Finn Valley College

Bí Cinealta Policy
To Prevent And Address
Bullying Behaviour

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School Ethos and Characteristic Spirit

Finn Valley College is a state, co-educational, multi-denominational post-primary school that operates under the patronage of Donegal ETB. All of our ETB schools operate in accordance with the core values of:

- Excellence in Education
- Care
- Respect
- Equality
- Community

Appendix A

Finn Valley College Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Finn Valley 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 given the opportunity to contribute to the development and review of this policy.

	Date consulted	Method of consultation
School Staff	11/11/24	Survey all staff
	14/03/25	Full Staff presentation Half School Closure
Students	11/11/24	Survey all students - went out to each year group's Google Classroom. Student Wellbeing Team (focus group)
Parents	11/11/24	Survey
Board of Management	11/11/24	Survey
Wider school community, as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	11/11/2024	
The date policy was approved: 19/06/2025		
The date policy was last reviewed:		

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

This section outlines the prevention strategies that will be implemented 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):

School Strategies for Preventing Bullying
The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyberbullying, homophobic and transphobic bullying) that will be used by the school are as follows

Aligned with the four key areas of wellbeing promotion:

Culture & Environment

- All staff foster a positive atmosphere of tolerance and mutual respect.
- All members of our school community work hard together to deliver our School Ethos. a culture where the core values of care, equality, community and respect are promoted.
- Dissemination of the Anti-bullying Policy on the school website and in the Student Journal
- Dissemination of other complementary policies, including the Code of Behaviour and the Internet Usage Policy.
- Daily 8-minute tutorial for all year groups.
- Weekly Year Group Assemblies.
- FVC Expectations
- Vigilance by all staff in and out of the classroom to bullying.
- A robust supervision system to prevent bullying in the school environment.
- Promoting a culture of telling and supporting victims of bullying.
- The Student Support Team meet weekly
- Breakfast Club
- Check and Connect programme

Student Voice & Leadership
- Student Wellbeing Team
- Student Leadership Team
- Student Council
- Peer Mentor team
- Green Schools Committee

Curriculum (Teaching & Learning)

- Explicitly teach pupils what respectful language and respectful behaviour look like, act like, sound like and feel like in class and around the school Wellbeing class.
- Teaching about bullying and cyber-bullying when the opportunity arises across the curriculum, including in subjects such as CSPE, SPHE, English, PE, and Social Education.
- The use of the Wellbeing class to highlight bullying and the school's response to it, targeted interventions if needed.
- Specific educational interventions including teaching about bullying in CPSE, SPHE and RSE, as well as teaching the acceptance of minority groups.
- The Belonging Plus Transfer and Transition programme is part of the induction programme for 1st years, which is delivered under co-ordination of the BFL teacher.
- Step Up to Secondary School program is also part of our induction to build team building & positive relationships coordinator
- The display of posters and anti-bullying messages in prominent areas, both in classrooms and around the school corridors.
- The use of an Anti-Bullying Charter in the school.
- Supporting the Reporting of Bullying by making online reporting available to students in the form of a QR code.
- FVC run an annual Anti-bullying week (in line with national dates)
- Digital Wellbeing week in FVC (in line with national SID dates)
- The use of in-school support mechanisms, including the Student Support team, the Behaviour for Learning Teacher, the HSCL and the Year Head pastoral care system.
- Outside speakers are invited to address students on bullying, safe internet usage

and cyber-bullying.
- Positive Behaviour initiative(s).
- Student Wellbeing Team: Promotes friendships, raises awareness on Anti-bullying and helps organise various events to promote inclusion and diversity.

Policy & Planning
- Finn Valley College Vision, Mission and Values Statement
- Finn Valley College Code of Behaviour
- Finn Valley College Admissions Policy
- Finn Valley College Critical Incident Policy
- Finn Valley College Child Safeguarding Statement
- Finn Valley College Membership of the Stranorlar School Completion Programme
- Finn Valley College DEIS Plan
- Finn Valley College School Guidance Plan
- Finn Valley College Student Support Team Structures and Procedures
- Finn Valley College RSE Policy
- Finn Valley College SEN Policy
- Finn Valley College Autism Classes Policy
- Finn Valley College Student Wellbeing Policy

Relationship & Partnership

- Weekly Wellbeing message - shared with all school community stakeholders weekly.
- Collaborating with local organisations to provide additional support and resources.
- SCP- School Completion Programme supports at-risk students.
- Family Resource Centre Stranorlar / Foroige/ Donegal Youth Services
- NEP's, HSCL - offer various support programs for both parents and students.
- Talks to parents on the school's policy and dealing with bullying as part of the Information evenings
- VSware System
- Parents Association
- Support the active participation of parents in school life, e.g. being a member of the Parents' Association, volunteering in the school library.

These strategies comply with Section 6.5 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.*
- Restorative Practices
- Wellbeing Programme
- SPHE programme
- SEN Provision
- Behaviour for Learning Programme
- Learner Voice
- Student Council
- Class teacher / Year Head pastoral system
- Student Support team
- Senior Prefect System
- Student Leadership Programme
- Whole School Assemblies specifically discussing Bullying
- Outside agencies delivering programmes on Cyberbullying and Internet Safety
- We don't want this video campaign
- Prize giving affirms and rewards 'Care, Respect, Equality and Community

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):

- **Supervision** on corridors, outside and canteen area between classes and at all breaks
- and lunchtimes and at the end of the day
- **Code of Behaviour:** Establishes clear expectations for student conduct (to be
- reviewed in respect of Bí Cineálta).
- Supervision at toilet areas at all break and lunchtimes
- Lunchtime activities & clubs each lunchtime for students
- Library space for students each lunchtime as a quiet space
- SEN Provision - SET room /ASD room - safe space
- Mentors and class leaders

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

All members of the Finn Valley College school Community.

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):

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):

The whole school community has a responsibility to prevent and address bullying behaviour. The following approach and steps are based on the information contained in Chapter 6 of the Bì Cinealta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.

Approach

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

When addressing bullying behaviour, the teachers with responsibility will:
- Ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour feels listened to and reassured
- Seek to ensure the privacy of those involved
- Conduct all conversations with sensitivity
- Consider the age and ability of the students 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.

Stage 1 - Identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred

Bullying is defined in Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying and Bì Cinealta: 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 Bì Cinealta procedures.*

Where bullying behaviour is suspected, parents/guardians report it to the Tutor teacher.

To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour, we will 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 the behaviour should be addressed using the Bì Cinealta Procedures.

Note: One-off incidents may be considered bullying behaviour in certain circumstances. A single hurtful message posted on social media can be considered bullying behaviour as it has a high likelihood of being shared multiple times and thus becomes a repeated behaviour.

If the answer to any of these questions is **No,** then the behaviour is not bullying behaviour. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred (Stage 1), teachers should consider what, where, when and why, as follows: (Note that these steps are required, as outlined in the procedures):

- Where one student is reported to be involved, the student should be engaged individually at first.
- Thereafter, this student and the student who is reported to be experiencing the bullying behaviour should be met together.
- If a group of students is involved, each student should be engaged individually at first.
- Thereafter, all students involved and the student who is reported to be experiencing the bullying behaviour 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 be helpful to ask the students involved to write down their account of the incident(s).
- Parents will be supported by the school, if needed, with recommendations for useful resources/guides to help them support their children

Stage 2: Where bullying behaviour has occurred

- Parents 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.
- It is important to listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation.
- All bullying behaviour will be recorded.
- This will include the form and type of behaviour if known (see FVC Appendix C form), 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
- The record should be shared with the Principal.

Stage 3: Follow up where bullying behaviour has occurred

- The teacher must engage with the students involved and their parents again no more than 20 school days after the initial engagement. Important factors to consider as part of this engagement are the nature of the bullying behaviour, the effectiveness of the strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and the relationship between the students involved.
- The teacher 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, along with the date that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased, should also be recorded.
- Any engagement with external services/supports should also be noted.
- Ongoing supervision and support may be needed for the students involved, even where bullying behaviour has ceased.

- If the bullying behaviour has not ceased, the teacher should review the strategies used in consultation with the students involved and their parents. A timeframe should be agreed upon for further engagement until the bullying behaviour has ceased.
- If it becomes clear that the student who is displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behaviour, then consideration should be given to 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.
- If a parent(s) is not satisfied with how the bullying behaviour has been addressed by the school, following the Bí Cinealta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, they should be referred to the school's complaints procedures (available on our website).
- If a parent is dissatisfied with how a complaint has been handled, they may make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children if they believe that the school's actions have had a negative effect on the

School Supports for students affected by bullying

The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows:
- Students who report bullying are listened to sensitively, and their concerns are treated with the importance and respect they merit.
- Incidents are reported to the Pastoral Care Team, and an appointment is made for the student(s) to discuss emerging issues.
- Parental contact may be invoked depending on the seriousness of the incident.
- Other interventions may be put in place to improve the self-esteem and confidence of the student affected by the behaviour, including student mentoring, referral to outside agencies, targeted friendship development initiatives and so forth.
- The student involved in the bullying may be referred to counselling or another suitable intervention to address their behaviour and, in particular his/her relational behaviour.
- Students may be encouraged to become involved in team-building activities within or outside of the curriculum.
- Subject and class teachers may be informed so that they are sensitive and responsive to the ongoing needs of all students involved.
- These supports comply with Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*

Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and PostPrimary Schools

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*.
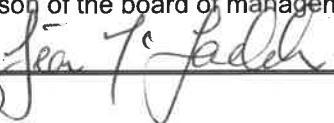
Section D: Oversight

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: _____   Date: 19/6/2025
(Chairperson of the board of management)

Signed: _____   Date: 19/6/2025
(Principal)