

St. Patrick's National School

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of St. Patrick'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.

"We confirm that we will take all steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent all 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 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*.

- Bullying is 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.

The harm caused can be

- Physical: (e.g.: personal injury, damage to or loss of property)
- Social: (e.g.: withdrawal, loneliness, exclusion)
- Emotional: (e.g.: low self-esteem, depression, anxiety)

Behaviour that is not bullying behaviour:

- Disagreement between students is not considered bullying unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.
- If the repeated harm is real for the student experiencing the behaviour, but unintended by the other student, this is not bullying, but, importantly, must be addressed under the school's code of behaviour.
- Some students with special educational needs may have social communication difficulties which may make them communicate their needs through behaviours that can hurt themselves or others. It is important to note that these behaviours may not be deliberate or planned, but in certain situations, they are an automatic response which they cannot control. The school will specifically 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.

A one-off instance of negative behaviour towards a student is not bullying behaviour. However, a single hurtful message posted on social media can be considered bullying behaviour as it may be visible to a wide audience and has a high likelihood of being shared multiple times and so becomes a repeated behaviour.

Online bullying behaviour:

Cyber bullying is carried out via text, direct messaging/instant messaging, social media platforms, email, apps, digital gaming sites, gaming consoles, chatrooms and other online technologies.

This can include:

- Sending or sharing of insulting and offensive or intimidating messages or images via online means as mentioned above.
- Posting information which is personal, private or sensitive without consent.
- Making and/or participating in fake profiles on a social network to impersonate and/or humiliate other students.
- Exclude/disrupt access to a student on purpose on online chat groups/access to accounts/from an online game.

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	22/01/2025	Principal and Vice Principal attended training provided by Oide
	03/04/2025	In school training for all staff by Principal and Vice Principal. Staff training from Oide facilitator to Sarah-Ann Mc Clafferty
	08/04/2025	Staff meeting to discuss new procedures
	30/05/2025	Feedback sought from staff through a Google Form
Students	28/05/2025	Pupils from 5 th & 6 th class completed pupil survey online
	03/06/2025	Consultation with Student Committee
	18/06/2025	Senior Pupils worked on the design of the Pupil Friendly Policy
Parents	30/05/2025	Links to the Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour sent to parents via Aladdin Message. Feedback sought from parents through a Google Form. Attention drawn to where to access our policy.
	17/06/2025	Draft Bí Cineálta Policy sent to parents via Aladdin Message
Board of Management	07/04/2025	Initial consultation with the BOM

Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	17/06/2025	Email sent to school bus company explaining the new procedures and that when our draft policy is ready we will send a copy of it to them.
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):

“In developing the 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 our 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 our 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 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”.

Culture and Environment

- Create a school culture where bullying behaviour is unacceptable and a consistent approach to addressing bullying behavior is adopted.
- Involve parents as active partners in fostering an environment where bullying behaviour is not tolerated.
- Support the idea that our school is a telling environment.
- Establish clear expectations for behaviour and enforce them consistently.

- Promote the concept of a trusted adult. This is promoted and reinforced through the yearly teaching of the Stay Safe and Mindful Matters Friendship and Bullying topics.
- Create a positive school culture and climate 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.
- Foster and enhance the self-esteem of all our pupils through both curricular and extracurricular activities.

Pupils will be provided opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth through formal and informal interactions. The following strategies and initiatives may be used:

- Stay Safe, Mindful Matters & RSE materials and associated videos.
- Lunchtime sports activities during the school year that encourage inclusion and having fun playing with friends.
- Acts of Kindness acknowledged by class teacher and principal.
- Positive affirmations by teachers and staff in classrooms and on yard.
- Student Council to allow and encourage pupil voice.
- Green Schools committee.
- Quiet Space
- School Wellbeing Area
- Zippy Friends used in 1st class.
- A Code of Behaviour that rewards good behaviour – Golden Time every Friday.

Ways in which we work to achieve these goals are as follows:

- Staff are briefed on the uniform approach we must take to handle all reports of bullying.
- A Wellbeing Week will take place in June each year with an emphasis on kindness and friendship.
- Playground helpers – students in 6th class support Junior classes on the yard to help with games and positive interactions.
- Yard Buddies to ensure that everyone has someone to play with at break times.
- Child Friendly Bí Cineálta Policy was formed with pupil and parent input and is distributed to parents, children and staff to discuss. This policy outlines various ways “to tell”.
- Parents receive information at times regarding useful information on Anti Bullying, Stay Safe and SPHE lessons which focus on positive behaviour.
- Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils.
- Celebrating school, class and individual achievements.
- Foster positive relationships between pupils and staff members in order to nurture connections and establish open communication.

Curriculum (teaching and learning):

We strive to:

- Provide teaching and promote learning which is collaborative and respectful, fostering inclusion and respect for diversity.
- Display a shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact.

Ways in which we work to achieve this:

- Teach SPHE and RSE content which fosters students' well-being and self-confidence as well as promoting personal responsibility for their own behaviours and actions. One anti-bullying/friendship lesson at the start of each term.
- Implementation of the Stay Safe and Mindful Matters Programmes.
- Online Safety education programmes and guest speakers to tie in with Internet Safety Day.
- Model respectful behaviour towards colleagues, pupils and visitors in our school environment.
- Curricular and extracurricular activities can help to develop a sense of self-worth, working together, inclusion and respect.
- Students are given regular opportunities to work in small groups with peers, which can help build a sense of connection, belonging and empathy.
- Acknowledgment of our diverse school population – celebrating diversity and culture in our school through art, displays and photographs.
- Support for staff including access to CPD when and as required.
- Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behavior.
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the Bí Cineálta Policy through our yearly reviews.

Policy and planning

The aim of St. Patrick's NS. Bí Cineálta policy is:

- To raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with school management, teachers, pupils, parents/guardians.
- To promote a school ethos and culture where all school community members treat each other with kindness and respect.
- To promote a school ethos which encourages children to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To ensure appropriate supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of school activity are kept under observation.
- To develop procedures for noting, investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To implement a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and for those involved in bullying behaviour.
- To work with appropriate agencies in countering all forms of bullying and promoting anti bullying behaviour.

The Acceptable Use Policy, Supervision policy, Special Education Policy, Code of Behaviour, RSE Policy and Child Safeguarding Statement all support the implementation of the Bí Cineálta policy.

Appropriate Teacher Professional Development will be planned for and organised in order to

support the successful implementation of this policy.

Effective leadership is a key component with Principal, Deputy Principal, DLP, DDLP, and all members of the in-school leadership team focused on supporting the implementation of this policy.

Relationships and Partnerships

- Interpersonal connections are supported through a range of formal and informal structures such as our Parents Association, and our student council, committees and groups.
- Age and stage appropriate awareness initiatives that engage the student body in looking at their own behaviour – promoting acts of kindness and friendship, being an active help to others and looking at the causes of and impact of bullying during SPHE lessons.
- Notification will be sent of any workshops and seminars for students, staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of bullying.
- Positive home school links and relationships, help parents to communicate with teachers at an early stage if they suspect their child is being bullied.
- Encouraging peer mentoring and peer support
 - Playground Helpers & Yard Buddies
 - Wellbeing/Buddy Walks
 - Buddy Reading, Science Share and other activities between older and younger classes.
- Supporting the active participation of students and parents in school life.
- The meaningful involvement of the board of management, staff, pupils and their parents in the development, implementation and review of the school's Bí Cineálta policy and student friendly version is actively pursued by the school through the regular use of discussion groups and surveys.

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):

Supervision and Monitoring

Staff at all times endeavour to encourage pupils to show respect for each other.

- A yard supervision rota is devised at the beginning of each term so that adequate and appropriate supervision is provided for on yard.
- An Acceptable Use Policy has been developed and will be regularly reviewed to ensure that pupils are aware of their responsibilities when accessing the internet in school and when using school devices.
- Staff are particularly vigilant in monitoring pupils who are considered at risk of bullying/being bullied.
- All disclosed incidents of bullying are investigated thoroughly and consistently by following the correct procedure as outlined to staff and recorded on specific school templates. Reports on bullying are stored in a specific folder in the principal's office.
- School wide awareness raising on all aspects of bullying, supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extracurricular activities.
- The Acceptable Use Policy, Supervision policy, Special Education Policy, Code of Behaviour, RSE Policy and Child Safeguarding Statement all support the implementation of the Bí Cineálta policy.
- The pupils are actively involved in contributing to a safe and inclusive school environment. These messages are reinforced during our Wellbeing Week each June.
- Ensuring that pupils know who to tell and how to tell. The school actively encourages the concept of a 'trusted adult' through letting pupils know regularly that they can talk to them.
- Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place.
- Promote online safety events or material for parents.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

- The class teacher (relevant teacher) will oversee recording of bullying reports for students in their class – this includes using the procedures guidelines to investigate reports of bullying and recording bullying behaviour.
- Principal will inform the Board of Management of incidents of bullying.

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):

- Teacher/teachers investigates all instances of reported or suspected bullying behaviour with a view to establishing the facts and managing the behaviour.
- In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved.

Teacher(s) should consider the following: who, what, where and when?

- Teachers will be fair and consistent in their approach when addressing bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents.
- Interviews will be conducted outside the classroom in a fair and consistent way.
- If a group has been involved, each member will be interviewed individually at first and, thereafter, as a group when each child will be asked for his/her account of what happened. It may be helpful to ask the students involved to write down their account of the incident.

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

- 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 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.

Non-teaching staff such as special needs assistants (SNAs), caretakers, cleaners are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the class teacher.

School staff should know what to do when bullying behaviour is reported to them.

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, schools should deal in accordance with their BÍ Cineálta policy.

Both the student who is experiencing bullying behaviour and the student who is displaying bullying behaviour need support.

Parents are an integral part of the school community and play an important role, in partnership with schools, in addressing bullying behaviour.

The primary aim of the teacher investigating bullying is to resolve issues and to restore relationships. 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 bullying behaviour. In some cases, relationships may never be restored to how they were before.

The parents/guardians of the parties involved will be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken. The school will give parents/guardians an opportunity to discuss ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the support provided to the pupils.

It must also be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parents/guardians) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter (under GDPR) between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parents/guardians and the school.

When an investigation is completed and/or a bullying situation is resolved the teacher will complete a report, to include the findings of the investigation, the strategy adopted and the outcome of the intervention, as well as any other relevant information.

Behaviour reflection sheets filled out by pupils are to be kept in the child's file.

Staff will fill out a Bullying Behaviour Record. This report will be kept in the child's file.

The teacher must engage with the students and parents involved no more than 20 days after the initial discussion to review progress following the initial intervention.

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)/guardian(s) is not satisfied with how the bullying behaviour has been addressed by the school, in accordance with the B' Cine'alta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for 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 B' Cine'alta procedures):

The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying involves a whole school approach.

Given the complexity of bullying behaviour, no one intervention/support programme works in all situations.

Supporting Bullied pupils:

- Ending the bullying behavior.
- 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 extracurricular 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 honourable thing and giving them praise for this.
- Making adequate counselling facilities available to help those who need to learn other ways of meeting their needs besides violating the rights of others (subject to available funding).
- 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 'clean sheet' and no blame in return for keeping a promise to reform.

All bullying behaviour will be recorded on the Bullying Behaviour Record sheet. 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: _____
(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(Principal)