

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour



The Board of Management of **St. Fiachra's JNS** 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 recognise the very serious nature of bullying and 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.

We confirm that we will take all steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent all 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 everybody 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 everybody has a 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.

This *Bí Cineálta* policy sets out how our school community prevents and addresses bullying behaviour.

Behaviour that is Not Bullying Behaviour

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.

Examples of 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 being shared multiple times and so becomes 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 supplementary education 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.

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

Types of Bullying Behaviour

Bullying behaviour can take many forms, which can occur separately or together. These can include the following behaviours **when repeated over time**, which is not an exhaustive list:

Direct bullying behaviour:

- **Physical bullying behavior:** pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping students. It may also take the form of severe physical assault. While students can often engage in "mess fights" they can sometimes be used as a disguise for physical harassment or inflicting pain.
- **Personal property** can be a focus of attention for bullying behaviour. This may result in damage to clothing, mobile phone or other devices, schoolbooks and other learning material or interference with a student's locker or bicycle. The contents of school bags and pencil cases may be scattered on the floor. Items of personal property may be defaced, broken, stolen or hidden.
- **Verbal bullying behaviour:** Continual name-calling directed at a student which hurts, insults or humiliates the student should be regarded as a form of bullying behaviour. Often 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.
- **Written bullying behaviour:** Writing insulting remarks about a student in public places, passing around notes about or drawings of a student.
- **Extortion:** Something is obtained through force or threats.

Indirect bullying behaviour:

- **Exclusion:** Where a student is deliberately and repeatedly isolated, excluded or ignored by a student or group of students.
- **Relational:** A student's attempts to socialise and form relationships with peers are

repeatedly rejected or undermined. Common forms include control: “Do this or I won’t be your friend anymore”; a group of students ganging up against one student; nonverbal gesturing; malicious gossip; spreading rumours about a student; giving a student the “silent treatment”; and the deliberate manipulation of friendship groups to make someone unpopular.

Online bullying behaviour:

Online bullying behaviour (cyberbullying) is carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as text or direct messaging/instant messaging, social media platforms, email, apps, digital gaming sites, gaming consoles, chatrooms and other online technologies.

This form of bullying behaviour can include:

- sending or sharing nasty, insulting, offensive, and/or intimidating messages or images via text messages, emails, direct messages or other websites or apps
- posting information considered to be personal, private and sensitive without consent
- making and/or participating in fake profiles on a social network to impersonate and/or humiliate other students
- excluding or disrupting access to a student on purpose from online chat groups, access to accounts or from an online game.

Even though a message may be posted online just once by a student it can be considered bullying behaviour as it may be seen by a wide audience where it is intended to be shared or has a likelihood of being shared multiple times and is thus repeated.

Child Safeguarding

Section 10 of the Children First Act, 2015 places a statutory obligation on schools, as a “provider of a relevant service” to ensure, as far as practicable, that each child attending the school is safe from harm while attending school or otherwise participating in school activities.

The Children First National Guidance document 2017 provides that in cases of serious instances of bullying where the behaviour is regarded as a child protection concern, the matter will be addressed without delay in accordance with the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools. While generally bullying behaviour can be addressed without the involvement of Tusla, a referral may need to be made to Tusla or An Garda Síochána as appropriate.

In determining when bullying behaviour should be reported to Tusla the following factors should be considered:

- the impact 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 may 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.

See St. Fiachra’s JNS’s Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment.

Outside School

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.

Therefore, where bullying behaviour occurring outside school continues in our school, we will deal with it in accordance with their Bí Cineálta policy. (See Section 6.2 of the procedures.)

Outside School includes the following:

- **Coming to and from school:** Bullying behaviour can occur in the area immediately outside the school, the local shops and the wider local area. Bullying behaviour can take place at the bus stop or on the journey to and from school whether the students are walking, cycling or on school buses.
- **Organised Clubs/Groups:** Bullying behaviour can also take place in organised clubs and groups outside of school such as sports clubs.
- **Online bullying (cyber bullying)** - cyber bullying can cause significant harm and have a lasting impact on students who experience this behaviour. Access to technology means that online bullying behaviour can happen any time.

This is not an exhaustive list.

Requests to take no action:

A student reporting bullying behaviour may ask that a member of staff does nothing about the behaviour other than “look out” 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 matter and how their parents will be informed of the situation.

Parents may also make schools aware of bullying behaviour that has occurred and specifically request that the school take no action. Parents should put this request in writing to the school or be facilitated to do so where there are literacy, digital literacy or language barriers.

However, while acknowledging the parent’s request, the school has a right to act and 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.

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	11 th March 2025 7 th May 2025	Staff Questionnaire Staff Meeting
Students	14 th March 2025	Focus group Interview sheet

Parents	18 th March 2025	Parent Questionnaire
Board of Management	24 th March 2025	Discussion at BOM meeting
Wider school community	25 th September 2025	Policy published on school website
Date policy was approved: 22nd September 2025		
Date policy was last 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.

The Board of Management of St. Fiachra's JNS recognises that bullying behaviour is not acceptable and is committed to working in partnership with the school community to prevent and address bullying behaviour in the school. Our prevention strategies align with the four key areas of the Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice.

In developing the preventative strategies which this school will use to prevent all forms bullying behaviour, we come from the context of our Catholic ethos, where inclusivity permeates our school in a real way.

This section sets out the prevention strategies that will be used by our school.

Culture and Environment:

- Positive and inclusive school culture
- Positive relationships
- Effective leadership
- Positive culture and environment
- A telling environment
- A trusted adult
- Safe physical access
- Supervision
- opportunities to participate in class and whole school activities to raise self - esteem

Curriculum:

- Teaching and learning in SPHE
- RSE Curriculum
- Student participation
- SPHE Methodologies
- Promoting inclusion and diversity
- Extra - curricular activities to develop positive self - worth
- Group work/ Collaboration
- Role - play, acting out scenarios
- Circle time
- Morning meetings/chats in class.

Policy and Planning:

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

Relationships and partnerships:

- Strong interpersonal connections
- Bullying awareness initiatives
- Student and parent participation
- Staff CPD
- Critical thinking Skills
- Promoting peer support
- Supporting activities that build empathy, respect and resilience

Preventing Cyberbullying:

- implementing the SPHE curriculum
- implementing the Digital Media Literacy curriculum which teaches students about responsible online behavior and digital citizenship
- updating and communicating an acceptable use policy for technology
- referring to appropriate online behavior as part of the standards of behavior in the Code of Behaviour
- promoting of safety online safety events for parents who are responsible for overseeing their children's activities online
- hosting our annual Internet safety day to reinforce awareness around appropriate online behaviour

Preventing homophobic/transphobic bullying behavior

- maintaining an inclusive physical environment such as by displaying relevant posters
- encouraging children to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour

Preventing racist bullying behaviour

- fostering a school culture where diversity is celebrated and where children 'see themselves' in their school environment
- providing supports to school staff to respond to the needs of students for whom English is an additional language, students from ethnic minorities, including Traveller or Roma students and for communicating with their parents
- ensuring that library reading material and textbooks represent appropriate lived experiences of students and adults from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds
- encouraging children to report when they witness racist behavior
- having the cultural diversity of the school visible and on display

Preventing sexist bullying behavior

- ensuring members of staff model respectful behavior 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
- 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

- A supervision rota ensuring adequate yard and indoor supervision at all break times
- Children are accompanied by at least 2 staff member on school trips
- children are told where to play when out at yard and what spaces to avoid

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 our board of management and staff meetings.

The Board of Management confirms that appropriate supervision and monitoring policies and Practices are in place to both prevent and deal with bullying behaviour and to facilitate early intervention where possible.

-Code of Behaviour

-Special Education Needs Policy

-Acceptable Use Policy

The dignity and the wellbeing of the individual person our is of paramount concern in 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 further 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.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

All teaching staff of St. Fiachra's JNS

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**

Identifying Bullying Behaviour

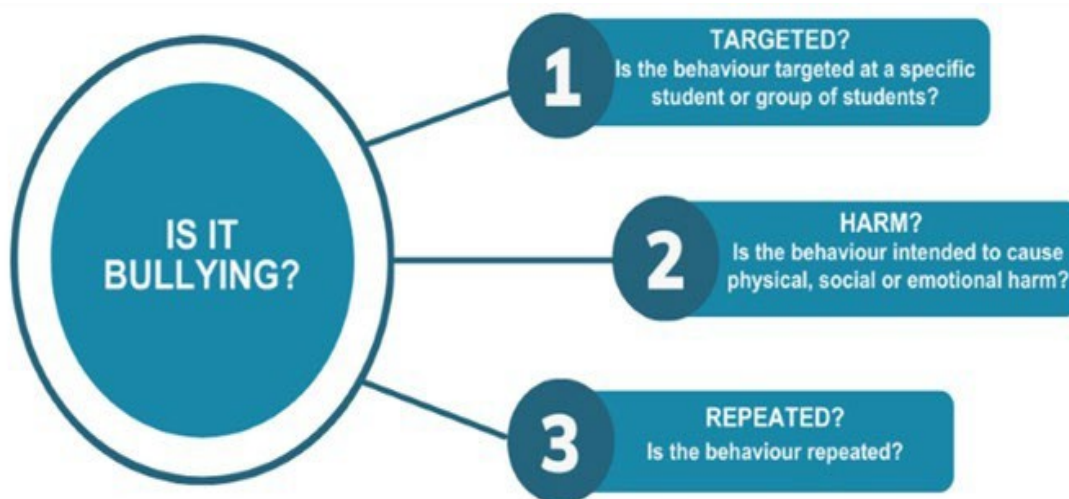
The *steps* that will be taken by the school to determine if bullying behaviour has occurred, the approaches

taken to address the bullying behaviour and to review progress are as follows:

Step One: Identify if bullying behaviour has occurred:

To identify if the behaviour meets the criteria for the definition of bullying, the class teacher 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 questions above is Yes, then the behaviour is bullying behaviour and the behaviour should be addressed using the Bí Cineálta procedures.

If the answer is no to any one of the questions it is not deemed as bullying behaviour. Incidents can occur where behaviour is unacceptable and hurtful but the behaviour is not bullying behaviour. Strategies that deal with inappropriate behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour

- 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.
- If a group of students are involved, each student will be engaged individually at first. Thereafter, all students involved should be met as a group.,
- 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.

Step two: Approaches Taken to Address the Bullying Behaviour.

Where bullying behaviour has occurred:

Where it has been identified that bullying has occurred, the school will act immediately. The primary aim in addressing reports of bullying behaviour will be to stop the bullying behaviour and to restore as far as practicable the relationship of the students involved, rather than to apportion blame.

The Class Teacher will:

- Act immediately.

- Seek to ensure the privacy of those involved.
- Contact parents of all involved at an early stage. Inform them of the matter and to consult with them on the actions to be taken to address the behaviour as outlined in the school's Bí Cineálta policy.
- Listen to the views of the student experiencing the bullying.
- Ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour is heard and reassured
- Consider the age and ability of those involved
- Be fair and consistent in their approach to addressing bullying behaviour
- Support both the student(s) who is experiencing bullying behaviour and the student (s) who is displaying bullying behaviour. All students need support.
- Listen to the views of the student who have experienced the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation
- Record the incident of bullying behaviour and the engagement with all involved on the school's Bullying Template (Appendix A attached)
- If a student support file exists for a pupil involved, schools are encouraged to place a copy of the record on the student's support file, Class teacher and Principal to retain a copy
- In circumstances where a student expresses concern about their parents being informed, the school should develop an appropriate plan to support the student and for how their parents will be informed.
- If a student support file exists for a pupil involved, schools are encouraged to place a copy of the record on the student's support file, Class teacher and Principal to retain a copy

Recording

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

Step three: Review progress - Follow Up When Addressing Bullying

The class teacher **must** engage with the student (s) involved and their parents again **no more than 20 school days after** the initial engagement.

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 behavior 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.

Approaches to Support those who Experience, Witness & Display Bullying Behaviour

St. Fiachra's JNS takes all instances of bullying behaviour on a case-by-case basis, but we may use the following approaches generally:

- All students involved will be checked in with regularly and behaviour will be monitored carefully.
- The teacher will check-in with parents too and will look for their ongoing support to monitor their pupils at home and to communicate with the school if needed.
- We will use resources, as appropriate – including those developed by NEPS (National Educational Psychological Service), Oide (support service for schools) and from programmes/sites such as Webwise and FUSE.

Invoking the Code of Behaviour

If it becomes clear that the student who is displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behavior, the school will consider using the strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour as provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

Complaint process:

If a parent is not satisfied with how bullying behaviour has been addressed by the school, in accordance with these procedures, they should be referred to the school complaints procedure. In the event that a student and/or parent is dissatisfied following the complaints procedure, they may make a complaint to the Ombudsman for children.

Supports: NEPS Oide Webwise National Parents Council DCU Anti bullying centre Tusla

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. There 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: *Bernadette Ellis*

Chairperson of Board of Management

Signed: *Pauline Keane*

22.09.2025

Appendix A



Template for Recording Bullying Behaviour

This template is only to be used when bullying behaviour has been identified, in line with the Bí Cineálta Procedures.

1. Date of initial engagement with pupil(s) and parent(s)

2. Initials of pupil who has experienced bullying behaviour and class group

Initials _____ Class _____

3. Initials and class(es) of pupil(s) engaged in bullying behaviour

Initials _____ Class(es) _____

4. Source of bullying concern/report (tick relevant box(es)*)		5. Location of incidents (tick relevant box(es)*)	
Pupil concerned		Yard	
Other Pupil		Classroom	
Parent		Corridor	
Teacher		Toilets	
Other		Other (specify)	

6. Initials of person(s) who reported the bullying concern and/or relationship to the pupil(s)

7. Dates of when the bullying behaviour occurred

8. Form of Bullying Behaviour (tick relevant box/boxes) See page 21

Physical Bullying Behaviour		Exclusion Bullying Behaviour	
Verbal Bullying Behaviour		Relational Bullying Behaviour	
Written Bullying Behaviour		Online Bullying Behaviour	
Extortion		Other (specify)	

9. Type of Bullying Behaviour (tick relevant box/boxes)

Disablist Bullying Behaviour		Homophobic/Transphobic (L4BTQ+) Bullying Behaviour	
Exceptionally Bullying Behaviour		Physical Appearance Sexual Harassment	
Gender Identity Bullying Behaviour		Racist Bullying Behaviour	
Sexist Bullying Behaviour Sexual Harassment		Religious Identity Bullying Behaviour	
Poverty Bullying Behaviour		Other (specify)	

10. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact

11. Views of pupil(s) and parent(s) regarding the actions to be taken

12. Date of review with pupil(s) and parent(s) (within 20 days)	
13. Has bullying behaviour ceased?	
14. Views of pupil(s) and parents in relation to this	
15. If bullying behaviour has not ceased, set an agreed timeframe to meet again and review strategies	
16. Engagement with external services or supports (if any)	

If bullying behaviour continues beyond the review timeframes, the school's Code of Behaviour is to be used.

Signed _____ (Relevant Teacher)

Date _____

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal _____

