



Riverview ETNS Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

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

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

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

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

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

Definition of bullying

Bullying is defined in *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* and *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* as targeted behaviour, online or offline that causes harm. The harm caused can be physical, social and/or emotional in nature. Bullying behaviour is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power in relationships between two people or groups of people in society. The detailed definition is provided in Chapter 2 of the Bí Cineálta procedures.

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

Types of bullying:

Where behaviour is regarded as identity-based bullying, indicate the relevant category on the record. There are many different types of bullying behaviour. These can include the following which is not an exhaustive list:

- disablist bullying behaviour: behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of a perceived or actual disability or additional need

- exceptionally able bullying: behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their high academic ability or outstanding talents
- gender identity bullying: behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their perceived or actual gender identity
- homophobic/transphobic (LGBTQ+) bullying: behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their perceived or actual membership of the LGBTQ+ community
- physical appearance bullying: 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
- racist bullying: 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. Racism is defined in the National Action Plan Against Racism¹³ as “a form of domination which manifests through those power dynamics present in structural and institutional arrangements, practices, policies and cultural norms, which have the effect of excluding or discriminating against individuals or groups, based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin”¹⁴
- poverty bullying: behaviour that intends to humiliate a student because of a lack of resources
- religious identity bullying: behaviour that intends to harm a student because of their religion or religious identity
- sexist bullying: 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|
- sexual harassment: any form of unwanted verbal, nonverbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature or other conduct based on sex which affects the dignity of the student

Behaviour that is not 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 must be addressed under the school ‘s code of behaviour.
- Some students with special educational needs may have social communication difficulties which may lead them to 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 cannot control.
- Disagreement between students is not considered bullying unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.

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	11th of April 2025	Staff meeting and Google Form
Students	h May 2025	Student questionnaires
Parents	30th April 2025	Google form
Board of Management	June 9th 2025	Board meeting
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	N/A	
Date policy was approved: June 9th, 2025		
Date policy was last reviewed:		

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

This section sets out the prevention strategies that will be used by the school. These include strategies specifically aimed at preventing online bullying behaviour, homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour, racist bullying behaviour, sexist bullying behaviour and sexual harassment as appropriate (see Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

Curriculum:

- SPHE - Weaving Well-Being, RSE, Anti-bullying Surveys, Internet Safety workshops (e.g. Don't be mean behind the screen), specific anti-bullying lessons
- Learn Together - Values of the month, Morning Circles, Assemblies, Neurodiversity week, Pride week, development of critical thinking
- Drama - Role-play of scenarios, development of empathy, communication
- Literacy - Choice of reading materials, novels/stories/poems reflecting diversity in characters and authors, bullying as a theme in resources used
- SESE History - study of a wide range of diverse figures, Black History Month
- SESE Science - study of diverse figures in science
- Cross-curricular - group- work
- Inclusion - emphasis across curriculum and school

Policy and Planning:

- Anti-bullying policy in place (November 2021) - prevention, whole-school approach, shared understanding of what bullying is, effective leadership, education

on prevention strategies, monitoring and supervision, consistent recording, on-going evaluation

- Supervision policy (October 2024)
- Communication policy (February 2025)
- Inclusion policy (October 2022)
- Code of Behaviour
- Care Team meetings involving relevant staff
- Stakeholders input into policy
- Curriculum long-term planning (Integration, programmes)

Culture and Environment:

- Communication between staff - care team meetings
- Huge emphasis on kindness and other values - value of the month
- Ethos of the school - accepting of individuals
- Restorative practice used throughout school
- Staff are very supportive of one another and work together
- Emphasis on equality in staff which feeds through to the children
- Differences are accepted and celebrated
- Neurodiversity week/ Pride Celebration
- Assemblies - celebrating little wins
- Calm Corners, regulating tools, Zen Garden, Nurture, Art Therapy
- Strong personal relationship between staff and children - morning check ins, restorative circles, I want my teacher to know boxes
- Staff open to change - very progressive - strong sense of moving forward
- Strong relationship with parents - open dialogue

Relationships and Partnerships

- focus groups
- nurture groups
- student council
- neurodiversity week
- pride week
- different families, same love
- parents association
- positive postcards
- positive noticing day
- buddy bench (for younger classes)

Preventing Online Bullying Behaviour

- Annual cyber-safety talks for children from 3rd class up
- Annual cyber-safety talks for parents
- Webwise lessons, 1st - 6th class

Preventing Homophobic and Transphobic Bullying

- Anti-bullying week every year in September, including friendship, neurodiversity and different families - LGBT awareness.
- Books and other classroom materials depicting different families and identities
- Pride week in June

Preventing Racist Bullying Behaviour

- Books with a variety of identities are read in class and available in class libraries
- People from different racial and cultural backgrounds are learned about and celebrated

Preventing Sexist Bullying Behaviour

- gender stereotypes are challenged, and people in roles that do not conform to gender expectations are highlighted.
- all children are given access to all activities.
- books which challenge gender expectations are highlighted in class lessons and assemblies

Preventing Sexual Harassment

- language which diminishes somebody based on their gender is challenged
- Teaching about personal boundaries, consent, and respect for bodily autonomy (age-appropriate).
- Explicitly including lessons about respect, consent, and appropriate behaviour in RSE (Relationships and Sexuality Education) classes.
- Providing clear reporting procedures for students experiencing or witnessing harassment.
- Regular staff training on recognising and addressing signs of 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):

Supervision Policy

Acceptable Use of the Internet Policy

Code of Behaviour

Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

Mainstream class teachers and SETs (where appropriate).

The Principal/Deputy Principal will provide support and advice and will become involved where appropriate.

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):

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 students involved, rather than to apportion blame.
- Identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred
- Bullying behaviour 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.”
- To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour you should 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 should be addressed using the Bí Cineálta Procedures.
- 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.

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.

Where bullying behaviour can occur

- Bullying behaviour can happen anywhere, online or offline and at any time, but there are certain places and times where bullying behaviour can be more likely to occur. These can include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

Inside School

- School physical environments can have a significant influence on social relationships among students and can impact on the ability of school staff to effectively prevent and address bullying. Well designed school environments play a vital role in preventing bullying behaviour and promoting inclusion, positive relationships, and a safe and supportive learning environment.

Outside School

- A school is not expected to deal with bullying behaviour that occurs when students are not under the care or responsibility of the school. However, where this bullying behaviour has an impact in school, schools are required to support the students involved. Where the bullying behaviour continues in school, schools should deal with it in accordance with their Bí Cineálta policy. For the purposes of this policy, it is recognised that most online bullying behaviour occurs outside school. See Section 6.2 of these procedures.
- Support of child experiencing bullying outside school, might involve a chat with a teacher or a phonecall home to link in with parents/guardians.

Step 1- When an allegation of bullying is received

- When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred teachers should consider:
- What, where, when and why?
- If a group of students is involved, each student should be engaged with individually at first thereafter, all students involved should be met as a group
- At the group meeting, each student should be asked for their account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's views
- Each student should be supported as appropriate, following the group meeting
- In some instances, it may be helpful to ask the students involved to write down their account of the incident(s)
- Teachers will fill the incident sheet – see appendix A, and ask the following questions



- 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.

- 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.

Step 2 Where bullying behaviour has occurred:

- Parents of the students 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 behaviour
- Principal should be informed at an early stage
- It is important to listen to the views of the student who is experiencing bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation
- Teacher will fill in the bullying behaviour recording form to keep a record of all engagement with all involved- see appendix
- This record should document the form and type of bullying behaviour, if known (see Section 2.5 and 2.7 of the Bí Cineálta procedures), where and when it took place and the date of the initial engagement with the students involved and their parents
- The record should include the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour
- Follow up where bullying behaviour has occurred:
- Engage with the students involved and their parents again no more than 20 school days after the initial engagement
- Document the review with students and their parents to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased and the views of students and their parents in relation to this
- 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 the bullying behaviour has not ceased, the teacher should review the strategies used in consultation with the students involved and their parents.
- Agree upon a timeframe for further engagement until the bullying behaviour has ceased

If it becomes clear that the student who is displaying the bullying behaviour continues to display the behaviour, then the school 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 student, their parents and the school

Parent Complaints

If a parent(s) is not satisfied with how the bullying behaviour has been addressed by the school, in accordance with the Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, they 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

Requests to take no action

A student reporting bullying behaviour may ask that a member of staff does nothing about the behaviour other than "look out" for them. It is important that the member of staff shows empathy to the student, deals with the matter sensitively and speaks with the student to work out together what steps can be taken to address the matter and how their parents will be informed of the situation. It is important that the student who has experienced bullying behaviour feels safe.

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 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.

When bullying behaviour becomes a child protection concern

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 should 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 schools should 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.

Criminal behaviour

Bullying behaviour can be considered criminal behaviour under certain circumstances and legal consequences can apply. The age of criminal responsibility in Ireland is 12 years.

An Garda Síochána is the appropriate authority to investigate alleged criminal behaviour.

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):

All school staff must respond promptly and consistently when bullying behaviour is reported or witnessed. The school's procedures for preventing and addressing bullying behaviour are clearly outlined in this policy and the student-friendly version.

While the school is not responsible for managing bullying that occurs outside its duty of care, it will support students where such behaviour impacts them in school. If the student displaying bullying behaviour is not a member of the school community, the school will still support the affected student and work with them and their parents to determine appropriate steps.

When responding to bullying behaviour, school staff must:

- Ensure the student experiencing bullying feels listened to, supported, and involved in deciding on the actions to be taken.
- Respect the privacy and dignity of all involved and conduct all interactions with sensitivity.
- Consider the age, ability, and specific needs of the students involved.
- Act in a timely and consistent manner.
- Contact the parents/guardians of all involved at an early stage and consult with them on actions being taken. Where a student expresses concern about informing their parents, a supportive plan should be developed with the student.

The school recognises that both the student experiencing bullying and the student displaying bullying behaviour need support. Appropriate interventions will be put in place to address the needs of each student, including supports to help students manage relational difficulties.

Given the complexity of bullying behaviour, the school adopts evidence-informed approaches suited to the specific context. Approaches such as restorative practice will only be used when:

- Staff are appropriately trained.
- Students involved agree to participate.

All approaches used by the school to address bullying behaviour are outlined in this policy to ensure clarity and consistency across the school community.

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*.

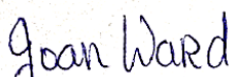
Section D: Oversight

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:



(Chairperson of board of management)

Date: 9/6/2025

Signed:



(Principal)

Date: 9/6/2025