Balla National School Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Balla National School has adopted the following policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour. This policy fully complies with the requirements of *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* 2024.

The board of management acknowledges that bullying behaviour interferes with the rights of the child as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. We all, as a school community, have a responsibility to work together to prevent and address bullying behaviour and to deal with the negative impact of bullying behaviour.

We are committed to ensuring that all students who attend our school are kept safe from harm and that the wellbeing of our students is at the forefront of everything that we do. We recognise the negative impact that bullying behaviour can have on the lives of our students and we are fully committed to preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.

We confirm that we will, in accordance with our obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the harassment of students or staff on any of the nine grounds specified: gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.

Definition of bullying:

Bullying is defined in *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* and *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* as targeted behaviour, online or offline that causes harm. The harm caused can be physical, social and/or emotional in nature. Bullying behaviour is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power in relationships between two people or groups of people in society.

A one-off instance of negative behaviour towards a student is not bullying behaviour. However, a single hurtful message posted on social media can be considered bullying behaviour as it may be visible to a wide audience and has a high likelihood of being shared multiple times and so becomes a repeated behaviour.

Behaviour that is not bullying behaviour:

- If the repeated harm is real for the student experiencing the behaviour, but unintended by the other student, this is not bullying, but, importantly, must be addressed under the school's code of behaviour.
- Some students with special educational needs may have social communication difficulties which may make them communicate their needs through behaviours that can hurt themselves or others. It is important to note that these behaviours are not deliberate or planned, but in certain situations, they are an automatic response which they cannot control.
- Disagreement between students is not considered bullying unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.

Section A: Development/review of our Bí Cineálta policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour

All members of our school community were provided with the opportunity to input into the development/review of this policy.

	Date consulted	Method of consultation
School Staff	March 2025	Staff provided with the opportunity to discuss the new Bi Cinealta action plan and stemming from this discussion, staff were informed of the important points in dealing with an incidence or report of bullying School Half Day Closure -Webinar
Students	15/5/2025	Ms.Armstrong spoke to each class and emailed a survey home for students to complete to seek their input into the new policy. A student friendly policy poster is on display in each classroom.
Parents	15/05/2025	An information letter was emailed home to parents and a survey was attached to seek their input into the new policy.
Board of Management	June 2025	Review new policy – leading to consultation and final ratification after amendments made where necessary.

Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers		As appropriate bus drivers, visitors, student teachers etc are informed about the policy.
Date policy was approved: 12th June 2025		
Date policy was last reviewed: 20th october 2026		

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

This section sets out the prevention strategies that will be used by the school. These include strategies specifically aimed at preventing online bullying behaviour, homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour, racist bullying behaviour, sexist bullying behaviour and sexual harassment as appropriate:

Culture and Environment:

- The school community supports 'A Telling Environment'. The school is a safe environment where reporting of bullying behaviour is encouraged.
- A Trusted Adult strategy. Our staff support this strategy by letting students know that they can talk to them.
- We have safe physical spaces that support psychological safety. Spaces that have a clear line of sight make it easier for school staff to supervise students.
- Supervision of students during yard time and all activities throughout the school day.
- Respectful atmosphere is cultivated in the school
- Greeting children at the door/gate in the morning & evening

Curriculum (Teaching and Learning):

- In teaching and learning children have regular opportunities to work in small groups with their peers, which can help build a sense of connection, belonging and empathy among students. The curricular subjects offered to students provide opportunities to foster inclusion and respect for diversity. The Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) curricula aim to foster students' wellbeing, self confidence and sense of belonging and to develop students' sense of personal responsibility for their own behaviour and actions. We explicitly teach a number of initiatives which are directly related to anti bullying e.g. Friends for Life, Zippy's friends.
- We use the Restorative Practice approach
- We use Webwise & HTML heroes to teach children about safety online
- We have a School Wellbeing Committee

Policy and Planning:

The following documents , policies and procedures are directly concerned with the prevention of bullying behaviour

- Acceptable use policy(AUP),
- Supervision policy,
- Special Education policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Sphe plan
- RSE
- Safeguarding Statement
- Well being policy & statement
- The school has the following supervision and monitoring policies in place to prevent and address bullying behaviour (see Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):
- *Morning and evening supervision
- *Yard rota for supervision at break times and lunch times. Appropriate supervision is an important measure to help prevent and address bullying behaviour. We will take all reasonable measures to ensure the safety of our students and to supervise students when students are attending school or attending school activities.

Relationships and Partnerships:

- Supporting the active participation of students in school life
- Supporting the active participation of parents in school life, including those who may find it difficult or daunting to engage with the school due to being unfamiliar with the education system or due to language or cultural barriers
- Conducting workshops for students, school staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of bullying
- Supporting activities that build empathy, respect and resilience
- Promoting acts of kindness
- Teaching problem solving

Preventing cyberbullying behaviour:

- Having regular conversations with students about developing respectful and kind relationships online.
- Developing and communicating an acceptable use policy for technology
- Referring to appropriate online behaviour as part of the standards of behaviour in the Code of Behaviour.
- Promoting online safety events for parents who are responsible for overseeing their children's activities online.
- Holding an Internet safety day to reinforce awareness around appropriate online behaviour

Preventing homophobic/transphobic bullying behaviour:

- Maintaining an inclusive physical environment by displaying relevant posters
- Encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
- Challenging gender stereotypes
- Encouraging students to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour

Preventing racist bullying behaviour:

- Fostering a school culture where diversity is celebrated and where students "see themselves" in their school environment.
- Having the cultural diversity of the school visible and on display.
- Encouraging bystanders to report when they witness racist behaviour
- Providing supports to school staff to respond to the needs of students for whom English is an additional language and for communicating with their parents

Preventing sexist bullying behaviour:

- Ensuring members of staff model respectful behaviour and treat students equally irrespective of their sex.
- Ensuring all students have the same opportunities to engage in school activities irrespective of their sex.

- Celebrating diversity at school and acknowledging the contributions of all students.
- Encouraging parents to reinforce these values of respect at home.

- **Preventing Cyber Bullying, Homophobic/Transphobic bullying, Racist bullying, Preventing sexual harassment. In addition to above mentioned strategies, the school has the following in place to prevent and address bullying:**
- Staff at all times endeavour to encourage pupils to show respect for each other.
- Implementation of the SPHE curriculum.
- Positive self-esteem is fostered among the pupils by celebrating individual differences, by acknowledging good behaviour and by providing opportunities for success.
- The school's anti-bullying policy is discussed regularly with the pupils.
- Staff are particularly vigilant in monitoring pupils who are considered at risk of bullying/ being bullied.
- All disclosed incidents of bullying are investigated thoroughly and consistently by following the correct procedure as outlined to staff and recorded on Aladdin.
- School wide awareness raising on all aspects of bullying, supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extracurricular activities.
- Foster a culture where diversity is celebrated and students “see themselves” in the school environment.
- Involvement of pupils in contributing to a safe school environment e.g. Kindness / Wellbeing week, and other activities that can help to pupils and encourage a culture of peer respect and support
- Ensuring that pupils know who to tell and how to tell.
- Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place.
- Refer to appropriate online behaviour when using devices and in SPHE lessons. Promote online safety events or material for parents
- The listing of supports currently being used in the school and the identification of other supports available to the school e.g. www.tacklebullying.ie, www.antibullyingcentre.ie, www.webwise.ie
- Raise awareness of the impact of homophobic bullying behaviour and encourage students to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour.
- Ensuring the library has material that reflects our diverse school population from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.
- Modelling of respectful behaviour by staff of all irrespective of sex.
- Ensuring all students have the same opportunities to engage in school activities irrespective of sex.

- Making clear that our school has a zero tolerance approach to sexual harassment of any kind with enforceable policy - See Code of Behaviour.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

The teacher(s) with responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour is (are) as follows:
• **The class teacher** will oversee recording of bullying reports for students in their class – this includes using the procedure guidelines to investigate reports of bullying and recording bullying behaviour in the correct form on Aladdin
• **Classroom Support Teacher**
• **Assistant Principa**l/ Anti- Bullying Policy co-ordinator is available to provide up to date information and support if needed to assist class teachers in addressing concern.
• **Deputy** principal
• **Principal** The principal will inform the Board of Management of incidents of bullying.
• All staff will be vigilant to bullying behaviour.

When bullying behaviour occurs, the school will:

> ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour is heard and reassured

> seek to ensure the privacy of those involved

> conduct all conversations with sensitivity

> consider the age and ability of those involved

> listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation

> take action in a timely manner

> inform parents of those involved

The steps that will be taken by the school to determine if bullying behaviour has occurred, the approaches taken to address the bullying behaviour and to review progress are as follows:

To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour we will consider the following questions:

1. Is the behaviour targeted at a specific student or group of students?

2. Is the behaviour intended to cause physical, social or emotional harm?

3. Is the behaviour repeated?

If the answer to each of the questions above is Yes, then the behaviour is bullying behaviour and the behaviour should be addressed using the Bí Cineálta Procedures. Note: One-off incidents may be considered bullying in certain circumstances. A single hurtful message posted on social media can be considered bullying behaviour as it has a high likelihood of being shared multiple times and thus becomes a repeated behaviour. If the answer to any of these questions is No, then the behaviour is not bullying behaviour. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

The school's procedures for investigation, follow-up and recording of bullying behaviour and the established intervention strategies used by the school for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour are as follows:

a. While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the 'Relevant Teacher(s)', they will use their professional judgement in relation to the records to be kept, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved.

b. If it is established by the 'Relevant Teacher(s)' that bullying has occurred, they must keep appropriate written records which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.

c. The 'Relevant Teacher(s)' must record the bullying incident on Aladdin by adding an Incident Report to the relevant pupil's file. The 'Relevant Teacher' must inform the Principal.

The primary aim in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame). With this in mind the school's procedures are as follows:

-In investigating and dealing with bullying the teacher(s) will exercise their judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred, what type of it has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved.

-All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the 'Relevant Teacher(s)'. In that way pupils will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It should be made clear to all pupils that when they report instances of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.

-Since bullying is often hidden from teachers and not reported, but pupils "see everything," special surveys are used (e.g. every term and whenever a particular concern arises) to help uncover possible bullying situations. These surveys allow pupils to suggest who they think their teacher should talk to in relation to these situations. It is the teacher who decides if the behaviour is really bullying.

-It is made clear to pupils that if they report possible bullying behaviour in surveys they are not getting others "in trouble" with anyone but rather enabling them to get out of trouble into which they may ultimately get in if the behaviour turned out to be bullying and if it continued. With this approach, the well documented reluctance of pupils to report bullying behaviour is significantly reduced or even disappears altogether bringing to an end the "no ratting" culture. This is necessary to empower pupils who observe bullying behaviour to report it without fear of a bad outcome for themselves or anyone else and without fear of any backlash by anyone against anyone involved. This is the approach that enables this school, with the help of its now-well informed and highly aware pupils, to uncover hidden bullying so it can be quickly and calmly brought to an end.

-Initial investigations of bullying will be done in class where possible but some incidents might be best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.

-When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour the 'Relevant Teacher(s)' should seek answers to questions of what, where, who, when and why.

-If a group is involved each member should be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved should be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member should be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about the other's statements.

-The School, through the 'Class Teacher' reserves the right to ask any pupil, whether suggested in a survey or not, to write an account of what happened, as part of an investigation. This will be a standard procedure and does not necessarily imply that any pupil is guilty of misbehaviour.

-Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that they may face from the other members of the group after an interview by the teacher. Where the 'Relevant Teacher(s)' has/have determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts should be made to try to get him/her to see the perspective of the pupil being bullied.

-The "Relevant Teacher'' does not apportion blame but should make an effort to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied. S/he emphasises that the intention is not to punish perpetrators but to talk to them, to explain how harmful and hurtful bullying is and to seek a promise that it will stop. If that promise is forthcoming and is honoured there will be no penalty and that will be the end of the matter.

-Giving a Pupil "One Chance": In the event that the interviewed pupil is found by the teacher to have been involved in bullying behaviour s/he is offered "one chance" – to sign a promise that s/he will stop bullying, regardless of what form it took, and treat all pupils fairly, equally and respectfully from then on, including any previously targeted pupil(s). If the pupil makes, and honours that promise then in natural justice s/he is given that "one chance" to make a fresh start (a) with no punishment, since the bullying is now over and (b) without being brought to the attention of the school Principal or parents. This is the best possible outcome – the bullying situation is now fully resolved with no resentment.

-When an investigation is completed and/or a bullying situation is resolved the 'Class Teacher' will complete the Incident Report form on Aladdin. The results of a check-back,(two weeks later), to revisit and reassess whether the bullying is really over, is added to the report at that stage.

-The Best Possible Outcome: If, using this efficient, low-key, restorative, child-friendly "reform, not blame" approach, the promise continues to be honoured, indicating that the resolution of the initial bullying situation was successful, this matter may never have to be revisited and everyone involved, with minimum fuss,

can “live happily ever after.” However, in the event of a breach of promise – a resumption of bullying behaviour whether against previously targeted pupil(s) or other(s), further action will follow at that still “early stage.”

-If a pupil has signed such a promise but then chooses to break it, and subsequently bully either the same pupil(s) again or any other pupil(s), the Principal will be informed about what has taken place and parent(s)/guardian(s) will be immediately informed at that very “early stage” (Bí Cineálta 6.2 p. 44). Then, in accordance with the Bí Cineálta procedures, parent(s)/guardian(s) will be consulted by the ‘Class Teacher’ regarding the actions to be taken to address and monitor the pupil’s ongoing behaviour.

-If the pupil is being asked to make a second promise, which would constitute an attempt at resolution of that second bullying situation without blame or punishment, parent(s)/guardian(s) will be asked to countersign it, knowing that if this second promise is broken the pupil will be dealt with under the school’s wider Code of Behaviour. This may involve direct contact between parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school Principal and may involve imposition of sanctions on the pupil.

-If the second promise, reinforced by parent(s)/guardian(s), is honoured then that bullying situation is regarded as resolved. The teacher’s report will include the details of the interactions with parent(s)/guardian(s). The results of a check-back, to revisit and reassess whether the bullying is really over, is added to the report at that stage. This will include input from parent(s)/guardian(s) as to whether they consider the bullying to be over and whether they are satisfied with the final outcome as well as any other relevant information.

-Breach of this second promise by further bullying behaviour would be regarded as a very grave matter and a sanction may be imposed by the school authorities in accordance with the school’s wider Code of Behaviour (See sanctions below).

-Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parent must be referred to the school's complaints procedure.

-In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parents of their rights to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children. The School will maintain care for the victim over time. This will be done by speaking to the child a number of weeks after the incident to check on their continuing welfare. The child’s parents will also be consulted.

- If a child makes a report of bullying, but asks that nothing is to be done about it, the relevant teacher will support the child appropriately to explore how it will be handled sensitively and how parents may be notified. If a parent does so, they must submit in writing that they require no further action to be taken, but even so, the school may still deem it necessary to be investigated and handled appropriately.

Sanctions:

-Where a pupil has been found to be engaged in bullying behaviour, has formally promised to stop and has broken that promise, any of the following sanctions may be imposed: - For (first) breach of promise – s/he may be required to sign another promise, this time countersigned by a parent/guardian; -

-In the unlikely event of a further (second) breach of promise – the 'Class Teacher' may contact parent(s)/guardian(s) to inform them of the nature and extent of the bullying behaviour, to discuss the matter with them with a view to coming to a better understanding the reasons for the bullying behaviour, to suggest actions to be taken to help meet their child's needs and to agree a strategy whereby a promise to end the bullying behaviour would be honoured;

-In the highly unlikely event of a further (third) breach of promise – parent(s)/ guardian(s) may be invited to a meeting with the 'Class Teacher' and the Principal and a sanction may be imposed in accordance with the Code of Behaviour of the school.

- In the extremely unlikely event of a further (fourth) breach of promise – the case may be referred to the Board of Management and a further sanction may be imposed in accordance with the Code of Behaviour of the school.

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

The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying involves a whole school approach. Given the complexity of bullying behaviour, no one intervention/support programme works in all situations.

• Supporting Bullied pupils:

- Ending the bullying behaviour,

- Fostering respect for bullied pupils and all pupils,

- Fostering greater empathy towards and support for bullied pupils,

- Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through annual awareness-raising programmes,

- Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through the speedy identification of those responsible and speedy resolution of bullying situations,

- Making adequate counselling facilities available to pupils who need it in a timely manner (subject to available allocation)

- Helping bullied pupils raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that help develop friendships and social skills.

Supporting Bullying pupils:

- Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are not blamed or punished and get a ‘clean sheet,’

- Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are doing the right and honorable thing and giving them praise for this,

- Making adequate counselling facilities available to help those who need it learn other ways of meeting their needs besides violating the rights of others,

- Helping those who need to raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that develop friendships and social skills.

- Using learning strategies throughout the school and the curriculum to help enhance pupils’ feelings of self-worth,

- In dealing with negative behavior in general, encouraging teachers and parents to focus on, challenge and correct the behaviour while supporting the child,

- In dealing with bullying behaviour seeking resolution and offering a fresh start with a ‘clean sheet’ and no blame in return for keeping a promise to reform

All bullying behaviour will be recorded. This will include the type of behaviour, where and when it took place, and the date of the engagement with students and parents. The actions and supports agreed to address bullying behaviour will be documented. If the bullying behaviour is a child protection concern the matter will be addressed without delay in accordance with *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

Section D: Oversight

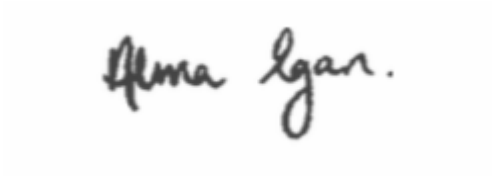
The principal will present an update on bullying behaviour at each board of management meeting. This update will include the number of incidents of bullying behaviour that have been reported since the last meeting, the number of ongoing incidents and the total number of incidents since the beginning of the school year. Where incidents of bullying behaviour have occurred, the principal will also provide a verbal update which will include where relevant, information relating to trends and patterns identified, strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and any wider strategies to prevent and address bullying behaviour where relevant. This update does not contain personal or identifying information.

This policy is available to our school community on the school’s website and in hard copy on request. A student friendly version of this policy is displayed in the school and is also available on our website and in hard copy on request.

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed, following input from our school community, each calendar year or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which this policy refers.

Signed:  Date: 20/10/2026

(Chairperson of Board of Management)



Signed: Date: 20/10/2026

(Principal)

Appendix 1 – Examples of Bullying Behaviour

Bullying (Deliberate/Targeted, Repeated, Harmful/Hurtful Behaviour) can take a number of forms. These may include any of the following (this list is not exhaustive):

- **Repeated aggressive behaviour/attitude/body language, for example:**

Shouting and uncontrolled anger
Personal insults
Verbal abuse
Offensive language directed at an individual
Continually shouting or dismissing others
Public verbal attacks/criticism
Domineering behaviour
Open aggression
Offensive gestures and unwanted physical contact

- **Intimidation, either physical, psychological or emotional, for example:**

Treating in a dictatorial manner
Ridicule
Persistent slagging
Deliberate staring with the intent to discomfort
Persistent rudeness in behaviour and attitude toward a particular individual
Asking inappropriate questions/making inappropriate comments re. personal life/family
Asking inappropriate questions/making inappropriate comments re. social life or schoolwork

- **Interference with property, for example:**

Stealing/damaging books or equipment
Stealing/damaging clothing or other property
Demanding money with menaces
Persistently moving, hiding or interfering with property
Marking/defacing property

- **Undermining/Public or Private Humiliation, for example:**

Condescending tone
Deliberately withholding significant information and resources

Deliberately and maliciously sharing private images in social media
Malicious, disparaging or demeaning comments
Malicious tricks/derogatory jokes
Knowingly spreading rumours
Belittling others' efforts, their enthusiasm or their new ideas
Derogatory or offensive nicknames (name-calling)
Using electronic or other media for any of the above (cyber bullying)
Disrespectfully mimicking a particular individual in his/her absence
Deliberately refusing to address issues focusing instead on the person

- **Ostracising or isolating, for example:**

Deliberately marginalising an individual
Deliberately preventing a person from joining a group or manipulating friendship groups
Deliberately preventing from joining in an activity, schoolwork-related or recreational
Deliberately trying to create dislike by others
Blaming a pupil for things s/he did not do

Appendix 2 – Incident Report Form

Balla National School **INCIDENT REPORT FORM**		
Circle as appropriate:	**Source of report:** Parent Pupil Staff-Member Survey Other	
Date:		
Name of Reporting person: **(staff member / pupil/ other)**		
Details of Alleged Incident:	Date:	
	Location:	
	Possible targeted pupil(s):	
	Possible Perpetrator(s):	
	Others who were there	
	Initial details of incident	
	The “form” it took (*e.g. verbal, written, exclusion, extortion, relational, intimidation, physical,):*	
	The “type” of bullying *(e.g. targeting others on*	

	the basis of race, poverty, faith, disability, sex, sexual orientation or identity, high ability, skin colour):	
Actions Taken:	Record on next page. See reverse.	
Date:		
Signed:		

Action Taken in Response to Incident Report

(Please record any survey, interview, promise, phone-call, consultation with parents, teacher, Principal, any external service/support etc. etc. as relevant).

Date:	
	Signed:

Review after Two Weeks

(Please record whether the behaviour was bullying, and if so, whether it has ceased).

Date:	

	Signed:

Appendix 3: Promise Agreement 1

I _____ (your name) promise to stop bullying and treat all pupils fairly, equally and respectfully from now on.

Signed:_____

Appendix 3: Promise Agreement 2

I _____ (your name) promise to stop bullying and treat all pupils fairly, equally and respectfully from now on.

Signed:_____ Child

Signed: _____ Parent