

Bí Cineálta Policy

St. David's College



Iontaobhas Scoileanna Éamainn Rís
Edmund Rice Schools Trust

Bí Cineálta Policy St David's College

School Address: Artane, Dublin 5

School roll number: 60471F

School Patron: The Edmund Rice Schools Trust

Overview

The Board of Management of St. David's College has adopted the following policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour. This policy fully complies with the requirements of *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2024*. The board of management acknowledges that bullying behaviour interferes with the rights of the child as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. We all, as a school community, have a responsibility to work together to prevent and address bullying behaviour and to deal with the negative impact of bullying behaviour. We are committed to ensuring that all students who attend our school are kept safe from harm and that the wellbeing of our students is at the forefront of everything that we do. We recognise the negative impact that bullying behaviour can have on the lives of our students and we are fully committed to preventing and addressing bullying behaviour. We confirm that we will, in accordance with our obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the harassment of students or staff on any of the nine grounds specified: gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.

Definition of Bullying

Bullying is defined in *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* and *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* as targeted behaviour, online or offline that causes harm. The harm caused can be physical, social and/or emotional in nature. Bullying behaviour is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power in relationships between two people or groups of people in society. Each school is required to develop and implement a *Bí Cineálta* policy that sets out how the school community prevents and addresses bullying behaviour. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour that is not bullying behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

Bullying can be both direct and indirect. Direct bullying includes physical, verbal and written incidents, as well as extortion. Indirect bullying involves relational and online bullying behaviour, as well as exclusion.

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	5/2/25 19/3/25	Online survey Staff half-day training
Students	23/11/24 29/11/24 30/1/25 5/2/25 5/3/25 26/3/25 2/5/25 9/5/25	Student council focus groups. Students discussed effectiveness of the current approach and designed a survey given to the entire student body Survey results reflected on and input given into policy Students designed the student friendly version of the policy
Parents	4/2/25 6/5/25	Online survey and invitations to join the focus group to review the draft policy Parents reviewed the draft policy and gave input
Board of management	14/5/25	Brought to BoM for input and approval
Wider school community	5/2/25 19/3/25	Online survey Staff half-day training
Date policy was approved: 14/5/25		
Date policy was last reviewed:		

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

This section sets out the prevention strategies that are used by the school. These strategies are broken down into four main areas and aim to prevent the various types of bullying outlined at the beginning of this document. A separate segment on combating cyber-bullying is included at the end of this section.

Culture and Environment

A positive and inclusive school culture and environment is essential to prevent and address bullying behaviour. The school is committed to the following principles:

- > fostering positive relationships between all members of the school community, based on respect, care, integrity and trust
- > each member of staff plays an active role in preventing bullying behaviour and responding to it when it occurs
- > effective leadership which clearly outlines expectations around preventing and responding to bullying behaviour
- > a 'telling' environment whereby students feel comfortable reporting issues to trusted staff members, confident that the matter will be dealt with appropriately. 'Telling' can also be done anonymously via the anti-bullying box and discreetly through an anti-bullying email account.
- > daily tutor time, giving each student in the school an adult they have regular contact with
- > ensuring the school building itself is a safe space
- > appropriate supervision of students for all parts of the school day
- > the use of phone pouches, preventing cyberbullying via mobile phones while students are in the school building
- > classroom management strategies which both foster a positive relationship and minimise chances of bullying behaviour occurring unbeknownst to the teacher
- > Year Heads discuss bullying and what students should do if they witness or experience bullying behaviour at regular assemblies

Curriculum

The school curriculum plays an important role in preventing bullying behaviour. This is via:

- > SPHE and RSE lessons, aimed at actively teaching the importance of positive relationships
- > CSPE lessons which focus on the role the individual plays in the community and society
- > a specific anti-bullying lesson, taught by class tutors during the first week of the school year. This outlines various scenarios and how students can respond to them
- > the FUSE anti-bullying programme is taught to 1st year students
- > a restorative practice module is taught to 1st and 2nd year students
- > online safety seminars are presented to junior students

Policy and Planning

The wellbeing of the school community is at the heart of the school's policies. The following help the school in preventing bullying behaviour:

- > the BÍ Cineálta policy has had input from all of the stakeholders
- > the BÍ Cineálta policy is reviewed yearly
- > a student-friendly version of the BÍ Cineálta policy has been developed and is a part of the school journal
- > staff are informed of CPD around the area of inclusion and diversity
- > the student council survey the student body on the school's approach to bullying annually and present the findings to the staff

Relationships and Partnerships

Strong interpersonal connections are a vital part of effectively preventing and addressing bullying behaviour. These interpersonal connections are supported through a range of formal and informal structures, including:

- > student council
- > clubs

- > parents association
- > sports teams
- > wellbeing week
- > friendship week
- > LGBTQ+ awareness week
- > peer mentoring programme
- > check and connect mentoring
- > 6th year mentoring
- > tutor time
- > the HSCL officer

Cyberbullying

The aforementioned strategies aim to prevent all types of bullying. However, owing to the complex nature of cyber-bullying, the school advises students take the following actions:

- > screenshot any cyberbullying that occurs via text and report it to a trusted adult at school
- > screen record any cyberbullying that occurs via videos and/or voice messages and report it to a trusted adult at school
- > block/remove those taking part in cyberbullying
- > do not join into group chats with people outside of your immediate friend group
- > do not engage with people online that you don't know in the real world

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

Year Heads

Guidance Counsellor

Special Needs Coordinator

Behaviour for Learning Teacher

Anti-bullying Coordinator

Deputy Principal

Principal

Note: All members of school staff play an important part in preventing bullying behaviour from occurring. When a staff member observes an incident of bullying they should refer it to someone from the above list

Approach

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

Identifying if Bullying Behaviour Has Occurred:

Bullying is defined 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. When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred, consideration is given to what, where, when and why?

To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour the school will consider the following questions:

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

If the answer to each of the questions above is **Yes**, then the behaviour is bullying behaviour and the behaviour will be addressed using the BÍ Cineálta Procedures. Repeated is defined in the context of this policy as occurring more than once during the same academic year

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.

Behaviour That is Not Bullying

Over the course of a student's school life, they are likely to move in and out of different friend groups. Fall outs and disagreements are a natural part of life. These are not considered bullying, unless they meet the previously outlined criteria. However these situations can still be challenging for students and the school will offer support where appropriate.

Where Bullying Behaviour has Occurred

When it has been determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, 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
- > consult with parents on the actions to be taken to address the behaviour

- > the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour will be taken into account. They will be asked how they feel is best in addressing the situation
- > a record of all engagements will be kept, documenting the form and type of bullying behaviour, if known, where and when it took place and the date of the initial engagement with the students involved and their parents
- > the record should include the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour

Group Bullying

- > if a group of students is involved, each student will be engaged with individually at first
- > thereafter, all students involved will be met as a group
- > at the group meeting, each student will be asked for their account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's views
- > each student will be supported as appropriate, following the group meeting
- > students involved may be asked to write down their account of the incident(s)

Actions Taken

It is acknowledged internationally that there is no one approach to resolve all bullying cases. Therefore the school will employ the approach that is felt best suited to the scenario. In all cases the student being bullied will be given an input into what should happen. The primary goal is always to stop the bullying behaviour from reoccurring. The school will use the following approaches to support those who experience, witness and display bullying behaviour:

- > Restorative practice
- > Conversations with students involved
- > Meeting with a member of the pastoral care team
- > Meeting with the anti-bullying coordinator
- > Phone calls or meetings with parents of those involved
- > Assignment of a mentor (when appropriate)

> Removal of privileges

> Detention

> Suspension

Students who consistently engage in bullying behaviour may be referred to the Board of Management for expulsion

Follow up Where Bullying Behaviour has Occurred:

> the relevant staff member will engage with the students involved and their parents again no more than 20 school days after the initial engagement

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

> the staff member 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

> the date that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased will also be recorded

> any engagement with external services/supports will also be noted

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

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

> if it becomes clear that the student who is displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behaviour, then the school will use 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 Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, they will be referred to the school's complaints procedures

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

Requests to Take no Action:

A student/parent reporting bullying behaviour may ask the staff to take no action. In such cases the school will:

- > monitor the situation without getting involved
- > endeavour to support the student and discuss the various options at their disposal
- > contact parents and discuss the matter
- > ask for the request to be written and signed by the student and parent

In certain circumstances, while acknowledging the request, the school may decide that the bullying behaviour should be addressed. Students and parents will be informed of this before any action is taken

Bullying Behaviour Outside of School

The school is not responsible for bullying behaviour that occurs when students are not under the care or responsibility of the school. However bullying that occurs while students are travelling to and from school will be dealt with under the BÍ Cineálta Policy. When bullying behaviour continues into school, the BÍ Cineálta Policy will be followed as normal

The school will still endeavour to support students that are being bullied outside of school

Child Protection Concerns

Generally, bullying behaviour can be addressed without the involvement of Tusla. However, bullying behaviour can become a child protection concern when it results in significant physical or emotional harm, or where it becomes a persistent and severe problem and measures taken to address it are not effective.

In determining when bullying behaviour should be reported to Tusla, the following factors are considered:

- > Impact on the child
- > Protective/appropriate action taken by parents/guardians
- > Protective/appropriate action taken by school
- > Involvement of NEPS
- > Engagement of child/family with support services

Criminal Behaviour

The age of criminal responsibility in Ireland is 12. In certain circumstances, bullying behaviour can be considered criminal behaviour and legal consequences may apply. The following list covers some of these circumstances:

- > Coco's law criminalises the sharing of, or threatening to share, intimate images without a person's consent, and distributing, publishing, or sending a threatening or grossly offensive communication to another person
- > Physical violence, or threats of physical violence, may be considered assault
- > If bullying behaviour involves discrimination or hate speech targeting a student based on their race, religion, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation or membership of the Traveller community, it may be considered a hate crime under the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989
- > Bullying behaviour involving sexual harassment or sexual assault is considered a criminal offence

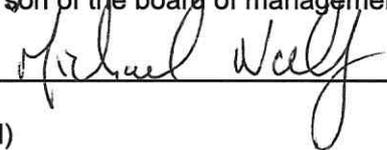
Where the school feels criminal behaviour has taken place while students are under the care of the school, An Garda Síochána may be contacted

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: 
(Chairperson of the board of management)

Date: 14-5-25

Signed: 
(Principal)

Date: 14/5/25