# Bí Cineálta Policy.

**School Address***: Our Lady of Good Counsel School,*

*Innishmore, Ballincollig, Cork. P31FH22*

**Phone number:** *0214878370*

**Roll number:** *18208A*

**School Patron:** *The Bishop of Cork and Ross, Bishop Fintan Gavin*.

**Principal:** *Aisling Power*.

**Deputy Principal:** *Nollaig Moynihan.*

**Chairperson:** *Harold Brooks*

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## Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

Date of Issue: May 2025

| Amendments / Reviews |
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**Aim of Policy**: To provide clear guidelines to staff in relation to the **Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour in** school.

The Board of Management of Our Lady of Good Counsel (O.L.G.C.) 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 pupils who attend our school are kept safe from harm and that the wellbeing of our pupils is at the forefront of everything that we do. We recognise the negative impact that bullying behaviour can have on the lives of our pupils 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 pupils 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.

**[i]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 |
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| School Staff | March 2025 (Monday meeting discussion on | Circular 0055/2024 sent to all staff<br>Information seminar for all |

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| | Circular) | staff<br>Principal and Deputy attended training in CESC<br>In-School Staff Training<br>Draft Policy sent to staff |
| Students | March 2025<br>April 2025 | Student Council put together questionnaire for pupils<br>Questionnaire completed by pupils |
| Parents | April 2025 | Questionnaire to Parents<br>Results of Parent and Pupil Questionnaire sent to parents |
| Board of Management | 27th May | Draft Policy sent to BOM |
| Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers | | |
| Date policy was approved: | | |
| Date policy was last reviewed: | | |

**Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour**

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| This section sets out the prevention strategies that are used by our 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. |
| **Culture and Environment**<br>Our Lady of Good Counsel School is a space where pupils and staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported. Relationships between the stakeholders are based on respect, care, integrity and trust. There is open communication between the patron, Board of Management, school staff, pupils and their parents to help foster a collaborative approach and shared responsibilities in relation to preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.<br>Each member of staff is responsible to develop and maintain a school culture where bullying behavior is unacceptable and the staff endeavor to be consistent in their approach to addressing bullying |

behavior. The staff help the pupils to promote kindness and inclusion. The parents are active partners in their child's education, they help foster an environment where bullying behaviour is not tolerated as they encourage and promote empathy and respect.

**A telling Environment**
Our Lady of Good Counsel School supports and encourages a 'telling environment'. OLGC staff and pupils understand the importance of recognizing that the pupils will not;

- Be fearful of retaliation from the pupil displaying bullying behaviour or their peers
- Have concerns about being seen as a 'tell-tale'
- Be fearful that the trusted adult/teacher might make the situation worse
- Be fearful that they will not be believed

To encourage a 'telling environment' the learning experiences through SPHE will give our pupils the knowledge of what will happen when they report bullying behavior and the steps that will be taken.

**A Trusted Adult**
Through the Stay Safe Programme the pupils are encouraged to identify the trusted adults that they can go to. Staff support this strategy by letting pupils know that they can talk to them.

The trusted adult (if not the class teacher) should reassure the pupils that they have done the right thing by reporting the bullying behaviour. The trusted adult, without delay should inform the pupil's class teacher of the report of bullying behaviour.

**Curriculum, Relationships and Partnerships**
Teaching and learning is collaborative and respectful. Pupils have regular opportunities to work in small groups with their peers, this helps build a sense of connection, belonging and empathy among pupils. OLGC School provides opportunities for pupils to develop a sense of self worth through curricular programmes.

Strong interpersonal connections are a vital part of effectively preventing and addressing bullying behaviour. These interpersonal connections are supported through a range of formal and informal structures such as the student council, parents' association, active team partnership and monthly behaviour meetings that support the staff in implementing effective behaviour strategies and the development of a whole school approach to positive behaviour.

The following, which is not an exhaustive list, are developed and promoted to strengthen relationships and partnerships between members of the school community:

- Age appropriate awareness initiatives that look at the causes and impacts of bullying behaviour including those dealing with navigating friendships, identity-based bullying, racist bullying, homophobic/transphobic bullying, sexism and sexual harassment
- support the active participation of students in school life
- support 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
- conduct workshops and seminars for pupils, school staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of bullying
- we undertake activities that build empathy, respect and resilience
- we promote acts of kindness
- we teach problem solving

**Policy and Planning.**
The wellbeing of the whole school community is at the heart of OLGC's plans and policies.
Policies that support Bí Cineálta are:
Child safeguarding statement
Code of Behaviour
Acceptable Use Policy
Safety Statement
Parents/Guardians and Visitors Policy
Special Education Needs Policy
RSE Policy
Opting Out Policy
Attendance Policy
Parental Involvement Policy

**Preventing cyberbullying behaviour**
OLGC School proactively addresses the challenges of the impact of technology on our pupils. We promote digital literacy, digital citizenship, and foster safe online environments.

Strategies to prevent cyberbullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- implementing the SPHE curriculum
- Internet Safety Week
- communicating our acceptable use policy for technology
- referring to appropriate online behaviour as part of the

standards of behaviour in the Code of Behaviour
- promotion of online safety events for parents who are responsible for overseeing their children's activities online. It is important for their child's safety, that parents are aware of their children's use of technology including smartphones and gaming consoles.

**Preventing homophobic/transphobic bullying behaviour**
All students including gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students, have a right to feel safe and supported at school.

Strategies to prevent homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:
- We maintain an inclusive physical environment
- We encourage staff training to promote understanding and empathy

**Preventing racist bullying behaviour**
Pupils attending our OLGC School come from many different cultures and backgrounds. Pupils from diverse backgrounds may face discrimination and prejudice and may be subject to racist bullying behaviour.

Strategies to prevent racist bullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:
- OLGC School fosters a school culture where diversity is celebrated and where pupils "see themselves" in their school environment
- We encourage empathy building activities
- We encourage bystanders to report when they witness racist behavior
- We will provide supports to school staff to respond to the needs of pupils for whom English is an additional language and for communicating with their parents
- We provide support to school staff to support pupils from ethnic minorities, including Traveller and Roma students, and to encourage communication with their parents
- We ensure that library reading material and resources represent appropriate lived experiences of pupils and adults from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds

**Preventing sexist bullying behaviour**
OLGC School focuses on gender equality as part of the school's measures to create a supportive and respectful environment.
Strategies to prevent sexist bullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- We endeavor to ensure members of staff model respectful behaviour and treat pupils equally irrespective of their sex
- We endeavor to ensure all pupils have the same opportunities to engage in school activities irrespective of their sex
- We celebrate diversity at school and acknowledge the contributions of all pupils
- We encourage parents to reinforce these values of respect at home

**Preventing sexual harassment**
Preventing sexual harassment requires an approach that focuses on education, awareness and clear enforceable policies. Schools must make it clear that there is a zero tolerance approach to sexual harassment. Sexual harassment should never be dismissed as teasing or banter.

Strategies to prevent sexual harassment include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- We promote positive role models within the school community
- We challenge gender stereotypes that can contribute to sexual harassment

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):

**Safe physical spaces and supervision in school.**
OLGC School endeavours to ensure the safety of the pupils at all times while they are in school. The school is well-maintained and areas are well lit. Pupils are supervised at all times before, after and during the school day. This is possible with the level of staffing that we have and through the use of supervision rotas developed and updated by the Deputy Principal.

**Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour**

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

The class teacher in consultation with management

**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):

**Identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred.**
Some pupils 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 these behaviours are not deliberate or planned but, in certain situations, they are an automatic response which they can't control.

**Approach**
The primary aim in addressing reports of bullying behaviour should be to stop the bullying behaviour and to restore, as far as practicable, the relationships of the pupils involved, rather than to apportion blame. When addressing bullying behaviour teachers should:

- ensure that the pupil 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

**Core definition of Bullying Behaviour**
*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.*

This definition of bullying sets out clear criteria to help schools to identify bullying behaviour. 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. To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour the following questions should be considered:

1. Is the behaviour targeted at a specific pupil or group of pupils?
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 should be addressed using the Bí Cineálta Procedures.
Incidents can occur where behaviour is unacceptable and hurtful but the behaviour is not bullying behaviour. Strategies that deal with inappropriate behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

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.

If the answer to any of these questions is No, then the behaviour is not bullying behaviour. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred teachers consider what, where, when and why?

- if a group of pupils is involved, each pupil should be engaged with individually at first
- thereafter, all pupils involved should be met as a group
- at the group meeting, each pupil should be asked for their account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's views
- each pupil should be supported as appropriate, following the group meeting

**Where bullying behaviour has occurred**
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 pupils 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 behavior

- 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
- a record should be kept of the engagement with all involved
- This record should document the form and type of bullying behaviour, if known (see Section 2.5 and 2.7 of the Bi Cineálta procedures), where and when it took place and the date of the initial engagement with the pupils involved and their parents
- The record should include the views of the pupils and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour Follow up where bullying behaviour has occured
- The teacher must engage with the pupil involved and their parents again no more than 20 school days after the initial engagement
- 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 pupils involved
- The teacher should document the review with pupils and their parents to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased
- The date that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased should also be recorded
- Any engagement with external services/supports should also be noted
- Ongoing supervision and support may be needed for the pupils involved even where bullying behaviour has ceased
- If the bullying behaviour has not ceased the teacher should review the strategies used in consultation with the pupils involved and their parents. A timeframe should be agreed for further engagement until the bullying behaviour has ceased
- If it becomes clear that the pupil who is displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behaviour, then consideration should be given to using the strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour as provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour. If disciplinary sanctions are considered, this is a matter between the relevant pupil, their parents and the school
- 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
- 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

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| 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): |
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| The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying involves a whole school approach. Given the complexity of bullying behaviour, no one intervention/support programme works in all situations.<br><br>Parents are consulted at each stage and their input on what their child needs for support would be taken into consideration when developing strategies to support the pupil.<br>The pupil's voice would also be extremely important in developing a plan of support.<br><br>Stay Safe, Weaving Wellbeing and Relationship and Sexuality Programmes are used to promote the understanding and to provide support for pupils that have been bullied, witnessed or have engaged in bullying behaviour.<br><br>Further support would be sought from NEPS if deemed necessary. The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) of the Department of Education provides a comprehensive, school based psychological service to support the wellbeing, academic, social and emotional development of all students. NEPS staff can support schools with issues around bullying through this direct or indirect case work service. In relation to bullying, NEPS psychologists often advise schools on best practice to prevent and address bullying when issues arise in schools and/or provide training in preventative initiatives, such as developing social and emotion skills, social skills, executive function skills, promoting resilience and skills in relationship repair between peers as appropriate.<br><br>Tusla will be contacted for advice in cases where it is considered that bullying behaviour is a child protection concern. See section 2.4 for guidance on when bullying behaviour becomes a child protection concern. |

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)

**Board of Management Approval**

This policy was reviewed and approved by the Board of Management of Our Lady of Good Counsel Special School on:

**Date: _____**

**Chairperson: _____**

**Signature: _____**

**Review Date: _____**

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