

St Francis of Assisi BÍ Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of St Francis of Assisi Primary School 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.

Behaviour that is not bullying behaviour

A one-off instance of negative behaviour towards another student is not bullying behaviour. However, a single hurtful message posted on social media can be considered bullying behaviour as it may be visible to a wide audience and has a high likelihood of it being shared multiple times and so becomes a repeated behaviour. Disagreement between students, or instances where students do not 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 which they can't control. Bullying is not accidental or reckless behaviour. If the repeated harm is real for the student experiencing the behaviour but unintended by the other student, this is not bullying. These behaviours, while not defined as bullying, can be distressing. Strategies to deal

with inappropriate behaviour are provided for within the school’s Code of Behaviour.

Types of bullying behavior

Bullying behaviour can take many forms, direct and indirect, which can occur separately or together. These can include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

Relational	<p>Relational bullying behaviour occurs when a student’s attempts to socialise and form relationships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined. Behaviours include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isolation and exclusion • Malicious gossip and spreading rumours • Intentionally and repeatedly ignoring a victim • Taking the victim’s friends away intentionally • Breaking the confidence of a victim • Making mean comments so that the victim can hear
Cyberbullying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online bullying behaviour (cyberbullying) is carried out through the exchange of text or direct messaging/instant messaging, social media platforms, email, apps, digital gaming sites, gaming consoles, chat rooms and other online technologies. • Spreading rumors, lies or gossip online • Sending or sharing offensive and/or intimidating messages or images • Posting or resharing personal or sensitive information without consent • Posting offensive or aggressive messages under their profile or another person’s name • Making and/or participating in fake profiles on a social network to impersonate and/or humiliate other students • Manipulating a person to share information in order to share online • Purposefully excluding someone from an online group • Ongoing harassment that causes a person considerable fear for their safety • Abusive posts on any form of communication technology
Verbal Bullying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeated name calling directed at a student which hurts, insults or humiliates the student • Name calling of this type refers to physical appearance; for example, size or clothes worn or gender identity. It can also refer to a student’s accent, distinctive voice characteristics, academic ability, race or ethnic origin.

Physical Bullying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking or tripping a student • Physical harassment that is disguised as ‘play fighting’ or rough play • Intentional damage to a student’s property/ items
Written Bullying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing insulting remarks about a student in public places such as toilet cubicles • Passing around notes about or drawings of a student
Extortion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of threats or intimidation to obtain a student’s belonging • The use of threats or intimidation to force a student to carry out a task e.g forcing a student to complete another’s student’s homework.
Identity Based Behaviours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Including any of the nine discriminatory grounds mentioned in Equality Legislation (gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community). • Spreading rumours about a person’s sexual orientation • Taunting a person of a different sexual orientation • Name calling used in a derogatory manner • Physical intimidation or attacks • Threats • Discrimination, prejudice, comments or insults about colour, nationality, culture, social class, religious beliefs, ethnic or traveller background • Exclusion on the basis of any of the above

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.

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

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	April 2025	Staff survey online
Students	March 2025	Pupil survey on ipads
Parents	April 2025	Parent survey online
Board of Management	Meetings throughout 2024/ 2025	Regula BOM Updates Policy Review June 2025
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, ancillary staff	April 2025	Ancillary staff paper survey
Date policy was approved: Septmeber 2025		
Date policy was last reviewed: September 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.

Culture and Environment:

- Positive and inclusive school culture which fosters respect, dignity and approachability among staff and students.
- Developing positive relationships with all school stakeholders.
- Effective leadership
- Positive culture and environment
- A telling environment
- A trusted adult
- Safe physical access
- Appropriate and adequate supervision of students at all times
- Clear expectations for behaviour and enforcing them consistently by all school staff
- All staff use a Restorative practice approach to address conflict
- Concern box/ worry monster in classrooms

- Opportunities to participate in class and whole school activities to raise self – esteem
- Involving parents as active partners in their child’s education fostering an environment where bullying is not tolerated. Relevant policies and curricular updates are shared with parents on our website, through the monthly bulletin and Aladdin.

Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)

To develop connections and a sense of belonging, respect and empathy among students, and teachers, we encourage collaborative and respectful teaching and learning.

- Team teaching, station teaching and group work
- Regular movement breaks
- Seating plans changed regularly
- Student participation in appropriate school and classroom decisions
- Promoting inclusion and diversity
- Extra - curricular activities to develop positive self – worth and to encourage skills in wide variety of areas- school sports teams, afterschool club, afterschool care, trip and tours etc
- Group work/ Collaboration
- Role - play, acting out scenarios
- Circle time
- Morning meetings
- Regular school assemblies
- Explicit teaching and discussions about appropriate and respectful language and behaviour. We do this through the Grow in Love, RSE, SPHE and Wellbeing Programmes
- Organise workshops and guest speakers for students in senior classes and parents on topics such as RSE, Bullying, online safety etc

Policy and Planning:

- Bí Cineálta policy
- Student friendly Bí Cineálta policy
- Code of behaviour
- Child safeguarding statement
- SPHE Policy
- Communication Policy
- Health and Safety Statement
- Acceptable use policy
- Supervision Policy
- RSE Policy
- SEN policy
- SSE Wellbeing in education
- Appropriate CPD

Relationships and partnerships:

Interpersonal connections are fostered through a range of formal and informal structures such as our PTA, Student Council, Green School Committee, and other committees and groups.

- We promote the right of every member of the school community to be safe and secure in school. Every visitor must sign in, safety measures such as locking gates are prioritized, dismissal and collection arrangements are strictly adhered to.
- We aim to create a warm and welcome atmosphere by having regular, open, respectful communication between home and school.
- Support the work of the PTA and encourage parental involvement in school life. Parents welcomed to share skills, assist with trips, take part in classroom initiatives
- Information sessions held at the beginning of the school year for all parents
- Formal parent teacher meetings held in November
- Monthly school bulletin shared with parents
- Regular staff meetings, ISM (In school management) and BOM meetings to support the work of the school
- Foster and develop links with the wider community. Welcome visitors such as the Community Garda, collaboration with other local school etc

Preventing cyber bullying behaviour:

(Note - the digital age of consent is the minimum age a user must be before a social media or internet company can collect, process and store their data. In Ireland the digital age of consent is 16. Children between 13 and 16 must have parental permission to sign up to social media services. Most social media platforms have a minimum age requirement and for the majority of these, it is 13 years old. Therefore, children under the age of 13 should not have a social media account))

- promoting digital citizenship
- implementing SPHE curriculum
- open conversations with students about developing respectful and kind relationships online
- referring to appropriate online behaviour as part of the standards of behaviour in the Code of Behaviour
- Promoting online safety events for parents who are responsible for overseeing their children's activities online
- Facilitating community Garda visits

Preventing homophobic/ transphobic bullying behaviour

- maintaining an inclusive physical environment such as displaying relevant posters
- encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
- challenging gender-stereotypes
- Taking part in Same Families Different Love Competition
- Reading materials that are inclusive of all family types.

Preventing racist bullying behaviour

- fostering a school culture where diversity is celebrated and where students "see themselves" in their school environment
- encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
- encouraging bystanders to report when they witness racist behaviour
- ensuring that library reading material and textbooks represent appropriate lived

experiences of students and adults from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds

- Involvement in activities such as European Day and celebrating International Week.

Preventing sexist bullying behaviour:

- ensuring members of staff model respectful behaviour and treat students equally irrespective of their sex
- ensuring all student have the same opportunities to engage in school activities irrespective of their sex eg boys and girls Sports teams
- celebrating diversity at school and acknowledging the contribution of all students
- encouraging parents to reinforce these values of respect at home

Preventing sexual harassment:

- promoting positive role models within the school community
- challenging gender stereotypes that can contribute to sexual harassment

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

- Yard supervision procedures which is reviewed regularly
- Code of Behaviour
- School's acceptable use policy
- Special Education Policy
- School trips/tours procedure
- Wellbeing Policy
- SPHE- Stay Safe, RSE, Walk Tall, Weaving Wellbeing
- Nurture Room

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

All teachers with responsibility for addressing bullying behaviours. The following staff members will provide teachers with guidance and support if required:

- Johanne Dunne (Principal)
- Helen Fields (Deputy Principal)
- Ciarán Murphy and Corinna Linehan (Assistant Principal 1)
- Niamh Redmond, Brian Hughes, Sarah Fields (Assistant Principal 2)

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:

Identify if bullying behaviour has occurred:

- Two staff members can be present when engaging with children individually initially without parents' notification and presence.
- Two staff members can be present when engaging with a group of children to investigate what happened. Teacher's discretion can be used with this approach about when best to use it.
- A group meeting will provide the opportunity for the children to give their account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's views. Each student should be supported, as appropriate, following the group meeting. It may also be helpful to ask the students involved to write down their account of the incident.

The following three questions should be considered to determine if bullying has occurred.

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 should be addressed using the Bí Cineálta procedures

Requests no action taken:

A student who reports bullying behaviour may ask a member of staff not to do anything and just "look out" for them due to not wanting to be identified as having told someone about the bullying behaviour. They might feel that telling someone might make things more difficult for them. Where this occurs, it is important that the member of staff shows empathy to the student, deals with the matter sensitively and speaks with the student to work out together what steps can be taken to address the behaviour. It must be made clear to the pupil that other parties may need to be informed for their welfare.

Parents may also make the school aware of bullying behaviour and specifically request that no action is to be taken by the school. Parents should put this in writing to the school. However, schools may decide that based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour through the Bí Cineálta procedures and/or the Code of Behaviour where appropriate.

Determining if the bullying behaviour has ceased:

The teacher must engage with the students and parents involved no more than 20 school days after the initial discussion to review progress.

Factors to consider in the review include:

- the nature of the bullying
- the effectiveness of strategies use to address the bullying behaviour
- the relationship between the students involved

Ongoing supervision of both the child experiencing bullying behaviour and the child

displaying bullying behavior may be required as well as continued support. 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 teacher should review the strategies used in consultation with the students and parents and agree to meet 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 should consider using the strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour as provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour. If disciplinary sanctions are considered, this is a matter between the relevant student, their parents and school.

Unlike previous Anti-Bulling Procedures, A school is not expected to deal with bullying behaviour that occurs when students are not under the care or responsibility of the school. However, where this bullying behaviour has an impact in school, schools are required to support the students involved. Where the bullying behaviour continues in school, schools should deal with it in accordance with their BÍ Cineálta policy.

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

The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying involves a whole school approach. Given the complexity of bullying behaviour, no one intervention/support programme works in all situations.

Supporting Bullied pupils:

- Ending the bullying behaviour,
- Fostering respect for bullied pupils and all pupils,
- Fostering greater empathy towards and support for bullied pupils
- Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through annual awareness-raising programmes,
- Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through the speedy identification of those responsible and speedy resolution of bullying situations,
- Making adequate support available to pupils who need it in a timely manner
- Helping bullied pupils raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that help develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school).

Supporting Bullying pupils:

- Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are not blamed or punished and get a 'clean sheet,'
- Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are doing the right and honorable thing and giving them praise for this,
- Making adequate supports available to help those who need it learn other ways of meeting their needs besides violating the rights of others,
- Helping those who need to raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school),
- Using learning strategies throughout the school and the curriculum to help enhance pupils' feelings of self-worth,
- In dealing with negative behavior in general, encouraging teachers and parents to focus on, challenge and correct the behaviour while supporting the child,
- In dealing with bullying behaviour seeking resolution and offering a fresh start with a 'clean sheet' and no blame in return for keeping a promise to reform

Supporting students who are bullied outside of the school eg online:

- Offer the child a listening ear and safe space to talk
- Advise them to inform a trusted adult at home
- Ring parents if concerned about their safety
- Suggest a buddy system with a trusted friend
- Suggest they remove themselves from the platform

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.

Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools

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

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(Principal)