

Wicklow Educate Together National school

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

This policy is to be read with recognition that all children are developing and learning social and emotional skills, and that this development occurs at different stages for all children. Our school is both a place of academic learning and of social and emotional development, and our role is to teach, guide, and support children as they build these skills. This cornerstone will always be our guiding principle and will always inform our implementation of this policy.

The Board of Management of **Wicklow Educate Together National 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 (1992). 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.

Types of Bullying:

There are many different types of bullying behaviour. These can include directing bullying at someone focused on the following: disability, exceptional ability, gender identity, LGBTQ+, physical appearance, racism, ethnicity, poverty status, religious identity, sexism and sexual harassment. This is not an exhaustive list.

Bullying can be: Direct:

- Physical: pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping students. Physical assault. Destruction of personal property.
- Verbal: continual name calling which insults, humiliates the student – this may refer to physical appearance, size, clothes, gender, accent, academic ability, race or ethnic origin.
- Written: Writing insulting remarks in public places, passing notes or drawings about the student.
- Extortion: where something is obtained through force or threats

Bullying can be: Indirect:

- Exclusion: where a student is deliberately and repeatedly isolated, excluded or ignored by a student or group of students
- Relational: Where a student's attempts to form friendships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined, threats, non-verbal gesturing, malicious gossip, spreading rumours, silent treatment and manipulation of friend groups etc can all form relational bullying for a student.

Online bullying behaviour:

Cyber bullying is carried out via text, direct messaging/instant messaging, social media platforms, email, apps, digital gaming sites, gaming consoles, chatrooms and other online technologies.

This can include:

- Sending or sharing of insulting and offensive or intimidating messages or images via online means as mentioned above.
- Posting information which is personal, private or sensitive without consent.
- Making and/or participating in fake profiles on a social network to impersonate and/or humiliate other students

Section A: Development of our Bi Cinealta 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.

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	Date consulted	Method of consultation
School staff		Staff meeting Focus groups Online questionnaire
Students		Class discussion Questionnaire differentiated and adapted depending on the age of the child.
Parents		Surveys for all parents and guardians.
Board of Management		Consultation at BOM meeting
Wider school community		Consultation as deemed necessary.
Date policy was approved		
Date policy was last reviewed		

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of pupils and is therefore fully committed to the following key principles in preventing bullying behaviour, in line with the Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice.

The Wellbeing Framework for Practice provides the following four key areas that are essential for a holistic, whole-school approach to wellbeing promotion and preventing bullying behaviour: Culture and Environment; Curriculum (Teaching and Learning); Policy and Planning; and Relationships and Partnerships.

Culture and Environment

Wicklow Educate Together strives to create a positive school culture and climate which is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity, encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behavior in a non-threatening environment and promotes respectful relationships across the school community. We will do this by:

- Striving to create a positive and inclusive school culture and environment where students and school staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported.
- Open communication between all members of our school community especially school staff, students and their parents/guardians.
- Acknowledge the uniqueness of each individual and their worth as a human being. Promoting positive habits of self- respect, self -discipline and responsibility among all our school community.
- Effective school leadership that influences the culture and sets the standard for the school community when preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.
- Opportunities for students and their parents to shape the school culture by promoting kindness and inclusion.

- Fostering ‘a telling environment’ in which students feel comfortable to talk about their concerns regarding bullying behaviour.
- School staff letting students know that they are a ‘trusted adult’ and that they can talk to them about any issues concerning them regarding bullying behaviour.
- Effective supervision and monitoring of students during break and lunchtimes.
- The creation of safe physical spaces in school, both in the classroom and in the school yard. Taking particular care of ‘at risk’ pupils and use systems to identify needs and facilitate early intervention where necessary -thus responding to the needs, fears & anxieties of individual members in a sensitive manner.

Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)

Wicklow Educate Together will strive to:

- Provide a teaching and learning culture that is collaborative and respectful.
- Provide teaching and promote learning which is collaborative and respectful, fostering inclusion and respect for diversity.

Ways in which we will work to achieve this;

- Teach SPHE and RSE content which fosters students’ well-being and self confidence as well as promoting personal responsibility for their own behaviours and actions.
- Model respectful behaviour towards colleagues, pupils and visitors in our school environment.
- Students are given regular opportunities to work in small groups with peers, which can help build a sense of connection, belonging and empathy.
- Acknowledgment of our diverse school population – celebrating diversity and culture in our school through art, displays, cultural events and Learn Together lessons.
- Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying.
- Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour and on-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

Policy and Planning

The aim of Wicklow Educate Together National School’s Bi Cinealta policy is

- To raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with school management, teachers, pupils, parents/guardians.
 - To promote a school ethos which encourages children to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.
 - To ensure appropriate supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of school activity are kept under observation.
 - To develop procedures for noting, investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.
 - To implement a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and for those involved in bullying behaviour.
 - To work with appropriate agencies in countering all forms of bullying and promoting anti bullying behaviour.
- The Acceptable Use Policy, Special Education Policy, Dignity at Work Policy and Code of Behaviour as well as other school policies, all support the implementation of the Bi Cinealta policy.

Effective leadership is a key component with Principal, Deputy Principal and all ISLT members supporting the implementation of this policy.

Relationships and Partnerships

- Interpersonal connections are supported through a range of formal and informal structures such as our Parents’ Association, our Student Council, our Green School’s committee and other student groups.
- Age and stage appropriate awareness initiatives that engage the student body in looking at their own behaviour – promoting acts of kindness and friendship, being an active help to others and looking at the causes of and impact of bullying during SPHE lessons.
- Conducting workshops and seminars for students, staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of bullying.
- Encouraging peer mentoring and peer support
- Supporting active participation of students in school life and active participation of parents in school life also.
- Engaging students in actively contributing to the formation of a Child Friendly Anti Bullying Policy to make

them active participants in promotion of and discussion of useful ways to identify and reduce bullying behaviour and highlight procedure and how to deal with it if it does occur.

Preventing cyberbullying behaviour

The Board of Management acknowledges that technology and social media have provided many positive opportunities for entertainment, social engagement and education. Technology is a part of life that can impact even the youngest members of society. However, the increase in the use of technology has led to students becoming increasingly vulnerable to cyberbullying or unacceptable online behaviour. The Board of Management, along with the entire school community, is committed to proactively addressing the challenges posed by cyberbullying and fostering safe online environments via the school curriculum, school policies and broader school initiatives.

The school cannot be 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 a direct impact in school, the school will support the students involved.

Preventing homophobic/transphobic bullying behaviour

The Board acknowledges that 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:

- maintaining an inclusive physical environment such as by displaying relevant posters encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
- challenging gender stereotypes
- encouraging students to speak up when they witness homophobic/transphobic bullying behaviour

Preventing racist bullying behaviour

The Board also acknowledges that students attending Wicklow Educate Together N.S come from many different cultures and backgrounds, which enriches the school community. The Board is committed to ensuring that all students feel safe and supported in school regardless of their ethnicity or country of origin. This is supported through the school curriculum in SPHE and through initiatives such as Culture Week, which aim to promote and display an inclusive environment.

Preventing sexist bullying behaviour

The Board acknowledges that there will be a focus on gender equality as part of school's measures to create a supportive and respectful environment. This is supported through the school curriculum in SPHE and through school staff modelling respectful behaviour. Strategies to prevent sexist bullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- ensuring members of staff model respectful behaviour and treat students equally irrespective of their sex
- ensuring all students have the same opportunities to engage in school activities irrespective of their sex
- celebrating diversity at school and acknowledging the contributions of all students

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:

- using the updated SPHE specifications at primary level to teach students about healthy relationships and how to treat each other with respect and kindness
- promoting positive role models within the school community
- challenging gender stereotypes that can contribute to sexual harassment

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

Although the Board of Management of Wicklow Educate Together has overall responsibility to ensure that this policy is effective it also acknowledges that the whole school community has a responsibility to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

ISLT Team - have a clear role to act in a leadership capacity within the school community, stimulating a whole school approach to preventing and tackling bullying - and modelling best practice. Reports of bullying are assessed by the relevant staff member and then referred to the ISMT if appropriate.

The primary aim in addressing reports of bullying behaviour is to stop the bullying behaviour and to restore, as far as practicable, the relationships of the students involved, rather than to apportion blame.

The school will promote a culture of telling. Bullying behaviour should be immediately reported to a member of staff in the classroom / yard. The staff member will investigate at an appropriate time.

Beyond the school community, bullying behaviour may extend to outside of school. Where this negatively impacts on a school - parents and pupils have a responsibility to support the school in helping to address the issue. This applies particularly (but not exclusively) to cyber bullying.

The assistance of Gardai, Tusla and Community Workers may be required in some cases

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.
- listen to the views of the alleged perpetrator.
- take action in a timely manner.
- inform parents of those involved.

Requests to take no action

Parents(s)/guardian(s) are entitled to request, in writing, that the school take no action regarding incidents of bullying behaviour. However, certain circumstances may require intervention by the school despite a request to take no action by parent(s)/guardian(s).

Identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred:

The Board of Management acknowledges that parents are an integral part of the school community and play an important role, in partnership with the school, in addressing bullying behaviour. Where bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the students involved will 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.

The views of the student who is experiencing bullying behaviour will be taken into account as to how best address the situation.

To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour, the following questions will be considered during the investigation by the investigating teacher:

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 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, investigating teachers will consider what, where, when and why? If a group of students are involved, each student will be engaged with individually at first. It may be helpful to ask students to write down their account of the incident.

Determining if bullying behaviour has ceased

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.

Even though the bullying behaviour may have ceased, ongoing supervision and support may be required for both the student who has experienced the bullying behaviour as well as the student who has displayed the behaviour.

If the bullying behaviour has not ceased, the teacher should review the strategies used in consultation with the students and parents and agree to meet again over an agreed timeframe until the bullying behaviour has ceased. Where it becomes clear that the student who is displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behaviour, then the school should consider 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.

Recording bullying behaviour

All bullying behaviour will be recorded on aladdin. 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.

Complaint process

Where a parent(s)/guardian(s) is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parent(s)/guardian(s) must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures

Additional Information relating to schools' complaint procedures are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/policyinformation/parentalcomplaints/>

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

The Office of the Ombudsman for Children can be contacted at ococomplaint@oco.ie.

***Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post Primary Schools (See Appendix A)*

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.

This policy will be available to our school community on the school's website and in hard copy on request. A student friendly version of this policy will be displayed in the school and will also be 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: Daniel Vickers Date: 25th September 2025
(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: Sinead Watson Date: 25th September 2025
(Principal)

