Kilmessan Mixed N.S. Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of *Kilmessan Mixed N.S.* 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.

1. 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 core elements are defined as follows:

- **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. Posting a single harmful message/image/video online, and which is highly likely to be reposted or shared with others can therefore be seen as bullying behaviour.

- **Imbalance of power:** In incidents of bullying, 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, 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 the inability of the targeted student to remove offensive online material or escape the bullying.

2. How Bullying Behaviour Occurs

Bullying behaviour can take many forms, which can occur separately or together. These can include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

Direct bullying behaviour
Physical bullying behaviour:
- Physical bullying behaviour includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping students. It may also take the form of severe physical assault. While students can often engage in "mess fights" they can sometimes be used as a disguise for physical harassment or inflicting pain

- Personal property can be a focus of attention for bullying behaviour. This may result in damage to clothing, mobile phone or other devices, schoolbooks and other learning material or interference with a student's classroom box or bicycle. The contents of school bags and pencil cases may be scattered on the floor. Items of personal property may be defaced, broken, stolen or hidden.

Verbal bullying behaviour:
- Continual name-calling directed at a student which hurts, insults or humiliates the student should be regarded as a form of bullying behaviour. Often name-calling of this type refers to physical appearance; for example, size or clothes worn or gender identity. It can also refer to a student's accent, distinctive voice characteristics, academic ability, race or ethnic origin.

Written bullying behaviour:
- Written bullying behaviour includes writing insulting remarks about a student in public places, passing around notes about or drawings of a student.

Extortion:
- Bullying behaviour can involve extortion. Extortion is where something is obtained through force or threats.

Indirect bullying behaviour

Exclusion:
- Exclusion bullying behaviour occurs where a student is deliberately and repeatedly isolated, excluded or ignored by a student or group of students.

Relational:
- Relational bullying behaviour occurs when a student's attempts to socialise and form relationships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined. Common forms include control: "Do this or I won't be your friend anymore"; a group of students ganging up against one student; nonverbal gesturing; malicious gossip; spreading rumours about a student; giving a student the "silent treatment"; and the deliberate manipulation of friendship groups to make someone unpopular.

Online bullying behaviour

Online bullying behaviour (cyberbullying) is carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as text or direct messaging/instant messaging, social media platforms, email, apps, digital gaming sites, gaming consoles, chatrooms and other online technologies. This form of bullying behaviour can

include:

- sending or sharing nasty, insulting, offensive, and/or intimidating messages or images via text messages, emails, direct messages or other websites or apps

- posting information considered to be personal, private and sensitive without consent

- making and/or participating in fake profiles on a social network to impersonate and/or humiliate other students

- excluding or disrupting access to a student on purpose from online chat groups, access to accounts or from an online game.

Even though a message may be posted online just once by a student it can be considered bullying behaviour as it may be seen by a wide audience where it is intended to be shared or has a likelihood of being shared multiple times and is thus repeated. As online bullying uses technology to carry out bullying behaviour and does not require face-to-face contact it can occur at any time. Many types of bullying behaviour can be facilitated through online bullying. In many cases online bullying can relate to an "offline" experience with someone known to the student. This type of bullying may involve forms of sexual exploitation including but not limited to, sextortion and the nonconsensual sharing of intimate images. The sharing or threatened sharing of images without consent is a criminal offence.

A school is not expected to deal with bullying behaviour that occurs when students are not under the care or responsibility of the school. However, where this bullying behaviour has an impact in school, schools are required to **support** the students involved. Where the bullying behaviour continues in school, schools should deal with it in accordance with their Bí Cineálta Policy.

3. Behaviour that is not Bullying Behaviour

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

- Disagreements between students, or instances where students don't want to be friends or to remain friends, is not considered bullying behaviour unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others including deliberate manipulation of friendship groups

- Some students with additional educational needs may have social communication difficulties which may make them communicate their needs through behaviours that can hurt themselves or others. It is important to note that these behaviours are not deliberate or planned but, in certain situations, they are an automatic response which they can't control.

Bullying is not accidental or reckless behaviour. If the repeated harm is real for the student experiencing the behaviour but unintended by the other student, this is not bullying. These behaviours, while not defined as bullying can be distressing. Strategies to deal with inappropriate 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
Professional Learning Day for Principal and teacher	15th January 2025	Bí Cineálta seminar held in NEC
School Staff	12th May 2025	Half day closure led by Deputy Principal
Students	May and June 2025	Student Council Meetings and 3rd-6th classes working on student friendly policy
Parents	May and June 2025	Invitation for input at Parents' Association Meeting
Board of Management	April and May and 2025	Meetings re new procedures. Officially ratified on September 29th 2025
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	May and June 2025	Principal liaised with bus driver re new procedures for incidents that may arise on the bus
Date policy was approved: 29-09-2025		
Date policy was last reviewed:		

5. Preventing Bullying Behaviour

Kilmessan Mixed NS uses the KiVa Anti Bullying Programme as its primary mechanism for preventing bullying. KiVa is an anti-bullying programme that has been developed in the University of Turku, Finland, with funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture. This school has been trained in the KiVa anti bullying programme by Archways, who are licenced to deliver the KiVa programme to schools in Ireland. As a KiVa school, we use several universal actions as part of a whole school, participatory approach, with a focus on preventing bullying. All school staff have been trained in the KiVa Anti Bullying Programme and the KiVa screening process for bullying.

As a school we are fully committed to raising awareness of bullying in all its forms and to raising awareness of the effects that bullying can have on all concerned through the following educational and prevention strategies. Our school's approach to tackling and preventing bullying also takes particular account of the needs of pupils with disabilities or with Additional Educational Needs.

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

- Supervision Policy

- Acceptable Use Policy

- Special Education Teaching Policy
- Code of Behaviour.

5.1 School wide approach
Promoting a school-wide approach to the fostering of respect for all members of the school community by:
- modelling respectful behaviour in the school to all members of the school community at all times
- displaying key respect messages in and around the school
- giving constructive feedback to pupils when respectful behaviour and respectful language are absent
- acknowledging publicly, respectful behaviour when used by the children
- promoting appropriate respectful behaviour and compliance with the school rules and routines during assemblies
- providing pupils with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth and in particular to develop their self-esteem through curricular and extra-curricular initiatives and in school assemblies
- actively promoting the right of every member of the school community to feel safe and secure in school
- the promotion of the value of diversity to address issues of prejudice and stereotyping highlighting the unacceptability of bullying behaviour. Teachers will attend professional development if organised by the Department with specific focus on the training of the class teacher
- encouraging a culture of telling while also ensuring that pupils know who to tell and how to tell. In that way pupils will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance. **It will be made clear to all pupils that when they report incidents of bullying, they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.** We are a telling school
- Some students with additional educational needs may have difficulties recognising bullying behaviour has occurred. Some students with complex needs may lack awareness of social dynamics leading them to trust others implicitly. Consequently, these students may be more at risk of experiencing bullying behaviour. School Support Plans will reflect any additional learning in this area needed for these children
- ensuring that all staff watch out for signs of bullying behaviour in and around the school. This includes supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and during all extra-curricular activities. Non-teaching and ancillary staff will be encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to class teachers. Supervision will also apply to monitoring student use of communication technology within the school.

5.2 School Initiatives
- Kilmessan Mixed NS is a KiVa school. This programme is a whole school approach and includes both universal actions (prevention) and indicated actions (intervention) to stop bullying cases. The aim is to reduce bullying behaviour by influencing bystander responses.
- Assemblies are held every second month. They give the staff and principal the opportunity to promote, encourage and praise respectful and appropriate behaviour displayed by the pupils. Pupils are also given opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth and to develop their self-esteem through curricular and extra-curricular initiatives and in school assemblies
- Class teachers use different rewards and incentives to promote and encourage positive behaviour. All KNS staff try and "catch" the children being good
- Restorative Practice- Our school uses restorative practice to resolve conflict. This practice is designed to build a strong sense of community in schools, to teach interpersonal skills, to repair harm when conflict occurs and to proactively meet students' needs, so misbehaviour is less common. The 5 longstanding principles of Restorative Practice are: Relationship, Respect, Responsibility, Repair and Reintegration. Restorative practice prompts are on display in all classrooms.

- Share and Solve- Teachers regularly hold share and solve discussions in their classrooms after yard to deal with and prevent conflict
- A KiVa wall display has been created in the school to help develop children's awareness of the causes and effects of bullying. It also encourages them to take appropriate action when they believe that someone may be bullied. Members of the KiVa team are also displayed here.
- Our local community gardaí are available to come in and speak to the classes each year on aspects of bullying if deemed appropriate by the class teacher. Bullying behaviour can be considered criminal behaviour under certain circumstances and legal consequences can apply. The age of criminal responsibility in Ireland is 12 years
- Our active Parents' Association assist in developing initiatives to raise awareness of the dangers of mobile phones, internet etc.
- Whole staff professional development, if available, on bullying to ensure that all staff develop an awareness of what bullying is, how it impacts on pupils' lives and the need to respond to it-prevention and intervention
- Development and promotion of a Bullying Awareness code, *"Be a Buddy, not a Bully"* for the school to be displayed in classrooms and in common areas of the school
- An Acceptable Use Policy has been developed in the school to ensure that the access to technology within the school is strictly monitored
- At the start of every school year the Parent's Association are given a copy of the school's Anti-Bullying policy and they are informed of the official annual audit of the policy by the Board of Management

- Wellbeing Week-Every year the school runs a wellbeing week. There are daily announcements to encourage mindfulness, gratitude, kindness and respect in the school community. There are daily themes-Mindful Monday, Thankful Tuesday, Wellbeing Wednesday, Thoughtful Thursday and Friendly Friday. Classes are encouraged to do mindful meditation each day, and different classes also come together to play games on yard

- Morning Meetings- Morning Meetings were piloted in Senior classes in 2024-2025 and were hugely popular with our children and hugely successful in building relationships and community. Morning Meetings are being rolled out in all classes for 2025-2026.

5.3 Lessons
- Teaching the SPHE programme throughout the whole school using the Stay Safe, Walk Tall and RSE programme of resources
- Teaching pupils about what respectful language and respectful behaviour looks like, acts like, sounds like and feels like in class and around the school

- We deliver KiVa lessons throughout the year to students. The lessons are a key part of the universal actions of the KiVa anti-bullying programme. Unit 1 Lessons are for students from 1st to 3rd class and Unit 2 lessons are for students from 4th to 6th class. The aim is to increase socio-emotional skills and to promote the children's awareness of the importance of the group and bystanders in bullying and stopping bullying. The lessons strive to inspire empathy towards bullied students and provide safe ways to help and support the students who are treated badly. Within the lessons, bullying prevention is based on inspiring a shared sense of responsibility and changes in the norms of the whole group
- Kiva lessons are delivered approximately once a month and involve discussions, group assignments and videos, as well as active exercises, involving games and assignments.
- Teaching *The Stay Safe Programme*, throughout the whole school. This is a personal safety skills programme which seeks to enhance children's self-protection skills including their ability to recognise and cope with bullying (See SPHE Policy)
- Developing pupils' knowledge of the dangers of texting, social media and in particular the internet and

demonstrating how these forms of technology should be used in a positive way
- The school's anti-bullying policy is discussed with pupils at the start of every school year by each class teacher
- Developing the children's knowledge of our school rules. At the start of each new school year the class teachers go through the school rules with the pupils. Pupils are encouraged in a positive way to abide by the rules during the year.

6. Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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 person with responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour is the class teacher.

6.1 Procedures for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying

Investigating if bullying behaviour has occurred

Teachers are best advised to take a calm, unemotional, problem-solving approach when dealing with allegations of bullying behaviour. ***The primary aim in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved rather than to apportion blame.*** The school's procedures in dealing with and investigating bullying will be consistent with that in mind. Every effort will be made to ensure that pupils and parents/guardians understand this approach from the outset. Parents/guardians and pupils are required to co-operate 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. A school is not expected to deal with bullying behaviour that occurs when students are not under the care or responsibility of the school. However, where this bullying behaviour has an impact in school, schools are required to **support** the students involved. Where the bullying behaviour continues in school, schools should deal with it in accordance with their Bí Cineálta policy.

When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred the teacher should consider the following:
- what
- where
- when and
- why?

If a group of students is involved, each student should be engaged with individually at first. Thereafter, all students involved should be met as a group.

At the group meeting, each student should be asked for their account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's views. Each student should be supported, as appropriate, following the group meeting. It may also be helpful to ask the students involved to write down their account of the incident.

The definition of bullying provided in Chapter 2 of the Bí Cineálta procedures sets out clear criteria to help schools to identify bullying behaviour.

All interviews should be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this way.
Where possible incidents should be investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all

involved. Local arrangements, if necessary, can be made by the teacher to ensure supervision of classes while this is taking place. Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that may face them from the other members of the group after the interview by the teacher.

To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour you should consider the following questions:

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 Yes, then the behaviour is bullying behaviour and should be addressed using the Bí Cineálta Procedures.

Incidents can occur where behaviour is unacceptable and hurtful, but the behaviour is not bullying behaviour. Strategies that deal with inappropriate behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

Serious cases of bullying behaviour should be referred immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal.

When bullying behaviour has occurred.

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 class teacher must keep appropriate written records which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved. These records should be retained in the Pupils School Profile Folder. If applicable, the Kiva screening form will be completed and if it is determined that bullying has taken place, the investigation is saved to the teacher server under the KiVa Folder.
- It should be made very clear to the student how he/she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and how their actions are deemed to be bullying behaviour. Every effort should be made to try to get the student to realise that their behaviour/actions is of a bullying nature and the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied.
- Parents and guardians are an integral part of the school community and play an important role, in partnership with schools, in addressing bullying behaviour. Where bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the students involved must be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and to consult with them on the actions to be taken to address the behaviour.
- The Principal will be informed and the class teacher and/or the Principal will meet with the parents/guardians of the parties involved as appropriate. The actions being taken by the school, as per the school's Code of Behaviour, will be explained and the parents/guardians will have an opportunity of

discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports being provided to the pupils, if necessary.

- **It must also be made clear to all involved, each set of pupils and parents/guardians, that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parents/guardians and the school**
- The reporting form attached to this policy must be completed at this stage.

6.2 Sanctions to be used by the school when Bullying has occurred

There are no sanctions listed in the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary Schools. It is recommended in the procedures that the '**primary aim in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved rather than to apportion blame.**

However, sanctions will be applied as deemed appropriate and at the discretion of the relevant class teacher, Principal and/or Board of Management using those outlined in our Code of Behaviour Policy.
In cases where the school has serious concerns in relation to the bullying behaviour outside agencies may be contacted e.g.

- Bullying behaviour can be considered criminal behaviour under certain circumstances and legal consequences can apply. The age of criminal responsibility in Ireland is 12 years. An Garda Síochána is the appropriate authority to investigate alleged criminal behaviour

- 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

- The advice of other services e.g. HSE, CAMHS, NCSE and NEPS etc. may also be sought.

6.3 Support

Kilmessan Mixed NS recognises the impact that Bullying can have on all children. We are committed to supporting the child who has experienced bullying behaviour and also to working with the child who has been displaying bullying behaviour. A programme of support for pupils involved in serious bullying may be devised, depending on the context of each incident, through the following programmes of support;

- in-school supports and opportunities will be provided for the pupils affected by bullying to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop friendships and social skills and build resilience e.g.
  - Pastoral care system
  - Buddy / Peer mentoring system/ Buddy benches on yard
  - Group work such as circle time
  - Lessons covered in the Kiva anti-bullying programme from 1st to 6th class.
- If pupils require counselling or further supports the school will endeavour to liaise with the appropriate agencies to organise same. This may be for the pupil affected by bullying or the pupil involved in the bullying behaviour
- Working with the 'bully' to ensure that they recognise how their actions were having a negative impact on other children's lives. Pupils involved in serious bullying behaviour may need assistance and support on an on-going basis.

7. Determining if bullying behaviour has ceased

- The teacher must engage **again** with the students and parents involved no more than 20 school days after the initial discussion to review progress following the initial intervention

- Important factors to consider as part of the review 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

- Even though the bullying behaviour may have ceased, ongoing supervision and support may be required for both the student who has experienced the bullying behaviour as well as the student who has displayed the behaviour. It can take time for relationships to settle and for supports to take effect. In some cases, relationships may never be restored to how they were before the bullying behaviour occurred

- If the bullying behaviour has not ceased, the teacher should review the strategies used in consultation with the students and parents and agree to meet again over an agreed timeframe until the bullying behaviour has ceased

- Where it becomes clear that the student who is displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behaviour, then the school should consider using the strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour as provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour. If disciplinary sanctions are considered, this is a matter between the relevant student, their parents and the school

- The review form attached to this policy must be completed at this stage.
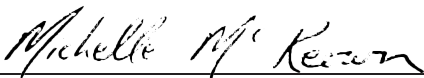
8. Oversight

The principal will present an update on bullying behaviour at each Board of Management meeting (Appendix D). 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. (Appendix E from Bí Cineálta Procedures).

Signed: _CFlahity_____ Date: ___29-09-2025_____

(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: _Michelle Mc Keian_____ Date: ___29-09-2025_____

(Principal)

KiVa Screening Forms

Appendix B- Student Friendly Bí Cineálta Policy

Appendix D- Guide to providing bullying behaviour update to Board of Management

Appendix E- Review of Bí Cineálta Policy

KiVa Themes are listed below

Unit 1	Unit 2
1. Let's get to know each other!	1. Respect is for everyone
2. Emotions	2. In a group
3. Our class – everyone is included	3. Recognise bullying
4. Difference is richness	4. Hidden forms of bullying
5. We say NO to bullying	5. Responsibly online
6. We will not join in on bullying	6. Consequences of bullying
7. The bullied child needs your support	7. The group and bullying
8. I will not be bullied	8. Communicating support
9. Literature lesson	9. Stick up for yourself
10. The KiVa contract	10. KiVa school – let's do it together!