

# St. Patrick's N.S.

## Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

### **Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour**

The Board of Management St. Patrick's National 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 recognize 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.

We confirm that we will take all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the bullying or harassment of our students in whatever form and however motivated. Catholic schools have a distinctive understanding of the human person, recognising that every person is created in God's image and likeness and has inherent dignity as a child of God. This is the basis for ensuring that each person in our school is treated with respect and care, in accordance with the Catholic Schedule. As a Catholic school, we are committed to respecting the dignity of every individual. No human person is to be devalued, and all have an indispensable part to play in the school community, regardless of difference.

### **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	January 2025	Staff attend Bí Cineálta Seminar, Navan Education Centre
	February 2025	Bí Cineálta Webinar & Staff Meeting to discuss new Bí Cineálta procedures and outline steps next steps for our school
Students	March 2025	Focus group discussion
	May 2025	Sociogram taking account of all friendships within the school
Parents	March 2025	Parent survey
	May 2025	Draft document
Board of Management	June 2025	Review policy draft on June 2025 – leading to consultation and final ratification after amendments were made
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus escorts	March 2025	Bus escorts were given the opportunity to provide input to the Bí Cineálta policy
Date policy was approved: September 2025		
Date policy was reviewed:		

## Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

This section sets out the prevention strategies that will be used by this school to address all forms of bullying behaviour, in whatever form and however motivated, including online bullying behaviour, homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour, racist bullying behaviour, sexist bullying behaviour and sexual harassment.

In developing preventative strategies which this school will use to prevent all forms of bullying behaviour, we come from the context of our Catholic ethos where inclusivity permeates the school in a real way. This school takes positive steps to ensure that the culture of the school is one which welcomes a respectful dialogue and encounter with diversity and difference, by ensuring that prevention and inclusivity strategies are given priority and discussed regularly at board of management and staff meetings.

The dignity and the wellbeing of the individual person is of paramount concern in our Christian response. This school will listen closely to and dialogue with parents, thereby building a relationship of mutual understanding, respect, trust and confidence. In continuing to develop prevention strategies, this school will listen to young people and parents, to help establish their particular context and needs. Frequent periods of reflection and engagement by the school, young people and parents, will be used to discern appropriate supports for young

people in this school and to help inform future prevention strategies.

### **Culture and Environment**

We strive to:

- Create a school culture where bullying behaviour is unacceptable and there is a consistent approach to addressing bullying behavior
- Involve parents as active partners in fostering an environment where bullying behaviour is not tolerated
- Support the idea that our school is a telling environment
- Promote the concept of a trusted adult
- Create safe and supervised spaces in our school building and yards
- Encourage a sense of belonging with ownership over their own space through art and creativity
- Create a positive school culture and climate which:
  - is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity;
  - encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment; and
  - promotes respectful relationships across the school community;

Ways in which we work to achieve these goals are as follows:

- Staff use the agreed school template to record all incident of bullying
- The school promotes friendship and kindness through classroom activities such as group work and paired work
- Older students are encouraged to support younger pupils on yard
- Child Friendly Bí Cineálta Policy was formed and was distributed to parents, children and staff to discuss. This policy outlines various ways to tell.
- Parents are provided with any new information on Anti Bullying when available
- Stay safe and SPHE lessons focusing on positive behaviour form part of curricular content in all classes
- Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils
- A noticeboard has been developed to promote kindness and respect

### **Curriculum (teaching and learning)**

We strive to:

- Provide teaching and promote learning which is collaborative and respectful, fostering inclusion and respect for diversity
- Display a shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact

Ways in which we work to achieve this:

- Teach SPHE, Stay Safe & RSE content which fosters student's well-being and self-confidence as well as promoting personal responsibility for their own behaviours and actions
- Model respectful behaviour towards colleagues, pupils and visitors in our school environment
- Curricular and Extra-curricular activities can help to develop a sense of self-worth, working together, inclusion and respect
- Students are given regular opportunities to work in small groups with peers, which can help build a sense of connection, belonging and empathy
- Implementation of programmes and prevention strategies that-
  - build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and
  - address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying
- An awareness of and encouragement to avail of CPD for staff
- Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the Bí Cineálta policy.

### **Policy and Planning**

The wellbeing of the school community is at the heart of school policies and plans. There are a range of school policies that support the implementation of the school's BÍ Cineálta policy. These include: Acceptable Use policy, Supervision policy, SEN policy and the Code of Behaviour policy

### **Relationships and Partnerships**

The following, which is not an exhaustive list, could be considered to strengthen relationships and partnerships between members of the school community:

- age appropriate awareness initiatives that look at the causes and impacts of bullying behaviour
- supporting the active participation of students in school life
- supporting the active participation of parents in school life,
- 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
- encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring
- promoting acts of kindness

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

Appropriate supervision is an important measure to help prevent and address bullying behaviour. Our school takes all reasonable measures to ensure the safety of their students and to supervise students when students are attending school or attending school activities.

Staff at all times endeavour to encourage pupils to show respect for each other.

The school is committed to the implementation of the SPHE curriculum.

Positive self-esteem is fostered among the pupils by celebrating individual differences, by acknowledging good behaviour and by providing opportunities for success.

The school has developed an AUP policy to encourage and promote responsible online behaviour and digital citizenship.

- The school's anti-bullying procedures are regularly discussed with the pupils.
- Staff are particularly vigilant in monitoring pupils who are considered at risk of bullying/ being bullied.
- All disclosed incidents of bullying are investigated thoroughly and consistently by following the correct procedure as outlined to staff and recorded on Aladdin using the template for this. (Appendix 1)
- School wide awareness raising on all aspects of bullying alongside supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extracurricular activities.
- Pupils contributing to a safe school environment e.g. whole school initiatives and projects encourage a culture of peer respect and support.
- Establishing a telling culture where students are confident and comfortable speaking to staff when a concern arises.
- Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place.
- Teaching appropriate online behaviour when using devices and in SPHE lessons.
- Making online safety events or material available for parents at regular intervals.
- Awareness of a wide variety of supporting material for teachers e.g. <https://antibullyingcentre.ie/fuse/> , <https://www.webwise.ie/> , <https://tacklebullying.ie/>
- Endeavour to challenge gender - stereotypes and encourage equal participation of all.
- Ensuring the library has material which reflects a diverse population from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

## Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

- The class teacher will oversee recording of bullying reports for students in their class – this includes using the procedure guidelines to investigate reports of bullying and recording bullying behaviour on the correct form on Aladdin.
- The teacher will follow up after twenty days to investigate if bullying has ceased.
- All staff will be vigilant to bullying behaviour.
- Principal will report to Board of Management all recorded incidences of Bullying

The primary aim in addressing reports of bullying behaviour should be to stop the bullying behaviour and to restore, as far as practicable, the relationships of the students involved (rather than to apportion blame).

When addressing bullying behaviour teachers should:

- 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 the students 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
- parents may be informed

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):

### **Identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred**

Bullying behaviour is targeted behaviour, online or offline that causes harm. The harm caused can be physical, social and/or emotional in nature and is repeated over time. It involves an imbalance of power in relationships between two people or groups of people.

The 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 the bullying behaviour has an impact in school, the school will support students involved and where any behaviour continues in school it will be dealt with in accordance with the Bí Cineálta policy.

When investigating if bullying behaviour has occurred the teacher should consider the following: what, where, when and why?

If a group of pupils is involved:

- each student should be engaged with individually at first
- thereafter, all students involved should be met as a group
- at the group meeting, each student should be asked for 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 be helpful to ask the students involved to write down their account of the incident(s)

To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour you should consider the following questions:

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

If the answer to each of the questions above is Yes, then the behaviour is bullying behaviour and the behaviour should be addressed using the Bí Cineálta Procedures.

*Note: One off incidents may be considered bullying in certain circumstances. A single hurtful message posted on social media can be considered bullying behaviour as it has a high likelihood of being shared multiple times and thus becomes a repeated behaviour.*

*If the answer to any of these questions is No, then the behaviour is not bullying behaviour. Strategies to deal with other, inappropriate behaviours are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.*

### **When bullying behaviour has occurred**

All incidents of bullying behaviour should be recorded (Appendix 1). The record should document the form and type of bullying behaviour, if known, where and when it took place and the date of the initial engagement with the students and their parents. The record should include the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour. It should document the review with students and their parents to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased and the views of students and their parents in relation to this. It is important to document the date of each of these engagements and the date that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased

- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the 'Relevant Teacher(s)'. In that way pupils will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance.

It should be made clear to all pupils that when they report instances of bullying behaviour they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.

- Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, SNAs and escorts are encouraged to report any incidences of bullying behaviour witnessed by them or mentioned to them to the Class Teacher.
- Teachers should take a calm, unemotional, problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents.
- On being informed of an alleged incident of bullying, the teacher dealing with the report will first interview the victim(s) and discuss the feelings which the victim(s) experienced because of the bullying behaviour.
- Initial investigations of bullying will be done in class where possible but some incidents might be best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved
- When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour the 'Relevant Teacher(s)' should seek answers to questions of what, where, who, when and why. This should be done in a clam manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non- aggressive manner.
- If a group is involved each member should be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved should be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member should be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about the other's statements.
- Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that they may face from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher.
- Where the 'Relevant Teacher(s)' has/have determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's Bí Cineálta Policy and efforts should be made to try to get him/her to see the perspective of the pupil being bullied.
- Where an incident is found to be a second or subsequent occurrence it can no longer be regarded as 'once off' and as such parents/guardians will be contacted. The school will give parents an opportunity to discuss ways in which they can reinforce and support the actions being taken by the school and how best to support the pupil.
- When the investigation is complete and the situation resolved the 'Relevant Teacher' will complete a report outlining findings of the investigation, any strategies adopted and outcomes of the incident alongside any other relevant information.
- The teacher must engage with the pupils and parents involved no more 20 school days after the initial discussions
- Incidents of bullying behaviour will result in the imposition of sanctions. Such sanctions will be proportionate to the seriousness of the bullying behaviour. It must be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parents) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required that this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parents and the school.
- In the event that a parent is not satisfied with how the behaviour has been addressed by the school in accordance with the Bí Cineálta Procedures to prevent and address bullying behavior for Primary and Post Primary school they can refer to the school's complaints procedures.
- In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parents of their rights to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

#### **Requests to take no action**

- If a child makes a report of bullying, but asks that nothing is to be done about it, the relevant teacher will support the child appropriately to explore how it will be handled sensitively and how parents may be notified. If a parent does so, they must submit in writing that they require no further action to be taken, but even so, the school may still deem it necessary to be investigated and handled appropriately.

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):

Given the complexity of bullying behaviour it is generally acknowledged that that no one approach works in all situations. International and national research also continues to evolve in this area and the effectiveness of particular approaches continues to be reviewed. Each incident will therefore need an approach that is best suited to its circumstances.

Both the student who is experiencing bullying behaviour and the student who is displaying bullying behaviour need support. It is important that the student who is experiencing bullying behaviour is engaged with without delay so that they feel listened to, supported and reassured. School staff should identify the supports needed for the student who is displaying bullying behaviour to better manage relational difficulties and ensure that their needs are met.

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.

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: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(Principal)

# Appendix 1

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Add all students names, including pupil being bullied and pupil(s) engaged in bullying behaviour above. Change description to reflect the incident.

1. Name of pupil being bullied and class group

Date:

Name:  Class Group:

2. Name(s) and class(es) of pupil(s) engaged in bullying behaviour

{% for student in students%} {{student.name}}, {{student.class}}  
{%endfor%}

3. Source of bullying concern/report (enter X in relevant box(es))\*

Pupil concerned	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Pupil	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parent	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Location of incidents (enter X in relevant box(es))

Playground	<input type="checkbox"/>
Classroom	<input type="checkbox"/>
Corridor	<input type="checkbox"/>
Toilets	<input type="checkbox"/>
School Bus	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Name of person(s) who reported the bullying concern

6. Form of Bullying Behaviour (enter X in relevant box(es))

Direct	Indirect	Online
Physical	Exclusion	Sending/sharing messages or images via text, email, direct message or other websites or apps
Verbal	Relational	Posting information considered to be personal, private and sensitive without consent
Written		Making and/or participating in fake profiles on a social network to impersonate and/or humiliate other students
Extortion		Excluding or disrupting access to a student on purpose from online chat groups, access to accounts or from an online game

7. Type of Bullying Behaviour (enter X in relevant box(es))

<b>Disability bullying behaviour:</b> behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of a perceived or actual disability or additional need	<b>Racist bullying:</b> behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their race or ethnic origin which includes membership of the Traveller or Roma community.
<b>Exceptionally able bullying:</b> behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their high academic ability or outstanding talents	<b>Poverty bullying:</b> behaviour that intends to humiliate a student because of a lack of resources
<b>Gender identity bullying:</b> behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their perceived or actual gender identity	<b>Religious identity bullying:</b> behaviour that intends to harm a student because of their religion or religious identity
<b>Homophobic/Transphobic (LGBTQ+) bullying:</b> behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their perceived or actual membership of the LGBTQ+ community	<b>Sexist bullying:</b> behaviour that intends to harm a student based on their sex, perpetuating stereotypes that a student or a group of students are inferior because of their sex
<b>Physical appearance bullying:</b> behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their physical appearance. Students who "look different" can be mocked or criticised about the shape, size or appearance of their body	<b>Sexual harassment:</b> any form of unwanted verbal, nonverbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature or other conduct based on sex which affects the dignity of the student

8. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact

9. Details and views of students and parents regarding actions to be taken

10. Review with students and parents (to determine if bully behaviour has ceased)

Details of engagement

11. Engagement with external services/supports

Details of service	Yes
<input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

12. Follow up

Engagement with student and parents within 20 days of initial contact

Agreement that bullying behaviour has ceased

# Bí Cineálta!

We want everyone at our school to feel safe and happy.

If you think that you are being bullied or someone else is being bullied, you need to tell a teacher or another adult that you trust. They will know what to do to help.

Get help!

Tell someone!

If a student tells a staff member that they think they are being bullied, we will:

- > talk with the student
- > ask the student what they want to happen
- > work out a plan together
- > talk to their parents
- > talk to the other student(s) involved
- > talk with the other student's parents

Bullying behaviour is when someone keeps being mean or hurtful to others on purpose over and over again.



When it happens a lot. Not just once.