



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

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of **St John of God NS** 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	4 th April 2025	Whole Staff Meeting (half day closure)
Students	6 th May 2025	Surveys Discussions with student council
Parents	1 st May 2025	Online Survey
Board of Management	23 rd June	Board meeting
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	4 th April	Whole staff meeting
Date policy was approved: Ratified y the Board of Management on 23 rd June 2025		
Date policy was last reviewed:		

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):

Culture and Environment

- Model respectful behavior to all members of the school community
- Assemblies that include everyone
- Sensory Room / Sensory Circuits / Calm Corners
- Alternative seating options in classrooms
- A school community that looks out for one another - a culture that promotes telling / and standing up for others
- Multicultural Day
- Positive Behaviour Board
- Friendship Week
- Clear Rules and Expectations in each class

- Safe playground spaces, easily accessible and in view of adults at all times.
- Appropriate levels of supervision with lots of play equipment on the yard to encourage play and interaction.

Curriculum – Teaching and Learning

- A thorough SPHE programme incorporating RSE and Stay Safe to teach personal safety, social and emotional skills as well as a sense of self confidence and belonging.
- A strong focus on belonging and community, looking out for one another to build a culture that promotes telling and seeking help for those in need or those being bullied or hurt by others.
- Clear classroom rules and expectations.
- Group seating and opportunities to work in pairs and groups to foster a sense of belonging and community.
- Alternative seating options in class
- Daily morning meeting circle in each class.
- Friendship Week
- Wellbeing week
- Regular inclusive assemblies
- Inclusion Team – part of the NSCE sustained in school therapy programme (2025 – 2027) – ensures that difference is acknowledged and respected in the school
- In class movement breaks
- Respect and acknowledgement of our diverse school community by providing a range of diverse books in the library and holding events such as Multi-cultural Day
- Active Schools Team – encourage participation on the yard with plenty of play equipment to encourage group play and interaction.

Policy and Planning

- Bí Cineálta Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Social Media Policy
- SPHE Plan
- Supervision Rota for breaktimes

Relationships and Partnerships

- Daily Morning Meetings
- Friendship Week / Good Behaviour Week

- Seesaw Digital learning journals for communication with home
- Giving the students a voice via the Student Council / Active Schools Committee
- Responsibility for older children to foster a sense of belonging, community and self-esteem – e.g. doors at breaktimes, distribution of lunches, taking care of ipads etc.
- Breakfast Club and after school clubs
- Regular whole school assemblies to build a sense of community, appreciate difference and reinforce school culture, expectations and ethos.
- Monthly curriculum outline emailed home at the end of each month.
- HSCL initiatives – Home visits, coffee mornings, in class activities (maths for fun etc), parent classes, multi-cultural day etc.
- Parents Association
- Regular newsletters
- Easy communication between parents and teachers via email / phonecall and / or meetings by appointment.

Preventing Cyber Bullying Behavior

- Implementing SPHE curriculum
- Open conversations with students about developing respectful and kind relationships online
- Referring to appropriate online behaviour as part of the standards of behaviour in the Code of Behaviour
- Promoting online safety events for parents who are responsible for overseeing their children's activities online
- Holding internet safety day

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

Preventing homophobic/ transphobic bullying behaviour

- Maintaining an inclusive physical environment such as displaying relevant posters
- Encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities with the likes of morning meetings and team building activities. Building a culture of belonging within each class.
- Challenging gender-stereotypes
- Encouraging students to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour – a culture of upstander vs bystander

Preventing racist bullying behaviour

- Fostering a school culture where diversity is celebrated and where students “see themselves” in their school environment
- Ensuring that library reading material and textbooks represent appropriate lived experiences of students and adults from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds
- Encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities with the likes of morning meetings and team building activities. Building a culture of belonging within each class.
- Encouraging students to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour – a culture of upstander vs bystander
- providing supports to school staff to support students from ethnic minorities, including Traveller and Roma students, and to encourage communication with their parents.

Preventing sexist bullying behaviour

- ensuring members of staff model respectful behaviour 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 contribution of all students
- encouraging parents to reinforce these values of respect at home

Preventing Sexual Harassment

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

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

- There is a supervision rota for all breaktimes ensuring that children are adequately supervised on the playground. This includes 10 minutes daily before the start of each day.
- On wet days, the children must remain seated in their classroom with an activity. Teachers on supervision move between the classes.
- Teachers move around the playground, interacting with children during breaktimes.
- There is a mix of playground equipment available to the children during break times to ensure they are active and engaged.
- All staff are responsible for upholding rules and expectations in the school.
- Children only enter the school from the playground with the permission of a teacher / SNA.
- Trips and activities off site will have a pupil to adult ratio of approximately 10:1.
- Children use ipads and other devices as a learning / communication tool under the supervision of a teacher / SNA only.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

The teacher(s) with responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour is (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, recording bullying behaviour on the correct form and follow up after 20 days.

All staff will be vigilant to bullying behaviour.

Principal will inform Board of Management of incidences of Bullying.

When bullying behaviour occurs, the school will:

- > ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour is heard and reassured
- > seek to ensure the privacy of those involved
- > conduct all conversations with sensitivity
- > consider the age and ability of those involved
- > listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation
- > take action in a timely manner
- > inform parents of those involved

The steps that will be taken by the school to determine if bullying behaviour has occurred, the approaches taken to address the bullying behaviour and to review progress are as follows (see Chapter 6 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

The whole school community has a responsibility to prevent and address bullying behaviour. The following approach and steps are based on the information contained in Chapter 6 of the Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.

Approach

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, the teachers with responsibility will:

- 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
- inform parents of those involved.

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.

To determine whether the behaviour observed and / or reported is bullying behaviour we 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.

Note: One-off incidents may be considered bullying behaviour 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 inappropriate behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

Stage 1

When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred, teachers should consider what, where, when and why? as follows: (Note that these steps are required – as outlined in the Procedures):

- Where one student is reported to be involved, the student should be engaged with individually at first to establish the **what**, **where** and **when**.
- Thereafter, this student and the student who is reported to be experiencing the bullying behaviour may be met together if appropriate and depending on the children involved (bearing in mind that the child experiencing bullying may not be comfortable for some time).
- At the group meeting, each student should be asked for their account of **what** happened, **where** it happened and **when** to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's views. It may be helpful to ask the students involved to write down their account of the incident(s).
- Each student should be supported as appropriate, following the group meeting.
- Parents will be supported by the school, if needed, with recommendations for useful resources/guides to help them support their children.

Stage 2

Where bullying behaviour has occurred

- Parents are an integral part of the school community and play an important role, in partnership with schools, in addressing bullying behaviour. Where bullying behaviour has occurred the parents of the students involved must be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and to consult with them on the actions to be taken to address the behaviour.
- It is important to listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation.
- Staff will be fair and consistent in their approach.
- All bullying behaviour will be recorded. This will include the form and type of behaviour if known (see pages 20-24, Section 2.5 and 2.7 of the Bí Cineálta procedures for descriptions/examples of the forms and types of bullying 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.
- The record should be shared with the Principal.

Note: A school is not expected to deal with bullying behaviour that occurs when students are not under the care or responsibility of the school. However, where this bullying behaviour has an impact in school, schools are required to support the students involved. Where the bullying behaviour continues in school, it will be dealt with in accordance with the Bí Cineálta Policy.

Where the student displaying the bullying behaviour is not a student in the school but the student who is experiencing it is, the school should support the student who is experiencing the bullying.

Stage 3

Follow up where bullying behaviour has occurred

- The teacher must engage with the students involved and their parents again no more than 20 school days after the initial engagement. Important factors to consider as part of this engagement are the nature of the bullying behaviour, the effectiveness of the strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and the relationship between the students involved.
- The teacher 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. The date that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased should also be recorded.
- Any engagement with external services/supports should also be noted.
- Ongoing supervision and support may be needed for the students involved even where bullying behaviour has ceased.
- If the bullying behaviour has not ceased the teacher should review the strategies used in consultation with the students involved and their parents. A timeframe should be agreed for further engagement until the bullying behaviour has ceased.
- If it becomes clear that the student who is displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behaviour, then consideration should be given to 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 the school.
- If a parent(s) is not satisfied with how the bullying behaviour has been addressed by the school, in accordance with the Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools they shall be referred to the school's complaints procedures.
- If a parent is dissatisfied with how a complaint has been handled, they may make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children if they believe that the school's actions have had a negative effect on 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):

Each incidence of bullying will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis but the following approaches may be used generally;

- Regular check ins with the children involved and their parents.
- Support from SET to help nurture relationships / build self-esteem where necessary and appropriate
- Support from NEPS and Oide and TUSLA as appropriate
- Referral to outside agencies such as psychology / counselling as appropriate
- Websites such as Webwise, FUSE (DCU antibullying Centre)
- Ongoing CPD for staff

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: Brenda Purty (Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: Sinéad Feery (Acting principal)

Date: 23/06/2025