



An Roinn Oideachais  
Department of Education

# Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying

Ireland's Whole Education Approach to preventing and addressing bullying in schools

December 2022



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## Foreword from Minister Norma Foley TD

I am very pleased to publish *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* which sets out a comprehensive roadmap to ensure that there is zero tolerance of bullying in Irish schools and that schools are places where every single child and young person feels welcomed, valued and understood.

This plan has been developed by the Department in collaboration with a diverse Steering Committee, the membership of which cuts across civic society representatives, academia, and those working directly with children and young people. I would like to express my sincere thanks to the chair of the Steering Committee, Dr Noel Purdy, to Professor James O'Higgins Norman, the UNESCO chair on Bullying and Cyberbullying, and to all the Steering Committee members for the time and expertise they have provided for this important body of work. I am very conscious that there is already great work ongoing in our schools to address bullying and to promote 'cineáltas'. The implementation of the actions in this Action Plan will greatly enhance the work that we already do to ensure that all the children and young people who attend our schools are kept safe from harm and that the wellbeing of our children and young people is at the forefront of everything that we do.

The Steering Committee, which I established in February of this year, has been guided by UNESCO's Whole Education Approach and this Action Plan incorporates each of the nine components of the Whole Education Approach. This will help ensure that *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* is sustainable, inclusive and benefits all our children and young people.

This Action Plan specifically acknowledges how a person's likelihood to experience bullying can be linked to their race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, additional educational need, or other characteristic and contains a broad range of actions to prevent and address bullying. This is both welcome and needed.

It is an Action Plan which is grounded in the lived experience of so many who have come through and remain within the education system. Extensive consultation has been undertaken with children and young people, including young people with special educational needs.

I would like to thank everyone who participated in the consultation process. It is heartening to have seen such a high level of engagement. I would especially like to thank the 170 children and young people who participated in the focus groups. I place great importance on the views and perspectives of our children and young people. I firmly believe it is they who are best placed to tell us how we can prevent and address bullying in our schools.

I am confident that implementation of the actions in *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* will greatly enhance the wellbeing of all of our children and young people and I look forward to its implementation.

**Norma Foley TD**  
**Minister for Education**



## Foreword from Secretary General Bernie McNally

I would like to thank the Steering Committee members for the dedication and commitment that they have shown in developing this Action Plan on Bullying. An enormous amount of work has gone into the development of *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying*.

The implementation of the actions in this Action Plan will help the Department of Education to achieve its vision of having an education system where every child and young person feels valued and is actively supported and nurtured to reach their full potential.

The *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2019* provides an overarching resource for schools to support the wellbeing of all members of the school community and to prevent and address bullying in schools. The Department recognises that promoting wellbeing and preventing and addressing bullying is a shared community responsibility.

There have been many changes since the publication of the 2013 Action Plan on Bullying. The population of Ireland has continued to grow and is increasingly more diverse. The use of technology and social media for education, entertainment and socialising has become more common among children and their families. The online and offline lives of our children and young people have become increasingly intertwined, with associated challenges to be addressed in terms of safety and wellbeing.

An extensive consultation process has been undertaken in the development of *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying*. In particular, this Action Plan has benefitted vastly from the views and experiences of a diverse range of children and young people who participated in the focus groups.

I believe that our children and young people have a very important role to play in helping us to develop policy at a school and a national level. Therefore, I fully support the action contained in *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* regarding the establishment of a dedicated unit in the Department of Education to promote the voice of children and young people and to build on the work already done to ensure that they have meaningful input into the development of Department policy.

Preventing and addressing bullying in schools is the responsibility of our whole school community; our pupils and students, parents, school staff and school management. It is not a problem that individuals can solve on their own. It starts with each one of us, showing cineáltas (kindness) in our everyday attitudes, thoughts, words and actions.

I look forward to leading on the full implementation of this Action Plan.

**Bernie McNally**  
**Secretary General**



## Foreword from Dr Noel Purdy, Chair of the Steering Committee

Bullying is wrong and can destroy lives. I write this at the outset as a teacher, researcher and above all as a parent, as an important reminder of the seriousness of the impact of bullying behaviour. We have a collective responsibility as a society to prevent and address bullying behaviour in all its forms. I am also reminded of the challenge set at national level in United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund's (UNICEF) *Innocenti Report Card 7* which states that:

The true measure of a nation's standing is how well it attends to its children – their health and safety, their material security, their education and socialization, and their sense of being loved, valued, and included in the families and societies into which they are born. (UNICEF, 2007, p.1)

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*. 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); to develop a new Action Plan with any new priority areas that need to be addressed to help prevent and address bullying in schools, and; to identify the actions which need to be taken to address these areas. The members of the Steering Committee have unfailingly drawn on their wealth of experience and expertise, working tirelessly to meet these terms of reference. I owe them all a debt of gratitude.

Over the past nine months, as a Steering Committee we have drawn on as wide an evidence base as possible, to help ensure that our new Action Plan is firmly grounded in the latest national and international research. This is contextualised within Irish educational and broader societal policy, and rooted in the everyday lived experience of all members of the school community: children and young people, teaching and non-teaching staff, families and broader society.

We have considered the significant progress made since the publication of the 2013 Action Plan and have carefully examined the recommendations of the Oireachtas Joint Committee's comprehensive 2021 *Report on School Bullying and the Impact on Mental Health*. The 2019 *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice* and UNESCO's *Whole Education Approach to Prevent and Address Bullying and Cyberbullying* have also provided important policy contexts which have helped to shape *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying*.

We would also like to thank the many thousands of individuals and organisations who contributed to our work. Over recent months we received over 50 presentations from a wide range of stakeholders, and engaged directly with teachers, principals, parents and children. We have also drawn on the findings of the different strands of formal consultation which included 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, children attending the Supporting Travellers and Roma (STAR) programme, Traveller and Roma children, children from Ukraine and refugees; and focus group interviews with 41 school staff and board of management members.

The development of *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* has provided us all with an important and timely opportunity to take stock of progress to date, to reflect on the latest research, and to engage widely with all stakeholders (including children and young people). It is my belief that this resulting Action Plan sets out the necessary next steps that will allow us to meet our collective responsibility to prevent and address bullying within today's increasingly diverse Irish society.

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

# Our vision



## Our vision

The Department of Education'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 Department has a key role to play in the promotion of the wellbeing of children and young people in Ireland. The Department of Education's *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2019* 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.

*Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* has drawn on the *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2019*, United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisations (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.

Our vision is centred on an Action Plan on Bullying that 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.

Ireland ratified the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child<sup>1</sup> in September 1992. In doing this we committed to promote, protect and fulfil the rights of children.

Bullying is a children's rights issue. Bullying interferes with the following rights of the child:

- > The right to freedom of expression (Article 13)
- > The right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 14)
- > The right to freedom of association and freedom of peaceful assembly (Article 15)
- > The right to privacy (Article 16)
- > The right to be protected from all forms of abuse and neglect (Article 19)
- > The right to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health (Article 24)
- > The right to education (Article 28)
- > The right to enjoy their own culture, religion or language (Article 30)

The implementation of the actions contained in *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* will help our children and young people to grow up in a society where these rights are protected. Furthermore, this Action Plan on Bullying is aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goal<sup>2</sup> 4 which is focused on the provision of an inclusive and equitable quality education for all children and young people which is fundamental to creating a peaceful and prosperous world.

<sup>1</sup> 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/>

<sup>2</sup> Information on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals can be found here: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

# Our approach to preventing and addressing bullying



## Our approach to preventing and addressing bullying

The Department of Education carried out a significant piece of work on anti-bullying in 2012 and 2013. An anti-bullying forum was held in May 2012, an *Action Plan on Bullying* was published in January 2013 and *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-primary Schools* were published in September 2013.

The Department's 2013 *Action Plan on Bullying* set out twelve key actions to help prevent and address bullying in schools. The twelve key actions contained in the Action Plan focused on support for schools, teacher training, research and awareness raising and aimed to ensure that all forms of bullying including identity-based bullying are 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.

Since 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 these changes in population, the use of technology and social media 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.

A recent Government 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 reported having been bullied in the past year. Furthermore, 11% of all children said that they had experienced cyberbullying in the past 12 months with 13-14 year olds reporting the highest incidence rates. The data suggests that girls are more likely to be bullied and to experience online safety issues (National Advisory Council for Online Safety (NACOS), 2021).



BeLonG To Youth Services recently published its Irish School Climate Survey which found that although we are making some progress in providing safe and supportive school environments for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) students, there is still a great deal of work to be done by all members of our school community. LGBTQ+ students still face challenges, including; negative treatment, hearing homophobic remarks from members of the school community, school retention and completion concerns, and unsafe spaces within schools (BeLonG To Youth Services, 2022). Of the 1,208 LGBTQ+ students who completed the survey 76% indicated that they “feel unsafe in school”.

Both Irish and international research shows that physical appearance is the most common reason for being bullied, with race, nationality and skin colour as the second most common reason. Children from poorer families, migrants, and those who are gender non-conforming have also been found to be more vulnerable to bullying behaviour (UNESCO, 2019). These factors are not always unconnected to each other, as such intersectional and intra-ethnic factors often contribute to how bullying is experienced (Kuldas, Foody, O’Higgins Norman, 2022).

In order to ensure that our responses to these challenges were underpinned by a greater understanding of bullying and cyberbullying, in 2014 the Department of Education funded a National Anti-Bullying Research Centre and in 2018 the Department supported the establishment of the first UNESCO Chair on Bullying and Cyberbullying at Dublin City University.

Given the evolving social and technological context in which children and young people are growing up today, the Department emphasised the priority and importance it places on wellbeing promotion in schools when it published the *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2019*. Central to the policy is that the promotion of wellbeing will be at the core of the ethos of every school in Ireland.



In February of this year, the Minister for Education, Norma Foley TD, established a Steering Committee<sup>3</sup> to review the 2013 Action Plan on Bullying.

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 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. The Steering Committee has specifically considered cyber bullying, identity based bullying and sexual harassment, among other areas. The Steering Committee has also given 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 in schools. The Wellbeing Policy identifies four key areas for wellbeing promotion: Culture and Environment, Curriculum (Teaching and Learning), Policy and Planning, and Relationships and Partnerships.

Internationally, 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 with the key components and characteristics of a wide-reaching approach to preventing and addressing bullying (Figure 1).

<sup>3</sup> The membership of the Steering Committee is contained in Appendix 1.

## International Conference on School Bullying, 2021

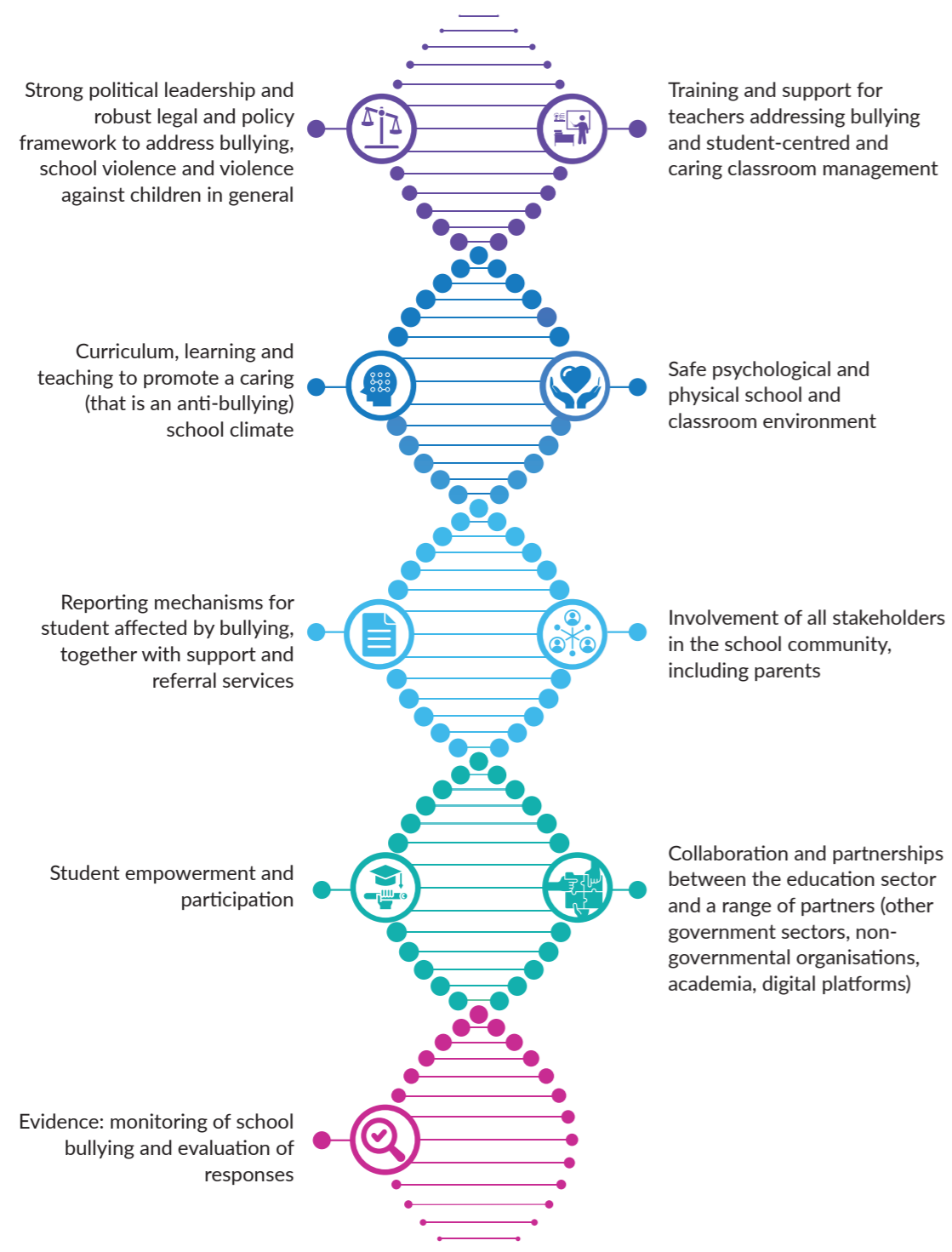
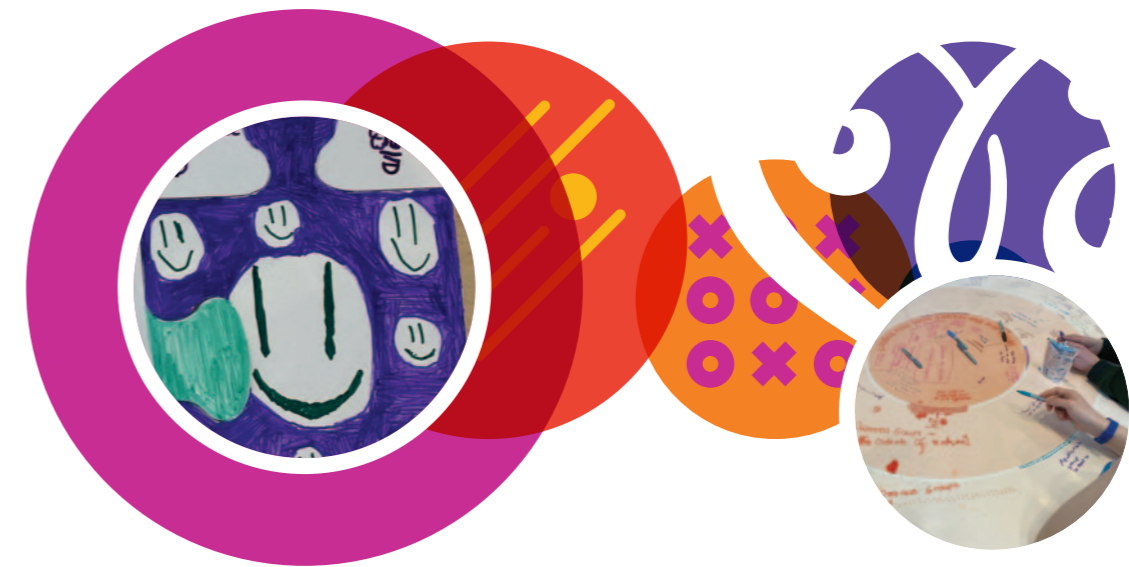


Figure 1. The Whole Education Approach to prevent and address bullying. The nine core components have been identified to form part of a whole-education approach that can help to effectively reduce bullying and cyberbullying. Republished with permission from UNESCO.

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Taking account of the above, *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* has been developed through the lens of the four key areas of the *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2019*. It is grounded in national and international research through UNESCO's Whole Education Approach, and informed by considered and broad consultation and engagement with members of our education community and wider society.

Through this extensive consultative process, consistent themes emerged and they have been used to develop the actions contained in this Action Plan. These wide ranging actions highlight the complex and intricate nature of the issue of bullying and how to prevent and address it.

*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 support and nurture positive relationships and partnerships

Through the implementation of *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* we can all work together towards a diverse, inclusive Irish society free from bullying in all its forms, where individual difference is valued, nurtured and celebrated and where all our children and young people can feel happy and safe in our schools.



# Voices from our school community



## Voices from our school community

The Department of Education has engaged in an extensive consultation process to ensure that the views of as many stakeholders as possible have been considered in developing *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying*.

- > Over 50 presentations were made to the Steering Committee
- > Over 4,600 responses were received to the public consultation questionnaire
- > 78 written submissions were 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 from diverse backgrounds were consulted including children with special educational needs, Traveller and Roma children, children from Ukraine and refugees

The themes that have emerged include the following:

### 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
- > 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



### 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 social personal and health education (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



### 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



- > "Talk about the effects of bullying"
- > "An adult that can talk to you about anything"
- > "More teachers in the yard"
- > "Meditation every day to help calm everyone down"
- > "Steuden cansull have more pour"
- > "Use previous instances of bullying/testimonies from those affected as a guideline of identifying bullying. Have this written into the policy"
- > "Children from each class present to others about the policy – you'd listen more"
- > "Have more educational workshops for students but also for adults – learn about each topic but also racism"
- > "Training for students for what to do if they or their friends are being bullied and who in the school they can go to"
- > "Training for teachers to help them identify bullying as sometimes someone who is being bullied isn't comfortable to come forward"



# What is bullying behaviour?

## Definition of bullying behaviour

**Bullying is 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.**



## What is bullying behaviour?

Building on many years of international research, the core definition above sets out clear criteria to help school communities to prevent, correctly identify and address bullying among children and young people. Alleged incidents of bullying are however often complex and must be considered on a case by case basis.

There are many different methods of bullying behaviour including physical, verbal and relational forms, and it can take place online and offline. There are also many different motives for bullying behaviour which can be understood on an individual level (for example desire for dominance, status, revenge) and/or on a societal level (for example 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 core elements of the definition are further described below:

### A. 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 (for example personal injury, damage to or loss of property), social (for example withdrawal, loneliness, exclusion) and/or emotional (for example 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.

### B. 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.

### C. 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.

# Department of Education roadmap for preventing and addressing bullying

## KEY AREAS OF WELLBEING

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



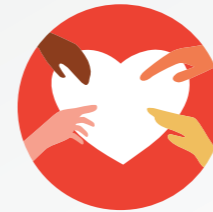
### PREVENTION

Education and empathy generation are the foundations for knowledge, respect and inclusion



### SUPPORT

Tangible and targeted supports provide a framework for school communities to work together



### COMMUNITY

Inclusive school communities that are connected build positive relationships and partnerships



### OVERSIGHT

Visible leadership inspires positive environments for children and the school community

## Accountability & Inclusion





## Key actions for preventing and addressing bullying

Talk about the effects of bullying

More teachers in the yard

Use previous instances of bullying/ testimonies from those affected as a guideline of identifying bullying. Have this written into the policy

Training for students for what to do if they or their friends are being bullied and who in the school they can go to

An adult that can talk to you about anything

Children from each class present to others about the policy - you'd listen more

Training for teachers to help them identify bullying as sometimes someone who is being bullied isn't comfortable to come forward

Meditation every day to help calm everyone down

Have more educational workshops for students but also for adults - learn about each topic but also racism

all happen

# 1 | 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.

## Culture and Environment

### School Culture and Values Declaration

Schools will be required to produce an accessible School Culture and Values Declaration, a Cineáltas Charter, which outlines the school's culture and values and how they can help to prevent and address bullying, in an age appropriate manner. The Declaration will include, for example, a school's focus on welcome, inclusion and wellbeing. 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 develop a recognition process, such as a Cineáltas flag, for schools who engage in measures to prevent and address bullying.

### Student Support Teams

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.

Student Support Teams will be encouraged to avail of continuous professional development (CPD) to support their effective practice to prevent and address bullying.

The Department of Education will provide specific guidance to schools on how Student Support Teams will actively seek the voice and participation of children, young people and their parents.

The Department of Education will develop guidance for the establishment of a Student Support Team model in larger primary schools.

### Designated Role

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.

### School Self Evaluation

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 *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice*.

The Department of Education will encourage all schools to avail of Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) Wellbeing CPD, to support them as they engage in a whole school approach to wellbeing promotion as outlined in the Department's *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice*.

### Inspections

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.

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.

The Department of Education will develop a plan to support the promotion, implementation and evaluation of the Department's *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice*, which will include a focus on school culture and preventing and addressing bullying.

**School Buildings**

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.

**Awareness Raising**

The Department of Education will work collaboratively to highlight the important role and responsibility that school staff have in modelling behaviour based on the ethical values of respect, integrity, care and trust.

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.

The Department of Education will continue to support the Stand Up Awareness Campaign.

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 (for example online bullying, racist bullying, disablist bullying) and highlighting the important role of bystanders.

# 2 | 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.



## Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)

### Initial Teacher Education (ITE)

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.

### ITE Policy Statement

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.

### Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) Support

The Department of Education will review existing resources available to 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.

### School Leaders

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.

### Postgraduate Diploma in Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE)

The Department of Education will continue to roll-out and expand 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.

### Training for School Staff

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.

The Department of Education will continue to roll out CPD to support the implementation of the *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice* in all schools by 2025.

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.

### Training for Boards of Management

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.

### Training for Parents

The Department of Education will ensure that update, 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.

### SPHE/RSE Curriculum

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.

The updated Junior Cycle SPHE programme will include content on navigating friendships online, including how to recognise and respond to online bullying.

### Review of the Primary Curriculum

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.

### Traveller Culture and History

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

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

The NCCA will ensure that literature which positively represents the diversity of society and promotes equality and inclusion will be included in the text lists from which post-primary schools choose texts to support teaching and learning.

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.

### Anti-Bullying Programme

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 available and promoted to schools. The programme will continue to be updated by the DCU Anti-Bullying Centre based on research and feedback.

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.

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 Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice.



# 3 | 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.

## Policy and Planning

### Data Collection

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.

The Department of Education will progress the development of a national database to facilitate data being collated in an anonymised manner to facilitate the development of an annual national report on bullying in schools.

### Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools

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.

The Department of Education will develop mandatory anti-bullying template documents to assist schools in developing and implementing their anti-bullying procedures.

Schools will be required to ensure that their Anti-bullying Policy is accessible and made available to the whole school community.

### Resources to support LGBTQ+ Pupils and Students in Schools

The Department of Education will review and update the *Being LGBT in School* Resource.

### Code of Behaviour Guidelines

Tusla will review and update the 2008 *Developing a Code of Behaviour Guidelines for Schools* to reflect current Department of Education policies and procedures for schools including *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* and to ensure that schools have sufficient tools to address bullying issues as they arise.

### Research

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.

### Online Safety Commissioner

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.

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.

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.

### Implementation and Evaluation Group

The Department of Education will establish an implementation group to oversee the implementation of *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying*. A programme of evaluation and review, including the publication of regular progress reports, will be developed as part of the implementation plan.

# 4 | Relationships and Partnerships

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

## Relationships and Partnerships

### Student Voice and Participation

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 *National Framework for Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making*.

The Department of Education will encourage schools to establish student councils that are representative of the pupils and students in the school.

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.

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.

### School Clusters

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.

### Wellbeing and Mental Health Supports

The Department of Education will pilot a programme of counselling supports for primary schools.

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.

The Department of Education will increase the number of National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) Psychologists available within the school sector and take proactive measures to promote the study of educational psychology.

### Diversity in the Teaching Profession

The Department of Education will progress 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.

### Resources

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.

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.

The Department of Education will continue to support the work of the National Anti-Bullying Research and Resource Centre in DCU.

# Measuring Success



## Measuring Success

The implementation of each of the actions contained in this action plan will assist us in implementing a whole education approach to preventing and addressing bullying in our schools.

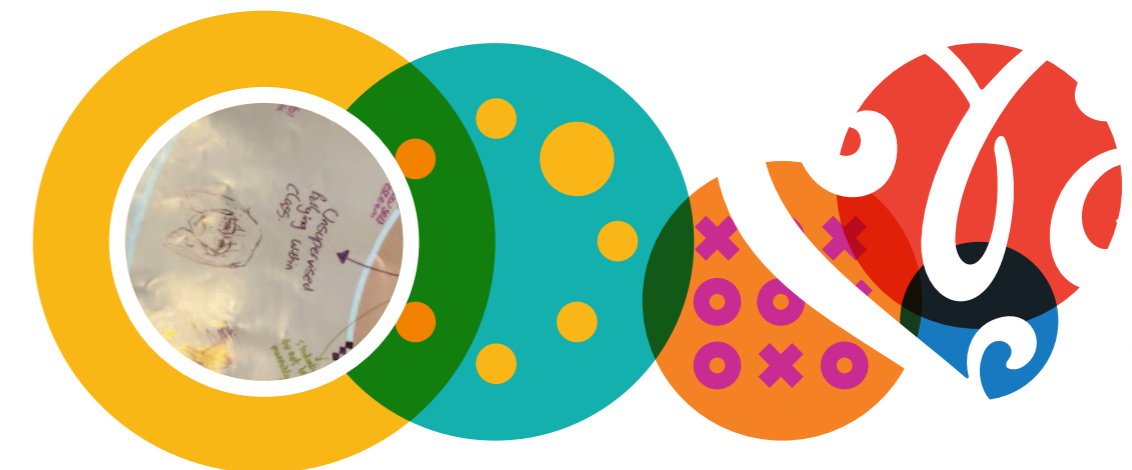
*Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* sets out the roadmap to be followed. The Department of Education, in consultation with our education partners, will develop an implementation plan for *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* which will contain detailed actions and, where necessary, sub-actions as well as timeframes for implementation. The implementation plan will also include a programme of evaluation and review including the publication of regular reports detailing the progress made towards the implementation of each of the actions and sub-actions.

The Department will establish an Implementation Group to oversee and to provide guidance on the implementation of the plan.

During the process of implementation, the Department will continue to engage with our education partners, key stakeholders and relevant agencies.

It is envisaged that the success of *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* will be evidenced by a number of measures, which include the following:

- > Increased voice and participation of children, young people and their parents in policy development and implementation at school and national level including in relation to developing and implementing measures to prevent and address bullying in schools
- > Student councils and school staff that reflect the diversity of the school community
- > All schools engaging in a school self-evaluation approach to wellbeing promotion in line with the Department's Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice
- > Embedding of positive cultures in schools as evidenced from published inspection reports, national research and school culture and value declarations
- > All school staff being provided with the knowledge, skills and confidence to prevent and address bullying, racism, sexism, sexual harassment and to promote equity, diversity, inclusion and wellbeing
- > An up-to-date curriculum which encompasses measures to prevent and address bullying, and to promote equity, diversity, inclusion, and intercultural education and wellbeing
- > Anti-bullying approaches which are effective in preventing and addressing bullying as evidenced by Inspection reports, board of management reports and national data
- > Implementation of effective anti-bullying programmes
- > Collation of national data on the prevalence of bullying and measures that successfully address bullying
- > Research-informed policy, CPD and awareness raising campaigns to prevent and address all forms of bullying



# Closing Statement

*Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* provides a collective vision and clear roadmap for how the whole education community and society can work together to prevent and address bullying in our schools.

These new actions 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 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.

Preventing and addressing bullying is a shared community responsibility. It starts with each one of us, in our everyday attitudes, thoughts, words and actions. So let's work together towards an inclusive society free from bullying in all its forms and where diversity and individual difference are valued and celebrated.



# 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, UNESCO Chair on 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, Department of Education
- > Zak Moradi, Anti-racism Activist

(Membership of Steering committee at time of publication)

# Abbreviations

CPD	Continuous Professional Development
DCU	Dublin City University
HEI	Higher education institution
ITE	Initial teacher education
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer
NACOS	National Advisory Council for Online Safety
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Service
NQT	Newly qualified teacher
PDST	Professional Development Service for Teachers
RSE	Relationships and sexuality education
STAR	Supporting Travellers and Roma
SPHE	Social personal and health education
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

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