

Sacred Heart School Westport

Bí Cineálta Policy



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Appendix A: Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Sacred Heart Secondary School, Westport, has consulted with the principal partners involved in the education of our students in the formation of the school's Bí Cineálta policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

The Board of Management of Sacred Heart 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 its negative impact.

We are committed to ensuring that all students who attend our school are kept safe from harm and that student wellbeing is at the forefront of everything 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 such behaviour.

We confirm that, in accordance with our obligations under equality legislation, we will take all 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 further confirm that we will take all steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the 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 provides the foundation for ensuring that each person 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 all have an indispensable role 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 individuals or groups. 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 outlines how the school community prevents and addresses bullying behaviour. Strategies to address inappropriate

behaviour that does not meet the definition of bullying are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

The core definition outlined above establishes clear criteria to assist school communities in preventing, identifying, and addressing bullying among students. While alleged incidents of bullying can be complex, each situation must be assessed on a case-by-case basis. The key elements of the definition are explained below.

1. Targeted Behaviour

Bullying involves intentional and harmful actions directed at others. It occurs when a student knowingly engages in unwanted behaviour that causes harm and is aware that their actions are perceived as harmful by the targeted individual. This behaviour is neither accidental nor reckless. The harm caused may take various forms, including:

- **Physical** (e.g. injury or damage to property)
- **Social** (e.g. isolation or exclusion)
- **Emotional** (e.g. low self-esteem, anxiety, or depression)

Such harm can have severe and long-lasting effects on the targeted student. However, where the harmful impact is unintentional, the behaviour does not meet the definition of bullying. These situations should nevertheless be addressed under the school's Code of Behaviour.

2. Repeated Behaviour

Bullying is characterised by a repeated pattern of harmful behaviour over time. A single, intentional negative act offline—even where a power imbalance exists—does not constitute bullying, but should still be addressed under the school's behaviour policy.

In contrast, a single harmful message, image, or video posted online can meet the definition of bullying if it is reasonably likely to be reshared or to remain accessible, thereby repeatedly impacting the targeted individual.

3. Imbalance of Power

In bullying situations, the targeted student often finds it difficult to defend themselves due to a real or perceived imbalance of power. This imbalance may arise from:

- Differences in physical factors such as size, strength, or age
- Social or economic factors, including popularity, peer influence, status, or financial circumstances
- Personal characteristics such as race, ethnic origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability
- Experience of care systems or access to additional educational supports

In cases of online (cyber) bullying, power imbalances may be created by anonymity, technological knowledge, or control over digital content. The targeted student may feel powerless to remove harmful material or escape ongoing harassment.

Behaviour That Is Not Bullying

A single incident of negative behaviour, while potentially harmful, does not in itself constitute bullying. However, a hurtful message posted on social media may be classified as bullying if it is likely to be shared and to cause repeated harm. Online bullying can be visible to a wide audience and may be reshared multiple times, thereby becoming repeated behaviour.

Disagreements between students, or situations where students do not wish to form or maintain friendships, are not considered bullying unless they involve deliberate and repeated efforts to cause distress, exclude others, or manipulate peer relationships.

Some students with special educational needs may experience social communication difficulties, which can lead to behaviours that inadvertently cause harm to themselves or others. Such behaviours are not deliberate or planned and, in some cases, may be automatic responses beyond the student's control. Bullying is not characterised by accidental or reckless behaviour.

If a student experiences repeated harm from behaviour that is unintentional, the behaviour does not meet the definition of bullying. Nevertheless, these situations may still be distressing and should be addressed using the strategies outlined in 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	28 th March 2025	Half day school consultation, overview of Bi Cineálta procedures
Students	14 th May 2025	Student online survey
Parents	19 th May 2025	Parent online survey
Board of Management	19 th Jan 2026	Presentation and discussion at Board meeting
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):

Preventative Strategies

In developing preventative strategies to prevent all forms of bullying behaviour, this school operates within the context of its Catholic ethos, where inclusivity permeates school life in a meaningful and tangible way.

The school takes proactive steps to ensure that its culture promotes respectful dialogue and engagement with diversity and difference. Prevention and inclusivity strategies are prioritised and are discussed regularly at meetings of the Board of Management and school staff.

The dignity and wellbeing of the individual are of paramount importance in our Christian response. The school listens carefully to, and engages in meaningful dialogue with, parents, thereby fostering relationships grounded in mutual understanding, respect, trust, and confidence.

In continuing to develop effective prevention strategies, the school actively listens to the voices of young people and parents in order to understand their specific contexts and needs. Regular periods of reflection and engagement involving the school community, students, and parents are used to discern appropriate supports for students and to inform the ongoing development of prevention strategies.

1. General Preventative Strategies

Culture and Environment

- A whole-school approach to fostering respect for all members of the school community, in accordance with the school's Mission Statement and the values of the CEIST Charter.
- A school chaplain engages with students on pastoral and wellbeing matters.
- The school actively promotes a positive, supportive, and inclusive climate at all times.
- Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours, and extracurricular activities. Non-teaching staff are encouraged to remain vigilant and to report concerns to Year Heads. Supervision also includes monitoring students' use of communication technologies within the school.
- Students are not permitted to use mobile phones during school hours.
- Lunchtime activities provide safe and structured opportunities for students to build positive peer relationships.
- Anti-bullying posters and displays are prominently visible throughout school corridors and communal areas.
- Whole-school initiatives, such as Wellbeing Week, promote self-awareness, empathy, and resilience.

- School-wide events such as Halloween fancy-dress days and charity fun runs promote positive peer interaction and a sense of community.
- Sports Day for first- and second-year students, and an end-of-year trip for third-year students, support bonding and positive wellbeing.
- An Induction Day is provided for first-year students upon their arrival at Sacred Heart Secondary School.
- Charity fundraising activities take place throughout the school year, fostering compassion and social responsibility.

Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)

- Curricular areas such as SPHE (Wellbeing), CSPE, RE, and RSE foster values that promote respect for oneself and for others.
- The Junior Cycle SPHE curriculum includes anti-bullying modules in first, second, and third year. These are supported through the use of film clips, audio resources, and class discussions, with materials sourced from the NCCA and the HSE.
- Subjects such as SPHE, CSPE, and RE explicitly address bullying, along with related themes including belonging and inclusion, communication, conflict resolution, friendship, personal safety, and relationships—central to a school culture grounded in respect for all.
- Co-curricular and extracurricular activities promote the holistic development of students and contribute to their social, emotional, and personal wellbeing (e.g. the Mentoring Programme).
- Group-work strategies encourage inclusivity and prevent social exclusion by ensuring that every student has a meaningful role.
- The Learning to Learn programme builds self-esteem, strengthens teamwork, and enhances interpersonal skills, empowering students to thrive both academically and socially.

Policy and Planning

- The school's Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment are implemented, reviewed, and communicated to the school community on an annual basis.
- Whole-staff professional development on bullying ensures that all staff are aware of what constitutes bullying behaviour, its impact on students' wellbeing, and the importance of timely prevention and intervention.
- The school has developed and implemented an Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) to ensure that access to technology within the school is appropriately monitored, including students' use of mobile phones and learning devices. Ethical and responsible digital citizenship is promoted through the AUP.
- All staff have completed Children First training.
- A "Give Respect, Get Respect" initiative reinforces mutual respect among students and staff.
- Regular student surveys and feedback mechanisms are used to monitor wellbeing and identify potential bullying trends.

Relationships and Partnerships

- The SEN Coordinator, Year Heads, Guidance Counsellors, Chaplain, and Senior Management collaborate through Student Support Team meetings to monitor students' needs and progress.

- The Student Council and Mentoring Programme play an active role in supporting students and promoting a culture of peer respect and support.
- Positive student–teacher relationships are developed through daily classroom interactions.
- Strong relationships are further fostered through extracurricular involvement.
- Peer relationships are strengthened through school bonding activities, leadership opportunities, and student voice initiatives.
- Partnerships with external agencies, including NEPS, CAMHS, and An Garda Síochána, provide additional support where required.
- Parental engagement is supported through newsletters, information sessions, and the promotion of online safety resources.

2. Preventing Online (Cyber) Bullying

Technology and social media provide many positive opportunities for entertainment, social engagement, and learning. However, increased access to and use of digital technologies can also expose students to cyberbullying and other forms of unacceptable online behaviour. At Sacred Heart School Westport (SHS), the following strategies are used to prevent online bullying. This list is not exhaustive.

- The school promotes digital literacy, responsible digital citizenship, and safe online practices through assemblies, SPHE classes, digital literacy initiatives, and visiting speakers.
- Assemblies and guest speakers address themes such as respectful and kind online relationships.
- The school has developed and communicates an Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) for technology to students and parents/guardians.
- Expectations regarding appropriate online behaviour are clearly outlined in the school’s Code of Behaviour.
- Online safety information sessions are organised for parents/guardians, who play a key role in supporting and monitoring their children’s online engagement.
- Students are not permitted to use mobile phones during the school day.
- The school Wi-Fi system restricts access to social media during school hours to prevent misuse.

3. Preventing Homophobic and Transphobic Bullying

The school is committed to creating a safe, inclusive environment for all students, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

- An inclusive physical environment is maintained through the display of appropriate posters and symbols that promote acceptance and respect.
- Gender stereotypes are actively challenged through teaching, discussion, and school-wide initiatives.
- Participation in Stand Up Awareness Week raises awareness of LGBTQ+ issues and promotes inclusivity.

- SPHE and CSPE curricula include age-appropriate discussions on LGBTQ+ topics to foster understanding and acceptance.
- Staff are encouraged to participate in “Belong To” training to support inclusive practice and awareness.

4. Preventing Racist Bullying

The school actively promotes a culture that values diversity and respects all cultural and ethnic identities.

- A positive school culture is fostered where students see their identities reflected and valued within the school environment.
- Staff model respectful behaviour and ensure that all students are treated fairly and equitably.
- The school showcases cultural diversity through displays, photographs, and school-approved social media content.
- Students are encouraged and empowered to report racist behaviour and to act as active bystanders.
- Initiatives during Wellbeing Week celebrate cultural diversity and inclusion.
- SPHE, Wellbeing, and Religious Education curricula address themes of racism, equality, human dignity, and social responsibility.
- Students are encouraged to express cultural identity through art, music, and drama, reinforcing inclusivity.
- Staff are provided with resources to support students for whom English is an additional language and to communicate effectively with parents/guardians from diverse cultural backgrounds.

5. Preventing Sexist Bullying

To prevent sexist bullying, the school implements the following measures:

- **Embedding Respect and Equality in the Curriculum**
Themes of gender equality, respect, and social justice are integrated across SPHE, CSPE, Religious Education, and other relevant subject areas.
- **Promoting Critical Thinking and Awareness**
Students are encouraged to critically examine gender stereotypes, media representations, and societal norms through workshops, assemblies, and classroom-based discussions.
- **Modelling Respectful Behaviour**
All staff model inclusive and respectful language and behaviour and challenge sexist attitudes or comments whenever they arise.
- **Empowering Student Voice**
Students are provided with opportunities to express concerns, share experiences, and contribute to anti-bullying initiatives through the Student Council and peer-led programmes.
- **Staff Training and Support**
Ongoing professional development supports staff in recognising and

addressing sexist bullying, unconscious bias, and gender-inclusive practices.

- **Engaging Parents and Guardians**

Open communication with families is promoted to foster a shared understanding of respectful behaviour and gender equality.

- **Monitoring and Reflection**

The school regularly reviews incidents, feedback, and school culture to identify trends and strengthen preventive strategies. Sexist bullying is included as a specific category in bullying reports and reviews.

6. Preventing Sexual Harassment

The school adopts a proactive approach to preventing sexual harassment and promoting respectful relationships.

- The updated SPHE curriculum is used to educate students about healthy relationships, boundaries, consent, and respectful behaviour.
- Positive role models are promoted within the school community.
- Awareness is raised among students, staff, and parents/guardians regarding what constitutes sexual harassment and its impact on individuals and the wider school community.
- Clear, accessible, confidential, and supportive reporting procedures are in place for students who experience or witness sexual harassment.
- Regular staff training and age-appropriate student education support understanding of respectful relationships, personal boundaries, and consent.
- A culture of respect and inclusion is fostered, ensuring that all members of the school community feel safe to voice concerns and confident that they will be listened to and supported.
- Ongoing dialogue with students, parents/guardians, and staff helps to inform the development and review of effective prevention strategies.

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, Monitoring and Early Intervention

The Board of Management confirms that appropriate supervision and monitoring policies and practices are in place to both prevent and address bullying behaviour and to facilitate early intervention where possible.

A proactive approach is encouraged during all periods of supervision. Supervision is provided before school and during morning and lunch breaks. Students are assigned designated areas in which to socialise and eat.

- Supervision of students in classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours, and extracurricular activities is in place to ensure student safety and to discourage bullying behaviour.
- Non-teaching and ancillary staff are encouraged to remain vigilant and to report concerns to relevant teachers or members of Senior Management.
- Student use of communication technologies within the school is monitored in accordance with the Acceptable Use Policy and the Code of Behaviour.
- Educational devices used in classrooms are monitored and controlled through the use of IMTLazarus.
- Enhanced supervision is provided in outdoor and internal areas identified as potential bullying “hotspots”, including corridors, toilets, and external areas of the school.
- Student peer-support networks are encouraged, including the involvement of the Student Council in promoting a safe and respectful school environment.
- Regular student surveys and feedback mechanisms are used to evaluate the effectiveness of supervision and monitoring strategies and to identify emerging areas of concern.

Promoting a Culture of Reporting

The school actively promotes a culture of reporting where students feel safe and supported in raising concerns about bullying behaviour.

- Students are encouraged to report incidents of bullying without fear of repercussions. This is reinforced through the clear message that reporting is responsible behaviour and not “telling tales”.
- Multiple reporting pathways are available to students, including:
 - Speaking directly with a teacher, Class Tutor, Year Head, or a member of School Management.
- Parents/guardians and peers are also encouraged to report concerns on behalf of students where appropriate.

Role of the Student Council

The Student Council plays an important role in supporting the school’s anti-bullying and wellbeing initiatives.

- The Student Council plays an active role in promoting a safe, inclusive school environment and in encouraging peer respect and positive behaviour.
- An increased Student Council presence in corridors and communal areas helps to support students and deter bullying behaviour.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

Responsibility for Addressing Bullying Behaviour

The teachers with responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour are as follows:

Principal, Deputy Principal and Year Heads

The primary aim in investigating and addressing bullying behaviour is to resolve issues and, where practicable, to restore relationships between the parties involved, rather than to apportion blame. The school's procedures are consistent with this restorative approach.

Every effort will be made to ensure that all parties involved—including students and parents/guardians—understand this approach from the outset.

Reporting Bullying Behaviour

- Any student or parent/guardian may report a bullying incident to any teacher in the school. Where possible, reports should be made in the first instance to the relevant Year Head.
- All reported incidents will be investigated and addressed by the relevant Year Head, in consultation with the Principal or Deputy Principal as appropriate.
- Teaching and non-teaching staff, including secretaries, Special Needs Assistants (SNAs), caretakers, and cleaning staff, are required to report any bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or any incidents reported to them, to the Year Head, Principal, or Deputy Principal.
- All staff must keep a written record of bullying incidents witnessed by them or reported to them, in compliance with GDPR requirements. All records are forwarded to the relevant Year Head.

School Response to Bullying Behaviour

When bullying behaviour is identified, the school will:

- ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour is listened to, supported, and reassured
- seek to protect the privacy and confidentiality of those involved, insofar as is practicable
- conduct all discussions with sensitivity, respect, and fairness
- take into account the age, stage, and individual needs of those involved
- listen to the views of the student who has experienced bullying regarding how they feel the situation may be addressed
- take appropriate action in a timely and effective manner
- inform the parents/guardians of all students involved, as appropriate

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):

Determining Whether Reported Behaviour Is Bullying

The definition of bullying outlined above provides clear criteria to support the Year Head in determining whether reported behaviour constitutes bullying.

Bullying is defined in *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 may be **physical, social, and/or emotional** in nature. Bullying behaviour is **repeated over time** and involves an **imbalance of power** in relationships between individuals or groups.

To determine whether the behaviour reported meets the definition of bullying, the following questions must be considered:

- Is the behaviour targeted at a specific student or group of students?
- Is the behaviour intended to cause physical, social, or emotional harm?
- Is the behaviour repeated?

If the answer to **all** of the above questions is **Yes**, the behaviour constitutes bullying and must be addressed using the *Bí Cineálta Procedures*.

Note:

In certain circumstances, a one-off incident may be considered bullying. For example, a single hurtful message posted online may constitute bullying behaviour if it is likely to be reshared or remain accessible, resulting in repeated harm.

If the answer to **any** of the above questions is **No**, the behaviour does not meet the definition of bullying. However, appropriate strategies to address such behaviour are provided for within the school's **Code of Behaviour**.

Investigating Whether Bullying Has Occurred

When investigating and addressing allegations of bullying, the Year Head will apply professional judgement to determine whether bullying behaviour has occurred and how best to resolve the situation. A calm, objective, and solution-focused approach will be adopted throughout.

- Upon receipt of an allegation of bullying, the Year Head, or a designated staff member (Principal or Deputy Principal), will conduct a preliminary review of the incident. This will involve engagement with all students involved.
- All interviews will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard for the rights of all students concerned. Students who are not directly involved may also, where appropriate, provide relevant information. Investigations should, where possible, take place outside the classroom to ensure privacy.
- The Year Head will seek to fully understand the incident by calmly asking key questions, including: what happened, where it happened, when it happened, who was involved, and why. Where a group of students is involved, each student will be interviewed individually.
- Written accounts of the incident(s) may be requested from those involved to support the investigation process.
- Following the initial investigation, parents/guardians of all parties involved will be contacted, and the school's procedures for addressing bullying behaviour

will be clearly explained.

- Where the Year Head determines that bullying behaviour has occurred, parents/guardians of the relevant students will be informed at an early stage. The actions being taken by the school, in line with this policy, will be outlined, and parents will be given the opportunity to discuss how they can support the school's response and the supports being put in place.
- Where a student is found to have engaged in bullying behaviour, it will be clearly explained to her how her actions breach the school's Anti-Bullying Policy. Efforts will be made to support the student in understanding the impact of her behaviour from the perspective of the student who has been bullied. The student will be instructed to cease the behaviour immediately, and a restorative approach will be adopted where appropriate.
- It will be made clear to all parties—including students and parents/guardians—that any disciplinary action taken is a private matter between the student concerned, her parents/guardians, and the school.

Follow-Up Where Bullying Behaviour Has Occurred

- The relevant teacher will re-engage with the students involved, and their parents/guardians, **no later than 20 school days** after the initial investigation.
- Factors considered during this review will include the nature of the bullying behaviour, the effectiveness of the strategies implemented, and the quality of the relationships between the students involved.
- The teacher will document the review process, including whether the bullying behaviour has ceased, the views of the students and parents/guardians, and the date on which it was agreed that the behaviour had ceased.
- Any engagement with external agencies or support services will be recorded. Ongoing supervision and support may be required even where bullying behaviour has ceased.
- If the bullying behaviour has not ceased, strategies will be reviewed and adjusted in consultation with the students involved and their parents/guardians. A clear timeframe will be agreed for further review and engagement.
- Where a student continues to engage in bullying behaviour, consideration will be given to applying strategies for inappropriate behaviour as outlined in the school's **Code of Behaviour**. Any disciplinary measures are a matter between the student, her parents/guardians, and the school.
- If a parent/guardian is dissatisfied with how the school has addressed the bullying behaviour, they should be referred to the school's **Complaints Procedures**, in accordance with the *Bí Cineálta Procedures*.
- Where a parent/guardian has exhausted the school's Complaints Procedures and remains dissatisfied, the school will advise them of their right to make a complaint to the **Ombudsman for Children**.

Established Intervention Strategies

The following intervention strategies may be used, as appropriate, to address bullying behaviour:

- Teacher interviews with all students involved.
- Negotiating agreements between students and monitoring progress. This may occur informally or through a more structured mediation process, as appropriate.
- Working collaboratively with parents/guardians to support school-based

interventions.

- Use of a **No-Blame Approach**, where appropriate.
- Mentoring support provided by a member of staff.
- Restorative interviews with individual students.
- Restorative conferencing involving relevant parties, where appropriate.
- Use of sociogram questionnaires to support understanding of peer relationships.
- Support sessions with the Guidance Counsellor and/or Chaplain, which may include resilience-building strategies.

Record-Keeping

All bullying incidents must be recorded using the **Bullying Incident Report Form** (Appendix D).

Records should include:

- The type of behaviour, location, and timing of the incident(s).
- Dates of engagement with students and parents/guardians.
- Actions agreed and supports put in place to address the behaviour.
- The views of the students and parents/guardians regarding the proposed actions.

Where bullying behaviour raises a child protection concern, the matter must be addressed immediately in accordance with the **Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools**.

References to **Sections 2.5 and 2.7 of the Bí Cineálta Procedures**, along with **Appendices B and C**, should be used to support the accurate classification and recording of behaviour.

Requests to Take No Action

A student who reports bullying behaviour may request that no action be taken other than that staff “look out” for them. The student may not wish to be identified as the reporting person due to concerns that further action could worsen the situation.

In such cases, it is essential that the staff member responds with empathy, handles the situation sensitively, and works collaboratively with the student to explore possible options for support. Agreement should be reached with the student regarding how and when their parents/guardians will be informed. Above all, the student must feel safe, heard, and supported.

Parents/guardians may also report bullying behaviour and request that no action be taken. In such cases, parents/guardians should be asked to submit their request in writing or be supported to do so where literacy, digital access, or language barriers exist. While the school will acknowledge and carefully consider such requests, it may nonetheless decide—based on the circumstances—that intervention is necessary in order to fulfil its duty of care and safeguarding responsibilities.

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):

Supporting Students Affected by Bullying Behaviour

Sacred Heart Secondary School has a structured and supportive approach to meeting the needs of students who experience bullying, those who witness bullying behaviour, and those who display bullying behaviour. These supports are implemented in line with the **Bí Cineálta Procedures**.

1. Supporting Students Who Experience Bullying

Students who experience bullying may feel stress, anxiety, insecurity, or humiliation. The school provides the following supports to assist students in recovering, rebuilding confidence, and restoring wellbeing:

- Immediate reassurance, support, and validation for the affected student.
- Opportunities for students to express their feelings in a safe, supportive, and confidential environment.
- Access to counselling services and pastoral care supports as appropriate.
- Engagement with parents/guardians to develop and implement a tailored support plan.
- Support in rebuilding confidence through structured and positive activities.
- Reinforcement of the message that bullying behaviour is not the student's fault through awareness-raising initiatives.
- Peer mentoring programmes to support the development of positive friendships.
- Encouragement to participate in group activities such as team sports, clubs, or extracurricular programmes to promote inclusion and social integration.
- Ongoing monitoring of the student's wellbeing through follow-up meetings with relevant staff.

2. Supporting Students Who Witness Bullying

Students who witness bullying behaviour may experience fear, distress, guilt, or anxiety. The school supports students in understanding their role as active and responsible members of the school community:

- Promoting a "telling culture", where reporting bullying is recognised as responsible behaviour and not as "telling tales".
- Providing education on safe and appropriate bystander intervention strategies, including how to support a student experiencing bullying.
- Reinforcing the message that witnesses can play a key role in stopping bullying and should report concerns to a trusted adult.
- Teaching students that they have a responsibility in shaping a respectful and inclusive school culture by rejecting bullying behaviour.
- Facilitating discussion and learning through SPHE and Wellbeing classes to build empathy, resilience, and confidence in taking action.
- Ensuring students are aware of accessible and safe reporting procedures.

3. Supporting Students Who Display Bullying Behaviour

Students who engage in bullying behaviour may also require support, as such behaviour can be linked to difficulties in social relationships, low self-esteem, or a lack of awareness of the impact of their actions. The school provides the following supports:

- One-to-one interventions with teachers or support staff to address behaviour and promote reflection.
- Restorative interviews and restorative conferencing to support understanding of the impact of the behaviour and to rebuild relationships where possible.
- Access to counselling or behavioural support for students who require additional assistance in managing emotions or relationships.
- Encouragement to participate in structured activities that promote teamwork, empathy, and positive social skills, such as group projects or sporting activities.
- Clear communication regarding consequences where bullying behaviour continues, in line with the school's Code of Behaviour.
- Targeted interventions to develop positive social and relational skills.
- Clear affirmation that students who demonstrate genuine change are supported and encouraged, rather than labelled or stigmatised.

4. External Supports and Professional Services

Where appropriate, the school works in partnership with external agencies to provide additional supports for students, staff, and parents/guardians. These may include:

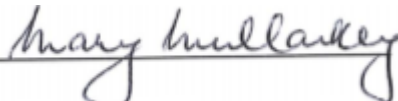
- **National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS):** providing psychological guidance, assessment, and support for students affected by bullying behaviour.
- **Oide:** offering professional development and training for staff in prevention and response strategies related to bullying behaviour.
- **Webwise:** supporting digital safety education and responsible online engagement.
- **National Parents Council:** providing resources, guidance, and workshops to assist parents/guardians in supporting their children.

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: 

Date: 13th Jan 2026

(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: 

Date: 13th Jan 2026

(Principal)

Review Date: August 2026

Appendix A BÍ Cineálta Cover Sheet & Bullying Case Flowchart

Case Reference Number: _____

Stage 1: Investigation

Name of Person(s) who received allegation: _____

Have they submitted their notes: Yes/No or have you attached your notes of verbal conversation
Yes/No

(i) Student(s) experiencing bullying

No. of Students: _____

Have they submitted their notes: Yes/No or have you attached your notes of verbal
conversation Yes/No

No. of Parents: _____

Have they submitted their notes: Yes/No or have you attached your notes of verbal conversation
Yes/No

(ii) Student(s) Alleged to be bullying

No. of Students: _____

Have they submitted their notes: Yes/No or have you attached your notes of verbal conversation
Yes/No

No. of Parents: _____

Have they submitted their notes: Yes/No or have you attached your notes of verbal conversation
Yes/No

Students who witnessed the bullying

No. of Students: _____

Have they submitted their notes: Yes/No or have you attached your notes of verbal conversation
Yes/No

No. of Parents: _____

Have they submitted their notes: Yes/No or have you attached your notes of verbal conversation
Yes/No

Stage 2: Determination

Has bullying occurred? (See Appendix B)	Yes/No
If Yes: Have you recorded details on appendix B	Yes/No
If No:	
(i) Have you informed parents of the determination?	Yes/No
(ii) Referred to code of behaviour?	Yes/No
(iii) Have you issued sanctions?	Yes/No
(iv) Have you recorded and attached all the notes?	Yes/No

Stage 3: Actions

Have you consulted with all parents and all students, how to proceed	Yes / No
If applicable: have they WRITTEN to request no action	Yes / No
Have you recorded and attached all notes:	Yes / No

Stage 4: 20 Day Review

Have you consulted with all parents and all students, how to proceed	Yes / No
Have you recorded and attached all notes:	Yes / No

Stage 5: File Closed or referred to Principal

Closed: All files scanned and uploaded to student file storage system	Yes / No
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Referral: Yes / No

To Principal to be dealt with under Code of Behaviour

Appendix B Bullying Determination Checklist

Bullying Determination Checklist

Bullying is targeted behaviour, online or offline that causes harm. The harm caused can be physical, social and/or emotional in nature. Bullying behaviour is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power in relationships between two people or groups of people in society.

To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour you should consider the following questions:

Is the behaviour targeted at a specific student or group of students?	Yes	No
Is the behaviour intended to cause physical, social or emotional harm?	Yes	No
Is the behaviour repeated?	Yes	No

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.

Schools are not expected to address bullying behaviour that occurs when students are not under the care or responsibility of the school. However, if this bullying behaviour, including cyber bullying behaviour, continues into the school environment, schools are required to address the bullying behaviour. Bullying behaviour, including cyber bullying behaviour, which has occurred outside of school can often continue in school.

Where a school is made aware of cyberbullying behaviour that has occurred while a student was not under the care or responsibility of the school, the school is required to support the student. Ways that the school could support the student include listening, showing empathy, reassuring the student, and asking the student to let the school know if the bullying behaviour occurs in school.

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

In the case of cyber-bullying, 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.

If bullying behaviour occurs when students are on a school trip and are therefore under the care

and responsibility of the school, the school must address the bullying behaviour.

Types of Bullying behaviour checklist

Types of Bullying behaviour	Yes/No
Disablist bullying behaviour:	
Exceptionally able bullying:	
Gender identity bullying:	
Homophobic/transphobic (LGBTQ+) bullying:	
Physical appearance bullying:	
Racist bullying:	
Poverty bullying:	
Religious identity bullying:	
Sexist bullying:	
Sexual harassment:	
Other	

How the bully behaviour occurred

How the bully behaviour occurred	Yes/No
Physical bullying behaviour:	
Verbal bullying behaviour:	
Written bullying behaviour:	
Extortion	
Exclusion	
Relational	
Cyberbullying	
Other	

Appendix D Bullying Incident Report Form

Name of student being bullied: _____

Year: _____

Name(s) and class(es) of students allegedly engaged in bullying behaviour:

Source of bullying concern/report (tick as relevant):

Student concerned	
Other student(s)	
Teacher	
Parent	
Other	

Location of incident(s) (tick as relevant)

School Grounds		Classroom	
Bus		Toilets	
Out-of-school		Corridor	

Name of person(s) who reported the alleged bullying concern:

Type of bullying behaviour (tick as relevant):

Physical		Gender-identity bullying	
Verbal		Extortion	
Damage to personal property		Written bullying	
Exculsion/isolation		Relational bullying	
Cyber-bullying		Other	
Intimidation			

Brief description of bullying behaviour:

Impact of bullying behaviour:

Details of action taken:

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

(Year Head)

Appendix E Bullying Update for Board of Management meeting of ___ / ___ / ____

Having reviewed the details of the incidents of bullying behaviour that have been reported since the previous board of management meeting, the following information is provided:

Total number of new incidents of bullying behaviour reported since the last board of management meeting	
Total number of incidents of bullying behaviour currently ongoing.	
Total number of incidents of bullying behaviour reported since the beginning of this school year.	

Where incidents of bullying behaviour have been reported since the last meeting, the update included a verbal report, which includes the following information where relevant:

- The trends and patterns identified such as the form of bullying behaviour, type of bullying behaviour if known, location of bullying behaviour, when it occurred
- The strategies used to address the bullying behaviour
- Any wider strategies to prevent and address bullying behaviour
- If any serious incidents of bullying behaviour have occurred which have had a serious adverse impact on a student
- If a parent has informed the school that a student has left the school because of reported bullying behaviour
- If any additional support is needed from the board of management
- If the school’s BÍ Cineálta policy requires urgent review in advance of the annual review This update did not include any personal information or information that could identify the students involved.

Signed: _____

Date:

(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed:  _____

Date:

(Principal)

Appendix F Review of the Bí Cineálta Policy

Review of the Bí Cineálta Policy

The Board of Management (the Board) must undertake an annual (calendar) review of the school's Bí Cineálta policy and its implementation in consultation with the school community. As part of the review, this document must be completed

1. When did the Board formally adopt its Bí Cineálta policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour in accordance with the Bí Cineálta Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools? Insert date when the Bí Cineálta policy was last adopted by the school.
_____/_____/20_____
2. Where in the school is the student friendly Bí Cineálta policy displayed?
3. What date did the Board publish the Bí Cineálta policy and the student friendly policy on the school website? _____/_____/20_____
4. How has the student friendly policy been communicated to students?
5. How has the Bí Cineálta policy and student friendly policy been communicated to parents?
6. Have all school staff been made aware of the, school's Bí Cineálta policy and the Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools?
7. Does the Bí Cineálta policy document the strategies that the school uses to prevent bullying behaviour?
8. Has the Board received and minuted the Bullying Behaviour Update presented by the principal at every ordinary board meeting over the last calendar year?
9. Has the Board discussed how the school is addressing all reports of bullying behaviour?
10. Is the Board satisfied that all incidents of bullying behaviour are addressed in accordance with the school's Bí Cineálta Policy?
11. Have the prevention strategies in the Bí Cineálta policy been implemented?
12. Has the Board discussed the effectiveness of the strategies used to prevent bullying behaviour?
13. How have (a) parents, (b) students and (c) school staff been consulted as part of the review of the Bí Cineálta Policy?
14. Outline any aspects of the school's Bí Cineálta policy and/or its implementation that have been identified as requiring further improvement as part of this review:
15. Where areas for improvement have been identified, outline how these will be addressed and whether an action plan with timeframes has been developed?

16. Does the student friendly policy need to be updated as a result of this review and if so why?

17. Does the school refer parents to the complaints procedures if they have a complaint about how the school has addressed bullying behaviour?

18. Has a parent informed the school that a student has left the school due to reported bullying behaviour?

19. Has the Office of the Ombudsman for Children initiated or completed an investigation into how the school has addressed an incident of bullying behaviour?

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(Principal)

Date of next review: