

# **Ardscoil Mhuire**



## **Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour**

## **Introduction**

The Board of Management of Ardscoil Mhuire 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 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, membership of the Traveller community.

## **Rationale**

The purpose of this policy is to outline the procedures in place in Ardscoil Mhuire to:

- develop a positive school culture and climate
- ensure the effective treatment of reported cases of bullying.

## **Scope**

This policy applies to staff, students and any other member of the school community.

## **Related policies and documents**

- Acceptable Usage Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Dignity in the Workplace Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Relationships and Sexual Education Policy
- Special Educational Needs Policy
- Health and Safety Statement
- Critical Incident Policy
- SPHE Policy
- Whole School Guidance Plan
- Attendance Policy
- Admissions Policy and Admissions Notice
- Induction for New Staff and Student Teachers
- Anti-Bullying Policy (In relation to adult members of the school community)
- Harassment and Sexual Harassment Policy (In relation to adult members of the school community)
- Pastoral Care Policy
- Wellbeing Policy

## **Principles of Best Practice**

The Board of Management recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of students.

The Board of Management is therefore fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behavior:

- a) A positive school culture and climate which:
  - Is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity
  - Encourages students to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment
  - Promotes respectful relationships across the school community.
- b) Effective leadership
- c) A school-wide approach
- d) A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact
- e) Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that build empathy, respect and resilience in students and explicitly address the issues of cyberbullying and identity-based bullying including homophobic and transphobic bullying.
- f) Effective supervision and monitoring of students
- g) Supports for staff
- h) Consistent recording, investigating and following up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies) and
- i) On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the Anti-Bullying policy.

## **Relationship to the Characteristic Spirit of the School**

In Ardscoil Mhuire we aim to develop the full potential of every student in a learning environment where fairness, understanding, success and discipline is pursued. This policy is reflective of Ardscoil Mhuire's mission statement which is *'to provide a Christian environment where all persons are valued and assisted to reach their full potential.'* The school seeks to promote the wellbeing of all members of the school community in a respectful, safe and caring environment which values the dignity of each individual. (Please refer to the Anti Bullying policy and Harassment and Sexual Harassment policy in relation to adult members of the school community).

## **Goals/Objectives**

- a) To create a school ethos which encourages all to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in confidence.
- b) To affirm the right of all within the school to live a life free from bullying.
- c) To raise awareness of bullying as an unacceptable form of behaviour with school management, teachers, students, parents/guardians.
- d) To create a school ethos that acknowledges, accommodates and respects a diversity of persons in the school community.
- e) To ensure that the school's *Social, Personal and Health Education Programme* raises awareness of the factors associated with bullying behaviour as well as developing appropriate knowledge, skills and behaviours.
- f) To take practical actions to prevent incidents of bullying behaviour e.g. to ensure comprehensive supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of school activity are kept under observation.
- g) To develop and put into effect procedures for reporting and recording incidents of bullying behaviour.
- h) To develop procedures for addressing and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.

- i) To develop a programme of support for those affected by and involved in bullying behaviour. Particular reference will be made to the restorative approach.
- j) To work with, and through, the various local agencies in countering all forms of bullying and anti-social behaviour.
- k) To recognise and acknowledge the role of parents/guardians in equipping their daughter with a range of life skills.

## **Definition of bullying**

In accordance with Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying and Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools bullying is defined as follows:

*Bullying is targeted behaviour, online or offline that causes harm. The harm caused can be physical, social and/or emotional in nature. Bullying behaviour is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power in relationships between two people or groups of people in society.*

The core elements of the definition are further described below:

### **Targeted behaviour**

Bullying is deliberate, unwanted behaviour that causes harm to others, and where the student displaying bullying behaviour knows that their behaviour is or will be perceived as harmful by the child or young person experiencing the behaviour.

Bullying is not accidental or reckless behaviour. The harm can be physical (for example, personal injury, damage to or loss of property), social (for example, withdrawal, loneliness, exclusion) and/or emotional (for example, low self-esteem, depression, anxiety) and can have a serious and long-term negative impact on the student experiencing the 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, importantly, must still be addressed under the school's Code of Behaviour.*

### **Repeated behaviour**

Bullying takes the form of a systematic pattern of behaviour which is repeated over time. Single offline incidents of intentional negative behaviour involving an imbalance of power are not considered bullying but must still be addressed under the school's Code of Behaviour.

However, in the context of this policy, posting a single harmful message/image/video online, which is highly likely to be reposted or shared with others can therefore be seen as bullying behaviour.

*Negative behaviour that does not meet this definition of bullying will be dealt with in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour.*

## **Imbalance of power**

In incidents of bullying of this nature, the student experiencing the bullying behaviour finds it hard to defend themselves as a result of the abuse of a real or perceived imbalance of power. This imbalance of power may manifest itself through differences in size, strength, age, ability, peer group power, economic status, social status, religion, race, ethnic origin including membership of the Traveller and/or Roma communities, sexual orientation, family circumstances, gender, gender identity, gender expression, experience of the care system, disability or the receipt of special education. In incidents of online (or cyber) bullying, the imbalance of power may relate to online anonymity, technical proficiency and possession of information/images/video, and/or the inability of the targeted student to remove offensive online material or escape the bullying.

The following **forms** of bullying behaviour are included in the definition of bullying:

- Direct bullying behaviour - This includes the following (the list is not exhaustive):
  - Physical bullying behaviour
  - Verbal bullying behaviour
  - Written bullying behaviour
  - Extortion.
- Indirect bullying behaviour. - This includes the following (the list is not exhaustive):
  - Exclusion
  - Relational
- Online bullying behaviour.

## Types of Bullying Behaviours

*This list of types of bullying behaviours is not an non exhaustive list. Similar behaviours may be considered as bullying behaviours.*

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 <i>National Action Plan Against Racism</i> <sup>13</sup> 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”.
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, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature or other conduct based on sex which affects the dignity of the student.

Additional information on different types of bullying is set out in Section 2 of the *Bi Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

## Examples of Bullying Behaviours

*The list of examples below is non exhaustive. Similar behaviours may be considered as bullying behaviours.*

<p><b>General behaviours which apply to all</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harassment based on any of the nine grounds in the equality legislation e.g. sexual harassment, homophobic bullying, racist bullying etc.</li> <li>• Physical aggression</li> <li>• Damage to property</li> <li>• Name calling</li> <li>• Slagging</li> <li>• The production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other materials aimed at intimidating another person</li> <li>• Offensive graffiti</li> <li>• Extortion</li> <li>• Intimidation</li> <li>• Insulting or offensive gestures</li> <li>• The “look”</li> <li>• Invasion of personal space</li> <li>• Spreading rumours</li> <li>• Smirking/Sniggering</li> <li>• A combination of any of the types listed.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cyber</b></p>	<p><b>Denigration:</b> Spreading rumours, lies or gossip to hurt a person’s reputation</p> <p><b>Harassment:</b> Continually sending vicious, mean or disturbing messages to an individual</p> <p><b>Impersonation:</b> Posting offensive or aggressive messages under another person’s name</p> <p><b>Flaming:</b> Using inflammatory or vulgar words to provoke an online fight</p> <p><b>Trickery:</b> Fooling someone into sharing personal information which you then post online</p> <p><b>Outing:</b> Posting or sharing confidential or compromising information or images</p> <p><b>Exclusion:</b> Purposefully excluding someone from an online group</p> <p><b>Cyber stalking:</b> Ongoing harassment and denigration that causes a person considerable fear for his/her safety:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Silent telephone/mobile phone call</li> <li>• Abusive telephone/mobile phone calls</li> <li>• Abusive text messages</li> <li>• Abusive email</li> <li>• Abusive communication on social networks e.g. Facebook/Ask.fm/ Twitter/You Tube/Instagram or on games consoles</li> <li>• Abusive website comments/Blogs/Pictures</li> <li>• Abusive posts on any form of communication technology.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Identity Based Behaviours</b>  <b>Including any of the nine discriminatory grounds mentioned in Equality Legislation</b>  (gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.) In addition, the Equal Status Acts 2000 - 2018 prohibit discrimination in the provision of accommodation services against people who are in receipt of rent supplement, housing assistance, or social welfare payments.</p>	
<p><b>Homophobic and Transgender</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spreading rumours about a person’s sexual orientation</li> <li>• Taunting a person of a different sexual orientation</li> <li>• Name calling e.g. gay, queer, lesbian...used in a derogatory manner</li> <li>• Physical intimidation or attacks</li> <li>• Threats</li> </ul>
<p><b>Race, nationality, ethnic background and membership of the Traveller community</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discrimination, prejudice, comments or insults about colour, nationality, culture, social class, religious beliefs, ethnic or traveller background</li> <li>• Exclusion on the basis of any of the above.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Relational</b></p>	<p>This involves manipulating relationships as a means of bullying.</p> <p>Behaviours include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Malicious gossip</li> <li>• Isolation, exclusion and ignoring</li> <li>• Ignoring</li> <li>• Excluding from the group</li> <li>• Taking someone’s friends away</li> <li>• “Bitching”</li> <li>• Spreading rumours</li> <li>• Breaking confidence</li> <li>• Talking loud enough so that the victim can hear</li> <li>• The “look.”</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sexual</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unwelcome or inappropriate sexual comments or touching</li> <li>• Harassment.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Special Educational Needs and/or Physical Disability</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Name calling</li> <li>• Taunting others because of their disability or learning needs</li> <li>• Taking advantage of some students’ vulnerabilities and limited capacity to recognise and defend themselves against bullying</li> <li>• Taking advantage of some students’ vulnerabilities and limited capacity to understand social situations and social cues</li> <li>• Mimicking a person’s disability</li> <li>• Setting others up for ridicule.</li> </ul>

<b>High Achiever</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Name calling</li> <li>• Taunting others because of their abilities</li> <li>• Setting others up for ridicule</li> <li>• Isolation, exclusion and deliberately ignoring.</li> </ul>
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### **Effects of Bullying on Individuals**

<b>Physical</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical ill health</li> <li>• Damage to personal belongings or loss of property</li> <li>• Physical injury</li> </ul>
<b>Social</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of confidence</li> <li>• Loneliness</li> <li>• Low self-esteem</li> <li>• Social isolation</li> <li>• Social anxiety</li> <li>• Fear.</li> </ul>
<b>Psychological</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generalised anxiety</li> <li>• Anger</li> <li>• Depression (strong predictor of peer victimisation)</li> <li>• Suicidal thoughts or behaviour.</li> </ul>

### **Possible Indicators That a Student is Being Bullied**

<p><b>Physical indicators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unexplained bruising, cuts etc.</li> <li>• Loss of/ damage to personal property</li> <li>• Hunger or thirst</li> <li>• Frequent minor illnesses, headaches, tummy</li> <li>• Bedwetting</li> <li>• Loss of appetite</li> <li>• Obsessive behaviour, physical appearance, weight</li> <li>• Stammering</li> <li>• Requests for extra money</li> <li>• Aggression /Violence.</li> </ul>
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### **Emotional/ Psychological Indicators**

- Outbursts of anger, temper, irritability at home
- Bullying brother and sisters, parents/guardians
- Well behaved child suddenly troublesome

### **Signs of depression**

- Changes in: mood, appetite, sleep pattern
- Tiredness, neglect of appearance
- Expressions of sadness, worthlessness
- Nightmares, crying at night
- Restless, dangerous, wild, disruptive behaviour
- Cynicism, black mood
- Implied or overt threats of suicide.

### **School Related Indicators**

- Reluctance to go, wanting to be accompanied
- Returning in bad form
- Changing route
- Avoiding certain days/lessons
- Nervousness in class
- Punctuality problems
- Poor concentration
- Deterioration in school work
- Expressions of hopelessness
- Fewer phone calls, friends calling, invitations
- Reluctance to take part in activities
- Abusive phone calls, texts, social media messages etc.

### **The Relevant Teacher for Addressing and Dealing with Bullying.**

The Relevant Teachers for addressing and dealing with bullying may include any or all of the following:

- Principal
- Deputy Principal
- Year Heads
- Care Team.

**Any teacher may act as a relevant teacher if circumstances warrant it.**

## 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	01/04/2025 30/04/2025	Staff Anti-Bullying Survey Staff Presentation Staff Meeting
Students	12/02/2025 24/02/2025	Consulted with students through the Student Representative Council, Student Anti-Bullying Survey
Parents	01/04/2025	Parents Association, Parent/Guardian Anti Bullying Survey
Board of Management	03/06/2025	Review new policy draft
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	N/A	N/A
Date policy was approved:		
Date policy was last reviewed:		

## Education and Prevention Strategies

This policy derives from our school's Mission Statement:

*Ardscoil Mhuire provides a Christian environment where all persons are valued and assisted to reach their full potential.*

In line with our Mission Statement Ardscoil Mhuire always strives to ensure that all people within the school feel cared for and safe, whilst also giving expression to the school's culture of fairness and respect. The school, in its provision of curricular, extra-curricular and pastoral care programmes, provides prevention and awareness-raising measures across all aspects of bullying, and supports strategies to engage students in addressing problems when they arise. We work towards building empathy, respect and resilience in students. The education and prevention strategies (including strategies aimed at cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including homophobic and transphobic bullying) that will be used by the school are as follows:

### School Wide Approaches:

- Strategies/Initiatives aimed at raising awareness of bullying as an unacceptable behaviour are on-going throughout the school year. These include an anti-bullying/friendship themed week once a year to promote awareness and increase vigilance. This involves poster campaigns, the display of anti-bullying charters and posters throughout the school, and the provision of anti-bullying resources such as books and videos.
- The *Bi Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour* is published on the school website [www.asmlimerick.ie](http://www.asmlimerick.ie), in the students' journal, teachers digital handbook and in the school *Code of Behaviour*.
- The *Bi Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour* is promoted at various occasions e.g. parents'/guardians' nights, first year enrolment, open nights and other forums and platforms.
- The school promotes a positive sense of self-worth among its students. through the provision of an inclusive and diverse curriculum, varied and extensive co-curricular and extra-curricular programmes in addition to positive affirmation initiatives such as Awards ceremonies, Academic cards, the Merit System, Attendance initiatives, JCSP celebrations, LCA celebrations etc.
- The Student Representative Council helps to heighten an awareness of bullying behaviour and create a positive atmosphere within the school community. The SRC is encouraged to report concerns to teachers, Year Heads, Deputy Principals or Principal.
- The Student Representative Council (SRC) was involved in the development and promotion of the policy. A student-friendly version of the *Bí Cineálta* policy, which was devised by the SRC, is available in the school journal and displayed where students and the school community can see it. The student-friendly policy uses language that is easy for students and parents/guardians to understand.
- The student body is regularly consulted, by way of informal discussion and anonymous survey, to determine the extent, if any, and nature of any bullying behaviour within the school. We are aware of the possible abuses that can arise from the adoption of such questionnaires, and we exercise extreme caution in their use.
- The pastoral care structures within the school offer support, advice, protection, detection and expertise in this area. See Pastoral Care Policy
- The diligent and proportionate implementation of the Code of Behaviour aims to minimise opportunities for bullying. See Code of Behaviour Policy
- The Board of Management ensures annually that appropriate and robust supervision and monitoring policies and practices are in place to both prevent and deal with bullying behaviour and to facilitate early intervention where possible. The supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extra- curricular activities is of the utmost importance. Non-teaching and ancillary staff are also encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to the relevant teachers. Supervision will also apply to monitoring student use of communication technology within the school. **See Section**
- The development and regular review of the school's *Acceptable Use Policy and Mobile Phone policy*

aims to minimise opportunities for bullying. These policies clearly outline the necessary steps taken to ensure that the access to technology within the school is strictly monitored, as is the students' use of mobile phones. See Acceptable Use Policy Mobile Phone Policy.

- Ardscoil Mhuire is currently awaiting the construction of a new school Campus due to the growth in student enrolment. While our current school site is quite restrictive we always strive to ensure that our physical environment is a safe and inclusive space for our students.
- The implementation of a well-structured and comprehensive Wellbeing Programme presents students with regular opportunities to discuss aspects of bullying, develop an understanding of the effects that bullying behaviour can have on those involved and explore appropriate ways of behaving towards one another. This crucial message is also reinforced informally across the entire curriculum.
- Students who experience or witness bullying behaviour are encouraged and supported to report the behaviour to a trusted adult. Senior Management, Year Heads, Class Teachers, Subject Teachers and SNAs support this strategy by letting students know that they can talk to them. The trusted adult reassures the student that they have done the right thing by reporting the behaviour.
- Year Heads take an active role in addressing bullying during morning assemblies. They aim to raise awareness, promote a positive school culture, and reinforce the school's anti-bullying procedures/policies.
- Students are encouraged to treat everyone with respect. Teachers and staff demonstrate integrity and show respect for every person in the school environment, thus acting as positive role models for all member of the school community. Restorative practice is used in the school by teachers, Year Heads and Senior Management, as a positive approach to conflict resolution.
- Ardscoil Mhuire is a school with almost 600 students. Our students come from across a range of abilities and social backgrounds. As such, we have always had students with a range of disabilities and special educational needs. We minimise the likelihood of bullying for such students by striving to create an inclusive environment, focusing on developing social skills, paying attention to key moments such as transitioning from primary to post primary and Junior to Senior Cycle as well as cultivating a positive school culture which values respect for all in addition to supporting and helping one another.
- The self-esteem of all our students is fostered and enhanced through both co-curricular and extracurricular activities. Students are provided with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth through formal and informal interactions.
- The Home School Community Liaison works with parents/guardians to raise awareness of the impact of bullying on students. The HSCL provides support to students from ethnic minorities, including Traveller and Roma students and those experiencing some form of disadvantage. In her role the HSLC communicates regularly with the parents/guardians of the aforementioned students.
- The School Completion Programme team engages with students to support and educate them around the aspects of bullying.

### **Supervision & Monitoring by Staff**

- ***Break and Lunchtime Supervision:*** Teachers are assigned to key areas such as hallways, the canteen, schoolyards and common areas to maximise oversight. They are encouraged to remain vigilant and responsive to issues as they arise.
- ***Classroom Supervision:*** Base rooms are assigned to each class group for break times. Students from different class groups are not permitted to enter base rooms other than the one assigned to them. Students in classrooms during break times are required to keep the door open, behave in an appropriate and respectful manner and maintain a clean space.
- ***Clear and Open Visibility:*** Classrooms and corridors are designed with unobstructed windows to facilitate easy monitoring of student interactions. Teachers maintain a strong presence during transitions between classes to ensure ongoing oversight.
- ***Bathroom Supervision:*** Teachers on supervision are encouraged to monitor bathrooms to prevent bullying or inappropriate behaviour in these less visible areas.
- ***School Events and Outings:*** All recommended pupil-teacher ratios are adhered to during trips and tours,

ensuring student safety. Staff are assigned supervisory roles. The Code of Behaviour applies to all school events and extracurricular activities and is supported by existing extracurricular procedures.

- **Teacher Presence:** Teachers are encouraged to actively supervise corridors and classrooms, especially during key times when students may be more vulnerable to bullying behaviour. Areas where bullying could/may occur within the school, as identified by students and teachers, have extra monitoring in place.

### Safe physical spaces

- **Safe physical environment:** The school ensures the clear visibility of students in the classroom i.e. clear windows and a glass panel on all doors. Additionally, we ensure that appropriate lightening exists in all areas of the school, that corridors are kept clear and accessible and that the school grounds are well maintained. In a large section of the school, a one way system is being operated. Students must follow this one way system at all times to avoid unnecessary congestion and prevent any opportunities for bullying behaviour to occur.
- **Visuals and displays:** Posters and student artwork are displayed to promote inclusion, respect and diversity.
- **Involvement of students:** Students contribute to the creation of a safe and inclusive school environment through their involvement in the mentoring programme (LIFT) in addition to other student support activities which foster a culture of peer respect and support e.g. Friends for Life programme, 1<sup>st</sup> year induction programme (MAP) etc.
- A Mental Health notice board the school was created by the Mental Health Committee. In this safe space students can access information and leaflets which focus on mental health issues and the supports that are available.

### Implementation of the Curriculum:

- The implementation of the Wellbeing Programme further enhances the existing school culture of respect and responsibility. Students with a heightened sense of wellbeing are more inclined to identify, challenge and report bullying behaviours.
- The CSPE programme for Junior Cycle provides students with a deeper understanding of the world they live and the importance of their role as active citizens. The CSPE curriculum encourages students to develop positive attitudes towards and an understanding of other cultures.
- The SPHE programme for Junior Cycle encourages students to develop the ability to care and respect themselves and others, enable them to make informed decisions and choices and to respect human diversity. Through SPHE students develop their skills of communication, co-operation and conflict resolution in addition to acquiring the knowledge necessary to create and maintain supportive and positive relationships.
- Students in Junior Cycle learn about Relationship Sexual Education (RSE) in their SPHE class. Senior Cycle students receive RSE classes in their Religion class where there is an emphasis based on building and sustaining positive relationships.
- The process of teaching and learning across the entire curriculum presents informal opportunities to discuss aspects of bullying, and to explore appropriate ways of behaving towards one another.
- The school is aware of the increasing incidences of cyber bullying. Our strategies in this regard focus on educating students on appropriate online behaviour, how to stay safe while on-line and also on developing a culture of reporting any concerns about cyber-bullying. We do this through our own curricular provision, and by inviting guest speakers to the school to address these issues with our students. Additionally, first year students receive training in the safe use of social media. LCA students also learn about online safety as part of their English and Communications coursework. Online resources dealing with the various forms of bullying, facilitated by Webwise, are also utilised

regularly in SPHE classes.

- Through the process of teaching and learning across the curriculum a culture of reporting, with particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders is emphasised. In that way students gain confidence in ‘telling’. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It is made clear to all students that when they report incidents of bullying, they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.

### **Co-Curricular and Extracurricular:**

- Student involvement is central to ensuring the creation of a safe school environment e.g. mentoring (LIFT) in addition to other student support activities which foster a culture of peer respect and support e.g. Friends for Life programme, 1<sup>st</sup> year induction programme (MAP) etc.
- The development of extensive co-curricular and extra-curricular activities also ensures the development of respect for diversity and difference e.g.
  - Active School’s Committee
  - After school Fun Clubs
  - Awards Ceremonies
  - Book Club
  - Celebrate Us week
  - Check and Connect
  - Debating Club
  - Drama Club
  - Friendship week
  - Friends for Life Programme
  - Green School’s Committee
  - Homework Club
  - Junior Cycle Wellbeing programme
  - JCSP/LCA Celebrations
  - Leading Ireland’s Future Together (LIFT) Schools Programme
  - Mental Health Committee
  - Merit System
  - Sports –Soccer, Rugby, Gaelic Football, Basketball, Camogie.
  - Student Induction
  - Stand Up Awareness week
  - Student Representative Council
  - Young Saint Vincent de Paul Conference

## Preventing cyberbullying behaviour

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 and/or unacceptable online behaviour.

Ardcoil Mhuire is committed to addressing the challenges posed by technology. The school promotes digital literacy, digital citizenship, and fostering safe online environments.

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

- > Ardscoil Mhuire has ensured that the SPHE curriculum is implemented in full in the school.
- > All first year students are introduced to the safe and ethical use of the internet as part of their Wellbeing Programme. Students learn about online safety and digital media literacy. They also take part in discussions around their use of school accounts, the *Acceptable Use Policy, Code of Behaviour* and the *Bi Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour*.
- > A team of senior students engage with Webwise Ireland as Youth Advisory Panelists and/or as Safer Internet Day ambassadors.
- > A Safe Internet Day takes place annually to reinforce awareness around appropriate online behaviour. Students experience a host of activities, some of which include, a poster competition, the creation of visual and audio/visual resources which are displayed around the school and used in classes, the promotion of Webwise's resources, a Safer Internet Day Expo for Junior Students, visits and presentations to local feeder primary schools and a social media campaign.
- > The Digital Media Literacy curriculum teaches First Year students about responsible online behaviour and digital citizenship.
- > Teachers, Year Heads and Senior Management have regular conversations with students about developing respectful and kind relationships online.
- > The school has developed an Acceptable Usage Policy for technology. This policy is available to all staff, students and parents/guardians through the school office, school website and in the school journal.
- > The school's Code of Behaviour addresses appropriate online behaviours.
- > A presentation on cyberbullying is given periodically to parents/guardians, who are the primary educators of their daughters, and responsible for overseeing their daughter's activities online
- > Webwise resources are shared regularly with parents/guardians

## Preventing homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour

All students including gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students, have the 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:

- > The school maintains an inclusive physical environment by displaying relevant LGBTQ+ posters and material that promotes LGBTQ+ inclusion.
- > The SPHE programme for all year groups, deals explicitly with the issue of identity-based bullying and in particular homophobic and transphobic bullying. The words gay and lesbian, or words with similar meaning, must never be used as terms of offence, even in jest. This curriculum highlights the ways in which students can support their peers and develops student empathy.
- > A safe space is created for students to report all types of bullying. Students are encouraged to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour.
- > *Belong To* resources are used with students in classes
- > Workshops are provided for school staff and parents/guardians to raise awareness of the impact of homophobic bullying behaviour.
- > Year Heads take an active role in addressing bullying during morning assemblies. They aim to raise

awareness, promote a positive school culture, and reinforce the school's anti-bullying procedures/policies.

### **Preventing racist bullying behaviour**

Ardcoil Mhuire has become much more culturally diverse over the last number of years/decades. Students attending the school come from many different cultures and backgrounds. Students from diverse backgrounds may be vulnerable to experiencing discrimination and prejudice and may be subject to racist bullying behaviour.

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

- > Annually we celebrate 'International Day' in the school. At this event our school's cultural diversity is celebrated by all students in our school community. The national flags and the cultural diversity of all of our students are displayed throughout the school and on our social media platforms.
- > Regularly teachers raise awareness of racism through the teaching of the curriculum in their classrooms. In particular SPHE, CSPE and Religion teachers focus and raise awareness of racism through their specified syllabus.
- > The school acknowledges, respects and supports the religious beliefs of our students of other faiths. Religious feasts and festivals of other faiths are publicly acknowledged within the school community.
- > The school encourages a culture of reporting all incidents of racist bullying, with particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders.
- > Presentations and the school website are accessible to parents/guardians in multiple languages, ensuring inclusivity. The school is committed to accommodating diverse backgrounds and cultures.

### **Preventing sexist bullying behaviour**

Schools should focus on gender equality as part of the measures to create a supportive and respectful environment. Strategies to prevent sexist bullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- > Annual celebration of International Women's Day. Students attend a day of celebration where local, national and international women are acknowledged and celebrated.
- > Students attend presentations from speakers, many of whom are female, from a variety of occupations. These presentations highlight the achievements of women in various fields, many of which may be viewed to be the domain of the opposite sex, and raises awareness about barriers to gender equality.

### **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.

- > Staff members model respectful behaviour
- > The school has a zero-tolerance policy towards sexual harassment
- > The school encourages a culture of reporting all incidences of sexual harassment

## **Procedures for Identifying, Reporting, Recording, Addressing and Dealing with Bullying Behaviour**

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

The teacher(s) with responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour may include any or all of the following:

- Year Head
- Deputy Principal
- Principal
- Care Team

When bullying behaviour occurs, the school will:

- ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour is heard and reassured
- seek to ensure the privacy of those involved
- conduct all conversations with sensitivity
- consider the age and ability of those involved
- listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation
- take action in a timely manner
- inform parents of those involved

The teachers who may be involved at any one time will be determined by the nature of reporting (or how the incidents came to light), on the gravity of the allegations, and on the nature and effectiveness of the intervention strategies. The Year Head and/or Senior Management takes overall responsibility for addressing and dealing with reports of bullying, and maintains any records generated.

A positive and inclusive school culture and environment is essential to prevent and address bullying behaviour. The school environment should be a space where students and school staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported.

The school has the responsibility to ensure we create a safe and caring environment for all students. Teachers support and nurture students through their daily encounters. They encourage students to report bullying behaviour to their Year Head and/or Senior Management.

The school's procedures must be consistent with the following approach. Every effort will be made to ensure that all involved (including students, parent(s)/guardian(s)) understand this approach from the outset.

### **Identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred**

- Any student or parent(s)/guardian(s) may bring a perceived bullying incident to any teacher in the school who will then inform the relevant teacher i.e. Year Head and/or Senior Management.
- Teaching staff must report any incidents of perceived bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant Year Head or Senior Management.
- Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), student teachers, caretakers and cleaners must report any incidents of perceived bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to Senior Management.
- Students who witness bullying behaviour will be supported and encouraged to report the behaviour to a trusted adult in the school or at home so the behaviour can be addressed. The trusted adult in school can be an SNA, teacher, member of the care team, Year Head, Deputy Principal or Principal.

- All reports, including anonymous reports of perceived bullying, must be addressed and dealt with by the relevant teachers i.e. Year Head and/or Senior Management.

Bullying is defined in *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying and Bi 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 *Bi Cineálta* procedures.

When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred the relevant teacher will consider what, where, when and why?

- > If a group of students is involved, each student will be engaged individually at first.
- > Thereafter, all students involved will be met as a group or in smaller groupings, if deemed appropriate.
- > 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 student will be supported as appropriate, following the group meeting.
- > Students involved may be asked to write down their account of the incident(s).

To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour the following questions will be considered:

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 **No**, then the behaviour is not bullying behaviour. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour, that is not deemed bullying behaviour, are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

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 procedures outlined below.

### **When Bullying Behaviour has occurred**

When bullying behaviour occurs, the relevant teachers in a calm, unemotional problem-solving manner will:

- > Take action in a timely manner.
- > Ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour is heard and reassured.
- > Listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation.
- > Inform parents/guardians of those involved. *Parent(s)/guardian(s) and students are required to cooperate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving any issues and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved as quickly as possible*
- > Seek to ensure the privacy of those involved. *Where possible, incidents should be addressed outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved*
- > All interviews will be conducted, using the restorative approach, with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all students concerned in addition to consideration of their age and ability
- > When addressing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teachers will seek answers to restorative questions. This should be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner. Restorative questions include:
  1. *What happened?*

2. *What were you thinking at the time?*
  3. *What have you thought about since?*
  4. *Who has been affected by this? In what way have they been affected?*
  5. *What do you think needs to happen next?*
- > If a group is involved, each member will be engaged individually at first using the restorative questions by the relevant teacher. Statements are usually read back to students to ensure clarity.
  - > All students involved may be asked to write down their account of the incident(s).
  - > Thereafter, all those involved will be met individually and/or in smaller groupings and/or as a whole group.
  - > Where the relevant teacher(s) have determined that a student has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it will be made clear to her how she is in breach of the school's Anti-Bullying Policy and efforts will be made to try to get her to see the situation from the perspective of the student being bullied.
  - > In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed, the relevant teacher(s) must, as part of their professional judgement, take the following factors into account:
    1. *Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased*
    2. *Whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable*
    3. *Whether the relationships between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable*
    4. *Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parent(s)/guardian(s) or the school principal or deputy principal*
  - > It must also be made clear to all involved (each set of students and parent(s)/guardian(s)) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the student being disciplined, his or her parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school.

## **Recording Bullying Behaviour**

All incidents of bullying behaviour will be recorded by the relevant teacher i.e. Year Head and/or Senior Management (See Appendix 1) The involvement of senior management in an investigation in no way reflects the severity of the behaviour. The information included in the school's procedures for recording and reporting bullying behaviour are as follows:

- The form of bullying behaviour
- The type of bullying behaviour
- If known, where and when it took place
- The date of initial engagement with the students and their parents/guardians
- The views of the students and their parents/guardians regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour
- The review with the students and their parents/ guardians to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased
- Each of these engagements should include a date
- The date it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased
- Engagement with external agencies

## **Support for Working with Students Affected by Bullying**

- The following in-school supports and opportunities will be made available to the students affected by bullying. These supports are designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop friendships and social skills and build resilience:
  1. Pastoral care system
  2. Peer mentoring system
  3. Class Teacher/Year head system
  4. Care team
  5. Check and Connect
  6. NBSS related modules
  7. Bluebox

- If students require counselling or further support, the school will endeavour to liaise with the appropriate agencies to organise same. This may be for the student affected by bullying or involved in the bullying behaviour.

### **Follow Up Procedures**

- The relevant teacher (Year Head and/or Senior Management) must engage with the students involved and their parents/guardians again no more than 20 school days after the initial engagement.
- Important factors to consider as part of this engagement are the nature of the bullying behaviour, the effectiveness of the strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and the relationship between the students involved.
- The relevant teacher (Year Head and/or Senior Management) will document the review with students and their parents/guardians to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased and the views of students and their parents/guardians in relation to this.
- The date that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased will also be recorded and 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 relevant teacher/ Year Head and/or Senior Management will review the strategies used in consultation with the students involved and their parents/guardians. A timeframe will be agreed for further engagement until the bullying behaviour has ceased.
- If it becomes clear that the student who is displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behaviour, then further consideration will be given to using the strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour as provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour. If disciplinary sanctions or further disciplinary sanctions are considered, this is a matter between the relevant student, their parents/guardians and the school.
- If a parent/ guardian 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*. Parent(s)/ guardian(s) should be referred to the school's complaints procedures.
- If a parent/ guardian 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.

Extreme instances of bullying behaviour will, in accordance with the *Children First* and the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, be referred to TUSLA and/or Gardaí as appropriate.

### **Complaint process**

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

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

<https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/parental-complaints/>

In the event that a student and/or parent/ guardian is dissatisfied with how a complaint has been handled, a student and/or parent/ guardian 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](mailto:ococomplaint@oco.ie).

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/guardians. 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 School*.

## **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: Sr. Ena Quinlan  
(Chairperson of board of management)

Date: 11<sup>th</sup> May 2026

Signed: Brid Herbert  
(Principal)

Date: 11<sup>th</sup> May 2026

## Appendix 1

### Template for the Recording Bullying Behaviour

This template is only to be used when bullying behaviour has been identified, in line with the Bi Cineálta Procedures.

1. Date of initial engagement with student(s) and parent(s) \_\_\_\_\_

2. (i) Name of student who has experienced bullying behaviour \_\_\_\_\_

(ii) Class group of student who has experienced bullying behaviour \_\_\_\_\_

3. Name and class group(s) of student(s) engaged in bullying behaviour

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class(es) \_\_\_\_\_  
Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class(es) \_\_\_\_\_  
Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class(es) \_\_\_\_\_

4. Source of bullying concern/report (tick relevant box(es))

Student concerned	
Other student	
Teacher	
Parent	
Other	

5. Location of incidents (tick relevant box(es))\*

Canteen	
Classroom	
Corridor	
Toilets	
Outdoor areas in school	
Other	

**6. Name of person(s) who reported the bullying concern and/or relationship to the student(s)**

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**7. Dates of when the bullying behaviour occurred**

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**8. Form of bullying behaviour (tick relevant box(es))**

Physical Bullying Behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/>	Exclusion Bullying Behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/>
Verbal Bullying Behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/>	Relational Bullying Behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/>
Written Bullying Behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/>	Online Bullying Behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/>
Extortion	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

**9. Types of Bullying Behaviour (tick relevant box/boxes)**

Disablist Bullying Behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/>	Poverty Bullying	<input type="checkbox"/>
Exceptionally Able Bullying Behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/>	Religious Identity Bullying	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender Identity Bullying	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sexist Bullying	<input type="checkbox"/>
Homophobic/Transphobic (LGBTQ+) Bullying	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sexual Harassment	<input type="checkbox"/>
Physical Appearance Bullying	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Racist Bullying	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>

**10. Brief description of bullying behaviour and its impact**

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**11. Views of student(s) and parent(s) regarding the actions to be taken**

**12. Date of review with student(s) and parent(s) \*\* within 20 days**

**13. Has bullying behaviour ceased?**

**14. Views of student(s) and parent(s) in relation to the procedures**

**15. If bullying behaviour has not ceased, set an agreed timeframe to meet again and review strategies**

**16. Engagement with external services or supports (if any)**

*If bullying behaviour continues beyond the review timeframes, the situation will be dealt with in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour.*

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ (Relevant Teacher)

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date submitted to Principal for reporting to the Board of Management:** \_\_\_\_\_

