Leenane National School

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Leenane NS has adopted the following policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

This policy fully complies with the requirements of *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* 2024.

The board of management acknowledges that bullying behaviour interferes with the rights of the child as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. We all, as a school community, have a responsibility to work together to prevent and address bullying behaviour and to deal with the negative impact of bullying behaviour.

We are committed to ensuring that all students who attend our school are kept safe from harm and that the wellbeing of our students is at the forefront of everything that we do. We recognise the negative impact that bullying behaviour can have on the lives of our students and we are fully committed to preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.

We confirm that we will, in accordance with our obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the harassment of students or staff on any of the nine grounds specified: gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.

Definition of Bullying

Bullying is defined in *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* and *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* as targeted behaviour, online or offline that causes harm. The harm caused can be physical, social and/or emotional in nature. Bullying behaviour is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power in relationships between two people or groups of people in society.

The detailed definition is provided in Chapter 2 of the Bí Cineálta procedures.

Types and Forms of Bullying Behaviour that can occur are outlined in Appendix 1 of this policy.

Each school is required to develop and implement a Bí Cineálta policy that sets out how the school community prevents and addresses bullying behaviour. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour that is not bullying behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

Section A: Development/review of our Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

All members of our school community were provided with the opportunity to input into the development/review of this policy.

	Date consulted	Method of consultation
School Staff	11/09/2026	Sharing of draft policy with staff to consult and make any amendments to the draft policy.
Students	08/09/2026 08/09/2026	Questionnaires: Students were given a Bullying questionnaire to seek their input in developing our school's Bí Cineálta policy. Their suggestions were all taken into account when drafting the school's Bí Cineálta Policy.
Parents	04/09/2026	Parent Questionnaire – parents were given a Bullying questionnaire to seek their input in developing our schools Bí Cineálta policy.
Board of Management	15/09 /2026	Review of new policy draft – leading to consultation and final ratification after amendments made where necessary.
Date policy was approved: June 2025		
Date policy was last reviewed: September 2026		

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

This section outlines the prevention strategies that will be used by Leenane NS. 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

- The school promotes an atmosphere of friendship, respect, connection and belonging through our school ethos, philosophy and Code of Behaviour. We value our positive school culture where children and staff feel safe, connected and supported.
- There is a strong sense of community and cooperation in Leenane NS between Board of Management, staff, pupils and parents, and each has a clear role in the prevention of bullying. Relationships between all members of the school community are based on respect and trust. Open communication between all partners helps foster a collaborative approach and shared responsibilities in relation to preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.
- Each member of our school staff has a responsibility to develop and maintain a school culture where bullying behaviour is unacceptable and to take a consistent approach to addressing bullying behaviour.
- All school staff consistently model respectful behaviour towards colleagues, students, and visitors, demonstrating professionalism, courtesy, and consideration in all interactions..
- Students shape the school culture by promoting kindness and inclusion within their peer group and maintain a positive and supportive school environment for all.

- Positive self-esteem is fostered among the pupils by celebrating individual differences/achievements, by acknowledging and rewarding good behaviour and by providing opportunities for success.
- Weekly school assemblies serve as a platform to recognise and celebrate the achievements of students, fostering a sense of pride within the school community. During these assemblies, the school's Bí Cineálta Policy is regularly referenced to remind students of the importance of respect, kindness, and empathy and that bullying behaviour is unacceptable.
- A "telling" environment is encouraged in Leenane NS where students feel comfortable reporting bullying. A School Happiness Questionnaire is carried out on a termly basis with pupils from JI to 6th class. (Appendix 2)
- We actively promote the concept of a 'trusted adult'—a reliable and caring staff member that students can turn to for guidance, support, and reassurance. This trusted adult helps ensure that students feel safe and confident in expressing their concerns and seeking help when needed. By nurturing a culture of trust and communication, we aim to provide a space where every student feels supported.
- The physical layout of our school creates a safe environment for the children. The building and grounds are well maintained and promote a sense of ownership and respect in the school community.
- Consistent supervision strategies and ongoing monitoring of students are implemented throughout the school day, including during transitions, break times, and extracurricular activities. These efforts are designed to ensure a safe and supportive environment, effectively prevent bullying, and quickly identify and address any concerns related to student behaviour, wellbeing, or safety.

Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)

- In Leenane NS, we promote teaching and learning that is collaborative and respectful. Students are provided with regular opportunities to engage in small group work, fostering the development of friendships, interpersonal connections, and a supportive school environment.
- The SPHE Curriculum, including the *Stay Safe, WalkTall and RSE* programmes, are taught throughout the school to support the Bí Cineálta policy.
- Our weekly assembly themes are linked to developing wellbeing and resilience and promoting positive behavior.
- The school acknowledges that diversity and inclusion should be recognised and understood thus fostering an environment where inclusivity, respect, and understanding thrive, and where students "see themselves" in the school environment.
- Leenane NS provides opportunities for students to participate in both curricular and extracurricular activities to develop a sense of self-worth, team work inclusion and respect.

Policy and Planning

- In Leenane NS the wellbeing of the school community is at the heart of school policies and plans. Our Bí Cineálta policy will be reviewed annually in conjunction with other policies that contribute and support the implementation of our Bí Cineálta policy.
- A number of our school policies support the implementation of the Bí Cineálta policy: *Acceptable Usage Policy, Digital Learning Policy, Special Education Policy, Code of Behaviour* and *Child Safeguarding Statement, Wellbeing Policy*.
- Student voice will be a key component in shaping school policy and planning, promoting greater awareness and supporting the successful implementation of initiatives.
- Teachers and school staff will engage in appropriate professional learning courses to support us in preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.

Relationships and Partnerships

- Strong personal connections are a vital part of effectively preventing and addressing bullying behaviour. In our school these connections are supported through a range of formal and informal structures.
- Implementing age-appropriate awareness initiatives that encourage students to reflect on their own behavior to promote kindness, friendship, and supporting others, while also exploring the causes and impact of bullying during SPHE lessons.

- Promoting and facilitating workshops and seminars for students, staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of bullying for example external speakers and reference to parental workshops in school newsletter in line with targets from our Digital Learning Policy.
- In Leenane NS we encourage the active involvement of students in school activities, while also promoting the engagement of parents in the school community.
- Encouraging the active involvement of parents and students in the development of the school's Bí Cineálta Policy, as well as a child-friendly version of the policy ensures their participation in promoting and discussing effective strategies to identify and reduce bullying behavior, while also outlining procedures for addressing and resolving incidents if they occur.

Preventing Cyberbullying Behaviour

The increase in the use of technology has led to students becoming increasingly vulnerable to cyberbullying or unacceptable online behaviour. The school will proactively address these challenges by promoting digital literacy, digital citizenship, and fostering safe online environments.

Strategies to prevent cyberbullying behaviour include:

- Implementation of the SPHE curriculum.
- Annual Garda Visit for pupils
- Implementation of the Digital Media Literacy curriculum which teaches students about responsible online behaviour and digital citizenship. (Webwise)
- Having regular conversations with students about developing respectful and kind relationships online.
- Implementing and clearly communicating the school's Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) for technology.
- Referring to appropriate online behaviour as part of the standards of behaviour in the Code of Behaviour.
- Promoting or hosting online safety events for parents who are responsible for overseeing their children's activities online.
- Organising online safety workshops for students to enhance their understanding of safe internet practices and ensure their security while online.
- Marking Internet Safety Day each year to reinforce awareness around appropriate online behaviour.

**Instances of alleged bullying on social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook (this is not an exhaustive list) will not be investigated by the school. These platforms are not suitable for pupils under 13 years of age. The school has no authority over the use of devices outside of school. Our mobile phone policy is such that it is not permissible for pupils to use their phones on school grounds. The school does have a duty of care to pupils and will teach about cyber-bullying but will not be investigating alleged incidents of Bullying on these platforms. This is a matter for An Garda Síochana.*

Preventing Homophobic/Transphobic Bullying, Racist Bullying, Preventing Sexual Harassment

All students have a right to feel safe and supported at school. Strategies to prevent these various forms of Bullying behaviour include the following;

- Staff at all times endeavor to encourage pupils to show respect for each other.
- Positive self-esteem is fostered among the pupils by celebrating individual differences, by acknowledging good behaviour and by providing opportunities for success.
- The school's Bí Cineálta policy is discussed regularly with the pupils.
- Staff are particularly vigilant in monitoring pupils who are considered at risk of bullying/ being bullied.
- Challenging gender stereotypes.
- Conducting workshops and seminars for students, school staff and parents to raise awareness of racism. E.g. Show Racism the Red Card.
- Ensuring our class libraries have age-appropriate reading material to educate pupils about different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.
- Modelling of respectful behaviour by staff and treat all students equally irrespective of their sex.
- Ensuring all students have the same opportunities to engage in school activities irrespective of sex.
- Celebrating diversity in school and acknowledging the contributions of all students.
- Organising awareness campaigns and workshops on gender equality and respect.
- Encouaging parents to reinforce these values of respect at home.

- Promoting positive role models within the school community.

Leenane NS has the following supervision and monitoring policies in place to prevent and address bullying behaviour (See Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

- School staff supervise the entry and egress of pupils every day with positive interactions providing children with a daily reassurance of the staff as consistent trusted adults.
- Implementation of effective supervision strategies and continuous monitoring of students are implemented throughout the school day, including during transitions, break times, and extracurricular activities, to maintain a safe environment, prevent bullying incidents, and swiftly address any concerns related to student behaviour or wellbeing.
- Classroom teachers actively encourage students to report any incidents of bullying they witness or experience, promoting a culture of trust and responsibility.
- Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place.
- Non-teaching and ancillary staff are encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers.
- School assemblies are used to emphasise the importance of positive behaviour and looking after one another. Shining Stars are awarded to pupils to reinforce positive behavior.
- SPHE lessons play a crucial role in promoting positive behavior and providing students with strategies to address negative behaviour when it arises.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

All teachers will have responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour in consultation with the school 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

Leenane NS takes the following steps 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):

The school's procedures for investigation, follow-up and recording of bullying behaviour and the established intervention strategies used by the school for dealing with alleged cases of bullying behavior are as follows:

1. **All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the class teacher**. Pupils will gain confidence in reporting bullying behavior. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It should be made clear to all pupils that when they report instances of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.

2. **Identifying if Bullying Behaviour has Occurred**

When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred teachers should consider **what, where, when** and **why**? The steps that will be taken by the school to identify if bullying behaviour has occurred are as follows:

- Teacher will meet with the student(s) involved individually.
- If a group of students is involved, each student will be engaged with individually first.
- Thereafter, all students involved will be met as a group providing the child allegedly experiencing the bullying is comfortable to do this.
- At the group meeting, each student will be asked for their account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's views.
- Each member of a group will be supported through the possible pressures that they may face from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher.
- Children may be asked to write down their account of an incident.
- When determining if bullying behaviour has occurred the following questions will be considered:
- ***Is the behaviour targeted at a specific student or group of students?***
- ***Is the behaviour intended to cause physical, social or emotional harm?***
- ***Is the behaviour repeated?***

If the answer to any of the above questions is **NO** then the behaviour may be negative behaviour but is not considered bullying behaviour and will be dealt with in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour.

If the answer to each question above is **YES,** then the behaviour is bullying behaviour and the behaviour will be addressed using the procedure laid out below.

NOTE: One off Incidents may be considered bullying in certain circumstances. Posting a once-off offensive or hurtful public message, image or statement on a social network site or other public forum where that message, image or statement can be viewed and/or repeated by other people will be regarded as bullying behavior.

3. **In cases where it has been determined that bullying behaviour has occurred (i.e. yes to all three questions above) the class teacher will reassure the child who was bullied that the issue will be dealt.**

- Where the teacher has determined that a pupil has engaged in bullying behaviour, it will be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's Bí Cineálta policy and efforts will be made to try to get him/her empathise with the pupil experiencing bullying behaviour.
- The child/ children involved will be asked to assure the teacher and the child experiencing the bullying behaviour that further incidents will not take place.
- The primary objective at this first stage will be to restore the relationship between parties involved. This may involve employing strategies specific to the situation.
- Parents of students who have experienced bullying behaviour and who have displayed bullying behaviour will be informed at *this stage*.
- A record should be kept of the engagement with all involved – See Appendix 3 for School Template.
- Teacher will record incidents in a factual and impartial manner.
- This record will document the form and type of bullying behaviour, if known, where and when it took place and the date of the initial engagement with the students involved and their parents.

4. **Reviewing Progress**

- The teacher must engage with the students and parents involved no more than 20 school

days after the initial discussion to review progress following the initial intervention.

- Important factors to consider as part of this engagement are the nature of the bullying behaviour, the effectiveness of the strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and the relationship between the students involved.
- The teacher will document the review with students and their parents to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased and the views of the student and their parents in relation to this.
- 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 students involved even where bullying behaviour has ceased.
- If it is determined that the bullying behaviour has not ceased, then the process will proceed to Stage 2 outlined below.

5. Stage 2

If the bullying behavior has not ceased following initial interventions, the Principal will take additional steps to address the issue. These will include;

- Meeting with the students involved to review the situation in detail, ensuring that all parties have an opportunity to express their concerns and perspectives.
- A thorough assessment of the situation will be conducted to determine whether further strategies or additional supervision measures need to be implemented to prevent further incidents of bullying.
- The Principal will also arrange meetings with the parents or guardians of the students involved. These meetings will serve to collaboratively discuss the ongoing issues, put in place further interventions, and develop a tailored plan of action aimed at addressing the bullying behaviour. The focus of the plan will be on fostering positive behavioural change, promoting respect, and ensuring the wellbeing of all students.
- The school will work closely with parents to monitor progress, provide ongoing support, and ensure that both the student experiencing the bullying behaviour and the student displaying bullying behavior receive the necessary guidance and support to resolve the situation effectively.
- Continuous monitoring and follow-up will be conducted to assess the effectiveness of the interventions, with the aim of ending the bullying behaviour.
- If, after all interventions and supports have been implemented at this stage, it is determined that the bullying behavior has not ceased, the process will proceed to Stage 3, as detailed below.

6. Stage 3 – Code of Behaviour

The school has a fundamental responsibility to ensure a safe and supportive environment for all students. If initial interventions and supports do not effectively address bullying and the behaviour persists, a more structured program of appropriate sanctions may be implemented. This will be done by the Principal in consultation with the student's parents and the Board of Management. The sanctions will be designed to not only address the bullying behaviour but also to encourage positive behaviour, promote personal growth, and uphold the dignity and self-esteem of the child. The aim is to support the student's development in a constructive manner, while reinforcing the importance of respect and responsibility within the school community.

7. Requests to take No Action

A student reporting bullying behaviour may ask that a member of staff does nothing about the

behavior other than "look out for them". The student may not want to be identified as having told someone about the bullying behaviour. Where this occurs, it is important that the staff member shows empathy to the student, deals with the matter sensitively and speaks to the student to work out together what steps can be taken to address the matter and how their parents will be informed of the situation.
It is important that the student who has experienced bullying behaviour feels safe

However, while acknowledging the child's request, schools may decide that, based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour.

Parents may also make schools aware of bullying behaviour that has occurred and specifically request that the school take no action. Parents should put this request in writing to the school or can be facilitated to do so where there are literacy, digital literacy or language barriers.
However, while acknowledging the parent's request, schools may decide that, based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour.

8. Bullying Outside School

A school is not expected to deal with bullying behavior that occurs when students are not under the care or responsibility of the school. However, where this bullying behavior has an impact in school, schools are required to support the students involved. Where the bullying behavior continues in school, schools should deal with in accordance with the Bí Cineálta policy.

10. Complaints Procedure

If a parent is not satisfied with how bullying behaviour has been addressed by the school, in accordance with these procedures, they should be referred to the school's complaints procedure.

In the event that a parent is dissatisfied with how a complaint has been handled, a parent 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.

Leenane NS will use the following approaches to support those who experience, witness and display bullying behaviour:

- The school implements a range of programmes and initiatives to support and promote students' wellbeing. These include school assemblies, the school garden, extracurricular activities, SPHE lessons. Each of these play a vital role in fostering a positive and supportive environment that prioritises the emotional, social, and mental wellbeing of all students.
- The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) provides a comprehensive range of supports including both direct supports; working with affected children, and indirect support in the form of CPD and advice.
- The NCSE has a range of supports available to schools in the form of advisors to visit the school and provide advice and support as well as providing a range of CPD opportunities for teachers and staff.
- *Oide* is the Department of Education support service for schools and it supports professional learning for primary teachers and school leaders.
- *Webwise* is the online safety initiative of the Department of Education and is used in the classes to help support the promotion of safer, better internet use through awareness raising and education initiatives targeting teacher's students and parents.

Supporting students who experience bullying behaviour:

- Ensuring prompt identification of those responsible for bullying and swift resolution of bullying situations, reinforcing that the student experiencing bullying behaviour is not at fault.
- Promoting respect for all pupils, including those who are experiencing bullying.
- Encouraging empathy and providing support for students experiencing bullying.

- Supporting students who experience bullying behaviour in building self-esteem by encouraging participation in activities that foster friendships and social skills, such as group work in class or involvement in extracurricular activities, either during or after school.

Supporting students who engage in bullying behaviour

- Ensuring that students who improve their behaviour are not blamed or penalised, and are given a fresh start.
- Recognising and praising students who demonstrate behavioural improvements, affirming their decision to make positive and honourable choices.
- Students will be encouraged to engage in activities that foster friendships and social skills, such as group work in class or extracurricular team activities, to support the development of self-esteem.
- Teachers and parents are encouraged to focus on addressing and correcting negative behaviour while maintaining continuous support for the child's overall growth and wellbeing.
- Specific topics in SPHE and other related subjects, including friendships, feelings, caring for others, and bullying, may be revisited by the class teacher with the whole class as required. This allows for reinforcement and revision of important principles related to positive social interactions and behaviour.

Record Keeping

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: 15.09.26
(Chairperson of BOM)

_____ Date: _____
(Principal)