

# Thomond Primary School Bí Cineálta Policy

## Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Thomond Primary School has adopted the following policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour. This policy fully complies with the requirements set out in *Bí Cineálta:* Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2024.

The Board acknowledges that bullying behaviour infringes upon the rights of the child as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. As a school community, we all share a responsibility to work collaboratively to prevent and address bullying and to mitigate its harmful effects.

Ireland ratified the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child in September 1992, thereby committing to promote, protect, and fulfil the rights of all children. Bullying is fundamentally a children's rights issue, as it undermines several key rights, including:

- The right to freedom of expression (Article 13)
- The right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion (Article 14)
- The right to freedom of association and peaceful assembly (Article 15)
- The right to privacy (Article 16)
- The right to protection from all forms of abuse and neglect (Article 19)
- The right to the highest attainable standard of health (Article 24)
- The right to education (Article 28)
- The right to enjoy one's own culture, religion, or language (Article 30)

As a school community, we reaffirm our collective responsibility to actively prevent and address bullying behaviour and its negative impact. We are committed to safeguarding all students from harm and ensuring that student wellbeing remains central to everything we do.

We fully recognise the serious impact bullying can have on students' lives and are dedicated to its prevention and resolution. In line with our obligations under equality legislation, we will take all reasonably practicable steps to prevent harassment of students or staff on any of the nine specified grounds: gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race, and membership of the Traveller community.

We confirm that we will take all steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent all bullying or harassment of our students in whatever form and however motivated. Catholic schools have a distinctive understanding of the human person, recognising that every person is created in God's image and likeness and has inherent dignity as a child of God. This is the basis for ensuring that everybody in our school is treated with respect and care, in accordance with the Catholic Schedule. As a Catholic school, we are committed to respecting the dignity of every individual. No human person is to be devalued, and everybody has a part to play in the school community, regardless of difference.

# **Definition of Bullying**

As outlined in *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 targeted behaviour, online or offline, that causes harm. This harm may be physical, social, or emotional. Bullying is typically repeated over time and involves a power imbalance between individuals or groups in society. (Reference: Chapter 2, Bí Cineálta procedures)

Bullying can result in various forms of harm:

- Physical: e.g., personal injury, damage to or loss of property
- Social: e.g., exclusion, isolation, withdrawal
- Emotional: e.g., anxiety, low self-esteem, depression

**Types of Bullying:** Bullying behaviours can be directed at an individual based on aspects such as disability, exceptional ability, gender identity, LGBTQ+ status, physical appearance, racial or religious identity, socioeconomic background, sexism, or through sexual harassment. This list is not exhaustive.

#### **Direct Bullying:**

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

#### **Indirect Bullying:**

- Exclusion: deliberate and repeated isolation, exclusion or ignoring of a student or groups of students
- Relational: Where a student's attempts to form friendships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined, threats, non-verbal gesturing, malicious gossip, spreading rumours, silent treatment and manipulation of friend groups etc. can all form relational bullying for a student.

#### **Online Bullying:**

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

#### Examples include:

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

#### **Additional Considerations**

Some students with special educational needs may display behaviours that unintentionally harm themselves or others, often due to difficulties in social communication. These behaviours are not always intentional or premeditated, but in certain situations, they are an automatic response which they cannot control, they are addressed appropriately within the context of the student's needs.

It is important to distinguish between conflict and bullying. Disagreements or isolated incidents, while unacceptable, do not constitute bullying unless they involve deliberate, repeated attempts to distress, exclude, or create dislike by others.

However, even a single hurtful message posted on social media can be considered bullying, as its visibility to a wide audience and potential for repeated sharing can make it a form of repeated behaviour.

The school's **Code of Behaviour** provides strategies for addressing inappropriate conduct that does not meet the criteria for bullying.

# 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	26/03/25	A whole staff presentation and workshop.
		A draft policy created by the wellbeing coordinator
	09/05/25	A review of this draft policy by the Wellbeing Team
	14/5/25	This reviewed draft was given to staff for a final staff review before presentation to the Board of Management
Students	April 2025	Review of student responses to the TPS annual safety questionnaire.
	07/05/25	The Student Council discussed developing a 'child-friendly' Anti-Bullying Policy aimed at creating a document for display and dissemination among TPS students.
Parents	May 2025	Parents will review the draft policy in collaboration with the HSCL coordinator during a Parents' Council meeting.
Board of Management	June 2025	The Board of Management will review the draft policy prior to ratification
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	June 2025	The secretary, caretaker, Lollipop Lady, bus drivers & bus escorts will be provided with copies of the policy and given the opportunity to discuss it with the Principal and/or the Cineáltas Policy Coordinator, should they wish to do so.
Date policy was approved: 17	<sup>th</sup> June 2025	
Date policy was last reviewed	l:	

## **Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour**

The Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice provides the following four key areas that are essential for a holistic, whole school approach to wellbeing promotion:

- Culture and Environment
- Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)
- Policy and Planning
- Relationships and Partnerships

This section outlines the prevention strategies the school will implement. These strategies specifically address the prevention of online bullying, homophobic and transphobic bullying, racist bullying, sexist bullying, and sexual harassment, as appropriate (refer to Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures).

#### Our School's Mission Statement:

Rooted in our Christian tradition, Thomond Primary School strives to work in partnership with parents and community to provide a holistic and high-quality education in a safe, caring and nurturing environment; where everybody is respected, valued and cherished in order that each child may have the opportunity to fulfil his or her potential.

This vision guides everything we do and forms the foundation for both the content we teach and the approaches and methodologies we use.

In developing the preventative strategies this school will use to prevent all forms of bullying behaviour, we come from the context of our Catholic ethos, where inclusivity permeated our school in a real way. This school takes positive steps to ensure that the culture of the school is one which welcomes a respectful dialogue and encounter with diversity and difference by ensuring that prevention and inclusivity strategies are given priority and discussed regularly at our board of management and staff meetings.

The dignity and wellbeing of the individual person is of paramount concern in our Christian response. This school will listen closely to and dialogue with parents, thereby building a relationship of mutual understanding, respect, trust and confidence.

In continuing to develop prevention strategies, this school will listen to young people and parents, to help establish their particular context and needs. Frequent periods of reflection and further engagement by the school, young people and parents, will be used to discern appropriate supports for young people in this school and to help inform future prevention strategies.

#### Primary Prevention Strategies Across the Four Key Areas of Wellbeing

#### **Culture and Environment:**

To prevent bullying behaviour, we focus on:

- · Celebrating all forms of difference and diversity
- Providing rigorous supervision of students before, during, and after school, including on buses
- · Using visual reminders of expected behaviours
- Actively involving parents in all aspects of school life
- Maintaining a bright, warm, and welcoming school environment

- Fostering a sense of belonging for all students
- Offering after-school clubs to cater to various interests and talents
- Holding monthly assemblies that celebrate learning, achievement, and recognize students who show growth and improvement
- Ensuring staff are trauma-aware
- Employing the 'Incredible Years' approach to behaviour management
- Modelling warm, cooperative, and respectful interactions
- Using restorative practices to address and heal any harm caused

#### Curriculum:

To prevent bullying behaviour, we implement:

- A robust SPHE policy and teaching plan
- The careful and consistent teaching of the Stay Safe Programme
- A well-developed, sensitive RSE policy and teaching plan
- The use of the 'Walk Tall Programme' to enhance self-esteem and self-awareness
- The Nurture Room and its associated programs and methodologies
- Explicit teaching on managing friendships and resolving conflicts, including programs like 'Friends for Life,' 'Zippy's Friends,' and 'DINA'
- Digital safety education through the Webwise Programmes
- · Regular upskilling for staff to enhance their expertise
- The use of the Zones of Regulation Programme to help children manage big emotions
- Clear and positive teaching of school rules
- Engaging students in the creation of their own classroom rules
- Inviting relevant experts to address staff, students, and parents to support classroom work
- Incorporating additional programs as needed, such as Educare and Roots of Empathy

#### Policy and Planning:

To prevent bullying behaviour, we ensure:

- A comprehensive SPHE Policy and Plan
- An Acceptable Use Policy
- A Digital Learning Plan
- A Child Protection Policy with up-to-date training for designated staff
- A dedicated Wellbeing Team
- Regular Care Team meetings for each cohort of students
- DEIS planning that incorporates wellbeing across all areas
- 'Friendly February,' a month-long school initiative promoting friendship and positive relationships through daily activities and recognition
- The Amber Flag Committee and related initiatives
- Intake meetings with preschools/crèches to plan for incoming junior infants, as well as transition meetings with secondary schools for outgoing 6th class students
- A Student Council to promote child agency
- School Captains to foster leadership
- Playground Leaders who mentor and monitor younger students
- A 'My Thoughts About School' checklist completed by students at the start of the school year, and a 'Safety at School' questionnaire at the end of the year to gather feedback and identify any issues

#### Relationships and Partnerships:

To prevent bullying behaviour, we focus on:

- Ensuring every staff member establishes and maintains a warm, positive relationship with each child, based on unconditional positive regard
- Building positive relationships with parents and guardians through formal meetings, informal
  contact, parent-child classes and programs (e.g., Maths for Fun, STEAM, Baking), and casual
  encounters at the gate
- Showing genuine interest in students' lives outside of school
- Encouraging former pupils to stay connected with the school and seek advice or support when needed
- Maintaining strong relationships with other local primary schools
- Collaborating with secondary schools to ensure smooth transitions for students
- Involvement in the School Completion Programme (SCP) to support students at risk of leaving school early, including those affected by bullying
- A strong and active Parents' Association working closely with a dedicated HSCL teacher
- An active and vibrant Facebook page for sharing updates, activities, and information with the school community
- The use of Aladdin Connect to maintain communication with parents and guardians
- Strong links with colleges of Education for teacher development
- Collaboration with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO)
- Partnerships with local sports clubs to engage students
- Collaboration with Bluebox Creative Therapies to offer additional support for students and families
- Working with Music Generation and local artists to provide arts education
- Close relationships with Speech and Language Therapists, Blackberry Park, Primary Care, and NEPS to ensure students receive the necessary support, and staff are equipped with the training they need

#### Preventing Cyberbullying Behaviour:

- Promoting digital citizenship and responsible online behaviour
- Implementing the SPHE (Social, Personal, and Health Education) curriculum
- Encouraging open discussions with students about fostering respectful and kind online relationships
- Organizing online safety events for parents and guardians (who are responsible for monitoring their children's online activities)
- Observing an Internet Safety Day/Week

(Note: The digital age of consent refers to the minimum age at which a user can legally consent to social media or internet companies collecting, processing, and storing their data. In Ireland, this is 16. Children aged 13 to 16 must have parental consent to sign up for social media services. The majority of social media platforms have a minimum age requirement of 13. Therefore, children under 13 should not have social media accounts.)

#### Preventing Homophobic/Transphobic Bullying Behaviour:

- Maintaining an inclusive environment through the display of posters advocating for inclusivity and equal rights for all
- Promoting kindness and respectful behaviour at all times
- Organizing activities to build empathy
- Challenging gender stereotypes through literature, debates, and the SPHE program
- Encouraging students to 'call out' or 'report' homophobic/transphobic behaviour when they
  witness it

#### Preventing Racist Bullying Behaviour:

- Fostering a school culture that celebrates diversity and helps students feel represented in the school environment
- Organizing Multi-Cultural Days
- Promoting kindness and respectful behaviour at all times
- Engaging students in activities to build empathy
- Encouraging students to 'call out' or 'report' racist behaviour when they witness it
- Providing support to students from ethnic minorities (including members of the Travelling Community) and their families
- Ensuring that library resources and textbooks reflect the diverse experiences of students and adults from different national, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds

#### Preventing Sexist Bullying Behaviour:

- Ensuring staff members model respectful behaviour and treat all students equally, regardless of sex
- Offering all students equal opportunities to participate in school activities, irrespective of sex
- Celebrating diversity within the school and recognizing the value and contributions of everyone
- Promoting kindness and respectful behaviour at all times
- Encouraging students to 'call out' or 'report' sexist behaviour when they witness it

#### Preventing Sexual Harassment:

- Educating students about the importance of respecting body autonomy
- Teaching consent at age-appropriate levels
- Promoting positive role models within the school community and beyond
- Challenging gender stereotypes that contribute to sexual harassment
- Encouraging students to 'call out' or 'report' any form of harassment they witness

The school has established the following supervision and monitoring policies to prevent and address bullying behaviour:

- A culture of kindness, care, and respect for all individuals
- Strong, respectful, and mutually trusting relationships with parents and guardians
- A strict Supervision Policy that is rigorously enforced
- A comprehensive Acceptable Use of the Internet Policy that is rigorously enforced
- A Code of Behaviour that is consistently adhered to
- A Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment

# Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

The following staff members are responsible for addressing bullying behaviour:

- Class Teacher: Responsible for overseeing the recording of bullying reports concerning students in their class. This includes following procedural guidelines to investigate reports and documenting incidents using the appropriate forms on Aladdin/OneDrive.
- DLP/DDLP: Will conduct a follow-up investigation twenty school days after the initial report to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased.
- All School Staff: Expected to remain vigilant for signs of bullying and to be aware of their responsibilities in addressing and reporting such behaviour.
- Principal: Responsible for informing the Board of Management about incidents of bullying.
- Deputy Principal/SENCO: Provides support and advice as needed in relation to bullying concerns.
- Wellbeing Team Leader/Policy Coordinator: Available to offer up-to-date information and support to assist class teachers and staff in addressing bullying-related issues.

When bullying behaviour occurs, the school will:

- Ensure the student experiencing bullying behaviour is listened to and reassured
- Maintain the privacy and confidentiality of all individuals involved
- Handle all conversations with care and sensitivity
- Take into account the age and abilities of the students involved
- Consider the views of the affected student when determining the most appropriate response
- Respond in a timely and effective manner
- Communicate with the parents or guardians of all students involved

The steps the school will take to determine whether bullying behaviour has occurred, the strategies used to address it, and the process for reviewing progress are outlined as follows (refer to Chapter 6 of the *Bí Cineálta* procedures):

#### Identifying Bullying Behaviour

Bullying is a targeted behaviour—whether online or offline—that causes harm. This harm may be physical, social, or emotional in nature. Bullying is typically repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power in relationships between individuals or groups within society.

To determine whether a reported incident constitutes bullying, the following questions should be considered:

- 1. Is the behaviour directed at a specific student or group of students?
- 2. Is there an intention to cause physical, social, or emotional harm?
- 3. Is the behaviour repeated?

If the answer to all three questions is Yes, the behaviour is considered bullying and should be addressed using the Bí Cineálta Procedures.

Note: In certain circumstances, a single incident may be classified as bullying—particularly when it is likely to be repeated in impact. For example, a hurtful message posted online may be shared multiple times, making its effect ongoing and repetitive.

If the answer to any of the questions above is No, the behaviour does not meet the definition of bullying. In such cases, strategies outlined in the school's Code of Behaviour will be applied to address inappropriate behaviour.

#### Investigating Alleged Bullying

When evaluating whether bullying has occurred, teachers will take into account:

- What happened
- Where it happened
- When it occurred
- Why it may have happened

If a group of students is involved, each student will first be spoken to individually. Following this, all involved students will be brought together for a group discussion. During the group meeting, each student will be asked to share their account of events to ensure mutual understanding of all perspectives.

Appropriate supports will be put in place for each student based on their individual needs following the meeting.

Depending on the students' age and developmental stage, it may be helpful to ask them to provide written accounts of the incident(s).

#### When Bullying Behaviour Occurs:

Parents are a vital part of the school community and play a key role, in partnership with the school, in responding to bullying behaviour. When such behaviour is identified, the parents of the students involved will be contacted promptly to inform them of the situation and to consult on appropriate steps to address it.

It is essential to listen to the views of the student experiencing the bullying to determine the most effective way to resolve the issue.

A detailed record will be maintained of all interactions with those involved.

This record will outline the nature and form of the bullying behaviour (if known), referencing Sections 2.5 and 2.7 of the *Bi Cineálta* procedures, along with details of where and when the incidents occurred and the date of the initial engagement with the students and their parents.

The record will also include the perspectives of both the students and their parents regarding the proposed actions to address the behaviour.

#### Follow up where bullying behaviour has occurred:

The teacher must re-engage with the students involved and their parents within 20 school days of the initial engagement. Key factors to consider during this follow-up include:

- The nature of the bullying behaviour
- The effectiveness of the strategies implemented to address the behaviour
- The relationship between the students involved

The teacher should document this review, including whether the bullying behaviour has ceased, and the views of the students and their parents on the matter. The date on which it is determined that the bullying behaviour has stopped should also be recorded.

Any involvement of external services or supports should be noted.

Even if the bullying behaviour has ceased, ongoing supervision and support may still be necessary for the students involved.

If the bullying behaviour continues, the teacher will review and revise the strategies in consultation with the students and their parents. A new timeframe will be agreed upon for further engagement, continuing until the bullying behaviour has stopped.

If it becomes evident that the student engaging in the bullying behaviour is persisting, consideration should be given to the use of disciplinary measures as outlined in the school's Code of Behaviour. If disciplinary sanctions are deemed necessary, this will be a matter between the school, the student involved, and their parents.

If a parent is not satisfied with how the school has addressed the bullying behaviour, in accordance with the *Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, they should be directed to the school's complaints procedures.

If a parent remains dissatisfied with how their complaint has been handled and believes the school's actions have negatively impacted their child, they may escalate the issue to the Ombudsman for Children.

Where the bullying behaviour raises a child protection concern, it will be addressed immediately, in line with the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.

The school will use the following approaches to support those who experience, witness and display bullying behaviour:

The primary objective in responding to reports of bullying should be to stop the behaviour and, as far as possible, to rebuild the relationships between the students involved—rather than to assign blame.

The school's approach to supporting students affected by bullying is rooted in a whole-school strategy. Due to the complex nature of bullying, no single intervention or support programme is effective in every situation.

When addressing incidents of bullying, teachers will:

- Ensure the student experiencing bullying feels safe, heard, and supported
- Respect the privacy of all individuals involved
- Handle all conversations with care and sensitivity
- Take into account the age and developmental level of the students involved
- Listen to the student's perspective on how the situation should be addressed
- Act promptly and appropriately
- Communicate with the parents or guardians of those involved

Supports are available to help prevent and address bullying behaviour.

These include:

- The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)
- Oide
- Webwise
- The National Parents Council
- Dublin City University (DCU) Anti-Bullying Centre
- TUSLA (the Child and Family Agency)

The Teacher is the Primary Resource

At Thomond Primary School, we take pride in our child-centred, relationship-based approach in all aspects of school life. We believe that nurturing warm, trusting, and respectful relationships is the foundation of everything we do. Within this supportive atmosphere, children feel confident and safe approaching their teachers and other trusted adults when they encounter or witness bullying behaviours.

Through consistent and committed implementation of the *Stay Safe* programme, we ensure that all children clearly understand what constitutes bullying behaviour and what does not. They are also equipped with the knowledge and confidence to take appropriate action if they are affected by or witness bullying.

Those who engage in bullying behaviour also need and deserve support. A restorative approach can be highly effective in ensuring that all parties are heard, given time to reflect, and offered the opportunity to contribute to a resolution. It empowers children with a sense of agency—something especially important for those who have experienced bullying. This approach focuses on healing and repair rather than assigning blame or causing shame. Restorative practices or mediation will only be used to address bullying behaviour when the involved teachers have received appropriate training and when all students involved have consented to participate.

Those who witness bullying behaviour need appropriate support. We will continue to foster a culture where 'telling' is encouraged and normalized. Children will be taught—and reminded—that reporting bullying takes away the power from those who engage in such behaviour. They will be praised for making the brave and responsible choice to help themselves and others by speaking up. Over time, all children will come to understand that 'telling' is a superpower—and the right and sensible action to take when they experience or witness bullying.

# **Section D: Oversight**

The Principal will provide an update on bullying behaviour at each Board of Management meeting. This report will include:

- · the number of bullying incidents reported since the previous meeting,
- the number of ongoing incidents, and
- the total number of incidents reported since the beginning of the school year.

Where incidents have occurred, the Principal will also give a verbal update. This may include, where relevant, information on emerging trends and patterns, strategies implemented to address the bullying behaviour, and broader preventative measures. No personal or identifying information will be shared. For further details, see Chapter 7 of the *Bí Cineálta* procedures.

This policy is available to the school community on the school's website and in hard copy upon request. A student-friendly version is displayed in the school and is also accessible on the website or in hard copy, if requested.

The policy and its implementation will be reviewed annually—following consultation with the school community—or as soon as practicable after any significant change to a relevant matter.

# **Ratification and Communication**

This plan was formally approved by the Board of Management of Thomond Primary School on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2025.

Signed:	Date:	-
Michael Condon		
Chairperson of the Board of Management		

# **Appendix A: Template for Recording Bullying Behaviour**

\*This template should be used if the bullying incident meets the criteria outlined in the Bí Cineálta procedures. \*

1. Pupil's Name and Class Group  Name:
Class:
2. Name(s) and Class(es) of Pupil(s) Engaged in Bullying Behaviour
3. Form(s) of Bullying (please circle): Physical, Verbal, Written, Extortion, Exclusion, Relational, Online, Other:
4. Type of Bullying (please circle): Disablist, Exceptionally Able, Gender Identity, Homophobic/Transphobic, Physical Appearance, Racist, Poverty, Religious Identity, Sexist Bullying, Sexual Harassment:
5. Location of Incident(s):
6. Date(s) of Incident(s):
7. Name of Person Reporting the Bullying Concern:
8. Brief Description of the Bullying Behaviour and Its Impact:

9. Date(s) of Initial Engagement with the Pupil(s) Involved:  (Both the pupil harmed and the pupil engaging in harm should be supported)
10. Date(s) of Initial Engagement with Parents:
11. Actions Taken in Response to the Bullying Incident:
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12. Views of Pupils and Parents on Actions to Be Taken:
13. Date of Review to Determine if the Bullying Behaviour Has Ceased:
14. Engagement with External Services/Supports (if any):
Signature: (Teacher)
Date:
Date Submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal: