

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.

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

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.

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)

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

- 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.

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?		☐

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

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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)	☐

8. Was engagement with external services/supports sought?

- Yes
- No

If Yes, give further details

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

Date: _____

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