



Cara Community Special School Enfield, Co. Meath

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

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1. Introduction to Cara Community Special School, Enfield, Co. Meath & Rationale

In December 2023, the Department of Education (DE) granted Patronage of a new Special School in Co. Meath to the Louth and Meath Education and Training Board (LMETB).

Cara Community Special School, Enfield, Co. Meath is a Community Special School that provides an appropriate education for students, aged 4 to 18 years old, who have a diagnosis of Autism and complex learning needs, with a professional recommendation for a Special School/who require the support of a Special School setting.

The student must have reached 4 years on or before 31st August of the school academic year for which they seek enrolment. To facilitate this age band, the range of classes extend from primary to post primary and are based on relevant and appropriate peer groupings and the individual needs of each child. As per DE regulations, students will leave school at the end of the school year in which they reach the age of 18 years old.

The school operates within the regulations as outlined by the Rules for National Schools and relevant circulars and directives issued by the Primary/Special Education sections of the Department of Education. The school is funded by grants from the Department of Education. Staffing allocations are in line with those set out by the Department of Education. Under the direction of the Patron, the school will be managed on an interim basis by a Single Manager pending the appointment of a Board of Management. The Board of Management is made up of representatives of the Patron, parents, school staff and the community.

Cara Community Special School, Enfield, Co. Meath delivers the curriculum as prescribed by the Department of Education and adapted to meet the educational needs of each student. A variety of methodologies and strategies are adopted to maximise the students' learning potential. Supported by the child's multidisciplinary team, the teachers and staff provide a caring and challenging learning environment which fosters personal, social and academic development. All students have an Individual Educational Plan designed specifically for them.

Our school is a place where everyone feels a sense of belonging and ownership. The school is characterised by respectful and positive relationships which support the dignity of every individual. We are committed to ensuring a safe environment where our students can maximise their potential. Forging meaningful relationships with the students, their parent(s)/guardian(s) and all involved in their care and education, is essential to ensuring a quality educational experience for our learners.

This policy aims to have in place, appropriate procedures that enable the school to appropriately identify and successfully address bullying behaviour. It outlines what is classified as bullying behaviour, the steps to address it and how to support all parties affected by the behaviour.

2. Aims

The Board of Management of Cara Community Special 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. 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.

3. Definition of Bullying

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

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

4. 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	04/09/2025 to 12/09/2025	- Bi Cinealta Policy Reading
Students	04/09/2025 to 12/09/2025	- Visuals - Social Story
Parents	11/06/2025 to 18/06/2025 04/09/2025 to 12/09/2025	- Online questionnaire. - Bi Cinealta Policy Reading
Board of Management		
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	24/09/2025 to 26/09/2025	- Bi Cinealta Policy Reading
Date policy was approved:		
Date policy was last reviewed:		

5. 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):

Culture & Environment	Curriculum
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A positive school culture and climate which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity; ○ encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment; and ○ promotes respectful relationships across the school community; • Promote the concept of a trusted adult – stay safe linkage – who to tell. • Create safe spaces in our school building and yards – visibility. • Incorporate artwork and signs to promote our school values – creation of a school charter promoting rights – equality, inclusion and respect. • Encourage a sense of belonging with ownership over their own space through art and creativity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and ○ teach students how to recognise bullying. • Teach SPHE and RSE content which fosters student’s 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, photographs, events. • Supports for staff; • Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies); • On-going evaluation of the

	effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.
Policy & Planning	Relationships & Partnerships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linking with external services e.g. NEPS, CAMHS, NCSE, CDNT, Tusla, Gardaí. • Linking with BOM, PA, Local clubs, Class events, Fundraising events. • Co-operation hours with Enfield Community College Teachers. • Interpersonal connections are supported through a range of formal and informal structures such as our parents' association. • 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. • Supporting active participation of students in school life and active participation of parents in school life also. • Engaging parents and 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.

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):

Preventing Cyberbullying/ Homophobic/Transphobic/Racist/Sexist Bullying Behaviour & Preventing Sexual Harassment

- Staff at all times endeavour to encourage pupils to show respect for each other.
- Implementation of the SPHE curriculum.
- Positive self-esteem is fostered among the pupils by celebrating individual differences, by acknowledging good behaviour and by providing opportunities for success.
- The school's anti-bullying policy is discussed regularly with the pupils.
- Staff are particularly vigilant in monitoring pupils who are considered at risk of bullying/ being bullied.
- All disclosed incidents of bullying are investigated thoroughly and consistently by following the correct procedure as outlined to staff and recorded on Aladdin using the template for this.
- School wide awareness raising on all aspects of bullying, supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extracurricular activities.
- Involvement of pupils in contributing to a safe school environment e.g. Kindness/ anti-bullying week, and other activities that can help to pupils and encourage a culture of peer respect and support.
- Ensuring that pupils are supported by staff in communicating bullying incidents.
- Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place.
- Refer to appropriate online behaviour when using devices and in SPHE lessons.
- Promote online safety events or material for parents.
- Challenge gender- stereotypes – equal participation of all. Equal recognition.
- Raise awareness of the impact of homophobic bullying behaviour.
- Foster a culture where diversity is celebrated and students “see themselves” in the school environment.
- Ensuring classes have access to material which reflects our diverse school population from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.
- Modelling of respectful behaviour by staff of all irrespective of sex.
- Ensuring all students have the same opportunities to engage in school activities irrespective of sex.
- Making clear that our school has a zero tolerance approach to sexual harassment of any kind with enforceable policy - See Code of Behaviour.

6. Addressing Bullying Behaviour

The teacher(s) with responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour is (are) as follows:

- The class teacher will oversee recording of bullying reports for students in their class
 - this includes using the procedure guidelines to investigate reports of bullying and recording bullying behaviour.
 - Deputy Principal (DDLDP) will follow up after twenty days to investigate if bullying has ceased.
 - All staff will be vigilant to bullying behaviour.
 - Principal will inform Board of Management of incidences of Bullying.
-

When bullying behaviour occurs, the school will:

- ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour is understood and reassured
- seek to ensure the privacy of those involved
- conduct all conversations with sensitivity
- consider the age and ability of those involved
- support the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to communicate their experience and address the situation
- take action 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):

- The 'Relevant Teacher' investigates all instances of reported or suspected bullying behaviour, whether these take place within the school or outside it, with a view to establishing the facts and bringing any such behaviour to an end.
- The School, through the 'Relevant Teacher' reserves the right to work alongside and discuss with classroom staff of any student to obtain an account of what happened, as part of an investigation. This will be a standard procedure and does not necessarily imply that a pupil is guilty of misbehaviour.
- Pupils who are alleged to have been involved in bullying behaviour are, with the assistance and support of staff, interviewed by the 'Relevant Teacher' to establish

the nature and extent of the behaviour and any reasons for it.

- The 'Relevant Teacher' does not apportion blame but rather treats bullying behaviour as a 'mistake' that can and must be remedied. S/he emphasises that the intention is not to punish perpetrators but to support them, to work with staff to teach how harmful and hurtful bullying is and to prevent it from happening again. Pupils who report bullying, therefore, are not getting others 'in trouble' so much as enabling them to get out of trouble into which they may ultimately get if the bullying continued.
- When an investigation is completed and/or a bullying situation is resolved, the 'Relevant Teacher' will complete a report to include the findings of the investigation, the strategy adopted, and the outcome of the intervention, as well as any other relevant information.
- In the event, that bullying behaviour continues following these supports, parent(s)/guardian(s) will be informed and requested to meet with the principal/deputy principal/ class teacher to agree on further action. Breach of these agreed actions by further bullying behaviour is regarded as a very grave matter, and a serious sanction may be imposed by the school authorities. A timeframe should be set for further engagement and follow-up until the bullying behavior ceases.
- All documentation regarding bullying incidents and their resolution is retained securely in the school.
- Where a pupil has been found to be engaged in bullying behaviour, has not taken part in agreed supports and actions, any of the following sanctions may be imposed:
 - S/he may be required to take part in further supports with outside agencies, with consent by a parent/guardian.
 - If the bullying behavior continues, the school should consider using strategies from the school's Code of Behaviour to address the inappropriate behavior
 - Parent(s)/guardian(s) may be invited to a meeting with the 'Relevant Teacher' and the Principal, and the pupil may be suspended from school.
 - The case may be referred to the Board of Management, and the pupil may be expelled from the school.

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):

Bullied pupils:

- Ending the bullying behaviour;
- Changing the school culture to foster more respect for bullied pupils and all pupils;
- Changing the school culture to foster greater empathy towards and support for bullied pupils.
- Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through

the awareness raising programme.

- Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through the speedy identification of those responsible and speedy resolution of bullying situations.
- Making adequate counselling facilities available to pupils who need it in a timely manner.
- Helping bullied pupils raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that help develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and team activities during school).

Bullying pupils:

- Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are not blamed or punished and get a 'clean sheet'.
- Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are doing the right and honourable thing and giving them praise for this.
- Making adequate counselling facilities available to help those who need it learn other ways of meeting their needs besides violating the rights of others.
- Helping those who need to raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class or team activities during school).
- Using learning strategies throughout the school and the curriculum to help enhance pupils' feelings of self-worth.
- In dealing with bullying behaviour seeking resolution and offering a fresh start with a 'clean sheet' and no blame in return for keeping a promise to reform.

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.

7. Oversight

The principal will present an update on bullying behaviour at each board of management meeting (Appendix 1). 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 (Appendix 2), 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: M. Kelly
(Chairperson of board of management)

Date: 19/1/26

Signed: Katie Callaghan
(Principal)

Date: 19/1/26

This policy was reviewed and ratified on:

Signed: _____
(Chairperson of board of management)

Date: _____

Signed: _____
(Principal)

Date: _____

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Guide to Providing Bullying Behaviour Update

Having reviewed the details of the incidents of bullying behaviour that have been reported since the previous board of management meeting, the principal must provide the following information at each ordinary meeting of the board of management:

Total number of new incidents of bullying behaviour reported since the last board of management meeting.	
Total number of incidents of bullying behaviour currently ongoing.	
Total number of incidents of bullying behaviour reported since the beginning of this school year.	

Where incidents of bullying behaviour have been reported since the last meeting, the update must include a verbal report which should include the following information where relevant:

- the trends and patterns identified such as the form of bullying behaviour, type of bullying behaviour if known, location of bullying behaviour, when it occurred etc
- the strategies used to address the bullying behaviour
- any wider strategies to prevent and address bullying behaviour
- if any serious incidents of bullying behaviour have occurred which have had a serious adverse impact on a student
- if a parent has informed the school that a student has left the school because of reported bullying behaviour
- if any additional support is needed from the board of management
- if the school's Bí Cineálta policy requires urgent review in advance of the annual review

This update should not include any personal information or information that could identify the students involved.

APPENDIX 2: Review of the Bí Cineálta Policy

The Board of Management (the Board) must undertake an annual (calendar) review of the school's Bí Cineálta policy and its implementation in consultation with the school community. As part of the review, this document must be completed.

Bí Cineálta Policy Review

1. When did the Board formally adopt its Bí Cineálta policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour in accordance with the *Bí Cineálta Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*? Insert date when the Bí Cineálta policy was last adopted by the school.

____/____/20____

2. Where in the school is the student-friendly Bí Cineálta policy displayed?

3. What date did the Board publish the Bí Cineálta policy and the student-friendly policy on the school website? ____/____/20____

4. How has the student-friendly policy been communicated to students?

5. How has the Bí Cineálta policy and student-friendly policy been communicated to parents

6. Have all school staff been made aware of the, school's Bí Cineálta policy and the *Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post- Primary Schools*? Yes ☐ No ☐
7. Does the Bí Cineálta policy document the strategies that the school uses to prevent bullying behaviour? Yes ☐ No ☐
8. Has the Board received and minuted the Bullying Behaviour Update presented by the principal at every ordinary board meeting over the last calendar year? Yes ☐ No ☐
9. Has the Board discussed how the school is addressing all reports of bullying behaviour? Yes ☐ No ☐
10. Is the Board satisfied that all incidents of bullying behaviour are addressed in accordance with the school's Bí Cineálta Policy? Yes ☐ No ☐
11. Have the prevention strategies in the Bí Cineálta policy been implemented? Yes ☐ No ☐
12. Has the Board discussed the effectiveness of the strategies used to prevent bullying behaviour? Yes ☐ No ☐
13. How have (a) parents, (b) students and (c) school staff been consulted with as part of the review of the Bí Cineálta Policy?

14. Outline any aspects of the school's Bí Cineálta policy and/or its implementation that have been identified as requiring further improvement as part of this review:

15. Where areas for improvement have been identified, outline how these will be addressed and whether an action plan with timeframes has been developed?

16. Does the student-friendly policy need to be updated as a result of this review and if so why?

17. Does the school refer parents to the complaints procedures if they have a complaint about how the school has addressed bullying behaviour? Yes ☐ No ☐

18. Has a parent informed the school that a student has left the school due to reported bullying behaviour? Yes ☐ No ☐

19. Has the Office of the Ombudsman for Children initiated or completed an investigation into how the school has addressed an incident of bullying behaviour? Yes ☐ No ☐