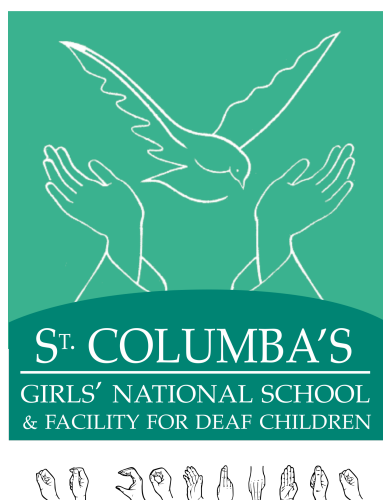




Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of St Columba's GNS with Facility for Deaf Children 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: 2.1 page 17 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	19 th March 2025	Staff consultation meeting held during half day school closure and Staff Survey
Students	31st March- 4th April 2025	Individual student survey carried out in each class
Parents	27th May 2025	Online survey
Board of management	1st of July 2025	Board of management meeting
Wider School Community (Taxi drivers, chaperones)	August 2025	Consultation with Deputy principal
Date Policy was approved: 1st of July		
Date policy was last reviewed - N/A - new policy		

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

St. Columba's GNS with Facility for Deaf Children will endeavour to prevent bullying behaviour through the 4 key areas of wellbeing:

1. Culture and Climate
2. Curriculum
3. Policy and Planning
4. Relationships and Partnerships

St Columba's Girls National school is a Bí Cineálta school. We promote a positive school culture and climate which:

- is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity
- has an effective leadership team, setting standards and expectations for the school community

- promotes open communication between Board of Management, school staff, students and their parents
- acknowledges the right of each member of the school community to enjoy school in a secure environment
- promotes a telling environment where students feel comfortable to talk about their concerns regarding bullying behaviour
- identifies a trusted adult students can talk to. The staff encourage pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment.
- acknowledges the uniqueness of each individual and his/her worth as a human being
- recognises the need to work in partnership with and keep parents informed on procedures
- provides a safe physical space for school staff to supervise students
- provides appropriate supervision of students in school and when attending school activities

Curriculum:

In St Columba's GNS with Facility for Deaf Children teaching and learning is collaborative and respectful. Students have regular opportunities to work in small groups with their peers to help build a sense of connection, belonging and empathy among students. The following curricular subjects and activities offered to students, provide opportunities to foster inclusion and respect for diversity.

- Teaching and learning in SPHE
- RSE curriculum
- Stay Safe Programme
- Walk Tall Programme
- Group work/ collaboration with Deaf classes
- Circle Time
- Extra curricular activities
- Kindness wall
- Wellbeing week each year
- Student friendly Bí Cineálta policy
- lessons delivered by the community Guard
- Buddy benches in yard
- Learning Log

Policy and Planning

The wellbeing of the school community is at the heart of all the policies and plans in St. Columba's GNS with Facility for Deaf Children. These include:

- Bí Cineálta policy
- Student friendly Bí Cineálta policy on display in school
- Code of Behaviour
- Child protection policy
- Acceptable usage policy
- RSE Policy
- SEN Policy and inclusion
- SSE Wellbeing in Education
- Supervision
- Appropriate TPL (Teacher Professional Learning)

Relationships and Partnerships

Strong interpersonal connections are a vital part of effectively preventing and addressing bullying behaviour in our school. Our school achieves through the following:

- Student council, to promote student voice within the school community
- School clubs
- School Teams
- Parents' associations
- Coffee mornings for parents
- Information evenings for parents
- appropriate TPL (Teacher Professional Learning)
- Promoting and supporting activities that build empathy, respect and resilience.
- Yard buddies, peer mentoring in the playground where older children organise and participate in games with younger children
- school website and social media: facebook/instagram
- Our school is a changemaker school and collaborates with other schools in this area.
- UDL (Universal Design for Learning: Pilot school)

Preventing cyberbullying behaviour

The digital age of consent is the minimum age a user must be before a social media or internet company can collect, process and store data. In Ireland the digital age of consent is 16. Children between the ages of 13 and 16 must have parental permission to sign up to social media services. Most social media platforms have a minimum age requirement, and for the majority of these, it is 13 years old. Therefore children under the age of 13 should not have a social media account.

2.3 The age of criminal responsibility in Ireland is 12 years. Some online behaviour may be illegal. Students need to be aware of the far reaching consequences of posting inappropriate or harmful content online. An Garda Síochána is the appropriate authority to investigate alleged criminal behaviour.

St Columba's GNS with Facility for Deaf Children promotes digital literacy, digital citizenship and fostering safe online environments. Strategies to prevent cyberbullying behaviour include the following;

- implementing the SPHE curriculum
- promoting digital citizenship
- having regular conversations with students about developing respectful and kind relationships online
- holding internet safety day
- communicating our acceptable usage policy to parents
- promoting online safety events for parents who are responsible for overseeing their children's activities online
- Digi Ducks programme in Junior infants to 2nd class
- Webwise lessons with 3rd and 4th classes
- FUSE anti bullying programme, addressing bullying and online safety in 5th and 6th class
- Displaying relevant posters around the school eg THINK

Preventing homophobic/transphobic bullying behaviour

All students have a right to feel safe and supported in our school. Strategies to prevent prevent Homophobic/transphobic bullying behavior include the following:

- maintaining an inclusive physical environment such as displaying relevant posters
- Teach About Respect and Empathy: Ensure lessons include discussions on respect for others, empathy, and kindness, particularly around issues of gender and sexuality.
- challenging gender stereotypes
- TPL (Teacher professional learning)
- use of inclusive materials: Incorporate books, stories, and educational resources that celebrate diversity in gender and sexual orientation. Select age-appropriate resources that show a variety of family structures, gender identities, and sexual orientations.

Preventing racist bullying behaviour

Students attending St. Columba's GNS with Facility for Deaf Children come from many different cultures and backgrounds. Our school endeavours to prevent racist bullying behaviour by:

- fostering a school culture where diversity is celebrated and where students "see themselves" in their school environment
- having the cultural diversity of the school visible and on display
- promoting empathy building activities
- encouraging bystanders to report when they witness racist behaviour
- providing supports to school staff to respond to the needs of students for whom English is an additional language
- inviting speakers from diverse ethnic backgrounds

- ensuring that library books and textbooks represent appropriate lived experiences of students and adults from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds

Preventing sexual harassment

St Columba's GNS with Facility for Deaf Children has a zero tolerance approach to sexual harassment.

Strategies to prevent sexual harassment include the following:

- promoting positive role models within the school community
- challenging gender stereotypes that can contribute to sexual harassment

Supervision

Appropriate supervision is an important measure to help prevent and address bullying behaviour. St Columba's GNS with Facility for Deaf children has the following supervision and monitoring policies in place to prevent and address bullying behaviour (see Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

- teacher and SNAs are present to supervise at first break and lunch times in the playground and the classroom

The board of management confirms that appropriate supervision and monitoring practices are in place to both prevent and deal with bullying behaviour and to facilitate early intervention where possible.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

Louise Roche (Principal)

Hansey Power (Deputy Principal)

Class Teacher

When bullying behaviour occurs, the school will:

Identify if bullying behaviour has occurred

When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred the teacher should consider the following: what, where, when and why? 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 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.

Use the three questions below to identify if bullying behaviour is occurring. If the answer is yes to all three questions, it is bullying behaviour and the behaviour should be addressed using the Bí Cineálta Procedures. If the answer is yes to two or fewer questions, consult the Code of Behaviour.

Is it Bullying Behaviour?

- 1. Targeted? Is the behaviour targeted at a specific student or group of students?**
- 2. Harm? Is the behaviour intended to cause physical, social or emotional harm?**
- 3. Repeated? Is the behaviour repeated?**

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 a group of students is involved, each student should be engaged with individually first.
- ➔ Thereafter, all students involved should meet 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 also be helpful to ask the students involved to write down their account of the incident(s).

Where bullying behaviour has occurred

School staff should know what to do when bullying behaviour is reported to them or when they witness bullying behaviour. St Columba's GNS with Facility for Deaf Children is not expected to deal with bullying behaviour that occurs when students are not under the care or responsibility of the school. However, where this bullying behaviour has an impact in school, St Columba's GNS with Facility for Deaf children is required to support the students involved, in accordance with the Bí Cineálta policy. The school should support the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as appropriate and engage with them and their parents to determine what steps can be taken.

Where bullying behaviour has occurred

When it is determined that bullying behaviour has occurred within the school, the school staff will be fair and consistent in their approach to address bullying behaviour. Both the student who is experiencing bullying behaviour and the student who is displaying bullying behaviour need support. It is important that the student who is experiencing bullying behaviour is engaged with, without delay so that they feel listened to, supported and reassured. School staff will identify the supports needed for the student who is displaying bullying behaviour to better manage relational difficulties and ensure that their needs are met.

- 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 must 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.

- it is important to listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation.
- a record should be kept of the engagement with all involved.
- this record should document the form and type of bullying behaviour, if known (see Section 2.5 and 2.7 of the Bí Cineálta procedures), where and when it took place and the date of the initial engagement with the students involved and their parents
- the record should include the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour.

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

- ❑ 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*

*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 parties involved must be contacted at an early stage to inform of the matter and to consult with them on the actions to be taken to address the behaviour as outlined in the school's Bí Cineálta policy. St Columbas GNS with Facility for Deaf Children will consider communication barriers that may exist when communicating with parents, for example, literacy, digital literacy or language barriers.

Given the complexity of bullying behaviour it is acknowledged that no one approach works in all situations. International and national research also continues to evolve in this area and the effectiveness of particular approaches continues to be reviewed. Therefore, our school must decide on an approach that is best suited to its own circumstances. Approaches such as restorative practice and mediation can be used to address bullying behaviour, when the teachers involved have been trained in how to engage in these methods and the students involved have agreed to their use.

Requests to take no action

Parents may make schools aware of bullying behaviour that has occurred and specifically request that the school take no action. Parents should put this request in writing to the

school or be facilitated to do so where there are literacy, digital literacy or language barriers. *However, while acknowledging the parent's request, schools may decide that, based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour.*

Follow up where bullying behaviour has occurred

The class teacher must engage with the students involved and their parents again no more than 20 school days after the initial engagement, to review progress. 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 students involved.

Even though the bullying behaviour may have ceased, ongoing supervision and support may be required for both the student who has experienced the bullying behaviour as well as the student 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 will review the strategies used in consultation with the students and parents and agree to meet again over an agreed timeframe until the bullying behaviour has ceased.

Where it becomes clear that the student who is displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behaviour, then St Columbas GNS with Facility for Deaf Children will consider 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.

Recording bullying behaviour

All incidents of bullying behaviour should be recorded. The record should document the form (Section 2.5) and type (See Section 2.7) of bullying behaviour, if known, where and when it took place and the date of the initial engagement with the students and their parents.

The record should include the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour. It 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. It is important to document the date of each of these engagements 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 school's record keeping policy and in line with data protection regulations.

Where a Student Support File exists for a student, schools are encouraged to place a copy of the record on the student's support file. This will assist the school's student support team, in providing a consistent and holistic response to support the wellbeing of the

students involved. Where a Student Support Plan exists, the plan should be updated to incorporate response strategies and associated supports.

All bullying behaviour will be recorded.

Bullying behaviour will be recorded in a Bullying Behaviour Incident Report (Appendix 1) and sent to the principal, Louise Roche. The following information will be included in the document

What type of behaviour has occurred?

Where and when did it take place?

The date of engagement with students and parents.

The actions and supports agreed to address bullying behaviour.

*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.

Complaint process

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

Additional Information relating to schools' complaint procedures are available at the following link: <https://www.gov.ie/en/policyinformation/parentalcomplaints/> In the event that a student and/or parent is dissatisfied with how a complaint has been handled, a student and/or parent 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 Office of the Ombudsman for Children can be contacted at ococomplaint@oco.ie.

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 emotional 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 these 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.

National Parents Council

The National Parents Council (NPC) is the representative organisation for parents of children in early years, primary and post primary education. NPC was established as a charitable organisation in 1985, under the programme for Government, as the representative organisation for parents of children attending school. It received statutory recognition in the Education Act 1998.

The NPC works to ensure that all parents are supported and empowered to become effective partners in their children's education. NPC seeks to achieve true partnership and deliver better outcomes for all students. The NPC delivers online and in person courses to support parents of both primary and post primary students to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

Dublin City University (DCU) AntiBullying Centre

The DCU AntiBullying Centre is a university designated research centre located in DCU's Institute of Education. The centre is known globally for its research in bullying and online safety. The AntiBullying Centre offers a range of modules as part of its FUSE programme for the entire school community that can be used to help to promote a positive school culture and assist in preventing and addressing bullying behaviours. Details on these programmes are included in the Resources Guide which accompanies these procedures.

Tusla

Schools should contact Tusla directly for advice in cases where it is considered that bullying behaviour is a child protection concern. See section 2.4 for guidance on when bullying behaviour becomes a child protection concern.

Section D: Oversight

The principal of St Columba's GNS with Facility for Deaf children 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. 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 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:
(Chairperson of The Board of Management)

Date:

Dónal Murphy (signed electronically)

01/07/2025

Signed:
(Principal)

Date:

Louise Roche (signed electronically)

01/07/2025

St. Columba's GNS with Facility for Deaf Children

Appendix 1: Bullying behaviour incident report

1. Name of pupil being bullied and class

Name _____ Class _____ Date _____

2. Name(s) and class(es) of pupil(s) engaged in bullying behaviour

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3. Source of bullying concern/report (tick relevant box(es))*

Pupil concerned	
Other Pupil	
Parent	
Teacher	
Other, please state	

4. Location of incidents (tick relevant box(es))*

Playground	
Classroom	
Corridor	
Toilets	
School bus	
Outside school	

5. Name of person(s) who reported the bullying concern

--

6. Form of Bullying Behaviour 2.5 (tick relevant box(es)) *

Physical Aggression		Cyber-bullying	
Verbal (eg. name calling, insults)		Damage to Property	
Written (eg. passing around notes or drawings)		Psychological (eg.intimidation, manipulation)	
Exclusion (where a student is deliberately and repeatedly isolated)		Extortion (obtaining something through force or threats)	
Relational (eg, spreading rumours, malicious gossip, silent treatment)		Other (specify)	

6. Type of Bullying Behaviour 2.7 (tick relevant box(es)) *

Prejudicial Bullying/Identity based bullying (eg. based on race, religion, gender, disability)		Exceptionally able bullying (bullying that intends to harm a student of high ability)	
Physical appearance bullying		Sexual Harassment (any form of unwanted verbal, nonverbal or physical contact of a sexual nature)	
Other (Specify)			

7. Where behaviour is regarded as identity-based bullying, indicate the relevant category:

Homophobic	Disability/ SEN related	Racist	Membership of Traveller community	Other (specify)

8. Brief Description of bullying behaviour

9. Impact of the bullying behaviour

10. Details of action taken

Signed _____ (Relevant Teacher) Date _____

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal _____

Appendix 2

Review of the Bí Cineálta Policy

The Board of Management (the Board) must undertake an annual (calendar) review of the school's Bí Cineálta policy and its implementation in consultation with the school community. As part of the review, this document must be completed.

Bí Cineálta Policy Review

1. When did the Board formally adopt its Bí Cineálta policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour in accordance with the Bí Cineálta Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools? Insert date when the Bí Cineálta policy was last adopted by the school. ____/____/20____

2. Where in the school is the student friendly Bí Cineálta policy displayed?

3. What date did the Board publish the Bí Cineálta policy and the student-friendly policy on the school website? ____/____/20____

4. How has the student friendly policy been communicated to students?

5. How has the Bí Cineálta policy and student friendly policy been communicated to parents?

6. Have all school staff been made aware of the school's Bí Cineálta policy and the *Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*?

7. Does the Bí Cineálta policy document the strategies that the school uses to prevent bullying behaviour?

Yes No

8. Has the Board received and minuted the Bullying Behaviour Update presented by the principal at every ordinary board meeting over the last calendar year?

Yes No

9. Has the Board discussed how the school is addressing all reports of bullying behaviour.

Yes No

10. Is the Board satisfied that all incidents of bullying behaviour are addressed in accordance with the school's Bí Cineálta Policy?

Yes No

11. Have the prevention strategies in the Bí Cineálta policy been implemented?

Yes No

12. Has the Board discussed the effectiveness of the strategies used to prevent bullying behaviour?

Yes No

13. How have (a) parents, (b) students and (c) school staff been consulted as part of the review of the Bí Cineálta Policy?

14. Outline any aspects of the school's Bí Cineálta policy and/or its implementation that have been identified as requiring further improvement as part of this review:

15. Where areas for improvement have been identified, outline how these will be addressed and whether an action plan with timeframes has been developed?

16. Does the student friendly policy need to be updated as a result of this review and if so, why?

17. Does the school refer parents to the complaints procedures if they have a complaint about how the school has addressed bullying behaviour?

Yes No

19. Has the Office of the Ombudsman for Children initiated or completed an investigation into how the school has addressed an incident of bullying behaviour?

Yes No

Signed _____ Signed _____

(Chairperson of The Board of Management) (Principal)

Date: _____ Date: _____

Date of next review: _____