

St. Joseph's N.S. Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

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 such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the 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 each person 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 all have an indispensable 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	14/03/2025	Focus Groups
Students	31 / 03 /25	Focus Groups and Questionnaires
Parents	24 / 03 /25	Questionnaires
Board of Management	24/06/2025	Discussion
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers, external coaches	31/03/2025	Discussion
Date policy was approved: 24 / 06/25		

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):

In developing 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 the school in a real way.

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 board of management and staff meetings.

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 engagement by the school, young people and parents, will be used to discern appropriate supports for young people in this school and to help inform future prevention strategies.

Culture and Environment

St Joseph's will promote a preventative school-wide approach to bullying by implementing the following strategies to ensure a positive school culture and climate is prioritised across the school.

- a. As a staff we will model respectful behaviour to all members of the school community at all times.
- b. As a staff we will agree key respect messages and display them in classrooms, assembly hall and around the school corridors. The pupils will be involved in the development of these messages and they will be cross-referenced with the school's *Code of Behaviour*.
- c. Co-operation among pupils in St Joseph's will be promoted through group/team activities and team sports activities e.g. GAA, soccer, athletics and basketball, where excellent opportunities for channelling and learning how to control aggression can be provided.
- d. The whole school community will be encouraged to become a 'reporting school' whereby the whole school community is encouraged to report/speak out if they are being bullied or if they witness a bullying situation. In that way pupils will gain confidence in 'telling'. Teachers will make it clear to pupils that when they report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.
- e. The school will consider the additional needs of SEN pupils with regard to programme implementation and the development of skills and strategies to enable all pupils to respond appropriately.

Curriculum(Teaching and Learning)

- a. As a staff we will agree key respect messages and display them in classrooms, assembly hall and around the school corridors. The pupils will be involved in the development of these messages and they will be cross-referenced with the school's *Code of Behaviour*.
- b. All teachers will explicitly teach pupils at all class levels what respectful language and respectful behaviour looks like, acts like, sounds like and feels like in class and around the school.

- c. All teachers will influence attitudes to bullying behaviour in a range of curricular settings. There is space within the teaching of all curriculum subjects to foster an attitude of respect for all; to promote the value of diversity; to address prejudice and stereotyping and to highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour.
- d. All teachers will implement the school's *Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme* including: (*RSE Programmes* , Webwise, Stay Safe, Walk Tall).
- e. **Friendship Week** will take place annually which will involve class-based and school-based activities that promote co-operation, sharing and friendship between all the children.

Policy and Planning

- a. The whole school community will be encouraged to become a 'reporting school' whereby the whole school community is encouraged to report/speak out if they are being bullied or if they witness a bullying situation. In that way pupils will gain confidence in 'telling'. Teachers will make it clear to pupils that when they report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.
- b. The school will consider the additional needs of SEN pupils with regard to programme implementation and the development of skills and strategies to enable all pupils to respond appropriately.
- c. Teachers will have access to Continuing Professional Development events in relation to Anti-Bullying and also set aside planning time as a staff for this area.
- d. All teachers will implement the school's *Acceptable Use Policy* to ensure that access to technology within the school is strictly monitored, as is the pupil's use of mobile phones and smart devices.
- e. A copy of the school's *Bí Cineálta Policy and Code of Behaviour* will be brought to the attention of parents/guardians of the incoming Junior Infant classes at the Junior Infant Open Day each year. Parents/guardians will be required to sign an undertaking which supports the policies on our Enrolment form. The school's *Bí Cineálta Policy and Code of Behaviour* will be available to all parents/guardians and others on the school's website.

- f. Delivery of the Garda SPHE Programmes at primary level will cover issues around personal safety and cyber-bullying.
- g. **Friendship Week** will take place annually which will involve class-based and school-based activities that promote co-operation, sharing and friendship between all the children.

Relationships and Partnerships

- a. Co-operation among pupils in St Joseph's will be promoted through group/team activities and team sports activities e.g. GAA, soccer, athletics and basketball, where excellent opportunities for channelling and learning how to control aggression can be provided.
- b. When children inform a teacher of a 'bullying' situation which occurred outside of school time, the teacher will advise the child to inform his/her parents/guardians. The child will be encouraged to ask for their support in resolving the situation. While a school is not expected to deal with bullying behavior that occurs when students are not under the care or responsibility of the school, if the behavior has an impact in school the school will support the students involved in accordance with the *Bí Cineálta* policy.
- c. A copy of the school's *Bi Cineálta Policy and Code of Behaviour* will be brought to the attention of parents/guardians of the incoming Junior Infant classes at the Junior Infant Open Day each year. Parents/guardians will be required to sign an undertaking which supports the policies on our Enrolment form. The school's *Bí Cineálta Policy and Code of Behaviour* will be available to all parents/guardians and others on the school's website.
- d. Where the opportunity arises, **guest speakers** with an expertise in the area of bullying prevention, will be invited to address pupils, staff and parents/guardians.
- e. Delivery of the Garda SPHE Programmes at primary level which cover issues around personal safety and cyber-bullying.

- f. **Friendship Week** will take place annually which will involve class-based and school-based activities that promote co-operation, sharing and friendship between all the children.

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 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.

A mix of organized activities are facilitated at break times through different play zones in the yard. This accommodates a range of preferences and interests. E.g. playground, astro, basketball, football, painted yard games, chill zone, music area.

Supervising staff are visible in hi-vis staff jackets and can be easily identified and approached by all pupils.

SET teachers and SNAs assist class teachers accompanying pupils to and from the yard at entry, exit and break times.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

Class teacher

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):

Addressing Bullying Behaviour

The whole school community has a responsibility to prevent and address bullying behaviour. Schools should work in partnership with their patron, board of management, staff, students and their parents to develop and implement their Bí Cineálta policy.

Any pupil or parent/guardian may bring a bullying concern to any teacher in the school. In line with *St Joseph's Bi Cineálta Policy*, bullying incidents should be reported to the 'relevant teacher' or supervising adult for investigation. This reporting may be done by the pupil, parent/guardian or a friend. Non-teaching staff such as the school secretary, special needs assistants (SNAs), the school caretaker, school cleaner and parents/guardians should be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying witnessed by them to the class teacher.

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 teachers should:

- > 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

Identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred

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 reported is bullying behaviour you should 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 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.

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 be helpful to ask the students involved to write down their account of the incident(s)

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
- > a record should be kept of the engagement with all involved
- > this record should document the form and type of bullying behaviour, if known (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

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 the school 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 should 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):

Supports for Pupils Affected by Bullying: The school's programme of support for pupils affected by bullying is as follows:

All in-school supports and opportunities will be provided for the pupils affected by bullying to participate in activities designed to **raise their self-esteem**, to develop friendships and social skills and build resilience through our pastoral care system, Buddy/Peer mentoring system and through group work such as circle time.

External supports such as NEPS, Webwise, Oide, NPC, TUSLA and DCU anti-bullying centre are available to the school community to address the bullying behaviour.

All schools are obliged to follow the procedures as outlined in this document without modification. Reference should be made to the school's *Child Protection Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment* and to the document *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2023* for further information.

In all its policies, practices and activities, St Joseph's will adhere to principles of best practice in Child Protection and Welfare as outlined in *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2023* and in *Children First – National Guidance for the*

Protection and Welfare of Children 2017.

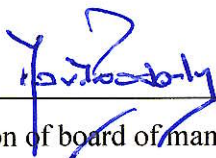
All bullying behaviour will be recorded. This will include the form and type of bullying behaviour, where and when it took place, and the date of the engagement with students and parents. The actions and supports agreed to address bullying behaviour will be documented. If the bullying behaviour is a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

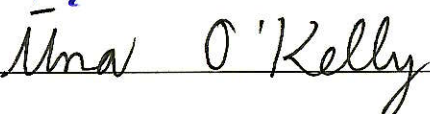
Section D: Oversight

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: 24/6/25
(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed:  Date: 24/6/25
(Principal)

