School Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

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The Board of Management of St. Joseph's College 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	11/02/2025	Staff Meeting
Students	01/05/2025	Online survey & focus group
Parents	01/05/2025	Online survey
Board of Management	3/6/2025	Discussed and Ratified.
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers		
Date policy was approved: 3-6-25		
Date policy was last reviewed: 3/6/25		

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):

Prevention Strategies Linked to Wellbeing Promotion Areas

1. Culture and Environment Establishing a positive and inclusive school culture and environment is fundamental to preventing bullying behaviour. This involves cultivating an environment where all members of the school community experience a sense of **belonging, safety, connection, and support**. Relationships should be built on **respect, care, integrity, and trust**. School leadership is crucial in setting the standards, and a consistent approach across all staff members is required when addressing bullying. Students and parents are active partners in fostering a school environment where

bullying is not tolerated.

- **Building a Respectful Culture:** Focus on building a respectful culture between staff and students. This involves creating a safe space where students feel they can confide in trusted adults. The school culture should be one where bullying behaviour is clearly unacceptable.
- **Regular Reinforcement:** Regularly reinforce and prioritise to students that there will be **no tolerance of any bullying or disrespectful behaviour**. This aligns with school leadership setting standards and staff taking a consistent approach.
- **Creating Safe Physical Spaces:** Modifying the physical environment can support prevention. Measures include ensuring good lighting, removing visual barriers, installing mirrors, and improving visibility of supervising staff. Visual posters/aids and signage promoting school values like equality, diversity, inclusion, and respect can contribute to this.
- **Supervision:** Implementing appropriate supervision is important. Students should remain under the watchful care of staff for the duration of the school day and/or on trips away from school, matches etc. Year group and/or age segregation of lockers and for lunches/break times is considered in relation to managing spaces and supervision.
- **Telling Environment:** Foster a 'telling' environment where students feel comfortable and supported in reporting concerns about bullying behaviour to a trusted adult. Addressing reasons why students might be hesitant to report is key.

2. Curriculum (Teaching and Learning) The teaching and learning experience provides significant opportunities to prevent bullying by promoting collaboration, respect, and understanding.

- **SPHE and RSE Curricula:** Utilise the SPHE and RSE curricula to foster wellbeing, self-confidence, belonging, and personal responsibility. These curricula help students develop social and emotional learning (SEL) skills and understand respectful relationships. Implement a consistent and uniform approach to teaching of bullying in SPHE classes using a targeted lesson plan across the school, ensuring the same message is conveyed. This also includes teaching online behaviour within the SPHE curriculum.
- **Diversity and Inclusion:** Incorporate diversity and inclusion throughout the curriculum, including Religious Education, CSPE, History etc to foster understanding of different beliefs, perspectives, and lived experiences. This aligns with promoting **continued awareness on different ethical backgrounds and diversity.**
- **Cross-Curricular Approach:** Implement a cross-curricular approach, for example, using texts like "Tich Miller" in English classes, to explore themes related to bullying, identity, and difference.
- **Empathy and Understanding:** Use guided questions in SPHE classes and share curricular experiences where students can identify and label bullying behaviour, linking this to real-life experiences. This helps in generating empathy and understanding e.g. use of relevant films, stories poems etc. Sharing the

experience of others can raise awareness of the impact of bullying.

- **Extra-Curricular Activities:** Provide **extra and co-curricular activities** to help students develop self-worth, foster new relationships, especially for those who might not belong to sports groups, and connect based on similar interests.
- **Digital Literacy:** Implement awareness through a **digital literacy programme**, potentially linked to the Digital Media Literacy curriculum, to teach students about responsible online behaviour and digital citizenship.

3. Policy and Planning School policies, particularly the Bí Cineálta policy, and associated plans are central to preventing and addressing bullying.

- **Communicating the Policy:** Communicate the school's Bí Cineálta policy and its student-friendly version to the entire school community. Each SPHE teacher covering the schools antibullying policy in term 1 is a method of communicating this policy.
- **Supporting Policies:** Ensure supporting policies like the acceptable use policy, supervision policy, and Code of Behaviour reinforce the Bí Cineálta policy. This includes measures like phones banned in school and websites blocked on school laptops (cyber) as part of the acceptable use policy. The Code of Behaviour is used for addressing inappropriate behaviour that does not meet the definition of bullying.
- **School Community Participation:** Involve the school community (staff, students, parents) in the development and review of the Bí Cineálta policy. Supporting student participation can increase awareness and effectiveness.
- **Professional Learning:** Facilitate teacher professional learning on preventing and addressing bullying, promoting inclusion, and diversity.

4. Relationships and Partnerships Strong relationships and partnerships among all members of the school community are vital.

- **Awareness Initiatives:** Conduct age-appropriate awareness initiatives about the causes and impacts of bullying, including identity-based bullying. Share the experience of others to make students aware of the impact of bullying.
- **Workshops and Seminars:** Organise workshops and seminars for students, staff, and parents to raise awareness. This aligns with inviting external speakers **on topics**.
- **Peer Support:** Encourage peer support mechanisms like peer mentoring to build empathy, respect, and resilience. The idea of building friendship bonds with other schools through fitness/sports events could also be seen as fostering positive peer relationships on a wider level.
- **Promoting Kindness:** Promote acts of kindness, which underpins the "Bí Cineálta" procedures and supports empathy and understanding. Encourage creating an environment or social space where students belong and like-minded connections are encouraged.

Strategies for Specific Types of Bullying Behaviour

The procedures highlight specific prevention strategies for different types of bullying.

- **Preventing Cyberbullying Behaviour:** Focus on promoting digital literacy and digital citizenship. Strategies include implementing the SPHE and Digital Media Literacy curricula, having conversations about respectful online behaviour, developing an acceptable use policy, referring to online behaviour in the Code of Behaviour, and promoting or hosting online safety events for parents. Measures like students not having mobile phones in school and websites blocked on school laptops are relevant here. Implementing awareness through a digital literacy programme is a specific strategy.
- **Preventing Homophobic/Transphobic (LGBTQ+) Bullying:** Strategies include maintaining an inclusive physical environment (e.g., displaying relevant posters), encouraging peer support and empathy building, challenging gender stereotypes, conducting awareness workshops/seminars, and encouraging students to speak up when witnessing homophobic behaviour.
- **Preventing Racist Bullying:** Foster a school culture that celebrates diversity, ensure cultural diversity is visible, conduct awareness workshops/seminars on racism, encourage peer support, encourage bystanders to report racist behaviour, support staff in communicating with parents from ethnic minorities, and invite speakers from diverse ethnic backgrounds.
- **Preventing Sexist Bullying:** Ensure staff model respectful behaviour and treat students equally regardless of sex, ensure equal opportunities in school activities, celebrate diversity, and organise awareness campaigns and workshops on gender equality and respect.
- **Preventing Sexual Harassment:** Implement education and awareness with a zero-tolerance approach. Strategies include using the updated SPHE specifications to teach about healthy relationships and respect, promoting positive role models, and challenging gender stereotypes. Sexual harassment should not be dismissed as teasing or banter.

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

The school has taken the following measures to create safe physical spaces:

- Ensure good lighting is present to avoid dark corners and spaces
- Remove visual barriers from windows such as posters
- Visibility of school staff on supervision of yard, canteen, toilets and corridors and break and lunch time.
- A mix of organised activities during break-times.

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

- Acceptable Use policy
- Supervision and Substitution policy
- SEN policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Bí Cineálta policy
- School Trip policy
- Health and Safety policy
- Guidance policy

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

Class teachers; Class tutors & Year Head

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

- If an SNA is approached by a student with a disclosure of potential bullying, the SNA will listen to the student and bring the concern to the SEN Coordinator/ASD Coordinator/Year Head as appropriate.

- In order to determine if bullying behaviour has occurred a behaviour checklist template is filled out by the staff member initially approached by the student(s). (Appendix 1)

- If it is decided that the behaviour is bullying the staff member will bring the initial template to the Year Head to complete a template for recording bullying behaviour. (Appendix 2)

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):

Determining if bullying behaviour has occurred

- To determine whether reported behaviour is bullying behaviour, consider the following questions:
  - Is the behaviour targeted at a specific student or group of students?
  - Is the behaviour intended to cause physical, social or emotional harm?
  - Is the behaviour repeated?
- Confirm that **bullying is defined as targeted behaviour, online or offline, that causes harm (physical, social and/or emotional). It is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power in relationships.**
- Understand that bullying is deliberate, unwanted behaviour where the student displaying the behaviour knows it is or will be perceived as harmful (physical, social, and/or emotional).
- Recognise that bullying is a systematic pattern of behaviour repeated over time. Note that a single hurtful online message can be considered bullying behaviour if it is highly likely to be reposted or shared, becoming repeated.
- Identify if there is an imbalance of power (real or perceived) that makes it hard for the student experiencing the behaviour to defend themselves. This can relate to differences in size, strength, age, ability, peer group power, social status, identity factors, or online anonymity/technical proficiency.
- Note that repeated harm that is real for the student experiencing it but unintended by the other student is *not* bullying behaviour but must still be addressed under the school's code of behaviour.
- Note that a one-off instance of negative behaviour (except for some online cases) is *not* bullying behaviour.
- Note that disagreement or not wanting to be friends is *not* bullying unless it involves deliberate, repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude, or manipulate friendships.
- Note that behaviour from students with special educational needs communicating needs that causes hurt is *not* deliberate or planned and therefore *not* bullying.
- Confirm that strategies for dealing with inappropriate behaviour that is not bullying are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.
- When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred, teachers should consider **what, where, when and why.**
- If a group of students is involved, engage with each student individually at first.
- Thereafter, meet with all students involved as a group.
- At the group meeting, ask each student for their account of what happened to ensure clarity on each other's views.
- Support each student, as appropriate, following the group meeting.
- Consider asking the students involved to write down their account of the incident(s).

2. Approaches taken to address the bullying behaviour

- Aim to stop the bullying behaviour.
- Aim to restore, as far as practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.
- Adhere to the following principles when addressing bullying behaviour:
  - Ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour feels listened to and reassured. Engage with them without delay.
  - 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. Involve them in deciding on the actions that will be taken to ensure their agency is not decreased further.
  - Take action in a timely manner.
  - Inform parents of those involved. Parents must be contacted at an early stage to be informed and consulted on the actions to be taken, as outlined in the school's policy. Consider communication barriers when communicating with parents (e.g., literacy, digital literacy, language barriers). Develop an appropriate plan to support a student who expresses concern about parents being informed.
- Be fair and consistent in the approach.
- Provide support for **both** the student experiencing and the student displaying the behaviour.
- Identify the supports needed for the student displaying bullying behaviour to better manage relational difficulties and ensure their needs are met.
- Decide on an approach that is best suited to the school's circumstances and specify it in the school's Bí Cineálta policy.
- Use approaches like restorative practice and mediation only if teachers are trained and students agree.
- Where bullying behaviour occurs outside school but has an impact in school and continues in school, deal with it according to the Bí Cineálta policy.
- If the student displaying the behaviour is not from the school, support the student experiencing the behaviour and engage with them and their parents on steps.
- If a student reporting bullying asks for no action other than looking out for them, show empathy, deal with it sensitively, and work with the student to agree on steps and how parents will be informed.
- If parents request no action (preferably in writing), schools may still decide to address the behaviour based on circumstances.
- Recognise that bullying behaviour can become a child protection concern when it results in significant physical or emotional harm or is persistent and severe with ineffective measures.
- Report concerns at or above the threshold of harm (seriously affected health, development, or welfare) to Tusla. If the staff member is a registered teacher, report jointly with the DLP for mandated reports. Report reasonable concerns that don't meet the mandated reporting threshold to the DLP or Tusla under Children First National Guidance. Seek advice from Tusla if in doubt.
- **Record all incidents of bullying behaviour.**
- Document the form and type of behaviour (if known), where and when it took

place, and the date of initial engagement with students and parents.
- Include the views of students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken.
- Document the actions and supports agreed.
- Retain records according to the school's policy and data protection regulations.
- Consider placing copies of the record on the student's support file or incorporating them into a Student Support Plan.

3. Reviewing progress

- **Engage with the students and parents involved again no more than 20 school days after the initial discussion to review progress.**
- Consider the nature of the bullying behaviour, the effectiveness of the strategies used, and the relationship between the students involved as part of the review.
- **Document the review with students and parents to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased** and their views on this.
- Record the date that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased.
- Note any engagement with external services/supports.
- Understand that even if bullying behaviour has ceased, ongoing supervision and support may be required for both students.
- Recognise that it can take time for relationships to settle or supports to take effect, and relationships may not always be fully restored.
- If the bullying behaviour has not ceased, review the strategies used in consultation with the students and parents.
- Agree to meet again over an agreed timeframe until the behaviour has ceased.
- Where it is clear that the student displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing, consider using strategies from the school's Code of Behaviour.
- If disciplinary sanctions are considered, this is a matter between the student, their parents, and the school.
- If a parent is not satisfied with how bullying behaviour has been addressed according to these procedures, refer them to the school's complaints procedure.
- Inform students and/or parents that they may complain to the Ombudsman for Children if dissatisfied with how a complaint was handled and they believe the school's actions negatively affected the student.

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):

Support for Students Who Experience Bullying Behaviour
- Engage with the student without delay so they feel listened to and reassured.
- Take action in a timely manner to prevent further harm.
- Involve the student in deciding how best to address the situation to preserve their agency.
- Ensure privacy and sensitivity in all conversations.
- Inform and consult with the student's parents early in the process.

- Continue support through supervision, emotional support, or external services, even after bullying behaviour has ceased.

Support for Students Who Display Bullying Behaviour
- Identify and provide support needed to manage relational difficulties and meet their emotional and social needs.
- Consider strategies such as restorative practice and mediation—only if staff are trained and students consent.
- Where necessary, apply the school's Code of Behaviour for inappropriate behaviour.
- Continue monitoring and support, especially if behaviour persists.

Support for Students Who Witness Bullying Behaviour
- Encourage and support them to report what they observed.
- Reassure them they've done the right thing by telling a trusted adult.
- Provide emotional support as needed, especially if they feel guilt or anxiety.
- Educate them about the importance of standing up safely against bullying behaviour.

General Approaches for All Involved
- Use a fair and consistent approach in all cases.
- Conduct individual and group meetings to establish clarity and shared understanding.
- Keep detailed records of all actions taken and views shared.
- Schedule a review meeting within 20 school days to assess if bullying has ceased.
- Engage with external supports such as NEPS, Oide, and Webwise as appropriate.

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: _____
(Chairperson of board of management)

Date: 2/6/2025

Signed: *Kevin McCarthy*
(Principal)

Date: 3/6/2025

Appendix 1

Bullying Behaviour Determination Checklist Template

To be completed when a student discloses a potential incident of bullying.

Name of student: _____

Name of staff member/teacher: _____

Date: _____

Section	Guiding Questions	Notes / Observations	Tick if Yes
1. Initial Disclosure	What happened?		☐
	Where did it happen?		☐
	When did it happen?		☐
	Why did it happen?		☐
2. Bullying Behaviour Indicators	Was it targeted behaviour at a specific student/group?		☐
	Was it repeated or likely to be repeated (e.g., shared online)?		☐
	Was there an imbalance of power (real or perceived)?		☐
3. Behaviour Not Considered Bullying	Was it a one-off incident without repetition or power imbalance?		☐
	Was the behaviour unintended, with no awareness of harm?		☐
	Was it conflict, rejection or disagreement not involving harm or exclusion?		☐

	Did it involve a student with SEN displaying behaviour to communicate needs?		☐
4. Additional Considerations	Could this be considered criminal behaviour?		☐
	Is there a child protection concern?		☐
5. Immediate Actions	Was the student listened to and reassured?		☐
	Have parents/guardians been informed (if appropriate)?		☐
	Has the incident been recorded and next steps planned?		☐

Appendix 2

Template for recording bullying behaviour

Date: _____

1. Name of student being bullied and year group

Name: _____

Year Group: _____

2. Name(s) and Year group of student(s) engaged in bullying behaviour

3. Location of incidents (tick as relevant)

School playground/yard		Locker area	
Classroom		Changing rooms	
Corridor		Gym	
Toilets		Canteen	
School bus		Other	

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

5. Type of bullying (tick relevant box(es))

Physical		Verbal	
Written		Extortion	
Exclusion		Relational	
Online		Disablist	
Exceptionally able		Gender identity	
Homophobic/Transphobic		Physical appearance	
Racist		Poverty	
Religious identity		Sexist	
Sexual harassment		Other (specify)	

6. Brief description of bullying behaviour and its impact (include the dates, if known, when it occurred)

7. Details of actions to be taken – to include the views of the students and their parents.

8. Was engagement with external services/supports sought?
   - Yes
   - No

If Yes. give further details

9. Review with student(s) and their parents to determine that bullying behaviour has ceased – within 20 school days

Date: _____