Carrignafoy Community College Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

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The Board of Management of Carrignafoy Community College has adopted the following policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

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

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

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

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

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. A one-off instance of negative behaviour towards another student is not bullying behaviour. However, a single **hurtful** message posted on social media can be considered bullying behaviour as it may be visible to a wide audience and has a high likelihood of being shared multiple times and so becomes a **repeated** behaviour. 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.

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	8th April 2025	Oral feedback, brainstorming, written survey, contributing to a shared padlet document.
Students	25th March 2025	Online survey and focus group.
Parents	8th May 2025	Online survey and focus group.
Board of Management	9th June 2025	Presentation to Board.
Wider school community (Road safety officer and caretaker.)	8th May 2025	Focus group.
Date policy was approved: June 9th, 2025		
Date policy was last reviewed: April 2024 (Policy under previous guidelines)		

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):

Prevention Strategies

This section sets out the prevention strategies used by the school in accordance with Chapter 5 of the *Bí Cineálta: Procedures for Schools* document. These strategies are specifically designed to prevent **online bullying, homophobic and transphobic bullying, racist bullying, sexist bullying,** and **sexual harassment,** while also fostering a positive and respectful school climate for all pupils and staff.

Whole-School Preventative Approaches

- Promotion of the *Bí Cineálta* Ethos: The school actively promotes a culture of kindness, inclusion, and mutual respect, as outlined in the *Bí Cineálta* guidelines and also central to our school's ETBI ethos.

  This is reinforced through whole-school assemblies, visual displays, student-led initiatives, and dedicated awareness campaigns throughout the academic year.

- **Positive Behaviour Framework:** the Positive Behaviour Team in collaboration with our Code of Behaviour working group, staff and students have developed classroom expectations that promote respectful conduct and kindness. These expectations will be reviewed regularly and upheld by all staff.

- **Staff Role-Modelling:** Staff lead by example in modelling inclusive and respectful behaviour, addressing any inappropriate conduct promptly, and creating a safe, supportive atmosphere in all school settings.

1. Prevention of Online Bullying (Cyberbullying)

- **School Mobile Phone Policy:** Mobile phones and personal electronic devices are banned in our school. This proactive measure significantly reduces the risk of online harm, limits opportunities for cyberbullying, and supports a more focused and respectful learning environment. It also promotes student wellbeing through increased in-person interactions at lunch and breaktimes and provides a safe space for students who may be experiencing online bullying outside of the school environment.

- **FUSE Anti-Bullying Programme (Second Year):** Delivered as part of the SPHE curriculum, this programme helps pupils understand online safety, the effects of cyberbullying, and the importance of speaking up.

- **Digital Citizenship Education:** Integrated across the SPHE and Social Education curricula, pupils explore digital responsibility, online etiquette, managing screen time, and how to report online abuse.

- **Teacher Vigilance and Reporting Culture:** Staff are alert to signs of cyberbullying and strongly encourage open communication and a culture of reporting concerns in a safe, blame-free way.

- **Clear Sanctions for Online Abuse:** The school's Code of Behaviour outlines clear consequences for pupils who engage in or enable online bullying, including incidents that occur outside of school hours where the bullying behaviour has an impact in school.

- **Pastoral Care Structure:** The school promotes strong relationships between students and their Year Heads, Class Teachers and other support staff to encourage open communication.

2. Prevention of Homophobic and Transphobic Bullying

- **Stand Up Awareness Week:** Celebrated annually, this national initiative highlights the importance of LGBTQ+ inclusion, challenges stereotypes, and promotes allyship among pupils and staff. The Student Council is active in promoting this initiative.

- **Inclusive Language Practices:** Staff are aware of the importance of the use of affirming and respectful language and are expected to address any use of homophobic or transphobic language immediately and consistently.

- **SPHE Curriculum Content:** Lessons explore gender identity, sexual orientation, equality, and the negative impact of discrimination and exclusion.

- **Visible Support and Representation:** School displays, posters and learning materials reflect LGBTQ+ inclusion, ensuring that all pupils feel recognised, respected, and safe.

- **Pastoral Care Structure:** The school promotes strong relationships between students and their Year Heads, Class Teachers and other support staff to encourage open communication.

3. Prevention of Racist Bullying

- **Curriculum Integration:** Racism and cultural diversity are addressed through SPHE, CSPE, and relevant subject areas. Pupils are encouraged to explore identity, equality, and the consequences of prejudice and discrimination.

- **Celebrating Diversity:** The school acknowledges and celebrates its diverse community through cultural events, inclusive classroom practices, and projects that foster intercultural understanding.

- **Zero-Tolerance for Racism:** Any form of racist language, behaviour, or exclusion is addressed immediately, in line with the school's Code of Behaviour and commitment to equity and respect.

- **Pastoral Care Structure:** The school promotes strong relationships between students and their Year Heads, Class Teachers and other support staff to encourage open communication.

4. Prevention of Sexist Bullying and Sexual Harassment

- **Consent and Bystander Education:** Senior pupils engage in lessons and workshops that focus on gender equality, respectful relationships, bystander intervention, and consent. These programmes aim to equip pupils with the tools to recognise, challenge, and report inappropriate behaviour.

- **Whole-School Respect Culture:** The school promotes gender equality in classroom content, extracurricular activities, and day-to-day interactions. Staff consistently challenge sexist language, attitudes, and assumptions.

- **Trusted Adults and Support Systems:** Pupils are made aware of staff members they can approach to disclose concerns. Staff are trained to handle disclosures sensitively and appropriately.

- **Restorative Approaches:** Where appropriate, restorative conversations are used to address harm, rebuild relationships, and promote accountability in line with the school's Code of Behaviour.

- **Pastoral Care Structure:** The school promotes strong relationships between students and their Year Heads, Class Teachers and other support staff to encourage open communication.

5. Additional Preventative Supports

- **Guidance and Counselling Programmes:** The *Mind Gains Programme* (First Year) and the *Bullying Intervention Programme* (Fifth Year) help pupils build emotional awareness, resilience, and empathy.

- **Support for Pupils with Additional Educational Needs (AEN):** Tailored supports, led by ASD/MGLD class and AEN staff, ensure that pupils with AEN are protected from isolation and exclusion, and are fully supported in social settings.

- **Ongoing Staff CPD:** Teachers and staff receive continuous professional development in bullying prevention, diversity and inclusion, and creating safe learning environments, in alignment with the *Bí Cineálta* framework.

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:

1. **A Telling Environment**

    Reporting by students and teachers of bullying behavior is encouraged through SPHE and anti-bullying school wide campaigns.

2. **A Trusted adult**

    Staff support the concept of "a trusted adult" through our school's pastoral care system, encouraging students to report bullying to subject teachers in the room at the time, or to class teachers, Year Heads, Guidance Counsellor, Deputy Principal or Principal, or any other staff member that they trust.

3. **Safe Spaces in School and Supervision**

    - Safe physical spaces exist in our school in the provision of Year group areas where students are, as far as possible, within line of sight of a supervising teacher at break times.
    - We have ASD units and an MGLD unit which are safe spaces for the students of those classes.
    - We have made physical adjustments to the bathroom facilities for students at junior and senior levels making the communal spaces around the sinks visible from the corridor.
    - Teachers supervise the grounds of the school at break times.
    - We have artwork and posters which promote our school's ethos of **Excellence in Education, Care, Respect, Equality and Community.** giving students a greater sense of belonging to and respect for their school community.
    - We have a timetable of organised activities during lunchbreak time and a coordinator of extracurricular activities accommodating a wide range of preferences and interests.

4. **Curriculum**

    Through SPHE, CSPE and RSE curricula and our ETBI Patrons' Curriculum, students are offered opportunities to foster inclusion and respect for diversity and to develop a sense of self-worth, self-confidence, well-being and personal responsibility. They are provided with space to consider relationships and sexuality and respect and understanding of different beliefs, perspectives and ways of living.

5. **Policy and Planning**

    - Various policies and procedures are in place including our school's Acceptable Use Policy, Special Education Teaching Policy and our Code of Positive Behaviour.
    - Staff are encouraged to engage in appropriate professional learning which supports preventing and addressing bullying behaviour and to share best practice.

6. **Relationships and Partnerships**

    As a school we strive to strengthen relationships and partnerships between members of the school community. We do this employing a variety of methods including the following;

    - Our school's Student Support Team underpins the development, implementation and review of strategies to prevent bullying behaviour
    - Engaging in age-appropriate awareness initiatives
    - Supporting the active participation of students in school life
    - Supporting the active participation of parents in school life through a range of means like Parent Teacher Meetings, Parents Council, HSCL led courses and school improvement projects
    - Organisation of workshops and seminars for students and parents to raise awareness of the impact of bullying
    - Promotion of acts of kindness through our Positive Behaviour Initiatives.
    - Engaging with the wider community through our Home School Community Liaison and School Completion Programme staff

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

The teacher(s) with responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour is (are) as follows: any teacher who becomes aware of bullying behaviour or to whom bullying behaviour is reported.

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
- act 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):

Procedures for Investigating, Addressing and Reviewing Bullying Behaviour

In accordance with **Chapter 6 of the** *Bí Cineálta: Procedures for Schools* **(2023)**, Carrignafoy Community College is committed to responding to all reports and concerns relating to bullying behaviour in a timely, respectful, and supportive manner. The procedures outlined below aim to resolve conflict, rebuild relationships, and ensure the ongoing safety and wellbeing of all students.

A. Determining Whether Bullying Has Occurred

The following steps will be taken to establish the facts of a reported incident and to determine whether bullying behaviour has taken place:

- **Initial Concern or Report**: Bullying concerns may be raised by a student, parent/guardian, staff member, or third party. Reports may relate to behaviour witnessed in school, online, during travel to/from school, or while on school-related activities.

- **Teacher Response**: The staff member who receives the report will respond calmly and reassure the student that they are being taken seriously. The matter will be passed to the **relevant teacher**

- **Fact-Finding Process**: The relevant teacher will seek to establish the facts of the case in a fair, non-judgmental and impartial manner, asking key questions: *who, what, where, when and why*. Interviews will take place away from the classroom where possible to ensure privacy and minimise disruption.

- **Individual and Group Interviews**: Where a group is involved, students will first be spoken to individually before being brought together. Group interviews will be handled sensitively, with an emphasis on reflection and responsibility rather than blame.

- **Professional Judgement**: Following a thorough investigation, the relevant teacher will use their professional judgement to determine whether the behaviour meets the definition of bullying

under *Bí Cineálta* and the school's policy.

- **Use of the Checklist for Investigating and Recording:** Teachers will use the Department of Education's *Checklist for Investigating and Recording Bullying Behaviour* (Appendix 3 of *Bí Cineálta*) as a guide and, where applicable, for recording incidents.

B. Approaches to Addressing Bullying Behaviour

The school is committed to addressing bullying in a manner that prioritises learning, restoration, and accountability. Our response strategies include:

- **Restorative Conversations:** Where appropriate, restorative dialogue is facilitated between students to rebuild relationships and promote empathy. These conversations are carefully supported to ensure that students feel safe and heard.

- **Behavioural Interventions:** Clear expectations for behaviour are reinforced. Where bullying is confirmed, interventions may include targeted support, monitoring, formal warnings, or referral to relevant school supports (e.g. Year Head, Guidance Counsellor, Student Support Team, Behaviour Support Team, SCP, and AEN Team).

- **Parent/Guardian Engagement:** Parents/guardians are informed as early as is practicable. They are encouraged to collaborate with the school in supporting all students involved. Meetings may include the relevant teacher, Year Head, and/or Deputy Principal/Principal.

- **Referral to Support Structures:** Students affected by bullying may be referred to the school's Student Support Team, Guidance Counsellor, AEN department, or external services (e.g. NEPS, CAMHS, HSE, Gardaí) as required.

- **Disciplinary Action:** If appropriate, the school will apply sanctions as outlined in the school's Code of Positive Behaviour. All disciplinary actions are carried out with discretion and with the student's dignity in mind.

- **Whole-School Follow-Up:** In cases that affect wider group dynamics, the school may implement class-wide interventions, restorative circles, SPHE lessons, or workshops to promote respect, kindness, and understanding.

- **Child Protection:** Where the behaviour is deemed to be potentially abusive, it will be referred to Tusla in accordance with the school's Child Safeguarding Statement and the **Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2017)**. An Garda Síochána may be contacted if necessary.

C. Ongoing Review, Monitoring and Reporting

The school acknowledges that addressing bullying behaviour is not a one-off event but a process requiring follow-up, monitoring, and formal accountability measures. The following steps will be taken to ensure sustained progress and transparency:

- **20-Day Follow-Up:** In accordance with Section 6.8.10 of the *Bí Cineálta Procedures*, the relevant teacher will review progress on any bullying incident after **20 school days**. If they are not satisfied that the bullying has been adequately and appropriately addressed, the case will be referred to the Principal using **Appendix 3** of the procedures.

- **Monitoring of All Parties:** Both the target and the student(s) responsible for the behaviour will be

supported and monitored. Ongoing support may include check-ins with the **Student Support Team**, SPHE follow-up, or access to counselling and wellbeing services.

- **Formal Reporting to the Board of Management:**
  In compliance with Chapter 6.9 of the *Bí Cineálta* procedures:

  The Principal shall report all confirmed instances of bullying behaviour to the Board of Management at every Board meeting. This includes the total number of reports since the last meeting and confirmation that all cases have been dealt with in line with the school's policy and the procedures.

  These reports:

  - Will be anonymised to protect student confidentiality.

  - Will confirm that all appropriate action has been taken, in accordance with this policy and national guidelines.

  - May include progress updates on systemic issues or emerging trends where relevant.

- **School-Level Record Keeping**: All confirmed incidents are documented using the *Bí Cineálta* recording templates. Records are stored in line with GDPR requirements and accessible to authorised personnel only.

D. Right to Review and Appeal

- If a parent/guardian or student over the age of 18 is dissatisfied with how a bullying matter has been handled, they will be referred to the **CETB Complaints Procedure**.

- Should this process be exhausted without resolution, the school will inform parents of their right to refer the matter to the **Ombudsman for Children**.

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):

Supporting Students Affected by Bullying Behaviour

(In line with Chapter 6 of the Bí Cineálta: Procedures for Schools, 2023)

Carrignafoy Community College recognises that bullying behaviour affects not only those who are targeted, but also those who witness and those who engage in the behaviour. A whole-school, solution-focused approach is essential to ensure meaningful recovery, accountability, and prevention of future harm. The following supports will be provided to address the needs of all students involved.

A. Support for Students Who Experience Bullying Behaviour

Students who have experienced bullying behaviour will be supported through a coordinated, compassionate approach, with the aim of restoring wellbeing, building resilience, and ensuring their ongoing safety and inclusion in school life. Supports may include:

- **One-to-One Restorative Conversations:** Facilitated by the relevant teacher or member of the Student Support Team, with a focus on hearing the student's experience, affirming their voice, and identifying the next steps forward.

- **Check-Ins and Follow-Up Monitoring:** Ongoing support via the Year Head, class teacher, or a nominated trusted adult to monitor wellbeing and prevent recurrence.

- **Referral to Internal Supports:** Students may access:

    - *Guidance Counselling Services*

    - *Check & Connect Programme*

    - *School Completion Programme*

    - *Peer mentoring or social skills programmes*

    - *Pastoral Support through the Student Support Team*

- **External Agency Support:** Where further needs are identified, the school will liaise with external agencies (e.g. NEPS, CAMHS, HSE) to support access to specialised services.

- **Rebuilding Confidence and Belonging:** Students may be supported to participate in group-based activities, wellbeing programmes, or student voice initiatives that foster confidence and social connection.

B. Support for Students Who Display Bullying Behaviour

Students who engage in bullying behaviour will be supported to understand the impact of their actions, take responsibility, and make lasting behavioural change. This process includes:

- **Restorative Conversations:** These will be structured to promote accountability, empathy, and a constructive pathway forward. Staff will help the student reflect on the harm caused and agree on how they will repair relationships and rebuild trust.

- **Use of the Ladder of Referral**: As outlined in the school's Code of Behaviour, students may be referred to the Behaviour Support Team or Senior Leadership where appropriate, with intervention measures tailored to individual needs.

- **Guidance and Reflection Work**: Targeted interventions may include goal-setting sessions, wellbeing plans, and regular check-ins with the Guidance Department, Behaviour Support Teacher, Year Head or a trusted staff member.

- **Parental Involvement**: Parents/guardians will be engaged early in the process and offered guidance on how to reinforce positive behaviour at home.

- **Referral to External Services**: Where necessary, the school may refer to appropriate support agencies to address emotional, behavioural or social needs contributing to the bullying behaviour.

C. Support for Students Who Witness Bullying

Students who witness bullying behaviour often feel unsure, distressed, or complicit. It is essential that they are empowered to act safely and supported to process what they have experienced. The school will:

- **Affirm and Support Reporting**: Students who come forward will be affirmed for their responsible action. Staff will ensure they feel safe and heard.

- **Provide Information and Guidance**: Through SPHE and dedicated workshops, students will be taught safe and constructive ways to respond to bullying, including how to report concerns and support their peers.

- **Restorative and Debriefing Conversations**: Where appropriate, witnesses may be included in restorative processes to help rebuild group relationships and establish healthy norms.

- **Student Support Team**: Students may be referred to the school's SST for additional support if required

D. Support for Parents and Families

Parents play a vital role in reinforcing school messages and supporting students through bullying-related incidents. The school will:

- **Host Information Workshops for Parents**: To provide up-to-date guidance on recognising signs of bullying, digital safety, and supporting emotional wellbeing.

- **Offer Individual Support**: The Home School Community Liaison (HSCL), Guidance Department, Year Heads and the Senior Leadership Team will be available to meet with parents and offer advice, resources, and referrals to external support.

- **Maintain Transparent Communication**: Parents will be kept informed of progress at key points and encouraged to participate in developing and monitoring support plans for their child.

E. Whole-School Accountability and Follow-Up

- **Clear Recording and Reporting:** All incidents, interventions, and supports provided will be recorded using the appropriate templates (Appendix 3 of *Bí Cineálta*) and stored securely.

- **Escalation Procedures:** If the behaviour persists or causes ongoing harm, it will be escalated to senior leadership and reviewed as part of a formal intervention strategy.

- **Review of Progress:** Regular reviews will be conducted to assess the effectiveness of the supports in place. Where necessary, these plans will be adapted to better meet student need.

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: 10/6/2025
(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: *Tracey Kennedy* Date: 10/6/2025
(Principal)