of school, therefore this policy outlines the supports available to all students experiencing bullying behaviour when in our care and that is having an impact in school.

## 1.2 Legal Basis

These procedures are underpinned by a range of legislation which includes the following:

- **The Education Welfare Act (2006)** provides that the board of management of a recognised school shall, after consultation with the Principal of, the teachers teaching at, the parents of students registered at, and the Educational Welfare Officer assigned functions in relation to, that



school, prepare, in accordance with subsection, a Code of Behaviour in respect of the students registered at the school.

- **The Code of Behaviour Guidelines for Schools** requires schools to have an Antibullying Policy as part of the school's Code of Behaviour.
- Schools have an obligation under the **Equal Status Acts (2000 – 2018)** to prevent harassment (including sexual harassment) on the grounds of gender, marital status, family status, age, disability, sexual orientation, race, religion, and membership of the Traveller community.
- The **Children First Act (2015)** places a statutory obligation on schools to ensure, as far as practicable, that each child attending the school is safe from harm while attending school or otherwise participating in school activities.
- The **Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act (2020)** also known as **Coco's Law** provides that a person who distributes, publishes or threatens to distribute or publish an intimate image of another person (a) without that other person's consent, and (b) with intent to cause harm to, or being reckless as to whether or not harm is caused to, the other person, is guilty of an offence.

## 2.0 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 (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.*

### Please 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.
- In addition, bullying behaviour can be considered criminal behaviour under certain circumstances and legal consequences can apply.

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 young person experiencing the behaviour. Bullying is not accidental or reckless behaviour. The harm can be physical, social or emotional 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, will 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, will 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 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.

## 2.1 Forms of Bullying

Bullying behaviour can take many forms, which can occur separately or together. These can include bullying behaviours that are described as direct, indirect or online. In investigating reports of bullying behaviour the relevant teacher will work to identify the form(s) of bullying behaviour occurring.

### 2.1.1 Indirect bullying behaviour

| Indirect Forms of Bullying | Description and Examples  |
|----------------------------|---|
| <b>Exclusion</b>           | This occurs where a student is deliberately and repeatedly isolated, excluded or ignored by a student or group of students. |
| <b>Relational</b>          | This occurs when a student's attempts to socialise and form relationships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined. |

### 2.1.2 Direct bullying behaviour:

| Direct Forms of Bullying | Description and examples   |
|--------------------------|--|
| <b>Physical</b>          | This includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking, tripping students, damage to clothing, mobile phone or other devices, schoolbooks and other learning material or interference with a student's locker or bicycle. |



|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
|                        | The contents of school bags and pencil cases may be scattered on the floor. Items of personal property may be defaced, broken, stolen or hidden. It may also take the form of severe physical assault.   |
| <b>Verbal Bullying</b> | Continual name-calling directed at a student which hurts, insults or humiliates. The name-calling may refer to physical appearance; for example, size or clothes worn or gender identity. It could also refer to a student's accent, distinctive voice characteristics, academic ability, race or ethnic origin. |
| <b>Written</b>         | This includes writing insulting remarks about a student in public places, passing around notes about or drawings of a student.   |
| <b>Extortion</b>       | Extortion is where something is obtained through force or threats.   |

### 2.1.3 Online Bullying

Also known as Cyberbullying. This is carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as text or direct messaging/instant messaging, social media platforms, email, apps, digital gaming sites, gaming consoles, chatrooms and other online technologies.

It can include.

- Sending or sharing nasty, insulting, offensive, and/or intimidating messages or images via text messages, emails, direct messages or other websites or apps
- Posting information considered to be personal, private and sensitive without consent
- Making and/or participating in fake profiles on a social network to impersonate and/or humiliate other students
- Excluding or disrupting access to a student on purpose from online chat groups, access to accounts or from an online game
- **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.
- **Cyberstalking:** Ongoing harassment and denigration that causes a person considerable fear for his/her safety.
- Silent telephone/mobile phone call.
- Abusive telephone/mobile phone calls.
- Abusive text messages.

- Abusive emails.
- Abusive communication on social networks e.g., Facebook/Ask.fm/Twitter/YouTube, TikTok or on games consoles.
- Abusive comments on another student's blog and /or pictures.
- Abusive posts on any form of communication technology.

### **Please note**

- If an incident of online bullying is being investigated, Portlaoise College reserves the right to ask a student to show their phone/electronic devices to the Year Head/Deputy Principal/Principal. If the student refuses to co-operate with this request, sanctions as per the Code of Behaviour will be imposed.

## **2.2. Types of Bullying**

There are many different types of bullying behaviour, some of which are described below. In investigating reports of bullying behaviour the relevant teacher will work to identify the type(s) of bullying behaviour occurring.

| <b>Types of Bullying</b>                        | <b>Description or Examples</b>   |
|---|--|
| <b>Disablist bullying</b>                       | Behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of a perceived or actual disability or additional need  |
| <b>Exceptionally able bullying</b>              | Behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their high academic ability or outstanding talents   |
| <b>Gender identity bullying</b>                 | Behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their perceived or actual gender identity  |
| <b>Homophobic/transphobic (LGBTQ+) bullying</b> | Behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their perceived or actual membership of the LGBTQ+ community   |
| <b>Physical appearance bullying</b>             | Behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their physical appearance. Students who "look different" can be mocked or criticised about the shape, size or appearance of their body |
| <b>Racist bullying</b>                          | Behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their race or ethnic origin which includes membership of the Traveller or Roma community.  |

|                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Poverty bullying</b>            | Behaviour that intends to humiliate a student because of a lack of resources   |
| <b>Religious identity bullying</b> | Behaviour that intends to harm a student because of their religion or religious identity   |
| <b>Sexist bullying</b>             | Behaviour that intends to harm a student based on their sex, perpetuating stereotypes that a student or a group of students are inferior because of their sex. |
| <b>Sexual harassment</b>           | Any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature or other conduct based on sex which affects the dignity of a student.           |

### 2.3. Behaviours that are not bullying

The following are examples of behaviours that are not classified as bullying;

- If the repeated harm is real for the student experiencing the behaviour but unintended by the other student, this is not bullying.
- Disagreements between students, or instances where students don't want to be friends or to remain friends, is not considered bullying behaviour 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. These behaviours are not deliberate or planned but, in certain situations, they are an automatic response which they can't control.

Negative behaviour that does not meet this definition of bullying will be dealt with in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour.



## SECTION A

### 3.0 Development 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 of this policy.

|                                      | Date of Consultation   | Method of Consultation  |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| <b>School Staff</b>                  | 23 <sup>rd</sup> of January 2025                                 | Workshop at staff meeting. Staff were grouped together by month of birth to discuss their thoughts. Staff were surveyed for their feedback using the template in the Cineálta guidelines. Suggested activities were also included. This info was then collated. |
| <b>Students</b>                      | 27 <sup>th</sup> of January 2025 & 7 <sup>th</sup> of April 2025 | Whole school workshop in class during Cineáltas Week. At the end of the workshop, a survey was shared with students. This was followed up with a focus group with two students from each year group facilitated by members of our student council.              |
| <b>Parents</b>                       | 9 <sup>th</sup> of April 2025                                    | Survey sent to parents via VSware.  |
| <b>Board of Management</b>           | 13 <sup>th</sup> of January 2025                                 | Presentation with discussion.   |
| <b>Wider School Community</b>        | 6 <sup>th</sup> of May 2025                                      | Discussion with various personnel individually on their experience with bullying here in Portlaoise College.  |
| <b>Date Policy was approved</b>      | June 9 <sup>th</sup> 2025  |   |
| <b>Date Policy was last reviewed</b> |  |   |



## SECTION B

### 4.0 Preventing Bullying Behaviour.

Outlined in the sections that follow are the practices and procedures in place within the school to assist with the prevention of bullying behaviour. This includes as they align with the four key areas of wellbeing promotion (culture and environment, curriculum, policies & planning, relationships & partnerships), strategies aimed at preventing specific types of bullying and the supervision and monitoring policies within to school that assist in the prevention of bullying behaviour.

### 4.1 Bullying Prevention Strategies as they align with the four key areas of Wellbeing Promotion.

| Culture and Environment  | Curriculum  |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active Pastoral Care Team – weekly meeting</li> <li>• Mentoring System</li> <li>• Agreed Classroom rules</li> <li>• Establishment of a Safe Telling Environment</li> <li>• LGBTQ+/Stand Up Week</li> <li>• Seating Plans</li> <li>• Digital Citizenship Programme</li> <li>• Visible Displays around the school</li> <li>• Display of students' work</li> <li>• Designated area to report bullying issues via email</li> <li>• Empowerment of student voice - Student Council, Meitheal,</li> <li>• Prefects, Focus Groups</li> <li>• Designated areas for students- Split breaks, Homeroom, Cairdeas Room, Astro Turf, Track, Courts, 1<sup>st</sup> Year area</li> <li>• STAR Awards</li> <li>• Tutor System</li> <li>• Assistant Year Heads</li> <li>• Intercultural Day</li> <li>• Positive Behaviour Groups</li> <li>• School Completion Program</li> <li>• Whole School Activities</li> <li>• VSWare Points system</li> <li>• Working Together Workshops</li> <li>• End of Year trips/activities</li> <li>• Home School Community Liaison (HSCL)</li> <li>• Signage and welcomes</li> <li>• Space to access teachers for reporting</li> <li>• Teachers check and connect</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Various awareness weeks throughout the school calendar e.g. Stand Up Awareness Week, Inclusion Week, Cineáltas Week, Green Schools etc</li> <li>• Variety of programmes are run in SPHE and Wellbeing/Guidance Classes</li> <li>• Peer Teaching</li> <li>• Wellbeing is at the centre of all subject plans</li> <li>• Wellbeing indicators addressed in all areas of Teaching &amp; Learning</li> <li>• 1st year transition programme through SPHE/Wellbeing</li> <li>• School Show</li> <li>• Religion at Junior Cycle</li> <li>• Whole School Workshops</li> <li>• Staff CPD on area of anti-bullying</li> <li>• Whole school survey regarding bullying</li> <li>• Use of Google Classroom</li> <li>• Variety of teaching strategies</li> <li>• Tutor System</li> <li>• Patrons (LOETB)Framework</li> <li>• Promoting Self Esteem</li> </ul> |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restorative Practice</li> <li>• Supervision</li> <li>• Year Head Assemblies</li> <li>• Teachers taking responsibility for forming groups</li> <li>• No mobile phones in class</li> <li>• Display of students work on the wall</li> <li>• Open door policy – SLT</li> <li>• Gaisce Award</li> </ul>  |   |
| <b>Relationships and Partnerships</b>  | <b>Policy and Planning</b>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Linking with external services e.g. NEPS, CAMHS, Tusla, Gardaí, Jigsaw etc</li> <li>• Linking with BOM, Parent's Council, Student Council</li> <li>• Subject specific CBAs e.g. CSPE Action Project, SPHE CBA</li> <li>• School of Distinction</li> <li>• Fundraising events – LCVP/LCA</li> <li>• Pastoral Care Team</li> <li>• Guest Speakers</li> <li>• Home School Community Liaison (HSCL)</li> <li>• Extra-Curricular- Coaches, clubs, sports etc</li> <li>• Student Support Team</li> <li>• Gardai presenting to students/parents</li> <li>• Coffee Mornings</li> <li>• Trips/Tours</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acceptable Usage Policy</li> <li>• Bi Cineálta Policy</li> <li>• Code of Behaviour</li> <li>• Acceptable Usage Policy</li> <li>• Child Safeguarding</li> <li>• Data Protection</li> <li>• AEN</li> <li>• Wellbeing Policy</li> <li>• Department plans all have wellbeing at the core</li> <li>• Staff aware that they are all mandated persons, child protection procedures handed out each year as reminder and complete Children First E-Learning Programme.</li> <li>• Principal &amp; Deputy Principals complete DLP/DDLP training and refreshers</li> </ul> |

## 4.2 Supervision and Monitoring practices in place to address bullying behaviour

In addition to all the practices identified above under Culture and Environment, Curriculum, Planning and Policy and Relationships and Partnerships, Portlaoise College has the following supervision and monitoring policies to prevent and address bullying behaviour:

- Supervision: A weekly schedule of Teacher/SNA supervision in Portlaoise College is developed to monitor student behaviour and wellbeing. Any causes for concern are dealt with and reported to school management. These include before school and at break times.
- All staff are watchful and observe relationships between students in class, note absence patterns and let it be known that high standards of behaviour are always expected
- Tutor System: Students have a class tutor that meets with them every morning. During this time Tutors can check in with their class and identify any potential issues.
- Student Support Team: The student support team meet weekly and discuss potential areas of concern in the school.
- Student Council/Prefects/Meitheal: These student teams can help identify issues relating to bullying.



## **4.3 Bullying Prevention Strategies**

The prevention strategies specifically aimed at online bullying, homophobic, transphobic, racist, sexist and sexual harassment bullying that are used by the school are as follows:

### **4.3.1 Online Bullying (Cyberbullying)**

- Digital Literacy Education: Students are taught about responsible online behaviour and privacy.
- Anonymous Reporting Tools: Use the confidential email address: [antibullying@portlaoisecollege.ie](mailto:antibullying@portlaoisecollege.ie)
- Monitoring school devices & platforms: Content filters and moderation of school accounts is commonplace.
- Parental Workshops: Parents are taught how to identify signs of online bullying and tools for monitoring.
- Consequences for Online Abuse: Cyberbullying is treated with the same seriousness as offline abuse.

### **4.3.2 Homophobic Bullying**

- Inclusive Curriculum: LGBTQ+ figures and topics are incorporated into subjects like history, literature, and health.
- Stand Up Week: have this in the calendar and have activities/workshops this week
- Community Education: Involving local LGBTQ+ organizations in assemblies and workshops.

### **4.3.3 Transphobic Bullying**

- Respect Gender Identity: Use of chosen names and pronouns in school systems.
- Gender-Neutral Facilities: Provision of universal restrooms and changing areas.
- Stand Up Week: have this in the calendar and have activities/workshops this week
- Transition Support: Offer emotional and administrative support to transitioning students.

### **4.3.4 Racist Bullying**

- Anti-Racism Education: Students are taught about systemic racism, microaggressions, and cultural appreciation.
- Diverse Staff & Role Models: The school as a community has a diverse staff to reflect and support students.
- Cultural Events & Heritage Months: Celebrate diversity through school-wide events such as Intercultural Day.
- Clear Reporting and Follow-Up: Document and address each incident of racial bullying with transparency.

### **4.3.5 Sexist Bullying**

- Gender Equality Education: Students are taught about stereotypes, toxic masculinity, and gender equity.



- Encourage Female Leadership: Support girls in STEM, student government, and sports.
- Challenge Stereotypes: Using media literacy gender roles and expectations are debunked.
- Monitoring School Culture: Be aware of sexist language or "jokes" and stop them early.

#### **4.3.6 Sexual Harassment**

- Clear Definitions and Policies: School ensures students and staff know what constitutes harassment.
- Boundaries Education: Students are taught about consent, personal space, and respect.
- Empower Victims: Provided confidential counselling and advocacy resources.
- Swift Action: Ensure reports are taken seriously and acted on quickly.

## **SECTION C**

### **5.0 Addressing Bullying Behaviour**

The following sections outlines the channels through which bullying behaviour can be reported, the teachers with responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour, the steps that will be taken by the school to determine if bullying behaviour has occurred, the approaches taken to addressing bullying behaviour and the supports available to those who experience, witness and display bullying behaviour.

When addressing bullying behaviour as school we will endeavour to stay true to the following principles;

- Ensure the student experiencing the 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 view 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.

#### **5.1 Reporting Bullying Behaviour**

Students, parents, non-teaching staff, visitors or members of the wider community should feel welcome to report any concerns regarding bullying behaviour to any member of school staff. All members of staff have a responsibility to report any concerns in relation to bullying to a member of the Anti-Bullying team.

The Anti-Bullying team in Portlaoise College is comprised of the Principal, the Deputy Principal, Care Team and Year Heads.

Students can also report any concerns regarding bullying behaviour via email to [antibullying@portlaoisecollege.ie](mailto:antibullying@portlaoisecollege.ie).

This email address is open and available to students to email their bullying concerns to during term time only. It will be monitored for responses during each term on a weekly basis by a member of the Care team. Any bullying concerns reported to this email will then be passed to the relevant teacher for further investigation. All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying, will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher.

## 5.2. Procedures for Investigating Allegations of Bullying Behaviour

Teachers with responsibility for addressing and investigating bullying behaviour are as follows: **Year Heads, Deputy Principals and Principal**. They will be referred to as the **Relevant Teacher**.

To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour the relevant teacher 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 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.

If the answer to one of these questions is **No**, then the behaviour is not bullying behaviour and the behaviour will be addressed through the Code of Behaviour.

The following procedure serves to guide relevant teachers through the process of investigating allegations of bullying behaviour. Investigations can take a considerable amount of time.

- Initially, the relevant teacher will gather as much information as possible regarding the allegation of bullying behaviour. This usually involves speaking directly with the student who alleges the bullying behaviour. The student(s) will be requested to give a verbal and written account of the incident(s).
- The relevant teacher will also speak with the student(s) against whom the allegation of bullying behaviour has been made. The relevant teacher may speak to students individually or in groups depending on the nature of the allegation. The student(s) will be requested to give a verbal and/or written account of the incident(s).
- Where possible, allegations/incidents are investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved. However, considering the fact that all students and teachers are fully timetabled, the student(s) will usually have to leave a lesson or to be excused from a lesson to meet/speak with a relevant teacher. This will be facilitated, as discretely as possible but total discretion is very difficult to realise in a live school environment.



- All investigations will be conducted with sensitivity and due regard to all the students concerned.
- When investigating allegations of bullying behaviour or incidents, the relevant teacher should seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This should be done calmly, setting an example in dealing with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner.
- It will be made clear to students that when they provide information, they are not considered to be 'telling tales' but are behaving responsibly and that the well-being of other students is dependent on them reporting such behaviour.
- The relevant teacher may consult with any staff member or other persons during the course of their investigation in order to seek guidance or further relevant information.
- Where the relevant teacher is concerned that a particular allegation of bullying is causing serious upset to a student, staff member or another person, then they should bring it to the attention of the Principal or Deputy Principal at the earliest opportunity.
- The relevant teacher should complete a record of the investigation form (Form A, available in Appendix A)
- The relevant teacher will exercise their professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved.
- If the relevant teacher determines that bullying has not occurred, then they will consult with the Year Head/ tutor of the student(s) involved in order to provide support and guidance.
- The relevant teacher will report on their investigation and decision at a meeting with the relevant Deputy Principal.

### **5.3 Procedures for Addressing Bullying Behaviour Following Investigation**

The Board of Management of Portlaoise College adopts the *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2024*, as the basis for how the school addresses the issue of bullying.

The primary aim in dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame).

Portlaoise College reserves the right to investigate allegations of bullying and to take disciplinary action where necessary, where bullying is perpetrated by a member of the school community and it impinges on the work or well-being of a student in the school, even where the bullying acts are committed outside the school (see the section on the scope of the policy).

In any case where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred:

- The relevant teacher will record the bullying behaviour and any actions taken using the standardised recording template (Form B, available in Appendix B)
- The relevant teacher(s) will immediately report any incidents of serious physical assault, sexual assault or harassment to the Principal or Deputy Principal.
- The parents of the parties involved will be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and to explain the actions being taken (by reference to the policy). They will have an input into what the sanctions/supports should be under the remit of our Code of Behaviour.



- The relevant teacher(s) will make it clear to the relevant student(s) engaged in bullying behaviour, that they have breached the BÍ Cineálta Policy. The relevant teacher(s) will also make reasonable efforts to get the student(s) who have engaged in the bullying behaviour to try to see the situation from the perspective of the student who is being bullied.
- The relevant teacher will use their professional judgement to select the most appropriate evidence-based intervention strategy to resolve issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.
- The relevant teacher (Year Head) may seek guidance or assistance from the Senior Leadership Team at any stage as well as the Care Team.
- The relevant teacher(s) will implement the chosen intervention strategy. It will be made clear to all involved (each set of students and parents) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the student being disciplined, his/her parents and the school.

#### **Please note**

- 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.

#### **5.3.1 Evidenced based strategies for addressing bullying behaviour**

There are a variety of approaches and intervention strategies that can be used in any given situation. The *BÍ Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2024*, highlighted the importance of schools' identifying and consistently implementing evidence-based intervention strategies for dealing with cases of bullying.

Given the complexity of bullying behaviour, it is generally acknowledged that no one intervention works in all situations. The relevant teacher will decide on the intervention method(s) that are best suited to each specific case. The methods of intervention that will be used by Portlaoise College include:

1. The traditional disciplinary approach
2. Strengthening the victim
3. Mediation
4. Restorative Practice [ Refer to Appendix G for further information]
5. The Support Group Method
6. The Method of Shared Concern.

#### **5.4 Following up where bullying behaviour has occurred**

- As a follow-up to the implementation of an intervention strategy, the relevant teacher (s) will meet separately with the students involved and their parents to review progress. This should be carried out within 20 school days.

- In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant teacher must, as part of his/her professional judgement, take the following factors into account:
  - Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased
  - Whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable
  - Whether the relationships between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable; and
  - The effectiveness of the strategies used to address the bullying behaviour
  - Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the Principal or Deputy Principal
- The details of this follow-up meeting should be recorded in Form B available in Appendix B.
- In cases where the relevant teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has not ceased and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after they determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, it must be recorded by the relevant teacher on Form B (and referred to the Anti-Bullying team for further consideration and follow-up. This may involve trying a different intervention, application of the school's Code of Conduct (up to and including suspension and exclusion), or referral of the case to Tusla or An Gardaí. A timeframe will be agreed for further engagement until the bullying behaviour has ceased.
- In any cases where the school has serious concerns in relation to managing the behaviour of a student, the advice of the National Education Psychological Service (NEPS) may be sought.
- Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with the DES procedures, they must be referred, as appropriate, to the LOETB complaints procedure.
- If a parent has exhausted the complaints procedure and is still not satisfied, the parents have a right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children

## **5.5 Referral of serious cases to Tusla**

Generally, bullying behaviour can be addressed without the involvement of Tusla. However, bullying behaviour may become a child protection concern when it results in significant physical or emotional harm, or where it becomes a persistent and severe problem and measures taken to address it are not effective.

In determining when bullying behaviour should be reported to Tusla the following factors will be considered:

- the impact on the child
- protective/appropriate action taken by the parents
- protective/appropriate action taken by the school
- engagement of child/family with support services such as NEPS

If there is doubt about whether bullying behaviour is a child protection concern the Designated Liason Person (DLP) will contact Tusla's social work department for advice. This will enable the social worker to explore the situation with school staff and provide advice on the best course of action.



Portlaoise College reserves the right to seek the assistance of agencies such as the National Education Psychological Service (NEPS), the HSE, and the Gardaí, where it deems such assistance is necessary to dealing effectively with bullying.

## **5.6 Requests for no action/intervention**

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, the teacher has a duty of care to the student and will need to inform the parent/guardian.

Parent/guardians have the right to ask the school to take no action or intervention regarding bullying behaviour impacting their child. 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, the school may decide that, based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour.**

## **6.0 Programme of Supports for those who experience, witness or display bullying behaviour**

Supports are available within the school and through external agencies for students who experience, witness or display bullying behaviour. There are also supports available to families who have a child who has experienced bullying behaviour or is displaying bullying behaviour, all of which are outlined below. Additional advice for parents and students can be found in Appendix H and I.

### **6.1 Programme of supports available to students affected by bullying**

- Counselling and/or opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop their friendship and social skills and thereby build resilience whenever this is needed. In this regard the Student Support Team will work closely with the student to ensure they are actively supported in the school and to engage in school-based activities they enjoy.
- Placed on our school’s focus in/out support list and/or engage in Check and Connect.
- Program of support facilitated by the school’s guidance department in conjunction with the Year Head.
- Learning strategies applied within the school will also allow for the enhancement of the pupil’s self-worth



## **6.2 Programme of supports available to students who display bullying behaviour:**

- Counselling to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others. The Year Head in conjunction with the Student Support Team will work closely with the student in this regard.

## **6.3 Outside agency support available to the school**

The school in certain circumstances may also seek the support and advice of TUSLA, EWO, NEPS, NCSE, second level school support services, HSE and any other agency deemed appropriate to support the school in dealing with incidents of bullying.

### **6.3.1 Support websites for students**

<http://www.barnardos.ie/resources-advice/young-people/teen-help/bullying.html>

<https://www.childline.ie/index.php/support/bullying/1395>

[http://www.letsomeoneknow.ie/common\\_problems/bullying/](http://www.letsomeoneknow.ie/common_problems/bullying/)

<http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/Publications/services/Children/Cool%20School%20Bullying%20Project%20Tips%20for%20Teens.pdf>

### **6.3.2 Support websites for parents**

<http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/Publications/services/Children/whatparentsneedtoknow.pdf>

<http://www.webwise.ie>

## **SECTION D**

### **7.0 Oversight**

The Principal will present an update on bullying behaviour at each ordinary board of management meeting, using the form available at Appendix D of this policy. 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 been reported since the last meeting, 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 will 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, in hard copy on request and in Appendix A of this policy.

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. The template contained in Appendix E of this policy will be completed by the Board of Management to confirm that all aspects of the annual review were completed. The school community will also be given notice that the annual review has taken place through completion and publication of the form contained in Appendix F of this policy on the school website.

Signed: Bernadette A Ryan  
Chairperson of Board of Management

Date: 9/6/2025

Signed: [Signature]  
Principal

Date: 9/6/2025