



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

The Board of Management of St. Joseph's N.S. 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.

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.

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	29/05/2025	Bí Cineálta Half Day training
Students	June 4th-6th	Surveys
Parents	June 6th-13th	Survey sent home on Aladdin and also available on the school website
Board of Management	19/06/2025	Board of Management meeting
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus escorts, school secretary,	19/06/2025	Consultation in school
Date policy was approved: 19/06/2025		
Date policy was last reviewed: 25/09/2024		

### 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 as appropriate (see Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

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

- Positive and inclusive school culture - 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.

- Positive relationships
- A telling environment
- A trusted adult
- Safe physical spaces
- Supervision
- Teaching and learning in SPHE
- RSE curriculum
- Extra-curricular activities
- Group Work/Collaboration
- Policies (Bí Cineálta, Code of Behaviour, Child Safeguarding etc.)
- Promoting peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
- Supporting activities that build empathy, respect and resilience
- Encouraging students to speak up if they witness homophobic behaviour
- Fostering a school culture where diversity is celebrated and where students 'see themselves' in their school environment
- Having the cultural diversity of the school visible and on display
- 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 contributions of all students
- Promoting positive role models within the school community
- Weekly assemblies
- Buddy system
- Regular surveys/ surveys when issues arise- write about anything if they have nothing to say at all.
- Informing children of expectations and consequences prior to issues occurring
- Communicating to students and parents that phones, smartwatches and all audio/visual recording devices are not permitted in school due to their voice and video recording features.

The dignity and the wellbeing of the individual person is of paramount concern in our Christian response. This school will listen closely to and dialogue with parents, thereby building a relationship of mutual understanding, respect, trust and confidence.

In continuing to develop prevention strategies, this school will listen to young people and parents, to help establish their particular context and needs. Frequent periods of reflection and further engagement by the school, young people and parents, will be used to discern appropriate supports for young people in this school and help inform future prevention strategies.

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):

- Before classes begin each morning, during all breaks and after school ends, teachers fulfil a supervisory role in the school grounds, corridors and classrooms.
- All organised in-school activities at break times, before or after school are supervised by teachers/coaches.
- Communication between members of staff (Teachers and SNAs)

- Yard book
- Art work/posters around the school to promote the school's values

### Safe Places

Pupils are only allowed access to those parts of the school and school grounds that are sufficiently well lit and visible to supervisory staff to be safe for all who avail of them.

The school gates are locked at each break time to ensure children can play safely.

Pupils are only allowed access to equipment storage spaces when teachers are present.

Children are encouraged to go to the toilet before break and lunch times. If they need to go during break or lunch times, children are allowed in one at the time to the closest toilet. Younger children are escorted in by SNAs.

### Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

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 as far as is practicable
- > 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):

This school's procedures for uncovering, investigation, follow-up and recording of bullying behaviour, and the established intervention strategies used by the school for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour are as follows:

- The 'Class Teacher' investigates all instances of reported or suspected bullying behaviour, whether these take place within the school or outside it but with an impact within it, with a view to establishing the facts and bringing any bullying behaviour to an end.

- Since bullying is often hidden from teachers and not reported, but pupils “see everything,” special surveys are regularly used (e.g. at least every term and whenever a particular concern arises) to help uncover possible bullying situations. These surveys allow pupils to suggest who they think their teacher should talk to in relation to these situations. The surveys have then completed their work – it is the teacher who decides if the behaviour is really bullying.
- It is made clear to pupils that if they report possible bullying behaviour in surveys they are not getting others “in trouble” with anyone but rather enabling them to get out of trouble into which they may ultimately get if the behaviour turned out to be bullying and if it continued. We also remind children that it can be difficult to report bullying. With this approach, the well documented reluctance of pupils to report bullying behaviour is significantly reduced or even disappears altogether bringing to an end the “no telling” culture. This is necessary to empower pupils who observe bullying behaviour to report it without fear of a bad outcome for themselves or anyone else and without fear of any backlash by anyone against anyone involved. This is the approach that enables this school, with the help of its now-well-informed and highly aware pupils, to uncover hidden bullying (and the majority of all bullying that takes place is hidden) so it can be quickly and calmly brought to an end.
- Pupils who are alleged to have been involved in behaviour that may have been bullying behaviour are interviewed by the ‘Class Teacher,’ acting *in loco parentis* (as authorised by the D.E.S. and the Board of Management) to establish the facts and ascertain whether the behaviour was in fact bullying and if so, the nature and extent of it and any reasons for it.
- The School, through the ‘Class Teacher’ reserves the right to ask any pupil, whether suggested in a survey or not, to write an account of what happened, as part of an investigation. This will be a standard procedure and does not necessarily imply that any pupil is guilty of any misbehaviour.
- *Positive Problem Solving Interview:* The ‘Class Teacher’ does not apportion blame but rather treats all bullying behaviour as something that can and must be remedied. S/he emphasises to the interviewed pupil that the intention is not to punish anyone but to explain how harmful and hurtful bullying is and then, in the event that the behaviour in question was bullying behaviour, asks the pupil to promise not to bully anyone again, on the basis that if/when s/he makes and keeps that promise s/he will not be punished and is not “in trouble” with anyone.
- *Giving a Pupil “One Chance”:* In the event that the interviewed pupil is found by the teacher to have been involved in bullying behaviour s/he is offered “one chance” – to sign and honour a binding promise that s/he will stop bullying, regardless of what form it took, and treat all pupils fairly, equally and respectfully from then on, including any previously targeted pupil(s). If the pupil makes, and honours that promise then in natural justice s/he is given that “one chance” to make a fresh start (a) with no punishment, since the bullying is now over. This is the best possible outcome – the bullying situation is now fully resolved with no resentment, no risk of backlash, a “win-win” outcome for all concerned.
- *Final Report:* When an investigation is completed and/or a bullying situation is resolved the ‘Class Teacher’ will complete a report, to include the findings of the investigation, the “reform, not blame” strategy adopted and the outcome of the intervention, as well as any other relevant information. The results of a check-back, which in this school normally takes place about two weeks later, to revisit and reassess whether the bullying is really over, is added to the report at that stage.
- *The Best Possible Outcome:* If, using this efficient, low-key, restorative, child-friendly “reform, not blame” approach, the promise continues to be honoured, indicating that the resolution of the initial bullying situation was successful, this matter may never have to be revisited and everyone involved, with minimum fuss, can “live happily ever after.” In such cases the “preliminary step” detailed above is the only step needed. However, in the event of a breach of promise – a resumption of bullying behaviour (which is repeated, targeted, hurtful/harmful behaviour), whether against previously targeted pupil(s) or other(s), further action will follow at that still “early stage.”

*If a First Promise to Stop Bullying is Broken, then (at this “early stage”) – the Next Steps*

- If a pupil has signed such a promise but then chooses to break it, and subsequently bully either the same pupil(s) again or any other pupil(s), the Principal will be informed about what has taken place and parent(s)/guardian(s) will be immediately informed at that very “early stage” (Bí Cineálta 6.2 p. 44). Then, in accordance with the Bí Cineálta procedures, parent(s)/guardian(s) will be consulted by the ‘Class Teacher’ regarding the actions to be taken to address and monitor the pupil’s ongoing behaviour.
- If the pupil is being asked to make a second solemn promise, which would constitute an attempt at resolution of that second bullying situation without blame or punishment, parent(s)/guardian(s) will be asked to countersign it, knowing that if this second promise is broken the pupil will be dealt with under the school’s wider Code of Behaviour. This may involve direct contact between parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school Principal and may involve imposition of sanctions on the pupil.
- If the second promise, reinforced by parent(s)/guardian(s), is honoured then that bullying situation is regarded as resolved. The teacher’s final report then includes, in addition to all the details referred to in the ‘Final Report’ paragraph above, the details of the interactions with parent(s)/guardian(s) in this case. The results of a check-back, which in this school normally takes place about two weeks later, to revisit and reassess whether the bullying is really over, is added to the report at that stage. This will include input from parent(s)/guardian(s) as to whether they consider the bullying to be over and whether they are satisfied with the final outcome as well as any other relevant information.
- Breach of this additional promise by further bullying behaviour would be regarded as a very grave matter and a sanction may be imposed by the school authorities in accordance with the school’s wider Code of Behaviour (See sanctions below).
- All documentation regarding bullying situations and their resolution is retained securely in the school.

### Sanctions:

Where a pupil has been found to be engaged in bullying behaviour, has formally promised to stop and has broken that promise, any of the following sanctions may be imposed:

- The Principal meets with the child and the parents/guardians.
- Procedures in line with the school’s Code of Behaviour will be invoked.
- Sanctions, up to and including Suspension or Expulsion may be invoked.
- The case may be referred to the board of management and the board will follow TESS guidelines regarding expelling and/or expulsion.

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):

- Listening
- Showing empathy
- Reassuring the student
- Asking them to let them know if the bullying behaviour occurs in school.
- Devising appropriate “check in” mechanisms
- Discussing how the student can inform their parents of the situation if they haven’t done so already

## Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools

All bullying behaviour will be recorded. This will include the type of behaviour, where and when it took place, and the date of the engagement with students and parents. The actions and supports agreed to address bullying behaviour will be documented. If the bullying behaviour is a child protection concern the matter will be addressed without delay in accordance with *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

### Section D: Oversight

The principal will present an update on bullying behaviour at each board of management meeting. This update will include the number of incidents of bullying behaviour that have been reported since the last meeting, the number of ongoing incidents and the total number of incidents since the beginning of the school year. Where incidents of bullying behaviour have occurred, the principal will also provide a verbal update which will include where relevant, information relating to trends and patterns identified, strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and any wider strategies to prevent and address bullying behaviour where relevant. This update does not contain personal or identifying information. See Chapter 7 of the *Bí Cineálta* procedures.

This policy is available to our school community on the school's website and in hard copy on request. A student friendly version of this policy is displayed in the school and is also available on our website and in hard copy on request.

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed, following input from our school community, each calendar year or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which this policy refers.

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

(Chairperson of board of management)

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

(Principal)