

03/06/2025

Re: Bí Cineálta Policy Guidance for Catholic Schools

Dear Principals and Chairpersons,

Many schools have requested advice on bringing their policy into harmony with the Catholic ethos of their school. The words “Bí Cineálta” mean “be kind” and being kind and inclusive is the real enactment of a Catholic ethos in our schools. In response to this and in support of the work that you do in our schools, the Patron has requested that we write to you, on his behalf, with recommended additional wording to strengthen your Bí Cineálta Policy.

Firstly, on his behalf, we wish to affirm the continuing work of Catholic schools in ensuring that our schools are welcoming and inclusive environments where everyone feels valued and supported.

Opening Section of the Bí Cineálta Policy

Catholic education places a strong emphasis on the values of acceptance, respect and the importance of reaching out to the most vulnerable and marginalised. Catholic schools, in line with their ethos, are committed to respecting the dignity of every individual where no human person is to be diminished or devalued, regardless of difference. Catholic schools recognise that it is important to take steps to prevent all types of bullying behaviour.

To reflect this, it is recommended that the following wording be added to the end of the opening section of the Bí Cineálta Policy.

“We confirm that we will take all steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent all bullying or harassment of our students in whatever form and however motivated.

Catholic schools have a distinctive understanding of the human person, recognising that every person is created in God's image and likeness and has inherent dignity as a child of God. This is the basis for ensuring that everybody in our school is treated with respect and care, in accordance with the Catholic Schedule.

As a Catholic school, we are committed to respecting the dignity of every individual. No human person is to be devalued and everybody has a part to play in the school community, regardless of difference.”

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

While it is important to consider strategies to prevent specific types of bullying behaviour, it is also important to ensure that strategies to prevent *all* bullying behaviour are discussed in Section B of your school's policy. This is to ensure that all young people who are bullied, regardless of the reason for such bullying, can see that their school's Bí Cineálta policy applies to them. It is therefore recommended that the following be inserted at the beginning of Section B:

This section sets out the prevention strategies that will be used by this school to address all forms of bullying behaviour, in whatever form and however motivated, including online bullying behaviour, homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour, racist bullying behaviour, sexist bullying behaviour and sexual harassment.

Catholic schools develop preventative strategies grounded in their Catholic ethos, where inclusivity is meaningfully integrated into all aspects of school life. To reflect this, the following wording is recommended to be added to the beginning of the preventative strategies listed in Section B of the Policy:

“In developing the preventative strategies which this school will use to prevent all forms of bullying behaviour, we come from the context of our Catholic ethos, where inclusivity permeates our school in a real way.”

Catholic schools take steps to ensure that the culture of the school is one which welcomes a respectful dialogue and encounter with diversity and difference. One of the ways in which this is achieved, is by ensuring that prevention and inclusivity strategies are given priority at board of management and staff meetings. To reflect this, the following wording is recommended to be added to Section B of the policy:

“This school takes positive steps to ensure that the culture of the school is one which welcomes a respectful dialogue and encounter with diversity and difference by ensuring that prevention and inclusivity strategies are given priority and discussed regularly at our board of management and staff meetings.”

Catholic schools listen closely to parents and seek to build relationships of mutual understanding, respect, trust and confidence with the school. They take time to listen to young people and parents to discern appropriate supports for young people in school. This inclusiveness of Catholic schools in relation to parents and young people forms part of its preventative strategies. To reflect this, the following wording is recommended to be added to Section B of the policy:

“The dignity and the wellbeing of the individual person is of paramount concern in our Christian response. This school will listen closely to and dialogue with parents, thereby building a relationship of mutual understanding, respect, trust and confidence.”

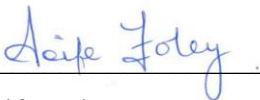
“In continuing to develop prevention strategies, this school will listen to young people and parents, to help establish their particular context and needs. Frequent periods of reflection and further engagement by the school, young people and parents, will be used to discern appropriate supports for young people in this school and to help inform future prevention strategies”.

Conclusion

Bullying goes against the heart of what Catholic schools stand for in terms of reaching out to the most vulnerable and marginalised in our schools and respecting the dignity of every individual, regardless of difference. The recommended additional wording strengthens and underpins the specific commitment of Catholic schools to the prevention and addressing of bullying behaviour and highlights the centrality of your school's Catholic ethos.

Thank you for the ongoing work you are doing in your school, particularly in relation to addressing bullying behaviour and for your dedication and commitment to making your schools a happier place for young people. Please contact us if we can assist you, as you finalise your policy in time for the 25/26 school year.

Yours sincerely,



Aoife Foley

Acting Director