



St. Joseph's N.S.

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of St. Joseph's National School 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 *Cineálta: 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.

In incidents of bullying, the student experiencing the bullying behaviour finds it hard to defend themselves as a result of the abuse of a real or perceived imbalance of power.

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	May 2025	Staff questionnaire, half day training & sharing of draft policy with staff to discuss and make any amendments.
Students	May 2025	Student questionnaire & feedback sought from children in formation of a Child Friendly Bí Cineálta policy.
Parents	May 2025	Parent questionnaire & email to Parents' Association seeking feedback on draft policy.
Board of Management	June 2025	BOM Meeting to review draft policy leading to consultation and final ratification after amendments made where necessary.
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	June 2025	Publish on school website.
Date policy was approved:		
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

- Create a positive and inclusive school culture and environment which is welcoming of difference and diversity where students and staff experience a sense of belonging, feel safe, connected and supported.
- Promote respectful relationships between all members of the school community, based on respect, care, integrity and trust.
- Students can shape the school culture by promoting kindness and inclusion within their peer group and maintain a positive and supportive school environment for all.
- Involvement of parents, as active partners in their child's education, can help foster an environment where bullying behaviour is not tolerated through promoting empathy and respect.
- A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact.
- Effective leadership is a key component in setting the standards and expectations for the school community in preventing and addressing bullying.

- Each member of staff has a responsibility to develop and maintain a school culture where bullying behaviour is unacceptable and take a consistent approach to addressing bullying behaviour.
- Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies).
- Staff are briefed on the uniform approach we must take to handle all reports of bullying.
- Promote a school ethos which supports the idea that our school is a telling environment which encourages children to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment.
- Promote the concept of “a trusted adult” to encourage students to report if they or another student is experiencing bullying behaviour.
- Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils.
- Create safe physical spaces in our school building and yard where visibility is prioritised.
- Incorporate artwork and signs to promote our school values – equality, inclusion and respect.
- Encourage a sense of belonging with ownership over their own space through art and creativity.
- Staff are particularly vigilant in monitoring pupils who are considered at risk of bullying/ being bullied.
- Implement a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and for those involved in bullying behaviour
- Work with appropriate agencies in countering all forms of bullying and promoting anti bullying behaviour.

Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)

- Provide teaching and promote learning which is collaborative and respectful, fostering inclusion and respect for diversity.
- Students are given regular opportunities to work in small groups with peers, which can help build a sense of connection, belonging and empathy.
- Implementation of SPHE and RSE curriculum which fosters students’ well-being and self confidence as well as promoting personal responsibility for their own behaviours and actions.
- Stay Safe and SPHE lessons focusing on positive behaviour form part of curricular content in all classes.
- Teachers model respectful behaviour towards colleagues, pupils and visitors.
- Curricular and extracurricular activities can help to develop a sense of self worth, working together, inclusion and respect.
- Opportunities to participate in class and whole school activities to raise self-esteem including; role-play, group work and circle time.
- Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including, in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.
- Anti Bullying week activities such as Random Acts of Kindness homework, poster making, slogan making, etc.
- Supports available to the school e.g. www.tacklebullying.ie, www.antibullyingcentre.ie, fuse, www.webwise.ie.
- Shared folder of resources on Google drive for all teachers to access.

Policy and Planning

- Bí Cineálta Policy
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the Bí Cineálta Policy
- Student friendly Bí Cineálta Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Supervision Policy
- RSE Policy
- SEN policy
- DEIS Plan
- Appropriate Teacher Professional Learning

Relationships and Partnerships

- Age-appropriate initiatives that engage students in looking at the causes and impacts of bullying behaviour.
- Supporting the active participation of students in school life such as the Green Schools committee, school sports teams, assembly, etc.
- Engaging students in actively contributing to the formation of a Child Friendly Bí Cineálta Policy to make them active participants in promotion of and discussion of useful ways to identify and reduce bullying behaviour and how to deal with it if it does occur.
- Supporting the active participation of parents in school life for example; our Parents' Association, our Science Fair, etc.
- Conducting workshops for students, staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of bullying.
- Encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring.
- Promoting acts of kindness.
- Teaching problem solving skills.
- Hosting debates.

Preventing cyber bullying behaviour

- Implementing the SPHE curriculum.
- Implementing the Digital Media Literacy curriculum which teaches students about responsible online behaviour and digital citizenship.
- Having regular conversations with students about developing respectful and kind relationships online.
- Communicating an Acceptable Use Policy for technology.
- 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 to reinforce awareness around appropriate online behaviour.

(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 technically 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.
- Challenging gender-stereotypes.
- Conducting workshops for students, staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of homophobic bullying behaviour.
- Encouraging students to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour.

Preventing racist bullying 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.
- Conducting workshops for students, staff and parents to raise awareness of racism.
- Encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities.
- Encouraging bystanders to report when they witness racist behaviour.
- Providing supports to staff to respond to the needs of students for whom English is an additional language and for communicating with their parents.
- Providing supports to school staff to support students from ethnic minorities, including Traveller and Roma students, and to encourage communication with their parents.
- Inviting speakers from diverse ethnic backgrounds.
- Ensuring that library reading material and textbooks represent appropriate lived experiences of students and adults from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.
- Acknowledging our diverse school population and celebrating diversity and culture in our school through art, displays, photographs and international events.

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.
- Organising workshops on gender equality and respect.
- 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 (see Chapter 5 of the BÍ Cineálta procedures):

In addition to above mentioned strategies, the school has the following in place to prevent and address bullying:

- A teacher and three SNAs present to supervise the yard at small break and lunch time.
- A teacher is timetabled to supervise morning and evening time as pupils are entering and exiting the school.
- Children are accompanied by at least one staff member on school trips.
- Children are told where to play when out in the yard and what spaces to avoid.
- Teachers bear in mind children who may have recently clashed when organising groups for collaborative work/ teams etc.

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.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

- All class teachers.
 - All staff will be vigilant to bullying behaviour.
 - 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 and recording bullying behaviour.
 - The DLP will follow up after twenty days to investigate if bullying has ceased.
 - Principal will inform the Board of Management of incidents of Bullying.
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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):

Identify if bullying behaviour has occurred

The following questions will be considered to determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour:

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 to any of these questions is **No**, then the behaviour is not bullying behaviour. Incidents can occur where behaviour is unacceptable and hurtful but the behaviour is not bullying behaviour. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behavior.

Note: one-off incidents may be considered bullying 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.

When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred teachers should consider what, where, when and why?

- If a group of students is involved, each student should be engaged with individually at first.
- Thereafter, all students involved should be met as a group.
- At the group meeting, each student should be asked for 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(s).

Where bullying behaviour has occurred

- Where bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the students involved should 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.
- A record should be kept of the engagement of all involved.
- This record should document the form and type of bullying behaviour (*see Section 2.5 and 2.7 of the Bí Cineálta procedures*), where and when it took place and the date of the initial engagement with the students involved and their parents.
- The record should include the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour.

Parents of both parties 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 as outlined in the school's *Bí Cineálta* policy. 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.

Requests no action taken

A student who reports bullying behaviour may ask a member of staff not to do anything and just "look out" for them due to not wanting to be identified as having told someone about the

bullying behaviour. They might feel that telling someone might make things more difficult 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 behaviour. It must be made clear to the pupil that other parties may need to be informed for their welfare.

Parents may also make the school aware of bullying behaviour and specifically request that no action is to be taken by the school. Parents should put this in writing to the school. However, schools 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.

Determining if bullying behaviour has ceased

- 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.
- Even though the bullying behaviour may have ceased, ongoing supervision and support may be required for both the student who has experienced the bullying behaviour as well as the student who has displayed the behaviour.
- 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 behaviour 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 consideration should be given to using the strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour as provided 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.

Recording bullying behaviour

All incidents of bullying behaviour should be recorded. The record should document the form (*Section 2.5*) and type (*See Section 2.7*) of bullying behaviour, if known, where and when it took place and the date of the initial engagement with the students and their parents.

- The record should include the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour.
- 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.
- It is important to document the date of each of these engagements and the date that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased.
- 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.
- Where a Student Support File exists for a student, schools are encouraged to place a copy of the record on the student's support file.

Complaint process

If a parent is not satisfied with how the 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

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):

Where bullying behaviour has occurred

It is important for staff to be fair and consistent in their approach to address bullying behaviour. Both the student who is experiencing bullying behaviour and the student who is displaying bullying behaviour need support. Engage with the student who is experiencing bullying without delay. School staff should identify the supports needed for the student who is displaying bullying behaviour to better manage relational difficulties. It is important that a student's agency is not decreased further by adults deciding what will happen next without listening to the student and involving them in deciding on the actions that will be taken.

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, then school can deal with it in accordance with Bí Cineálta policy.

Supporting Bullied pupils

- Ending the bullying behaviour.
- Fostering respect for bullied pupils and all pupils.
- Fostering greater empathy towards and support for bullied pupils.
- Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through annual awareness-raising programmes.
- Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through the speedy identification of those responsible and speedy resolution of bullying situations.
- Making adequate counselling facilities available to pupils who need it in a timely manner (subject to available funding).
- Helping bullied pupils raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that help develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school).

Supporting Bullying pupils

- Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are not blamed or punished and get a 'clean sheet.'
- Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are doing the right and honorable thing and giving them praise for this.
- Making adequate counseling facilities available to help those who need it learn other ways of meeting their needs besides violating the rights of others.
- Helping those who need to raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school).
- Using learning strategies throughout the school and the curriculum to help enhance

pupils' feelings of self-worth.

- In dealing with negative behavior in general, encouraging teachers and parents to focus on, challenge and correct the behaviour while supporting the child.
- In dealing with bullying behaviour seeking resolution and offering a fresh start with a 'clan sheet' and no blame in return for keeping a promise to reform.

Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and PostPrimary 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.

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)

Signed: _____

(Principal)

Date: _____

Date: _____