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Scoil Mhuire agus Eoin Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire agus Eoin 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.

We confirm that we will take all steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent all bullying or harassment of our students in whatever form and however motivated.

Catholic schools have a distinctive understanding of the human person, recognising that every person is created in God's image and likeness and has inherent dignity as a child of God. This is the basis for ensuring that everybody in our school is treated with respect and care, in accordance with the Catholic Schedule. As a Catholic school, we are committed to respecting the dignity of every individual. No human person is to be devalued and everybody has a part to play in the school community, regardless of difference.

Definition of bullying

Bullying is defined in Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying and Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools as targeted behaviour, online or offline that causes harm. The harm caused can be physical, social and/or emotional in nature. Bullying behaviour is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power in relationships between two people or groups of people in society. The detailed definition is provided in Chapter 2 of the Bí Cineálta procedures.

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 student 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 student experiencing the 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 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 is not considered bullying but must still be addressed under the school's

code of behaviour. Posting a single harmful message/image/video online, and which is highly likely to be reposted or shared with others can therefore be seen as bullying behaviour.

Imbalance of power In incidents of bullying, the student 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 student to remove offensive online material or escape the bullying.

Behaviour that is not bullying behaviour

A one off instance of negative behaviour towards another 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. Disagreement between students, or instances where students don't want to be friends or to remain friends, is not considered bullying behaviour unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others including deliberate manipulation of friendship groups. 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 can't control. Bullying is not accidental or reckless behaviour. If the repeated harm is real for the student experiencing the behaviour but unintended by the other student, this is not bullying. These behaviours, while not defined as bullying, can be distressing. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

Each school is required to develop and implement a Bí Cineálta policy that sets out how the school community prevents and addresses bullying behaviour. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour that is not bullying behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

Section A: Development/review of our Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

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

	Date consulted	Method of consultation
School staff	19/02/2025	-Staff meeting: half day closure for training, consultation and input
Students	11/06/2025 19/05/25	-Student focus group consulted about Bí Cineálta Student Friendly Policy. -Student Focus group around Bi Cineálta procedures
Parents	27/01/2025 6/6/2025	-Meeting with Parent focus group -Invited feedback and suggestions on draft policy from the Parent's Association
Board of management	17/06/2025	-Discuss and agree to the final draft at the BOM meeting. -Ratify and monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the policy through feedback from the

		principal at each meeting and its annual review.
Wider school community as appropriate.	16/06/2025	Consultation as deemed necessary with the caretaker/secretary and afterschool club.
17/06/2025 - policy was approved and ratified by the Board af Management		
Date policy was last reviewed on :		

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

This section sets out the prevention strategies that will be used by this school to address all forms of bullying behaviour, in whatever form and however motivated, including online bullying behaviour, homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour, racist bullying behaviour, sexist bullying behaviour and sexual harassment as appropriate (see Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures).

The Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire agus Eoin recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of pupils and is therefore fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour. In developing the preventative strategies which this school will use to prevent all forms of bullying behaviour, we come from the context of our Catholic ethos, where inclusivity permeates our school in a real way.

The dignity and the wellbeing of the individual person is of paramount concern in our Christian response. This school will listen closely to and dialogue with parents, thereby building a relationship of mutual understanding, respect, trust and confidence.

Culture and Environment
This school takes positive steps to ensure that the culture of the school is one

which welcomes a respectful dialogue and encounter with diversity and difference by ensuring that prevention and inclusivity strategies are given priority and discussed regularly at our board of management and staff meetings.

In continuing to develop prevention strategies, this school will listen to young people and parents, to help establish their particular context and needs. Frequent periods of reflection and further engagement by the school, young people and parents, will be used to discern appropriate supports for young people in this school and to help inform future prevention strategies.

• A positive and inclusive school culture and environment which:

-is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity.

-is a 'telling' environment which encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment.

-promotes and models respectful relationships across the school community.

• Effective leadership that sets the standards and expectations for the school community when preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.

• Open communication between the patron, boards of management, school staff, students and their parents help to foster a collaborative approach and shared responsibilities in relation to preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.

• A school-wide approach where each member of staff takes a consistent approach to effective observation and addressing of bullying behaviour.

• A 'trusted adult' who reassures and supports students that they have done the right thing by reporting bullying behaviour.

• Parents as active partners in their child's education, fostering an environment where bullying is not tolerated through promoting empathy and respect.

• Students promote kindness and inclusion within their peer groups helping to maintain a positive and supportive school environment for all.

• Students are provided with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth through formal and informal interactions.

• Safe physical spaces to support psychological safety and to prevent bullying behaviour. This includes:

-posters, artwork and signage to help promote the school's values such as equality, diversity, inclusion, kindness, respect and self-worth.

-clear visibility of school staff who are supervising at break times.

-school garden to help students feel a sense of responsibility for their school

environment and to foster a sense of belonging.

● Some specific school initiatives that promote and reinforce this culture are: Student Council, Themed Weeks, Merit Awards, Reverse Integration, Outdoor Classroom, Sensory Play Areas.

● Appropriate supervision is in place at all times to help prevent and address bullying behaviour. Schools are required to take all reasonable measures to ensure the safety of their students and to supervise students when students are attending school or attending school activities.

Curriculum teaching and learning

● Teaching and learning that is collaborative and respectful is promoted. Students 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. Schools are provided with opportunities to develop a sense of self worth through both curricular and extra curricular programmes.

● The full implementation of the Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum and the Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) and Stay Safe Programmes.

● School wide delivery of lessons on bullying from evidence based programmes e.g. Stay Safe Programme, Walk Tall Programme, Websise.

● Delivery of the Garda SPHE programmes at primary level. These lessons, delivered by Community Gardai, cover issues around personal safety and cyber-bullying.

● 'Internet Safety Day' to educate students about the dangers of cyberbullying and to teach safe and responsible internet use.

● The school specifically considers the additional needs of SEN pupils with regard to programme implementation and the development of skills and strategies to enable all pupils to respond appropriately.

● The fostering and enhancing of the self-esteem of all our students through both curricular and extracurricular activities. Students will be provided with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self worth through formal and informal interactions.

Policy and Planning:

● Bí Cineálta policy

- Student friendly Bí Cineálta policy
- Code of behaviour
- Child safeguarding statement and risk assessment
- Acceptable use policy
- Supervision policy
- SPHE and RSE Policy
- SEN policy
- Wellbeing interwoven into DEIS policy.
- Appropriate Continuous Professional Development for staff.

Relationships and Partnerships

Strong interpersonal connections supported through a range of formal and informal structures such as Student Council, School Choir, Buddy system etc.
- DEIS Partnership with Parents.
- Supporting the active participation of parents in school life (Home School Community Liaison Teacher)
- Supporting the active participation of students in school life.
- Promoting acts of kindness and activities that build empathy, respect and resilience. e.g. Friendship Day/Week, Wear Red Day, Blue Star Programme etc.
- Encouraging peer tutoring.
- Teaching problem solving skills
- Critical Thinking Skills

Preventing cyber bullying behaviour:

Technology and social media have provided many positive opportunities for entertainment, social engagement and education. However, the increase in the use of technology has led to students becoming increasingly vulnerable to cyberbullying or unacceptable online behaviour.

Scoil Mhuire agus Eoin strives to proactively address these challenges by promoting digital literacy, digital citizenship, and fostering safe online environments. Strategies to prevent cyberbullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:
- Implementing the SPHE curriculum
- Implementing the Digital Media Literacy curriculum which teaches students about responsible online behaviour and digital citizenship
- 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
- The use of personal devices is not permitted in school (AUP)

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

Preventing homophobic/ transphobic bullying behaviour:
All students, including gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students, have a right t feel safe and supported at school.
Strategies to prevent homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:
- Maintaining an inclusive physical environment by displaying relevant age-appropriate posters.
- Encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
- Challenging gender stereotypes.
- Educating students about the importance of respecting all people, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender orientation.
- Encouraging students to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour.

Preventing racist bullying behaviour:
As our school becomes more culturally diverse, we strive to prevent potential racist bullying behaviour.
Strategies to prevent racist bullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:
- 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.
- 'Wear Red Day' to celebrate diversity and to take a stand against racism.
- Encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities.
- Encouraging bystanders to report when they witness racist behaviour.
- Providing supports to school staff to respond to the needs of students for whom
English is an additional language and for communicating with their parents
- Ensuring that library reading material and textbooks represent appropriate lived experiences of students and adults from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

Preventing sexist bullying behaviour:
Strategies to prevent sexual harassment include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:
- 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 contribution of all students.
- Encouraging parents to reinforce these values of respect at home

Preventing sexual harassment:
Scoil Mhuire agus Eoin promotes a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment. It strives to support this through a focus on education, awareness and clear enforceable policies. Sexual harassment should never be dismissed as teasing or banter. Strategies to prevent sexual harassment include the following:
- Promoting positive role models within the school community.
- Challenging gender stereotypes that can contribute to sexual harassment.

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):

Supervision
- Morning Duty: Principal and Deputy Principal remain on duty at the gate.

Dry mornings:Teachers and SNA's supervise students in the yard before school begins.

Wet mornings:Teachers and SNA's supervise students in the classrooms.

- Students are supervised within sight of staff members on yard and in school.
- Yard Supervision Rota:Teachers, along with SNAs under the direction of the yard duty teacher, provide yard supervision and wet day supervision in the classroom.
- Classes are assigned designated areas on the yard to ensure age-appropriate interactions and ease of monitoring and observing of behaviour.
- At the end of the school day, class teachers walk their class out to the school gates.
- The school grounds are enclosed and pupils do not leave the school grounds during the day without adult supervision.
- On school excursions there is always a minimum of two staff members accompanying each class.

Monitoring

- Incident reporting: The class teacher investigates and documents all incidents of reported or suspected bullying behaviour.
- Incident investigation: All reports of bullying should be investigated promptly and thoroughly. The investigation should include interviews with the student who reported the incident, the student who was allegedly bullied and any witnesses.
- Follow up: The school should take appropriate action to address the bullying behaviour.
- A report on incidents of bullying behaviour is given at each BOM meeting.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

Class teachers

Approach

The primary aim in addressing reports of bullying behaviour should be to stop the bullying behaviour and to restore, as far as practicable, the relationships of the students involved, rather than to apportion blame.

When addressing bullying behaviour teachers should:

• 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

• Act 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 (see Chapter 6 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

Identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred

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

If a group of students is involved, each student should be engaged with individually at first.

Thereafter, all students involved should be met as a group.

At the group meeting, each student should be asked for their account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's views.

Each student should be supported as appropriate, following the group meeting.

It may be helpful to ask the students involved to write down their account of the incident(s)

To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour you should 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.

Where bullying behaviour has occurred:

• It is important for school staff to be fair and consistent in their approach to address bullying behaviour.

• Both the student who is experiencing bullying behaviour and the student who is displaying bullying behaviour need support.

• It is important that the student who is experiencing bullying behaviour is engaged with, without delay, so that they feel listened to, supported and reassured.

• School staff should identify the support needed for the student who is displaying bullying behaviour to better manage relational difficulties and ensure that their needs are met.

• Parents are an integral part of the school community and play an important role, in partnership with schools, in addressing bullying behaviour. Where bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the students involved must be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and to consult with them on the actions to be taken to address the behaviour

Bullying Behaviour that occurs when students <u>are not</u> under the care or responsibility of the school

A school is not expected to deal with bullying behaviour that occurs when

students are not under the care or responsibility of the school.

However, where this bullying behaviour has an impact in school, schools are required to support the students involved.

Where the bullying behaviour continues in school, schools should deal with it in accordance with their Bí Cineálta policy.

Where the student displaying the bullying behaviour is not a student in the school, but the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour is a student in the school, the school should support the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as appropriate and engage with them and their parents to determine what steps can be taken.

What is not bullying behaviour?

A once off instance of negative behaviour

Disagreement between students

Instances where students don't want to remain friends

Non-deliberate behaviours of students with special educational needs (Bí Cineálta Section 2.2)

Cyberbullying

Bullying behaviour including cyberbullying behaviour, which has occurred outside of school can often continue in school.

Where a student engages in cyberbullying behaviour when in school, the school must address the bullying behaviour

Where a student experiences cyberbullying behaviour in school, the school must address the bullying behaviour.

In the case of cyberbullying, although the hurtful message may have been sent outside of school hours, the student may view the message while in school. Where this happens, the school must address the bullying behaviour

Recording Bullying Behaviour (See Template Appendix B which shows all the required fields/details)

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. Where a Student Support File exists for a student a copy of the record should be placed on the student's support file.

Where a Student Support Plan exists, the plan should be updated to

incorporate response strategies and associated supports.

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 2.4)

Determining if bullying behaviour has ceased

• The teacher must engage with the students involved and their parents again no more than 20 school days after the initial engagement

• Important factors to consider as part of this engagement are the nature of the bullying behaviour, the effectiveness of the strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and the relationship between the students involved

• The teacher should document the review with students (Appendix B) and their parents to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased and the views of students and their parents in relation to this

• The date that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased should also be recorded

• Any engagement with external services/supports should also be noted

• Ongoing supervision and support may be needed for the students involved even where bullying behaviour has ceased

• If the bullying behaviour has not ceased the teacher should review the strategies used in consultation with the students involved and their parents. A timeframe should be agreed for further engagement until the bullying behaviour has ceased

• If it becomes clear that the student who is displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behaviour, then the school consideration should be given to using the strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour as provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

• If disciplinary sanctions are considered, it must be made clear to all (pupils and parents/guardians) that this is a private matter (under GDPR) between the student being disciplined, his/her parents/guardians and the school

• If a parent(s) is not satisfied with how the bullying behaviour has been addressed by the school, in accordance with the Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools. they should be referred to the school's complaints procedures

• If a parent is dissatisfied with how a complaint has been handled, they may make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children if they believe that the school's actions have had a negative effect on the student.

Requests to take no action:

A student who reports bullying behaviour may ask a member of staff not to do anything and just "look out" for them due to not wanting to be identified as having told someone about the bullying behaviour. They might feel that telling someone might make things more difficult for them.

Where this occurs:

• It is important that the member of staff shows empathy to the student, deals with the matter sensitively and speaks with the student to work out together what steps can be taken to address the behaviour.

• It must be made clear to the pupil that other parties may need to be informed for their welfare.

• Parents may also make the school aware of bullying behaviour and specifically request that no action is to be taken by the school. Parents should put this in writing to the school.

• The school will consider each such request on a case-by-case basis while reserving the right, if determined that based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour through the Bí Cineálta procedures and/or the Code of Behaviour where appropriate.

Complaint Process

If a parent(s) is not satisfied with how the bullying behaviour has been addressed by the school, in accordance with the Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, they should be referred to the school's complaints procedures.

If a student and/or parent is dissatisfied with how a complaint has been handled, they may make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children if they believe that the school's actions have had a negative effect on the student.

The school will use the following approaches to support those who experience, witness and display bullying behaviour (see Chapter 6 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

In supporting pupils impacted by bullying behaviour the school will:

-Keep monitoring relationships and behaviour of the pupils that experienced, witnessed or displayed bullying behaviour so as to determine the behaviours have stopped and relationships are restored to an acceptable level.

-Continue to promote a positive school culture where students feel safe, respected and valued.

-Continue to promote and encourage appropriate staff training initiatives for supporting students and addressing bullying.

-Provide opportunities for pupils to participate in activities designed to raise self-esteem, to develop friendships and social skills and thereby building resilience and a sense of self-worth whenever this is needed.

Supports available to help prevent and address bullying include the following:

- NEPS providing advice on best practice to prevent and address bullying when issues arise in schools and/or training in preventative initiatives.
- Oide – providing TPL.
- Webwise – online safety awareness raising and education initiative for pupils and parents.
- National Parents Council – online and in person courses to support parents to prevent and address bullying.
- DCU Anti bullying centre- FUSE programme that can be used to promote a positive school culture and assist in preventing and addressing bullying behaviours.
- Tusla – for cases where it is considered that bullying behaviour becomes a child protection concern.

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. See Chapter 7 of the Bí Cineálta procedures. This policy is

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

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

Signed: _Rosella Sheehan_ Date: _17/06/25_ (Chairperson of BOM)

Signed: _Maria McDonagh_ Date: _17/6/2025_ (Principal)