Bí Cineálta Policy to Promote a Culture of Kindness, Respect and Inclusion To Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour 2026

At St. Finian's College, we are committed to fostering a safe, caring, and inclusive environment where all members of the school community feel respected, valued, and supported. This Bí Cineálta (Be Kind) Policy is grounded in our Catholic ethos and reflects our belief in the dignity of every person.

The Board of Management of St Finian's College Mullingar has adopted the following policy to promote a culture of Kindness, Respect and Inclusion and to help 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. 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 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/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	27th March 2025	Half Day closure to facilitate Presentation on Bí Cineálta including staff survey
Students	28th April 2025	Student Council Discussion and all students surveyed through Google Form
Parents	29th April 2025 13th May 2025	All parents/Guardians surveyed through Google Form Parents Council Meeting
Board of Management	1st May 2025 23rd June 2025	Meeting
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	27th March 2025	Half day closure all staff including ancillary staff and office staff attended
Date policy was approved: 23rd June 2025		
Date policy was last reviewed: New Policy 2025		

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):

Aims of our policy:

- To promote kindness, empathy, and mutual respect among all students and staff.
- To encourage positive behaviour and language in all interactions.
- To prevent bullying, discrimination, and exclusion in all forms.
- To support the emotional and mental wellbeing of every student and staff member.

To build a culture where kindness is celebrated and recognised

Key Principles:

- Kindness is Strength: We promote kindness as a core strength, not a weakness.
- Respect for All: Every person is treated with dignity regardless of background, ability, identity, or belief.
- Positive Language: We use language that uplifts and never harms.
- Lead by Example: Staff and student leaders model kindness in word and action.
- Restorative Practice: When unkindness occurs, we seek resolution, reflection, and growth.

Culture and Environment:

A positive and inclusive school culture and environment is essential to prevent and address bullying behaviour. The school environment should be a space where students and school staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported.

Relationships between all members of the school community should be based on respect, care, integrity and trust.

Open communication between the patron, boards of management, school staff, students and their parents help to foster a collaborative approach and shared responsibilities in relation to preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.

The school leadership team influences the school culture and set 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 can 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, can help foster an environment where bullying behaviour is not tolerated through promoting empathy and respect.

Strategies to achieve a positive culture and environment include:

- As a Catholic School, St. Finian's College seeks to develop a sense of community that attempts to live out the teaching of Christ, especially in our treatment of others. We endeavour to develop the spiritual, intellectual, social, cultural and physical potential of all our students. With the cooperation of the parents, this potential is developed as fully as possible, so that each student can achieve success at his/her own level of ability.

Our Aims are achieved by:

- welcoming our responsibility for academic achievement and examination results commensurate with the abilities of individual students, while also seeking to develop in all our pupils those sensibilities which will enable them to contribute fully to society.
- encouraging our students to learn and think independently,

- encouraging our students to tolerate and value diversity,
- encouraging our students to show respect for all; teachers, fellow students and the environment in which we live,
- encouraging our students to become responsible, creative and visionary members of our community.

St Finian's College is a Restorative Practice School. **Restorative Practice** is based on a set of core values. The core values include respect, and being respectful of everyone, including towards people someone maybe doesn't always see eye to eye with or even like. It is the promotion and enhancement of empathy and having the skill set to find solutions to specific problems. Through the development of empathy, and promoting understanding of perspective taking, people can learn to respect each other and where someone is coming from in terms of their own expression of thought and feelings. In our efforts to show empathy, we are able to harness the notion of fairness in our relationships, and therefore can also account for our own actions and hold others to account for theirs. Where conflict arises, it is the ability to resolve conflict and repair harm to a relationship in a collaborative manner. RP allows for building trust between and with people. It provides a structured approach in the form of a scaffold, which helps build and sustain relationships. It also provides a platform for dealing with conflict in a healthy manner when conflict occurs.

- It is important that the school community supports a 'telling' environment. Students who witness bullying behaviour or experience bullying behaviour should be supported and encouraged to report the behaviour

- A Trusted Adult: The concept of "a trusted adult" is an effective strategy to encourage students to report if they or another student is experiencing bullying behaviour. Staff in St Finian's College support this strategy by letting students know that they can talk to them. Our staff will reassure the student that they have done the right thing by reporting the behaviour. They will continue to support the student, as appropriate, while the behaviour is being addressed by the relevant member of staff. They will, without delay, inform the member of staff who has responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour. In St Finian's College we have a Pastoral Care system in place with class teachers, SNAs, tutors, Year Heads, Guidance counsellors, Deputy Principals and the Principal.

- St Finian's College stakeholders, the Patron, Board of Management, SMT, staff, pupils, parents, work together to create a school where kindness is prioritised. Inclusivity is developed through extracurricular activities, TY Programmes, Lunchtime activities, Clubs, Societies,

Creating safe physical spaces in schools

St Finian's College will endeavor to create safe physical spaces in our school.

We will:

- improve the visibility of school staff who are supervising at break times including during yard duty. Appropriate supervision is an important measure to help prevent and address bullying behaviour.
- Improving the supervision in particular in the bathroom areas.
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- offer a mix of organised activities during break times
- ensure good lighting is present to avoid dark corners or spaces
- remove visual barriers from windows such as posters

- install CCTV and reduce blind spots
- Use murals, artwork and signage to help promote our school's ethos and values such as equality, diversity, inclusion and respect
- Maintain the school and its grounds to ensure safety

Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)

Teaching and learning that is collaborative and respectful will be promoted. Students will have regular opportunities to work in small groups with their peers, which can help build sense of connection, belonging and empathy among students.

The curricular subjects offered to students in St Finian's College provide opportunities to foster inclusion and respect for diversity.

St Finian's College provides opportunities for students to develop a sense of self-worth through both curricular and extracurricular programmes. School trips and tours are essential for our students to experience new opportunities. We will endeavor to facilitate new opportunities, where practicable.

In St Finian's College students are taking the following Wellbeing subjects:

SPHE including the RSE strand, CSPE, Physical Education, Caring Aspects Class and Guidance.

- Education: Integrate kindness themes in SPHE, CSPE, Wellbeing, and Religion classes.
- Awareness Campaigns: Annual Bí Cineálta Week with assemblies, posters, and student-led activities.
- Peer Support: Train student mentors to promote inclusion, particularly for first-years and new students.
- Recognition: 'Acts of Kindness' awards and acknowledgment in school newsletters and assemblies.

Policy and Planning

The wellbeing of the school community is at the heart of all school policies and plans. St Finian's College's policies such as the school's acceptable use policy, supervision policy, special education teaching policy and Code of Behaviour support the implementation of our school's Bí Cineálta policy.

St Finian's College supports the participation of students in the development and implementation of school policies through the involvement of our Patron, our Board of Management, our staff, our parents and our students including the Student Council. The Student Council participation helps increase awareness and ensure effective implementation.

St Finian's College engages in appropriate teacher professional learning courses to support school staff to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

Relationships and Partnerships

Strong interpersonal connections are a vital part of effectively preventing and addressing bullying behaviour and are supported through a range of formal and informal structures such as student councils, school clubs, parents' associations and student support teams.

- Students: Show kindness, speak up against unkindness, include others.
- Teachers: Model kindness, promote inclusive practices, address negative behaviour.
- Parents/Guardians: Reinforce the value of kindness at home, support the school's efforts.
- Management: Provide resources, training, and consistent enforcement of the policy.

The following initiatives strengthen relationships and partnerships between members of our school community:

- supporting the active participation of students in school life e.g. sports, musicals, extracurricular clubs,
- supporting the active participation of parents in school life, including those who may find it difficult or daunting to engage with the school due to being unfamiliar with the education system or due to language or cultural barriers
- Our Mentor system, where 5th & 6th year students mentor our new first year students to help them settle into their new school.
- conducting workshops and seminars for students, school staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of bullying
- supporting activities that build empathy, respect and resilience e.g. HOUSE system
- promoting acts of kindness e.g. HOUSE system

Preventing cyberbullying behaviour

The increase in the use of technology has led to students becoming increasingly vulnerable to cyberbullying or unacceptable online behaviour.

St Finian's College proactively address these challenges by

- promoting digital literacy,
- digital citizenship,
- and fostering safe online environments.

Strategies to prevent cyberbullying behaviour include the following:

- 1st year talk from the Deputy Principal on Cyberbullying during Caring Aspects class with An Garda Siochana present.
- implementing the SPHE curriculum
- implementing the Digital Media Literacy curriculum which teaches students about responsible online behaviour and digital citizenship delivered in the first year and third year Caring Aspects classes
- 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 Behaviour
- promoting / hosting online safety events for parents, who are responsible for overseeing their children's activities online, in conjunction with other schools and our Parents council.
- holding an Internet safety day to reinforce awareness around appropriate online

behaviour

In Ireland the digital age of consent is 16.

Preventing homophobic/transphobic bullying behaviour

Strategies to prevent homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour include the following:

- Create and build an inclusive physical environment such as displaying relevant posters to help foster a culture of acceptance of student diversity
- encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
- challenging gender stereotypes
- conducting workshops 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
- Celebrating our Stand Up Week / Anti Bullying Week

Preventing racist bullying behaviour

St Finian's College is a culturally diverse school. Students attending St Finian's College come from many different cultures and backgrounds.

Students may face discrimination and prejudice and may be subject to racist bullying behaviour.

Strategies to prevent racist bullying behaviour include the following:

- fostering a school culture where diversity is celebrated and where students "see themselves" in their school environment e.g. our national Diversity Fair is visited by all year groups.
- 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, and to encourage communication with their parents
- inviting speakers from diverse ethnic backgrounds
- ensuring that library reading material and textbooks represent appropriate lived experiences of students and adults from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds

Preventing sexist bullying behaviour

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 workshops and presentations on gender equality and respect
- encouraging parents to reinforce these values of respect at home

Preventing sexual harassment

At St Finian's College there is a zero tolerance approach to sexual harassment. Sexual harassment should never be dismissed as teasing or banter.

Strategies to prevent sexual harassment include the following:

- using the updated SPHE specifications at post primary 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
- following our Sexual Harassment Procedures as laid down in our school policy document.

The school has the following supervision and monitoring policies in place to prevent and address bullying behaviour:

Supervision

All teachers and staff look out for the wellbeing and welfare of their students every day.

Teachers structure their classroom environment and implement classroom management strategies in order to promote a positive and respectful culture and to prevent bullying behaviour.

Our school has a Supervision timetable agreed at the beginning of the school year for supervision before and after school and for during the school breaks. This includes the buildings and the school grounds. Each school trip/ tour as well as extracurricular activities are staffed to ensure proper supervision of students. As our campus develops, we will look at the areas that need supervision and we may need to limit access to certain areas to ensure safety for our school community.

Our school has a Senior Management Team of our Principal and two Deputy Principals. John Mc Hale is the DLP (Designated Liaison Person) for our school community and leads our school community in matters concerning Child Protection issues.

We have a Pastoral Care Team consisting of the Principal, two deputy Principals, six Year Heads, two Guidance Counsellors, an SEN representative, and three AP1 post holders. One of the AP1 post holders leads our Anti Bullying policy and strategies. The PCT team meet weekly. The Deputy Principals meet the Year Heads weekly to discuss any issues in the various year groups to prevent and address bullying behaviour. Each class group has a tutor who teaches them at least once a week.

Where issues of bullying arise, an Appendix 3 is completed. All parties are included in the process to address bullying behaviour. Our Guidance Counsellors support all parties involved also.

The principal, John Mc Hale, 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.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

The teacher(s) with responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour is (are) as follows:

All teachers are mandated people and are responsible to help prevent and address bullying issues or concerns.

The Board of Management oversee the management of the school and address Bullying at each BOM meeting.

Mr. John Mc Hale, Principal of the school.

Ms. Aisling Ryan 1st – 3rd year: Year Heads

Ms. Emma Carey 4th -6th year Year Heads.

We have an AP1 post holder with Anti Bullying as part of their role, to be decided in September 2025.

Ms. Aine Kirby & Mr. Mark Bourke support staff and students and parents as Counsellors

Class Tutors: Each class has their own tutor for each academic year.

Ancillary staff are responsible for reporting bullying behavior also.

Each member of staff is a mandated person.

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 :

The primary aim in addressing reports of bullying behaviour should be to stop the bullying behaviour and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved. The definition of bullying sets out clear criteria to help schools to identify bullying behaviour.

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.

St Finian's College will adhere to the following when addressing bullying behaviour:

- ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour feels listened to 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*

Steps to be taken to determine if bullying behaviour has occurred:

- When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred the teacher/year head/ deputy principal will consider the following: what, where, when and why?

- If a group of students is involved, each student will be engaged with at first by the year head/deputy principal. Each student will be asked for their account of what happened to ensure that everyone is clear. Students may be asked to write down their account of the incident. Each student will be supported, as appropriate, by the relevant members of staff.

- Where bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents/guardians of the parties involved will be contacted by the Year Head / Deputy Principal to inform them of the matter and to consult with them on the actions to be taken to address the behaviour as outlined in our Bí Cineálta policy.

- An Appendix 3 will be completed. All incidents of bullying behaviour will be recorded. The record will include the type of bullying behaviour, where and when it took place and the date of the initial engagement with the students and their parents. The record will include the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour. It also documents 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 will also be noted. These records will be retained in accordance with the school's record keeping policy and in line with data protection regulations. A copy of the record will be kept on the schools Google Drive and may be kept on the student's school file.

- A review of progress will take place following the initial intervention. Even though the bullying behaviour may have ceased, ongoing supervision and support may be required for both the student who has experienced the bullying behaviour as well

as the student who has displayed the behaviour. It can take time for relationships to settle and for supports to take effect. In some cases, relationships may never be restored to how they were before the bullying behaviour occurred.

- If the bullying behaviour has not ceased, the Deputy Principal/ Year Head will review the strategies used in consultation with the students and parents and agree to contact each other again over an agreed timeframe until the bullying behaviour has ceased.

- Where 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.

- A student reporting bullying behaviour may ask that a member of staff does nothing about the behaviour other than "look out" for them. St Finian's College will deal with this in a sensitive manner ensuring that the student reporting feels safe and heard. However, while acknowledging the student's request, the school will decide, based on the circumstances, if it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour

- Parents who make schools aware of bullying behaviour that has occurred and specifically request that the school take no action will be requested to put this in writing to the school. However, while acknowledging the parent's request, the school will decide, based on the circumstances, if it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour

Incidents can occur where behaviour is unacceptable and hurtful but the behaviour is not bullying behaviour.

Although a school is not expected to deal with bullying behaviour that occurs when students are not under the care or responsibility of the school, where this bullying behaviour has an impact in school, St Finian's College will support the students involved.

Where the student displaying the bullying behaviour is not a student in the school, but the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour is a student in the school, St Finian's College will support the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as appropriate and engage with them and their parents to determine what steps can be taken.

Strategies that deal with inappropriate behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

Where parents/guardians are not satisfied with how a bullying issue or concern has been dealt with, they will be referred to the school's complaints procedures.

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

Support for Students Involved in Bullying Incidents

St Finian's College is committed to supporting all students affected by bullying — whether they have experienced it, witnessed it, or engaged in bullying behaviour.

The following approaches will be adopted to ensure a safe and inclusive school environment:

1. Support for Students Who Experience Bullying

- Students will be offered a safe, confidential space to report incidents and express their concerns.
- Pastoral staff will provide ongoing emotional support.
- Restorative approaches may be used, where appropriate and with the consent of the student, to rebuild relationships and promote healing.
- Parents/Guardians will be informed and involved in supporting the student, where appropriate.
- Referrals to school-based counselling or external support services will be made if further intervention is required.

2. Support for Students Who Witness Bullying

- Students will be encouraged to report incidents safely and without fear.
- Education will be provided on the role of bystanders and the impact of bullying, including during tutor time, assemblies, and Caring Aspects & SPHE lessons.
- Guidance Counsellors will be available to students.

3. Support for Students Who Display Bullying Behaviour

- The school will take a supportive and educational approach, aiming to understand the root causes of the behaviour.
- Behaviour will be addressed in line with the school's Restorative Practice policy, with a focus on reflection and accountability.
- Students may be asked to engage in restorative conversations with affected peers, where appropriate.
- Pastoral staff will work closely with parents/guardians to implement strategies for improved behaviour.
- Where necessary, targeted interventions such as anger management, social skills programmes, or counselling will be offered.

Kindness is the foundation of our school spirit — Bí Cineálta i gcónaí (Be Kind Always).

Further Supports that are available to help prevent and address bullying behaviour through the process outlined above include:

Our Pastoral Care Team:
Principal
Deputy Principals
Year Heads

Teachers
Tutors
Guidance counsellors
Mentor System
School based Anti-Bullying Initiatives e.g. FUSE Programme
Wellbeing subjects: CSPE / SPHE / RSE
National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)
TUSLA
National Parents Council: The NPC works to ensure that all parents are supported and empowered to become effective partners in their children's education
Oide: Oide is the Department of Education's support service for schools, and it supports professional learning for primary and post primary school leaders and teachers.
Webwise is the online safety initiative of the Department of Education
Other external agencies i.e. Garda, Counselling Services – CAMHS, YAHMs, Youthreach

This list is not exhaustive.

All bullying behaviour will be recorded. St Finian's College will use the Appendix 3 as outlined above. The Appendix 3 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.

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: _____

(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: _____ Date: _____

(Principal)