Rath Dara Community College
Bí Cineálta Policy.

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Board Approval Date	24-09-2025

Review Dates		

Rath Dara Community College
Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

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The Board of Management of Rath Dara 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. 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	27/02/2025 03/03/2025	SURVEY HALF DAY CONSULTATION
Students	0/05/2025	SURVEY, FOCUS GROUP
Parents	13/03/2025 06/05/2025	PARENT SURVEY PARENT FOCUS GROUP
Board of Management	14/05/2025	DRAFT OUTLINE/ SUGGESTIONS
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	27/02/2025	SURVEY
Date policy was approved: 24-09-2025		
Date policy was last reviewed:		

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

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

- **Creating a Positive School Ethos**
  - Encouraging students to disclose and discuss bullying incidents.
  - Promoting **respect, responsibility, and welfare** for all members of the school community.
  - Recognizing and **supporting at-risk students** with restorative measures and early intervention.
- **Raising Awareness**
  - Educating students, parents, and teachers about bullying as **unacceptable behaviour**.
  - Using **the Wellbeing programme** to develop knowledge, skills, and awareness related to bullying. Student friendly Policy
- **Encouraging Inclusivity and Diversity**
  - Promoting **respect for different values, beliefs, and traditions**.

- Fostering a culture of **mutual respect, courtesy, and interdependence** in school communities.

- **Providing a Safe and Secure Learning Environment**
  - Ensuring the school environment is **physically and emotionally safe.**
  - Using **monitoring systems** to detect and address bullying behaviour early.
- **Empowering Students to Take Ownership**
  - Implement **student-led anti-bullying groups** or peer mentoring programs.
  - Encourage student involvement in **creative projects,** such as murals and campaigns against bullying.
- **Enhancing Supervision and Safe Spaces**
  - Increasing staff visibility and **rotational supervision** in high-risk areas.
  - Designing **break-time activities** that foster engagement and inclusion.
  - Establishing **safe zones** where students can go when feeling vulnerable. Library, ASD hub, Quiet Space.
- **Anonymous and Accessible Reporting Systems**
  - Implementing **confidential digital reporting platforms** for students to report bullying safely.
  - Providing **a trusted adult program** where students can seek help without fear of retaliation.
- **Digital and Cyberbullying Prevention**
  - Educating students about **responsible social media use and digital citizenship.**
  - Partnering with parents to **monitor online behaviour** and reinforce safe internet practices.
- **Regular Anti-Bullying Training for Staff**
  - Conducting workshops to equip teachers with **strategies for identifying and intervening** in bullying cases.
  - Training staff on **trauma-informed responses** to bullying incidents.

- **Anti-Bullying Training for Parents**

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):

- **Anti-Bullying Policy** – Outlines the school's commitment to preventing and addressing bullying through clear procedures and support systems.
- **DLP/DDLP** – The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and Deputy DLP manage child protection concerns, including bullying-related issues.
- **Child Safeguarding Statement** – Ensures the protection and welfare of all students in line with national child protection guidelines.
- **CPOR** – Child Protection Oversight Report monitors safeguarding measures and responses to bullying incidents.
- **CIR** – Critical Incident Response plan provides a framework for managing serious events, including bullying-related crises.
- **Well-Being Subjects (SPHE/RSE, CSPE)** – Promote student well-being, personal development, and respect, addressing bullying prevention.
- **Anti-Bullying/Well-Being Week** – Annual event raising awareness and promoting positive relationships among students.
- **Behavioural Council** – Supports students with behavioural challenges, including bullying, through structured interventions.
- **BFL Teacher** – A Behaviour for Learning teacher provides targeted support to students struggling with social and emotional issues.
- **SCP** – The School Completion Programme (SCP) supports at-risk students, including those affected by bullying.
- **Guidance Counsellor** – Offers emotional and academic support, including advice and intervention for bullying victims.
- **Chaplain** – Provides pastoral care and emotional support for students experiencing difficulties, including bullying.
- **HSCL** – The Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) fosters communication between families and the school to support student well-being.
- **Parents Association** – Works in partnership with the school to promote a safe, inclusive environment for all students.
- **Code of Positive Behaviour** – Sets expectations for respectful interactions and outlines consequences for bullying behaviour.
- **Pastoral Care System (Tutor/Year Head)** – Provides a structured support system for student welfare, including bullying concerns.
- **DEIS Plan** – Addresses educational disadvantage with measures that support student well-being and inclusion.
- **Ethos** – The school's core values:
- Our mission at Rath Dara Community College is to work together as a school community to create an educational environment that is positive, caring, safe and inclusive. We embrace diversity, promote inclusion and foster mutual respect. We focus on excellence in education through a progressive, individualised student-centred learning environment that supports the unique needs of the individual. This enables us to challenge, encourage and celebrate students' success in reaching their social, academic and emotional goals.

- **Schools of Sanctuary** – Supports refugee and migrant students, fostering a culture of inclusion and respect.
- **Autism-Friendly School** – Implements strategies to support autistic students and promote an inclusive school environment.
- **SST** – The Student Support Team coordinates interventions for students facing challenges, including bullying.
- **BOM** – The Board of Management oversees school policies, including anti-bullying measures.
- **Student Council** – Represents student voices, advocating for initiatives that promote respect and inclusion.
- **Year Head Section on SharePoint** – Centralised platform for tracking student behaviour and well-being concerns.
- **VSware** – School management system used to monitor student behaviour and record bullying incidents.
- **AUP** – The Acceptable Use Policy regulates responsible use of digital technology to prevent cyberbullying.
- **ICT Policy** – Governs technology use in the school, including measures to combat online bullying.
- **Transfer Programme with SCP** – Supports students transitioning between schools, ensuring continuity of care for those at risk.
- **Stakeholder Survey/Forum** – Provides opportunities for students, staff, and parents to give feedback on school policies, including bullying prevention.
- **Yellow Flag** – Recognises schools that promote diversity and inclusion, reducing bullying based on race or ethnicity.
- **Amber Flag** – Acknowledges schools that prioritise mental health awareness and well-being initiatives.
- **Gold Flag** – Awards schools demonstrating excellence in promoting equality, inclusion, and anti-bullying efforts.
- **CPD (Child Safety, Anti-Bullying)** – Continuous professional development ensures staff are trained in safeguarding and bullying prevention.
- **External Supports (Genesis, CAMHS, Jigsaw)** – Collaborates with external agencies to provide specialised support for students facing mental health and bullying-related challenges.
- **Partnership with JLO** – Works with the Juvenile Liaison Officer to address behavioural concerns and promote restorative practices.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

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 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):

1. If students are upset and feel they are being bullied or if they have information regarding a bullying incident, they should talk to their tutor, a teacher, year head or the principal/deputy principal.
2. Students can complete a confidential Bullying report form.
3. We encourage students to seek advice should they need to. The staff member should respect the student's wishes in so far as this may be done without endangering him/her.
4. The student(s) will be asked to give a written account of the event(s) that are causing distress.
5. Instances of bullying will be reported to the Senior Mangement Team. Year Heads will investigate all reports of bullying behaviour. (The SMT or personnel appointed by them will investigate if the Year Head is not available) The staff will remain vigilant regarding repeated incidents.
6. Cases of bullying will be dealt with discreetly where possible, In line with the school ethos, students will be supported through the process.
7. All reports of bullying, will be recorded, investigated and dealt with by year heads. In that way students will gain confidence in telling. This confidence factor is of vital importance.
8. Recording of reports of bullying: An online record book for the purpose of recording reports of bullying can be found on SharePoint and it is imperative that all matters relating to an incident of bullying should be entered in this book.

An allegation of bullying will be dealt with as follows:

In the event of a bullying incident against another student(s) or member of staff:

- The person/people involved will be advised to cease this behaviour and where necessary steps will be taken to a) resolve any misunderstandings b) guidance will be given to change behaviour where necessary.
- Students may ask staff to monitor bullying without direct action; staff should handle requests sensitively.
- Parents can request no action in writing, with support available if needed.
- The school may still intervene if necessary for student welfare.
- In all bullying incidents the parents/guardians of all parties involved will be informed and if necessary a meeting/meetings will be arranged.

- A meeting will take place with the teachers, students and parents involved to discuss possible interventions.
- A follow-up review occurs within 20 school days.
- Effectiveness of interventions and student relationships are assessed.
- Even if bullying stops, ongoing supervision and support may be needed for both the affected student and the one displaying bullying behaviour.
- If the situation does not improve other steps will be taken, including involving the Student Support Team, the BFL teacher, referral to the Behavioural Council. If the bullying behaviour does not cease the school's Code of Positive behaviour will be followed.
- In cases where it is considered that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after it was determined that bullying behaviour occurred, a report must be made to the DLP.
- The relevant teacher (the teacher who oversees the investigation) must record the bullying behaviour in the standardised recording template at Appendix A.
- The record should include:
  1. the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour.
  2.It should document the review with students and their parents to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased and the views of students and their parents in relation to this.
  3.It is important to document the date of each of these engagements and the date that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased.

It is important to note:
Schools are not responsible for bullying that occurs:
Outside of school hours or Online (excluding the school platforms).

Schools will endeavour to support the student who is the victim of such bullying.

Under Coco's law some behaviour may have to be reported to outside agencies e.g. The Gardai.

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):

Students will be encouraged to report any incident in a safe and confidential environment, where appropriate. Parents will be informed of any incident that occurs and will be involved in implementing a plan to help their child. The student will receive support from staff such as the Year Head, Guidance counsellor, Chaplain, the BFL teacher, School Completion the Principal, and Deputy-Principal.

Teachers will be informed, where appropriate, to adjust the workload or to provide additional support.

Restorative approaches will be facilitated to promote healing and repair relationships.
When necessary, students can be referred to external agencies if further support is needed.

Students will have the opportunity to engage in extra-curricular activities to rebuild a sense of belonging.

Year heads will monitor progress and ensure the bullying behaviour has ceased.
Students and parents will be invited to provide feedback on the support received.

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: Mary McCamley Date: 24-09-25
(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: Emily Byrne Date: 24-09-25
(Principal)