Bi Cinealta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of St Declan's Community College has adopted the following policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

This policy fully complies with the requirements of Bf Cinealta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2024.

St Declan's Community College is a state, co-educational, multidenominational school underpinned by the core values of:

- Excellence in Education
- Care
- Equality
- Community
- Respect

St Declan's Community College strives to provide all students with equal opportunities to engage with the curriculum and school life. In all aspects of school life all members of our school community are treated equitably regardless of their race, gender, religion/belief, age, family status, civil status, membership of the Traveller community, sexual orientation, ability or socio-economic status.

St Declan's Community College provides a safe physical and social environment that reinforces a sense of belonging to the school community and wider society. We strive to enable every student to realise their full potential regardless of any aspect of their identity or background. St Declan's Community College promotes a fully inclusive education that recognises the plurality of identities, beliefs and values held by students, parents and staff. We prepare open-minded, culturally sensitive and responsible citizens with a strong sense of shared values.

In St Declan's Community College, students of all religions and beliefs are treated equally. The school environment and activities do not privilege any particular group over another whilst at the same time acknowledging and facilitating students of all religions and beliefs.

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 *Cineciltas: Action Plan on Bullying* and *Bf Cinecilta: 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 Bi Cinealta procedures.

This Bf Cinealta policy sets out how the school community prevents and addresses bullying behaviour. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour, that is not bullying behaviour, are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

Section A   Development of the BiCinealta 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		
Students		
Parents		
Board of Management		
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.

St Declan's Community College endeavours to support a holistic whole school approach to wellbeing promotion though the four key areas of *The Wei/being Policy Statement and Framework/or Practice* which are: *1.* Culture and Environment; 2. Curriculum (Teaching and Learning); 3. Policy and Planning; and 4. Relationships and Partnerships. These four areas have been considered by StDeclan'sCommunity College when developing measures to prevent bullying behaviour.

1.   Culture and Environment
St Declan's Community College considers that a positive and inclusive school culture and environment is essential to prevent and address bullying behaviour and that each member of the school community has a responsibility to contribute to the creation and maintenance of a positive school culture. Relationships between all members of the St Declan's CommunityCollege comm□nity are founded on the core values of the school- excellence in education, care, equality, respect and community. The school leadership team continuously emphasises the importance and meaning of these core values promoting a positive school culture and setting 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 are expected to 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, are expected to promote empathy and respect in their children and to contribute to a school environment where harmful behaviour is not tolerated. Preventing and addressing bullying behaviour collaboratively is a shared responsibility of the school boards of management, school staff, students and their parents.

To promote a positive and inclusive school culture and environment St Declan's Community College engages in many activities including:

- Promotion of inclusivity and respect: Foster a positive school environment where diversity is celebrated and all students feel valued through wellbeing, Yellow Flag programme, Students' Council, Class representatives, Green Schools, provision map, Stand Up Awareness week, Transition Programme for First years, school mission statement, WWETB Ethos, display of student work, seating plans, establishment of safe telling environment, supervision by school staff, Guidance support, active student support team, designated lunch areas for year groups, active mentoring system, supervision by school staff, staggered end of day times, separate lunch breaks.
- Awareness programmes: Conduct regular workshops and assemblies to educate students about the impact of bullying and the importance of kindness.
- Student-led initiatives: Encourage students to lead campaigns and activities that promote a positive school culture e.g. Students' Council, Mentoring system, Easter Egg hunt, SVdP fundraising, Students' Council post box.
- Encouraging the reporting of bullying behaviour by creating a 'telling' environment where conversations about concerns regarding bullying behaviour are open, ensuring that adults have the knowledge and skills to deal appropriately with bullying behaviour and that students know what will happen when they report bullying behaviour.
- Development of "a trusted adult" strategy to encourage students to report if they or another student is experiencing bullying behaviour.
- Creation of safe physical spaces with a clear line of sight for supervision.
- The school will identify areas where there is a greater risk for bullying behaviour to occur and will endeavour to increase visibility in these areas, reduce student congregation and/or increase supervision.
- Installation of murals, artwork and signage to promote the school's core values.
- Good maintenance of school grounds to promote a sense of ownership and respect in the school community.

2. Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)

Teaching and learning that is collaborative and respectful is promoted in St Declan's Community College. Students are given regular opportunities to work in small groups with their peers, to help build sense of connection, belonging and empathy among students.

The curricular and extracurricular programmes offered to students provide opportunities to foster inclusion and respect for diversity and to develop a sense of self-worth. This includes but is not limited to the following:

- Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) aims to help students to feel empowered to create, nurture and maintain respectful and healthy relationships with themselves and others.
- Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) also provides space for students to examine and consider relationships and human sexuality which can foster an understanding of diversity which may help to reduce gender and identity-based bullying as well as sexism and sexual harassment.
- Students can also consider diversity and inclusion through the Patron's Curriculum which aims to encourage respect and understanding of different beliefs, perspectives and ways of living.

- In Civic Social and Political Education (CSPE), there is a focus on the interdependence of people in communities, at local as well as national and international levels.
- History and, at Senior Cycle, SPHE can be used to raise awareness of racism and colonialism.
- Teachers will endeavour to use resources and materials to support incorporating diverse cultures and history across all areas of the curriculum.
- Anti-bullying education will be provided by including lessons on bullying prevention, empathy, and respect within the curriculum.
- Digital citizenship education where students are taught about safe and responsible online behaviour to prevent cyberbullying.
- Topics on on cultural diversity, gender equality, and LGBTQ+ inclusivity are incorporated into the school curriculum.

3. Policy and Planning

The wellbeing of the school community is at the heart of school policies and plans.

Other policies such as the school's acceptable use policy, supervision policy, Whole School Inclusion policy and Code of Behaviour support the implementation of this Bf Cinealta policy. This policy clearly outlines the procedures for preventing, reporting and addressing bullying incidents and will be routinely reviewed and updated to ensure its' effectiveness.

Students are supported to participate in the development and implementation of school policies and plans can help increase awareness and ensure effective implementation.

Staff are facilitated to engage in teacher professional learning courses to support them to prevent and address bullying behaviour and promote inclusion and diversity.

4. Relationships and Partnerships

St Declan's Community College is committed to developing and maintaining strong interpersonal connections which are vital to effectively prevent and address bullying behaviour. These interpersonal connections are supported through a range of formal and informal structures such as student councils, student mentors, school clubs, parents' associations and student support teams, list other structures.

St Declan's Community College engages in the following activities to strengthen relationships and partnerships between members of the school community so that we can collectively prevent bullying behaviour:

- First year transition and induction programme
- 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
- supporting the active participation of students in school life through student council, green schools committee, extracurricular activities.
- supporting the active participation of parents in school life, through the parents' association, conducting workshops and seminars for students, school staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of bullying including cyber bullying.
- supporting activities that build empathy, respect and resilience
- encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring
- promoting acts of kindness
- teaching problem solving
- hosting debates
- Involving all members of the school community, including teachers, special needs assistants, ancillary staff, parents, and students, in anti-bullying initiatives.
- Involving members of the local community such as school bus drivers, school completion project

workers and others who may have regular contact with students in anti-bullying initiatives.
- Partnering with external organisations and experts to provide additional support and resources for bullying prevention.
- Student Support Team can support the development, implementation and review of the school's strategies to prevent bullying behaviour. When implementing a prevention strategy schools should consider engaging with members of the wider school community who are in regular contact with students, such as the following, which is not an exhaustive list:
- These members of the wider school community can be encouraged to report any bullying behaviour to the school as appropriate.

The school has developed a number of strategies specifically aimed at preventing online bullying behaviour, homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour, racist bullying behaviour, sexist bullying behaviour and sexual harassment as described below.

Preventing Cyberbullying Behaviour

While technology and social media have provided many positive opportunities for entertainment, social engagement and education its increased use has led to students becoming increasingly vulnerable to cyberbullying or unacceptable online behaviour.

To address these challenges School promotes digital literacy, digital citizenship, and fosters safe online environments. Strategies to prevent cyberbullying behaviour include the following:
- implementing the SPHE curriculum
- implementing the Digital Media Literacy curriculum which teaches students about responsible online behaviour and digital citizenship
- having regular conversations with students about developing respectful and kind relationships online
- developing and communicating an acceptable use policy for technology
- referring to appropriate online behaviour as part of the standards of behaviour in the Code of Positive Behaviour
- promoting or hosting online safety events for parents who are responsible for overseeing their children's activities online[1]
- holding an Internet safety day to reinforce awareness around appropriate online behaviour
- Provide workshops and resources to educate students about the risks of cyberbullying and how to protect themselves online.
- Reporting mechanisms: Establish clear and accessible channels for students to report cyberbullying incidents.

Preventing Homophobic/Transphobic Bullying Behaviour

All students including gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students, have a right to feel safe and supported at school. Strategies to prevent homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:
- maintaining an inclusive physical environment such as by displaying relevant posters
- encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
- challenging gender stereotypes

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[1] 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. 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 smartphones and gaming consoles.

- 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
- creating a supportive environment for LGBTQ+ students through clubs, counselling, and inclusive policies.

Preventing Racist Bullying Behaviour

Schools have become much more culturally diverse over the last number of decades with students from many different cultures and backgrounds who may face discrimination and prejudice and may be subject to racist bullying behaviour.

Strategies to prevent racist bullying behaviour include:
- fostering a school culture where diversity is celebrated and where students "see themselves" in their school environment
- having the cultural diversity of the school visible and on display
- conducting workshops and seminars for students, school staff and parents to raise awareness of racism
- encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
- encouraging bystanders to report when they witness racist behaviour
- providing supports to school staff to respond to the needs of students for whom English is an additional language and for communicating with their parents
- providing supports to school staff to support students from ethnic minorities, including Traveller and Roma students, and to encourage communication with their parents
- inviting speakers from diverse ethnic backgrounds
- ensuring that library reading material and textbooks represent appropriate lived experiences from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.
- Organise events and activities that celebrate different cultures and promote intercultural understanding.
- Integrate anti-racism education into the curriculum to teach students about the impact of racism and how to combat it.

Preventing Sexist Bullying Behaviour

Gender equality is an important part of the schools focus to create a supportive and respectful environment. Strategies to prevent sexist bullying behaviour include the following:
- 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 to reinforce these values of respect at home
- education of students about gender equality and respect through lessons and discussions.
- Implementation of programs that empower students to challenge sexist attitudes and behaviours.
- Provision of clear channels for students to report sexist bullying and ensure that reports are taken seriously.

Preventing Sexual Harassment

In St Declan's Community College there is a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment. Sexual harassment will never be dismissed as teasing or banter.

Strategies to prevent sexual harassment include the following:

- using the updated SPHEspecifications 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
- Teaching students about consent, boundaries, and respectful relationships.
- Enforcement of strict policies against sexual harassment and ensure that incidents are addressed promptly and effectively.

Supervision

St Declan's Community College takes all reasonable measures to ensure the safety of students and to supervise students when students are attending School or attending School activities. The school has the following supervision and monitoring policies in place to prevent and address bullying behaviour:

Supervision is provided in the School from 8:30am to 15:4Spm with staff rostered for certain areas in the School to monitor the behaviour of students outside of class times. During class times, staff and students are required to be in their rostered location promptly. It is not possible to provide supervisiion in all areas of the School at all times. It is expected that students behave appropriately at all times and do not engage in behaviour that causes harm to themselves or others. Senior students in particular are expected to model appropriate behaviour on the corridors, throughout the School and while on School activities. Supervising staff will monitor the behaviour of students and be available in case of accident or injury during break times.

St Declan's Community College offers a mix of organised activities during break times supervised voluntarily by School staff and students are encouraged to take part.

Section C   Addressing Bullying Behaviour

The teacher(s) with responsibilityi-.StDedan'sCommunity College for addressing bullying behaviour is (are) as follows:
Assistant Principal for each year group

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

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 bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation
- act in a timely manner
- inform parents of those involved

The steps that willbe 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:

Bullying is defined in *Cinealtas: Action Plan on Bullying* and *Bf Cinealta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviourfor Primary and Post-Primary Schools* astargeted behaviour. online oroffiine 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 Bi Cinealta procedures.

Therefore, when behaviour is reported the School will consider if the behaviour is:
  i. targeted at a specific student or group of students
  ii. intended to cause physical, social or emotional harm
  iii. repeated

If the behaviour meets all 3 criteria, then the behaviour is bullying behaviour and will be addressed usng this policy. If the behaviour does not meet all 3 criteria, thenthebehaviour is not bullying behaviour and will be managed under the School's Code of Behaviour.

To determine if harmful behaviour was intentional, the School will conduct an investigation to assess whether the behaviour wasdeliberate andunwanted, andif the student displaying the behaviour knew or should have reasonably known that their actions would be perceived as harmful by the victim. This includes evaluating the context andfrequency of the behaviour, as well asits physical, social, and emotionalimpact on the victim. If the harm is thendeterminedto be repeated andintentional, it willbe considered bullying and dealt with under thispolicy. However, if the harm was unintended but still real for the victim, it will beaddressed under the School's code of behaviour to ensure a safe and supportive environment for all students.

One-off incidentsmay be considered bullying in certain circumstances. A single hurtful message posted on social media canbe considered bullying behaviour as it has a high likelihood of being shared multiple times and thusbecomes repeated behaviour.

Identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred
When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred the staff member dealing with the matter will consider the nature and context of the behaviour, may meet students individually or as a group and/or ask students to write down their account of the incident(s). The approach taken by the School willbe determined by the situational context. Appropriate support will beprovided for students during this process.

St Declan's Community College willnotdeal with bullying behaviour that occurs when students are not under the care or responsibility of the School. This also applies to online behaviour which willnot be investigated or dealt with bythe school unless the behaviour occurs on a Schoolonline platform such as Microsoft Teams or school email. However, where any bullyingbehaviour has animpact in school, the students involved willbe supported if the school are made aware of the situation. Where the bullying behaviour occurs in School, it willbe dealt with it in accordance with this BiCinealta policy. Similarly, the school would support the student with any harm caused following the incident.

St Declan's Community College will address bullying behaviour in a fair and consistent manner, providing support to both thestudent who isexperiencing bullying behaviour and the student who is displaying bullying behaviour.

Actions where bullyingbehaviour has occurred
Where bullyingbehaviour has occurred, the parents of the students involved will becontacted at an early stage to informthemof thematter andto consult with themonthe actions to be taken to address the behaviour.

Where a student or parent makes the school aware of bullying behaviour and requests that the school take no action, the staff member will be empathetic, deal with the matter sensitively and work

collaboratively with the student and parent/guardian to determine what steps can be taken to address the matter. Parent(s)/Guardian(s) must put any request that the school take no action in writing to the school. However, while acknowledging the parent's/guardian's request, St Declan's Community College may decide that, based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour.

In circumstances where a student expresses concern about their parent/guardian being informed, St Declan's Community College will support the student to plan for how their parents will be informed. Due regard will be given to potential communication barriers. While the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how they would like to proceed will be listened to, school is required to inform parents.

A record will be kept of the engagement with all involved. Sanctions as set out in the Code of Behaviour are available to the school if considered appropriate and necessary. However, given that the primary aim of this procedure is to stop the bullying behaviour and to restore, as far as practicable, the relationships of the students involved, rather than to apportion blame, sanctions are not always required.

Given the complexity of bullying behaviour it is generally acknowledged that that no one approach works in all situations. The school will determine the approach that is best suited to each circumstance. Approaches such as restorative practice and mediation will only be used to address bullying behaviour when the staff involved have been trained in how to engage in these methods and the students involved have agreed to their use.

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

For Students Who Experience Bullying:
1. Provide access to guidance counsellors, other support staff or signposting to external services for emotional support and coping strategies.
2. Create designated safe areas where students can go if they feel threatened.
3. Implement peer mentoring to offer social support.
4. Establish confidential ways for students to report bullying incidents.
5. Engage parents in discussions and strategies to support their children.

For Students Who Witness Bullying:
1. Teach students about the impact of bullying and the importance of standing up against it.
2. Conduct workshops to empower students to intervene safely and support victims.
3. Provide anonymous reporting options to encourage witnesses to come forward.
4. Use role-playing to practice how to respond to bullying situations.
5. Recognise and reward students who take positive actions against bullying.

For Students Who Display Bullying Behaviour:
1. Implement programmes to address and modify aggressive behaviour.
2. Provide access to guidance counsellors, other support staff or signposting to external services for emotional support, underlying issues or to build empathy.
3. Use restorative approaches to repair harm and rebuild relationships.
4. Work with parents to address behaviour and reinforce positive actions at home.
5. Provide support or signpost to external agencies to improve social interactions and reduce aggressive tendencies.

Follow up where bullying behaviour has occurred

The staff member dealing with the matter will engage with the students involved and their parents again no more than 20 school days after the initial engagement and will document the review with students and their parents to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased and the views of students and their parents in relation to this. Any engagement with external services/supports or requirements for ongoing supervision and/or support will also be noted.

If the bullying behaviour has not ceased the staff member will review the strategies used in consultation with the students involved and their parents and a timeframe for further engagement until the bullying behaviour has ceased will be agreed.

If it becomes clear that the student who is displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behaviour, then consideration should be given to using the strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour as provided for within the School's Code of Behaviour.
If disciplinary sanctions are considered, this is a matter between the relevant student, their parents and the School.

If a parent(s) is not satisfied with how the bullying behaviour has been addressed by the School, in accordance with the Bf Cinealta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools they can make a complaint using the ETB complaint procedure, a copy of which is available from the School office.

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

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 and any review of the situation will be documented along with the date that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased. Any engagement with external services/supports will also be noted. These records are 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, a copy of the record will be included in the student's support file. Where a Student Support Plan exists, the plan will be updated to incorporate response strategies and associated supports.
If the bullying behaviour is a child protection concern the matter will be addressed without delay in accordance with *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.*

Section D Oversight
The principal will present an update on bullying behaviour at each board of management meeting as set out in Chapter 7 of the BICinealta procedures. This update will include the number of incidents of bullying behaviour that have been reported since the last meeting, the number of ongoing incidents and the total number of incidents since the beginning of the School year. Where incidents of bullying behaviour have occurred, the principal will also provide a verbal update which will include where relevant, information relating to trends and patterns identified, strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and any wider strategies to prevent and address bullying behaviour where relevant. This update does not contain personal or identifying information.

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

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed, following input from our School community, each

calendaryearoras soon as practicable after there hasbeena materialchange in any matter to which this policy refers.

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

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(Principal)