St. Patrick's National School
Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

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The Board of Management of St. Patrick'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.

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	13th February 2025 17th February 2025 24th March – 8th April 2025	Half-day closure – staff meeting Teacher consultation on draft policy Staff survey on the school's anti-bullying policy & procedures
Students	24th March 2025	Bí Cineálta student committee focus group meeting to answer questions on the school's anti-bullying policy & procedures
Parents	14th March – 4th April 2025	Parent survey on the school's anti-bullying policy & procedures
Board of Management	9th – 12th June 2025	Review of draft 'Bí Cineálta' policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour

Date policy was approved: 12th June 2025

Date policy was last reviewed:

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.

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 (section 5.1)

- A positive school culture and environment which is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity, encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment and promotes respectful relationships across the school community;
- Effective leadership to influence the school culture and to set the standards and expectations for the school community in preventing and addressing bullying;
- School-wide awareness raising on all aspects of bullying, to include pupils, parents/guardians and the wider school community;
- Encourage a culture of telling, with particular emphasis on the importance of by-standers. In that way, pupils will gain confidence in 'telling'. Ensuring that pupils know who to tell and how to tell – a trusted adult – signs in classroom/hallway etc. and provide a process by which pupils can speak to a trusted adult in confidence;
- Creation of safe physical spaces to prevent bullying behavior – well lit, no visual barriers, reduce blind spots, visible staff, artwork to promote school's values;
- Encouraging and promoting acts of kindness, tolerance and inclusivity via school-wide and classroom-based initiatives;
- Whole school commitment to prevent and address unacceptable behavior which may lead to bullying behavior e.g. name-calling, isolating;
- Monthly 'Bí Cineálta' awards at assembly to identify and reward positive behaviour;
- Availability of buddy benches in the yard;
- Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extra-curricular activities. Non-teaching and ancillary staff are encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers. Supervision also applies to monitoring student use of communication technology within the school;
- Discussion at every staff meeting to highlight pupils who require closer monitoring in the yard and other situations where bullying behavior may occur.

Curriculum (Teaching and Learning) (section 5.2)

- The full implementation of the SPHE curriculum, to include the 'Stay Safe', 'Walk Tall' and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Programmes;
- Use of role-play, drama, oral language, stories to explore and reinforce teaching;
- Continuous Professional Development for staff in delivering these programmes;
- Delivery of the Garda SPHE Programmes - these lessons, delivered by Community Gardaí, cover issues around personal safety and cyber-bullying;
- The school specifically considers the additional needs of pupils with Special Educational needs with regard to programme implementation and the development of skills and strategies to enable all pupils to respond appropriately;
- Whole staff professional development on bullying to ensure that all staff develop an awareness of what bullying is, how it impacts on pupils' lives and the need to respond to it - prevention and intervention;
- School-wide awareness raising on all aspects of bullying, to include pupils, parents/guardians and the wider school community;
- The fostering and enhancing of the self-esteem of all our pupils through both curricular and extracurricular activities. Pupils will be provided with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth through formal and informal interactions;
- Teaching of school's ethos and values via Religious Education curriculum.

Policy and Planning (section 5.3)

The following school policies, practices and activities are particularly relevant to bullying:

- 'Bí Cineálta' policy, including student-friendly version of this policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment
- Supervision of Pupils
- Acceptable Use Policy

- SEN/Inclusion Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- Whole school SPHE plan
- School Self-Evaluation and School Improvement Plan: Promotion of Wellbeing
- Appropriate professional development/teacher professional learning to support school staff in preventing and addressing bullying behavior;
- Consultation with and implementation of Department of Education and Youth, National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and National Council for Special Education (NCSE) guidance documents to help inform practice and build relationships;
- The school's Anti-Bullying policy is communicated to all parents and pupils via the school information management system and posted on the school website;
- All parents/guardians are given a copy of the Code of Behaviour on enrolment.

Relationships and Partnerships (section 5.4)

- Age-appropriate school-wide awareness raising on all aspects of bullying, to include pupils, parents/guardians and the wider school community;
- A school-wide approach to the fostering of respect for all members of the school community;
- Foster integration and inclusion of pupils in Autism classes, as appropriate;
- Promotion of active student and parent participation via student committees and Parents' Council activities – Anti-Bullying/Wellbeing/Active Schools initiatives, guest speakers for pupils and parents, playground leaders, Sponsored walk and family fun day, Bake sale, links with local sports clubs, fundraising activities, etc;
- Promotion of critical thinking skills, problem-solving and peer support;
- Supporting activities that build empathy, respect and resilience.

Preventing cyberbullying (section 5.5)

- Implementation of SPHE curriculum to include digital media literacy;
- Regular conversations with pupils on developing respectful online relationships;
- Implement 'Smart Phone Free' initiative with support of Parents' Council;
- Reviewing and communicating the Acceptable Use policy for technology;
- Promoting and/or hosting online safety events for parents and pupils.

Preventing homophobic/transphobic bullying (Section 5.6)

- Implementation of SPHE curriculum to prevent and address bullying behaviour;
- Promoting and maintaining an inclusive environment;
- Encouraging peer support and empathy-building activities;
- Challenging gender-stereotypes;
- Encouraging students to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour.

Preventing racist bullying (Section 5.7)

- Implementation of SPHE curriculum to prevent and address bullying behaviour;
- Fostering a school culture were diversity is celebrated;
- Encouraging peer support and empathy-building activities;
- Ensuring that library-reading material and textbooks represent appropriate lived experiences of student and adults from different nations, ethnicities and cultures;
- Encouraging bystanders to report when they witness racist behavior.

Preventing sexist bullying (Section 5.8)

- Implementation of SPHE curriculum to prevent and address bullying behaviour;
- Promote gender equality within the school community;
- Ensure that staff members model respectful behavior and treat students equally,

irrespective of their sex;
- Ensuring all students have the same opportunities to engage in school activities, irrespective of their sex;
- Encouraging parents to reinforce these values of respect at home.

Preventing sexual harassment (Section 5.9)
- Implementation of SPHE curriculum to prevent and address bullying behaviour;
- 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):

Relevant policies:
- Bí Cineálta policy to address and prevent bullying behaviour
- Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment
- Supervision of Pupils
- Acceptable Use Policy

Relevant procedures:
- Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extra-curricular activities.
- Non-teaching and ancillary staff will be encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers.
- Supervision will also apply to monitoring student use of communication technology within the school.
- The Board of Management has responsibility for ensuring appropriate supervision and monitoring policies and practices are in place to both prevent and address 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.

Please note:

Where deemed appropriate, a Special Education Teacher may be asked to address bullying behaviour on a class teacher's behalf. This will be decided in consultation with the school principal and on a case-by-case basis.

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

As per the '*Bí Cineálta*' procedures, the school will not deal with bullying behavior that occurs when pupils are not under the care or responsibility of the school. However, where this bullying behavior has an impact in school, the school will support the pupils 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):

Identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred

To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour the following questions will be considered:
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 behavior 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 will consider what happened, where it happened, when it happened and why it happened?
- o if a group of students is involved, each student will be engaged with individually at first;
- o thereafter, all students involved will be met as a group, if appropriate;
- o at the group meeting, each student will be asked for their account of what happened, to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's views;
- o each student should be supported as appropriate, following the group meeting;
- o if deemed helpful, the students involved may be asked to write down their account of the incident(s).

Where bullying behavior has occurred
- 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 behavior;
- the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behavior as to how best to address the situation will be listened to;
- a record will be kept of the engagement with all involved using the school template;
- this record will document the form and type of bullying behavior, if known (refer to Sections 2.5 and 2.7 of the '*Bí Cineálta Procedures*'), where and when it took place and the date of initial engagement with the students involved and their parents;
- where appropriate, the record should include the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour.

Requests to take no action
If a student asks that a member of staff does nothing about the bullying behaviour, it is important that the staff member:
- shows empathy to the student and deals with the matter sensitively;
- speaks with the student to work out together what steps can be taken to address the matter and how their parents will be informed of the situation;

- ensures that the student feels safe.

If a parent makes the school aware of bullying behaviour that has occurred and specifically requests that no action be taken, they should put this request in writing to the school.

However while acknowledging the parent's request, schools may decide that, based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour.

Determining if bullying behaviour has ceased

- the teacher will engage with the students involved and their parents again no more than 20 school days after the initial engagement;
- important factors that will be considered 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 will document the review with students and their parents to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased and the views of the 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 will review the strategies used in consultation with the students involved and their parents. A timeframe for further engagement until the bullying behaviour has ceased will be agreed.
- If it becomes clear that the student who is displaying bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behaviour, then consideration will 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 will be referred to the school's 'Parental Complaints' procedure.
- 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 action 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):

- 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;
- Pupils should know how to tell, understand that there are no innocent bystanders and that all incidents of alleged bullying behaviour must be reported to a teacher;
- Delivery of SPHE curriculum – to include Stay Safe programme, Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) programme, Digital Media Literacy (Webwise);
- Support teaching including Social Skills Group;
- Group work such as Circle Time;
- If pupils require counselling or further supports, the school will endeavour to liaise with the appropriate agencies to organise same. In very serious cases, NEPS will also be contacted for advice;
- Given the complexity of bullying behavior, the school acknowledges that no one approach works in all situations and will use discretion in deciding how best to support the pupils involved.

Organisations who provide support to schools to prevent and address bullying behaviour:

- NEPS (National Educational Psychological Service);
- Oide (Department of Education's support service for schools);
- Webwise (Department of Education online safety initiative)
- National Parents Council (delivers online and in-person courses for parents)
- Dublin City University (DCU) Anti-Bullying Centre – FUSE programme;
- Tusla – for advice in cases where it is considered that bullying behaviour is a child protection concern (refer to Section 2.4 of *Bí Cineálta* procedures).

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: _Philip Tuj_ Date: _12/06/2025_
(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: _Amanda Rowland_ Date: _12/06/2025._
(Principal)