



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Report on the Review of the 2013 Action Plan on Bullying and the Development of Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying





Members of the Steering Committee

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Foreword from Minister Norma Foley TD

I am very pleased to publish the Report on the Review of the 2013 Action Plan on Bullying. This report outlines the work of the Steering Committee that I established in February 2022 to review the *Action Plan on Bullying 2013* and to develop a new action plan on bullying *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* which was published in December 2022.

The Steering Committee, chaired by Dr Noel Purdy, considered the significant developments and relevant research since 2013. Recent as this date may be, it is clear from talking to young people and school staff that the world has moved on and changed in very significant ways since 2013. To give just one example, the prevalence of mobile phones and social media have changed how we communicate with one another entirely.

With this and other issues in mind, the Steering Committee reviewed the actions and progress under the 2013 Action Plan on Bullying and identified new priority areas that need to be addressed and actions which need to be taken to prevent and address bullying in schools.

This review has resulted in the development of *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying*, Ireland's Whole Education Approach to preventing and addressing bullying in schools. Our new action plan on bullying builds upon the achievements and ambition of the previous Action Plan on Bullying and the work undertaken in the intervening years so as to ensure that our children and young people are safe and happy in our schools.

This report documents the extensive work undertaken by the Steering Committee to review the 2013 Action Plan on Bullying and to ensure that *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* is practical, inclusive and contains a broad range of actions which help us all to work together towards a diverse, inclusive Irish society free from bullying in all its forms and where individual difference is valued and celebrated.

I would like to thank the Steering Committee for their work and to thank all those who participated in the extensive consultation process. I would especially like to thank the 170 children and young people who participated in the focus groups and whose views are reflected in *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying*. Your insight, experiences and enthusiasm make an incredible difference every day to your schools and we have also been thrilled to benefit from it as well.

Norma Foley TD
Minister for Education



Foreword from Secretary General Bernie McNally

I would like to thank the Steering Committee for the commitment and dedication that they have shown in their extensive work to review the 2013 Action Plan on Bullying and to develop the new *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying*. I would also like to thank the chair of the Steering Committee, Dr Noel Purdy, of Stranmillis University College in Belfast.

This report on the review of the 2013 *Action Plan on Bullying* documents the work of the Steering Committee and the extensive consultation process that was undertaken to review the 2013 Action Plan and to develop a new action plan, *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying*, which was published in December 2022.

It is important, in developing a new action plan, that we look to the 2013 Action Plan to review progress on implementation of the actions and to reflect on what has worked well and what hasn't worked well. We must also consider the changes that have happened since 2013, relevant research, best practice in preventing and addressing bullying and the views of a wide range of children and young people, parents, school staff, academics, organisations and individuals.

I am pleased that the Steering Committee have taken such a thorough approach in their review and the development of the new action plan. *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* incorporates each of the nine components of UNESCO's Whole Education Approach to prevent and address bullying.

The Department's Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice (2019) provides an overarching framework for schools to support the wellbeing of all members of the school community and to prevent and address bullying in schools. The Department's vision is to provide an education system where every child and young person feels valued and is actively supported and nurtured to reach their full potential. The implementation of *Cineáltas* will help us to achieve our vision and will help ensure that our children and young people are kept safe from harm and that the wellbeing of children and young people is at the forefront of everything.

Bernie McNally
Secretary General



Foreword from Chair of the Steering Committee Dr Noel Purdy

It has been a privilege for me to chair the Steering Committee appointed by the Minister for Education Norma Foley TD in February 2022 to review the 2013 *Action Plan on Bullying* and to develop a new Action Plan to prevent and address bullying in Irish schools.

An important first step in the process, as reflected in the terms of reference, was to review the actions and progress under the 2013 Action Plan on Bullying. This report is the result of that comprehensive review and provides evidence of the extent of the work of the Steering Committee supported by government officials over recent months. That work has firstly involved critically reviewing the implementation of the existing Action Plan and auditing its content against UNESCO's *Whole Education Approach to Prevent and Address Bullying and Cyberbullying* (UNESCO, 2020).

The Whole Education Approach dispels the myth that addressing bullying can be seen as the responsibility of schools working in isolation. Instead it proposes a model comprising 9 components, recognising the importance of collaborative effort at all levels of society including government, school staff (teaching and non-teaching staff), researchers, support services, community stakeholders, parents and, importantly, children and young people themselves.

A whole-education approach ensures that local school initiatives recognise the importance of the interconnectedness of the school with the wider community including education, technological and societal systems, values and pressures, all of which can impact on the prevalence and type of bullying and cyberbullying that occurs in a school." (UNESCO 2020, p.2) *The Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice* (2019) provides an overarching framework for schools to support a comprehensive, multi-component approach to support the wellbeing of all members of the school community and to prevent and tackle bullying in schools.

This report provides an overview of the context within which *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* sits, including relevant legislation, policy and initiatives as well as developments within broader Irish society. The report also presents a summary of the extensive formal consultation which led to over 4,600 responses to the public consultation questionnaire; 78 additional written submissions from individuals and stakeholder organisations; direct face-to-face engagement with 170 children and young people, including children with special educational needs, Traveller and Roma children, children from Ukraine and children in the international protection system; and focus group interviews with 41 school staff and board of management members. The Steering Committee itself met 11 times, heard over 50 presentations from a range of stakeholders, and engaged directly with teachers, principals, parents and children.

Having reviewed the 2013 Action Plan on Bullying, consulted widely, engaged with key stakeholders and critically examined the latest national and international research evidence, we have published *Cinéaltas: Action Plan on Bullying* which features a new core definition of bullying along with explanatory notes and a series of significant actions presented under the four key areas of the 2019 Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice: Culture and Environment, Curriculum (Teaching and Learning), Policies and Planning, and Relationships and Partnerships.

This report provides additional context and rationale for that new definition of bullying, and an audit of the new actions against UNESCO's Whole Education Approach. While it is acknowledged that attention will inevitably focus on the definition and actions contained within *Cinéaltas: Action Plan on Bullying*, I believe that the contents of this report also represent essential reading, confirming the breadth, depth and rigour of the process of engagement, consultation and critical reflection over 9 months.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the members of the Steering Committee, the officials who facilitated our work so efficiently, and to all those who engaged with our important work in any way. It is my sincere hope that *Cinéaltas: Action Plan on Bullying*, supported by this report, will serve as a blueprint for Irish society in the years to come as we work together to prevent and address bullying in schools.

Dr Noel Purdy
Director, Centre for Research in Educational Underachievement,
Stranmillis University College, Belfast





Acknowledgements

The Department of Education would like to thank the Steering Committee and all of those who assisted with the review of the 2013 *Action Plan on Bullying* and the development of *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying*.

In particular the Department would like to thank the following:

- > The children and young people, parents, school staff and members of the public who shared their views, experiences and ideas
- > DCEDIY and the National Participation Office for facilitating focus groups with children and young people
- > The Youth Advisory Group and the schools who worked on piloting the methodologies for the Consultation Days
- > The schools and centres of learning providing summer programmes that facilitated additional focus group consultations with children and young people
- > The organisations and individuals who presented to the Steering Committee
- > The consultation report writers, Dr Bernadette Ní Áingléis, Dr Mary Gilbride and Ms Kate Carroll who carefully and skilfully presented the views of those attending the focus groups and those who made public submissions
- > The DCU Anti-Bullying Centre for their advice and expertise

Executive Summary

This report on the review of the 2013 *Action Plan on Bullying* provides an overview of the work undertaken by the Steering Committee to review the 2013 *Action Plan on Bullying* and to develop *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying*.

The approach taken by the Steering Committee included the following:

- > Reviewing the societal and technological changes and developments in research and international best practice relating to bullying since 2013 specifically in relation to the areas of online (cyber) bullying, identity based bullying and sexual harassment, among other areas
- > Giving consideration to UNESCO's Whole Education Approach to prevent and address bullying which provides a cohesive and holistic framework to guide policy makers in taking a wide-reaching approach to preventing and addressing bullying
- > Reviewing the actions and recommendations contained in the 2013 Action Plan on Bullying to identify progress made and barriers to their implementation
- > Mapping the actions contained in the 2013 Action Plan on Bullying against UNESCO's Whole Education Approach to identify gaps
- > Giving detailed consideration to the recommendations contained in the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Education, Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science *Report on School Bullying and the Impact on Mental Health* which was published in August 2021
- > Giving consideration to the Department of Education's *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2019* and using the lens of the four key areas for wellbeing promotion
- > Engaging in an extensive consultation process
- > Identifying key areas that need to be addressed and actions which need to be taken to address them
- > Developing an action plan that is a Whole Education Approach to preventing and addressing bullying in schools

This report outlines the work of the Steering Committee and provides the rationale for *Cineáltas*, the new action plan on bullying. A summary of the matters discussed at each Steering Committee meeting and a summary of each of the four consultation reports are provided with links to the meeting minutes and to the consultation reports.

The consultation process included the following:

- > Over 50 presentations were made to the Steering Committee
- > Over 4,600 responses were received through the public consultation online survey
- > 78 submissions were received through the public request for submissions
- > 41 school staff and board of management members participated in school focus groups
- > 170 children and young people participated in focus groups including children with special educational needs, Traveller and Roma children, children from the Ukraine and children in the international protection system

97 findings are provided in this report and these are set out under the four key areas for wellbeing promotion as outlined in the Department of Education's *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2019*: Culture and Environment, Relationships and Partnerships, Curriculum (Teaching and Learning), and Policy and Planning.

This report provides a context for the updated definition of bullying. It provides an overview of international perspectives and research in this regard and provides the rationale for the updated definition.

The final section of the report details the 61 actions contained in *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* and reviews them against UNESCO's Whole Education Approach to prevent and address bullying. This process has helped ensure that Cineáltas is a cohesive and holistic policy framework to prevent and address bullying.

Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying contains 61 actions which have been carefully designed, by drawing on the latest national and international research and evidence informed practice, and through listening to the voices of children and young people, parents, school staff and the wider education community. Together we have created an ambitious Action Plan which will help ensure that all of our children and young people feel safe and secure, and are nurtured to reach their full potential.



1 | Introduction



Chapter 1: Introduction

In February 2022, the Minister for Education, Norma Foley TD, asked her officials in the Department of Education to undertake a review of the *Action Plan on Bullying* and the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* which were both published in 2013 (DES, 2013; DES, 2013).

The *Action Plan on Bullying 2013* has been the key strategic policy approach to prevent and address bullying in schools since 2013, when in conjunction with newly developed *Anti-bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools*, schools were asked to develop and implement an anti-bullying policy. The aim of the Action Plan on Bullying was to “identify priority actions that can encourage schools to develop anti-bullying policies and in particular strategies to combat homophobic bullying to support students” (DES, 2013).

The Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education, Further, Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, published a report on *School Bullying and the Impact on Mental Health* in August 2021 following consultation with and receipt of submissions from various organisations (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2021). The recommendations contained within the report had the aim of ensuring that any response to prevent and address bullying met the requirements of an ever evolving and diverse society and was a comprehensive approach. The first of the recommendations contained within the report was for an Audit of the *Action Plan on Bullying* (2013).

Life in Ireland, Irish society and the experiences of our children and young people growing up in Ireland have changed greatly since the development of the *Action Plan on Bullying* in 2013 and the implementation of the anti-bullying procedures in September of that year. This review has the purpose of ensuring that the new Action Plan on bullying would be in line with up-to-date evidence-based research and represent a comprehensive and holistic, national educational response to bullying that meets the needs of the children and young people in modern Ireland.

Minister Foley requested that the review should consider significant developments and relevant research since 2013, specifically in relation to the areas of online (cyber) bullying, identity based bullying and sexual harassment, among other areas. The review should also ensure that the new action plan encompasses all the related initiatives that have progressed outside of the original actions in the plan, as well as giving consideration to additional actions which are required.

A Steering Committee consisting of department officials and subject matter experts from various advocacy organisations was established to carry out the review. The Steering Committee was chaired externally by Dr Noel Purdy from Stranmillis University College, Belfast.



The terms of reference for the Steering Committee were to:

- > review the actions and progress under the current Action Plan on Bullying (published in 2013)
- > develop a new Action Plan with any new priority areas that need to be addressed to help prevent and tackle bullying in schools
- > identify the actions which need to be taken to address these areas

In parallel to this, a working group was established to review the *Anti-bullying procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*. The terms of reference for the Working Group established to review the procedures were to:

- > take account of developments since the procedures were published in 2013
- > take account of relevant research in this area
- > take account of gender identity bullying, cyber bullying and sexual harassment
- > ensure appropriate oversight at school level
- > ensure that a school's anti-bullying policy is developed and reviewed in consultation with the school community

The consequence of being targeted for bullying can have a significant negative impact on an individual's wellbeing with research linking anxiety, depression, psychosis, lower self-esteem, borderline personality disorder, and even suicide, with children and young people across, all age groups (O'Higgins Norman, et al, 2023). With this in mind, and in the context of the broader experience and reality of what is encountered by children and young people both inside and outside the school gates, the review looked at bullying through the lens of the four key areas for wellbeing promotion: culture and environment, curriculum (teaching and learning), policy and planning, and relationships and partnerships, as outlined in the Department's *Wellbeing Policy and Framework for practice 2019*.

Throughout the review, the Department recognised the importance of the involvement of the whole education community in developing a robust and agile strategic policy document. The extensive consultation process involved significant consultation across the Department of Education, with other Government Departments and with a broad range of stakeholders including children and young people, parents, school staff, education partners, advocacy groups, academics, organisations and individuals. This was with the intention of gathering and listening to primary sources of information and data, to support and inform the development of new ideas to improve how we can prevent and address bullying in schools, ensuring that the developments are targeted to the needs of the whole school community.

This report outlines the review process and provides the rationale for the new action plan on bullying. The report outlines the progress made since 2013; the views from the consultation process; the actions in *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* and audits the 2013 *Action Plan on Bullying* and *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* against UNESCO's Whole Education Approach to prevent and address bullying and draws on the Department's *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2019*.

In doing so, it provides the rationale behind the development of the vision, principles, updated definition of bullying and wide-ranging actions provided in the accompanying policy document, *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying*.



2

Action Plan on Bullying 2013 and Anti-bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2013



Chapter 2: Action Plan on Bullying 2013 and Anti-bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2013

The Department of Education carried out a significant piece of work in 2012 and 2013 to develop an *Action Plan on Bullying* which was published in January 2013. Anti-bullying procedures for primary and post-primary schools were published in September 2013, replacing the previous document called *Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post-Primary Schools* which was published in 1993.

The *Action Plan on Bullying 2013* was developed following an extensive consultation process. The Working Group considered 68 submissions and consulted with government departments and agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), academics and researchers, colleagues from the UK and individuals who had experienced bullying behaviour. The Working Group also considered national and international literature on the topic including research on approaches and interventions that had been tried over recent decades. The impact of bullying and the very serious consequences for individuals and families was also considered. Consideration was also given to the Ombudsman for Children's Report on a consultation with over 300 children and young people about how to deal effectively with bullying in schools (Ombudsman for Children 2012) and BeLonG To Youth Services consultation with 31 LGBT young people. The main themes considered by the Working Group included the following:

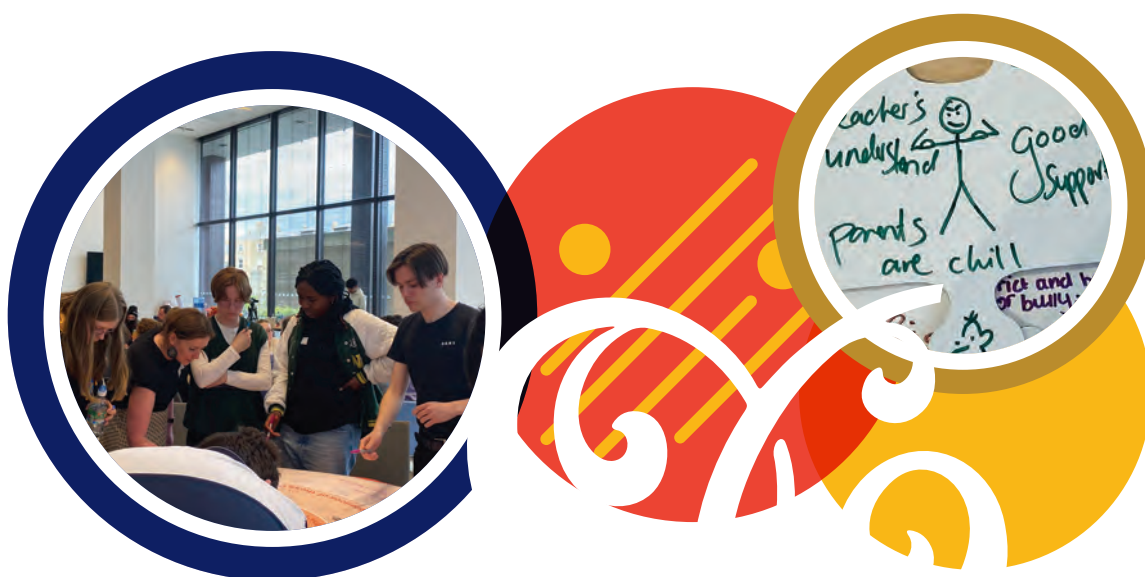
- > National context for tackling bullying in schools
- > Links to other social issues including mental health
- > Definition of bullying
- > Complexity of roles in bullying situations
- > Specific types of bullying and respect for diversity
- > Cyber bullying
- > Awareness raising at national level and at school level
- > Curriculum resources, teaching and learning
- > Training and education
- > Policy at school level
- > Supervision in schools
- > Pastoral support, coping skills and developing resilience
- > Student voice and participation
- > Complaints procedures
- > Evaluation and monitoring
- > Balance of responsibility between school and wider community
- > Resources

The 2013 *Action Plan on Bullying* set out twelve key actions to help prevent and address bullying in schools. These actions relate to the following:

- > Development and implementation of national anti-bullying procedures for schools
- > A requirement for schools to promote a school culture and climate that is welcoming of diversity and respectful
- > Strengthening of oversight arrangements in schools including reporting and evaluation of bullying incidents
- > Provision of national teacher training and resources on anti-bullying
- > Provision of training and resources for parents
- > Monitoring of schools' anti-bullying measures by the Department's Inspectorate
- > Supporting schools to self-evaluate their effectiveness in creating a positive school culture and preventing and tackling bullying
- > The development of a national anti-bullying website
- > Supporting the Stand Up Awareness campaign to prevent and tackle homophobic and transphobic bullying in schools
- > Supporting safe internet usage
- > Conducting research on effective interventions in Irish schools for the prevention of bullying of children with special educational needs; Conducting research on prevalence and impact of bullying linked to social media
- > Provision of seminars in the Department of Education to build capacity in respect of bullying.

The twelve key actions contained in the 2013 Action Plan on bullying focused on support for schools, teacher training, research and awareness raising and aimed to ensure that all forms of bullying including identity-based bullying were addressed. A number of the actions have been implemented in full, while others by their nature involve continuous action and are the subject of ongoing implementation.

The first action contained in the *Action Plan on Bullying 2013* was to develop new Anti-bullying procedures for schools. The *Anti-bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-primary Schools* were published in September 2013.





The procedures are designed to give direction and guidance to the Board of Management and to school personnel in preventing and addressing school-based bullying behaviour amongst its pupils and students. The Board and school personnel are required to adhere to these procedures in dealing with allegations and incidents of bullying.

The Board of Management must ensure that the school's anti-bullying policy is made available to school personnel, published on the school website (or where none exists, be otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the parents' association (where one exists). The procedures also include oversight arrangements which require that, at least once in every school term, the principal will provide a report to the board of management in relation to the numbers of bullying cases reported to him or her and confirmation that all of these cases have been, or are being, dealt with in accordance with the school's anti-bullying policy and the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.

The oversight arrangements also require that the Board must undertake an annual review of the school's Anti-Bullying Policy and its implementation by the school. Written notification that the review has been completed must be made available to school personnel, published on the school website (or where none exists, be otherwise readily accessible to parents and pupils on request) and provided to the parents' association (where one exists).

Review of implementation of the actions and recommendations contained in the Action Plan on Bullying 2013

The *Action Plan on Bullying 2013* contains twelve actions and thirteen recommendations. The Steering Committee have reviewed the actions and progress made in implementing the actions. The progress made in implementing the actions is provided in the table below.

Table 1. Progress in Implementation of the actions contained in the 2013 Action Plan on Bullying

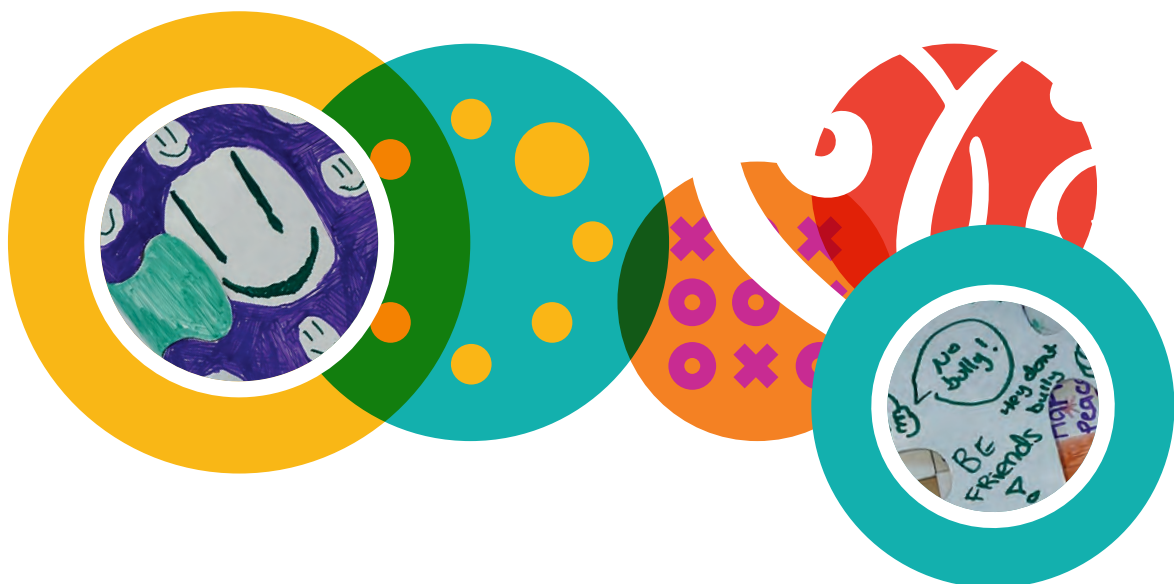
Actions	Status
<p>1. New National Anti-Bullying Procedures for Schools</p> <p>The DES, in consultation with the relevant education partners, will revise the existing anti-bullying guidelines for schools and the 2006 policy template for schools. The new document will clearly indicate the requirement on schools to have an anti-bullying policy which forms part of the school's Code of Behaviour. This work will take into account the working group's recommendations that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Schools promote a school culture and climate that is welcoming of diversity and where all relationships are respectful and where members of the school community feel empowered to prevent, discuss, disclose and deal with bullying behaviour. > Schools must work to prevent and effectively tackle homophobic and transphobic bullying in particular, which will lead to significant improvement in the school climate for all students. > All grounds of harassment under the Equal Status Acts should be listed in anti-bullying policies (gender (including transgender), civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community). 	<p>This action has been implemented.</p> <p>This action was implemented with the publication of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-primary Schools in 2013.</p> <p>The procedures require schools to have an anti-bullying policy in place that respects diversity, outlines how schools promote a welcoming school culture and climate and forms part of the school's Code of Behaviour.</p> <p>Boards of Management are required to ensure that everyone is aware of the policy, that it is reviewed annually and that there is appropriate oversight of incidents of bullying behaviour.</p> <p>The procedures include a definition of bullying and specific requirements in relation to the use of prevention and education strategies and the consistent investigation, follow up and recording of bullying behaviour.</p> <p>"Being LGBT in School" was developed with the support of the Department as part of the implementation of the Action Plan on Bullying 2013. Circulated to all post primary schools, the Guide supports schools in the implementation of the Department's Anti-Bullying Procedures, which require schools to engage in education and preventative strategies in relation to homophobic and transphobic bullying.</p>

Actions	Status
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > That the definition of bullying in the new national procedures should include a specific reference to the following forms and methods of bullying: deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying, cyber bullying, and identity based bullying (specifically including homophobic bullying, racist bullying, membership of the Traveller community and bullying of those with disabilities or special educational needs). This work will seek to strengthen oversight arrangements in schools including: > Periodic summary reports of bullying incidents to be provided to the Board of Management; > That the Board of Management must review the policy and its implementation annually and provide confirmation to the school community, including parents / the Parents' Association, that it has done so. > That the policy and record of its review are available to the Department and patron if requested. In addition, the new policy template should: > Make provision for schools to document prevention and education strategies; > Include a standardised template for reviewing implementation of a school's anti-bullying policy for completion each year by the Board of Management; > Provide a bullying report template for recording bullying incidents. > Support schools to analyse data to identify trends/patterns in the types of bullying in their school and to provide a baseline of evidence for adjusting policies and practices on an ongoing basis. 	

Actions	Status
<p>2. Review of Teacher Education Support Service provision</p> <p>The Department's teacher education support services will be directed to give priority to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > the gathering of evidence in relation to teacher needs with regard to bullying and teacher confidence / capacity to address, in particular, identity based bullying, including homophobic bullying, and cyber bullying. > the provision of an appropriate Continuous Professional Development (CPD) response. <p>In carrying out a review of teacher education needs, and in providing CPD, the Teacher Education Support Services will take account of the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > The need for support services to co-ordinate their support to schools so that a common approach is adopted by all support services around the area of bullying behaviour, based on the new DES Anti-Bullying procedures. > CPD for school leaders on the prevention of bullying behaviour in schools should include best practice guidelines on the promotion of a culture of mutual respect in schools. > CPD for teachers should not only involve awareness raising around all forms of bullying behaviour but should also include the provision of sample lesson plans that address school wide expectations such as rules and routines, respectful behaviour and respectful language. Sample lesson plans need to be age appropriate and differentiated for different levels of ability. 	<p>This action has been implemented.</p> <p>The Department's Professional Development Service for Teachers developed CPD material to support teachers and school staff in the implementation of the <i>Anti-bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-primary Schools</i>. The CPD took the format of Workshops, seminars and a webinar. It included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > A school wide approach to tackling bullying > Classroom based prevention > The role of SPHE > Investigation and intervention strategies such as restorative practice > Practical tools including admin material, a guide to the implementation of the procedures, including a checklist for school leaders and teachers > Successful strategies used by schools that were in practice <p>Oide on behalf of the Department's Wellbeing Office which is led by NEPS are leading out on the national roll out of Wellbeing CPD on the implementation of the Department's Wellbeing Policy and on the steps to take to engage in wellbeing promotion using School Self Evaluation (SSE).</p>

Actions	Status
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > CPD should support the development of Anti-Bullying policies in schools and the implementation of the policy on a daily basis in schools, based on evidence-based practice nationally and internationally. > Relevant Support Services should assist schools developing data gathering practices, templates and analysing data, taking into account data protection requirements and Child Protection procedures. > Relevant Support Services should also assist schools in incorporating their Anti-Bullying policy into the school's Code of Behaviour. > Education Centres could develop courses on implementation strategies and methodologies to promote respectful behaviour and address bullying behaviour in schools. 	<p>There are extensive training and curricular supports available to schools, including through the Social Personal Health Education curriculum, the Professional Development Service for Teachers, Webwise.ie and the national anti-bullying website www.tacklebullying.ie to assist schools in the development of policies and practices on the prevention of bullying and harassment and the safe use of the internet.</p> <p>Webwise.ie has developed dedicated resources for teachers, parents, children and young people which gives practical information and advice on key issues such as cyberbullying, sexting, image sharing, respectful communication, social media, popular apps and sites. NEPS psychologists are supporting all post-primary schools with the establishment or revision of their Student Support Teams in line with the revised Student Support Team Guidelines (2021).</p> <p>Student Support Teams (SST) are the overarching team concerned with the progressing of actions for the welfare and wellbeing of all students.</p> <p>The new integrated teacher education support service, Oide, was launched on 1st of September 2023. In bringing the four existing support services (PDST, JCT, NIPT and CSL) together, the new service provides a more efficient, effective and responsive model of CPD provision and provide a '<i>one stop shop</i>' where teachers and school leaders can access supports and resources.</p>

Actions	Status
<p>3. Coordinated training and resource development for boards of management and parents</p> <p>A coordinated plan for training and awareness initiatives for parents and boards of management to be provided in conjunction with management bodies and parents councils. This can build on existing work including the current joint DES / GLEN initiative to develop guidelines for boards of management on supporting LGBT young people.</p>	<p>This action has been implemented.</p> <p>The Department has funded the provision of anti-bullying sessions to parents through the National Parents Council since 2014. These sessions focus on helping parents to understand the many ways in which bullying can take place, and to be aware of the prevalence and dangers of cyberbullying including webcam blackmail, online grooming and how to manage the safe use of technology both inside and outside the home. The training sessions enable parents assist their children when issues of bullying behaviour arise.</p> <p>The Child Abuse Preventative Programme provides training for school management on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > The implementation of the Stay Safe programme > Reporting guidelines and procedures and > Code of best practice, and parent education. It provides parent education on Stay Safe and related child protection issues



Actions	Status
<p>4. School Inspection</p> <p>Existing models for evaluating SPHE and for whole school evaluations (WSEs) should be adapted by amending questionnaires and by other means to include more evidence gathering concerning the effectiveness of the schools actions to create a positive school culture and to prevent and tackle bullying.</p>	<p>This action has been implemented.</p> <p>The questionnaires used by inspectors during whole-school evaluations were amended in January 2014, following publication of the <i>Action Plan on Bullying</i>, to include more evidence gathering concerning the effectiveness of the school's actions to create a positive school culture and to prevent and tackle bullying.</p> <p>The Department's Inspectorate published a report in 2013 on the data gathered through parent and student/pupil questionnaires during the period 2013-2016. Inspectors carry out similar surveys and focus groups as part of Child Protection and Safeguarding inspections in schools and boarding facilities, and include questions regarding the provision of SPHE and RSE lessons. Subject inspections in SPHE now also include focus groups of students.</p>
<p>5. Thematic Evaluation of Bullying in Schools</p> <p>A thematic evaluation should be conducted, in collaboration with relevant partners, in a sample of primary and post-primary schools to evaluate the effectiveness of the actions schools take to create a positive school culture and to prevent and tackle various forms of bullying, including homophobic bullying.</p>	<p>This action has been implemented.</p> <p>In 2021 the Department's Inspectorate undertook more than 500 thematic incidental inspections to monitor the implementation of anti-bullying procedures in schools. <i>The Report on the implementation of aspects of anti-bullying measures in schools</i> was published in April 2022.</p> <p>The Inspectorate also carried out a focus group exercise with approximately 100 primary and 120 post primary pupils to gather their views on actions taken by schools to prevent and tackle bullying. <i>Actions by schools to prevent and tackle bullying: Report on focus groups with primary pupils and post-primary students</i> was published in June 2022.</p>

Actions	Status
<p>6. School Self Evaluation</p> <p>Schools should be supported in self-evaluating their effectiveness in creating a positive school culture and in preventing and tackling bullying. This should be done through the provision of criteria to judge quality within the Leadership and Management and the Support for Students dimensions of School Self-Evaluation (SSE).</p>	<p>This action has been implemented.</p> <p>School self-evaluation was curtailed due to the pandemic. However, schools are required to use the SSE process to initiate a wellbeing promotion review and development cycle by 2025.</p> <p>Inspectors carry out advisory visits to schools on a regular basis to support the self-evaluation process.</p>
<p>7. New national anti-bullying website</p> <p>A single national anti-bullying website should be developed to provide information for parents, young people and school staff on types and methods of bullying and how to deal with bullying behaviour. This website can also provide links to the range of curriculum and other resources available. Good examples of national websites in other jurisdictions include the www.respectme.org.uk website managed by RespectMe the Scottish anti-bullying service and the www.Stopbullying.gov federal government website managed by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services.</p>	<p>This action has been implemented.</p> <p>The Department of Education provides annual funding to the DCU Anti-Bullying Centre towards research and training programmes and to meet the running and development costs of the national anti-bullying website, www.tacklebullying.ie. This website provides a single point of information and support for young people, parents and teachers affected by bullying behaviour.</p>



Actions	Status
<p>8. Stand Up Awareness Week Against Homophobic Bullying</p> <p>In light of the identified need to combat bullying against LGBT young people or young people perceived to be LGBT, DES should support the Stand Up Awareness campaign. The objective of this initiative is to prevent and tackle homophobic and transphobic bullying in schools by : a) increasing friendship and support of LGBT students by other students; b) increasing awareness of LGBT students among other students, teachers, principals, and others in the school-wide community; increasing respect for diversity and LGBT identities; increasing the likelihood that LGBT students will report bullying; and, thereby, reduce bullying and attendant isolation, self-harm, suicidality, and mental health difficulties among LGBT students.</p>	<p>This action has been implemented.</p> <p>Since 2014 the Department has provided funding to BeLonG To Youth Services to support delivery of the Stand Up Campaign.</p>
<p>9. Support a media campaign focused on cyber bullying and specifically targeted at young people</p> <p>As part of the Safer Internet Day 2013, which takes place on 5th February, support the rollout of a social marketing campaign specifically targeted at young people.</p>	<p>This action has been implemented.</p> <p>Safer Internet Day is an EU wide initiative to promote a safer internet for all users, especially young people. It is promoted in Ireland by with Oide Technology in Education and Webwise.</p>
<p>10. Research on effective supports for children with special educational needs</p> <p>The working group welcomes the agreement of the National Disability Authority to conduct research on good practice and effective interventions in Irish schools for the prevention of bullying of children with special educational needs. This will support the dissemination of good practice across the school system.</p>	<p>This action has been implemented.</p> <p>The National Disability Authority published an executive summary of their research in November 2014. Based on the literature review and empirical research, five guiding principles were identified that underpin a framework for schools to ensure that their school becomes a place where staff and children are happy and safe and that the school environment is conducive to learning and to developing good relationships with others.</p>

Actions	Status
<p>11. Research on prevalence and impact of bullying linked to social media on the mental health and suicidal behaviour among young people</p> <p>The working group welcomes the agreement of the National Office for Suicide Prevention to facilitate a literature review to examine the prevalence and impact of bullying linked to social media on the mental health and suicidal behaviour among young people within the school setting. In addition, the review may identify at risk groups who may be particularly vulnerable to this form of bullying to enable the development of appropriate preventative measures for the whole school community.</p>	<p>This action has been implemented.</p> <p>In March 2014 the Department and the National Office for Suicide Prevention published <i>Literature Review 'The Prevalence and Impact of Bullying Linked to Social Media on the Mental Health and Suicidal Behaviour Among Young People'</i></p>
<p>12. Awareness raising measures, including guidelines, for policy makers and DES agencies and services which work in the schools sector on all types and forms of bullying.</p> <p>DES to facilitate a series of internal seminars to build capacity in respect of bullying. All policy staff of relevant DES business units and DES agencies and services will be invited to participate. Guidelines will be developed for staff to support policy proofing for identity based issues, in particular LGBT identity and homophobic bullying.</p>	<p>This action has been implemented.</p> <p>The DCU Anti-Bullying Centre has provided seminars on topics related to bullying and online safety. These are for staff working in the Department of Education as well as a wider audience. Since 2021, the seminars have been organised with the Observatory on Cyberbullying, Cyberhate and Cyberharassment and are now offered online three times per year.</p>

Consideration has also been given to the thirteen recommendations contained in the *Action Plan on Bullying 2013* and the status of their implementation. The progress made in implementing the recommendations is provided in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Progress in Implementation of the recommendations contained in the Action Plan on Bullying 2013

Recommendations	Status
<p>1. Establishment of an Anti-Bullying Implementation Group:</p> <p>A group to be established to oversee the implementation of accepted actions and recommendations set out in this Action Plan. The Implementation Group would also have a role in relation to the research proposed in actions 9 & 10 above.</p>	<p>This recommendation was not implemented.</p> <p>A formal implementation group, with regular reporting on progress in implementing the actions was not established.</p>
<p>2. Protocols between state agencies providing services to schools.</p> <p>Agencies should review their protocols for the appropriate sharing of information about schools and the children and young people in those schools. This could help to identify issues that need to be addressed at school level and help ensure resources are used to support children and young people to best effect.</p>	<p>This recommendation was not implemented.</p> <p>In 2018 the General Data Protection Regulations became effective and agencies are required to have Data Sharing Agreements in place. However, there does not appear to have been a focus on Agencies sharing information about schools and the children and young people in them.</p>
<p>3. Initial Teacher Education (ITE)</p> <p>The Teaching Council's <i>Initial Teacher Education: Criteria and Guidelines for Programme Providers</i> set out the mandatory elements to be contained in programmes of ITE and the learning outcomes. The Learning Outcomes in the Guidelines do not currently include specific references to bullying. The Working Group recommends that consideration be given to making specific references to bullying in the guidelines in line with the findings in this Action Plan.</p>	<p>This recommendation was not implemented.</p>

Recommendations	Status
<p>4. Curriculum</p> <p>The DES, NCCA and other bodies involved in curriculum development and implementation should consider the findings and recommendations particularly in the context of the development of new curricula. Consideration should be given to placing a requirement on schools to provide SPHE at senior cycle.</p>	<p>This recommendation has been implemented.</p> <p>In April 2018, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) was asked to undertake a major review of RSE in schools across all stages of education to ensure that it is fit for purpose and meets the needs of young people today in modern Ireland.</p> <p>The NCCA was asked to look at a number of specific issues in respect of RSE and the curriculum. These included but were not limited to consent; developments in relation to contraception; healthy positive, sexual expression and relationships; safe use of the Internet and social media and its effects on relationships and self-esteem; and LGBTQ+ matters.</p> <p>A draft revised Junior Cycle specification for SPHE was published by the NCCA for a public consultation which ran from July to October 2022. The new specification has been implemented in schools since September 2023.</p> <p>The updated specification places a strong focus on the development of important life skills that young people need growing up in a fast changing and complex world. It is grounded in an approach that is positive, holistic, student-centred, inclusive and age and developmentally appropriate. There are a number of learning outcomes contained within the draft specification relating to bullying, both in-person and online as well as maintaining healthy, respectful relationships.</p> <p>Preparation to update the Senior Cycle SPHE/RSE specification has already commenced. A background paper and brief has been prepared which will guide the work of the NCCA development group for the Senior Cycle SPHE/RSE specification. That background paper was published in October for public consultation.</p>

Recommendations	Status
	<p>The Senior Cycle specification is currently available for public consultation and it is expected to be finalised early in 2024 with a view to being implemented in schools in September 2024</p> <p>The Primary Curriculum Framework was published in March 2023. Development groups for all the curricular areas including wellbeing have been set up by the NCCA. It is expected that consultation on draft specifications will take place in 2024.</p> <p>Learning pertaining to RSE in primary school will be addressed within the curricular area of Wellbeing in Stages 1 and 2 of the curriculum (junior infants to second class) and Social, Personal and Health Education in stages 3 and 4 of the curriculum (third to sixth class). This development group will work on the development of a specification for the curricular area and corresponding subjects. This advice will be developed through research, deliberation, consultation, and engagement with networks.</p>
<p>5. Stereotyping</p> <p>DES to engage with book publishers who produce materials for schools in relation to stereotyping.</p>	<p>This recommendation was not implemented.</p>
<p>6. Development of a new National Framework for Anti-Bullying</p> <p>The working group recommends that consideration be given in the context of the Children and Young People's Policy Framework to developing a new national framework which would set out the Government's commitment to preventing and tackling bullying for children and young people from early childhood through to adulthood.</p>	<p>This recommendation was not implemented</p> <p>In 2014, the Government published <i>Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures</i>. It contained a commitment to develop a National Framework for Anti-Bullying, taking a community-wide approach to tackling bullying from childhood through to adulthood, on which the Department of Children and Youth Affairs would take the lead. In the latest progress report it has been marked as not being progressed.</p>

Recommendations	Status
<p>7. Research into investigative procedures in other jurisdictions and development of proposals for change to the Irish system if real value can be added.</p> <p>The Working Group would welcome a further in depth analysis of specific investigative processes in other jurisdictions which could usefully inform the development of any proposed improvements to the Irish system for investigating complaints.</p>	<p>This recommendation has been implemented.</p> <p>From 2017 to 2020, research was undertaken by DCU Anti-Bullying Centre on investigative processes in other jurisdictions which included USA, New South Wales in Australia, and England.</p> <p>The research concluded that whilst Ireland was behind the other jurisdictions in terms of legislative reform it had been proactive with regard to enabling policy. No law or investigative process can adequately deal with school bullying, a holistic whole education approach is required.</p>
<p>8. Research, monitoring and evaluation</p> <p>As resources permit, identify and initiate further research on bullying issues including monitoring and evaluation of initiatives in schools and other sectors in order to support the dissemination of good practice and provide evidence for further policy development and decision making.</p>	<p>This recommendation has been implemented.</p> <p>Since 2013, the Department has funded a number of research initiatives aimed at understanding bullying and learning how best to deliver anti-bullying initiatives in schools.</p> <p>FUSE Anti-Bullying and Online Safety, is Ireland's first indigenous research based anti-bullying and online safety programme for schools. The programme was piloted in primary schools and made available to all post-primary schools in Ireland.</p> <p>In 2021, a national Observatory on Cyber bullying, Cyber hate, and Cyber harassment which provides research and education on issues related to digital safety was established.</p>

Recommendations	Status
<p>9. Children First</p> <p>Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children states that “In situations where the incident is serious and where the behaviour is regarded as potentially abusive, the school should consult the HSE Children and Family Services with a view to drawing up an appropriate response, such as a management plan “. It also states that “Serious instances of bullying behaviour should be referred to the HSE Children and Family Services”. It is recommended that more detailed guidance should be provided by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs for schools and others as to what constitutes “serious bullying” under Children First and when referrals to the HSE should be made.</p>	<p>This recommendation has been implemented in part.</p> <p>The Child Protection procedures (revised 2023) for Primary and Post Primary Schools provide that in cases of serious instances of bullying where the behaviour is regarded as possibly abusive, a referral may need to be made to Tusla or An Garda Síochána as appropriate.</p> <p>The procedures also provide that where school personnel have concerns about a child arising from alleged bullying behaviour but are not sure whether to report the matter to TUSLA, the designated liaison person shall seek advice from Tusla. However, the procedures do not provide guidance in relation to what constitutes serious bullying.</p>
<p>10. Code of Conduct for the media</p> <p>Within the context of the findings and recommendations in this action plan, consideration could be given to reviewing Principle 9 in the Code of Practice for Newspapers and Magazines which relates to Children and specifically consider adding a reference to the handling of media stories relating to bullying and suicide.</p>	<p>This recommendation has been implemented.</p> <p>Principle 9 of the Code of Practice emphasises that the press shall take particular care in seeking and presenting information or comment about a child under the age of 16. Journalists and editors should have regard for the vulnerability of children, and in all dealings with children should bear in mind the age of the child, whether parental or other adult consent has been obtained for such dealings, the sensitivity of the subject matter, and what circumstances if any make the story one of public interest.</p> <p>The Reporting of Suicide is listed under Principal 10 of the Office of Press Ombudsman’s current code of practice. It states that excessive details of the means of suicide should be avoided.</p>

Recommendations	Status
<p>11. Youth Work</p> <p>The group recommends that schools should continue to strengthen collaboration and interaction with youth services and promote the active participation by pupils in youth focused services within their local communities. The group strongly encourages youth services, groups and organisations to develop and implement anti-bullying policies in the context of their work with young people and to avail of the range of training and supports available through the NYCI, BeLonG To Youth Services and other national youth organisations in this regard.</p>	<p>This recommendation has been implemented in part.</p> <p>The Department continues to support Youth Services, and provides funding to a number of initiatives and organisations. These include the DCU Anti-Bullying Centre, the tacklebullying.ie website and the Stand Up campaign.</p>
<p>12. Sporting organisations</p> <p>The working group acknowledges the intention of the GAA to roll out a series of workshops for clubs entitled GAA Tackling Bullying from March 2013. The working group recommends that GAA clubs, along with other sporting organisations, work with schools to ensure a shared understanding of bullying in our communities, along with shared approaches to tackling bullying.</p>	<p>This recommendation has been implemented.</p> <p>The GAA became the country's first sporting organisation to launch a national anti-bullying campaign with the unveiling of the GAA Tackling Bullying Programme in March 2013.</p> <p>The programme consists of a two-hour training workshop suitable for Coaches, Parents, Players and other Club personnel and also includes a range of publicity materials for Clubs. The 2013 Tackling Bullying Programme has been shared with the other main sporting organisations. The GAA are currently working with Google to update the social media aspect of anti-bullying training, and this will be included in future safeguarding and coach education training.</p>

Recommendations	Status
<p>13. Partnership with Industry</p> <p>It is clear that social media and telecommunications companies and internet service providers have an important role to play in developing measures to prevent cyber bullying and to provide reporting mechanisms for those affected by cyber bullying. The working group encourages industry to continue to work with Irish State agencies and services, NGOs, parents and young people to raise awareness of cyber bullying and how it can be dealt with.</p>	<p>This recommendation has been implemented.</p> <p>The Online Safety and Media Regulation Act has, among other things, established a new regulatory body Coimisiún na Meán, including an Online Safety Commissioner. The role of the Online Safety Commissioner is to hold designated online services to account through binding online safety codes for how they tackle the availability of defined categories of harmful online content, including cyberbullying material. The Act provides Coimisiún na Meán with strong compliance and enforcement powers, including the power to seek the imposition of financial sanctions of up to €20 million or 10% of turnover.</p> <p>The Act requires that Coimisiún na Meán consult widely, including with industry, on the development and application of codes and other regulatory functions.</p> <p>Coimisiún na Meán also has an educational and awareness raising role in promoting positive online behaviour regarding children and young people, in conjunction with Webwise and other educational partners.</p> <p>The Online Safety and Media Regulation Act was signed into law on 10 December 2022.</p>

It is evident from table 1 and table 2 that significant progress was made with regard to implementation of all the actions in the *Action Plan on Bullying* however, a number of recommendations were not implemented or were implemented in part.

Audit of the 2013 Action Plan on Bullying against the Whole Education Approach

The *Action Plan on Bullying 2013* was a very significant development in educational policy in Ireland. It was the first definitive statement on bullying in schools since a previous brief document called *Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post-Primary Schools* which was published in 1993. That document had essentially defined bullying, described how it is manifested in schools, the implications for individuals and briefly advised schools on how to write an anti-bullying policy and implement it in very general terms.

The *Action Plan on Bullying 2013* moved the issue of school bullying from the edge of public policy to the centre of how we approach schooling in primary and post-primary schools in Ireland. It acknowledged that the harm caused by bullying can result in “loss of self-esteem, anxiety, stress, depression, difficulties with school work, reluctance to attend schools, and, in extreme cases, self-harm and suicide” (p. 31).

The purpose of the Action Plan was to give direction and enable school personnel, particularly school principals, to prevent and address bullying at a local level within their own context. Furthermore, the Action Plan provided a framework for principals and boards of management to work to consider suggestions for best practice in addressing bullying. These suggestions included: taking appropriate preventative steps such as developing a policy, nominating a specific member of staff to deal with bullying and including formal reporting of bullying.

Although limited, a range of recommendations put forward in the *Action Plan on Bullying 2013* make explicit linkages with other policy initiatives. For example, the sixth recommendation within the action plan recommends that school self-evaluation should support schools in the development of a positive school culture and tackling bullying. With the significant developments since 2013 in school self-evaluation in Ireland, the recent publication of *Looking at Our Schools 2022*, the quality framework of primary, special and post-primary schools, the updated action plan on bullying should contain more explicit linkages to this, given that school self-evaluation is now embedded in schools. Such self-evaluation would need to be linked to wider national evaluation of bullying in the school system. Opportunities for teacher professional learning for anti-bullying should also consider the national enactment of the Teaching Council’s *Cosán* framework, the professional learning framework for teachers (and school leaders).



The 2013 Action Plan responded to 68 submissions and consultation with a range of stakeholders, resulting in a very detailed 125 page document. A number of conclusions can be drawn from how the action plan is presented. While the action plan is pitched to a range of stakeholders, it was very text heavy and not accessible for all. The executive summary is helpful, but it would have been more helpful, given the brief number of recommendations if the recommendations were more clearly articulated within this section.

The Action Plan could have adopted a more promotional genre in how it was presented. While colourful text is used, the action plan does not contain any images of education settings, schools, pupil/student positive interactions. Images are powerful communication devices as they can convey concepts and information, and reinforce information provided in text. Therefore, the inclusion of relevant images in *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* will allow for the plan to be more reader-friendly and relatable to those who are implementing the actions contained therein. Finally, the language devices used in the action plan merit consideration as language choices are open to interpretation. For example, two verbs ‘must’ and ‘should’ are often used in the Action Plan to provide instruction and direction. For example, “schools must work to prevent and effectively tackle homophobic and transphobic bullying ...schools should be supported in self-evaluating their effectiveness in creating a positive school culture and in preventing and tackling bullying”. ‘Must’ may represent obligation, while ‘should’ may represent desirability. Thus to achieve the actions presented therein, language choices play an important role. Finally, the *Action Plan on Bullying* contains extracts from the then Programme for Government. It is important that this does not imply that implementation of the actions are limited to the lifetime of any given Government.

The publication of the *Action Plan on Bullying* in 2013 by the then Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairi Quinn TD was seen as a welcome development. It was introduced during a period when there were wider reforms in education policy including teacher education, school-self-evaluation, and changes to literacy and numeracy provision at primary and post-primary schools. In addition to this, the Action Plan was launched in the aftermath of the national economic crisis, which resulted in fiscal prudence in public services including education.

In tandem with this reform agenda, there was a pathway towards financial recovery as a result of the global economic downturn and national recession. This resulted in fiscal prudence in public service provision. Policy reform was to be achieved through the re-prioritising of spending and ensuring that the best outcomes could be achieved from existing financial and human resources. This position was made explicit in the terms of reference where the *Action Plan on Bullying* working group would “have regard to the current financial constraints within which the Department of Education and Skills is operating and will continue to operate in the coming year” (DES, 2013). While fiscal curtailment was an issue at the time of publication in 2013, the inclusion of this in the terms of reference may be rendered problematic as it can limit medium to long-term recommendations that may be achievable as economic conditions alter.



Research shows that that several well-known approaches to bullying prevention and intervention are limited in their success. These tend to reduce school-bullying perpetration by approximately 19–20% and school-bullying victimization by approximately 15–16% (Gaffney, Ttofi and Farrington, 2019). UNESCO recognised a need to develop an approach that was broader than a single whole-school approach. While whole-school approaches have been recommended in policy and procedures for several decades, it was felt that this approach put too much responsibility on individual schools to tackle bullying from within their own resources without sufficient recognition of the important role to be played by the wider education system and society.

Schools exist within a wider education system and society. Initiatives to prevent and address bullying need to recognise the interconnectedness of the school with the wider community including education, technological and societal systems. As such a broader *whole-education approach* is needed to really address bullying in schools. UNESCO's Scientific Committee on Tackling School Bullying, including cyberbullying, identified nine core components of a whole-education approach which are set out below.

1. *Strong Political Leadership*
2. *Safe Psychological and Physical School and Classroom Environments*
3. *Training and Support for School Staff*
4. *Curriculum, learning & teaching to promote caring school climate*
5. *Reporting mechanisms with support and referral services*
6. *Collaboration and partnerships between the education sector and a range of partners*
7. *Involvement of all stakeholders in the school community, including parents*
8. *Student empowerment and participation*
9. *Evidence: monitoring of school bullying and evaluation of responses*

Although UNESCO didn't recommend the Whole Education Approach until 2021, it is useful to evaluate the *Action Plan on Bullying 2013* against the Whole Education Approach to assess to what extent the Plan meets the standard of current policy and practice in preventing and addressing bullying.

Table 3. Audit of the 2013 Action Plan on Bullying against the UNESCO Whole Education Approach

Action Plan 2013	Responsibility	UNESCO WEA Component								
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Anti-Bullying Procedures for Schools	DE School	*	*				*			*
Review Teacher Education Support Service Provision	DE	*		*	*	*	*			
Coordinated Training and resource development for boards of management and parents	DE Management Bodies Parents Association	*		*			*	*		*
School Inspection	DE	*	*		*					*
Thematic Evaluation of Bullying in Schools	DE	*					*			*
School Self-Evaluation	DE School	*		*	*				*	*
National Anti-Bullying Website	DE	*							*	
Stand-Up Awareness Week	DE	*	*	*	*		*	*	*	*
Media Campaign	DE Safer Internet Centre	*						*		
Research on Support for Children with Special Educational Needs	National Disability Authority	*		*			*			*

Action Plan 2013	Responsibility	UNESCO WEA Component								
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Research on Prevalence and impact of bullying linked to social media on the mental health and suicidal behaviour among young people	National Office for Suicide Prevention	*		*						*
Awareness Raising Measures for policy makers and Department of Education and Skills and agencies and services which work in the schools sector on all types and forms of bullying	DE	*		*				*		

It is clear that the *Action Plan on Bullying 2013* complied to some extent with all nine components of UNESCO's Whole Education Approach, and as such was quite progressive. However, it is also clear that the plan emphasised an approach that was narrower in scope than the Whole Education Approach in that it focused mainly on what individual schools could do within their own resources to address bullying.



Review of implementation of the 2013 Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools

In 2017 the DCU Anti-Bullying Centre (ABC) conducted research on the implementation of the 2013 *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* to ascertain the extent to which these procedures had been successfully implemented at a local level by school management (Murphy, Downes and O'Higgins Norman, 2017). 918 responses were received to a survey conducted with school principals.

The responses indicated that the key successes from implementation were as follows:

- > The introduction of the 2013 Procedures was a positive step in how the Irish school system tackles bullying, particularly in terms of developing local anti-bullying policies, raising awareness and reporting bullying
- > They provided greater clarity about bullying and an overarching national approach to tackling bullying at a local level in schools
- > They ensured that schools understand that they are required to be accountable for how they manage bullying

The responses indicated that the key barriers to implementation were as follows:

- > Gaps in access to qualified counsellors to address issues associated with bullying
- > Difficulties with providing early intervention for students experiencing bullying or engaging in bullying behaviour
- > The need for school management to prioritise fulfilling their obligation to implement the Anti-Bullying Procedures particularly in relation to appointing a relevant teacher and/or developing whole-school committees to tackle bullying in an ongoing way at local level
- > The importance of multidisciplinary teams to provide support for pupils and their families who experience socio-economic inequalities which may result in bullying
- > Difficulties experienced by principals to meet the requirement to identify the most suitable interventions and supports for their school for those who experience bullying and those who engage in bullying

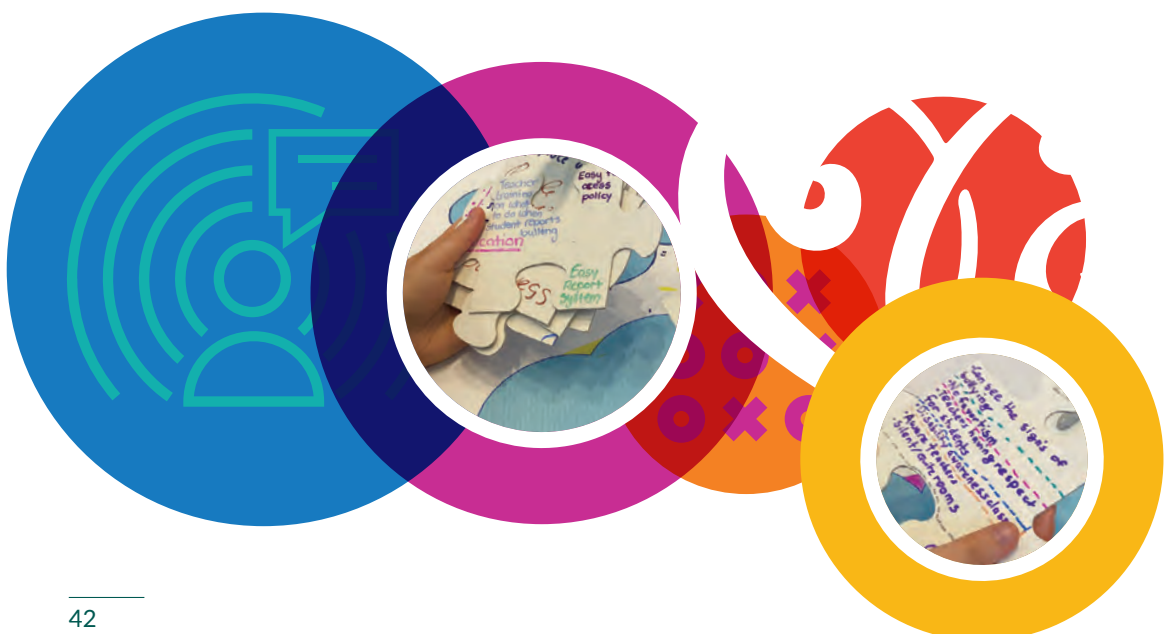
Other studies that indicated barriers to the implementation of the 2013 Anti-bullying Procedures include a 2022 study by Dr Maeve Dupont that investigated the effectiveness of the anti-bullying procedures on Traveller and Roma pupils experience in the system, and the Department's Inspectorate report on incidental inspections to monitor the implementation of anti-bullying procedures in schools. The findings of these studies corroborate the findings of the 2017 study by the DCU Anti-Bullying Centre outlined above.

Dr Maeve Dupont from the DCU Anti-Bullying Centre conducted research that explored the views of Traveller and Roma Communities regarding the anti-bullying procedures for schools (Dupont, 2022). The report makes a number of recommendations in relation to the procedures which include naming bullying of Travellers and Roma in anti-bullying policies; raising parents' awareness of anti-bullying policies and addressing parental reluctance to reporting bullying; adopting a consistent approach to dealing with bullying and providing support for those affected. The report highlighted the importance of follow up, recording and reporting incidences of bullying so that the data can be analysed to monitor levels of bullying behaviour and identify trends that warrant further intervention.

Pieces of Us is the Irish Children's Report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (Ombudsman for Children 2022). The report advises that many of the children spoken to had experienced bullying in primary or post-primary school. Many children felt that schools did not listen to or believe them when they reported bullying or that schools did not report or investigate incidents properly. The children spoken to believed that their school did not do enough to deal with bullying or to discipline bullies. They saw schools as over-reliant on informal ways of dealing with bullying, awareness raising and inclusion rather than addressing the cause of bullying. This frequently led them to feel let down by their school.

The Inspectorate of the Department of Education published two reports on the implementation of aspects of anti-bullying procedures in 2022. The first report (Department of Education 2022) entitled *Report on the implementation of aspects of anti-bullying measures in schools* is based on information gathered by the Inspectorate during 518 incidental inspections of primary, post-primary and special schools during September to November 2021. 309 of these were primary and special schools whilst 209 were post-primary schools.

Inspectors reviewed the extent to which schools were engaging with the anti-bullying procedures. In particular they considered the school's implementation of five key aspects of the procedures. Inspectors also collected information about the priorities of the school in relation to the creation of a school culture that prevents and addresses bullying. During each incidental inspection time was allocated for discussion between the inspector and the school principal on issues relating to anti-bullying and the school's identified priorities for the creation of a positive school culture and climate.





The inspectorate report on implementation of anti-bullying procedures was broadly positive. Most primary schools and the majority of post primary schools were meeting the requirements of the five aspects of the anti-bullying procedures. Schools were found to have adopted a range of strategies to reduce bullying and schools had taken ownership of the principles contained in the anti-bullying procedures and adapted and refined them as appropriate.

However, concerns raised included non-compliance with the requirements for principals to report termly to the Board of Management, the requirements for the Board of Management to carry out an annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and a difference in compliance between primary and post primary schools.

The Inspectorate also published a report entitled *Actions by schools to prevent and tackle bullying: Report on focus groups with primary pupils and post-primary students*. It is based on focus groups with 100 primary pupils and 120 post-primary students to seek their views on the actions taken by their schools to prevent and tackle bullying (Department of Education 2022).

The engagement with pupils and students focused on four key areas: School Culture and Atmosphere; Education, Prevention and Whole-school approach to Bullying; Cyberbullying; Inclusion and Diversity. The report found that the children and young people who participated in the focus groups enjoyed and valued the opportunity to voice their views on their school's actions to prevent and address bullying.

There was a commonality in the effective practices identified by the children and young people with that provided by the principals with the importance of the promotion of positive behaviour, teaching respect and the taking account of pupil/student perspective highlighted.

Post primary students highlighted the importance of their school's code of behaviour and the need for teachers to have an interest, training and expertise in Social Personal Health Education (SPHE). They considered that more training should be made available to the entire school community for preventing and addressing cyberbullying and identity based bullying particularly in the areas of racism and homophobia.

There was a contrast in confidence in the reporting instances of bullying. Whilst primary school pupils had strong confidence the majority of post primary students stated that they would be reluctant to report bullying to an adult in their school. The report noted that meaningful engagement with children and young people is critical to ensuring that schools are safe.

3

Policy and Legislative Developments since 2013



Chapter 3: Policy and Legislative Developments since 2013

Over the past decade since the 2013 *Action Plan on Bullying* was developed, Ireland has become an increasingly diverse country in terms of nationality, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, social class and religion, among other identities. This has resulted in a greater awareness in society of the importance of providing an inclusive education and schools have adapted to cater to the needs of an increasingly diverse student population.

A number of government funded initiatives and strategies have supported this work such as the Developing Equality Of Opportunity in Schools Programme (DEIS); the Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH) which aims to increase the number of students from under-represented groups entering further and higher education, including initial teacher education; and the National Access Plan for Equity of Access, Participation and Success in Higher Education 2022-2028 which aims to support inclusion and diversity.

Travellers have been recognised as a distinct ethnic group and a focus has been placed on increasing their participation in mainstream education. The National Access Plan recognises the needs of vulnerable learners, the most marginalised and those with special and additional needs, particularly those who are socioeconomically disadvantaged, students with disabilities and students from the Irish Traveller community.

A number of strategies and initiatives aimed at promoting social integration have been developed. These include the provision of additional language supports, special needs assistants, intercultural and diversity education programmes, all of which have resulted in a largely positive relationship between students of different backgrounds and identities in Irish primary and post-primary schools.

Equally, increased awareness of LGBTQ+ identities has resulted in support for a number of initiatives to promote inclusion in schools and societies, including the StandUp Awareness Week and the ShoutOut project.



Technology and Social Media

The use of technology and social media has increased significantly among children and young people and their families. Long before the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, it was clear that the online and offline lives of children and young people and their families had become more and more intertwined, creating new challenges to be addressed.

Although the majority of young people who use technology and social media for entertainment, socialising, and learning have a positive experience a significant minority of children, young people and adults have had negative experiences online. These experiences include cyberbullying, racism, sexism, non-consensual sharing of intimate images and in rare cases unwanted contact from strangers. This has resulted in a heightened focus on bullying and online safety issues among parents, educators, and policy makers alike. Despite the many achievements arising from the *Action Plan on Bullying 2013*, it is evident that schools need further support to prevent and address bullying, and to promote online safety among children and young people.

The internet introduces children and young people to new ideas and diverse sources of information that can help them to engage with others and become more respectful of different opinions, viewpoints and backgrounds. While the use of digital technologies brings many opportunities to young people, there are certain risks that also apply. Participation in the online environment exposes our children and young people to online risks such as exposure to inappropriate content, harmful interaction with other children or with adults and openness to online bullying. Now more than ever it is essential that our young people are well versed in how to be safer online. Providing an effective response to online safety requires collaboration between many stakeholders including Government, parents/guardians, educators, industry and individuals themselves.

The Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027 sets out the Department's policy approach to continue the progress made in embedding digital technology across the curriculum and in all aspects of teaching, learning and assessment. It builds on the achievements of the previous strategy, the Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020. The stated vision of the Digital Strategy is "to empower schools to harness the opportunities of digital transformation to build digital competence and an effective digital education ecosystem so as to develop competent, critically engaged active learners while supporting them to reach their potential and participate fully as global citizens in a digital world". Online safety and the safe and ethical use of digital technologies is a key component of the new Digital Strategy.



There are extensive professional learning opportunities and curricular supports available to schools to assist them in the development of policies and practices on the safe use of the internet including on the prevention of bullying, including cyberbullying, and harassment. These include the Social Personal Health Education (SPHE) curriculum and the junior cycle Digital Media Literacy short course, Oide and Webwise.

Webwise is the Irish Internet Safety Awareness Centre and is part of Oide, the Department of Education funded support service. Webwise promotes safer, better Internet use through awareness raising and education initiatives targeting teachers, children, young people 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, cyberbullying and more. A new Junior Cycle Unit of Learning; *The Respect Effect* on connecting and communicating online has been available to schools since October 2023. Educators can also access free online courses in Understanding, Preventing and Responding to Cyberbullying from Webwise and Oide Technology in Education.



DCU Anti-Bullying Centre

In 2014 the Department of Education funded the DCU Anti-Bullying Centre. In 2018 the Department also supported the establishment of the first UNESCO Chair on Bullying and Cyberbullying at Dublin City University. The UNESCO Chair conducts a programme of research within and supported by the Centre that spans a range of global partnerships involving universities, NGOs, Governments, schools and youth organisations. This work encompasses research and education on bullying and ensured that in implementing the 2013 Action Plan the Department of Education has been able to rely on up-to-date research and insights about the experiences of Irish children, young people, parents and school staff, as well as insights from international research.

In 2020 UNESCO published its *Whole Education Approach to Prevent and Address Bullying*. The Whole Education Approach provides a cohesive and holistic framework to guide policy makers with the key components and characteristics of a wide-reaching approach to preventing and addressing bullying. The Whole Education Approach to preventing bullying in schools including cyberbullying is holistic as it provides a comprehensive and systemic framework including aspects of law and policy that are beyond a whole-school approach.

Responding to the findings of research conducted by the DCU Anti-Bullying Centre among School Principals on the implementation of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* the Centre developed FUSE, an anti-bullying and online safety programme that is available to all schools in Ireland. This student-led and evidenced-based programme aims to integrate the efforts of parents, students and school staff so that they can combine their efforts to recognise, respond, and report bullying and online harm.

This approach to addressing bullying contributes to the pursuit of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), in particular SDG4, which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education, and SDG16, which aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies. In building on the 2013 Action Plan it is planned that by adopting a broader approach to school bullying in *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying*, the education system in Ireland can be even more inclusive and sustainable for the future.

More recently, a partnership between the Department of Education and the Department of Justice resulted in the establishment of the Irish Observatory on Cyberbullying, Cyberhate and Online Harassment. The creation of the Observatory follows from the introduction of the Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020 (Coco's Law). Based in the DCU Anti-Bullying Centre, the Observatory provides up-to-date research on the contours, functions, and impacts of cyberbullying, cyberhate, and online harassment among children, young people and adults in Ireland.

Certain key developments in policy, reports and procedures that occurred since the last action plan in 2013 warrant particular attention. Matters on these topics were carefully considered by the Steering Committee and shaped their deliberation and direction. Key developments include:

- > Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2019
- > School Self-Evaluation
- > Child Protection and Safeguarding
- > Children First Act and Guidance
- > LGBT Strategy
- > Migrant Integration Strategy
- > National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017 – 2021
- > National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017-2022
- > National Action Plan Against Racism
- > Sexual Harassment
- > The Joint Oireachtas Committee Report on School Bullying and the Impact on Mental Health
- > Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020
- > Online Safety and Media Regulation Bill



Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2019

The *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2019* defines wellbeing as being

present when a person realises their potential, is resilient in dealing with the normal stresses of their life, takes care of their physical wellbeing and has a sense of purpose, connection and belonging to a wider community. It is a fluid way of being and needs nurturing throughout life.

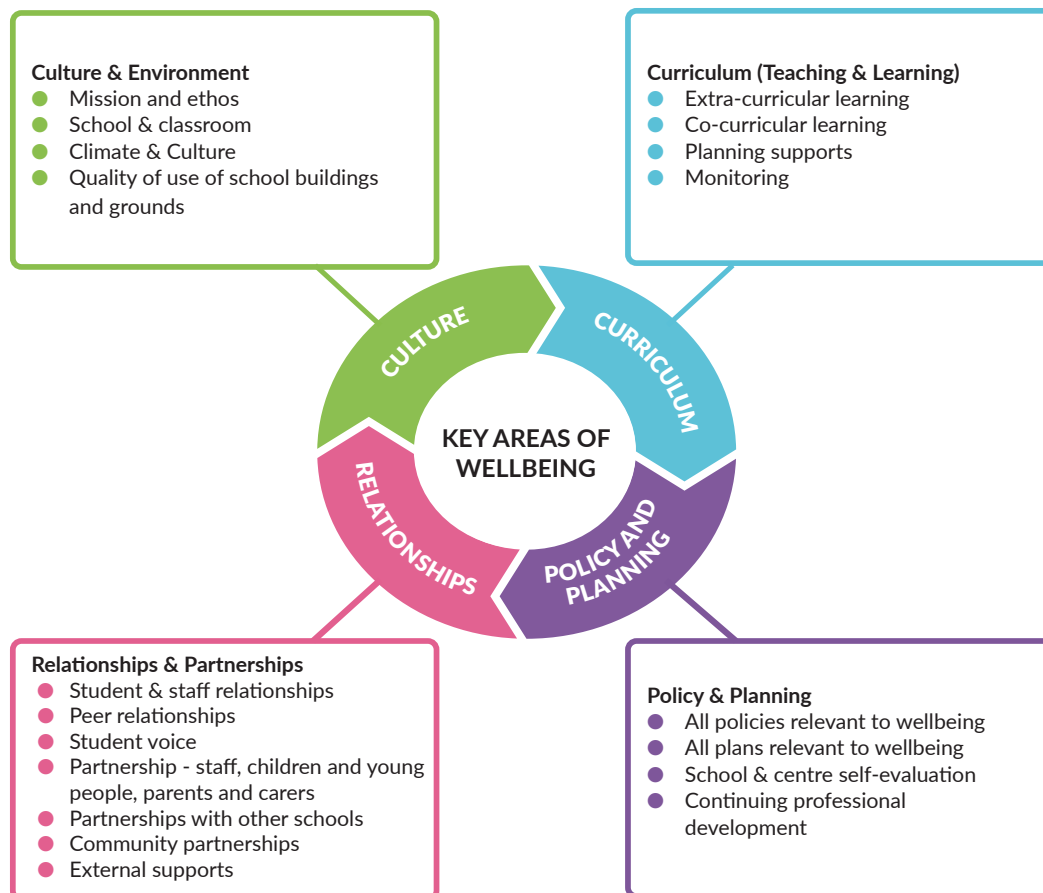
The Department recognises that bullying has a significant impact on the wellbeing of children and young people, and that schools play a vital role in the promotion of their academic, physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual development. Our education system is key to equipping children and young people with the knowledge, skills and competencies to deal with challenges that may impact on their wellbeing. The *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2019* sets out the Department's ambition and vision for wellbeing promotion, building on the many guidelines and frameworks that are already available to support and promote the wellbeing of children and young people, with the promotion of wellbeing at the core of the ethos of every school and centre for education in Ireland.

The *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2019* provides an overarching framework for schools to support a comprehensive, multi-component whole school approach to wellbeing that can support schools to prevent and address bullying through an evidence-informed approach. The Department recognises that schools exist within a wider system and stresses the importance of the interconnectedness of the school with the wider community in its approach to wellbeing and in particular in responding to bullying and in bullying prevention.

The approach outlined in the policy statement is in line with research and international best practice and in line with UNESCO's Whole Education Approach to prevent and address bullying and cyberbullying.

The Policy identifies four key areas for wellbeing promotion.





Culture and Environment - Providing children and young people with opportunities to be part of a school environment and culture that feels physically safe and psychologically safe

Curriculum (Teaching and Learning) - Focusing on giving children and young people opportunities to experience success and a sense of achievement in their learning and to develop and build core physical, social and emotional skills and competencies

Relationships and Partnerships - Providing children and young people with opportunities to experience supportive relationships within the school community

Policy and Planning - Ensuring that approaches to supporting wellbeing and resilience are embedded in all of the school's policies (for example Anti-bullying policy; Code of Behaviour; Critical Incident Policy) and that these policies are made available to staff, children and young people, parents and relevant school community partners.

To implement this policy every school is required, by 2025, to use the six-step School Self-Evaluation process with the Wellbeing in Education Framework for Practice, to consider their existing provision for wellbeing under each of the four key areas (culture and environment, curriculum, policy and planning, and relationships and partnerships), and to initiate a wellbeing promotion review and development cycle.



School self-evaluation



School self-evaluation (SSE) is a collaborative, inclusive, and reflective process of internal school review. Since its formal introduction to the Irish school system in 2012, schools have engaged with the process in varying ways to advance aspects of teaching, learning and wellbeing.

SSE involves gathering information from a range of sources, and then making judgements about practice and about how well pupils and students are doing. The key focus of school self-evaluation is to bring about improvements in pupils' and students' learning (Department of Education 2022).

SSE is envisaged as a process which is based on reliable information from a range of sources and perspectives – including information about the learning experiences of children and young people and how they are doing in their learning. It is also intended to be an inclusive, participatory process involving school management, all staff, pupils/students and their parents. As such, it is a rights respecting process – acknowledging the role of these stakeholders and actively facilitating their participation in the process.

The Inspectorate of the Department of Education has a role in supporting the SSE process through advisory visits to schools. Inspectorate resources and materials to support SSE are also available through the dedicated school self-evaluation website.

SSE is supported by a quality framework, Looking at Our School (LAOS) 2022, which provides a set of criteria or descriptors of quality in schools. LAOS is, in essence, a set of standards against which schools can consider how well they are performing in relation to aspects of teaching and learning and of leadership and management (Department of Education 2022). The domains and standards in Looking at Our School 2022 will help to inform the judgements of school leaders and teachers on whether existing provision and practice is effective. The statements of practice are key to making judgements about how effective aspects of provision are and to supporting a school in deciding what needs to be done in order to improve.

LAOS 2022 builds upon the previous framework, i.e LAOS 2016. The framework has been updated to reflect recent educational reform, thinking and developments in areas such as child safeguarding, anti-bullying, inclusion, pupil participation, parent participation, creativity, education for sustainable development, support for pupil transitions and Cosán, the national framework for teachers learning.

The Inspectorate provides schools with regular updates on the requirements for SSE. *School Self-Evaluation: Next Steps September 2022 – June 2026* was published in August 2022 to assist all schools to engage with SSE following the COVID-19 pandemic. The Inspectorate recognises the importance of having effective SSE processes in place to achieve this. Circulars 0032/2021 and 0033/2021 set out the requirements for primary and post-primary schools to use the SSE process to initiate a wellbeing promotion review and development cycle by 2025.



Child Protection and Safeguarding

Any concerns of a child protection nature received by staff in the Department are dealt with in accordance with the *Department's Procedures for Responding to Child Protection Concerns which come to the attention of staff employed by the Department of Education*.

The Department of Education has no power to investigate child protection concerns, but does ensure that the details of any concern reported to the Department are immediately transmitted to Tusla, the Child and Family Agency for assessment.

The Department cannot guarantee confidentiality to complainants in such circumstances as the information it receives must be passed on to the relevant authorities for investigation including any details of the person reporting the concern.

The Children First Act 2015 was enacted on 19 November 2015 and commenced in full on 11 December 2017. The Act places a number of statutory obligations on schools and other organisations to ensure that appropriate child protection and safeguarding processes are in place. *Children First, National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* was launched on 2 October 2017.

One of the main objectives of the Children First Act 2015 is to ensure that children and young people are kept safe from harm while using the services of relevant organisations including schools.

The Act does this by placing the following specific statutory obligations on organisations:

- > To keep children safe from harm while they are using the service
- > To carry out a risk assessment to identify whether a child or young person could be harmed while using the service
- > To develop a Child Safeguarding Statement that outlines the policies and procedures which are in place to manage the risks which have been identified
- > To appoint a relevant person to be the first point of contact in respect of the organisation's Child Safeguarding Statement

The Department of Education's *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools Revised 2023*, Department of Education (Revised 2023) provides guidance to schools in relation to their responsibilities under the Children First Act 2015 and the Children First National Guidance 2017. Boards of Management are responsible for ensuring that the child safeguarding requirements of *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (Revised 2023)* are implemented in full and must exercise appropriate oversight in this regard.

The *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (Revised 2023)* provide specific guidance to schools in relation to the reporting procedures for the concern as well as the protocols in relation to dealing with the employee where an allegation is made against a member of school staff. In a school context, the most important consideration to be taken into account is the protection of children, and their safety and wellbeing must be the priority. Each school authority also has a duty and responsibility, as an employer, in respect of its employees.

In January 2019 an *Addendum to Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* was published to supplement *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* [DCYA, 2017] following a commitment made in the Government's Action Plan for Online Safety 2018 – 2019. The addendum amends the *Children First* guidance to include a specific reference to the need to consider online safety in the context of the child safeguarding statement including risk assessment. The addendum ensures that online safety is specifically accounted for in child safeguarding statements, as required under the Children First Act.

The Department of Education's Inspectorate monitors compliance with the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (Revised 2023)* during all school inspections. The Inspectorate's monitoring work is one of a range of quality assurance and oversight measures to ensure that schools and their staff are operating in compliance with the Children First Act 2015.

Child Protection Monitoring by the Inspectorate includes three levels of compliance checks. As part of the Department's oversight measures, the Inspectorate checks on compliance with the key aspects of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (Revised 2023)* during all school inspections. The level of checks on compliance depends on the inspection being conducted.



The aims of the Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspection model in schools and in boarding facilities (which are specific, stand-alone in-depth inspection models focused solely on child protection) are to:

- > Monitor the implementation of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* (Revised 2023) and the implementation of *Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections in Boarding Facilities associated with Recognised Schools 2023* in a sample of schools annually
- > Publish written reports on the implementation of *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* (Revised 2023) in the sample of schools inspected
- > Report to the Schools Division and to the Child Protection Oversight Group of the Department of Education on the extent to which the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* (Revised 2023) are implemented in the sample of schools inspected
- > Gather information to inform the development of child protection and safeguarding requirements by the Department of Education and by other government departments and agencies involved in child protection

All school inspection reports published on the Department's website contain information about how a school is implementing the Child Protection procedures.

With regard to bullying, the Child Protection Oversight Report to the Board of Management which is provided by the Principal at each board meeting must include the number of child protection concerns arising from alleged bullying behaviour.



LGBTQI+ Strategy

Published by the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (GLEN) with the support of The Department of Education in 2016, *'Being LGBT in School'* is a resource for Post-Primary Schools to prevent homophobic and transphobic bullying and support LGBTQI+ students. This document is an updated compilation of a series of resources intended to assist schools in addressing homophobic bullying and supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students. The publication provides guidance related to inclusive school policy development, including anti-bullying policies, that consider equality law and the creation of a positive school climate and culture. It also provides guidance on education and prevention strategies on homophobic and transphobic bullying, and outlines the role and responsibilities of the 'relevant teacher' in the anti-bullying policy, including strategies to encourage reporting of bullying among LGBT students.

Despite the recent improvements in the LGBTQI+ landscape in Ireland, the National Youth Strategy 2015-2020 identified LGBTQI+ young people as a specific group to be considered in the context of focused provision for marginalised young people. The LGBTQI+ Youth Strategy, published in June 2018, was developed on foot of this. The Department of Education participated in the development of the LGBTQI+ Youth Strategy, which included the following goals:

1. create a safe, supportive and inclusive environment for LGBTQI+ young people
2. improve the physical, mental and sexual health of LGBTQI+ young people
3. develop the research and data environment to better understand the lives of LGBTQI+ young people

To date the Department has led on the implementation of a number of actions under goals 1 and 3 that aimed to raise awareness of LGBTQI+ young people, and ensure full participation by LGBTQI+ students in education, free from inequality, bullying or exclusion. The actions relate to the following: the inclusion of LGBTQI+ lives in the curriculum; professional development for teachers, psychologists and the wider school community; requirement for schools to implement an anti-bullying policy that fully complies with the requirements of the anti-bullying procedures including education and prevention strategies that explicitly deal with homophobic and transphobic bullying; the review of the SPHE/RSE curriculum and the prevention of identity based bullying; annual funding to support the Stand Up awareness campaign.

The implementation of Goal 1 has also helped to ensure that the needs of LGBTQI+ young people are taken into account in policies and procedures being developed, including anti-bullying policies in schools.



Migrant Integration Strategy

Ireland has become an increasingly diverse country over the past two decades, with the migrant population itself being highly diverse in terms of nationality, ethnicity and religious belief, or absence thereof.

Since 2017, the Migrant Integration Strategy (Government of Ireland 2020) has been the central policy framework adopted by Government to promote the integration of all migrants who are legally residing in the State. It envisages a whole-of-government approach to enhance diversity, inclusion and equity for migrants across all aspects of Irish society through increased focus on social inclusion measures, improved access to public services and targeted action to address racism and xenophobia.

Education plays a key role in implementing the vision of the migrant integration strategy which is to ensure that the integration process facilitates 'migrants to play a full role in Irish society, that integration is a core principle of Irish life and that Irish society and institutions work together to promote integration'.

Education is a listed pillar under the strategy and the following actions are worthy of particular note with regard to preventing and addressing bullying in schools by promoting diversity in the teaching profession, addressing racism and fostering positive attitudes towards diversity:

- > Action 27 - Proactive efforts will be made to attract migrants into teaching positions, including raising awareness of the Irish language aptitude test and adaptation period for primary teaching
- > Action 31 - The effectiveness of training for teachers on managing diversity and tackling racism will be reviewed
- > Action 34 - Schools will be encouraged to support migrant parents' participation in the school life of their children
- > Action 36 The fostering and development of positive attitudes towards diversity and celebrating difference will continue to form part of the school curriculum

National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021

The National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (Department of Justice and Equality 2017) is a cross-departmental initiative to improve the lives of the Traveller and Roma communities in Ireland. Amongst other actions three specific actions connected to Education were listed:

- > The Department of Education and Skills has introduced programmes for initial Teacher Education and for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) based on the concept of inclusive education. The Department of Education and Skills will ensure that such programmes enable teachers to deal with teaching and learning needs of all students from all cultural backgrounds and provide support for pedagogical practices that promote inclusion
- > The Department of Education and Skills will request that the Teaching Council examine how the areas of intercultural, anti-racism and diversity are dealt with in Initial Teacher Education Programmes during the review of the “Criteria and Guidelines for Programme Providers of Initial Teacher Education”
- > The Department of Education and Skills will continue to address the areas of anti-racism, identity-based bullying and cultural awareness through a suite of supports including the recently revised Stay Safe Programme and the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) provided by Department funded support services to teachers at Primary and Post-Primary level

National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017-2022

The National Disability Inclusion Strategy (Department of Justice and Equality 2017), was launched in 2017 and was originally intended to run for five years until the end of 2021. It was later extended to 2022.

The Strategy is a whole-of-government approach to improving the lives of people with disabilities. It provides a significant framework for all activity across government departments and agencies. This supports progress in delivering on the obligations in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) which was ratified in March 2018.

A revised version of the National Disability Inclusion Strategy was adopted by the Minister of State with responsibility for Disability in March 2020, following a mid-term review. This revised version of the strategy included 20 new actions, 35 modified actions and nine completed actions. Prior to the mid-term review, there were 114 actions contained in the Strategy. Between the new, modified and removed actions, there are now 125 actions across eight themes that includes education.

The actions include the following:

- > Support schools with the implementation of the *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2019*
- > Amend the Department's *Technical Guidance Documents for School and Educational Buildings* to ensure universal design principles and guidelines are fully considered in all designs for new building and, where possible, in the retrofit of existing buildings

Ensure that ongoing developments in legislation (e.g. Teaching Council, School Admissions) and national priority areas including Junior Cycle Reform, Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, Digital Strategy and National Council for Special Education policy advice will influence and support teacher learning in inclusion, differentiation, and special educational needs across the continuum of teacher education.

National Action Plan Against Racism

Established by Government in 2020, the Anti-Racism Committee has a mandate to review current evidence and practice and make recommendations to Government on how best to strengthen its approach to tackling racism, including drawing up a new National Action Plan Against Racism for Ireland (NAPAR).

An interim report as part of the development of a new National Action Plan Against Racism was published (Government of Ireland) in April 2021. It contains its guiding principles and understandings of racism, briefly summarises the societal and policy context for its work, and identifies some of the priority issues necessary to consider in the development of a new NAPAR for Ireland.

The Committee made three recommendations for immediate action:

- > remove Ireland's reservation to Article 4 of the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
- > take steps to put in place ethnic equality monitoring across all public services
- > remove all barriers to accessing support for migrant women experiencing gender-based violence

The NAPAR Implementation Plan cites education and training as key to raising awareness of racism across society and ensuring that we respond appropriately to it. For this reason, the year-one implementation plan includes a number of actions intended to strengthen inclusion and anti-racism at all levels of the education system, in line with Priority Action 2.5 of the NAPAR.

The following actions are relevant to Cineáltas:

- > The Department of Education will progress the development of a Traveller Education Strategy. This strategy will include actions to improve outcomes for Travellers in the education system
- > The Department of Education will establish an implementation group to oversee the implementation of *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying*, launched in December 2022. Among other measures relating to anti-racism, this plan provides for an updating of antibullying procedures for primary and post-primary schools to take account of racist bullying, gender identity bullying, cyber bullying, sexist bullying, and sexual harassment
- > The Department of Education will commence work on a professional learning programme for school staff that builds cultural and diversity awareness and school capacity to fully include and engage learners from migrant, refugee, ethnic minority and new Irish communities
- > The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment will progress its programme of work to support teaching and learning about Traveller Culture and History within the curriculum
- > The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment will review and update the Intercultural Guidelines for primary and post-primary schools to support the further integration of intercultural education in the curriculum
- > Higher Education Institutions will develop institutional action plans to support diversity in staffing and student recruitment
- > Higher Education Institutions will be requested to sign up to a national Race Equality Statement, the principles of which will ensure that institution leaders take responsibility, accountability and ownership of race equality issues within their institutions

As part of NAPAR, an independent Special Rapporteur on Racial Equality and Racism will be appointed by the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth to monitor the implementation of the Action Plan. The Rapporteur will also monitor progress towards the objectives of the plan, including by reference to the outcome indicators listed above, and will make an annual report to the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth which will be made available to the Oireachtas Committee on Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, who may invite the Rapporteur to discuss the Report

The National Action Plan against Racism is intended to be implemented over a five-year period, from the beginning of 2023 to the end of 2027.

Sexual Harassment

Ireland's third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (DSGBV) includes consideration of sexual harassment. It set an overall goal of zero tolerance in Irish society for domestic, sexual and gender-based violence.

The DSGBV Strategy recognises that a Whole of Government approach is required and that it is only through an integrated approach across all sectors of society that this issue will be addressed. The Strategy is structured around the four pillars or goals of the Istanbul Convention - Prevention, Protection, Prosecution and Co-ordinated Policies.

As part of the implementation plan the DSGBV Strategy highlights the need to resource, support and implement the development and updating of the primary school, junior and senior cycle Social Personal Health Education (SPHE)/Relationship Sexuality Education (RSE) curriculum specifications. A draft revised Junior Cycle specification for SPHE was published by the National Curriculum for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) for a public consultation which ran from July to October 2022. The updated Junior Cycle SPHE course is in place for first year students who entered post-primary education in September 2023. The updated specification places a strong focus on the development of important life skills that young people need growing up in a fast changing and complex world. It is grounded in an approach that is positive, holistic, student-centred, inclusive and age and developmentally appropriate. There are a number of learning outcomes contained within the draft specification relating to preventing and addressing bullying, both in-person and online as well as maintaining healthy, respectful relationships.

Work on Primary and Senior Cycle SPHE commenced in late 2022. A background paper and brief has been prepared for the Senior Cycle SPHE specification which will guide the work of the NCCA the Senior Cycle SPHE/RSE development group. A draft senior cycle curriculum document currently available for public consultation, will be finalised in early 2024 with a view to being implemented in schools in September 2024.



The Oireachtas Joint Committee Report on School Bullying and the Impact on Mental Health

In August 2021, the Joint Committee on Education, Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science published its report on *School Bullying and the Impact on Mental Health* (Houses of the Oireachtas 2021).

Publication followed a nine month process whereby the Committee reviewed the issue of school bullying and its impact on mental health. This process began on 5 November 2020 (the First United Nations International Day against Violence and Bullying at School, including Cyberbullying) when the committee met with senior academics from the DCU Anti-Bullying Centre to discuss the impact of school bullying, including cyberbullying, during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Committee met with key stakeholders, including clinical psychologists and child and adolescent mental health experts, school patrons, unions, management bodies, the Ombudsman for Children, organisations dealing with cyber safety for children and young people, representatives from the Department of Education, parents and young people. The Committee also received 39 written submissions from a wide range of stakeholders.

The Committee concluded that the compelling oral evidence and background research material provided to the Committee demonstrated clearly that school bullying and the resulting impact on mental health is a national issue of concern that warrants examination in a considered and sensitive way.

The Committee's report contains 28 recommendations with 10 key recommendations listed. The 10 key recommendations focus on:

- > An audit of the *Action Plan on Bullying 2013* and *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Schools 2013*
- > Data collation on incidences of school bullying
- > The role of the Inspectorate in monitoring schools' anti-bullying and wellbeing initiatives
- > The provision of school based emotional counselling and therapeutic supports
- > Establishment of the Office of an Online Safety Commissioner
- > Mandatory online cyber bullying training for all teaching staff
- > Mandatory modules on preventing and addressing bullying and racism, and the promotion of inclusion and diversity in ITE courses and CPD programmes
- > Restoration of middle management posts
- > Rollout of the FUSE programme, developed by the Anti-Bullying Centre, to all primary and post primary schools
- > Piloting the Barnardos Friendship Group and Roots of Empathy programmes in primary schools

The work of the Oireachtas Joint Committee was considered in detail by the Steering Committee and was of immense benefit to the work of the Steering Committee in carrying out this review of the 2013 *Action Plan on Bullying* and in developing *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying*.

Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020

'Coco's Law', otherwise known as the Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020, provides for two new offences criminalising the non-consensual sharing of intimate images, regardless of a person's motivation for doing so. This includes where the intimate image shared is purporting to be of another person, even if it is not in fact an image of them.

The first offence is where there is intent to cause harm to the victim and it carries a maximum penalty of an unlimited fine and/or 7 years' imprisonment. The second offence covers situations where there was no intent to cause harm to the victim and it carries a maximum penalty of a €5,000 fine and/or 12 months' imprisonment.

The penalties are high to reflect the seriousness of the offences and the damage and hurt they cause to victims. The creation of a separate offence criminalising the sharing of intimate images without consent, even when there was no intention to cause harm, shows clearly that it is the lack of consent that is the issue regardless of the motivation for sharing. The legislation also makes it clear that it is irrelevant that a person may have consented to the taking of an image if it is subsequently published or distributed without their consent.

While harassment was already an offence in Ireland under the Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act, 1997, Coco's law updated this Act by broadening the scope of the offence of harassment. The offence of harassment now covers all forms of persistent communications about a person, not just to a person, and the penalty provided has been increased from seven to ten years to reflect the harm that can be caused by the most serious forms of harassment.

Coco's Law also provides for a new offence of sending, distributing or publishing a threatening or grossly offensive message by any means of communication with intent to cause harm to the victim. This offence covers once-off harmful communications, as distinct from harassment which requires persistent communication, and it carries a maximum penalty of an unlimited fine and/or 2 years' imprisonment.

In September 2021, the Department of Justice launched a campaign to raise awareness of Coco's Law. The campaign aimed to:

- > educate wider Irish society that sharing intimate images without consent is socially unacceptable, has harmful consequences and that there is now legislation in place with serious sanctions if convicted of doing so, regardless of motivation, and
- > to let victims know that if this happens to them, they should contact Hotline.ie who can assist in getting the image taken down and report the matter to An Garda Síochána if that is what the victim wants

When signing the commencement order for "Coco's Law" it was announced by the Minister for Justice, Helen McEntee, that an agreement had been reached between the Department of Justice, the Anti-Bullying Centre at DCU and the Department of Education to establish a 'Research Observatory on Cyberbullying' focused on providing up-to-date research, advice and resources related to cyberbullying, cyberhate, and online harassment, and the implementation of Coco's Law.

Funding was also provided by the Department of Justice for Webwise to update the popular 'Lockers' programme, which is an important Junior Cycle resource, to include information about Coco's Law and non-consensual sharing of intimate images.

A new lesson is available to post-primary schools on Understanding the Harassment, Harmful Communication and Related Offences Act 2020 and the legal consequences of it for young people. The Webwise *What is Coco's Law?* Lesson is intended for the 3rd to 5th year demographic.

Online Safety and Media Regulation Act 2022

The Online Safety and Media Regulation Act 2022 which establishes a regulatory framework for online safety overseen by the new Coimisiún na Meán (the Media Commission), was signed into law in December 2022. The Act provides powers for the online safety commissioner, appointed in January 2023, to make online services accountable for how they address the availability of harmful online content.

The creation and enforcement of online safety codes applying to online services, including social media services and private messaging services, will seek to minimise the availability of defined categories of harmful online content through oversight of the systems that online services use to deliver and moderate content. These codes may also provide for standards in relation to the complaints handling processes operated by those services.

The defined categories of harmful online content relate to offence-specific content linked to 42 criminal offences, serious cyber-bullying material, material promoting eating disorders, self-harm or suicide, and material which makes available knowledge of the means of suicide.

Following an investigation, and subject to appropriate Court oversight, An Coimisiún may sanction non-compliant online services, including financial sanctions of up to €20m or 10% of turnover.

The Bill also contains the legal basis for Coimisiún na Meán to establish an individual complaints mechanism. The purpose of the mechanism would be to allow complaints about individual items of online content which are alleged to be harmful, to be submitted directly to Coimisiún na Meán. This is in line with the 'Report of the Expert Group on an Individual Complaints Mechanism', published in September 2022, which called for a phased roll-out of an individual complaints mechanism, initially prioritising those complaints about online content relating to children.

As well as overseeing certain systemic regulatory functions, the Online Safety Commissioner will have a role in carrying out educational initiatives, such as public information campaigns. In this context, the Commissioner will also work with existing educational bodies such as the Department of Education, Webwise.ie and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

The Commissioner will also be able to endorse third party providers of online safety educational materials which will help schools to source appropriate and robust online safety materials. The Bill also provides for the establishment of a Youth Advisory Committee.

4

Work of the Steering Committee



Chapter 4: Work of the Steering Committee

Minister Foley tasked the Steering Committee with reviewing the 2013 *Action Plan on Bullying* and developing a new Action Plan which is in line with up-to-date research and is a comprehensive and holistic, national education response to bullying.

The Steering Committee were asked to consider the significant developments and relevant research since 2013, specifically in relation to the areas of online (cyber) bullying, identity based bullying and sexual harassment, among other areas. The Steering Committee were asked to ensure that the new action plan encompasses all the related initiatives that have progressed outside of the original actions in the 2013 *Action Plan on Bullying*, as well as giving consideration to additional actions which are required.

The Steering Committee gave detailed consideration to the recommendations contained in the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Education, Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science Report on *School Bullying and the Impact on Mental Health* which was published in August 2021.

The Steering Committee carried out an extensive consultation process to inform their work. This included inviting over fifty individuals from various national and international organisations or who had relevant experience to make presentations to the Steering Committee. The Department invited presenters to provide information on how their organisation or experience linked with the topic and to highlight best practice in relation to their respective fields. Presenters were also requested to consider and present their views on the actions contained in the current action plan on Bullying, where they felt there may be gaps, where they saw areas of opportunity and what may still have relevance in today's education system. All were provided with a copy of the *Action Plan on Bullying 2013* and *Anti-bullying procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2013* (Department of Education and Skills 2013) in advance of the meeting for reference.

A chronology of the presentations given and the main points discussed at the meetings of the Steering Committee are provided below.



Steering Committee Meetings

Table 4. List of meetings of the Steering Committee

Meeting Number	Date of meetings	Location
1	16 February 2022	Clock Tower, Department of Education, Marlborough St.
2	22 March 2022	Remote via WebEx
3	06 April 2022	Remote via WebEx
4	26 April 2022	Remote via WebEx
5	10 May 2022	Remote via WebEx
6	24 May 2022	Clock Tower, Department of Education, Marlborough St.
7	14 June 2022	Remote via WebEx
8	29 June 2022	G13/14 Department of Education, Marlborough St.
9	08 September 2022	G13/14 Department of Education, Marlborough St.
10	29 September 2022	RIU Plaza The Gresham Hotel Dublin
11	27 October 2022	G13/14 Department of Education, Marlborough St.

Minutes of these Steering Committee Meetings can be accessed at the following link:
<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/52aaf-cinealtas-action-plan-on-bullying/>

Meeting 1: 16 February 2022

The first meeting of the Steering Committee provided an opportunity for members to hear the vision for the review of the 2013 *Action Plan on Bullying* as set out by the Minister for Education, Norma Foley TD. Minister Foley spoke about her commitment and that of her Department to update the 2013 *Action Plan on Bullying*.

Minister Foley advised that the Steering Committee should take a comprehensive and holistic Whole Education Approach when conducting the review with a specific focus on online (cyber) bullying, gender identity bullying and sexual harassment among other areas. Minister Foley also highlighted the importance of the meaningful participation of children and young people in the review and echoed the Department's commitment to engage with children and young people to ensure that their voice is listened to and visible in the new action plan.

Three other speakers provided presentations to introduce the committee to their work. Dr Noel Purdy introduced himself as the chair of the Steering Committee and outlined the terms of reference for the work. Professor James O'Higgins Norman provided a background to the Whole Education Approach to preventing and addressing bullying and cyberbullying and Sharon Eustace, Regional Director NEPS, outlined the Department's strategy for Wellbeing promotion. This included a detailed presentation on the Department's *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2019*.

The Steering Committee were also provided with a presentation on the background and history of the 2013 *Action Plan on Bullying* including the 12 key actions contained in the action plan, briefly outlining their progress, further related initiatives which have progressed in parallel and the role of the Inspectorate with regards to oversight.

Following on from this a schedule of meetings was created with the Department taking a blended approach of online and in-person meetings to maximise accessibility and participation of members.

Presentations from Members of the Steering Committee

Meeting 2: 22 March 2022 and Meeting 3: 6 April 2022

The second meeting occurred remotely and provided an opportunity for the Department to provide more in depth information in relation to the status of the actions contained within the current action plan and to outline the work and recommendations contained in the Joint Oireachtas Committee report on *School Bullying and the Impact on Mental Health*. The Department also outlined the roles and responsibilities of the various parties during the review including the Parents and Learners Unit, the Steering Committee and the Working Group established to review the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

This meeting also included one strand of the consultation process whereby members of the Steering Committee were able to consider and outline their views on “*what is missing or needs strengthening in the 2013 Action Plan and how can we address this?*” This provided the opportunity for Steering Committee members to share their views, knowledge and experience in this and related areas and offered valuable insights from a wide variety of perspectives.

Presentations at this meeting included those from Moninne Griffith, BeLonGTo; Adam Lambe, Irish Second-Level Students Union; Aileen Hickie, Parentline; Bridget Wilson, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth Affairs; Professor James O'Higgins Norman, DCU Anti-Bullying Centre; Jane McGarrigle, Webwise; Mai Fanning National Parents Council Post-primary; Sarah Benson, Women's Aid and Seónaid Ó Murchadha, Independent Living Movement Ireland.

Members agreed on the need to take a Whole Education Approach to work together on the issues relating to preventing and addressing bullying in schools. A large number of presenters also discussed a lack of awareness among students, parents and school staff of both the systems in place and the appropriate actions to take when a student experiences bullying or when bullying becomes an issue within a school or outside the school. They highlighted the importance of clear pathways between policies and procedures to ensure continuous and consistent implementation at all levels and across the entire school system.

Moninne Griffith, CEO BeLong To

Moninne Griffith highlighted the experience of LGBTQ+ students in Ireland referencing the BeLong To School Climate report that was published in 2019 which documented the high percentage (73%) of LGBTQ+ students who don't feel safe in school, referencing the type of bullying they experience including homophobic remarks, exclusion, and even sexual and physical harassment¹. She highlighted the importance of school leaders and the role they play in driving change management, but advised that these leaders also need resources to deliver this sustained change.

Adam Lambe, (ISSU)

The ISSU was represented by Adam Lambe, who called for a bi-annual review of the action plan. He also highlighted the need for an inclusive approach to ensure that students feel accepted in the school environment. He noted a disconnect between the anti-bullying procedures and policies, and advised that teachers need CPD to ensure that they up-hold and respect confidentiality with regard to bullying disclosures. He advised that there needs to be a whole school community approach to implementing procedures and not a top-down approach. ISSU gets requests when schools aren't dealing with bullying matters in an effective and inclusive way. Schools need clarity on the next steps in dealing with bullying matters in an inclusive and effective way.

Aileen Hickie, CEO, Parentline

Aileen Hickie stressed the importance of effective communication with parents, and advised that they need reassurance from schools that schools are taking practical and coherent steps when dealing with incidents of bullying. She called for a strengthening of the anti-bullying policies including oversight measures to ensure that the procedures are put into practice and implemented including highlighting the need for an awareness of clear referral pathways and processes among all members of the school community to ensure policies are implemented consistently.

Bridget Wilson, Child Rights Policy Unit, DCEDIY

Bridget Wilson discussed the consultation underway on the successor to *Better Outcomes Brighter Future* (BOBF), the national policy framework for children and young people. Published in 2014, BOBF sets out the Government's agenda and priorities in relation to children and young people under the age of 25 and provides the overarching framework for the development and implementation of policy and services. She indicated that the issue of bullying had been raised in submissions, specifically referencing children and young people who may be more vulnerable.

¹ The 2022 School Climate report was published prior to finalisation of the Cineáltas Action Plan and data from this was taken into consideration during finalisation of the actions contained within the plan.

Professor James O'Higgins Norman, UNESCO World Chair on Bullying and Cyberbullying

Professor James O'Higgins Norman highlighted the advances in research with regards to our understanding of various aspects of bullying since 2013 and its implications for new policy development. He echoed the sentiments of other presenters with regards to the need for a whole system and society approach with a collective responsibility for all stakeholders involved. He emphasised the importance when considering the definition to focus on the harm done rather than the behaviour involved, and stressed the importance of having national data to both see the extent of bullying occurring and to act as a measure of determining progress in implementation and the success of the action plan.

Jane McGarrigle, Project Officer with Webwise

Jane McGarrigle reiterated the concerns expressed by other members with regards to the confidence of school staff in dealing with issues of online (cyber) bullying. She also expressed the value of a whole school community approach to preventing and addressing bullying. As previously indicated, all members of the school community need to have a clear understanding and awareness of their role and the best steps to take in both the prevention of bullying and supporting students who experience and exhibit bullying behaviour. She emphasised the importance of initial teacher education (ITE) as a space for adequate training to allow teachers to have pre-requisite knowledge before entering the classroom and advised that this training should also have a top-down approach to ensure consistency among school leaders. She also highlighted the role that social media companies could play in awareness raising and addressing bullying in the online space.

Mai Fanning, National Parents Council Post-Primary (NPC-PP)

Mai Fanning echoed the sentiments of representatives from Parentline and Webwise. She highlighted the nature of the issues and difficulties experienced by parents, highlighting a gap in understanding regarding policies and who to approach in a school if their child was experiencing bullying. She advised that some children do not want their parents to intervene. She explained there can be an issue when bullying occurs outside the school gates, in relation to whose responsibility it is to provide support and address the issue. She noted that policies are adopted but are not implemented which can lead to an escalation of issues. She also drew attention to the child who is exhibiting the bullying behaviour, and called for research and investigations to identify why children bully others. She noted the importance of the Social, Personal, Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) programmes, and highlighted that these can be used to strengthen how a child feels about themselves by building their self-worth and resilience. She advised of the importance of language in the action plan and advised that this needs to be strengthened, for example, using the word 'shall' instead of 'should'.

Sarah Benson, Women's Aid

Sarah Benson's presentation highlighted the convergence between the review of the *Action Plan on Bullying 2013* and the draft third national Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Strategy (DSGBV). Sarah noted key actions contained within the draft DSGBV that relate to the delivery of age appropriate interventions for boys to address male violence, to highlight how pornography fuels misogyny and gender inequality, and action 1.4.5 that specifically refers to the Department of Education's work on anti-bullying and the review of the action plan and its associated procedures. Sarah drew attention to two national surveys for young people aged 18-25 commissioned by Women's Aid in conjunction with RedC. She noted stark findings that 1/5 young women had experienced intimate partner abuse by the age of 25. Of these 75% were sexually coerced, 50% sexually assaulted and over one quarter had been raped. She noted the disparity in the experience of young women compared to young men in experiencing intimate partner abuse. She noted that sexist bullying was not mentioned in the current action plan, and also noted that gender, gender identity and sexuality need to be distinguished and differentiated as three distinct terms, with sexuality being a risk factor with LGBTQ+ young people three times more likely to experience unwanted sexual comments compared to heterosexual peers. She highlighted a number of intersectional factors that also must be considered including race, ethnicity, ability, sexuality, and/or gender identity, and noted that measurement and assessment of the form and content of bullying must also be considered.

Seònaid Ó Murchadha, Independent Living Movement Ireland

Seònaid Ó Murchadha, board member of Independent Living Movement Ireland, highlighted the experience of children with disabilities and how they are more likely than their non-disabled peers to suffer violence and abuse. She advised that system wide procedures can result in the exclusion of children with 'special educational needs', such as the segregation of children with special educational needs from their peers. She emphasised the importance of looking at the issue from a human rights perspective and considering the barriers that children with special educational needs already face such as gaining a place in the education system. She noted that children and young people with disabilities are disproportionately affected by bullying, and referenced a UNESCO report, regarding the experience of violence and bullying in educational settings by children with educational needs and disabilities (UNESCO 2021c). Seònaid also referenced a website, *DisAbuse*, which specifically hopes to help address disablist bullying and highlight training resources that have been developed in this area².

Two Steering Committee members who were not in a position to present at the second meeting presented to the group at the start of the third meeting. Áine Lynch representing the National Parents Council-primary, and Maria Joyce, representing the National Traveller Women's Forum both highlighted the importance of a positive school culture and environment, training for the whole school community and the need for consistency with regards to implementation of anti-bullying procedures within the school system.

² www.disabuse.eu

Áine Lynch, National Parents Council – Primary (NPC-P)

Áine Lynch highlighted the importance of preventative measures and school culture. She advised that the current procedures are seen in some schools as a set of procedures for dealing with issues when a bullying incident occurs, with the school culture and preventative measures not receiving as much attention. She advised that there needs to be more consistency and attention given across the education system to prevention and school culture. When the procedures first arrived in schools companies flooded the schools with resources and posters were seen in nearly every school however, it is clear that posters alone don't make a positive school culture – more is needed. She also advised of the need for supports for children and young people who experience bullying behaviour and also for those who are exhibiting bullying behaviour as it can often be indicative of underlying concerns.

Maria Joyce, National Traveller Women's Forum

Maria Joyce highlighted recent publications relating to the experience of Traveller and Roma students within the Irish education system and also referred to a publication specifically relating to the implementation of anti-bullying procedures in Primary and Post-Primary Schools (Dupont 2022). She advised that the research gathered information in relation to school engagement, participation, attendance and retention. She emphasised the importance of prevention in reducing bullying, and advised that an inclusive curriculum and diversity among the teaching profession is important to promote an equitable, inclusive and welcoming environment for Traveller and Roma children. She focused on the need for understanding the importance of intersectionality even within the Travelling community itself and advised that explicit reference should be made for all types of identity based and racist bullying including bullying of members of the LGBTQ+ community, children with additional learning needs and other minority groups.

All Steering Committee members welcomed the recommendations of the Joint Oireachtas Committee particularly in relation to the need for whole school community training, the importance of student voice and participation and the extensive policy focus that needs to be placed on addressing bullying in all its forms. A number of presenters advised of their views that bullying is both a public health and human rights issue and that there should be a focus on these areas in the updated action plan on bullying.



Presentations to the Steering Committee

Presentations from Researchers, Advocacy Organisations, Social Media Companies, Government and Regulatory Bodies, Individuals and schools – Meetings 3-7

Meetings 3 – 7 centered around presentations from researchers, advocacy organisations, social media companies, Government and regulatory bodies, individuals and schools. Presenters drew attention to the role of the whole education community in preventing and addressing bullying, the value of meaningful student voice and participation, the importance of comprehensive and regular training of school staff and the requirement for an adaptive and agile response depending on the context and culture of each individual school community. Key points of information from these presentations are outlined below.

Researchers

A number of researchers and academics presented on a variety of areas over the course of the meetings, on topics ranging from religious identity-based bullying, the experience in Northern Ireland on the development and implementation of anti-bullying legislation, to the experience of Traveller and Roma students regarding implementation of the anti-bullying procedures in schools.

Professor Peter K. Smith, Emeritus Professor, Goldsmiths University of London

Professor Peter K. Smith provided positive feedback on the 2013 action plan and suggested that the new action plan could give greater focus to a variety of areas including assertiveness training and building of relationships through co-operative group work. He provided a broad overview of areas of importance including emphasising the important role of the class teacher and non-teaching staff and how their response can have a significant impact. He highlighted the role of parents and siblings and in particular parents role in resolving online bullying. He concluded his presentation by emphasising the importance of giving young people a voice in this area and drew attention to the Red Balloon Centres in the UK.

Dr Noel Purdy

The Chair of the Steering Committee, Dr Noel Purdy, provided a presentation on developments in Northern Ireland, which recently enacted legislation with regards to addressing bullying in schools through increased oversight for schools and boards of governors. The legislation provides clarity on when schools have the authority to deal with bullying that may occur outside the school, and that this is where it is likely to have a detrimental effect on the education of the child or young person. He outlined the advantages and disadvantages of introducing legislation to address bullying in schools, including the time it takes to amend legislation, the challenges with creating a definition that can be implemented as legislation, and the responsibilities assigned to schools in this space.

Dr Amalee Meehan

Dr Amalee Meehan provided an insight into religious identity-based bullying of students in Ireland. She discussed research on religious identity, bullying and inclusion, with teachers indicating that they were concerned about certain cohorts of students who may be targeted specifically because of their religious identity. She indicated that students who practice any type of religion are vulnerable to bullying and advised that it is important that this is recognised during the development of the action plan.

Dr Maeve Dupont

Dr Maeve Dupont presented on her research on the experience of Traveller and Roma students regarding the implementation of the anti-bullying procedures for Primary and Post-primary schools (Dupont 2022). She advised of the increased risk that certain cohorts of children and young people have of experiencing bullying behaviour. She discussed the various findings, including the difficult experience Traveller and Roma students have both of bullying within schools and the response from schools when reporting incidents of bullying. She noted the importance of consistency in the implementation of the procedures in schools, and the importance of removing barriers to reporting. She advised that the recommendations are just one component of a more holistic and comprehensive strategy needed to ensure that outcomes for Traveller and Roma children and young people are equal to those of other students.

Research can often lead to the development of various programmes and initiatives that aim to prevent and address bullying. The Steering Committee heard presentations from a number of organisations some of which have developed and deliver anti-bullying programmes to schools.

Advocacy Organisations

There are a number of organisations who work in the area of preventing and addressing bullying. Some of the organisations have developed tailor made programmes that can be implemented in schools to provide guidance and support on preventing and addressing bullying. Representatives from the Yellow Flag Programme, Barnardos, ISPCC, RCNI, CRA, ABA UK and DCU's FUSE programme presented to members of the Steering Committee during the course of the review.

Molly Brady-Martin, National Co-ordinator of the Yellow Flag Programme³

Molly Brady-Martin provided an outline of the experience of students of both racism and identity-based bullying in Ireland, referencing research by iReport, DCU, SpunOut and NYCI. She highlighted Yellow Flag's own data on the experience of black and minority ethnic students in experiencing racism and not having the confidence to report incidents of racism. She outlined the eight steps of the Yellow Flag Programme that is based on the Department of Education's School Self Evaluation Framework, which challenges racism while celebrating diversity. She highlighted the impact and evaluation framework used by the Yellow Flag Programme, with 78% of Yellow Flag schools integrating intercultural education into the formal curriculum after completing the programme. She called for greater policy alignment with the broad cohort of policy initiatives in this area including the Migrant Integration Strategy, the National Action Plan Against Racism, National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy and other broad policy frameworks within the Department of Education.

Martha Evans, Anti-Bullying Alliance, UK

The Anti-Bullying Alliance (ABA)⁴ in the UK is a coalition of organisations and individuals, working together to prevent bullying and create safer environments in which children and young people can live, grow, play and learn. Martha Evans, Director of the ABA, presented to the Committee on their key areas of work, including awareness campaigns, policy development and practice improvement. She outlined their whole school programme, which provides schools with access to audit resources and action planning tools, continuous professional development and an online pupil questionnaire to ascertain the levels of bullying and status of wellbeing which provides a way for schools to obtain a baseline measurement to help improve practices. Schools are rewarded for their participation in this programme by a recognition process based on their improvements to address bullying. Schools are also encouraged to share the practices and challenges that they face with other school communities. She indicated that 71% of schools had advised that bullying had reduced as a result of the programme. She provided suggestions for the development of the new action plan, which included the following: ensuring a strong focus on identity-based bullying including disablist bullying; considering the issue from a societal perspective to see how group dynamics can influence bullying and; the importance of collaboration between organisations and countries to ensure we can maximise learning from each other.

Kerri Smith and Clíodhna Purdue, Barnardos

Barnardos highlighted the voice of the child as being paramount in any strategy to prevent and address bullying with a focus on the importance of prevention and early intervention. Kerri Smith and Clíodhna Purdue provided information on the approach and supports that Barnardos provide to families, communities and schools. They advised that the impact of bullying needs to be looked at from a trauma informed perspective drawing attention to the needs of both the child and young person experiencing the bullying but also those displaying the bullying behaviour, with a proactive preventative response. They highlighted the need for an agile plan that evolves with the ever-changing nature of life in society, including an increase in time allocated to facilitate discussions on bullying within the

³ <https://yellowflag.ie/>

⁴ <https://anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/>

classroom. An overview of the Barnardos Roots of Empathy⁵ programme was provided. The programme focuses on preventative measures which aim to increase emotional wellbeing and improve social behaviour. They outlined a second programme offered by Barnardos on Online Safety with workshops and resources provided for teachers, students and parents, with the hope of empowering children to make good choices and to be kind online. They drew attention to data regarding concerns expressed by children about messages they receive from friends and strangers, highlighting the requirement for a multi-layered whole school approach to preventing and addressing bullying, with a focus on creating greater confidence for parents to address online issues with their children.

Victoria Howson, ISPCC

Victoria Howson presented on the ISPCC Shield Anti-Bullying Programme⁶ that aims to support children, families, and communities in preventing bullying. Similarly to other programmes, it focuses on enhancing resilience and the coping capacity of children, families and communities. The Shield Programme focuses on awareness raising but also now includes a school self-evaluation tool, and is based on up-to-date evidence and research. She provided a background of the approach and content within the programme and outlined the connections between the Shield Programme and other ISPCC supports. She highlighted that schools need additional guidance and support to meet their responsibilities regarding bullying, and programmes like the Shield Programme can provide many of these supports.



⁵ <https://www.barnardos.ie/our-services/work-in-schools/roots-of-empathy>

⁶ <https://www.ispcc.ie/shield-anti-bullying-programme/>

Julie Ahern and Tanya Ward, Children's Rights Alliance

The Children's Rights Alliance, drew attention to data relating to the number of students who had experienced bullying and those who did not feel safe in their school environment. Tanya Ward, highlighted the huge impact that bullying has on young people's emotional wellbeing and the consequences of this including non-attendance in school, anxiety and self-harm. Julie Ahern provided information on this from a children's rights perspective including the need for age appropriate information, and the involvement of children and young people as co-researchers in this space. They welcomed the idea of a dedicated anti-bullying website. They pointed to a number of gaps in current provision including in relation to supports for children experiencing bullying, supports available to school staff and drew attention to the lack of available data to ensure that policy and decision makers know the extent of bullying in schools and the types of bullying. This information is essential to help ensure it is tackled effectively. They highlighted the important role of the Online Safety and Media Regulation Bill in this area.

Darran Heaney, FUSE Anti-Bullying Programme

The FUSE Anti-Bullying programme⁷ looks at the whole education approach to prevent and address bullying and cyberbullying. Darran Heaney, Project Manager with FUSE, explained that the suite of workshops employed during FUSE aims to empower school communities to prevent and address bullying and online safety. He indicated that research shows that when communities work together, supported by the education system and society successful initiatives can be developed to prevent and address bullying. He advised that the programme is mapped to the SPHE curriculum and is partnered with the "Fighting Words" programme for primary schools. He explained that participants are surveyed to identify their confidence and ability to notice, respond to and report bullying after participating in the workshops.

Dr Clíona Saidléar, Rape Crisis Network Ireland

The Department of Justice published the Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (Government of Ireland 2022), which outlines a zero tolerance approach to DSGBV in Irish society. This is important in the context of research highlighting that women and girls are affected disproportionately as victims/survivors of DSGBV. Dr Clíona Saidléar of Rape Crisis Network Ireland (RCNI), presented to the committee on the role of RCNI, highlighting their research published in 2021, looking at the experience of sexual harassment amongst adolescents, and provided up-to-date data on sexual harassment in schools. This report emphasised the importance of early intervention to prevent and protect children from sexual violence, highlighting key risk factors including gender, sexuality and age. She linked this to possible suggestions to update the action plan including bringing greater attention to the experiences of young women and girls, bringing a sharper focus on sexism, and recognising the seriousness of sexism and sexist bullying and grooming for exploitation. As with many other presenters, she highlighted the importance of accurate data, a need to place an increased focus on preventing and addressing online (cyber) bullying and ensuring that the updated action plan includes language like sexism.

⁷ <https://antibullyingcentre.ie/fuse/>

Social Media Companies

The evolution in the development of digital technologies has brought about vast changes in the ways in which we can communicate with each other. It has also brought a number of other avenues through which children and young people experience bullying behaviour. Online bullying is a phenomenon, which appears to have increased during the COVID-19 lockdown (Milosevic T et al., 2021). Children and young people now have greater access than ever to the internet, messaging applications and social media. Ofcom presented data from the UK which indicates that children as young as 3 have social media profiles. The data also found that eight in ten parents of 3-17-year-olds said that they were aware that there was a minimum age requirement for having a social media profile (81%). But of these only 42% could give the correct age (13).

Social media companies have a large role to play in both the policies they make and the actions they take with regards to moderation of harmful content and handling of complaints from users of their platforms who are subjected to online (cyber) bullying and harassment. The Steering Committee thought it was important to talk to social media platforms to discuss their approach to addressing this issue. A number of organisations presented to the committee including META, TikTok and YouTube.

Susan Moss, TikTok

Susan Moss, Public Policy and Government Relations Manager for TikTok, presented to the Steering Committee at the fifth meeting. She outlined the ideas and ideals behind TikTok. She referenced the 2013 *Action Plan on Bullying* which states "Online communication between young people is often hidden from adults and free from supervision." (Anti-Bullying Working Group, 2013). She advised that this does not need to be the case in 2022. She highlighted the role that parents have to play in terms of monitoring their children's social media consumption and use, including setting parameters with regards to privacy settings and family pairing options.

She noted that issues regarding abuse can be reported directly and that TikTok has a sophisticated detection model that removes content before it is reported, with 87% of content being removed before anyone has the opportunity to watch the clip. She also discussed the proactive self-moderating features that TikTok has introduced to promote kindness and empathy, encouraging users to stop and think before posting videos or comments. She highlighted the importance of students learning from their peers, and the need to establish evidence based intervention strategies. She also noted the role of all members of the community in terms of harmful content including, mobile phone device companies, media companies, parents and students.

Dualta Ó Broin, META

META is a company whose platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram are used by a large cohort of young people with approximately 9% of Instagram users being between the ages 13-17 (www.statista.com 2022). Meta Head of Public Policy for UK and Ireland, Dualta Ó Broin, presented to the Steering Committee at the sixth meeting. He provided an outline of the work META does to support online safety and community programmes. He outlined META's approach to safety and proactive measures that are taken to remove hate speech, bullying and harassment on Instagram even before an incident is reported. He advised that META has developed safety tools and technologies aimed at preventing harm, empowering young people and supporting their wellbeing. He advised that parental supervision tools allow parents and guardians to help their children manage their experience across META platforms.

Iain Bundred, YouTube

Iain Bundred, Head of Public Policy UK and Ireland for YouTube, presented to the Steering Committee. He noted that the default setting for YouTube users now assumes that they are under the age of 18. He advised of the steps that YouTube has taken to remove age inappropriate comments and the moderation of others. He emphasised the importance of dedicated media literacy education in schools for students to be taught about their online responsibilities and the impact of their online activity on themselves and others. He drew attention to an online series ran by YouTube called *Reframe* which hopes to improve media literacy for young people (Tackling Online Hate YouTube 2022).

It is evident from the presentations provided by social media companies that there are a range of policies for moderation and supports for parental controls. Social media companies have a responsibility to act quickly to remove inappropriate content. There is also a responsibility for all to be aware of the tools and technology available to users to protect their privacy, to follow procedures to report inappropriate content and to be aware of the consequences of posting hurtful and abusive comments online.



Government and Regulatory Bodies

Department of Education Inspectorate

The Department of Education Inspectorate presented on two separate occasions to the Steering Committee to provide information and data relating to two pieces of research conducted by the inspectorate during the start of the 2021 academic year. The Inspectorate carried out incidental inspections, looking at implementation of particular aspects of the anti-bullying procedures and what schools are doing to create a positive school culture (Department of Education 2022d). They also conducted focus groups with children and young people in relation to bullying (Department of Education 2022a). The Inspectorate highlighted the need for increased oversight at school level with regards to the implementation of anti-bullying procedures and for the provision of support to schools who are facing challenges in this area. The focus groups with children and young people highlighted the importance of student voice and participation in policy and decision making. Students relayed various experiences both positive and negative in a variety of areas including; culture and atmosphere in schools, a whole-school approach to anti-bullying measures and the need for education in digital literacy and online (cyber) bullying.

National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)

NEPS presented to the Committee on two separate occasions. At the first meeting of the Steering Committee Sharon Eustace provided an overview of the *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2019* (Government of Ireland 2019b) highlighting its structure and vision, which is to advise schools on how best they can promote the wellbeing of the school community across the four key areas of Culture and Environment; Curriculum (Teaching and Learning); Relationships and Partnerships and Policy and Planning.

NEPS developed guidance for post-primary schools in the area of Student Support Teams (SST), an “overarching team concerned with the progressing of actions for the welfare and wellbeing of all students” (NEPS, 2021). Deirdre Mc Hugh, Regional Director, provided an outline of this model and its background to the Steering Committee at its seventh meeting. She explained that a SST works as a central team within a school bringing coherence by co-ordinating the work of key stakeholders and teams within the school, including school leadership, pastoral care, special educational needs (SEN), guidance and the critical incident management team (CIMT). She clarified the role of the SST in that it should take a holistic whole school approach to look at the needs of all students at a universal level focused on a continuum of support as outlined in the *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2019*. She advised that SSTs should be solution driven. She advised that a NEPS evaluation of the SST model demonstrated the effectiveness of SSTs in schools noting that the model is rooted in evidence-based research and best practice. She drew attention to common themes that have emerged from analysis of qualitative feedback received by NEPS in relation to the implementation of the SST model. This included the following: that staff value the structure of SSTs and the whole school approach to student support; that the support is for all members of the school community including staff; and that it provides staff with the opportunity to network with other schools thereby increasing their knowledge and opportunities for learning.

John Kennedy, OFSTED

In June 2021, the Office of Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED) published a review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges in England. John Kennedy, Assistant Regional Director with OFSTED presented to the committee at its fifth meeting. John advised that they looked at a number of key areas including safeguarding, curriculum and reporting. He provided a background to the report and its key findings. He highlighted the importance of identifying children and young people who need support because of inappropriate behaviour at an early stage, to prevent behaviour from escalating to behaviour that is more serious. He noted the imbalance of the impact on girls and young women in their experiences of sexist comments and sexually inappropriate behaviour directed towards them with boys and young men having a different perception of what was acceptable and unacceptable behaviour to that of girls. He specifically drew attention to the experience of LGBTQ+ students, experiencing inappropriate sexual comments consistently. He highlighted the need to teach children about respect from an early age, including from Early Years Education, while it is important not to also negate the needs of older students at second level.

He emphasised the need to pitch the curriculum at the right level, including teaching about consent and online safety and noted evidence that teachers lacked confidence in delivering this aspect of the curriculum. He emphasised the importance of data collection, and highlighted the disparity in their survey between the perceived level of harassment at school level and the lived experiences of students on the ground, advising that if it is not reported, it does not mean that it is not happening. He identified these areas of best practice as key areas for intervention, including finding ways to listen to students' voices in this area. He noted that effective cooperation between parents, schools, external agencies including police and social care made a difference. The area of online (cyber) bullying was also discussed in the context of parents' lack of confidence and parents feeling unequipped to deal with their children's use of social media and accessing of inappropriate content.

Ciarán Shanley, Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media

Ciarán Shanley presented on the Online Safety and Media Regulation Bill which at the time of his presentation was passing through the Oireachtas. He outlined the provisions contained within the Bill, including the establishment of a new regulator, dissolution of previous regulator and the creation of a regulatory framework for online safety. He discussed the creation of a media commission, which would have education, cooperation and awareness raising functions. He noted it would have regulatory powers such as conducting investigations and the imposition of financial sanctions. He advised that the Bill is progressing through the legislative process with a number of amendments having been tabled.

Dr Niall Muldoon, Ombudsman for Children

The Ombudsman for Children's Office is a human rights institution that works to protect the rights and promote the welfare of children and young people in Ireland. They provide resources for children and young people on improving their knowledge and understanding of their rights and investigate complaints about services provided to children by public organisations.

Dr Niall Muldoon, the Ombudsman for Children, presented to the Steering Committee at its sixth meeting. His presentation focused on bullying as a children's rights issue and he advised that bullying interfered with a number of rights as provided for by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Dr Muldoon referenced a 2012 report published by the OCO entitled *Dealing with Bullying in Schools*. He noted the importance of a number of issues for consideration including the importance of seeking views and feedback from children and young people in this area. He highlighted the need for less tolerance of bullying and increased awareness of bullying. He advised that children and young people feel that there needs to be more discipline in addressing bullying issues. He emphasised the importance of collecting anonymised disaggregated data on an annual basis to gain a picture of the number and nature of bullying incidents occurring in schools and to identify what actions have been taken to resolve these incidents and to help mitigate against their reoccurrence. He drew attention to the importance of a clear definition of bullying, so that schools can delineate bullying from other types of behaviour. He highlighted the importance of consistency when dealing with serious incidents of bullying and called for therapeutic support for children and young people experiencing and exhibiting bullying behaviour. He spoke about the importance of training and upskilling of all school staff and boards of management and the need for sufficient support and resources to be provided at middle management level.

A number of presenters referenced the need for the provision of support to students who both experience bullying and exhibit bullying behaviour. They also highlighted the role of other agencies who have a role to play in this area including those that support the mental health and wellbeing of children, conduct research in this area, provide additional educational welfare support and help when bullying becomes a child protection concern.



Dr Philip Dodd, National Office for Suicide Prevention and Dr Eamon Raji, CAMHS

Dr Philip Dodd, Consultant Psychiatrist/Clinical Professor and Clinical Advisor at the National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) and Dr Eamon Raji, Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) CHO2 (Galway and Roscommon), presented to the committee on the area of mental health strategies to reduce the impact of bullying and associated mental health outcomes. Dr Dodd provided members with a background on two mental health strategies currently being implemented which are the *Connecting For Life Programme* which is Ireland's National Strategy to reduce Suicide 2015-2024⁸ and *Sharing the Vision: A National Mental Health Policy for everyone*⁹. He provided information on the background of the strategies and key pieces of information including the rising trend of self-harm among young women aged 15-19 and the similar trend with young men. He explained that the Connecting for Life programme is based on international best practice encompassing a whole-system multifactorial agency approach, as these issues are often complex in nature. He noted that young people who experience bullying have higher rates of self-harm than those who are not bullied and advised that it is also higher in young people exhibiting bullying behaviour, but also explained that there is not a clear cause and effect between bullying and self-harm but that it can be confounded by the presence of depressive illness anxiety disorders and parental conflict.

Dr Eamon Raji, provided an outline of the mental health service for children and young people, CAHMS, and the impact of bullying on some of the children who access this service. He emphasised the importance of social interventions in the treatment of psychiatry with a focus on a bio-psycho-social-model including interventions such as cognitive behavioural therapy and the value of both school and family support.

Jean Rafter, Tusla Education Support Services

Jean Rafter, Regional Manager with Tusla Education Support Services (TESS), provided a presentation outlining the services provided by TESS with regards to Home School Community Liaison (HSCL), the School Completion Programme (SCP) in schools under Delivery Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the Education Welfare Service (EWS) and highlighted the role and supports provided by each. She advised that Education Welfare Officers often identify bullying as a factor for children and young people disengaging in school and noted the adverse effects on children who may not wish to return to school if they are already out of school due to experiencing bullying. She also drew attention to the issue of children who are being suspended or expelled from schools as a result of an act of retaliation following experiencing bullying behaviour. She advised that the EWS see children with anxiety, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), or additional needs in particular disengaging from school due to bullying and some of these children seek places in Youthreach, or alternative education settings such as iScoil. She advised that there are approximately 100 Children aged 13-16 currently on iScoil homebased education provision who have been out of school for at least 6 months. Bullying is frequently a contributing factor for these young people being out of school. She encouraged the Steering Committee to engage with children and young people in alternative school settings to hear their experiencing of bullying as a factor in leaving school.

⁸ <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/7dfe4c-connecting-for-life-irelands-national-strategy-to-reduce-suicide-201/>

⁹ <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/2e46f-sharing-the-vision-a-mental-health-policy-for-everyone/>



The insidious and complex nature of bullying can be a contributing factor to adverse mental health outcomes (Evans C.B.R. et al., 2019). The impact of bullying can be considerable and long-lasting as evidenced in the presentation given by Jean Rafter in terms of school retention, and also in terms of mental health outcomes. Bullying can also be seen along a spectrum of deliberate inappropriate behaviour that can lead to harm and raise concerns relating to a child or young person's welfare and safety. It is important therefore for education providers and members of the school community to be able to determine when bullying becomes a child protection concern.

Charney Weitzman and Maureen Crowley, Children First Information and Advice Officers for TUSLA

Charney Weitzman indicated that there are various factors to be considered when determining whether there are child safeguarding concerns and a report should be made to Tusla, including impact on the child/children, support available from parents and levels of engagement or intervention from the school and external services (e.g. NEPS, TESS, CAMH, etc.). He advised that schools should consider if serious instances of bullying are also a child safeguarding concern under the Children First National Guidance (reasonable grounds for concern) or the Children First Act ('harm') when deciding whether to report to Tusla.

Charney noted that research indicates a high level of intimate partner violence in teen relationships. He also noted that inappropriate sharing of intimate images can cause high levels of distress, and that schools should consider the criminal aspects related to the sharing of intimate images (including as they relate to 'child pornography' and responsibilities under the Criminal Justice Withholding legislation). In relation to online safety, Charney referred to the addendum to Children First, which specifically relates to on-line safety. This addendum was a response to recognition of children's increased vulnerability in the online world. Additional vulnerabilities to bullying could include an individual's ethnicity, race, and membership of the LGBTQI+ community or the child or young person having a disability.

Thresholds are in place for reporting concerns to Tusla, including reasonable grounds for concern (Children First National Guidance), and 'harm' (the threshold for mandated reports under the Children First Act 2015). Charney advised that schools and parents should use the process of 'informal consultation', where a person is unsure whether to report an incident to Tusla. Charney also discussed Tusla's national approach to practice, Signs of Safety, which focuses on assessing current harm and risk of harm, and focuses on working towards creating safety for the child. He outlined the Tusla response pathways and the various directions that a report can move following initial screening.

Individuals with an Interest in the Area

Emer O'Neill, an Anti-racism Activist

Emer O'Neill, an Anti-racism activist, presented to the Committee at meeting five. Emer has worked with a colleague on the development of a dedicated anti-racism policy for schools and expressed the need for schools to have a separate anti-racism policy. Emer discussed her experience of racism when growing up in Ireland. In relation to the action plan and procedures, Emer highlighted the need to include references to racist bullying. She drew attention to the need for data on incidents of bullying so that we are aware of the extent and type of bullying that is occurring and that this can inform future policy. She referenced the work of the group developing the National Action Plan Against Racism. She also called for education and training for school staff in anti-racism and the need for unconscious bias training.

Chloe Heaslip, Anti-bullying Activist

Chloe Heaslip, a trainee teacher and Anti-bullying Activist, spoke at the sixth meeting about her family's experience of losing her brother Eden, in tragic circumstances following bullying. Chloe considered the 2013 *Action Plan on Bullying* in light of her own experience as a trainee teacher and provided a number of recommendations to be considered in the new action plan. These include the following: review of existing training provided at initial training education (ITE) level so that new teachers are able to deal with incidents of bullying; review school policies throughout the school year to ensure that they are fit for practice; schools should be required to record every incident of bullying, including the motivation behind it, the type of bullying and how it was dealt with. She noted that students who experience bullying can decide to leave school and that it is important to determine the reasons why students leave school early. She emphasised the importance of counselling in schools for students who experience bullying, and highlighted the value of preventative measures to stop bullying from occurring in the first place. She discussed the current definition and noted the importance school understanding the definition.

Models of Best Practice

Laura Maher, Principal, Scoil Choilm Community National School

Two schools presented to the Steering Committee to provide an outline of their experiences in promoting wellbeing, building strong relationships within the school community and preventing and addressing bullying. Laura Maher from Scoil Choilm Community National School explained that developing their ethos was an important step in building a positive school culture. Laura explained how they used a whole school approach to tackling racism. They have an interconnected cross-curricular approach with the subject matter built into lessons at an age appropriate level. The school has a charter on equality and diversity which uses simple relatable language to promote positive messages and there are displays located around the school to promote kindness and respect. The school involves parents by hosting community days and having multi-cultural celebrations. The school has a student council which represents the different cultures in the school and includes children with additional

learning needs. She highlighted a number of the key programmes and initiatives the school has implemented including Show racism the red card¹⁰ and the Yellow Flag Programme¹¹. She drew attention to the fact that the school also uses literacy and books to develop respect through literacy, providing students with stories that are accessible and age-appropriate on a range of topics including religious diversity and family diversity.

Dave Hayes and Nicola Garvey, Malahide Community School

As with Scoil Choilm, Malahide Community School (MCS) place high value in developing relationships between members of the whole school community. Dave Hayes and Nicola Garvey from MCS presented to the Committee about their positive strategies to prevent and address bullying. The school places an importance on visible displays of the values and principles of the school community and these permeate all elements of school life. This also extends to communication with parents and its pastoral care structures. They highlighted that their Parents Association plays a huge role in this. They noted that wellbeing and anti-bullying go hand in hand. Nicola stressed the importance of students feeling safe and being aware that action will be taken on bullying behaviour. She noted the importance of having a good reporting system to ensure that everyone is aware that bullying is not acceptable. She also noted the value of external supports such as NEPS, to provide advice and support to schools in handling serious incidents of bullying. They also noted the role that social media is playing in the breakdown of relationships and that there needs to be accountability from social media companies including increased monitoring and the removal of inappropriate content.



¹⁰ <https://theredcard.ie>

¹¹ <https://www.yellowflag.ie>

Key findings and proposed actions

Meetings 8 – 11 provided an opportunity for the report writers responsible for collating the information from the four main consultation strands: the consultation with children and young people; school staff focus groups; public consultation online survey and; public request for written submissions, to present the key insights gained from the experiences, observations and feedback provided by participants during the consultation process. The key findings from these reports are detailed in Chapter 5 and all consultation reports are available online¹².

During Meeting 10, the penultimate meeting of the Steering Committee, the focus was on giving consideration to the key findings from the presentations, research and consultations and the actions required to take account of the findings. Both the findings and proposed actions were mapped to the four key areas for wellbeing promotion as outlined in the *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2019* (Government of Ireland 2019b). These are Culture and Environment, Relationships and Partnerships, Curriculum (Teaching and Learning) and Policy and Planning.

Under *Culture and Environment*, the findings included the need for time and resources, a whole school community approach to anti-bullying and inclusion, access to safe places within the school and preventing bullying instead of reacting to it.

In relation to *Relationships and Partnerships*, the findings under this topic included the meaningful involvement of children and young people, diversity in student councils and school staff, zero tolerance for bullying and the importance of a trusted adult in relation to disclosure of incidents of bullying.

On the area of *Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)* key findings included building teacher confidence and skills to address bullying, the importance of anti-bullying programmes such as FUSE, inspections focused on school culture and wellbeing and an increased focus on inclusion, anti-racism and diversity at Initial Teacher Education, Newly Qualified Teacher Education and continuous professional development.

In relation to *Policy and Planning* key findings included the importance of an Online Safety Commissioner, collecting disaggregated data on bullying to inform policy, an annual risk assessment at school level and the whole school community understanding their roles and responsibilities.

At the final meeting of the Steering Committee the draft action plan and updated definition was reviewed and discussed in detail. The Steering Committee provided feedback on the proposed actions and undertook to provide any further feedback in writing.

¹² <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/52aaf-cinealtas-action-plan-on-bullying/>

Summary

The brief outline of the presentations as provided in this chapter does not attempt to capture all the information presented at Steering Committee meetings nor does it capture the discussion between presenters and Steering Committee members. This can be found in the minutes of each Steering Committee meeting which can be found on the gov.ie website at <https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation-information/53ee6-steering-committee-to-review-the-action-plan-on-bullying/>.

The Steering Committee are very grateful for the time, energy, knowledge and expertise that all presenters provided during their presentations which help to inform and guide the work of the Steering Committee.

Chapter 5 describes the findings from the other key consultation strands which include the consultation with children and young people, school staff focus groups, public consultation online survey and public request for written submissions.



5

Consultation Process for Review of the Action Plan on Bullying 2013



Chapter 5: Consultation Process for Review of the Action Plan on Bullying 2013

A wide-ranging consultation process has been held to ensure that the views of the many stakeholders are considered in this important process. The participation of children and young people, parents and school staff have been instrumental in the review of the *Action Plan on Bullying 2013*.



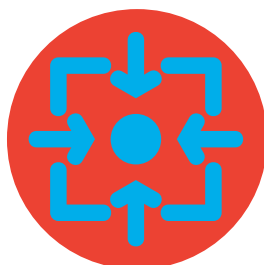
Over **50** presentations have been made to the Steering Committee



Over **4,600** responses were received to the public consultation online survey



78 submissions being received to the public request for submissions



41 school staff and board of management members participated in school focus groups



170 children and young people were consulted including children with special educational needs, Traveller and Roma children, children from the Ukraine and children in the international protection system

Presentations to the Steering Committee

Over 50 presentations have been made to the Steering Committee by stakeholders. These include presentations from an eminent international anti-bullying researcher, Professor Peter K. Smith, researchers from the Anti-Bullying Centre, the Anti-Bullying Alliance in the UK, the UK Department for Education Inspectorate, the Ombudsman for Children, the Rape Crisis Network Ireland, Barnardos, the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (ISPCC), the Children's Right's Alliance, the National Office for Suicide Prevention, Tusla and social media companies among others.

All presenters were asked to reflect on the 2013 Action Plan on Bullying and present their views on what was working well and what was missing or needed improving. The work of the Steering Committee really benefitted from this engagement. Chapter 4 contains an overview of the presentations and the minutes of the relevant Steering Committee meetings contain further detail. The full list of presenters to the Steering Committee is contained at Appendix 2.

The Steering Committee were joined by Minister Foley, children, young people, parents and school staff at its meeting on 24 May 2022. Attendees were assigned to tables consisting of Steering Committee members, children and young people, parents and school staff. Each group was asked to engage in a placemat activity to consider 'What is being done to prevent and tackle bullying?', 'What is working well?' and 'What else do we need to do?'. The minutes of this meeting provides further detail on this engagement.



Focus groups with children and young people

The Department of Education worked with the National Participation Office of Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) to arrange two consultation days with children and young people. On 11 May 2022 a focus group with 48 children from twelve primary schools around the country was held at Miesian Plaza. Minister Foley attended this consultation. One of the questions that the children were asked was what they think the Minister should do to prevent and address bullying. Minister Foley spent a substantial amount of time engaging with the children around the area of anti-bullying and what helps to prevent and stop bullying in schools. Two children shared their experiences of being bullied and described how it made them feel invisible. This provided an important stimulus for an engaging discussion between the Minister and the children around types of bullying and exclusion that they knew of, about the importance of telling someone when bullying happens and ways that the children thought they could be a friend to others at school. The children learned of the Minister's work to make sure all schools were safe, happy places of learning and how the children were helping the Minister to do that.

On 12 May 2022, a second focus group was held at Miesian Plaza with post-primary students who self-nominated to attend following an invitational email from the Participation Coordinator at DECDIY to all Comhairle na nÓg groups across the country and to a range of youth organisations. A total of fifty post-primary students from Comhairle na nÓg, BeLonGTo, Youth Work Ireland, Foróige and Scouts among other groups across the country volunteered to attend following an invitational email outlining the purpose of the consultation.

In July 2022, the Department of Education organised and facilitated four additional half-day consultations involving children and young people attending summer programmes in special classes, special schools, and in a STAR programme centre providing for Traveller and Roma children and young people. The voices of children international protection system and young people from Ukraine (fleeing the war) were also heard in these consultations. A total of 73 children and young people participated in these consultations. In addition, a number of students attending iScoil¹³ completed an online questionnaire.

The participants in these focus groups were from a variety of types of school including mainstream, special school, urban, rural and schools participating in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools programme (DEIS).

¹³ iScoil is a recognised, non-profit, blended learning service designed for young people (13-16 years of age) who for various reasons have disengaged from mainstream education. iScoil offers an alternative learning pathway for these young people leading to QQI accreditation with opportunities to access further education, training and employment. iScoil partners with various local agencies and youth organisations to provide a range of learning opportunities; some learning is online, some is face-to-face and others a blend of online and face-to-face learning. All referrals to iScoil are made by Educational Welfare Officers in the Tusla Education Support Service (TESS).

Methodology

The methodologies for the consultation days were piloted and approved by the Youth Advisory Group (YAG) and the consultation with young people was co-facilitated by the YAG team who were of a similar age to the participants.

The Lundy participation framework methodology was used to ensure that the voices of the children and the young people were enabled and respected throughout. A very pleasant atmosphere and safe environment was created for the children and young people to express their views and opinions.

The children and young people took part in various activities that were very much orientated towards blue-sky thinking of the children and the young people, starting from their world, their experiences, and their strengths.

Participants could respond in words (the round table discussions) or write or draw about it on the various graphically-designed poster frames and jigsaw pieces. The various poster templates were carefully designed to engage the children and young people. Some activities were completed individually and others completed as a group/whole table activity. The children and young people could choose not to speak on the topic and simply observe the discussion.

Given the sensitivities and vulnerabilities around the area of bullying and impact, National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) psychologists attended all consultation days in the event that a child or young person needed their assistance.



Key findings

Eleven findings emerged from the data collected during the consultation. The findings are set out under the four key areas for wellbeing promotion as outlined in the Department's *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2019* (Government of Ireland 2019b)

- > Culture and Environment
- > Relationships and Partnerships
- > Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)
- > Policy & Planning

Culture and Environment

Finding 1: School Climate: When children and young people felt listened to and valued by their teachers, it helped to prevent feelings of exclusion and isolation.

Finding 2: Leadership: School leadership has the power to make things better and more equal for all students.

Finding 3: School Buildings and Grounds: Safe Places: All children and all young people want to have access to safe, quiet places in school.

Finding 4: Supports: All children and young people need a variety of supports to help them deal with bullying.

Relationships and Partnerships

Finding 5: Webs of Relationships (School-in-Community): Children and young people want to see and experience visible expressions of respect, and trust and be treated fairly in school. They value school-community relationships.

Finding 6: Trusted Adult: Safe Faces: Having at least one trusted adult in school is a must for all children and all young people in school. The class teacher is especially important for primary school children and the career guidance counsellor for post-primary students. Privacy and confidentiality are very important to all children and all young people.

Finding 7: Student Council: Children and young people want meaningful work to do on the Student Council that is representative of all students. They view the Student Council as an important forum for working on school policies and for expressing their views on matters that directly affect them in school. It is a good space for listening.

Finding 8: Communication and Language: Children and young people (for whom English is an additional language) do not want the responsibility to be the sole language translators and communication medium for curriculum teaching in schools. Nor do they feel it is just or equitable to have such expectations of them.



Curriculum (Teaching & Learning)

Finding 9: Subjects and Programmes: Teaching and curriculum need to be up-to-date with the real life of students and to ensure that students are taught about bullying in relation to sexual harassment, identity-bullying, cyberbullying, and racism.

Finding 10: Teacher education and continuing professional development: Children and young people suggest that initial teacher education and continuing professional development for all teachers (primary and post-primary) and for SNAs should include modules on sexual harassment, cyberbullying, identity-bullying, homophobia, mental health awareness and cultural awareness. The psychology of how young people learn should be included for all.

Policy & Planning

Finding 11: Policy development and dissemination: Children and young people want a meaningful and recognised voice in school policy development. They want the school community to see the connections between the anti-bullying policy and procedures and other school policies that are directly related to anti-bullying (e.g. Code of Behaviour, Child Safeguarding Statement, Acceptable Use Policy (Digital Technologies), Wellbeing Policy, RSE/SPHE Policy) with the school's vision, mission and the Code of Professional Practice for Teachers. Make the policies plain and make them public.

The report on the consultations with children and young people can be found gov.ie - Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying (www.gov.ie).

Focus Groups with School Staff

Participants

27 primary school staff and board of management members participated in an online focus group on 8 June 2022. 14 post-primary school staff and board of management members participated in an online focus group on 1 June 2022. The purpose of the focus groups was to ensure that the voices of members of our school communities which include teachers, principals, chairpersons and other members of boards of management, special needs assistants (SNAs), school secretaries, caretakers and other ancillary support staff were heard in the consultation process.

Methodology

The Department facilitated these focus groups which were each of 90 minutes duration.

Participants were asked to consider two key questions:

- > How is bullying prevented and tackled in your school?
- > What supports do you and/or your school need to do this better?

Key Findings

Twenty five findings emerged from the data collected during the consultation. The findings are set out under the four key areas for wellbeing promotion as outlined in the Department's *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2019*:

- > Culture and Environment
- > Relationships and Partnerships
- > Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)
- > Policy & Planning



Culture and Environment

Finding 1: Creating a positive and inclusive school culture: Creating a school culture with core values of inclusion, kindness and respect for everyone was seen by participants as being key to preventing bullying.

Finding 2: A whole school approach to inclusivity and anti-bullying: Participants believed that this could be achieved if the whole school community is educated in the core values and expectations of the school.

Finding 3: Develop a culture of trust and support among staff: Participants believed that there is a need to develop a culture of trust and support among all staff, not just teachers, so that there is a spirit of partnership and teamwork across the entire school community.

Finding 4: Create an open environment of trust and discussion for children: Participants were of the view that the school must be a space where children and young people are encouraged to discuss issues and report incidents of bullying and feel safe and secure enough to do so without feeling judged.

Finding 5: Promote student voice: The importance of encouraging talk and discussion about issues relating to inclusion and bullying in the classroom was frequently mentioned by participants. In addition, it was felt that children and young people should be encouraged to listen to each other about anti-bullying.

Finding 6: Celebrate difference and treat all people with respect and fairness: A school where people are treated respectfully and fairly will help in terms of preventing bullying, according to many participants.

Finding 7: Reward good behaviour and inclusiveness: Participants believed that there is a need to celebrate good behaviour and inclusiveness, for example through award and merit systems.

Finding 8: Promote anti-bullying measures: Participants were of the view that schools should actively promote an anti-bullying approach and raise awareness of this, through strategies such as the use of posters, use of whole school surveys and social media, training senior students to watch out for bullying.

Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)

Finding 9: Raise awareness: Participants believed that schools should actively raise awareness around diversity and, in particular, awareness about LGBTQ+ issues particularly transgender issues.

Finding 10: Useful approaches and programmes for tackling bullying: Participants drew attention to a number of specific anti-bullying programmes that they found useful in schools.

Finding 11: School Ethos: Participants from some schools noted that there might be hesitancy by some members of the school community about the nature of the content contained within current curricula including Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE).

Policy and planning

Finding 12: Ensure clear policy and procedures: It was strongly felt that the school community must be fully aware of the procedures for preventing and tackling bullying.

Finding 13: Avoid 'labelling' of students: The 'no blame' approach which does not label children and young people as bullies or victims was advocated. So too was the use of 'restorative practice'.

Finding 14: Record and monitor incidents of bullying: The need to ensure that relevant information in relation to bullying incidents is shared and that there is a clear record in place was emphasised by many participants.

Finding 15: Provide greater clarity in the anti-bullying procedures: There was a strong belief that the anti-bullying procedures for schools should be more accessible for children and young people and should be elevated to the same level of importance as the child protection procedures.

Finding 16: Provide more guidance in relation to cyberbullying: It was felt that the Department should consider the issue of whether a school should have responsibility for investigating cyberbullying incidents that take place outside of school.

Finding 17: Review the templates for recording incidents of bullying: There were calls for the Department to design and trial updated anti-bullying templates including removing the requirement to name somebody as a bully and for the templates to be adapted for different age groups.

Finding 18: Provide resources for additional staffing of care teams: There were suggestions that the Department should place more value on the importance of 'pastoral care' as a means of preventing and tackling bullying.

Finding 19: Provide relevant training at Initial Teacher Education stage and for Newly Qualified Teachers: There were calls for more training to be provided at initial teacher education stage and for newly qualified teachers as well as for established teachers.

Finding 20: Relevant Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for the whole school community: Participants were clear that the Department should devise and roll out a national programme of relevant CPD for the whole school community in relation to preventing and tackling bullying.

Finding 21: Appropriate time for the whole school community to attend relevant CPD: Participants recommended that schools should be closed to release all staff to attend CPD in regional groups. This would allow all staff and schools to receive the same information and training and to have professional conversations with staff from other schools.

Relationships and Partnerships

Finding 22: Involve parents: There is a need for positive parental engagement and good communication with parents in order to tackle bullying according to many participants.

Finding 23: Link with other schools: Some participants suggested that schools should network and link with other schools, especially schools within their community, so that a whole community approach can be taken.

Finding 24: A less homogenous teaching profession: In order to bring about real inclusivity, many participants believed that schools need to have role models from different races, abilities, and identities working within them.

Finding 25: Conduct relevant research: Some participants called for the Department to conduct research in to why children do not report bullying as they get older.

The report on the consultations with school staff can be found gov.ie - Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying (www.gov.ie).



Public Consultation Online Survey

Participants

The questionnaire was available to all members of the public. The majority of responses came from parents, school staff, post-primary students and primary pupils. 2774 parents responded. 1895 were parents of primary pupils and 807 were parents of post-primary students with 72 indicating Youthreach or Other. The majority were parents of children from third class in primary to third year in post-primary. 1086 school staff responded, including 482 teachers and 290 principals, and a wide range of staff in student-support roles. 226 post-primary students and 88 pupils responded to the questionnaire.

Methodology

The Department held an online consultation which was open to all members of the public from 26 May to 21 June 2022. Information about the survey and how to participate in it was sent via electronic communication to all primary, post-primary and special schools, and other settings such as Youthreach centres. Information was also shared with a number of education stakeholder groups, including the National Parents Councils, the Second Level Students Union, and organisations supporting diversity and inclusion in schools.

Survey templates were published online and were tailored to capture the perspectives of the various groups that were invited to respond: primary pupils, post-primary students, parents of primary pupils, parents of post-primary students, school staff and the general public.

In relation to certain areas of the survey, the same questions appeared for different groups, so that the responses from these groups could be compared. Different questions were also asked of different groups to build up as complete a picture as possible of the many aspects of bullying and of the steps taken in schools to prevent and address it.

Key Findings

Twenty-six findings emerged from the data collected during the consultation. The findings are set out under the four key areas for wellbeing promotion as outlined in the Department's *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2019*:

- > Culture and Environment
- > Relationships and Partnerships
- > Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)
- > Policy & Planning



Culture and Environment

Finding 1: Reporting incidents of bullying: Primary pupils were more likely than post-primary students to report bullying. The main reasons for post-primary students not reporting bullying incidents included a lack of confidence in the school's or teacher's capacity to deal with the issue appropriately or to help the situation, concerns about the negative repercussions of telling; fears that the bullying would get worse; that the victim would get in trouble; or that the victim would not be believed.

Finding 2: Pupils and students were most likely to report incidents of bullying to a parent or adult at home: Primary pupils and post-primary students varied in who they would report bullying to. Both groups were most likely to tell a parent or someone at home. Telling a teacher or another adult at school was the next most likely reporting mechanism. Post-primary students were more likely to tell a friend or no one at all compared with their primary counterparts.

Finding 3: Reporting bullying is often unsatisfactory from a post-primary student perspective: The vast majority of primary pupils expressed confidence that reporting bullying would help, however almost half of the 30% of post-primary students who had reported bullying said there was no improvement and one in six said that things had gotten worse after reporting it.

Finding 4: Parents experience of reporting bullying: The vast majority of parents reported bullying incidents to the school, and just over half were satisfied with the outcome of reporting. The parents who didn't report bullying cited lack of confidence in the way it would be dealt with.

Finding 5: School staff's experience of bullying being reported to them: The majority of staff said that bullying was never or rarely reported to them. Parents or guardians are the largest single grouping to report bullying incidents to staff. Either the student being bullied or another student account for almost half of the reports of incidents of bullying made to staff.

Finding 6: Atmosphere and interactions in the school: Responses from school staff, parents and students indicate that the vast majority of respondents were positive about the atmosphere in the school, the welcoming nature of the school, and respectful relationships between students and between staff and students. There was some divergence between staff, parent and student responses with school staff being most positive and students being least positive.

Finding 7: Bullying and how it is dealt with: One in three of the post-primary student respondents and more than one in four of the parent respondents said that there was a bullying problem in their school. Responses indicated that there is considerable awareness of support available and the fostering of a supportive environment, however less than one in three students indicated that they were aware that there was a specific staff member in charge of dealing with bullying in their school.

Finding 8: Listening to parents and students: School staff responses to whether parents and students are listened to regarding bullying were considerably more positive than responses from parents and students.

Finding 9: Schools fostering respectful and inclusive behaviour: School staff, parent and post-primary student responses were generally positive regarding fostering respectful and inclusive behaviour. Parents and students were less positive regarding school staff suggesting ways in which arguments can be settled peacefully.

Finding 10: Views of parents on what more schools could do: Suggestions for what more schools could do included all parents and students being listened to and treated equally when they raise concerns about bullying, putting the anti-bullying policy into practice, dealing with bullying by teachers, having a zero tolerance policy towards bullying, taking positive action to encourage amicable and respectful behaviour, and implementing swift sanctions where bullying incidents occurred.

Finding 11: Views of school staff on what more schools could do: Staff suggestions for what more schools could do include greater co-operation between school and home to tackle the issue of bullying, establishing a school environment that is a respectful and inclusive place for all, the need to ensure that interactions between adults modelled respectful attitudes, adopting restorative practice, the need for explicit education in resolving situations where hurt or harm was caused, and the difficulty of establishing a zero tolerance policy.

Finding 12: Views of post-primary students on what more schools could do: Students stressed the importance of being able to report bullying concerns and incidents safely, of being listened to by teachers and other adults in the school, of students understanding what bullying is and how harmful it can be.



Relationships and Partnerships

Finding 13: Bullying behaviour in schools as an indication of not understanding and appreciating diversity: For both parents and school staff, being considered different from their peers was by far the most common reason for children being bullied. Identifying as LGBTQI+, being considered exceptionally able and having a learning disability or receiving support in school for additional needs were the most common reasons selected by post-primary students for being bullied. Being a member of an ethnic minority also featured as a key reason for parents, students and staff.

Finding 14: The experience of being bullied: Just under half of parents and school staff said they had been bullied, while 40% of post-primary students said they had been bullied.

Finding 15: Types of bullying behaviour: The top five types of bullying experienced were nasty comments, being excluded, being made to feel unwelcome, talking behind a person's back, and name-calling. Post-primary student responses ranked homophobic bullying tenth and cyberbullying eleventh.

Finding 16. Reasons for not experiencing bullying: Reasons for not being bullied are broadly categorised under two headings: school and societal factors, and personal factors. Themes include the importance of school atmosphere and behavioural expectations, an emphasis on discipline, the promotion of kindness and respect within the school community, the importance of explicit anti-bullying measures, the role of social media, the importance of strong friendship groups and a sense of belonging and identity. Not standing out, being strong and confident, having good self-esteem and not being too sensitive were cited as serving as a protection against bullying.





Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)

Finding 17: Training and education to help deal with and prevent bullying: Three quarters of staff indicated that they have some sort of training to prevent and tackle bullying but only a small proportion indicated significant or recent training. Almost a third of staff indicated that they needed more training in the area. A high proportion of school staff indicated a range of training they had in areas that support a safe and inclusive school environment including internet safety, special needs education, being an inclusive school and transgender awareness.

Finding 18: Staff feeling equipped to deal with bullying: School principals generally felt more equipped than school staff to deal with bullying.

Finding 19: Primary pupils' learning related to staying safe: The vast majority of primary pupils learned about a range of topics, most commonly: different types of bullying, feeling safe and unsafe, feelings and online safety. Only a small number of pupils had learned about racism.

Finding 20: Post-primary students' learning related to bullying: Topics that post-primary students learned most about included cyberbullying, rights and responsibilities, how to keep safe online, internet safety and online etiquette, peer pressure, different types of bullying, emotional and mental health and the importance of respectful and inclusive behaviour.

Finding 21: Where post-primary students learn about bullying: A large majority of post-primary students said that they learn about bullying and cyberbullying in school. They are most likely to learn about bullying in Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) lessons, followed by Wellbeing lessons and Anti-Bullying Programmes.

Policy & Planning

Finding 22: Defining bullying behaviour: Many respondents were satisfied with the 2013 definition. Suggestions for improving the definition included references to the harm inflicted by bullying behaviour, reference to cyberbullying and the intentional nature of bullying. The repetitive nature of bullying was queried, particularly in the online context. The inclusion of other forms of bullying in the definition, such as deliberate exclusion and exercising power over someone was suggested.

Finding 23: Awareness of and involvement with the anti-bullying policy: Overall there was a good awareness of their school's anti-bullying policy by staff, parents and students. School staff had the highest level of awareness and students were least aware. The majority of staff had involvement in the development of the anti-bullying policy, however parents and students had limited involvement.

Finding 24: Effectiveness, clarity and implementation of the policy: School staff were the most positive group in their responses to the effectiveness, clarity and implementation of the anti-bullying policy. Post-primary parents were more negatively disposed than were primary parents towards all aspects of the anti-bullying policy in their schools: effectiveness; clarity; and implementation.

Finding 25: Schools could do more about bullying: More than half of school staff and parents said that schools could do more about bullying. The majority of primary pupils and post-primary students believe that schools are doing all they can. Pupils and students called for adult supervision of all areas of the school, anonymous reporting systems, real consequences for those who engage in bullying behaviour, listening to students when they tell them about bullying, training for school staff to deal with bullying, and learning about kindness and treating others fairly.

Finding 26: What the Minister could do to stop bullying in schools: Parents called for external structures for unresolved bullying issues, greater accountability for schools through inspection and access to trained professionals such as psychologists. School staff and parents called for accountability and greater regulation for social media platforms, funding of anti-bullying training and initiatives for schools and parents. School staff called for greater resourcing for schools and capacity building for staff and school management to deal with bullying. Students made additional suggestions including a national anti-bullying week and a network of community-based activities for young people.

The report on the public consultation online survey can be found gov.ie - Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying (www.gov.ie).

Public Consultation Written Submissions

Participants

In May 2022, the Department invited individuals and organisations to make a written submission regarding the implementation of the *Action Plan on Bullying 2013 and the Anti-bullying procedures for primary and post-primary schools 2013* and to identify what needs strengthening to support the prevention and addressing of bullying in schools.

A total of seventy-eight written submissions were received. Just over half of the submissions were from individuals such as, principals, teachers, parents and students and the remainder were from organisations representing a range of education stakeholders and other groups.

Methodology

The Department developed an online submission portal to which written submissions could be made. This consultation ran for one month, between the dates of 26 May 2022 and 24 June 2022.

Participants were asked to include their name, the organisation they represented (if relevant) and their contact details in their response. They were then asked four specific questions:

1. Please outline your views on how the *2013 Action Plan on Bullying* and Procedures have supported schools to prevent and tackle bullying.
2. Please provide any relevant recent statistics or research in relation to bullying/anti-bullying that you would like to bring to the attention of the Steering Committee.
3. Please outline your views on what you think is missing or needs strengthening in the *2013 Action Plan on Bullying*.
4. Please outline your views on what you think is missing or needs strengthening in the *2013 Anti-bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-primary Schools*.

Key findings

Thirty-five findings emerged from the data collected during the consultation. The findings are set out under the four key areas for wellbeing promotion as outlined in the Department's *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2019*:

- > Culture and Environment
- > Relationships and Partnerships
- > Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)
- > Policy & Planning

Culture and Environment

Finding 1: Positive school culture and environment: The importance of a whole school approach to creating a positive and open school culture should be stressed.

Finding 2: Teacher role modelling: The Action Plan should stress the importance of role modelling by teachers.

Finding 3: Homogeneity of teaching profession: More diversity needed in the teaching profession.

Relationships and Partnerships

Finding 4: Student participation and reporting: The Action Plan should highlight the importance of Student Participation and of Safe Pathways for reporting bullying.

Finding 5: Children's rights: Recommendation that bullying should be treated as a children's rights issue.

Finding 6: Bullying by teachers: Bullying by teachers needs to be addressed.

Finding 7: Bullying of staff: Bullying of staff needs to be addressed.

Finding 8: Role of the Board of Management: There should be an increased focus on the role of the Board of Management.

Finding 9: Staff accountability: Greater focus should be placed on staff accountability.

Finding 10: Education on the impact of bullying: There should be a greater focus on educating the whole school community on bullying and its impact.



Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)

Finding 11: Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and Training: Need for mandatory, ongoing and appropriate CPD and Training.

Finding 12: ITE: Initial teacher education (ITE) providers should focus more on anti-bullying.

Finding 13: Inclusive curriculum: The importance of an inclusive curriculum needs to be emphasised.

Finding 14: Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) and Social Personal Health Education (SPHE): The RSE and SPHE programmes should be reviewed.

Finding 15: Inspection: The Inspectorate should report on the quality of anti-bullying policies and their implementation.

Finding 16: Resources for schools: Resources to schools should be increased.

Policy and Planning

Finding 17: Audit implementation of the recommendations in the *Anti-bullying procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2013*

Finding 18: Up-to-date research: The action plan should be informed by up-to-date research.

Finding 19: Data collection: Anonymised, disaggregated data should be collected.

Finding 20: Different types of bullying: The action plan should provide greater focus on different types of bullying.

Finding 21: Alignment with other policies: The anti-bullying policy should be aligned with other policies and strategies.



Summary of what respondents thought was missing or needed strengthening in the 2013 Anti-Bullying Procedures

Finding 22: The definition of “bullying”: A large number of submissions requested clarity on the definition of bullying and other certain key definitions including the definition of different types of bullying.

Finding 23: Clarification on aspects of the Procedures: The roles and responsibilities of schools should be clarified.

Finding 24: Guidance regarding bullying as a child protection concern: Guidance should be provided on when bullying is a child protection concern.

Finding 25: Consequences of bullying: School Procedures should outline the consequences for bullying.

Finding 26: Reporting and recording: All incidents of bullying should be reported and recorded.

Finding 27: Protecting children with special educational needs: Guidance should be provided on how to protect children with special educational needs.

Finding 28: Additions and amendments: A range of recommended additions and amendments to the *Anti-bullying procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2013* were called for.

Finding 29: Policy template: A range of updates were to the anti-bullying policy template were suggested including aims, definitions, strategies, monitoring and roles and responsibilities.

Finding 30: Appendices to procedures: Appendices 2, 3 and 4 should be updated.

Finding 31: Restorative Practices: The use of Restorative Practices should be advocated in the Procedures.

Finding 32: Visibility of anti-bullying policies: The procedures should stress the importance of increasing the visibility of anti-bullying policies.

Finding 33: Annual review: The procedures should stress the importance of an annual review.

Finding 34: Importance of monitoring: The procedures should stress the importance of monitoring.

Finding 35: Complaints system for parents: The procedures should include a complaints system for parents.

The report on the public consultation written submissions can be found gov.ie - Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying (www.gov.ie).



Summary Findings

Culture and Environment

- > The importance of a welcoming school community that has a culture of promoting inclusion, equality, respect and diversity with zero tolerance for bullying
- > The key role of school leaders in creating this culture
- > The importance of student voice
- > Creating an environment where children and young people feel safe and confident to report bullying behaviour
- > Access to safe places within the school, and the need to consider school design for both Internal and external spaces to ensure that the risk of the potential for bullying is reduced
- > Greater focus on school culture and student wellbeing during school inspections
- > Supports available for students and staff, when required
- > The importance of trying to prevent bullying instead of simply reacting to it
- > Raising awareness of how to address bullying and the impact of bullying among all members of the school community
- > Greater diversity in the teaching profession
- > Key role of school staff in modelling positive behaviour

Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)

- > An inclusive curriculum, which includes education on diversity and respect for other cultures, anti-racism and an increased awareness of unconscious bias for the whole school community
- > An increased focus on inclusion, equality and diversity during initial teacher education, newly qualified teacher education and continuous professional development
- > Building teacher skills to prevent and address bullying
- > The importance of evidence based, age-appropriate and culturally relevant anti-bullying programmes such as FUSE
- > Books and lessons which reinforce the message of inclusion and equality, and that reflect the evolving nature of society
- > The development of a specific qualification in SPHE for post-primary teachers

Policy and Planning

- > The importance of inclusive approaches to school policy development, involving the meaningful participation of children and young people
- > The wellbeing of the whole school community at the heart of policies and plans
- > The development of a range of effective approaches within schools to enable the safe reporting of bullying behaviour, including anonymity in reporting
- > The need for reporting of all alleged bullying incidents, including details of the type of bullying behaviour and the approach to addressing it
- > The importance of school staff being trained to implement a range of appropriate responses to alleged bullying behaviour
- > The need to collect disaggregated data on bullying in schools to inform future policy, and to guide continuous professional development
- > The importance of regular review of school policies
- > The importance of school policies setting out clearly and accessibly the roles and responsibilities of each member of the school community ensuring that information is also presented in age appropriate and child friendly language
- > The value of the School Self-Evaluation process for wellbeing promotion
- > The importance of an Online Safety Commissioner who can consider individual complaints
- > Alignment of the anti-bullying policy with other policies and strategies

Relationships and Partnerships

- > The importance of positive relationships across the whole school community to promote empathy, understanding and respect and raise awareness of unconscious bias
- > The importance of all school staff keeping a 'watchful eye' on the children and young people in their care with all school staff being confident in their knowledge of best practice in how to address bullying behaviour
- > The importance of a trusted adult in relation to disclosure of incidents of bullying
- > The meaningful involvement of children and young people
- > The importance of engagement with parents in recognition of their key role in preventing and addressing bullying
- > The benefits of encouraging greater diversity of involvement across the whole school community, including student councils and school staff
- > The potential for student mentors to play a role in preventing bullying in schools
- > The valuable role that Student Support Teams have to play
- > Consideration of bullying as a children's rights issue

6

Definition and Forms of Bullying



Chapter 6: Definition and Forms of Bullying

Defining Bullying

There are many different forms of bullying behaviour including physical, verbal and relational forms, that can take place both in-person and online. There are also many different motives for bullying behaviour which can be understood on an individual level (e.g. desire for dominance, status, revenge) and/or on a societal level (e.g. identity-based bullying such as racist, disablist, sexist or LGBTQ+ bullying). Bullying behaviour in schools is often strongly influenced by attitudes, behaviours, norms and power dynamics that are deeply engrained in our society.

The Steering Committee took a considered approach to shaping the updated definition of bullying, looking at a range of international research and literature on bullying including the 2021 UNESCO definition:

School bullying is in-person and online behaviour between students within a social network that causes physical, emotional or social harm to targeted students. It is characterized by an imbalance of power that is enabled or inhibited by the social and institutional norms and context of schools and the education system. School bullying implies an absence of effective responses and care towards the target by peers and adults. (UNESCO, 2021a)

This definition is significant in that it places a greater emphasis on the personal experience of harm by the child experiencing the bullying behaviour, which can be physical, emotional or social. The UNESCO definition also suggests that bullying implies an absence of effective responses and care towards the target, highlighting the wider community responsibility to develop a school climate in which all children can feel safe and in which difference is valued and respected. Such an approach is reflected further within the Whole Education Approach to reducing violence and bullying in schools (UNESCO, 2021b).



The 2013 Anti-Bullying Procedures defines bullying as:

unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time. The following types of bullying behaviour are included in this non-exhaustive definition: (i) deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying; (ii) cyber-bullying; and (iii) identity-based bullying such as homophobic bullying, racist bullying, bullying based on a person's membership of the Traveller community and bullying of those with disabilities or special educational needs.

The committee found that there remains no definitive, exhaustive or agreed definition of bullying among the global community of anti-bullying researchers. Nonetheless it fully recognises the importance of providing clear definitional demarcation criteria for children and young people, their parents, teachers and other school staff, and the wider community. With this in mind, the updated definition of bullying behaviour for *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying*, aims to strike a balance between the recognised need for a concise core definition and the importance of providing further explanatory commentary to support the educational community as it seeks to identify, prevent, and address all forms of bullying behaviour among children and young people.

The new core definition retains definitional clarity around three core elements of bullying behaviour: bullying as targeted, deliberate and unwanted behaviour that causes harm to others, that is repeated over time, and which involves an imbalance of power in relationships between two people or groups of people in society.

In the explanatory notes that follow the core definition, additional guidance is provided to schools on how we understand bullying behaviour on *both* an individual *and* societal level. We thus acknowledge how bullying behaviour may have *both* individual, psychological determinants *and* be influenced by broader societal attitudes, behaviours, norms and power dynamics.

The new definition reflects our developing understanding of bullying behaviours and is more representative of the latest international research.

Cineáltas defines bullying 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 core elements of the definition are further described below:

Targeted behaviour

Bullying is deliberate, unwanted behaviour that causes harm to others, and where the child or young person displaying bullying behaviour knows that their behaviour is or will be perceived as harmful by the child or young person experiencing the behaviour. Bullying is not accidental or reckless behaviour. The harm can be physical (e.g. personal injury, damage to or loss of property), social (e.g. withdrawal, loneliness, exclusion) and/or emotional (e.g. low self-esteem, depression, anxiety) and can have a serious and long-term negative impact on the child or young person experiencing the bullying behaviour. If the repeated harm is real for the child or young person experiencing the behaviour but unintended by the other child or young person, this is not bullying but, importantly, must still be addressed under the school's code of behaviour.

Repeated behaviour

Bullying takes the form of a systematic pattern of behaviour which is repeated over time. Single offline incidents of intentional negative behaviour involving an imbalance of power are not considered bullying, but must still be addressed under the school's code of behaviour. Posting a single harmful message/image/video online which is highly likely to be reposted or shared with others can however be seen as bullying behaviour.

Imbalance of power

In incidents of bullying, the child or young person experiencing the bullying behaviour finds it hard to defend themselves as a result of the abuse of a real or perceived imbalance of power. This imbalance of power may manifest itself through differences in size, strength, age, ability, peer group power, economic status, social status, religion, race, ethnic origin including membership of the Traveller and/or Roma communities, sexual orientation, family circumstances, gender, gender identity, gender expression, experience of the care system, disability or the receipt of special education. In incidents of online (or cyber) bullying, the imbalance of power may relate to online anonymity, technical proficiency and possession of information/images /video, and the inability of the targeted person to remove offensive online material or escape the bullying.



Forms of Bullying Behaviour

In developing the updated definition of bullying in *Cineáltas*, the Steering Committee took account of the many different forms of bullying that needed to be identified and addressed by schools and in particular areas that research highlighted as being of particular concern such as cyberbullying, identity-based bullying and sexual harassment.

Cyberbullying

According to UNICEF (2022) cyberbullying is bullying with the use of digital technologies. It can take place on social media, messaging platforms, gaming platforms and mobile phones. It is repeated behaviour, aimed at scaring, angering or shaming those who are targeted.

New forms of cyberbullying are being identified based on the media used or type of action (Slonje, Smith & Frisen, 2013). These new forms of bullying have paved the way for greater blurring of boundaries between schools, homes and cyberspaces (Whittaker & Kowalski, 2015).

A number of recent studies have shown the extent and impact of cyberbullying in Ireland:

- > A meta-analysis of 39 published cyberbullying studies in Ireland found a cyber-victimisation rate of 13.7% for primary and 9.6% for post-primary students (Foody, Samara, & O'Higgins Norman, 2017).
- > More recent research conducted with a sample of Irish adolescents (aged 12-16) showed that 12.4% of post-primary students were bullied online; 2.9% of students were both targets and perpetrators of cyberbullying, but only 1.5% of adolescents admitted that they bullied others online (Foody, McGuire, Kuldass & O'Higgins, 2019).
- > In May 2020, the DCU Anti-Bullying Centre conducted a study in partnership with the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission, on the experiences of Irish children and families during the Covid-19 lockdown (Milosevic, Laffan & O'Higgins Norman, 2021). The goal of this research was to understand how children and parents engaged with digital technology while staying at home and how these experiences may have impacted children's online safety and overall family wellbeing. Findings show that 28% of children in the sample reported to have been the target of cyberbullying during the lockdown, while 50% reported to have seen others being cyberbullied (bystander role). The younger in age that they were, the more likely they were to have been the target of cyberbullying. Overall, 49% of males experienced significantly more frequent cyberbullying since lockdown. Sixty-six percent (66%) of all children between the ages of 14-16 years experienced significantly more cyberbullying (as compared to pre-lockdown) in instant/private messaging services such as WhatsApp, Viber or Telegram.
- > A National Advisory Council for Online Safety (2021) study found that 17% of 9-17 year olds reported that they had experienced some form of bullying, either online or offline, in the past year. The highest number of reports came from 13-14 year olds, 22% of whom report having been bullied in the past year. Furthermore, 11% of all children say they have experienced cyberbullying in the past 12 months with 18% of 13-14 year olds reporting the highest levels of being cyberbullied. The data suggests that girls are more prone to being bullied and experiencing online safety issues.

Gender Identity Bullying

Bullying relating to gender identity is targeted at individuals who are not perceived to fit stereotypical 'normal' gender roles. This form of bullying is also referred to as transphobic bullying, reflecting a hatred or fear of those individuals who do not conform to society's gender expectations (DCSF, 2009; Hill, 2002). An individual may also experience transphobic bullying as a result of perception that a parent, relative or other significant figure displays gender 'variance' or is transgender.

Gender identity reflects an individual's internal sense of self as being male, female, or an identity between or outside the two. This is associated with socially constructed perceptions of gender roles; how a particular culture thinks an individual should look and behave according to their specific gender (Nagoshi et al., 2008).

The Equal Status Acts require that schools do not discriminate across nine grounds. One of these is gender. The European Court of Justice has held that discrimination against a transsexual person constitutes discrimination on the grounds of sex.

The Equal Status Acts specify four areas in which a school must not discriminate: the admission of a student, including the terms or conditions of the admission of a student; the access of a student to a course, facility or benefit provided by the school; any other term or condition of participation in the school; and the expulsion of a student or any other sanction.

The BeLonGTo School Climate Survey looked at gender-identity bullying and the experiences of transgender children and young people in schools. The Survey asked 1,208 students between the ages of 13 and 20 who identify as LGBTQ+ about their feelings of safety, instances of LGBTQ+ discrimination, experiences of harassment and availability of school based report and resources.

The findings report that for many LGBTQ+ students school is still a hostile environment where they face ongoing challenges. 76% of LGBTQ+ students do not feel safe at school in Ireland. Many participants reported experiences of bullying and physical, verbal and sexual harassment. Despite this there was some positive indicators, most notably, with 99% of LGBTQ+ students knowing of at least one school member supportive of LGBTQ+ identities. The report demonstrates the powerful, positive impact of inclusive and supportive teachers.



Sexual Harassment

“Sexual harassment is part of a continuum of behaviours that negatively impact upon the person, and it shares many common elements often seen in violence against women. Sexual harassment can be viewed as unwanted sexual, verbal and nonverbal behaviours which draw on gender-based beliefs and sexist hostility. It can range from unwanted banter, jokes, comments, gestures, and unwelcome sexual advances to unwanted, unwelcome or uninvited sexual contact. This is behaviour which violates a person’s dignity and creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading or offensive environment for the young person.” (Walsh 2021, p7)

The Equal Status Act 2000 prohibits sexual harassment and harassment (Equality Authority 2005). Harassment on the discriminatory grounds and sexual harassment are prohibited. Principals, teachers and others in positions of responsibility in a school may not harass or sexually harass students at the school or anyone who has applied for admission. They must not permit students – or anybody else who has the right to be in the school, such as parents – to harass or sexually harass other students.

In development of *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying*, the Steering Committee considered research on sexual harassment and abuse in schools.

- > In March 2021, the UK Department of Education asked Ofsted to undertake an immediate review into sexual abuse across state and independent schools. The review, published in June 2021, highlighted significant concerns about harmful and inappropriate sexual behaviour in schools. The review found a number of key issues including the prevalence of sexual harassment and online abuse for girls being far greater than adults realised, to such an extent that some children and young people considered it normal. The review found that sexual violence was typically linked to unsupervised spaces outside school, but also occurred in school. Children and young people were reluctant to report sexual harassment for a variety of reasons including fear of being ostracized by their peers, not being believed, or being blamed. Children and young people reported that RSHE generally didn’t equip them for the real world and often turned to their peers or social media for education. The review identified that some teachers and leaders underestimated the scale of the problem and either did not identify sexual harassment and sexualised language as problematic or they were unaware they were happening. It was also found that school staff didn’t feel that the guidance provided equipped them to respond appropriately to sexual harassment and abuse.
- > The Rape Crisis Network Ireland (RCNI) research, RCNI ‘Storm and Stress’ was published in August 2021. The study found that girls were subjected to higher levels of sexual harassment than boys, adolescents who were LGBT+ were subjected to higher levels of sexual harassment than those who were heterosexual, and adolescents aged 16-17 were subjected to much higher levels of sexual harassment than teen ages 13-15. It also found that in a 12 months period:
 - 80% of adolescents disclosed being subjected to some form of sexual harassment
 - 24% of adolescents disclosed that they were subjected to physical or extreme forms of sexual harassment
 - 83% of adolescents witnessed some form of sexual harassment
 - 28% of adolescents witnessed physical or extreme forms of sexual harassment
 - 78% of adolescent participants said that sexual harassment occurred within their peer community

- All of the youth workers who participated in the study stated that they had witnessed sexual harassment with levels varying from verbal to extreme forms of sexual harassment
- 57% of youth workers experienced sexual harassment from adolescents while at work
- 68% of LGBT+ adolescent participants experienced serious sexual harassment compared with 20% of the whole population
- 47% of adolescents did not know how to report sexual harassment within their school

Racist bullying

Article 1 of the International Convention for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), which provides: ‘...the term “racial discrimination” shall mean any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.’ (OHCHR no date)

The EU Action Plan Against Racism 2020-2025 (European Commission 2020) acknowledges the prevalence and impact of racism across the EU, and states (p1):

“Racism comes in different forms. Overt expressions of individual racism and racial discrimination are the most obvious. All too often, racial or ethnic origin is used as a ground to discriminate – the COVID-19 pandemic and the aftermath of terrorist attacks are just the most recent cases where blame has been unjustly directed at people with a minority racial or ethnic background. People of Asian and African descent, Muslims, Jewish and Roma people have all suffered from intolerance. But other, less explicit forms of racism and racial discrimination, such as those based on unconscious bias, can be equally damaging”

According to Irish Network Against Racism (INAR) the principle forms of racism in Ireland include:

- > Anti-Traveller racism: This refers to racism or discrimination experienced by people because they are or are perceived to be Travellers or from a Traveller background
- > Anti-Black racism: Sometimes referred to as Afrophobia this refers to racism or discrimination experienced by people because they are or are perceived to be black or African or from a black or African background
- > Anti-Muslim racism: Also referred to as Islamophobia this refers to racism or discrimination experienced by people because they are or are perceived to be Muslims or to be from a Muslim background
- > Anti-Roma racism: Sometimes referred to as anti-gipsyism or Romaphobia this refers to racism or discrimination experienced by people because they are or are perceived to be Roma, Gypsies or from a Roma or Gypsy background
- > Anti-Migrant racism: Also referred to as Xenophobia this refers to racism or discrimination experienced by people because they are or are perceived to be migrants or from a migrant background

- > Anti-Jewish racism: Also referred to as antisemitism this refers to racism or discrimination experienced by people because they are or are perceived to be Jewish or from a Jewish background

The Steering Committee considered a range of research related to racist bullying in Ireland including:

- > *Out of the Shadows, Traveller and ROMA Education – Voices from the Communities*, 2021 reports a lack of understanding of Traveller culture in schools.
- > The 2022 *Study into the Effectiveness of the Anti-Bullying Procedures on Traveller and Roma Pupils' Experiences in the School System* by the DCU Anti-Bullying Centre explored the views of the Traveller and Roma Communities concerning implementation of the anti-bullying procedures in schools. The report makes a number of recommendations, including:
 - naming bullying of Traveller and Roma children and young people in anti-bullying policies;
 - integration of anti-racism training in teacher continuous professional development; promotion of respect, belonging and inclusion in the curriculum;
 - raising parents' awareness of anti-bullying policies and addressing parental reluctance to reporting bullying;
 - raising awareness of what to do about concerns of teacher bullying;
 - adopt a consistent approach to dealing with bullying and provide support for those affected;
 - provide comprehensive supervision and monitoring of all school activity to help minimise opportunities for bullying;
 - and follow up, record and report incidences of bullying so data can be analysed to monitor levels of bullying behaviour and identify trends that warrant further intervention.



Disablist Bullying

“Disablist bullying is behaviour or language that makes a child or young person feel unwelcome or marginalised because of a perceived or actual disability or additional need.” (www.endbullying.org.uk no date)

Disablist bullying is a specific form of bullying motivated by prejudice against disabled people. This can be related to a perceived or actual disability/additional need. Some children may treat a physical or ‘behavioural’ characteristic of another child as a disability, and exclude or bully because of that, even though the child him/herself does not consider they have a disability.

Disablist bullying is harmful as it is based on prejudice and targets may not know how to seek support or express what they are experiencing. Like other types of bullying, disablist bullying can take many different forms and happen online, via phone or in the physical world.

The Steering Committee considered a range of research related to disablist bullying in the development of Cineáltas:

- > The 2015 report, *Disablist Bullying in Schools: Giving a Voice to Student Teachers* highlighted the lack of preparation of the student teachers as a result of the absence of any focus on disablist bullying in initial teacher education courses in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. It also found that this resulted in a lack of confidence in dealing with such incidents which were found to be often challenging and complex
- > In 2014 the National Disability Authority (NDA) found that individuals with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), are more likely to be bullied than individuals without SEND. Children with SEND, throughout the world, are more likely to ‘be bullied’/victimised than children without SEND. If bullying is to be tackled effectively for all children, then, schools, teachers, educational professionals and parents/guardians need to be aware of how bullying behaviours emerge and why children with SEND are more at risk of ‘being bullied’ and, also, in some cases, more at risk, of bullying others. They need to understand the risk and protective factors for bullying behaviours, including the specific factors for children with SEND
- > According to Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities (2018) children with disabilities are six times more likely than other children to experience violence and abuse. It goes on to say that the way in which children with additional needs are separated from their peers within the education system facilitates a culture where children with intellectual disabilities are treated as “others” by their peers, teachers, and by the system itself

When Bullying is a Child Protection Concern

Children First National Guidance 2017 and the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* (Department of Education and Skills 2013) provide that in cases of serious instances of bullying where the behaviour is regarded as possibly abusive, a referral may need to be made to Tusla or An Garda Síochána as appropriate. The procedures advise that where school personnel have concerns about a child arising from alleged bullying behaviour but are not sure whether to report the matter to TUSLA, the designated liaison person shall seek advice from Tusla.

The Steering Committee engaged with Tusla's Children First Information and Advice Service to seek more detailed guidance on when bullying becomes a child protection concern. In a presentation to the committee, Tusla indicated that there are various factors to be considered when determining whether there are child safeguarding concerns and a report should be made to Tusla, including impact on the child/children, support available from parents and levels of engagement or intervention from the school and external services (e.g. NEPS, TESS, CAMH, etc). Tusla advised that schools should consider if serious instances of bullying are also a child safeguarding concern under the Children First National Guidance (reasonable grounds for concern) or the Children First Act ('harm') when deciding whether to report to Tusla.

In a presentation to the committee, Tusla noted that research indicates a high level of intimate partner violence in teen relationships. Tusla also noted that inappropriate sharing of intimate images can cause high levels of distress, and that schools should consider the criminal aspects related to the sharing of intimate images (including as they relate to 'child pornography' and responsibilities under the Criminal Justice Withholding legislation). In relation to online safety, Tusla referred to the addendum to Children First, which specifically relates to on-line safety. This addendum was a response to recognition of children's increased vulnerability in the online world. Additional vulnerabilities to bullying could include an individual's ethnicity, race, membership of the LGBTQI+ community or the child or young person having a disability.

Thresholds are in place for reporting concerns to Tusla, including reasonable grounds for concern (Children First National Guidance), and 'harm' (the threshold for mandated reports under the Children First Act 2015). Tusla advised that schools and parents should use the process of 'informal consultation', where a person is unsure whether to report an incident to Tusla.

It is the view of the Steering Committee that more detailed guidance on when bullying becomes a child protection concern should be provided in the updated anti-bullying procedures for primary and post-primary schools.

7

Actions in *Cineáltas*: *Action Plan on Bullying*



Chapter 7: Actions in Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying

Background

The Department of Education has a key role to play in the promotion of the wellbeing of children and young people in Ireland. As outlined in Chapter 3, the Department of Education's *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2019* (Government of Ireland 2019b) provides a blueprint for its vision that the experience of children and young people, through their lifetime in the education system, will be one that enhances, promotes, values and nurtures their wellbeing.

The review of the *Action Plan on Bullying 2013* draws on the *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2019*, UNESCO's Whole Education Approach, as well as national and international research and best practice to develop a robust strategy that places the student at the centre of the school community and at the centre of national education strategy and policy development.

The work of the Steering Committee focused on the development of an updated Action Plan on Bullying that is practical, inclusive and contains a broad range of actions which will help us all to work together towards a diverse, inclusive Irish society free from bullying in all its forms and where individual difference is valued and celebrated. Through the extensive consultation process key findings emerged and they have been used to develop the various actions. These wide ranging actions highlight the complex and intricate nature of the issue of bullying and how to prevent and address it.

Ireland ratified the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child¹⁴ in September 1992. Throughout this review we have considered bullying as a children's rights issue and in doing so we are committed to promoting, protecting and fulfilling the rights of children. It is hoped that the actions developed as a consequence of this review will help our children and young people to group up in a society where these rights are protected.



¹⁴ Information on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child can be found here: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/a1481d-united-nations-convention-on-the-rights-of-the-child/>



Since the creation of the *Action Plan on Bullying 2013*, the population of Ireland has continued to grow and is more diverse. This has resulted in a greater awareness of the cohesive role of education in society, with many schools evolving to cater for more diversity among their students. Alongside this change in demographic, a fundamental change to our sociological context has been the rapid development of online and digital communications whose use has become increasingly common among children and young people and their families.

Long before the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, it was clear that the online and offline lives of children and young people and their families were increasingly intertwined and that this brings with it new challenges to be addressed. This has also been highlighted during the presentations provided to the Steering Committee and by the participants in the consultation processes. These developments have had major implications for the school community in both the nature of the bullying experienced, where and how it is experienced and the consequences for those who experience it. It has become more hidden and more insidious. The establishment of the Office of an Online Safety Commissioner offers a welcome development here.

In carrying out this review, the Steering Committee has taken account of the significant developments and relevant research since the action plan was published in 2013. This review considered the progress made since 2013 with regard to implementation of the twelve actions, but also considered the status of the thirteen recommendations. This highlighted a gap in the implementation of a number of the recommendations and has been considered in the development of the new actions for the updated Action Plan.

The Steering Committee specifically considered cyberbullying, identity-based bullying and sexual harassment, among other areas. The Steering Committee also gave detailed consideration to the recommendations contained in the *Oireachtas Joint Committee Report on School Bullying and the Impact on Mental Health* which was published in August 2021 (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2021).

The *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2019* provides an overarching framework for schools to support a comprehensive approach to support the wellbeing of all members of the school community and to prevent and address bullying. The Department recognises that schools exist within a wider system and stresses the importance of the interconnectedness of the school with the wider community in its approach to wellbeing and in particular in preventing and addressing bullying. The *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice* identifies four key areas for wellbeing promotion: Culture and Environment, Curriculum (Teaching and Learning), Policy and Planning and Relationships and Partnerships.

UNESCO's Whole Education Approach to prevent and address bullying contains nine components that can help to effectively reduce bullying and cyber bullying (UNESCO, 2020). This Whole Education Approach provides a cohesive and holistic framework to guide policy makers by providing them with the key components and characteristics of a wide-reaching approach to prevent and address bullying.

Taking account of the above, the actions in *Cineáltas: Action plan on Bullying* have been developed through the lens of the four key areas for wellbeing promotion as outlined in the *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2019*. The actions are grounded in national and international research through UNESCO's Whole Education Approach, and informed by considered and broad consultation with members of our education community and wider society.





Key Principles

Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying is rooted in the following four key principles:

- > Prevention: Through the generation of empathy and the provision of training which provides a foundation for knowledge, respect, equality and inclusion
- > Support: Tangible and targeted supports based on a continuum of needs which provide a framework for school communities to work together
- > Oversight: Visible leadership creates positive environments for children and young people and all members of our school community
- > Community: Building inclusive school communities that are connected to society, and that supports and nurtures positive relationships and partnerships

We have developed actions that are tangible and targeted and that are framed around the observations, feedback and experiences of the Steering Committee, presenters to the Steering Committee, education partners, our wider school community, participants in the consultation process, academics and representative groups and reflect the Department's vision as set out in the Department's Statement of Strategy.

Culture and Environment

Creating a positive and inclusive school culture and environment provides a space where children, young people and staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported.

Table 5. Actions related to Culture and Environment

Link Statement	Actions
A welcoming school community that has a culture of promoting inclusion, equality, respect and diversity with zero tolerance for bullying can be illustrated through the development of a School Culture and Values Declaration and the display of a Cineáltas flag or award.	<p>Schools will be required to produce an accessible School Culture and Values Declaration, which outlines the school's culture and values and how they can help to prevent and address bullying, in an age appropriate manner.</p> <p>The Department of Education will provide guidance to schools on the development and implementation of this declaration with input from the whole school community. The Department of Education will consider the development of a recognition process, such as a school flag or an award, for schools who engage in measures to prevent and address bullying.</p>
Student Support Teams working with the school community to support children, young people and their parents.	<p>All post-primary schools will be required to have Student Support Teams in place as part of the school's wellbeing promotion process. Their remit will include preventing and addressing bullying.</p> <p>Student Support Teams will be encouraged to avail of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) to support their effective practice to prevent and address bullying.</p> <p>The Department of Education will provide guidance to schools on how Student Support Teams will actively seek the voice and participation of children, young people and their parents.</p> <p>The Department of Education will develop guidance for the establishment of a Student Support Team model in larger primary schools.</p>
Schools will assign a designated person who will have a key role in promoting wellbeing and preventing and addressing bullying.	<p>The Department of Education will support schools to assign the role of a designated person to promote wellbeing, and in particular, to lead on measures to prevent and address bullying in schools as part of the school leadership team in accordance with the relevant Department circulars for post holders.</p>
School Self Evaluation empowers a school community to identify and affirm good practice and to identify and take action on areas that merit improvement including preventing and addressing bullying.	<p>The Department of Education will support schools to engage in a school self-evaluation approach to wellbeing promotion, which includes preventing and addressing bullying, in line with the Department's <i>Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2019</i>.</p> <p>The Department of Education will encourage all schools to avail of Oide Wellbeing CPD, to support them as they engage in a whole school approach to wellbeing promotion as outlined in the Department's <i>Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2019</i>.</p>

Link Statement	Actions
<p>The Department's Inspectorate will support schools to promote wellbeing including preventing and addressing bullying through engagement with the whole school community.</p>	<p>Whole School Evaluations will include an assessment of the key aspects of the anti-bullying procedures for schools, which include assessing whether the school has appropriate initiatives in place to promote a positive and inclusive school culture. The Inspectorate will follow up with schools where issues of non-compliance arise until the school becomes compliant.</p> <p>The Department's Inspectorate will prepare an annual report on the views of children, young people and parents on how their school prevents and addresses bullying, using both survey and focus group data including examples of best practice and areas where an increased focus may be required by schools.</p> <p>The Department of Education will develop a plan to support the promotion, implementation and evaluation of the Department's <i>Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2019</i>, which will include a focus on school culture and preventing and addressing bullying.</p>
<p>Access to safe spaces within the school and giving consideration to the design of internal and external spaces will reduce the risk of the potential for bullying in schools.</p>	<p>The Department of Education will ensure that guidelines for the design of school buildings incorporate measures that minimise the potential for bullying, with particular attention to the development of shared and collaborative learning and recreational spaces.</p>
<p>Raising awareness of how to prevent and address bullying and of the impact it has on members of the school community will help to highlight the role that we all have to play in preventing and addressing bullying in our schools and outside the school gates.</p>	<p>The Department of Education will work collaboratively with the Teaching Council to highlight the important role and responsibility that teachers have in modelling behaviour based on the ethical values of respect, integrity, care and trust as set out in the <i>Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers</i>.</p> <p>The Department of Education will continue to support the work of Webwise and increase awareness of the range of resources it provides as the Irish Internet Safety Awareness Centre.</p> <p>The Department of Education will continue to support the Stand Up Awareness Campaign.</p> <p>The Department of Education will work with relevant groups to develop a diverse programme of awareness raising initiatives to prevent and address bullying in schools, including raising awareness of different forms of bullying (e.g. online bullying, racist bullying, disablist bullying) and highlighting the important role of bystanders.</p>

Curriculum Teaching and Learning

An inclusive and supportive curriculum for our children and young people with training and development for all school staff provides consistent support and opportunities for inclusive learning and empathy generation.

Table 6. Actions related to Curriculum Teaching and Learning

Link Statement	Actions
Training at all stages of a teachers career, including Initial Teacher Education, is important to support consistent and continuous professional development to prevent and address bullying.	The Department of Education will engage with the Teaching Council and the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to ensure that the revised Standards for Initial Teacher Education (Céim) support a renewed focus on equipping student teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively prevent and address bullying, racism, sexism and sexual harassment and to promote equality, diversity, inclusion and wellbeing. The Department of Education will work collaboratively with the Teaching Council and HEIs to implement changes as required.
The ITE Policy Statement will place the wellbeing of children and young people being at the centre of ITE programmes.	The Department of Education will ensure that the implementation of relevant actions under its ITE Policy Statement takes account of preventing and addressing bullying, racism, sexism and sexual harassment and the promotion of equality, diversity, inclusion and wellbeing.
Training at all stages of a teachers career, including Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT), is important to support consistent and continuous professional development to prevent and address bullying.	The Department of Education will review existing resources available to newly qualified teachers (NQTs), to identify and develop any additional up-to-date resources required to support NQTs' learning in areas such as measures to prevent and address bullying, racism, sexism and sexual harassment and the promotion of equality, diversity, inclusion and wellbeing. The Department of Education will work to address any needs identified.
Our school leaders will be supported to prevent and address bullying and to promote equality, diversity, inclusion and wellbeing.	The Department of Education will review its existing leadership programmes to continue to ensure that these programmes include up-to-date content on measures to prevent and address bullying, racism, sexism and sexual harassment and the promotion of equality, diversity, inclusion and wellbeing. The Department will work to address any needs identified.
Our Social Personal Health Education (SPHE) teachers will have the knowledge, confidence and skills to teach the SPHE curriculum.	The Department of Education will progress the development of a post-graduate qualification for post-primary SPHE teachers to help equip teachers with the content knowledge, confidence and skills to plan and deliver SPHE and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) and to facilitate student learning relevant to all aspects of the specification including preventing and addressing bullying.

Link Statement	Actions
All school staff will have the knowledge, confidence and skills to prevent and address bullying, including cyberbullying.	<p>The Department of Education will ensure that all school staff have access to appropriate up-to-date training on measures to prevent and address bullying, racism, sexism and sexual harassment and the promotion of equality, diversity, inclusion and wellbeing.</p> <p>The Department of Education will continue to roll out continuous professional development (CPD) to support the implementation of the <i>Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2019</i> in all schools by 2025.</p> <p>The Department of Education will encourage primary and post-primary teaching staff to avail of the new Department of Education online courses on the topic of online bullying (cyber bullying) in order to provide school staff with the knowledge, resources and confidence needed to teach about cyberbullying and also to deal with cyberbullying incidents as they arise.</p>
All Boards of Management will be supported to prevent and address bullying.	The Department of Education will update the anti-bullying training for Boards of Management to support their oversight role in relation to bullying and to support them in addressing parental concerns in relation to alleged bullying behaviour.
All parents will have access to training to support them in dealing with bullying behaviour and keeping their children and young people safe online.	The Department of Education will ensure that up-to-date, accessible training for parents and guardians is available to inform and support them in dealing with bullying, particularly in relation to online bullying (cyber bullying) and keeping their children safe online.
An inclusive and age appropriate SPHE/RSE Curriculum will help support student learning about themselves and having positive and healthy relationships.	<p>The SPHE/RSE curriculum across primary and post-primary schools will be reviewed and updated to ensure that it includes, in an age appropriate manner, the areas of consent; healthy positive, sexual expression and relationships; safe use of the Internet and social media and its effects on relationships and self-esteem; and LGBTQ+ identities.</p> <p>The updated Junior Cycle SPHE programme will include content on navigating friendships online, including how to recognise and respond to online bullying.</p>
The primary curriculum will help support student learning about themselves and having positive and healthy relationships.	The review and redevelopment of the primary school curriculum will support age and stage appropriate learning in all aspects of the curriculum including preventing and addressing bullying and racism, and the promotion of equality, diversity, inclusion and wellbeing, including online safety. Adequate curricular time will be provided for this.

Link Statement	Actions
A curriculum inclusive of Traveller Culture and History will increase awareness and respect for Traveller culture as well as for children and young people from a Traveller background.	The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) will progress their work in supporting teaching and learning about Traveller Culture and History within the curriculum.
Intercultural Education will be further integrated in the Curriculum and our children and young people will increasingly see themselves and the diversity of society in the curriculum.	The NCCA will review and update the Intercultural Guidelines for primary and post-primary schools to support the further integration of intercultural education in the curriculum.
Literature, textbooks and other teaching resources will support schools to enhance student learning about equality, equity, diversity and inclusion.	<p>The NCCA will ensure that literature, which positively represents the diversity of society and promotes equality and inclusion, will be included in the curriculum.</p> <p>The NCCA, on behalf of the Department, will engage with school textbook publishers to inform them of the importance of ensuring that the content of their textbooks reflects the diversity of society and promotes equality and inclusion.</p>
Schools will be provided with evidence based anti-bullying programmes that meet the needs of teachers and their students.	<p>The Department of Education will work with the Dublin City University (DCU) Anti-Bullying Centre to arrange for the FUSE anti-bullying and online safety programme to be more widely available and promoted to schools. The programme will continue to be updated by the DCU Anti-Bullying Centre based on research and feedback.</p> <p>The Department of Education will fund the development of additional modules of the FUSE anti-bullying and online safety programme for each year of post-primary school and the appropriate years at primary school.</p> <p>In the development of their anti-bullying work, schools will be required to adhere to best practice guidance for primary and post primary schools in the use of programmes and/or external facilitators in promoting wellbeing consistent with the Department of Education's <i>Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2019</i>.</p>

Policy and Planning

Adaptive and responsive policies and planning where children and young people, their families, education partners and key stakeholders are active participants working together with government, acknowledges and enriches the role we all play in preventing bullying in Irish schools.

Table 7. Actions related to Policy and Planning

Link Statement	Actions
The collation of disaggregated data from schools will help provide an up-to-date picture of the nature and frequency of bullying occurring in schools and measures that successfully prevent and address bullying.	<p>The Department of Education will examine how schools can record alleged incidents of bullying behaviour in an anonymised manner, which will include information on the nature of the behaviour, the approach taken to address the behaviour and the outcome. Schools will regularly review their records of alleged incidents of bullying behaviour to discern emerging trends, to identify key learning and to consider what measures could be taken to prevent re-occurrence.</p> <p>The Department of Education will consider how national data could be collated in an anonymised manner to facilitate the development of an annual national report on bullying in schools.</p>
Anti-bullying procedures for primary and post-primary schools will clearly and accessibly set out the roles and responsibilities of each member of the school community and will be reviewed annually.	<p>The anti-bullying procedures for primary and post-primary schools will be updated to take account of gender identity bullying, cyber bullying, racist bullying, sexist bullying, and sexual harassment. These procedures will also provide guidance as to when an incident of bullying becomes a Child Protection Concern, will ensure appropriate oversight at school level, and will ensure that a school's anti-bullying policy is developed and reviewed in consultation with the whole school community.</p> <p>The Department of Education will develop mandatory anti-bullying template documents to assist schools in developing and implementing their anti-bullying procedures.</p> <p>Schools will be required to ensure that their anti-bullying policy is accessible and made available to the whole school community.</p>
Updated resources to assist schools to support LGBTQ+ pupils and students in will help prevent and address homophobic and transphobic bullying.	The Department of Education will review and update the <i>Being LGBT in School</i> Resource.

Link Statement	Actions
Code of Behaviour Guidelines for schools will be updated based on research and best practice and aligned with recent policy.	Tusla will review and update the 2008 <i>Developing a Code of Behaviour Guidelines for Schools</i> to reflect current Department of Education policies and procedures for schools including <i>Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying</i> .
Further research will support evidence based policy development.	The Department of Education will identify and initiate further research on preventing and addressing bullying in order to support the dissemination of good practice and provide evidence for further policy development and decision-making.
A whole of Government approach to online safety and cyberbullying will help to prevent and address bullying.	<p>The Department of Education will engage with the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media in relation to the role of the Online Safety Commissioner.</p> <p>The Department of Education will engage with the Online Safety Commissioner, once appointed, particularly with regard to the ways that social media companies can support measures to prevent and address bullying among children and young people in schools and online.</p> <p>The Department of Education will continue to be represented on the National Advisory Council for Online Safety whose remit includes providing advice to Government on online safety policy issues and inputting to the development of online safety guidance materials for all internet users.</p>
Interdepartmental oversight will help to ensure that the actions in <i>Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying</i> are implemented and are effective.	The Department of Education will establish an implementation group to oversee the implementation of <i>Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying</i> . A programme of evaluation and review, including the publication of regular progress reports, will be developed as part of the implementation plan.

Relationships and Partnerships

Promoting the development of relationships and partnerships between children and young people, their families and the school community enhances our networks and understanding of each other's experiences in Irish society.

Table 8. Actions related to Relationships and Partnerships

Link Statement	Actions
Our children and young people will be active participants in their education both at a school and a national level.	<p>Schools will be required to engage with their pupils and students to support and promote pupil and student led anti-bullying and wellbeing initiatives. The Department of Education will provide guidance to schools to facilitate this in accordance with the <i>National Framework for Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making</i>.</p> <p>The Department of Education will encourage schools to establish student councils that are representative of the pupils and students in the school.</p> <p>The Department of Education will establish a dedicated unit to promote the voice of children and young people and to ensure that they have meaningful input into the development of Department policy.</p> <p>The Department of Education will progress the Charter Bill through the Houses of the Oireachtas and will develop Charter Guidelines that will strengthen the voice and participation of children and young people and their parents in the development and implementation of school policies including their anti-bullying policy.</p>
The school community and wider community will establish relationships to promote wellbeing, including in relation to preventing and addressing bullying.	<p>The Department of Education will encourage schools to come together with their school community, including representative groups, to form clusters to progress wellbeing related initiatives and to share good practice and innovations with a particular focus on preventing and addressing bullying, racism, sexism and sexual harassment and the promotion of equality, diversity, inclusion and wellbeing.</p>
Through the provision and signposting of wellbeing and mental health supports, children and young people will be provided with tailored and appropriate supports.	<p>The Department of Education will pilot a programme of counselling supports for primary schools.</p> <p>The Department of Education will continue to work closely with the Department of Health to explore ways to improve wellbeing and mental health supports for children and young people, including raising awareness, promoting help-seeking behaviour and sign-posting of available services.</p> <p>The Department of Education will aim to increase the number of National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) Psychologists. In addition, the Department will consider piloting the use of Educational Psychology Assistants to strengthen wellbeing supports for schools, children and young people.</p>



Link Statement	Actions
Our children and young people will see themselves and the diversity of society in school staff.	The Department of Education will continue to support the objectives of the National Access Plan 2022 – 2028 to increase the number of students from under-represented groups entering Initial Teacher Education so that the teaching profession reflects the diversity of Irish society.
Up to date and relevant resources for parents, students and school staff will provide support and advice with regards to preventing and addressing bullying.	<p>The tacklebullying.ie website will be updated so that its content becomes more accessible to children and young people, parents and school staff and contains examples of best practice at school level. Once updated, an awareness campaign will be developed to promote the website and the information available on it.</p> <p>The Department of Education will update the list of wellbeing resources available to children and young people, parents and school staff to include resources in the area of preventing and addressing bullying, racism, sexism and sexual harassment and the promotion of equality, diversity, inclusion and wellbeing.</p> <p>The Department of Education will continue to support the work of the Anti-Bullying Centre in DCU.</p>

Audit of Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying against the Whole Education Approach

In 2019, following the World Anti-Bullying Forum in Dublin, UNESCO convened an international Scientific Committee that consulted widely with researchers and NGOs working in the field of bullying, to examine existing challenges and successes in preventing and addressing bullying and to make recommendations on the best way to approach bullying in the future.

In developing *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying*, the Department wanted to ensure that Cineáltas complied with all of the components of UNESCO's Whole Education Approach, and as such the Plan has been audited against UNESCO's Whole Education Approach as follows:

1. *Strong Political Leadership*
2. *Safe Psychological and Physical School and Classroom Environments*
3. *Training and Support for School Staff*
4. *Curriculum, learning & teaching to promote caring school climate*
5. *Reporting mechanisms with support and referral services*
6. *Collaboration and partnerships between the education sector and a wide range of partners*
7. *Involvement of all stakeholders in the school community, including parents*
8. *Student empowerment and participation*
9. *Evidence: monitoring of school bullying and evaluation of responses*



Table 9. Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying Audit against UNESCO Whole Education Approach

Wellbeing Area	Action	UNESCO WEA Component								
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Culture and Environment	School Culture and Values Declaration	*	*		*			*	*	
	Recognition Process	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	Student Support Teams	*	*	*		*	*	*	*	*
	Designated Person	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	School Self-Evaluation	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	Wellbeing CPD	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	Inspection of measures to prevent and address bullying	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	Inspection Annual Report	*				*		*	*	*
	Inspection: Evaluation of Wellbeing Promotion	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	Design of School Buildings	*	*					*		
	Staff Modelling Ethical Behaviour	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	Support Webwise	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	Support StandUp Campaign	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	Programme of Awareness raising Initiatives	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)	Review of Céim	*		*	*		*	*		
	ITE Policy	*		*	*		*	*		
	NQT Resources	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	Leadership Programmes	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	Postgraduate Diploma in SPHE	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	Training for all School Staff	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	Training for all School Staff on Cyberbullying	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	Training for Boards of Management	*	*			*		*		*
	Training for Parents	*	*			*		*		*

Wellbeing Area	Action	UNESCO WEA Component								
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	SPHE/RSE Curriculum Review	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	SPHE/RSE Junior Cycle Updated to include Online Relationships	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	Primary Curriculum Review	*	*	*	*				*	
	Traveller Culture and History	*	*	*	*		*	*	*	
	Review of Intercultural Education Guidelines	*	*	*	*		*	*	*	
	Literature and text lists reflect diversity	*	*	*	*		*	*	*	
	Textbooks reflect diversity	*	*	*	*		*	*	*	
	FUSE to be more widely available	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	Additional modules of FUSE developed	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	Guidelines for Use of External Programmes/ Facilitators	*	*		*		*			*
Policy and Planning	Data Collection: Schools	*	*			*				*
	Data Collection: National	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	Anti-Bullying Procedures for Schools: Updated	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	Anti-Bullying Procedures for Schools: Document Templates	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	Anti-Bullying Procedures for Schools: School Policies to be Accessible to Whole School Community	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	Update the <i>Developing a Code of Behaviour Guidelines</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	Update the <i>Being LGBT in Schools</i> resource	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	

Wellbeing Area	Action	UNESCO WEA Component								
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	Research on Prevention, Addressing Bullying	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	Online Safety Commissioner	*	*			*		*		*
	National Advisory Council on Online Safety	*	*	*			*	*		*
	Implementation & Evaluation Group	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Relationships & Partnerships	Schools Required to support and promote student led anti-bullying and wellbeing initiatives	*	*		*	*		*	*	*
	Representative Student Councils	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	Dedicated Student Participation Unit	*			*			*	*	*
	Charter Bill	*		*			*	*	*	*
	School Clusters	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	Pilot of Counselling supports for Primary Schools	*	*			*	*	*		
	Mental Health Supports	*	*	*		*	*	*		*
	Increase number of National Educational Psychological Service Psychologists	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	Diversity in Teaching Profession	*		*	*	*	*	*		*
	Tacklebullying website	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	Update List of Wellbeing Resources	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	
	Support the Anti-Bullying Centre	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

It is important to remember that UNESCO's Scientific Committee commented that none of these nine components takes precedence over others, and that all elements of a Whole Education Approach need to be equally implemented if bullying is to be successfully tackled. As such, implementation of the *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* will require collaboration and leadership between all of the stakeholders in education and society, not least government departments, schools, management bodies, patrons and trustees, unions, social media companies, parents, NGOs, school staff and, most importantly, children and young people themselves.

Conclusion

An extensive consultation, research and analysis process has been undertaken to develop *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying*. This report outlines the significant journey taken since the Department of Education established the Steering Committee on 16 February 2022.

As part of the consultation process the Steering Committee heard inputs from more than fifty presenters including advocates from a range of relevant organisations and experts in the field of wellbeing, diversity and anti-bullying. The Steering Committee considered the many societal and technological changes that have occurred since 2013 as well as a wide range of up-to-date research, and public views based on the extensive consultation process undertaken by the Department.

The development of *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* was strongly influenced by the voice and participation of children and young people. As the people most impacted by bullying in schools, children and young people were considered central to the process. Steering Committee members skilfully combined the latest academic national and international research with the voice of our children and young people and their voice can be heard through the actions listed in *Cineáltas*.

Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying uses the lens of the four key areas of wellbeing promotion from the *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2019*, recognising that promoting wellbeing and preventing and addressing bullying is multi faceted and a shared community responsibility.

Cineáltas has been audited against UNESCO's whole education approach to ensure that it is an effective holistic response to preventing and addressing bullying in schools. The implementation of the 61 actions in *Cineáltas* will greatly enhance the work that we do to ensure that all the children and young people who attend our schools are kept safe from harm and that individual difference is both valued and celebrated in schools.



Abbreviations and Acronyms

ABA	Anti-Bullying Alliance
ABC	Anti-Bullying Centre Dublin City University
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
AUP	Acceptable Use Policy
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
CAPP	Child Abuse Preventative Programme
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CPOG	Child Protection Oversight Group
CRA	Charities Regulatory Authority
DCEDIY	Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
DCU	Dublin City University
DE	Department of Education
DES	Department of Education and Skills
DEIS	Developing Equality of Opportunity in Schools
DFHERIS	Department of Further Higher Education Research Innovation and Science
DSGBV	Domestic Sexual Gender Based Violence
EAS	Employee Assistance Service
EWO	Educational Welfare Officer
EWS	Education Welfare Service
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
GCED	Global Citizen Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HSCL	Home School Community Liaison
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
ICERD	International Convention for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
INAR	Irish Network Against Racism
ISPCC	Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
LGBT	Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender
LGBTI	Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Intersex
LGBTQ+	Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer (and sometimes questioning)
LAOS	Looking at Our Schools
NAPAR	National Action Plan Against Racism

NOSP	National Office for Suicide Prevention
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NDA	National Disability Authority
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Service
NEWB	National Educational Welfare Board
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPC-PP	National Parents Council Post Primary
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher
NTRIS	National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy
NWCI	National Women's Council Ireland
OCO	Ombudsman for Children
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
OSMR	Online Social Media Regulation
PATH	Programme for Access to Higher Education
PDST	Professional Development Service for Teachers
PG	Post Graduate
RCNI	Rape Crisis Network Ireland
RSE	Relationships and Sexuality Education
SCP	School Completion Programme
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
SENO	Special Educational Needs Organiser
SPHE	Social Personal and Health Education
SSE	School Self Evaluation
STAR	Supporting Traveller and Roma
SNA	Special Needs Assistant
SST	Student Support Team
TENI	Transgender Equality Network Ireland
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
WEA	Whole Education Approach
WSE	Whole School Evaluation
YAG	Youth Advisory Group
YAP	Youth Advisory Panel

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Appendices



Appendix 1 | Membership of Steering Committee

Aileen Hickie, CEO, Parentline
Áine Lynch, CEO, National Parents Council Primary
Bridget Wilson, Child Rights Policy Unit, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration, and Youth
Caitlin-Faye Maniti, President, Irish Second-Level Students' Union
Deirdre Shanley, Assistant Secretary, Schools Division, Department of Education
Emer O'Neill, Anti-racism Activist, Teacher, Presenter
Prof. James O'Higgins Norman, Director, UNESCO Chair on Tackling Bullying and Cyberbullying Director, DCU Anti-Bullying Centre
Jane McGarrigle, Project Officer, Webwise
Judith Lyons, Parents and Learners Unit, Department of Education
Majella O'Dea, Teacher Education Section, Department of Education
Maria Bracken, Digital, Teacher Supply, Teaching Council Unit, Department of Education.
Maria Joyce, Coordinator, National Traveller Women's Forum
Martin Lally, Assistant Chief Inspector, Inspectorate, Department of Education
Moninne Griffith, CEO, BeLonG To
Niamh Molloy, Parents and Learners Unit, Department of Education
Dr Noel Purdy, Director Centre for Research in Educational Underachievement (CREU) Stranmillis University College, Chair of Committee
Paul Rolston, National Parents Council Post-Primary
Rebecca Galligan, Inspectorate, Department of Education
Ronan Kielt, Curriculum and Assessment Policy Unit, Department of Education
Ryan McKay, Parents and Learners Unit, Department of Education
Sarah Benson, CEO, Women's Aid
Seònaid Ó'Murchadha, Board member, Independent Living Movement Ireland
Sharon Eustace, Regional Director, National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), Department of Education
Yvonne Keating, Chief Inspector, Inspectorate, Department of Education
Zak Moradi, Anti-racism Activist

Appendix 2 | Organisations and individuals who presented to the Steering Committee

Date	Organisation	Representative
16th February 2022	Department of Education	Minister for Education, Norma Foley TD
16th February 2022	Centre for Research in Educational Underachievement (CREU), Stranmillis University College	Dr Noel Purdy, Director
16th February 2022	DCU Anti-Bullying Centre	Professor James O'Higgins Norman, Director & UNESCO Chair on Tackling Bullying and Cyberbullying
16th February 2022	National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)	Sharon Eustace, Regional Director
16th February 2022	Parents and Learners Unit, Department of Education	Judith Lyons, Principal Officer
22nd March 2022	Parents and Learners Unit, Department of Education	Judith Lyons, Principal Officer
22nd March 2022	Department of Education	Deirdre Shanley, Assistant Secretary General, Schools Division
22nd March 2022	BeLonG To	Moninne Griffith, Chief Executive Officer
22nd March 2022	Irish Second-Level Students' Union	Adam Lambe, Deputy President
22nd March 2022	Parentline	Aileen Hickie, Chief Executive Officer
22nd March 2022	Department of Children Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth	Bridget Wilson, Assistant Principal Officer, Child Rights Policy Unit
22nd March 2022	DCU Anti-Bullying Centre	Professor James O'Higgins Norman, Director & UNESCO Chair on Tackling Bullying and Cyberbullying
22nd March 2022	Webwise	Jane McGarrigle, Project Officer
22nd March 2022	National Parents Council Post-Primary	Mai Fanning, President
22nd March 2022	Women's Aid	Sarah Benson, Chief Executive Officer
22nd March 2022	Independent Living Movement Ireland	Seònaid Ó Murchadha
6th April 2022	Unit for School and Family Studies, Department of Psychology Goldsmiths, University of London	Professor Peter K. Smith, Emeritus Professor

Date	Organisation	Representative
6th April 2022	Inspectorate, Department of Education	Pádraig Mac Fhlannchadha, Assistant Chief Inspector
6th April 2022	Inspectorate, Department of Education	Catherine King, Primary Inspector
6th April 2022	Inspectorate, Department of Education	Paul Stevens, Primary Divisional Inspector
6th April 2022	Yellow Flag Programme	Molly Brady-Martin, National Coordinator
6th April 2022	Irish Traveller Movement	Bernard Joyce, Director
6th April 2022	DCU Anti-Bullying Centre	Darran Heaney, Project Manager, FUSE Anti-Bullying Programme
6th April 2022	DCU Anti-Bullying Centre	Dr Amalee Meehan, Researcher, Identity Based Bullying
26th April 2022	Rape Crisis Network Ireland	Dr Clíona Saidléar, Executive Director
26th April 2022	Inspectorate, Department of Education	Pádraig Mac Fhlannchadha, Assistant Chief Inspector
26th April 2022	Inspectorate, Department of Education	Siobhan Broderick, Senior Inspector, Post-Primary
26th April 2022	Inspectorate, Department of Education	Padraig Fahey, Primary Inspector
26th April 2022	Anti-Bullying Alliance, UK	Martha Evans, Director
26th April 2022	Barnardos	Kerri Smith, Assistant Director of Services
26th April 2022	Barnardos	Clíodhna Purdue, Training Officer Online Safety Programme
26th April 2022	Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children	Victoria Howson, Community Engagement Manager, Shield AntiBullying Programme
10th May 2022	Anti-Racism Activist/Teacher/Presenter	Emer O'Neill
10th May 2022	Ofsted UK	John Kennedy, Her Majesty's Inspector & Assistant Regional Director, London
10th May 2022	Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media	Ciarán Shanley, Senior Policy Analyst
10th May 2022	TikTok	Susan Moss, Public Policy and Government Relations Manager
10th May 2022	National Office for Suicide Prevention	Dr Philip Dodd, Consultant Psychiatrist/Clinical Professor & Clinical Advisor

Date	Organisation	Representative
10th May 2022	CAMHS CHO2 (Galway and Roscommon)	Dr Eamon Raji, Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist
10th May 2022	Children's Rights Alliance	Tanya Ward, Chief Executive Officer
24th May 2022	Office of the Ombudsman for Children	Dr Niall Muldoon, Ombudsman
24th May 2022	META	Dualta Ó Broin, Head of Public Policy, Ireland
24th May 2022	Anti-Bullying Activist/Trainee Teacher	Chloe Heaslip
14th June 2022	TUSLA	Charney Weitzman, Children First Information and Advice Officer
14th June 2022	TUSLA	Maureen Crowley, Children First Information and Advice Officer
14th June 2022	Tusla Education Support Service	Jean Rafter
14th June 2022	Centre for Research in Educational Underachievement (CREU), Stranmillis University College	Dr Noel Purdy, Director
14th June 2022	National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)	Deirdre McHugh, Regional Director
14th June 2022	DCU Anti-Bullying Centre	Dr Maeve Dupont
14th June 2022	YouTube	Iain Bundred, Head of Public Policy, UK and Ireland
29th June 2022	Department of Education	Dr Bernadette Ní Aingléis, Report Writer
29th June 2022	Scoil Choilm Community National School	Laura Maher, Principal
29th June 2022	Malahide Community School	Dave Hayes, Principal
29th June 2022	Malahide Community School	Nicola Garvey, Deputy Principal
29th June 2022	Parents and Learners Unit, Department of Education	Niamh Molloy, Higher Executive Officer
8th September 2022	Department of Education	Dr Mary Gilbride, Report Writer
8th September 2022	Department of Education	Kate O'Carroll, Report Writer
8th September 2022	Department of Education	Dr Bernadette Ní Áingléis, Report Writer

Appendix 3 | Written Submissions received by the Steering Committee

A – C

Action for Children and Families of Prisoners Network via the Irish Penal Reform Trust (IPRT)
Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools (ACCS)
Association of Secondary School Teachers of Ireland (ASTI)
Aysen, Parent
Barnardos
BelonG To
Bhc
Black and Irish
Bracken, Kirstin
Brady, Alacoque, Student
Carr, Carol
Catholic Secondary Schools Parents Association
Clancy, Tom
Connery, Natallia, Parent
Conroy, Sarah, KBNS (parent)

D – F

Educate Together
Egan, Keelin, St. Garvan's NS
Egan, Tony, Parent
Elizabeth, SNA
Fallon, Sean, Anti-bullying Campaign
Farrelly, Dr Gerard Mary Immaculate College
Faure, Terry, Parent
Feeney, Brendan, Parent
Foyle, Mary, School

G – I

Gillick, Shauna, Past pupil

Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO)

Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO) LGBT+ Teachers Group

Irish Primary Principals Network (IPPN)

Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (ISPCC) Shield Programme

J – L

Jedrzejowski, Susanne, Parent

Jennifer, Mother

Keating, Dr Seline, Assistant Professor in SPHE & Wellbeing in DCU Institute of Education;

Kenny, Bridget, Adamstown Community College

Kumar Singh, Vivek, Parent

Lally, Deirdre, Parent

Lena, Student

Looney, Noelle, Parent

Louise

Louth Meath Education Training Board

Lynch, Patricia

M – O

Maguire, Paul, Scoil San Treasa

Mc Carthy, Michael

Mc Donnell, Lorraine, None

Mc Geough, Evie

Mc Loughlin, Caroline

Mc Sweeney, Donna, Parent

National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education (NABMSE)

National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD)

National Parents Council - Post Primary

National Parents Council - Primary

National Traveller Women's Forum, Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre and Irish Traveller Movement

National Youth Council of Ireland

Neville, Areleen, Parent

Ó Murchú, Dr Daithí, Dublin West Education Centre

O'Brien, Michael, St Josephs Adolescent School

O'Brien, Sharon, Parent

O'Connell, Eleanor, Knocknagree NS

O'Connor Anna, Ag

O'Connor, Nora

Ombudsman for Children's Office

O'Sullivan Michael, Primary School

P – R

Parentline

Ryan, Laura, Special Primary School

S – U

Scurea, Mariana, Parent

Sinead, Parent

Smith, Cillian, Parent of child victim

Smith, Cillian, Parent of victim of bullying

Teachers' Union of Ireland (TUI)

TikTok


Treanor, Dara, Beech Hill College

V – Z

Wall, Brian, St. Mary's College Rathmines

Walsh Vicki, Parent

Yellow Flag Programme



When
no one
helps you.

Feeling
Nervous or
Scared.

Talk to someone
Talk to someone who will listen.

