St Joseph's College

Bí Cineálta Policy
to Prevent & Address Bullying Behaviour

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The Board of Management of **St Joseph's College, Lucan, Co. Dublin** 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. 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	• 16th Jan 2026 • 29th April 2025 • 29th April 2024	Whole Staff Consultation & Discussion in Groups at Staff Planning Half Day Staff Survey
Students	• 15th Jan 26 • 12th May 2025	Whole School Survey of Students
Parents	• 15th Jan 26 • 5th Dec 2024 - survey on bullying • 9th June 25 - consultation on draft policy	A survey on App A consultation form sent out on App/Website to Parents
Board of Management	• 20th Jan 26 • 9th June 25 & 12th June 25	Review of document Review of survey findings
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	• May 2025	Review of policy

Date policy was approved: 12th June 2025

Date policy was last reviewed: 20th January 2026

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**):

School Culture & Environment
- A positive school culture and environment will be promoted to ensure that all students feel safe, included, connected and supported. In St Joseph's College all members of the school community have a shared responsibility to develop a culture where bullying behaviour is unacceptable - this includes all staff, Principal, Deputy Principal, Board of Management, Parents and Students.

Strategies to prevent bullying behaviour will include;
1. **Reporting Bullying to Trusted Adult(s)**

● Fostering an environment in which students feel secure to Report Bullying. This includes:
  - ❖ Care and discretion in speaking to students about bullying situations
  - ❖ Careful handling of information relating to bullying and identities of witnesses
  - ❖ Developing students sense of empathy for those being bullied
  - ❖ Develop school wide culture of "Be a Buddy, Not a Bully" to encourage students to help a friend/peer who is being bullied
  - ❖ Engage with Students Council to identify Anti - Bullying Slogans
● Highlight to students the presence of trusted & supportive adults in the school who they can report bullying to e.g. Principal; Deputy Principal; Year Head: Tutor; Subject Teacher; SNA; Guidance Counsellor

2. **Safe School Building**
● Ensure the school building is a safe place by identifying and eliminating bullying "blind spots" & ensuring adequate supervision throughout the building.
● Have visual reminders & posters of Bi Cinealta & core values of Inclusion, Respect, Equality on walls & notice boards around the building and in classrooms and toilets

3. **Supervision including Supervision of Breaks**
● Ensure supervision of corridors and rooms at lunchtime/breaktime
● Run lunchtime activities for students to promote positive behaviour & enable students who may have fewer friends to have a sense of belonging during lunchtime/breaks.

4. **Curriculum - Teaching & Learning & lessons**
● Teach core values of equality, respect for diversity and inclusion through the Religion Curriculum & promote an appreciation for all religious beliefs.
● The SPHE/RSE specification helps students to feel empowered to create, nurture and maintain respectful relationship with themselves and others
● The RSE strand of the SPHE specification 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
● Opportunities for students to work in groups or pairs and engage in collaborative activities in co curricular and extra curricular activities
● Display of key messages in classrooms and around school building regarding respect and positive behaviour
● Use of seating plans by teachers in lessons
● Teachers being observant of negative behavior and group dynamics & students who may appear isolated or excluded or is showing avoidance of class

- Assemblies - SMT & Year Head to remind students regularly of core values of respect, equality and positive group atmosphere
- Information on types of bullying in Student Journal
- Training Cinnire Team

5. **Policy & Planning**
- Ensure Student Voice in the development and promotion of anti bullying initiative e.g. Key Roles on Student Council & Involvement of Student Council in Anti-bullying Practices & giving voice to bullying trends & reporting bullying behaviour - also the key roles of the Cinnire in counteracting bullying among 1st Years and promoting positive friendships across class groups and year group ; regular surveys of students; student leadership in anti bullying week etc
- Implementation of Code of Behaviour
- Various policies support the Bi Cinealta policy e..g AUP Policy; Mobile Phone Policy; Code of Behaviour

6. **Relationships & Partnerships**
- Develop effective relationships & partnerships across the school community to prevent & address bullying behaviour e.g. Connections with & between PA, Student Council, BOM, Amber Team, Peer Support Groups such as Cinnire, classes across Year Groups, whole school activities such as Anti -Bullying week and Flag Day -external teachers such as TY options teachers are also informed of the Anti Bullying strategies
- Provide activities that develop students' interpersonal relationships and social skills.
- Parents Association may organize workshops for parents on areas it considers useful such as online engagement and cyberbullying

Strategies for Preventing Specific Types of Bullying

Strategies to prevent <u>cyberbullying</u> will include;
- Digital Literacy & Online Safety lessons for Junior students
- Having a clear mobile phone policy for use of phone in school
- Having a clear AUP for use of technology in school
- Include online safety in the curriculum
- Outline expected standards of behaviour online in Code of Behaviour
- Invite Parents' Association to organise Educational Workshops for parents on Internet Safety and Cybersafety
- Regular reference to respect in real life and online at Assemblies
- Designated staff members to monitor security measures on student school gmails
- Blocking social networking sites on school devices

Strategies to prevent <u>homophobic/transphobic</u> bullying include;
- Displaying posters that promote respect, equality & inclusion
- Include respect for diversity as part of Anti Bullying Week & Stand Up Week
- Regular reminders at Assemblies that homophobic/transphobic bullying is not acceptable

Strategies to prevent <u>racist bullying </u>behaviour include;
- Promote diversity during Flag Day & lead up to it
- Make visible the number of nationalities in the school (e.g. Mural/Flags)
- Invite Student Council to run Black History Month & to raise awareness of racism
- Promote the motto "Report Racism"
- Include cultural diversity in texts bought for our new library

Strategies to prevent <u>sexist bullying behaviour & sexual harassment</u> include;
- Educate students on what sexist bullying behaviour /sexual harassment are in the curriculum e.g. RSE/SPHE
- Promote respect for persons in terms of gender identity
- Educate students on the influence of social media on attitudes to gender and gender stereotypes

The school has the following <u>supervision and monitoring policies</u> in place to prevent and address bullying behaviour (**see Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures**):

A well designed and well supervised school environment can have a significant positive influence on social relationships among students and the ability of staff to effectively prevent and address bullying behaviour.

In St Joseph's College….

- Supervision is in place around the corridors/building and in outside areas such as the basketball courts, on picnic benches, around canteen and lockers during breaks and lunchtimes, in the morning and after school to monitor students behaviour and interactions

- Supervision is in place during school related activities off site/ on tours and day trips to monitor students

- Lunchtime activities are organised to facilitate opportunities for all students to have somewhere to go for an activity

- All 1st Year students have a one on one meeting with a Guidance Counsellor in the first term at which the Guidance Counsellor checks if the student is on the receiving end of bullying behaviour

- Year Heads report at weekly meetings includes any bullying reports or interpersonal issues among students.

- In classrooms during lessons & on corridors between lessons, teachers and SNAs are observant for signs that bullying behaviour is taking place e..g looks, glances, sniggers, comments, domination of seats and space, interference with belongings etc

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

1. Principal
2. Deputy Principal
3. Year Head

Procedures to Follow

In any case where an allegation of bullying is made the Principal, Deputy Principal or Year Head will discuss the matter with the parties involved & keep a record of the meeting.

In any case where it is determined by the school that bullying may have occurred/is occurring the following steps will be taken;

1. The parents of the students involved will be contacted to inform them and invited to school to discuss the matter. Parents will be advised of steps to be taken to resolve the issue.

2. Parents and students are expected to cooperate with any investigation of bullying and to assist the school in resolving any issues and restoring positive relationships, if possible. Parents are asked to reinforce and support the positive actions being taken by the school.

3. Parents should recognise that in discussing bullying and/or allegations of bullying, the school is acting positively in the interests of students and they should cooperate with the school in this regard. If it is the case that a student has engaged in bullying behaviour, the student's parents are expected to make all efforts to ensure that there is no continuation of this bullying behaviour.

4. Parents will be informed if action is to be taken in accordance with St. Joseph's College, Code of Behaviour and advised that the student's behaviour will be monitored for improvement.

5. Students experiencing bullying will be offered support from the relevant Year Head and Guidance Counsellor and other measures may be taken within the school to support the student, if appropriate following discussion with the student.

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. When addressing bullying behaviour 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 whether bullying has occurred the Principal and/or Deputy Principal and Year Head will speak to all parties concerned with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all students concerned.

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

To determine whether reported behaviour is bullying 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 above questions is **Yes**, then the behaviour is bullying behaviour and it will be addressed using the Bi Cinealta Procedures.

- If the answer to any of the questions is **No** then the behaviour is not bullying behaviour - however, strategies to deal with unacceptable incidents are provided for under the school's Code of Behaviour.

Note - A once off negative incident 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 become a repeated behaviour.

- Disagreement between students or instances where students don't want to be friends or to remain friends is not considered bullying behaviour **unless** it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others including deliberate manipulation of friendship groups.

- Some students with special educational needs may have social communication difficulties which may make them communicate their needs through behaviours that can hurt themselves or others. It is important to note that these behaviours are not deliberate or planned but in certain situations they are an automatic response with they cannot control

- Deputy Principal and Year Head will discuss the report sensitively with the student(s) affected by bullying behaviour & her parents & listen to her views as to how best to address the situation. The student will be consulted and informed about what will happen next to stop the bullying. A record of the meeting and details will be kept - to include the form and type of bullying, if known, where and when it took place and the date of all engagements with parents and students.

- In some instances, parties involved may be requested to write the details of what has happened.

- Deputy Principal and Year Head to discuss a report with any student alleged to have engaged in bullying behaviour & with her parent(s) . A record of the meeting and details will be kept.

- If it involves a group of students, each student will be met separately with her parent(s) to discuss the report. Following individual interviews, the group may be met if deemed appropriate.

The Principal/Deputy Principal and Year Head will seek to determine;

- What has happened
- Where it happened
- When it happened
- Who was involved and in what way
- Why it happened

Approaches taken to address the bullying behaviour

- The investigation will seek to determine if bullying behaviour has/is occurring and/or whether the report concerns an incident of negative behaviour which will be addressed under the school's Code of Behaviour.

- The Deputy Principal and Year Head will engage with the student who is bullying to enable her to understand the negative impact of her actions on others.

- Principal and/or Deputy Principal will contact, inform and engage with all relevant parents who will need to be informed if the school considers that bullying behaviour has occurred & whether sanctions are to be implemented under the Code of Behaviour and to discuss how the matter will be addressed. Parents will be asked to discuss the bullying behavior with their daughter to outline the impact of bullying and to ensure that there is no continuation of it.

- The views and wishes to the student reporting bullying behaviour will be listened to and taken into consideration.

The school will adhere to the following principles 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 bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation
- take action in a timely manner
- inform parents of those involved

Request by Parents to take no Action

- Parents who report bullying behaviour to the school and request that the school take no action will be asked to put the request in writing to the school. While acknowledging the parents request, the school may (in certain circumstances) decide that it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour.

Bullying as a Child Protection Concern

- Bullying behaviour may 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 will be considered:

- the impact of the bullying behaviour on the child
- protective/appropriate action taken by the parents
- protective/appropriate action taken by the school
- engagement of child/family with support services such as NEPS.

- If there is doubt about whether bullying behaviour is a child protection concern the school will contact Tusla's social work department for advice. This will enable the social worker to explore the situation with school staff and provide advice on the best course of action.

Bullying which is Criminal Behaviour

- Bullying behaviour can be considered criminal behaviour under certain circumstances and legal consequences can apply.
- The age of criminal responsibility in Ireland is 12 years. Some online behaviour may be illegal, and students need to be aware of the far reaching consequences of posting inappropriate or harmful content online.
- In cases of intimate imagery, the Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020, also known as Coco's Law, criminalises 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 198911, and those engaging in such behaviour may face criminal charges.
- If bullying behaviour involves sexual harassment or sexual assault, this may also be considered criminal behaviour.

"An Garda Síochána is the appropriate authority to investigate alleged criminal behaviour." - Bi Cinealta Procedures pg. 19

The school will use the following <u>approaches to support those who experience, witness and display bullying behaviour</u> (**see Chapter 6 of the Bí Cineálta procedures**):

Students who experience bullying

- When students experience bullying behavior it can have a severe and profound impact on them in the short and long term - they may develop stress, insecurity, feel humiliated, and anxiety and become more vulnerable.
- Any students impacted by Bullying Behaviour will be offered the support of the Guidance Counsellor & Year Head through confidential listening, being a "go to"

person, giving helpful advice & reassurance and rebuilding self esteem.

Students who engage in bullying behaviour

- There may be a negative impact on those who engage in bullying behavior - they may display aggression, anti social behavior have lower academic achievement - students who engage in bullying may fail to recognise the impact of their actions and may lack empathy - they may avoid responsibility and/or deny or minimise their actions when confronted.
- Any student engaging in bullying behavior will be offered the support of the Year Head and Guidance Counsellor to enable them to understand the negative impact of their actions and to identify reasons for the behaviour and to develop more positive, sociable and non bullying interactions and ways of communicating with their peers. The Deputy Principal, Year Head and Guidance Counsellor will seek to identify the specific nature of supports needed for those engaging in bullying with a view to meeting those needs and stopping bullying behaviour.

Determining if bullying behaviour has ceased

- The Year Head will engage with the students and parents involved no more than 20 school days after the initial report to review whether the bullying behaviour has stopped. They will consider the type of bullying that was occurring and whether it has stopped, how effective the approaches to addressing it have been and the relationship between the students. A record will be kept including a date of when/if the bullying has ceased or recurred

- If the bullying behaviour has continued the Principal and Deputy Principal will engage again with the students involved and their parents to address it further, to bring about a discontinuation of the bullying and where necessary to implement sanctions under the school's Code of Behaviour .

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 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.

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: _Eileen McCrory_   Date: 20th January 2026

(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: _Bernadett Fitzgerald_   Date: 20th January 2026

(Principal)