School Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

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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.

Catholic schools have a distinctive understanding of the human person, recognising that every person is created in God's image and likeness and has inherent dignity as a child of God. This is the basis for ensuring that everybody in our school is treated with respect and care, in accordance with the Catholic Schedule.

As a Catholic school, we are committed to respecting the dignity of every individual. No human person is to be devalued and everybody has a part to play in the school community, regardless of difference."

Definition of bullying

Bullying is defined in *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* and *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* as targeted behaviour, online or offline that causes harm. The harm caused can be physical, social and/or emotional in nature. Bullying behaviour is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power in relationships between two people or groups of people in society. The detailed definition is provided in Chapter 2 of the Bí Cineálta procedures.

Each school is required to develop and implement a Bí Cineálta policy that sets out how the school community prevents and addresses bullying behaviour. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour that is not bullying behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

Section A: Development/review of our Bí Cineálta policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour

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

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

This school takes positive steps to ensure that the culture of the school is one which welcomes a respectful dialogue and encounter with diversity and difference by ensuring that prevention and inclusivity strategies are given priority and discussed regularly at our board of management and staff meetings.

All members of our school community were provided with the opportunity to input into the development/review of this policy.

	Initial date consulted	Method of consultation
School Staff	June 2025	Half Day Staff Workshop
Students	October 2024	Workshops with Principal
Parents	August 2025	Parents' Questionnaire
Board of Management	June 2025	BOM Meeting

Date policy was approved: 18th June 2025 (Updated as per Patron's Guidance July 2025)

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 (see Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures).

In developing these preventative strategies, we come from the context of our Catholic ethos, where inclusivity permeates our school in a real way.

- Fostering a positive and inclusive school culture where diversity is celebrated.
- Implementing our Social, Personal, and Health Education (SPHE) and Wellbeing initiatives.
- Encouraging open communication and promote a 'telling' environment.
- Providing adequate supervision in areas where bullying is more likely to occur.
- Organising workshops and schoolwide campaigns focused on kindness, respect, and inclusion.
- Promoting digital literacy and online safety to prevent cyberbullying.
- Establishing a Student Council of representatives of the student body who meet regularly to discuss ways in which we as a school can best support and meet the needs of the pupils.

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):

Safe Physical Spaces

- Clear lines of sight throughout our school environment to prevent hidden areas where bullying could occur.
- As much as possible, staff identify potential visual barriers and remove them to prevent potential opportunity for bullying.
- Our school grounds are fresh, bright and child-friendly to promote positive interactions and inclusion.

Active Supervision

- There is adequate staff presence during break times, on playgrounds, in hallways and classrooms, and other common areas.
- Classes are provided with structured activities during breaks to foster positive engagement and reduce opportunities for bullying.
- Staff are encouraged to be vigilant and proactive when observing potential bullying behaviour.

Promoting a 'Telling' Environment

- We endeavour to foster a culture where pupils know that they are safe in reporting bullying behaviour.
- We reassure pupils in order to address any concerns they may have about reporting, such as fear of retaliation.
- School staff are offered support when approached by a pupil with concerns as to next steps to take.

Use of Digital Tools and Policies

- Our school has devised and utilises our Acceptable Use Policy for technology to prevent cyberbullying (AUP).
- When pupils are using digital devices in school, staff monitor online activity where possible, ensuring students engage in safe digital behaviour.

Student and Peer Involvement

- Our school encourages peer monitoring and student-led initiatives through the Student Council, Green Schools' Team, Coiste Gaeilge and Active Team to support anti-bullying efforts.
- We implement mentorship programs where older students support younger ones in fostering a positive school climate, ie Yard Angels.

School-Wide Communication

- Supervision strategies and expectations are communicated to staff, students, and parents at the start of each year and throughout the year, when necessary.
- Staff are offered training on monitoring bullying behaviour effectively.
- We utilise assemblies, newsletters, and meetings to reinforce the importance of supervision in preventing bullying.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

When bullying behaviour occurs, the school will:

> ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour is heard and reassured

> seek to ensure the privacy of those involved

> 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):

- Students and parents are encouraged to report bullying to a trusted adult.
- Reports can be made confidentially to a designated teacher.
- All reports will be taken seriously and addressed promptly.
- Restorative approaches may be used where appropriate to rebuild relationships.
- Parents of students involved will be informed and engaged in the resolution process.
- If bullying behaviour is deemed to be a child protection concern, the matter will be reported in accordance with the '*Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools'.*
- The school will maintain detailed records of bullying incidents, responses, and follow-up actions to ensure accountability and continuous improvement.

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):

- Students experiencing bullying behaviour will be reassured. Staff will ensure they feel listened to and protected.
- Students engaging in bullying behaviour will be helped to understand the impact of their actions. They will be guiding and supported to develop more positive behaviour.
- Bystanders will be empowered to safely intervene or report bullying incidents.

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.