

# St. Anne's Community College

## Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of St. Anne's Community College (has adopted /will adopt in Sept) 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*.

[Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools](#)

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.

[Convention on the Rights of the Child | OHCHR](#)

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 education and equality legislation,

- Education Act (1998)
- Education Welfare Act (2000)
- Equal Status Act (2000)
- EPSEN Act (2004)

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.

A summary of the definition of bullying provided in Chapter 2 of the *Bí Cineálta* procedures

is as follows:

- **Targeted behavior online or offline**, that causes harm of a physical, social and/or emotional nature.
- **Is repeated over time**, and
- Involves an **imbalance of power** in the relationship between individuals or groups.

A detailed definition of bullying is provided in Chapter 2 of the Bí Cineálta procedures as follows:

“Bullying Behaviour can be considered criminal behavior under certain circumstances and legal consequences can apply. The age of criminal responsibility in Ireland is 12 years”.

“In cases of intimate imagery, the Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020, also known as Coco’s Law, criminalized the non-consensual sharing of intimate images and also criminalises threatening to share these images”.

“If bullying behaviour involves physical violence or threats of violence, it 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 and those engaging in such behavior may face criminal charges”.

“If bullying behaviour involves sexual harassment or sexual assault this may also be considered criminal behavior”.

An Garda Síochána is the appropriate authority to investigate alleged criminal behaviour (Bí Cineálta Procedures, 2024, P19).

This 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.

[Code-of-Behaviour-06-22.pdf](#)

There are many different forms of bullying. Forms include Online, Physical, Verbal, Written, Extortion, indirect bullying such as exclusion and relational. This list is not exhaustive.

Bullying can occur inside school, on the school yard, in the classroom and other areas such as bathrooms, locker areas, changing rooms, gym, assembly hall, canteen, showers, toilets and corridors. This list is not exhaustive.

Bullying can also occur outside of school in many areas including online.

#### **Limits of School Responsibility:**

Schools are **not legally or practically responsible** for monitoring or addressing every instance of bullying that happens **outside school hours** or when students are not in their care (e.g., at weekends, during holidays, or in the community).

#### **Impact on the School Environment:**

If bullying that happens **outside school** (for example, on social media, in a sports club, or in the local area) begins to **affect relationships, wellbeing, or behaviour within school**, then the school **must step in** to support those involved.

#### **When It Becomes a School Matter:**

If the behaviour **continues within the school context**, it is no longer “out of school”

bullying—it falls squarely under the school’s **Bí Cineálta policy** and must be addressed like any other case of in-school bullying.

These 3 points are referenced (Bí Cineálta Procedures, 2024, P 23).

“A school is not expected to deal with bullying that occurs when students are not under the care or responsibility of the school. However, where this bullying behavior has an impact in school, schools are required to support the students involved. Where the bullying behavior continues in school, schools should deal with it in accordance with their Bí Cineálta policy”

### **A Student Reporting Bullying**

A student reporting bullying behaviour may ask that a member of staff does nothing about the behavior other than to look out for them. In such a case it is important that the staff member shows empathy to the student, deals with the matter sensitively, speaks with the student to work out together what steps can be taken to address the matter and how their **parents/guardians will be informed of the situation. In these cases, the staff member cannot keep this information to themselves. The staff member is advised to report the bullying allegation to the students Head of Year (If the Head of Year is not available or it is of an urgent nature a member of Senior Management (Principal or Deputy Principal) may be informed).**

If a parent requests that the school takes no action on a bullying report made to the school regarding their child, parents should be asked to put this in writing to the school. “However, while acknowledging the parents’ request, the school may decide that based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour” (Bí Cineálta Procedures, 2024, P 45).

## 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	3 <sup>rd</sup> April 2025	Survey/Questionnaire
Students	8 <sup>th</sup> May 2025	Survey/Questionnaire
Parents & Parents Association	30 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2025	Survey/Questionnaire
Board of Management	Meeting scheduled Sept 2025	
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	(Staff, Students and wider community May 2025)	
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. This section also includes supervision and monitoring policies in place to prevent and address bullying behaviour (see Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

## Culture and environment

- A timetable is in place for the supervision of students during class time. When a teacher is absent a substitute teacher is timetabled to supervise the students. A supervision rota of teachers is in place to supervise students before school, at breaks and after school.
- Mirrors are installed to improve visibility and reduce blind spots.
- Visual barriers are removed from windows such as posters.

## Support for Students

- The school promotes a telling environment. According to research conducted in Ireland (Foody, Samara & Higgins, 2017) there is a persistent tendency not to report bullying incidents. We endeavour to provide an environment where student feel comfortable to talk about concerns regarding bullying behaviour. We will ensure that students reporting bullying incidents receive structured follow-up support from Guidance/Chaplaincy and Pastoral Care teams.

## Reporting Bullying

- Students are encouraged to report bullying behaviour to any teacher or staff member. Teachers and staff report bullying behaviour to Heads of Year. If a student is in danger a member of management is notified as soon as possible.
- Students are informed that Heads of Years usually lead bullying investigations, so a key person/trusted adult is in place for all students. Each year group has its own Head of Year. Students are regularly reminded who this trusted adult is that leads bullying investigations. They are reminded that the HOYs/trusted adults are experienced and it is safe to tell.
- The school has developed a dignity charter and it is on display in the school reception area and staff room.

The **dignity charter** is summarised as follows:

*The school community values every individual's uniqueness, experience, and expertise. Staff promote respect, honesty, tolerance, empathy, and inclusivity. Everyone—students, staff, and stakeholders—shares responsibility for upholding a **zero-tolerance approach** to discrimination, bullying, harassment, violence, or any behaviour that undermines a respectful culture. The school is committed to a **positive, dignified working and learning environment**, where all individuals are treated with respect and courtesy, and dignity is promoted for all.*

- The school's student council, peer-mentoring system for first years, school clubs, parents' association and student support teams promote strong interpersonal connections that are a vital part of effectively preventing and addressing bullying behaviour. Relevant training is provided at whole staff meetings. Individual CPD (continued professional development) is encouraged with staff members providing feedback and updates to colleagues.

## Curriculum Teaching and Learning

- Students are taught what bullying is and how it can be reported in school. At Junior Cycle SPHE teachers, and at senior cycle well-being teachers go through the School's 'Policy to prevent and address bullying Behaviour' explaining it to and discussing it with students. All students, as part of these lessons, complete a worksheet in their journal confirming

that students understand what bullying behaviour is, and who they can report bullying to at school. This worksheet is reviewed annually.

- The Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Curriculum at Junior Cycle aims to help students to feel empowered to create, nurture and maintain respectful and healthy relationships with themselves and others. The RSE strand of the specification also provides space for students to examine and consider relationships and human sexuality. This can foster an understanding of diversity, which may help to reduce gender and identity-based bullying as well as sexism and sexual harassment.
- The Civil Social and Political Education (CSPE) at Junior Cycle is used to raise awareness of racism and colonialism. By examining historical and contemporary examples of racial discrimination and colonial legacies, students can develop an understanding of the root causes of bias and prejudice.
- Students are reminded by Heads of Year regularly regarding the school's telling culture, and zero tolerance of bullying behaviour.

### **Policy and Planning**

- The wellbeing of the school community is at the heart of school policies and plans.
- The school's Code of Behaviour and Acceptable Use Policy, Special Education Policy support the implementation of the school's Bí Cineálta policy.

### **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 such as our student council, school clubs, parents' association, student support teams and peer-mentoring system.

### **Preventing Cyber Bullying Behaviour**

- Digital Media Literacy Curriculum is taught in first year to foster safe online environments by teaching students about responsible online behaviour and digital citizenship.
- The school has an acceptable use policy which helps to prevent cyber-bullying behaviour and students are reminded of it regularly.
- Online appropriate behaviour is mentioned as part of the school's Code of Behaviour.
- The school hosts safety events for parents who are responsible for overseeing their children's activities online. The digital age of consent in Ireland is 16. This means that for purposes of data collection students between the age of 13 and 16 years old must have parental permission to sign up to social media services where companies use the legal basis of consent to collect, process and store users' data.
- The school holds an internet safety day to reinforce awareness around appropriate on-line behaviour.
- Students are not permitted to use phones on the school grounds, unless in a classroom environment under the supervision of a teacher. First years are not permitted to use phones during the school day in class or otherwise.
- The Gardaí are invited to speak to all students annually (as reasonable) in year groups regarding cyber bullying, Coco's Law and other areas of concern.
- Students are supported to actively participate in school life through the organisation of school trips/activities, extra-curricular activities, guest speakers, whole school activities during themed weeks, awards ceremonies, graduation ceremonies.
- Acts of kindness are promoted and celebrated at awards ceremonies.

### **Preventing homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour**

- All student including gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students have the right to feel safe and supported at school.
- The school maintains an inclusive physical environment by displaying relevant posters with positive behaviour and inclusive practice themes. The school has a peer mentoring system for support of students.
- Gender stereotypes are challenged by the promotion and celebration of diversity among students.
- Students are encouraged to report to a staff member if they witness homophobic bullying.

### **Preventing racist Bullying Behaviour**

- A school culture is promoted where diversity is celebrated and students feel comfortable to be true to themselves in their environment. Peer support is encouraged through the mentoring program. Students are encouraged to report racist behaviour. EAL is provided for students who struggle with language.

### **Inclusion**

- The school promotes inclusion of students with Additional Educational Needs. Currently the school has two special classes for students with Autism.

### **Promotion of Neurodiversity**

- The “The Hangout Hub,” was established in 2024. This space was thoughtfully repurposed to provide students in mainstream with an area for sensory and movement breaks throughout the day. The Hangout Hub is designed for both **active and quiet activities**. The space contains **a variety of learning materials and manipulatives tailored to support diverse learning styles**. Sensory tools like stress balls, fidget toys, and textured materials are readily available to help students **self-regulate and refocus**. There are also spaces for movement, including balance boards and small exercise equipment, allowing students to **release energy in a constructive way**. The layout encourages flexibility, enabling students to choose activities that best suit their individual needs—whether that is engaging in a quiet reading corner, working on a hands-on project, or participating in group games. The Hangout Hub promotes a sense of community, where students can connect with peers and staff while attending to their sensory and movement needs, ultimately enhancing their overall well-being and readiness to learn.

### **Preventing gender based bullying behaviour**

- Staff members treat students equally irrespective of their gender.
- All students have the same opportunities to engage in school curriculum irrespective of their gender.
- Staff members receive training in Restorative Practices. Following incidents of bullying behaviour, restorative measures are taken to resolve any conflict. Parents are encouraged to reinforce values of respect by continuing the restorative process with their son/daughter and encouraging positive relationships.

### **Preventing sexual harassment**

- **Sexual harassment is a form of unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature** that violates a person’s dignity, creates a hostile or intimidating environment, or makes someone feel offended, humiliated, or unsafe.
- The school holds a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment. Sexual harassment should never be dismissed as teasing or banter. The school uses the updated SPHE

specifications at post-primary level to teach students about healthy relationships and how to treat each other with respect and kindness. Gender stereotypes which can contribute to sexual harassment are challenged.

## **Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour**

The Heads of Year have responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour.

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When bullying behaviour occurs, the school will:

- > ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour is heard and reassured
- > seek to ensure the privacy of those involved
- > conduct all conversations with sensitivity
- > consider the age and ability of those involved
- > listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation
- > take action in a timely manner
- > inform parents of those involved

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):

To determine if bullying behaviour has occurred, the following questions are considered.

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? (A one-off incident may be considered bullying in certain circumstances in school such as a single hurtful message posted on social media.)
4. Imbalance of power.

If the answer to these three questions is 'yes', then the behaviour is bullying and should be addressed using the school's Bí Cineálta Policy.

If the answer is 'no', then the behavior is not considered bullying and the behavior is dealt with under the school's Code of Behaviour.

Where bullying has occurred, parents are informed of the matter and consulted on the actions to be taken to address the behaviour. The views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviors, and their views on how best to address the situation, are listened to.

Please see form which the school will use to record bullying behavior.

The Head of Year will engage with students involved and their parents, 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 Head of Year should document the review with students and their parents to determine if the bullying behavior has ceased and the views of students and their parents in relation to this. The date that it has been determined that the bullying behavior has ceased should also be recorded. Any engagement with external services/supports should also be noted.

If the bullying behavior has not ceased, the Head of Year should review the strategies used in consultation with the students involved and their Parents/Guardians. A timeframe should be agreed for further engagement until the bullying behavior has ceased. If it becomes clear that the student who is displaying bullying behavior continues to display the behaviour, then the school should consider using the strategies to deal with inappropriate behavior as provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

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):

Students who experience, witness and display bullying behavior have access to in-school support provided by the school's Head of Years, Chaplain and Guidance counsellors.

Supports to schools, as outlined in the Bí Cineálta procedures, are provided by NEPS, Oide, Webwise, National Parents Council, Dublin City University Anti-Bullying centre and TUSLA.

All bullying behaviour will be recorded and kept in a locked cabinet in the Principal's office in line with GDPR procedures and protocols. This will include the type of behaviour, where and when it took place, and the date of the engagement with students and parents. The actions and supports agreed to address bullying behaviour will be documented. If the bullying behaviour is a child-protection concern, the matter will be addressed without delay in accordance with *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

### Section D: Oversight

The Principal will present an update on bullying behaviour at each board of management meeting. This update will include the number of incidents of bullying behaviour that have been reported since the last meeting, the number of ongoing incidents and the total number of incidents since the beginning of the school year. Where incidents of bullying behaviour have occurred, the Principal will also provide a verbal update which will include - where relevant - information relating to trends and patterns identified, strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and any wider strategies to prevent and address bullying behaviour where relevant. This update does not contain personal or identifying information. See Chapter 7 of the *Bí Cineálta* procedures.

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

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: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal)