

# Youthreach Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

## Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The advisory committee of Youthreach Ballina 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 Centres 2024*.

The Advisory Committee 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 Youthreach 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 learners who attend our Youthreach centre are kept safe from harm and that the wellbeing of our learners is at the forefront of everything that we do. We recognise the negative impact that bullying behaviour can have on the lives of our learners, 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 learners 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 Centres* 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 Youthreach is required to develop and implement a Bí Cineálta policy that sets out how the Youthreach community prevents and addresses bullying behaviour. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour that is not bullying behaviour are provided for within the Youthreach's Code of Behaviour.

## Section A: Development/review of our Bí Cineálta policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

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

|                                                            | Date consulted        | Method of consultation    |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Youthreach Staff                                           | Various dates in 2026 | Staff Meetings / Email    |
| Learners                                                   | Various dates in 2026 | VPG Class Discussions     |
| Parents/guardians                                          | Various dates in 2026 | Parent / Teacher Meetings |
| Committee of Management                                    | 25/6/2026             | Advisory Board Meeting    |
| Wider Youthreach community as appropriate, for example PSS |                       |                           |
| Date policy was approved: 25/6/2026                        |                       |                           |
| Date policy was last reviewed: 25/6/2026                   |                       |                           |

## Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

This section sets out the prevention strategies that will be used by Youthreach Ballina. 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 Advisory Committee of Youthreach Ballina, recognises the profoundly serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of pupils and is therefore fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour:

### Culture and Environment

- A positive and inclusive Youthreach culture and environment which is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity in line with our Ethos/Core Values.
- Is a 'telling' environment which encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents

of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment.

- Promotes and models respectful relationships across the Youthreach community.
- Sets high standards and expectations.
- A centre-wide approach where each member of staff takes a consistent approach to effective observation and addressing of bullying behaviour.
- Promoting kindness and inclusion among peers.
- Encouraging parents/guardians to be active partners in their child's education.
- Fostering an environment where bullying is not tolerated through promoting empathy and respect.
- A 'trusted adult' who reassures and supports learners they have done the right thing by reporting bullying behaviour. This is facilitated through mentoring.
- Creating safe, visible physical spaces in Youthreach.

### **Curriculum - Teaching and Learning**

- A shared understanding of what bullying is, its impact, and bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour.
- Implementation of education and prevention strategies, including awareness raising measures that:
- Build empathy, respect, and resilience in pupils.
- Promote inclusion and diversity.
- Explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including homophobic, transphobic, racist, sexist bullying, and sexual harassment as appropriate.
- Provide teaching and learning in SPHE that equips learners with skills to build positive relationships, resolve conflicts, and recognise and deal with bullying behaviour.
- SPHE Curricular Programmes to include:
- Online safety, cyber bullying, RSE, healthy and unhealthy relationships, communication, help seeking, etc.
- SPHE methodologies to include:
- Group work/Collaboration.
- Role-play, acting out scenarios, case studies.
- Extra-curricular activities to develop positive self-worth.
- Co-operative games /teamwork in sporting activities.

### **Policy and Planning**

- Bí Cineálta Policy developed, communicated, implemented, and reviewed in consultation with all partners.
- Consistent recording, investigation, and follow-up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies).
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the Bí Cineálta Policy.
- Learner Friendly Bí Cineálta Policy.
- Code of Behaviour.

- Child Safeguarding Statement.
- Acceptable Use Policy.
- Digital media policy
- Mobile phone policy
- SPHE & RSE Policy.
- SEN Policy.
- Youthreach outings/trips policy
- Wellbeing Statement and Framework for Practice.
- Health and Safety Policy Statement.
- Effective supervision and monitoring of learners within Youthreach and on all activities, trips, associated with the centre.
- Professional Development and other such relevant supports for staff.

### **Relationships and Partnerships**

- Youthreach has a strong focus on interpersonal connections between staff and learners, staff and parents/guardians and learners with their fellow learners.
- Workshops and seminars for learners, Youthreach staff, and parents/guardians to raise awareness of the impact of bullying.
- Promoting acts of kindness and activities that build empathy, respect, and resilience e.g., Well Being Week.
- Culture Day.
- Teaching problem-solving skills.
- Critical Thinking Skills.
- Promoting self-awareness and awareness of others.
- Encouraging peer mentoring
- Using restorative practices.
- Mentoring.

### **Preventing Cyber Bullying Behaviour**

Technology and social media have provided many positive opportunities for entertainment, social engagement, and education. However, the increase in the use of technology has led to learners becoming increasingly vulnerable to cyberbullying or unacceptable online behaviour.

Youthreach strives to proactively address these challenges by promoting digital literacy, digital citizenship, and fostering safe online environments.

Strategies to prevent cyberbullying behaviour include:

- Implementing the SPHE curriculum.
- Implementing the Digital Media Literacy curriculum which teaches learners about responsible online behaviour and digital citizenship.
- Having regular conversations with learners about developing respectful and kind relationships online.
- communicating the Youthreach acceptable use policy for technology.
- Referring to appropriate online behaviour as part of the standards of behaviour in the Code of Behaviour.

- Promoting online safety events for parents/guardians who are responsible for overseeing their children's activities online.
  - Holding an Internet safety day to reinforce awareness around appropriate online behaviour.
- Providing workshops for learners around internet safety.

### **Preventing Homophobic/Transphobic Bullying Behaviour**

All learners including gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender learners, have a right to feel safe and supported in Youthreach.

Strategies to prevent homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour include:

- Maintaining an inclusive physical environment such as by displaying relevant posters.
- Encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities.
- Challenging gender stereotypes.
- Conducting workshops and seminars for learners and staff to raise awareness of the impact of homophobic bullying behaviour.
- Encouraging learners to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour.

### **Preventing Racist Bullying Behaviour**

Strategies to prevent racist bullying behaviour include:

- Fostering a Youthreach culture where diversity is celebrated and where learners "see themselves" in their Youthreach environment.
- Having the cultural diversity of Youthreach visible and on display.
- Creating an awareness of racism through SPHE.
- Encouraging peer support and empathy building activities.
- Encouraging learners to report when they witness racist behaviour.
- Providing supports to Youthreach staff to respond to the needs of learners for whom English is an additional language and for communicating with their parents/guardians.
- Providing supports to Youthreach staff to support learners from ethnic minorities, including Traveller and Roma learners, and to encourage communication with their parents/guardians.
- Creating an awareness of diverse ethnic backgrounds.
- Ensuring that teaching and learning materials represent appropriate lived experiences of learners and adults from different national, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds.

### **Preventing Sexist Bullying Behaviour**

Strategies to prevent sexist bullying behaviour include:

- Ensuring members of staff model respectful behaviour and treat learners equally irrespective of their sex.
- Ensuring all learners have the same opportunities to engage in Youthreach activities irrespective of their sex.
- Celebrating diversity at Youthreach and acknowledging the contribution of all learners.

- Encouraging parents/guardians to reinforce these values of respect at home.

### **Preventing Sexual Harassment**

Youthreach Ballina promotes a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment. It strives to support this through a focus on education, awareness, and clear enforceable policies. Sexual harassment should never be dismissed as teasing or banter.

Strategies to prevent sexual harassment include:

- Promoting positive role models within the Youthreach community.
- Using the SPHE curriculum/specification to teach about healthy relationships and how to treat each other with respect and kindness.
- Challenging gender stereotypes that can contribute to sexual harassment.
- Encouraging bystanders to report when they witness sexual harassment.

Youthreach Ballina has the following supervision and monitoring policies in place to prevent and address bullying behaviour (see Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

- Learners are supervised at all times including breakfast clubs, breaks and lunch time.
- Staff are deployed at strategic positions around Youthreach, on buses, walks, trips etc to ensure adequate supervision and monitoring of interactions.
- Learners are accompanied by at least two staff members on Youthreach trips.
- Staff are very aware of the difficulties that having learners over and under 18 in the same groups and remain vigilant to ensure appropriate interactions.
- Mentoring can be a useful tool to gain information on bullying behaviour or identify learners who are having a difficult time.
- Code of behaviour is key.
- If patterns of inappropriate behaviour are detected these are investigated and documented, as relevant.

## Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

All staff have responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour. If it is a child safeguarding issue, the following staff will be responsible for addressing the bullying behaviour:

**Damian Evans – Youthreach Co-Ordinator/DLP, Natasha Walsh – DDLP**

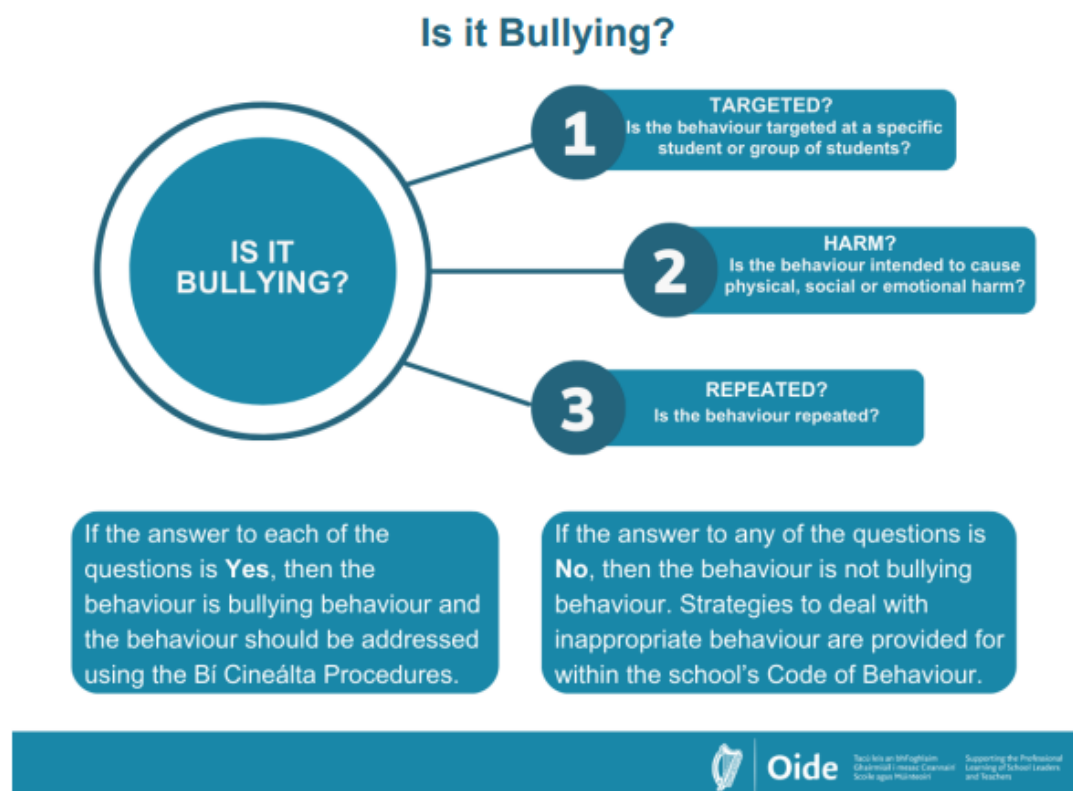
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When bullying behaviour occurs, Youthreach Ballina will:

- > ensure that the learner 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 learner who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation.
- > take action in a timely manner.
- > inform parents/guardians of those involved.

The steps that will be taken by Ballina Youthreach 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):

### Identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred.



- When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred the staff member will keep in mind the definition of bullying as illustrated above
- Staff must investigate by establishing what happened, where it took place, when it occurred and why it happened.
- All learners involved should be asked for their account of what happened individually and also as a group if relevant/appropriate.
- Each learner will be supported as appropriate after the meetings take place.
- If required learners may be required to write down their account of the incident.

### Where bullying has occurred

Where it is deemed that bullying has occurred Youthreach Ballina will carry out the following actions.

- In cases where it has been determined by the relevant staff member that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents/guardians of the parties involved in the case of learners under 18 are contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and to explain the actions being taken. The Centre gives parents/guardians an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the Centre and the supports needed.

- Where the Co-ordinator has determined that a learner/learner has/have displayed bullying behaviour, it is made clear to the learner how they are in breach of the Centres Anti-Bullying Policy/code of behaviour and efforts are made to enable them to see the situation from the perspective of the learner being bullied.
- If a learner is deemed to have displayed bullying behaviour, they will be told to cease this behaviour, and parents/guardians will be informed as above. Professional help may be recommended for any or all learner(s) involved where it is considered necessary by the Centre. The learner may be asked to sign a contract agreeing to cease the bullying behaviour and this will be carefully monitored by staff. It is made clear to all involved (with each learner and their parent) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the learner(s) being disciplined, their parent(s) /guardians (if under 18) and the Centre.
- Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved may be arranged separately with a view to possibly bringing them together through Restorative Practice at a later date if the learner who has experienced bullying behaviour is ready and agreeable. This can have a therapeutic effect and is engaged with through the learners. The Restorative Practice will occur when both learners are ready. They will be supported individually prior to this and will have their mentors present as a support during the Restorative Practice session. All Restorative Practice sessions are confidential and should not be discussed with any friends.

Youthreach is not expected to deal with bullying behaviour that occurs when learners are not under the care or responsibility of the centre. However, where this bullying behaviour has an impact in the centre, Youthreach are required to support the learners involved. Where the bullying behaviour continues in the centre such behaviour shall be dealt with in accordance with the guidelines

Where the learner displaying the bullying behaviour is not a learner in the centre but the learner who is experiencing the bullying behaviour is a learner in the centre, the centre should support the learner who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as appropriate and engage with them and their parents/guardians to determine what steps can be taken.

It is important for centre staff to be fair and consistent in their approach to addressing bullying behaviour. Both the learner(s) who is experiencing bullying behaviour and the learner(s) who is displaying bullying behaviour need support. It is important that the learner who is experiencing bullying behaviour is engaged with without delay so that they feel listened to, supported and reassured. Centre staff should identify the supports needed for the learner who is displaying bullying behaviour to better manage relational difficulties and ensure that their needs are

met.

### Request to take no action.

A learner reporting bullying behaviour may ask that a member of staff does nothing about the behaviour other than “look out” for them. The learner may not want to be identified as having told someone about the bullying behaviour. They may feel that telling someone might make things more difficult for them. Where this occurs, it is important that the member of staff shows empathy to the learner, deals with the matter sensitively and speaks with the learner to work out together what steps can be taken to address the matter and how their parents/guardians will be informed of the situation. It is important that the learner who has experienced bullying behaviour feels safe.

Parents/guardians may also make centres aware of bullying behaviour that has occurred and specifically request that the centre take no action. Parents/guardians can put this request in writing to the centre or be facilitated to do so where there are literacy, digital literacy or language barriers and a record should be kept. However, while acknowledging the parent's request, centres may decide that, based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour.

### Determining if bullying behaviour has ceased.

The teacher/staff member should engage with the learners and parents/guardians involved within a reasonable time frame 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 learners involved. Even though the bullying behaviour may have ceased, ongoing supervision and support may be required for both the learner who has experienced the bullying behaviour as well as the learner 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 learners and parents/guardians and agree to meet again over an agreed timeframe until the bullying behaviour has ceased.

Where it becomes clear that the learner who is displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behaviour, then the centre should consider using the strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour as provided for within the Youthreach Code of Conduct. If disciplinary sanctions are considered, this is a matter between the relevant learner, their parents/guardians, and the centre.

### Recording Bullying Behaviour

All incidents of bullying behaviour should be recorded. The record should document the form and type of bullying behaviour, if known, where and when it took place and the date of the initial engagement with the learners and their parents/guardians. The record should include the views of the learners and their parents/guardians regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour.

It should document the review with learners and their parents/guardians to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased and the views of learners and their parents/guardians in relation to this. The date of each of these engagements must be recorded and the date that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased. Any engagement with external services/supports should also be noted.

These records should be retained in accordance with the MSLETB record keeping policy and in line with data protection regulations. The relevant staff members designated to deal with bullying should have access to all records. Records should be kept of any supports put in place to address the bullying behaviour.

### Complaints procedures

If a parent is not satisfied with how bullying behaviour has been addressed by the centre, in accordance with these procedures, they should be referred to the MSLETB complaints procedures.

In the event that a learner and/or parent is dissatisfied with how a complaint has been handled, a learner and/or parent may make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children if they believe that the centres actions have had a negative effect on the learner. The Office of the Ombudsman for Children can be contacted at [ococomplaint@oco.ie](mailto:ococomplaint@oco.ie)

### Supports

Supports are available to help prevent and address bullying behaviour. These include the following:

- Mentoring
- Restorative practices
- Workshops for staff and learners and parents/guardians on the impact of bullying and online safety
- TUSLA where bullying is deemed to be a child protection issue.
- OIDE <https://oide.ie/post-primary/home/>
- Webwise <https://www.webwise.ie/>

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

### Support for Learners Who Experienced Bullying

- Anti-Bullying awareness will be promoted through SPHE and guest speakers e.g. on online bullying.
- Restorative Practice: Follow-up meetings are arranged with the involved parties separately, with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date if the learners in question are ready and agreeable. This can have a therapeutic effect.
- Mentoring
- Cyber Safety and Anti-Bullying Information Session: Information sessions for parents/guardians to educate them about the centres anti-bullying efforts and how they can support their children.

### Support for Learners Who Witness Bullying

- Encouraging Disclosure: The centre promotes a culture where learners are encouraged to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying in a non-threatening environment.
- Education and Prevention Strategies: Implementation of education and prevention strategies that build empathy, respect, and resilience in learners, explicitly addressing issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying.
- SPHE and R.E. Classes: Discussions in SPHE (Social, Personal, and Health Education) and include the Anti-Bullying Programmes " helping learners understand the impact of bullying and how to respond.

### Support for Learners Who Display Bullying Behaviours

- Investigation and Follow-Up: All reports of bullying are noted, investigated, and dealt with by centre staff. The Co-ordinator/resource person meets with both parties individually to discuss the matter and seek possible solutions.
- Restorative Practice: Practice to resolve conflicts and restore relationships, promoting a positive and respectful centre environment.
- Mentoring
- Sanctions: Learners involved in bullying are warned to stop immediately. If further incidents occur, there may need to be sanctions as per the code of behaviour.
- Cyber Safety Talks: Regular talks to educate learners about the dangers of cyberbullying and how to stay safe online.
- Parent-Teacher Meetings: Regular meetings to discuss learners' progress and address any concerns, fostering open communication between home and centre.

Youthreach Ballina will use the following approaches to support those who experience, witness, and display bullying behaviour (see Chapter 6 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

- Contact with parents/guardians.
- Check-in meetings with trusted adult(s)
- Follow-up meetings to determine if (a) behaviour has ceased and (b) support needs to continue.
- Anti- Bullying culture in the centre

When bullying behaviour occurs Youthreach Ballina will:

- ensure that the learner 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 learner who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation
- take action in a timely manner.
- inform parents/guardians of those involved.

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 learners and parents/guardians. 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 Centres*

## Section D: Oversight

The Co-ordinator will present an update on bullying behaviour at each Advisory Committee 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 Youthreach year. Where incidents of bullying behaviour have occurred, the Co-ordinator 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 Youthreach community in hard copy on request. A learner friendly version of this policy is displayed in the Youthreach and is also available in hard copy on request.

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed, following input from our Youthreach 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 Advisory Committee)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Coordinator)