Largy National School.
Kinlough,
Co. Leitrim.

Date of Ratification or Review:

11 June 2026

Date of next Review:

June 2027

Policies Scheduled for Joint Review:
Safeguarding and Risk Assessment

Largy National School – Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

1. Policy Statement

Largy National School is committed to fostering a school culture where kindness (*cineáltas*), inclusion, respect and pupil voice are embedded in daily life. This policy implements the revised *Bí Cineálta Procedures (2024)*, developed in accordance with Circular 55/2024, and aligns with the Department of Education's *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice (2019)*. It affirms the school's obligation to uphold children's rights under the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)*, particularly:

- Article 19: Right to protection from all forms of violence.
- Article 12: Right to express views freely.
- Article 28: Right to education.
- Article 30: Right to enjoy one's own culture and identity.

We aim to ensure that all children feel safe, valued, and supported. Bullying behaviour is not tolerated and is addressed through proactive prevention, restorative response and a structured review.

2. Legal and Policy Context

This policy complies with:

- *Education Act 1998*
- *Equal Status Acts*
- *Children First Act 2015*
- *Coco's Law 2020*
- *Wellbeing Framework for Practice*
- *Circular 55/2024: Bí Cineálta*

All procedures are underpinned by the four wellbeing domains: Culture and Environment, Curriculum, Policy and Planning, and Relationships and Partnerships.

A. Roles and Responsibilities:

The following school personnel have roles and responsibilities under this policy:

- **Principal/Deputy Principal**: Leadership, monitoring, oversight of all bullying reports, leading the 20-day review process and reporting to Board of Management.
- **Teachers/SNAs**: Active supervision, identification, reporting and follow-up of bullying behaviours. In addition, staff participate in restorative practices.
- **Wellbeing Lead**: Coordination of preventative programmes, staff training, data collection and trend analysis.
- **Board of Management**: Oversight and governance, annual review of the policy and school practice, receiving reports from Principal.
- **Parents/Guardians**: Supporting prevention at home, raising concerns with the school in line with this policy.

3. Definition of Bullying

Bullying is defined as targeted behaviour, online or offline, that causes physical, social, or emotional harm, is repeated over time, and involves a power imbalance.

This includes:

- **Direct**: Physical (e.g. hitting), verbal (e.g. insults), or written.
- **Indirect**: Exclusion, gossip, manipulation.
- **Cyberbullying**: Using digital platforms to intimidate, shame, or isolate.
- **Identity-Based**: Targeting based on race, gender, religion, orientation, disability, or socioeconomic status.
- **Exclusion or Manipulation**: Repeatedly leaving someone out of games, conversations, or activities. This is on purpose and can include influencing others to avoid, dislike or isolate someone socially.
- **Group-based bullying:** Where a group or peer cohort repeatedly targets one or more pupils.

Cyberbullying – Detailed Response Procedures
Reports involving cyberbullying trigger immediate digital safety protocols. This includes preserving evidence, notifying guardians and involving external supports like Webwise or Gardaí if needed. The AUP is cross-referenced during investigations or reviews.

Not all conflict is bullying. Incidents are assessed using the Bí Cineálta three-step threshold.

Non-bullying behaviours include unintentional harm, difficulties with social skills, and one-off conflicts, unless these behaviours meet the threshold for bullying. This category may include situations such as: 1) disagreements between children; 2) unintentional behaviours displayed by students with Special Educational Needs (SEN); 3) instances where students no longer wish to remain friends; and 4) isolated incidents of negative behaviour.

However, where behaviours such as teasing, exclusion or name-calling are persistent and meet the threshold of harm, repetition and power imbalance, they will be treated as bullying behaviours under this policy.

4. Whole-School Preventative Approach

In line with the national wellbeing framework and Circular 55/2024, we implement a whole-education approach using:

A. Culture and Environment

- A published Values Charter visible throughout the school.
- Annual wellbeing surveys are conducted to monitor safety and inclusion.
- Clear supervision policies for identified high-risk areas.
- Respect for people, diversity in families and choices.
- A designated Wellbeing Lead and Active Student Council.
- Mrs Mc Morrow is the Designated Liaison Person, Mrs McGrath is the Deputy Liaison Person and Mrs Coyle is the Wellbeing Lead.
- As Wellbeing Lead, Mrs Coyle coordinates wellbeing initiatives including The Amber Flag programme and Wellbeing Week initiatives, ensuring alignment with the school's values and the Bí Cineálta Framework.

B. Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)

- Delivery of SPHE, RSE, and Digital Media Literacy to foster empathy and inclusion.
- Participation in *FUSE*, *Webwise*, and themed awareness weeks.
- Whole-school activities promoting kindness, empathy, and anti-bullying awareness.

C. Policy and Planning

- Integration with the Code of Behaviour, AUP and Child Safeguarding Statement.
- Use of Department-approved templates for reporting and record-keeping.

- Reports and records will be completed using the Department of Education's Bullying Report Template, including timelines and thresholds for assessment. These records are retained in accordance with GDPR and school policy, and oversight is ensured by the Principal and Wellbeing Lead.
- Annual, Summer Term, Bí Cineálta policy review involving pupils, staff, and parents. To occur alongside other scheduled reviews.

D. Relationships and Partnerships

- Mechanisms to promote student voice, feedback and reporting will be formally collected post-incident and during reviews through focus groups or anonymous surveys. The Active Student Council is consulted on policy effectiveness annually.
- Regular engagement with parents and external services (e.g. NEPS).
- Use of a Student Support Team (Buddy System) for early intervention.
- Pupils are actively involved in the design and promotion of anti-bullying messages and activities throughout the school year.
- Pupil voice is gathered through class-based discussions, anonymous feedback opportunities, participation in wellbeing surveys and consultation with the Active Student Council.
- The Parents' Association (where active) is consulted on the policy and supports the promotion of anti-bullying initiatives.

E. Staff Training and Capacity Building:

- Annual training for all staff on recognising, responding to and preventing bullying is mandatory.
- Training will include workshops on restorative practices, digital citizenship and identity-based bullying.
- New staff receive induction on the Bí Cineálta Policy. External agencies such as PDST and Oide will be engaged for expert-led sessions.

F. Timeline of Consultation:

- **Pupils and Parents**: Surveys completed in preparation for ratification of policy.
- **Staff**: Meeting with Staff to discuss practices.
- **Board of Management**: Reviewed, amended, and ratified final policy (Summer 2026).
- The purpose of consultation is to ensure that this policy reflects the lived experience and views of the whole school community and that all stakeholders have meaningful input into the development and review of the policy.
- Consultation will continue on an ongoing basis as part of the policy review cycle and wellbeing promotion process. Feedback from pupils, staff, parents and the Board of Management will be gathered annually through surveys, workshops and feedback meetings.

5. Procedures for Addressing Bullying Behaviour

A. Reporting

- All reports of bullying behaviour, whether made verbally or in writing by pupils, parents or staff will be taken seriously and responded to in line with this policy.
- All staff are trained to receive concerns sensitively and confidentially.
- If a concern persists or escalates, staff are required to bring it to the attention of the Principal or Deputy Principal for further action.
- Students are encouraged to tell a trusted adult, anonymous box or use peer-report systems.
- All incidents are logged using official templates.
- The school is committed to responding promptly to all bullying concerns, with initial actions taken within a reasonable timeframe after the report is received.

B. Investigation and Decision

- Staff are expected to observe interactions actively and identify potential bullying behaviours, including those not directly reported.

- Staff assess against three criteria: harm, repetition, and power imbalance. They are discreet and evidence-based.

- Investigations are carried out fairly, with pupil voice central to the process.
- Pupil voice is also used to inform decisions about appropriate responses, restorative actions, and follow-up supports.

- Parental involvement from early stages: Parents/guardians will be kept informed at key stages of the investigation, response, and follow-up process.
- Where there is uncertainty about whether an incident meets the bullying threshold, the Wellbeing Lead and Principal will conduct a joint review and record their decision and rationale.

C. Response and Follow-up

- Where bullying behaviour meets the threshold of harm under the Children First Act 2015, the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) will make a report to Tusla in line with the school's Child Safeguarding Statement and national guidance.
- Restorative practices, mentoring and behaviour / classroom contracts and practices as needed. Restorative Practices focus on repairing relationships as opposed to punishments. This includes reflective conversations, apologies and agreements between pupils.
- DDLP or Wellbeing Lead conducts follow-up within 20 school days.
- Ongoing support provided to all affected parties; support is monitored and adjusted as needed.
- Supports may include individual or group wellbeing interventions such as resilience-building programmes, friendship groups or social skills support, as appropriate.
- Resolved cases will be monitored discreetly over a suitable period to ensure that bullying behaviour does not re-emerge.
- Follow-up monitoring will generally continue for a minimum of one school term or longer where needed, to ensure sustained resolution.

- Where bullying behaviour persists, interventions will follow a progressive escalation process — this may include formal behaviour contracts, additional support from external services (e.g. NEPS) and further disciplinary actions in line with the Code of Behaviour.

D. 20-Day Review Requirement

- In line with Circular 55/2024, a review must be conducted within 20 school days of determining that bullying behaviour has occurred. This review will assess the effectiveness of the interventions and determine whether bullying has ceased. Documentation of this review is maintained and shared with relevant parties (staff, parents/guardians).
- The Principal (DDLP) leads the 20-day review. Outcomes are documented using the Department of Education (OIDE) standard template and shared at staff meetings to inform practice improvements. Persistent cases prompt escalation and formal intervention plans.
- This review will assess the effectiveness of the interventions, whether bullying behaviour has ceased and whether supports in place for all parties remain appropriate.

6. Whole-School Preventative Framework

A. Culture and Environment

- *School Values Charter* displayed.
- *Safe zones* and visible supervision in high-risk areas.
- Anti-Bullying Week with themed activities.
- Emphasis on trusted adults and telling culture.
- Anti-bullying visuals, kindness boards / Tree, and student-created posters.
- Playground peer support and yard helpers.
- Buddy activity incorporated into all school events, celebrations and traditions.

B. Curriculum (Teaching & Learning)

- SPHE and RSE lessons on empathy, identity, and online safety.
- Programmes such as Stay Safe, Mindful Matters and Walk Talk are embedded in the curriculum to promote the concepts of Bí Cineálta.
- Group work promoting inclusion and connection.
- Use of *FUSE*, *Webwise*, and diversity education tools.
- Regular internet safety Talks.

C. Policy and Planning

- Integrated with the *Code of Behaviour*, *AUP*, and *Child Safeguarding Statement*.
- Staff access to reporting templates and digital logs.
- Annual policy review via SSE and community feedback.

D. Relationships and Partnerships

- Parent workshops on bullying prevention.
- The Active Student Council is consulted on policy effectiveness annually. Student feedback will be formally collected through focus groups or anonymous surveys.
- Student support teams for peer mentoring. Such as Buddy Opportunities and activities; for example, Buddy bench, buddy reading, buddy breakfast / brunch.
- Use of external services (e.g. NEPS, PDST, Oide, CPSMA).
- School charters created collaboratively.
- Newsletters will update parents on anti-bullying initiatives and promote family conversations around respect and online safety. All reports involving bullying will include a parent feedback loop to ensure closure.

7. Supports for Pupils

- **For Pupils Affected by Bullying**:
    - Group and individual support.

    - Encouragement to reengage in peer activities.
    - Referral for counselling if needed.
- **For Pupils Displaying Bullying Behaviour**:
    - Restorative dialogue and behaviour education.
    - Emphasis on empathy, not blame.
    - Targeted interventions and parent involvement.
- **For Witnesses**:
    - Education on bystander responsibility.
    - Reassurance and encouragement to report.
    - Where appropriate, witnesses will be engaged in restorative conversations and supported to contribute to a positive resolution.

8. Supervision and Monitoring

- Supervision rota covers all high-risk zones (Yard, Court, Maze, Classrooms, corridors, toileting rules).
- Non-teaching staff trained to report concerns.
- Aladdin used for incident tracking and trend monitoring.
- Themed weeks, assemblies, and wall displays reinforce prevention.
- The supervision rota is informed by patterns identified through bullying reports and staff observation of high-risk areas.

9. Oversight and Review

- Principal provides a formal update on bullying incidents to the Board of Management at each meeting.
- The Board of Management will formally record the number of bullying reports in the Principal's Report using the Department's reporting template. This includes

anonymous aggregated data that reflects trends and school response without naming individuals.

- The policy is reviewed annually and updated collaboratively. The Board of Management will assess the policy's impact using data from incident logs, student surveys, and feedback from staff and parents. This will inform strategic goals in the School Improvement Plan.
- The Board's annual review considers:
    - The number of bullying cases recorded
    - Patterns or trends identified
    - Effectiveness of interventions
    - Compliance with policy procedures
    - The Board will complete and publish an Annual Review Checklist as required under Circular 55/2024.
- A student-friendly version is published and displayed in each classroom (Sept 2025).
- Feedback from pupils, staff and parents/guardians on the implementation and effectiveness of the policy, gathered as part of ongoing consultation.
- Updated versions available on the school website and by request.

10. Wellbeing Integration

This policy is aligned with the school's Wellbeing Promotion Process under SSE, as required by the Department of Education. Implementation is tracked using indicators of success and self-evaluation tools outlined in the Wellbeing Framework.

11. Data Protection and Confidentiality

- All information relating to bullying incidents is handled in line with the school's Data Protection Policy and GDPR guidelines.

- Confidentiality is respected in all communications with students and parents/guardians.
- Records are stored securely and shared only with authorised personnel.

The Bí Cineálta Policy was ratified by the Board of Management on: _____

Signed: _____ Signed: _____

Chairperson: PJ Leddy Principal: Nicola McMorrow