Brackloon NS Bí Cineálta Policy to prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Brackloon NS has adopted the following policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

The 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 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 obligation 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 or power in relationships between two people or groups of people in society"*. The detailed definition is provided in Chapter 2 of the Bí Cineálta procedures.

Each school is required to develop and implement a Bí Cineálta policy that sets out how the school community prevents and addresses bullying behaviour. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour that is not bullying behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

Section A:
Development/review of our Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

All members of our school community were provided with the opportunity to input into the development/review of this policy.

	Date consulted	Method of Consultation
School staff		
Students		
Parents		
Board of Management		
Wider school community as appropriate, for example bus drivers		
Date policy was approved		
Date policy was reviewed		

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

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

The document outlines several prevention strategies to address bullying behaviour in schools. These strategies are categorized under four key area: Culture and Environment, Curriculum (Teaching and Learning), Policy on Planning, and Relationships and Partnerships. Here are the main prevention strategies.

Culture and Environment
- All staff will promote and model the four key values of **Respect, Empathy, Trust and Integrity.** Teachers will help the children to understand and explore these values through Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) lessons and continued wholeschool focus on the Le Chéile Charter.
- Staff will always be encouraged to contribute towards the development of a sense of community within their own classroom and throughout the school.
  They will endeavour to
    o Promote the value of diversity
    o Address prejudice and stereotyping
    o Highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour.

- **Positive School Culture:** Foster a positive and inclusive school culture where students and staff feel safe, connected and supported.
- **Telling Environment:** Encourage a 'telling' environment where students feel comfortable reporting bullying. Children can report bullying to the teacher at any

time but a formal anti bullying survey will be carried out with pupils from 2nd to 6th classes once a month. Surveys will be collected by a designated staff member. Each teacher will go through the survey and any report of bullying behaviour will be investigated by the class teacher of those involved and reported to the principal where necessary. If a bullying incident is established, the teacher will talk with the perpetrator and assist him/her to understand how his/her behaviour affects others.

- **Trusted Adult:** Promote the concept of a trusted adult whom students can approach to report bullying.
- **Safe Physical Spaces:** Create safe physical spaces in schools with good lighting, clear lines of sight, and reduces blind spots.
- **Supervision:** Ensure appropriate supervision during school hours and activities.

Types of Bullying Beahaviour that can occur

1. **Physical aggression:** This behaviour includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping people. It may also take the form of severe physical assault. While pupils often engage in 'mess fights', they can sometimes be used as a disguise for physical harassment or inflicting pain.
2. **Intimidation:** Some bullying behaviour takes the form of intimidation. It may be based on the use of very aggressive body language with the voice being used as a weapon. A facial expression which conveys aggression and/or dislike can be particularly upsetting.
3. **Isolation/exclusion and other relational bullying:** This occurs where a certain person is deliberately isolated, excluded or ignored by some or all of the class group. This practice is usually initiated by the person engaged in bullying behaviour and can be difficult to detect. It may be accompanied by writing insulting remarks about the pupil in public places, by passing around notes about or drawings of the pupil or by whispering insults about them loud enough to be heard. Relational bullying occurs when a person's attempts to socialise and form relationships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined. One of the most common forms includes control: "Do this or I won't be your friend anymore"(implied or stated); a group ganging up against one person (girl or boy); non-verbal gesturing; malicious gossip; spreading rumours about a person or giving them the "silent treatment".
4. **Cyber-bullying:** This type of bullying is increasingly common and is continuously evolving. It is bullying carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as text, social network sites, e-mail, instant messaging (IM), apps, gaming sites, chat-rooms and other online technologies. Being the target of inappropriate or hurtful messages is the most common form of online bullying. As cyber-bullying uses technology to perpetrate bullying behaviour and does not require face-to-face contact, cyber-bullying can occur at any time (day or night). Many forms of bullying can be facilitated through cyber-bullying. For example, a target may be sent homophobic text messages or pictures may be posted with negative comments about a person's sexuality, appearance etc.
5. **Name-calling:** Persistent name-calling directed at the same individual(s) which hurts, insults or humiliates should be regarded as a form of bullying behaviour. Often name-calling of this type refers to physical appearance, e.g. size or clothes worn. Accent or distinctive voice characteristics may attract negative attention. Academic ability can also provoke name calling. This tends to operate at two extremes. There are those who are singled out for attention because they are perceived to be weak academically. At the other extreme there are those who because they are perceived as high achievers are also targeted.
6. **Damage to property:** Personal property can be the focus of attention for bullying behaviour. This may result in damage to clothing, mobile phone or other devices, school books and other learning material. 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.

7. **Extortion:** Demands for money may be made, often accompanied by threats (sometimes carried out in the event of the targeted pupil not delivering on the demand). A pupil may also be forced into theft of property for delivery to another who is engaged in bullying behaviour.

Isolated or once-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour, including a once-off offensive or hurtful text message or other private messaging, do not fall within the definition of bullying and should be dealt with as appropriate in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour.

However, in the context of this policy, placing a once-off offensive or hurtful public message, image or statement on a social network site or other public forum where that message, image or statement can be viewed and/or repeated by other people will be regarded as bullying behaviour. Negative behaviour that does not meet this definition of bullying will be dealt with in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour.

Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)

- **Collaborative Learning:** Promote teaching and learning that is collaborative and respectful.
- **SPHE and RSE Curricula:** Use the Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) curricula to foster well-being, self-confidence, and sense of belonging.
- **Diversity and Inclusion:** Incorporate diversity and inclusion topics in various subjects like Religious Education and SPGE.
- Every effort will be made, through **curricular and extra-curricular programmes**, to provide pupils with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth.
- The **Stay Safe Programme**, taught in all classes in our school each year, is a personal safety skills programme which seeks to enhance children's self-protection skills including their ability to recognise and cope with bullying.

Specific Strategies for Preventing Different Types of Bullying

- **Cyberbullying**: Promote digital literacy and responsible online behaviour through the SPHE curriculum and Digital Media Literacy curriculum
- **Homophobic/Transphobic Bullying:** Maintain an inclusive environment, challenge gender stereotypes, and conduct awareness workshops.
- **Racist Bullying:** Foster a culture where diversity is celebrated, provide supports for students from ethnic minorities, and conduct anti-racism workshops.
- **Sexist Bullying:** Focus on gender equality, model respectful behaviour and organize awareness campaigns.
- **Sexual Harassment:** Promote a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment, use SPHE specifications to teach about healthy relationships and challenge gender stereotypes.

These strategies aim to create a supportive and respectful school environment that actively prevents and addresses bullying behaviour.

Policy and Planning
- **Wellbeing Policies:** Ensure that the wellbeing of the school community is at the heart of school policies and plans.
- **Engagement in Policy Development:** Involve students, parents and staff in the development and implementation of school policies.
- **Professional Learning:** Engage in appropriate teacher professional learning courses to support the prevention and addressing of bullying behaviour. 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 Policies
- **Appropriate Supervision:** Schools are required to take all reasonable measures to ensure the safety of their students and to supervise students when they are attending school or school activities.
- **Visibility of School Staff:** Ensure the visibility of school staff who are supervising during break times, including yard duty.
- **Organised Activities:** Some schools offer a mix of organized activities during break times to accommodate a range of preferences and interests, which can help prevent bullying behaviour.

Monitoring Policies
- **Bullying Behaviour Update to Board of Management:** The principal must present an update on the number of incidents of bullying behaviour at each Board of Management meeting. This update should include:
  - The number of incidents reported since the last meeting.
  - The number of ongoing incidents.
  - The total number of incidents reported since the beginning of the school year.
  - Trends and patterns identified.
  - Strategies used to prevent the bullying behaviour.
  - Any serious incidents that have had a serious adverse impact on a student.
  - Any additional support needed from the Board of Management.
  - Whether the school's Bí Cineálta policy requires urgent review.

- **Annual Review of Bí Cineálta Poloicy:** The school's Bí Cineálta policy must be reviewed each calendar year or as soon as practicable if the Board of Management determines that a review is warranted. This review should be completed with input from the school community, including the Board of Management, staff, students, parents and members of the wider school community as appropriate.

- **Recording Incidents of Bullying Behaviour:** All incidents of bullying behaviour must be recorded. The record should document the form and type of bullying behaviour, where and when it took place, and the date of the initial engagement with the students and their parents. The actions and supports agreed to address the bullying behaviour should also be documented.

- **Engagement with Students and Parents:** Schools must engage with students who have experienced bullying behaviour.

Relationships and Partnerships
- **Awareness Initiatives:** Conduct age-appropriate awareness initiatives on the causes and impacts of bullying.
- **Student Participation:** Support the active participation of students in school life.
- **Parent Engagement:** Encourage active participation of parents in school life, including those who may face barriers to engagement. Bullying prevention and awareness measures will also focus on educating pupils on appropriate on-line behaviour, how to stay safe on line and also on developing a culture of reporting any concerns about cyber bullying. Parents are advised of the following resources pertaining to Internet safety.
- Anti-bullying procedures for Primary and Post Primary schools published by the Department of Education and Skills.
- Get With It – A Guide to Cyber Bullying published by the Office for Internet Safety – www.internetsafety.ie

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

All teachers will have responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour.

When bullying behaviour occurs, the following procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying will be followed by all members of the school community.

1. 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 Bí Cineálta procedures): The following will also outline the approaches to support those who experience, witness and display bullying behaviour (see Chapter 6 of Bí Cineálta procedures).

2. All reports including anonymous reports of bullying will be investigated and dealt with by the class teacher. As the emphasis is on 'Reform and Blame' pupils will gain confidence in reporting bullying behaviour. Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, SNA's, caretakers and cleaners will be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them or mentioned to them to the class teacher. The incident will be recorded by the teacher (on Aladdin data base) and the situation will be monitored.

3. The class teacher and/or principal teacher will investigate a reported incident of bullying behaviour. The primary aim for the class teacher/principal in investigating and dealing with the bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationship of the parties involved rather than to apportion blame. Ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour is heard and reassured. In addressing the bullying the person investigating will:
   - 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.

4. In investigating and dealing with bullying, the class teacher and/or principal teacher will exercise her/his professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved.

5. The class teacher investigating bullying behaviour will take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents/guardians.

6. Incidents will generally be investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.

7. All interviews will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved may be asked for information in relation to an incident or set of incidents.

8. When investing incidents of bullying behaviour, the class teacher will seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This will be done in a calm manner, that sets and example for children in relation to appropriate methods for dealing effectively with conflict in a non-aggressive manner.

9. If a group is involved, each member will be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved will be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member will be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements.

10. Each member of a group will be supported through the possible pressures that may face them from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher.

11. Individuals may be asked to provide written information in relation to bullying incidents in the school.

12. In cases where it has been determined by the class teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the class teacher will reassure the child who was bullied that the issue will be dealt with and his/her parents informed.

13. Where the class teacher has determined that a pupil has engaged in bullying behaviour the following steps will be taken:
    - It will be made clear to the child how he/she is in breach of the school's Anti-Bullying Policy and efforts will be made to help him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the victim.
    - The pupil who has engaged in the bullying behaviour will then be given a chance to reform. He/she will be asked for a commitment not to engage in this type of behaviour again. If the teacher investigating the bullying feels it is necessary, the parents of the child who engaged in bullying behaviour may be informed at this stage.
    - Should the behaviour occur again, the child will meet with the principal and the child's parents will be informed. It will be made clear to both parents and child that the matter will be reported to the Board of Management and that sanctions as outlined in the Code of Behaviour and Discipline may be invoked.

14. There may be cases where a student's behaviour compromises the safety of other children, staff of visitors to the school. If this behaviour is viewed as a serious risk to the safety of others then an immediate suspension is warranted.

15. It will be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parents) by the principal teacher that, in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a

private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parents and the school.

16. All bullying behaviour will be recorded. The record should document
    - The form of bullying behaviour
    - Where and when it took place
    - Date of the initial engagement with students and parents
    - Include the views of the parents and student regarding the actions being taken to address bullying behaviour
    - It should document the review with the parents and student to determine whether or not bullying behaviour has ceased.

17. In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addresses, the class teacher and the principal teacher must, as part of their professional judgement, take the following factors into account.
    - Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased
    - Whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable
    - Whether the relationships between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable
    - Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the school Principal or Deputy Principal.

18. Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with the bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents must be referred as appropriate to the school's complaints procedures which is available from the school.

19. In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

20. 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.

21. NEPS, Tusla, Oide, Webwise, DCU Anti Bullying Centre and the National Parents Council all offer supports for the victim and the child engaging in bullying behaviour.

Section D: Oversight

The Principal will present an update on bullying behaviour at each Board of Management meeting. The 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 (See Bí Cineálta Appendix B) 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:_____

(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed:_____   Date:_____

(Principal)