

St Joseph's National School

Milltownpass 16304J

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of St Joseph's National School Milltownpass 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 **targeted** behaviour, online or offline, that **causes harm**.
- The harm caused can be physical, social and/or emotional in nature and can have lasting effects on the the child experiencing the behaviour.
- Bullying behaviour is **repeated over time** and involves an **imbalance of power** in relationships between two people or groups of people in society.
- It is behaviour which is deliberate in nature and is unwanted. It is not accidental or reckless behaviour .
- 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.

The harm caused can be :

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

Behaviour that is not bullying behaviour:

- 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 are not deliberate or planned, but in certain situations, they are an automatic response which they cannot control.
- Disagreement between students is not considered bullying unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.

Types of Bullying:

There are many different types of bullying behaviour. These can include directing bullying at someone focused on the following: disability, exceptional ability, gender identity, LGBTQ+ , physical appearance, racism, poverty status, religious identity, sexism and sexual harassment. This is not an exhaustive list.

Bullying can be : Direct:

- Physical: pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping students. Physical assault. Destruction of personal property.
- Verbal: continual name calling which insults, humiliates the student – this may refer to physical appearance, size, clothes, gender, accent, academic ability, race or ethnic origin.
- Written: Writing insulting remarks in public places, passing notes or drawings about the student.
- Extortion: where something is obtained through force or threats

Bullying can be :Indirect:

- Exclusion: where a student is deliberately and repeatedly isolated, excluded or ignored by a student or group of students.
- Relational: Where a student's attempts to form friendships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined, threats, non-verbal gesturing, malicious gossip, spreading rumours, silent treatment and manipulation of friend groups etc can all form relational bullying for a student.

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.

Requests to take no action

A student reporting bullying behaviour may ask that a member of staff does nothing about the behaviour other than “look out” for them. The student may not want to be identified as having told someone about the bullying behaviour. They may 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 matter and how their parents will be informed of the situation. It is important that the student who has experienced bullying behaviour feels safe. Parents may also make schools aware of bullying behaviour that has occurred and specifically request that the school take no action. Parents should put this request in writing to the school or be facilitated to do so where there are literacy, digital literacy or language barriers. However, while acknowledging the parent’s request, schools have a right to act and may decide that, based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying 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	<p>Early January 2025</p> <p>February 25</p>	<p>E. Bermingham/ E. Martin attended a 1 day Bí Cineálta training course.</p> <p>January 15th: Teacher meeting to share details of the Bí Cineálta action plan and to prepare suitable ways to consult with stakeholders. Staff were updated on the important points of dealing with an incident of bullying.</p> <p>All school staff completed a questionnaire on their own experience of the anti-bullying procedures in school</p> <p>Sharing of draft policy</p>
Students	<p>January 25</p> <p>Feb 25</p> <p>Feb 25-June 25</p> <p>Sept 25</p>	<p>All class teachers discussed the anti- bullying procedures with the children in a child-friendly manner and gained general feedback from the group.</p> <p>Student reps from each class attended a focus group with Ms Bermingham to discuss ideas and thoughts of the children and to seek their input in developing our policy.</p> <p>Awareness campaign led by the Bí Cineálta committee included: a Kindness wall, Poster competition, Kindness Week</p> <p>Bí Cineálta Committee created our Child Friendly policy made from snippets of the whole school posters</p>
Parents	<p>January '25</p>	<p>A survey was shared with the parent populations via textparent seeking input on our current policy and procedures.</p>
Board of Management	<p>October 2025</p>	<p>Meeting to outline new procedures.</p> <p>Ratification of new procedures</p>

Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers		
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Date policy was approved: 2/10/2025

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:

We strive to :

- Create a school culture where bullying behaviour is unacceptable and a consistent approach to addressing bullying behaviour.
- 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.
- Promote the concept of a trusted adult – stay safe linkage – who to tell.
- Create safe spaces in our school building and yards – visibility
- Incorporate artwork and signs to promote our school values
- Encourage a sense of belonging with ownership over their own space through art and creativity.
- 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;

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 – this is distributed to staff and a copy is displayed on the Staff Room notice board for ease of access also.
- Anti Bullying week activities such as Random acts of Kindness homework, Poster making, slogan making, etc
- Peer mentoring of Junior infants by 5th and 6th class students during the month of September and for any new enrolments throughout the year.
- Child-friendly Anti- Bullying 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
- Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils.
- Class Code development as well as notice board to promote kindness and build responsibility amongst pupils.

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 student's well-being and self confidence as well as promoting personal responsibility for their own behaviours and actions. Programmes include: Stay Safe, Weaving Wellbeing, Walk Tall, RSE, Zippy's Friends, Friendship Terrace and sacramental preparation programmes.
- 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, photographs, international events, Grandparents day, project work
- Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that
 - build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and
 - explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.
- Supports for staff;
 - Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies); and
 - On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

Policy and planning

The aim of St Joseph's NS's Bi 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 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 and Code of Behaviour and Well being policy all support the implementation of the Bi Cineálta policy.

Effective leadership is a key component with Principal, Deputy Principal, DLP, DDLP, and all middle management 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 student committees.
- 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.
- Conducting workshops and seminars for students, staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of bullying.
- Encouraging peer mentoring and peer support
- Supporting active participation of students in school life and active participation of parents in school life also.
- Engaging parents and students in actively contributing to the formation of a Child Friendly Anti Bullying Policy to make them active participants in promotion of and discussion of useful ways to identify and reduce bullying behaviour and highlight procedure and how to deal with it if it does occur.

Preventing Cyber Bullying, Homophobic/Transphobic bullying, Racist bullying, Preventing sexual harassment. In addition to above mentioned strategies, the school has the following in place to prevent and address bullying:

- Staff at all times endeavour to encourage pupils to show respect for each other.
- Implementation of the SPHE curriculum.
- Positive self-esteem is fostered among the pupils by celebrating individual differences, by acknowledging good behaviour and by providing opportunities for success.

- Digital Media programmes including Webwise/ All aboard for Digitown/ learning about responsible online behaviour and digital citizenship. AUP also developed for technology in our school. 6th class transition programme
- The school's anti-bullying policy is discussed regularly with the pupils.
- 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 the 'Yard incident book' (for minor yard issues) and Bullying record (if an investigation is warranted) on Aladdin
- Involvement of pupils in contributing to a safe school environment e.g. Kindness/ anti-bullying week, internet safety day and other activities that can help to pupils and encourage a culture of peer respect and support
- Ensuring that pupils know who to tell and how to tell.
- Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place.
- Refer to appropriate online behaviour when using devices and in SPHE lessons.
- Promote online safety events or material for parents
- The listing of supports currently being used in the school and the identification of other supports available to the school e.g. www.tacklebullying.ie, www.antibullyingcentre.ie>fuse, www.webwise.ie
- Centralised resources and lesson ideas for dealing with specific types of behaviour.
- Challenge gender- stereotypes – equal participation of all. Equal recognition.
- Raise awareness of the impact of homophobic bullying behaviour and encourage students to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour.
- Foster a culture where diversity is celebrated and students “see themselves” in the school environment. Ensuring the library has material which reflects our diverse school population from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.
- Ensuring all students have the same opportunities to engage in school activities irrespective of sex.
- Making clear that our school has a zero tolerance approach to sexual harassment of any kind with enforceable policy - See Code of Behaviour

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):

- Staff at all times endeavour to encourage pupils to show respect for each other.
- Implementation of the SPHE curriculum.
- Positive self-esteem is fostered among the pupils by celebrating individual differences, by acknowledging good behaviour and by providing opportunities for success.
- Digital Media Policy includes learning about responsible online behaviour and digital citizenship. AUP also developed for technology in our school.
- The school's anti-bullying policy is discussed regularly with the pupils.
- 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 Aladdin using the template for this.
- School wide awareness raising and training on all aspects of bullying, to include pupils, parent(s)/guardian(s) and the wider school community
- Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extracurricular 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.
- Involvement of pupils in contributing to a safe school environment e.g. Kindness/ anti-bullying week, and other activities that can help to pupils and encourage a culture of peer respect and support
- Encourage a culture of telling, with particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders. In that way pupils will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It should be made clear to all pupils that when they report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly and telling to keep people safe.
- Ensuring that pupils know who to tell and how to tell, e.g.
 - Direct approach to teacher at an appropriate time, for example after class
 - Hand note up with homework
 - Make a phone call to the school or to a trusted teacher in the school
 - Get a parent(s)/guardian(s) or friend to tell on your behalf
- Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place.
- Refer to appropriate online behaviour when using devices and in SPHE lessons.
- Promote online safety events or material for parents
- The listing of supports currently being used in the school and the identification of other supports available to the school e.g. www.tacklebullying.ie, www.antibullyingcentre.ie, www.webwise.ie

- Shared folder of resources for teaching of bullying including lessons from above websites – shared Google drive for all teachers to access.
- Challenge gender- stereotypes • Raise awareness of the impact of homophobic bullying behaviour and encourage students to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour.
- Foster a culture where diversity is celebrated and students “see themselves” in the school environment.
- Ensuring the library has material which reflects our diverse school population from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.
- Modelling of respectful behaviour by staff of all irrespective of sex.
- Ensuring all students have the same opportunities to engage in school activities irrespective of sex.
- Making clear that our school has a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment of any kind with enforceable policy - See Code of Behaviour

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

Mainstream class teachers and SETs (where appropriate). The Principal/Deputy Principal will provide support and advice and will become involved where appropriate.

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):

The whole school community has a responsibility to prevent and address bullying behaviour. The following approach and steps are based on the information contained in Chapter 6 of the Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.

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, the teachers with responsibility will:

- > 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.

Stage 1 - 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.

Where bullying behaviour is suspected, parents/guardians report it to the class teacher.

To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour we will 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 behaviour 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 (Stage 1), teachers should consider what, where, when and why? as follows: (Note that these steps are required – as outlined in the Procedures):

> Where one student is reported to be involved, the student should be engaged with individually at first.

> Thereafter, this student and the student who is reported to be experiencing the bullying behaviour should be met together.

> If a group of students is involved, each student should be engaged with individually at first.

> Thereafter, all students involved and the student who is reported to be experiencing the bullying behaviour 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).

> Parents will be supported by the school, if needed, with recommendations for useful resources/guides to help them support their children,

Stage 2: 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.

> All bullying behaviour will be recorded. This will include the form and type of behaviour if known (see pages 20-24, Section 2.5 and 2.7 of the Bí Cineálta procedures for descriptions/examples of the forms and types 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.

> The record should be shared with the Principal.

Stage 3: 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 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 BÌ Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools they should be referred to the school's complaints procedures (available on our website).

> 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.

Recording: 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*.

The school will use the following approaches to support those who experience, witness and display bullying behaviour (see Chapter 6 of the BÌ Cineálta procedures):

We take all instances of bullying behaviour on a case-by-case basis, but we may use the following approaches generally:

All students involved will be checked-in with regularly and behaviour will be monitored carefully. The teacher will check-in with parents too and will look for their ongoing support to monitor their child at home and to communicate with the school if needed.

We will use resources, as appropriate – including those developed by NEPS (National Educational Psychological Service), NSCE (engaging in the Relate Discovery programme, which includes supports from our 'Behaviour for Learning and Wellbeing' advisor), Oide (support service for schools) and from programmes/sites such as Webwise and FUSE. Teachers will be encouraged to attend

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' after all issues have been dealt with.

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)