

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

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The Board of Management of St. Joseph's 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	April 2025 May 2025	Read, review & give feedback on draft policy Meeting to follow in May along with half day training Staff Meeting – Staff provided with the opportunity to discuss the new Bí Cineálta action plan and stemming from this discussion, staff were informed of the important points in dealing with an incidence or report of bullying – staff notice board with the relevant information displayed as well as resources and record form. Staff given time to discuss and relay feedback. Sharing of draft policy with staff to discuss / consult and make any amendments.
Students	November 2024 May 2025	Discussions and lessons were held during Anti-Bullying week. Posters and pictures were displayed about bullying around the school Meeting with Pupil Council Students were given a questionnaire to seek their input in developing an Anti-Bullying policy in Child Friendly Format – their wording, examples and suggestions were all taken into account when drafting this Policy.
Parents	May 2025	Email to PA seeking feedback on policy Email to all parents seeking feedback Policy created with this information and sent out to parents/children to review together with information on same in terms of how to contact the school if needed. Attention drawn to our policy and Child Friendly policy, resources and initiatives in the school via school website and social media. Bi Cineálta policy draft shared with parent body and parent

		association for feedback
Board of Management	April 2025 May 2025 June 2025	BOM Meeting Review new policy draft – leading to consultation and final ratification after amendments made where necessary
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	May 2025 August 2025	Publish on Website
Date policy was approved: August 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:

- positive and inclusive school culture
- Positive relationships
- Effective leadership
- Positive culture and environment
- A telling environment
- A trusted adult
- Safe physical access
- Supervision
- concern box/ worry box in classrooms
- opportunities to participate in class and whole school activities to raise self - esteem

Curriculum:

- Teaching and learning in SPHE
- RSE Curriculum
- Student participation
- SPHE Methodologies
- Promoting inclusion and diversity
- Extra - curricular activities to develop positive self - worth
- Group work/ Collaboration
- Role - play, acting out scenarios
- Circle time
- Morning meetings

Policy and Planning:

- Bí Cineálta policy
- Student friendly Bí Cineálta policy
- Code of behaviour
- Child safeguarding statement
- Acceptable use policy
- Supervision
- RSE Policy
- SEN policy
- SSE Wellbeing in education
- Appropriate TPL (Teacher Professional Learning)

Relationships and partnerships:

- Strong interpersonal connections
- Bullying awareness initiatives
- Student and parent participation
- TPL (Teacher Professional Learning)
- Critical thinking Skills
- Promoting peer support
- Supporting activities that build empathy, respect and resilience

Preventing cyber bullying 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 children under the age of 13 should not have a social media account))

- promoting digital citizenship
- 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

Preventing homophobic/ transphobic bullying behaviour

- maintaining an inclusive physical environment
- encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
- challenging gender-stereotypes

Preventing racist bullying behaviour

- fostering a school culture where diversity is celebrated and where students "see

themselves” in their school environment

- encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
- encouraging bystanders to report when they witness racist behaviour
- providing supports to school staff to support students from ethnic minorities, including Traveller and Roma students, and to encourage communication with their parents
- ensuring that library reading material and textbooks represent appropriate lived experiences of students and adults from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds

Preventing sexist bullying behaviour:

- ensuring members of staff model respectful behaviour and treat students equally irrespective of their sex
- ensuring all student 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 behaviour (see Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

- One teacher and one SNA present to supervise at small break and lunch time
- children are accompanied by at least one staff member on school trips
- children are told where to play when out at yard and what spaces to avoid
- teachers bear in mind children who may have recently clashed when organising groups for collaborative work/ teams etc with a view to giving space to the children involved to heal.

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.

Mobile Phone Use and Bullying

Management and staff at St Joseph’s recognize the potential detrimental aspects of mobile phone use within the school grounds during school hours. It is believed that allowing access to mobile devices increases the risk of incidents of cyber-bullying and other forms of online abuse. Circular 0044/2025 provides the backdrop and rationale for our approach to this issue. In accordance with the circular, mobile phone use or possession in the school is **completely prohibited**. In the event of an emergency phones may occasionally be permitted on the premises but only if kept under supervision by an adult member of staff in a dedicated area. Any unauthorized use of a mobile phone (including but not limited to taking photographs, sending messages, accessing the internet etc) may result in the confiscation of the device, the relevant parents being informed and in the case of serious breaches, a suspension may be considered.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

Class teachers

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:

- Two staff members can be present when engaging with children individually initially without parents' notification and presence.
- Two staff members can be present when engaging with a group of children to investigate what happened. Teacher's discretion can be used with this approach about when best to use it.
- A group meeting will provide the opportunity for the children to give 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.

The following three questions should be considered to determine if bullying has occurred.

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.

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 the bullying behaviour has ceased:

The teacher must engage with the students and parents involved no more than 20 school days after the initial discussion to review progress. Factors to consider in the review include:

- the nature of the bullying
- the effectiveness of strategies use to address the bullying behaviour
- the relationship between the students involved

Ongoing supervision of both the child experiencing bullying behaviour and the child displaying bullying behavior may be required as well as continued support.

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 should consider 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 school.

Recording bullying behaviour:

All incidents of bullying behaviour should be recorded. The following details should be included on the record:

- form (see section 2.5 of Bí Cineálta procedures)
- type (see section 2.7 of Bí Cineálta procedures)
- where and when (if known)
- the date of initial engagement with the students and their parents
- the views of the students and their parents* regarding the action to be taken to address the bullying behaviour (*only in relation to their own child)
- when review takes place, it should be noted if the bullying behaviour has ceased and the views of the students and parents in relation to this.
- note the date of reviews and engagements
- note the date that the bullying behaviour has ceased
- any engagement with external services/ supports should also be noted
- if a SSF exists for a pupil involved, 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 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):

When bullying behaviour has occurred:

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 the school can deal with it in accordance with Bí Cineálta policy

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.

The following principles must be adhered to when addressing bullying behaviour:

- ensure the child 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 those involved
- listen to the view 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

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.

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: 26/11/25

(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: 

Date: 26/11/2025

(Principal)