



Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Malahide Portmarnock Educate Together Secondary 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. The detailed definition is provided in Chapter 2 of the *Bí Cineálta* procedures.

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

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

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	22/5/2025	Full staff professional learning experience (PLE)
	04/04 – 02/05/2025	Staff Survey
Students	08/05/2025	Student Survey
Parents	12-24/05/2025	Parent / Guardian Survey
Board of Management	20/05/2025	Board of Management presentation
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers		
Date policy was approved:		
Date policy was last reviewed:		

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 (see Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

A positive and inclusive school culture and environment is essential to prevent and address bullying behaviour. The school environment should be a space where students and school staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported.

Relationships between all members of the school community should be based on respect, care, integrity and trust. Open communication between the patron, board of management, school staff, students and their parents/guardians help to foster a collaborative approach and shared responsibilities in relation to preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.

Students can shape the school culture by promoting kindness and inclusion within their peer group and maintain a positive and supportive school environment for all.

Parents/Guardians, as active partners in their child's education, can help foster an environment where bullying behaviour is not tolerated through promoting empathy and respect. While the school will play a supportive role, it is the parents' and guardians' responsibility to oversee their child's online and in person behaviour outside of school hours

Malahide Portmarnock ETSS is committed to a proactive approach to prevent bullying behaviour and creating a culture of respect and kindness.

Strategies may include:

Culture and Environment

As per section 5.1 of the B'í Cineálta Policy, a positive and inclusive school culture and environment is essential to prevent and address bullying behaviour. The school environment should be a space where students and school staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported. Relationships between all members of the school community should be based on respect, care, integrity and trust. 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. The school leadership team influences the school culture and set the standards and expectations for the school community when preventing and addressing bullying behaviour. Each member of school staff has a responsibility to develop and maintain a school culture where bullying behaviour is unacceptable and to take a consistent approach to addressing bullying behaviour. Students can shape the school culture by promoting kindness and inclusion within their peer group and maintain a positive and supportive school environment for all. Parents, as active partners in their child's education, can help foster an environment where bullying behaviour is not tolerated through promoting empathy and respect.

Malahide Portmarnock ETSS has the following Bullying Prevention Strategies in place:

- School Ethos – displayed prominently around the school
- Student Assemblies to teach and reinforce ethos
- Murals, artwork and signage that promote inclusion, diversity, kindness, respect, tolerance etc
- Explicit expectations for students in the homework journal and discussed through student workshops
- Effective Leadership will set the tone and the standards expected
- Teachers promote the atmosphere and importance of 'one good adult/trusted adult'
- School community supports being a 'telling' environment – supported by the Student Council, Class tutors, Progress Leaders, Senior Management, SEN Team and an open door policy from all staff.
- CCTV to protect student wellbeing
- Assigned locker areas for each year group
- Supervision is in place before school
- Rota for teacher supervision of yard, corridors, toilets at break times

- Effective supervision and monitoring of students
- Good lighting to avoid dark corners or spaces
- Physical building designed to cater for a healthy environment
- Organised activities take place at lunchtime and after school
- Pastoral role of tutors
- Whole school engagement in Restorative Practice
- Celebrations – Awards assemblies, TY & LC Graduation, Sports Day etc
- Stand-up Awareness week
- Class tutor and Year Progress Leader systems
- Student Council
- Guidance Counsellor role
- Effective communication between our in-house structures
- The school will publish and share with the students a bi-cineálta policy in language accessible to all students.

Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)

- Collaborative learning – students have regular opportunities to work in groups to support relationship building and collaboration.
- Seating plans that are regularly changed based on teacher's professional judgement and where deemed appropriate
- SPHE, CSPE, Ethical Education and RSE programmes
- Provision of AEN supports, special classes etc
- Subjects at both Junior and Senior Cycle that offer learning opportunities that foster inclusion, diversity, awareness raising etc.
- Student assemblies with a focus on reinforcing the school's ethos
- Tutor time (Check & Connect)
- Wide range of Extra-curricular activities (e.g. Sports, Drama, Model UN, Music, Choir, etc) to cater for a broad range of interests
- Co-curricular activities (e.g. educational trips & guest speakers)
- Guidance provision
- Parental evenings
- Wide range of subject choice
- Student Wellbeing surveys

Policy and Planning

The wellbeing of the school community should be at the heart of school policies and plans. Malahide Portmarnock ETSS recognises the importance of the participation of all stakeholders in the development of school policies (Students, staff, parents, guardians, Board of Management etc) We review these policies on a regular basis.

The following policies and planning support the implementation of Bí Cineálta:

- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Guidance Plan
- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Staff Child Protection training
- Admissions Policy
- Dress Code
- Supervision & Substitution Procedures
- Student support plan
- Student support referral form
- Behaviour support plan
- Student and staff wellbeing committee

Relationships & partnerships

Strong interpersonal connections are a vital part of effectively preventing and addressing bullying behaviour. These interpersonal connections are supported through a range of formal and informal structures such as student councils, school clubs, parents'/guardians' associations and student support teams.

The following, which is not an exhaustive list, could be considered to strengthen relationships and partnerships between members of the school community.

- Age appropriate awareness initiatives that look at the causes and impacts of bullying behaviour including those dealing with navigating friendships, identity-based bullying, racist bullying, homophobic/transphobic bullying, sexism and sexual harassment. E.g. Stand-up Awareness week; Internet Safety day International Mother Languages Day etc.
- Supporting the active participation of students in school life to create strong interpersonal connections.
- Supporting the active participation of parents/guardians 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. E.g. Parent information evenings, Parent/Guardian/Student – Teacher meetings, Communication protocol, School app etc.
- Conducting workshops and seminars for students, school staff and parents/guardians to raise awareness of the impact of bullying.
- Supporting activities that build empathy, respect and resilience
- Encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring.
- Promoting acts of kindness
- Teaching problem solving skills
- Student Support Team
- Student Council
- Student Leaders Team
- Guidance Counselor
- Prefects
- Buddy systems
- NQT mentor system
- Droichead

Preventing Cyberbullying behaviour

Technology and social media have provided many positive opportunities for entertainment, social engagement and education, Technology is a part of life that can impact even the youngest members of society. However, the increase in the use of technology has led to students becoming increasingly vulnerable to cyberbullying or unacceptable online behaviour. Malahide Portmarnock ETSS will proactively address these challenges by promoting digital literacy, digital citizenship and fostering safe online environments.

Strategies to prevent cyberbullying include:

- Implementing Ethical Education and SPHE curricula.
- Address the importance of safe, respectful, kind online behaviour at assemblies and during Check & Connect.
- Developing and communicating a robust Acceptable Use Policy for technology.
- Referring to appropriate online behaviour as part of the standards of behaviour in the Positive Behaviour Policy.
- Promoting or hosting 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.

- Workshops and Speakers for class and year groups
- Informing students mobile phones are placed in their locker during the school day.

* 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.

For the purposes of data collection, students between the age of 13 and 16 years old must have parental permission to sign-up to social media services where companies use the legal basis of consent to process and store users' data. Most social media platforms and services have a minimum age requirement and for the majority of these services it is 13 years' old. Therefore, technically, children under the age of 13 should not have a social media account. It is important for their child's safety that parents are aware of their children's use of technology including smart phones and gaming consoles.

Preventing homophobic/transphobic bullying behaviour

All students, including gay, lesbian and transgender students, have a right to feel safe and supported in school.

Strategies to prevent homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour include the following:

- Maintaining an inclusive physical environment such displaying relevant posters.
- Developing partnerships/networks with relevant agencies – BeLonGTo, TENI etc
- Celebrating relevant themed weeks – Stand Up Awareness Week.
- Encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
- Challenging gender stereotypes through SPHE and Ethical Education.
- Conducting workshops and seminars for students, school staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of homophobic bullying behaviour.
- Encouraging students to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour.
- Displaying the 'Everyone is Welcome here' Pride Flag.

Preventing racist bullying behaviour

Schools have become more culturally diverse over the last number of decades. Students attending Malahide Portmarnock ETSS come from many different cultures and backgrounds. Students from diverse backgrounds may face discrimination and prejudice and may be subject to racist bullying behaviour.

Strategies to prevent racist bullying behaviour include the following:

- Fostering a school culture where diversity is celebrated and where students 'see themselves' in the school environment.
- Culture and language diverse events e.g. Mother language day, Multicultural day.
- Having the cultural diversity of the school visible and on display
- Promote workshops/courses/information evenings for Parents/Guardians in relation to raising awareness of racist bullying
- 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.
- Providing supports to school staff to support students from ethnic minorities, including Traveller and Roma students and to encourage communication with their parents/guardians.
- Inviting speakers from diverse ethnic backgrounds.
- Ensuring that the library reading material and textbooks represent appropriate lived experiences of students and adults from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.
- Challenging negative language and perceptions when necessary.

Preventing sexist bullying behaviour

MPETSS will focus on gender equality as part of the school's measures to create a supportive and respectful environment. Strategies to prevent sexist bullying behaviour include the following (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 contributions of all students
- organising awareness campaigns, workshops and presentations on gender equality and respect
- encouraging parents/guardians to reinforce these values of respect at home

Preventing sexual harassment

Preventing sexual harassment requires an approach that focuses on education, awareness and clear enforceable policies. MPETSS will make it clear that there is a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment. Sexual harassment should never be dismissed as teasing or banter.

Strategies to prevent sexual harassment include the following (not an exhaustive list):

- using the updated SPHE specifications at post primary level to teach students about healthy relationships and how to treat each other with respect and kindness
- promoting positive role models within the school community
- challenging gender stereotypes that can contribute to sexual harassment
- the school will work with outside agencies including An Garda Síochána and TUSLA if deemed appropriate.

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, break and lunchtime supervision.
- Substitution as per Supervision and Substitution Scheme for all absent teachers.
- Adequate supervision of students on school activities (sports, trips etc).
- MPETSS offers a mix of organised activities during some break times in order to accommodate a range of preferences and interests.
- CCTV that monitors internal and external spaces in the school 24/7.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

- The teacher who discovers the bullying behaviour
 - Tutor
 - Progress Leader
 - Guidance Counselor
 - Deputy Principal
 - Principal
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- > Any student or parent(s)/guardian(s) may bring a bullying incident to any teacher in the school.
 - > All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying, will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant Progress Leader and/or Deputy Principal.
 - > Teaching and non-teaching staff must report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them or mentioned to them, to the relevant Progress Leader and/or Deputy Principal.

The staff member to whom the incident of bullying behaviour is reported should:

1. Speak to the student and establish what has happened
 2. Explain to the student that this will be reported to the relevant Progress Leader
 3. Staff member should report the issue to the relevant Progress Leader.
 4. Progress Leader will complete the relevant section of the Record of Bullying Behaviour form
 5. The Progress Leader will investigate the matter and report their findings to the Deputy Principal
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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):

Determine if Bullying Behaviour has occurred

When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred the Progress Leader should consider the following: **what, where, when and why?**

- if a group of students is involved, each student should be engaged with individually at first
- each student will be asked to provide a written account (if a student requires it, they can dictate their account to the person investigating)
- students may or may not be met as a group.
- at a 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 meeting
- Reports of bullying behaviour will be investigated in a fair, consistent and timely manner.
- Parents/guardians and students are required to co-operate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving any issues and restoring , as far as practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.
- Parents/guardians of the parties involved in the alleged bullying incident will be contacted at an early stage of the investigation.

To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour the Progress Leader 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**?
4. Is there an **imbalance of power**, real or perceived by the student experiencing the bullying behaviour? (e.g. differences in size, strength, age, ability, race etc, see Chapter 2, 2.1 for full list)

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.

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 Positive Behaviour Policy.

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.

Where bullying behaviour has occurred:

When bullying behaviour occurs and it has been identified as such, Malahide Portmarnock ETSS 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 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 as outlined

in our Bí Cineálta Policy

- focus on resolving the interpersonal issues and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved – rather than apportioning blame
- support the students involved through Guidance, Progress Leaders, Tutor, other teachers and outside agencies where relevant
- make it clear to the student that they have been engaged in bullying behaviour and are in breach of our Bí Cineálta Policy.
- The student(s) displaying the bullying behaviour may, in the first instance be warned about their future behaviour towards the student who is experiencing bullying. The parents of both these students will be made aware of this action.
- Further strategies to address the bullying behaviour may include but are not limited to:
 - Moving seating plans
 - Moving class groups
 - Restorative conversations & mediation
 - Monitoring

Determining if bullying behaviour has ceased

- The Progress Leader/Deputy Principal must engage with the students and their parents/guardians involved no more than 20 school days after the initial discussion to review progress following the initial intervention.
- important factors to consider at this stage 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
- ongoing supervision and support may be needed for all students involved, even where bullying behaviour has ceased
- It can take time for relationships to settle and for supports to take effect. In some cases, relationships may never be restored to how they were before the bullying behaviour occurred.
- if the bullying behaviour has not ceased the Progress Leader should review the strategies used in consultation with the students involved and their parents/guardians. 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 consideration will be given to using the strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour as provided for within the school's Positive Behaviour Policy. If disciplinary sanctions are considered, this is a matter between the relevant student, their parents/guardians and the school

Where Bullying Behaviour occurs outside of 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, Malahide Portmarnock ETSS will support the students involved. Where the bullying behaviour continues in school, Malahide Portmarnock ETSS will 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, Malahide Portmarnock ETSS will 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.

Requests to take no action:

A student reporting bullying behaviour may ask that a member of staff does nothing about the behaviour other than “look out” for them. The student may not want to be identified as having told someone about the bullying behaviour. They may feel that telling someone might make things more difficult for them.

Where this occurs on request from a student, Malahide Portmarnock ETSS will:

- show empathy toward the student
- deal with the matter sensitively
- speak with the student to work out together what steps can be taken to address the matter and how their parents/guardians will be informed of the situation
- ensure that the student who has experienced bullying behaviour feels safe.

Where this occurs on request from a parent/guardian, Malahide Portmarnock ETSS will:

- ask for this request in writing (facilitate to do so where there are literacy, digital literacy or language barriers)
- acknowledge the request
- determine, based on circumstances, whether to address the bullying behaviour
- inform parents/guardians of the steps that will be taken

Recording Bullying Behaviour

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

The record should include the following:

- the views of the students and their parents/guardians regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour
- the review with students and their parents to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased and the views of students and their parents/guardians in relation to this.
- the date that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased.
- any engagement with external services/supports should also be noted

These records will be retained in accordance with the school's record keeping policy and in line with data protection regulations.

Where a Student Support File exists for a student, schools are encouraged to place a copy of the record on the student's support file. This will assist the school's student support team, in providing a consistent and holistic response to support the wellbeing of the students involved. Where a Student Support Plan exists, the plan should be updated to incorporate response strategies and associated supports.

Complaint process:

If a parent/guardian is not satisfied with how bullying behaviour has been addressed by the school, in accordance with these procedures, they will be referred to the school's complaints procedure. [https://www.mpetss.ie/Content/2024/2/lo45-Complaints Procedures for Voluntary Secondary Schools.pdf](https://www.mpetss.ie/Content/2024/2/lo45-Complaints%20Procedures%20for%20Voluntary%20Secondary%20Schools.pdf)

Additional Information relating to schools' complaint procedures are available at the following link: <https://www.gov.ie/en/policyinformation/parentalcomplaints/>

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

The Office of the Ombudsman for Children can be contacted at ococomplaint@oco.ie.

Serious incidences of bullying behaviour may, in accordance with the Children's First and the Child Protection Procedures be referred to the HSE, TUSLA or the Gardai as appropriate

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

- Access to Guidance Counselling
- Check and Connect
- Pastoral support from Tutor, Progress Leader and Senior Management team
- Restorative Practice where appropriate
- Behaviour for Learning initiatives
- Implementation of SPHE and RSE curricula
- Student Support Plans

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. 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.

Holly Howell

03/03/2026

Signed: _____

Date: _____

(Chairperson of board of management)

Jean-Marie Ward

03/03/2026

Signed: _____

Date: _____

(Principal)

(Note: Original signed copy retained in school)