Bí Cineálta Policy

The Board of Management of St Michaels House 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 Behavior for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* 2024.

The Board of Management notes that, in the context of this particular school as our students have complex severe intellectual disabilities, 'Bullying' has not been and is not currently, an issue. It could be argued however that due to the high staff/student ratio and our student profile that students may be prone to bullying from outside the school and/or through social media. The Board recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of our students.

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. Ireland ratified the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child1 in September 1992. In doing this we committed to promote, protect and fulfill the rights of children. Bullying is a children's rights issue.

Bullying interferes with the following rights of the child:

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

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 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 targeted behaviour, online or offline, which causes harm.

- The harm caused can be physical, social and/or emotional in nature and can have lasting effects on the child experiencing the behaviour.

- Bullying behaviour is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power in relationships between two people or groups of people in society.

- It is behaviour which is deliberate in nature and is unwanted. It is not accidental or reckless behaviour.

The harm can be:

- Physical (e.g.: personal injury, damage to or loss of property)

- Social: (e.g.: withdrawal, loneliness, exclusion)

- Emotional: (e.g.: low self-esteem, depression, anxiety)

- A one-off instance of negative behaviour is not bullying behaviour.

- If the repeated harm is real for the student experiencing the behaviour, but unintended, this is not bullying, but, importantly, must be addressed under the schools Code of Behaviour.

- Our students have 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.

Types of Bullying:

There are many different types of bullying behaviour. These can include directing bullying at someone focused on the following: disability, exceptional ability, gender identity, LGBTQ+, physical appearance, racism, poverty status, religious identity, sexism and sexual harassment. This is not an exhaustive list.

Bullying can be direct:

- Physical: pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping students.

- Physical assault.

- Destruction of personal property.

- Verbal: continual name calling which insults, humiliates the student – this may refer to physical appearance, sixe, clothes, gender, accent, academic ability, race or ethnic origin.

- Written: Writing insulting remarks in public places, passing notes or drawings about the student.

- Extortion: something is obtained through threat/force.

Bullying Bulling can be indirect:

- Exclusion: where a student is deliberately and repeatedly isolated, excluded or ignored by a student or group of students.
- Exclusion: where a student is deliberately and repeatedly isolated, excluded or ignored by a student or group of students.
- Relational: Where a student's attempts to form friendships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined, threats, non-verbal gesturing, malicious gossip, spreading rumours, silent treatment and manipulation of friend groups etc can all form relational bullying for a student.

Online bullying behaviour:

Cyber bullying is carried out via text, direct messaging/instant messaging, social media platforms, e-mail, apps, digital gaming sites, gaming consoles, chatrooms and other online technologies.

This can include:

- Sending or sharing of insulting and offensive or intimidating messages or images via online means as mentioned above.
- Posting information which is personal, private or sensitive without consent.
- Making and/or participating in fake profiles on a social network to impersonate and/or humiliate other students.
- Exclude/disrupt access to a student on purpose on online chat groups/access to accounts/from an online game.

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.

Section A- Development of Policy	Date consulted	Method of consultation
School Staff	26th May 2025	-Whole school Staff meeting -Bí Cínealta Presentation -Draft Policy discussion and review -Selection of student friendly Be Kind Policy
Students	28th April-26th May 2025	-Using different forms of augmentative communication pictures and symbols, students were surveyed in every class about how they feel in school
Parents	14th May-16th June 2025	-Google document survey https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdWKRJK0BZkigLkD1WdBOFLkCTKpEZeuK8EFo4RgvcmyFcZkA/viewform?usp=dialog -Hard copy survey sent home in the students school bags
Board of Management	17th June 2025	-Policy Discussion
Date policy was approved: 17th June 2025		
Date policy was last reviewed: 3rd December 2025		

Preventing Bullying Behaviour

This section B of the school policy sets out the prevention strategies that will be used by the school.

Culture and Environment:

We strive to:

- Create a school culture where bullying behaviour is unacceptable and a consistent approach to addressing bullying behaviour.

- Involve parents as active partners in fostering an environment where bullying behaviour is not tolerated.

- Promote the concept of a trusted adult.

- Create safe spaces in our school building.

- Incorporate artwork and signs to promote our school values – creation of a school charter promoting rights – equality, inclusion and respect.

- Create a positive school culture and climate which is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity.

- Nurture a culture that promotes respectful relationships across the school community.

Ways in which we work to achieve these goals are as follows:

- Teaching our Ethical Curriculum based on human values – our core school values will be taught through story-telling, meditation, songs, quotation and classroom group activities. We will have a value notice board on display at the school entrance and explore different values each month at our assemblies.

- Developing our child friendly Anti- Bullying Policy.

- Parents receive information at times regarding useful information on Anti Bullying.

- Engaging our students in SPHE lessons, Personal Care and Wellbeing Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle lessons, Stay safe and RSE lessons focusing on friendship and positive behaviour.

- Development of social skills through Communication and Language, PE, Music, Drama and Visual Arts.

- Effective supervision and monitoring of students.

- Working with NEPS and engaging in CPD.

- Creating a positive nurturing learning and working environment

Curriculum -Teaching & Learning

We strive to:

- Provide teaching and promote learning which is collaborative and respectful, fostering inclusion and respect for diversity.

- Display a shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact

- Deliver specific SPHE, Personal Care and Wellbeing &Stay Safe/ RSE lessons that are appropriate for our students

How we achieve this:

- Through developing curricular resources on our one drive which foster student's well-being and self-confidence.

- Modelling respectful behaviour towards colleagues, students and visitors in our school environment.

- Curricular activities that help to develop a sense of self-worth, working together, inclusion and respect.

- Hosting whole school events such as GAISCE, Glee Club and Graduation.

- Developing links with the local community. Creating opportunities to work alongside peers through inclusion programmes with the local schools in our community. We link in with the primary schools nearby for choir/parachute activities.

- We acknowledge our diverse school population celebrating diversity and culture in our school through art, displays, photographs, international events.

- By supporting staff through consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies)

- Reviewing of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

Policy and planning

The aim of St Michaels House, Special National School's Bí Cí.nealta policy is:

- To raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with school management, teachers, students, parents/guardians.

- To ensure appropriate supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of school activity are kept under observation.

- To develop procedures for noting, investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.

- To work with appropriate agencies in countering all forms of bullying and promoting anti bullying behaviour.

- To support the implementation of The Acceptable Use Policy, Supervision policy, Child Safeguarding, Dignity at Work and Code of Behaviour policies.

- To ensure the leadership team is supported when dealing with all instances of bullying. Effective leadership is a key component with Principal, Deputy Principal, DLP, DDLP, and the in school management team are focused on supporting the implementation of this policy.

Relationships and Partnerships

- Interpersonal connections in the school are supported through a range of formal and informal structures such as our parents' association and student advisory panels.

- We strive to create and develop age and stage appropriate awareness initiatives that engage the student body in looking at their own behaviour – promoting acts of kindness and friendship, being an active help to others and looking at the causes of and impact of bullying during SPHE/Wellbeing lessons and our Ethical Human Value curriculum.

- We foster the relationships by supporting active participation of students in school life and active participation of parents in school life.

- Both the parents and students actively contributed to the formation of the Child Friendly Anti Bullying Policy and also are encouraged to contribute to the development of other core school policies.

Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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 on the correct form on Aladdin

- Principal, Deputy Principal and members of the ISM

- The DLP will follow up after twenty days to investigate if bullying has ceased.

- All staff will be vigilant to bullying behaviour.

- Principal will inform Board of Management of incidences of Bullying.

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

Record Keeping

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.*
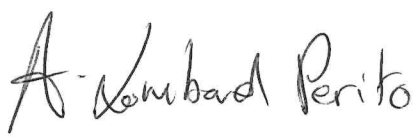
Policy Oversight

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. A student friendly version of this policy is displayed in the school and is also available on our website.

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed annually.

Signed: _Nuala Melina_ .   Date: 03/12/25

(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: _A. Lombard Perito_   Date: 03/12/25

(Principal)

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