



Assumption Secondary School

Bí Cineálta Policy



Appendix A: Assumption Secondary School Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Assumption Secondary School has adopted the following policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

This policy fully complies with the requirements of *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2024*.

The Board of Management acknowledges that bullying behaviour interferes with the rights of the child as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. We all, as a school community, have a responsibility to work together to prevent and address bullying behaviour and to deal with the negative impact of bullying behaviour.

We are committed to ensuring that all students who attend our school are kept safe from harm and that the wellbeing of our students is at the forefront of everything that we do. We recognise the negative impact that bullying behaviour can have on the lives of our students and we are fully committed to preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.

We confirm that we will, in accordance with our obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the harassment of students or staff on any of the nine grounds specified: gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.

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 behavior

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	28 th March 2025	E-Mail correspondence.
	4 th April 2025	DES approved half day in-service facilitated by the Principal & Deputy Principal.
Students	3 rd April 2025	First Year Assembly with power point presentation & consultative discussion.
	3 rd April 2025	Second Year Assembly (as above).
	31 st March 2025	Third Year Assembly (as above).
	4 th April 2025	Transition Year Assembly (as above).
	1 st April 2025	Fifth Year Assembly (as above).
	2 nd April 2025	Sixth Year Assembly (as above).
	4 th April-16 th May 2025	Student (Individual) design opportunity
Parents	2 nd May 2025	Written communication with parents.
	20 th May 2025	Closing for communication re policy content.
Board of Management	28 th March 2025	Documentation shared with members (e-mail)
	16 th May 2025	Documentation shared with members (e-mail)
	21 st May 2025	Presentation of policy and ratification.
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	Not applicable	
Date policy was approved: 21 st May 2025		
Date policy was last reviewed: Anti Bullying Policy reviewed on the 9 th of October 2024.		

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.

Our school culture and climate is welcoming of and values difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity and respect for all members of our school community. We encourage pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment and we promote respectful relationships across the school community.

The implementation of education, school policies and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) helps foster and enhance self-esteem, build empathy, respect and resilience in all our students and explicitly addresses the issues of bullying behaviour.

Prevention of online bullying behaviour (Cyber bullying).

Technology and social media have provided many positive opportunities for entertainment, social engagement and education. Technology is a part of life that can impact even the youngest members of society. However, the increase in the use of technology has led to students becoming increasingly vulnerable to cyber bullying or unacceptable online behaviour.

Assumption Secondary School proactively addresses these challenges (many of the strategies detailed below will have relevance under all headings that follow):

- Whole staff professional development on bullying (to include cyber bullying) to ensure that all develop an awareness of what bullying is, how it impacts on students' lives and the need for prevention, intervention and effective response.
- School wide awareness on all aspects of bullying, to include pupils, parent(s)/guardian(s).
- Involvement of the Student Representative Council in contributing to a safe school environment, leading student support activities and encouraging a culture of peer respect and support.
- Engaging the Student Form (non elected Student Voice) and Bí Cineálta student representative to assist in 'Preventing Bullying Behaviour (to include cyber bullying)' initiatives.
- Scheduling regular year group assemblies held by the Year Head and/or the Deputy Principal/Principal to acknowledge positive student behaviour and to promote the characteristic spirit of the school.
- By promoting digital literacy, digital citizenship, and fostering safe online environments.
- Teaching students about the importance of responsible online behavior and developing respectful and kind relationships online.
- Implementing the SPHE, CSPE and RSE curricula.
- Continuous Professional Development for staff in delivering these programmes.
- Student Support Team engagement.
- Communicating and implementing the school's 'Internet Acceptable Use Policy' for technology.
- Level 4 content filtering is used on the school's broadband network. The filter blocks access to websites belonging to the personal websites category and websites such as Facebook belonging to the Social Networking category.
- Referring to appropriate online behaviour as part of the standards of behaviour in the Code of Behaviour.
- Promoting online safety events and /or information for parents who are responsible for overseeing their children's activities online.
- Holding an Internet safety day and/or guest speakers to reinforce awareness around appropriate online behavior.
- FUSE Programme student engagement
- Delivery of Garda programmes that cover issues around personal safety and cyber-bullying.
- The school will consider the additional needs of AEN pupils with regard to programme implementation and the development of skills and strategies to enable all pupils to respond appropriately.

Preventing homophobic/transphobic bullying behaviour.

All students including gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students, have a right to feel safe and supported at school. We endeavor to create and generate safe spaces and places for LGBTQ+ young people.

Strategies to prevent homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour include the following:

- Implementing the SPHE, CSPE and RSE curricula.
- Student Support Team engagement.

- Consistently tackling the use of discriminatory and derogatory language in the school.
- Encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
- Challenging gender stereotypes
- Providing information /conducting workshops and/or seminars for students, school staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of homophobic bullying behavior
- Encouraging students to speak up if they experience or witness homophobic behavior.
- Supporting national awareness initiatives.
- Engagement of relevant external agencies.

Preventing racist bullying behaviour.

Our school is culturally diverse. We foster a school culture which embraces and celebrates this diversity.

Strategies to prevent racist bullying behavior include the following:

- Having the cultural diversity of the school visible and on display so as students can 'see themselves' in the school environment.
- Hosting annual Multi-cultural celebrations.
- Providing information/conducting workshops and seminars for students, school staff and parents to raise awareness of racism.
- Encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities.
- Encouraging students to report if they experience racist behaviour.
- Encouraging bystanders to report if they witness racist behaviour.
- Providing advice/supports to school staff to respond to the needs of students for whom English is an additional language and for communicating with their parents.
- Providing advice/supports to school staff to support students from ethnic minorities, including Traveller and Roma students, and to encourage communication with their parents
- Inviting speakers from diverse ethnic backgrounds where possible/appropriate.
- Consistently tackling the use of discriminatory and derogatory language in the school.
- Ensuring that library reading material and textbooks represent appropriate lived experiences of students and adults from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.
- Engagement in national initiatives to promote the celebration of diversity and to challenge racism and discrimination.

Preventing sexist bullying behaviour.

Assumption Secondary School is committed to providing an environment where there is gender equality and all members of the school community are treated with dignity and respect in an environment which is free from sexual bullying behaviour.

Strategies to prevent sexist bullying behaviour include the following:

- Ensuring members of staff model respectful behaviour and treat students equally irrespective of their sex.
- Consistently tackling the use of discriminatory and derogatory language in the school.
- Student Support Team engagement.
- Ensuring all students have the same opportunities to engage in school activities irrespective of their sex.
- Celebrating diversity at school and acknowledging the contributions of all students.
- Providing information/organising awareness campaigns, workshops and presentations on gender equality and respect
- Encouraging parents to reinforce these values of respect at home.

Preventing sexual harassment.

Our focus is on education and awareness. There is a zero tolerance approach to sexual harassment and it is not dismissed as teasing or banter.

Strategies to prevent sexual harassment include the following:

- Using the updated SPHE specifications at post primary level to teach students about healthy relationships and how to treat each other with respect and kindness.
- Student Support Team engagement.
- Consistently tackling the use of discriminatory and derogatory language in the school.
- Promoting positive role models within the school community.
- Challenging gender stereotypes that can contribute to sexual harassment.

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

School supervision is used to help prevent and address bullying behaviour. All reasonable measures are taken to ensure the safety of students attending school or attending school activities.

- Effective classroom management, clear 'Classroom Procedures' & school policies are used to help prevent and address bullying behaviour.
- Supervision rosters include before and after school supervision as well as break and lunchtime supervision periods.
- Areas to be supervised and duties are assigned to supervising staff.
- Vigilance is expected and supervising staff are not permitted to use mobile phones while on duty.
- Supervising staff action response to incidents as required in line with the Code of Behaviour, Bí Cineáta Policy, Child Protection Policy, Child Safeguarding and Risk Assessment and other relevant school policies and procedures.
- Non-teaching and ancillary staff are encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers.
- Students can help identify 'Hot spots' and 'Hot times' on the school premises and during the school day.
- Supervision also applies to monitoring student use of communication technology within the school.
- The school has CCTV cameras and a CCTV Policy.
- Organised clubs and activities are scheduled during break times. Clubs are run in a voluntary capacity and accommodate a range of student interests.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

- 1st Year
- Junior Year Head for 2nd & 3rd Years
- Transition Year Co-coordinator
- Senior Year Head 5th & 6th Years.

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:

Determining if bullying behaviour has occurred:

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.

To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour the following questions are considered:

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 Bí Cineálta Procedures.

Note: One off incidents may be considered bullying 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 teachers should consider 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 be helpful to ask the students involved to write down their account of the incident(s).

The approach to be taken to address identified bullying behaviour:

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 teachers should:

- Seek to ensure the privacy of those involved
- Conduct all conversations with sensitivity
- Ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour feels listened to and reassured. It is important to listen to the views of the student as to how best to address the situation.
- Consider the age and ability of the students involved
- Take action in a timely manner
- Inform parents of those involved .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 will 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

- A record should be kept of the engagement with all involved. This document will detail the following information:
 1. The form and type of bullying behaviour
 2. Where and when it took place
 3. The date of the initial engagement with students involved.
 4. The date of the initial engagement with parents of students involved.
 5. The views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behavior.

Follow up and review of progress 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.
- 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 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 the school 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, in accordance with the Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools they should be referred to the school's complaints procedures.
- 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 student.

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

- The Student Support Team will identify in-school supports and opportunities for students affected by bullying to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop friendships and social skills and build resilience.
- Ongoing supervision and support may be needed for the students involved even where bullying behaviour has ceased.
- Guidance support sessions will be scheduled.
- If pupils require counselling or further supports the school will endeavour to liaise with the appropriate agencies to organise same.
- All of the above will apply for students who experience, witness or who have displayed bullying behaviour.

External support groups/organizations (selected)

National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS): The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) of the Department of Education provides a comprehensive; school based psychological service to all primary and post primary schools to support the wellbeing, academic, social and emotional development of all students. The NEPS model of service is a consultative, capacity building model, in which there is a balance between casework and support and development work.

The psychological services which NEPS provides for students are differentiated in terms of whether the service involves the psychologist's direct involvement with the student, known as Direct Casework, or involves the psychologist working through teachers or teachers/parents to provide a psychological service for a student, known as Indirect Casework. NEPS staff can support schools with issues around bullying through this direct or indirect case work service.

In relation to bullying, NEPS psychologists often advise schools on best practice to prevent and address bullying when issues arise in schools and/or provide training in preventative initiatives, such as developing social and emotion skills, social skills, executive function skills, promoting resilience and skills in relationship repair between peers as appropriate.

Oide: Oide is the Department of Education's support service for schools, and it supports professional learning for primary and post primary school leaders and teachers in recognised schools and centres for education.

Oide fosters a culture of continuing professional learning among school leaders and teachers encouraging lifelong learning, reflective and enquiry based practices. The work of Oide contributes to school improvement by providing high quality professional learning experiences, supports and resources relating to curricular developments, broader educational goals and national priorities, such as wellbeing which includes preventing and addressing bullying. Oide provides continuing professional learning support to schools to support implementation of the Bí Cineálta procedures.

Webwise: Webwise is the online safety initiative of the Department of Education and is co funded by the European Commission. Webwise promotes safer, better internet use through awareness raising and education initiatives targeting teachers, students and parents. Webwise develops and disseminates resources that help teachers integrate digital citizenship and online safety into teaching and learning in their schools. Webwise also provides information, advice, and tools to parents to support their engagement in their children's online lives. With the help of the Webwise Youth Advisory Panel, Webwise develops youth oriented awareness raising resources and training programmes that promote digital citizenship and address topics such as online wellbeing and cyberbullying.

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.

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.