

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of St.Patrick's N.S 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.

In St.Patrick's N.S., the primary aim in addressing reports of bullying behaviour should be to stop the bullying behaviour and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.

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:

- ***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.

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.

The detailed definition is provided in Chapter 2 of the [Bí Cineálta procedures](#).

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	15/10/24	School Principal webinar
	6/11/24	Initial CPD for two members of Staff (Face to face in Carrick-Education Centre)
	11/02/25	Croke Park All Staff 2hrs (Cluster with Drumlish - certified by Carrick Ed.Centre)
	19/02/25	

		Half Day Closure to facilitate further CPD and planning
Students	12/02/25	5th&6th Class Students completed google form individually online
	26/2/25	Focus Group
Board of Management	19/02/25	Board Meeting
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	Bus Driver - informal chats throughout the school year	
Date policy was approved:		
Date policy was last reviewed: March 2024		

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 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".

The Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice provides the following four key areas that are essential for a holistic, whole school approach to wellbeing promotion:

- Culture and Environment
- Curriculum (Teaching and Learning) stay safe, SPHE, text books
- Policy and Planning
- Relationships and Partnerships

These four areas have been considered by our school when developing measures to prevent bullying behaviour.

- **Culture and Environment**

A positive and inclusive school culture and environment is essential to prevent and address bullying behaviour. The school environment should be a space where students and school staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported. Relationships between all members of the school community should be based on respect, care, integrity and trust. Open communication between the patron, board of management, school staff, students and their parents help to foster a collaborative approach and shared responsibilities in relation to preventing and addressing bullying behaviour. The school leadership team influences the school culture and sets the standards and expectations for the school community when preventing and addressing bullying behaviour. Each member of school staff has a responsibility to develop and maintain a school culture where bullying behaviour is unacceptable and to take a consistent approach to addressing bullying behaviour. Students can shape the school culture by promoting kindness and inclusion within their peer group and maintain a positive and supportive school environment for all. Parents, as active partners in their child's education, can help foster an environment where bullying behaviour is not tolerated through promoting empathy and respect. In St.Patrick's N.S., this emphasis on Culture and Environment is promoted through:

- An adherence to the school's Catholic Ethos
- Assemblies
- A value placed on a broad and diverse curriculum
- Being approachable to parents and pupils
- Respectful means of communication
- Multiple means of communication

- Student Committees (Active School, Green School, Wellbeing, Student Council)

- **Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)**

Teaching and learning that is collaborative and respectful should be promoted. Students should have regular opportunities to work in small groups with their peers, which can help build a sense of connection, belonging and empathy among students. The curricular subjects offered to students provide opportunities to foster inclusion and respect for diversity. St.Patrick's N.S. provides opportunities for students to develop a sense of self worth through both curricular and extra-curricular programmes.

The Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) curricula at primary level aim to foster students' well being, self confidence and sense of belonging and to develop students' sense of personal responsibility for their own behaviour and actions. Students' social and emotional learning (SEL) skills can be improved through the SPHE curriculum.

Bí Cineálta has explicitly requested schools to endeavour to prevent and address specific forms of Bullying Behaviour. These forms and our actions will be listed now below:

- **preventing online bullying behaviour:** Delivery of Stay Safe. Use of Webwise resources. Use of FUSE Anti-Bullying resources. Use of resources in Walk Tall. Cyber Safe talk bi-annually. Delivered by an external teacher to children from 3rd to 6th class.
- **homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour:** Delivery of Stay Safe.
- **racist bullying behaviour:** Use of novels and or text books.
- **sexist bullying behaviour and sexual harassment:** Gender Equality Matters (Dr Seline Keating)
<https://www.belongto.org/support-for-someone-else/at-school/primary/all-together-now/>) Resource Bank

As a school, St.Patrick's N.S pays particular focus on the area of Stay Safe, books as a vehicle to message SPHE topics and also the full delivery of the SPHE curriculum itself.

- **Policy and Planning**

In St.Patrick's N.S, there are a range of other policies such as the school's Acceptable Use Policy, Supervision Policy, Special Education Teaching Policy and Code of Behaviour that can support implementation of the school's Bí Cineálta Policy.

Supporting the participation of students in the development and implementation of school policies and plans can help increase awareness and ensure effective implementation. We will endeavor to engage children in the development of school policies relating to their wellbeing.

Engaging in appropriate teacher professional learning courses can support school staff to prevent and address bullying behaviour. School staff should also share their experiences and examples of best practice. There is a range of training available for school staff which relates to promoting inclusion and diversity and also for the wellbeing and protection of children:

- DLP and DDLP will continue to attend Child Protection training
- CPSMA training links will be made known to members of the Board of Management
 - Continued Bí Cineálta training will be made available to members of staff
 - Facilitate the annual Review of Child Version of Bi Cinéalta Policy

- **Relationships and Partnerships**

St.Patrick's N.S. recognises the importance of positive relationships across the whole school community to promote empathy, understanding and respect. The meaningful involvement of the board of management, staff, students and their parents in the development, implementation and review of the school's Bí Cineálta policy and student-friendly version is essential to effectively prevent and address bullying behaviour. As a staff, we have identified the following as important to the prevention and addressing of Bullying behaviour.

- The importance of positive relationships across the whole school community to promote empathy, understanding and respect and raise awareness of unconscious bias

- The importance of all school staff keeping a 'watchful eye' on the children and young people in their care with all school staff being confident in their knowledge of best practice in how to address bullying behaviour
- The importance of children having a trusted adult in relation to disclosure of incidents of bullying
- The meaningful involvement of children and young people
- The importance of engagement with parents in recognition of their key role in preventing and addressing bullying

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):

Appropriate supervision is an important measure to help prevent and address bullying behaviour. St.Patrick's N.S. will endeavour to take all reasonable measures to ensure the safety of the students and to supervise students when students are attending school or attending school activities.

In St.Patrick's N.S., the creation of safe physical spaces supports psychological safety has been identified as an important measure to prevent bullying behaviour. Spaces have a clear line of sight and make it easier for school staff to supervise students.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

- The class teacher will oversee recording of bullying reports for students in their class – this includes using the procedure guidelines to investigate reports of bullying and recording bullying behaviour on the correct form on Aladdin
- The DLP will follow up after twenty days to investigate if bullying has ceased.
- All staff will be vigilant to bullying behaviour.
- Principal will inform the Board of Management of incidents of Bullying.
- Anti- Bullying Policy co-ordinator is available to provide up to date information and supports if needed to assist class teacher in addressing concern

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

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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:

Identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred

To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour, we should 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 this Bí Cineálta Policy.

Incidents can occur where behaviour is unacceptable and hurtful but the behaviour is **not** bullying behaviour. Strategies that deal with inappropriate behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

Where Bullying Behaviour has occurred

St.Patrick's N.S.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, the school will support the students involved. Where the bullying behaviour continues in school, the school will deal with it in accordance with this Bí Cineálta policy.

Where the student displaying the bullying behaviour is not a student in St.Patrick's N.S., but the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour is a student in the school, the school should support the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as appropriate and engage with them and their parents to determine what steps can be taken.

It is important for school staff to be fair and consistent in their approach to address bullying behaviour. Both the student who is experiencing bullying behaviour and the student who is displaying bullying behaviour need support. It is important that the student who is experiencing bullying behaviour is engaged without delay so that they feel listened to, supported and reassured. School staff should identify the support needed for the student who is displaying bullying behaviour to better manage relational difficulties and ensure that their needs are met.

A student's agency or sense of power can be decreased when they experience or witness bullying behaviour. When a student tells an adult that they feel that they are experiencing bullying behaviour they may feel that they are taking back some control over what is happening to them. It is very important that a student's agency is not decreased further by adults deciding what will happen next without listening to the student and involving them in deciding on the actions that will be taken.

In St.Patrick's N.S., the following principles must be adhered to when addressing bullying behaviour and adhering to our Code of Behaviour Policy:

- 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*

*Parents are an integral part of St.Patrick's N.S. school community and play an important role, in partnership with schools, in addressing bullying behaviour. Where bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved must be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and to consult with them on

the actions to be taken to address the behaviour as outlined in this policy. In circumstances where a student expresses concern about their parents being informed, the school should develop an appropriate plan to support the student and for how their parents **will** be informed.

If a group of students is involved, each student should be engaged individually at first. Thereafter, all students involved 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 also be helpful to ask the students involved to write down their account of the incident.

Given the complexity of bullying behaviour it is generally acknowledged that no one approach works in all situations. International and national research also continues to evolve in this area and the effectiveness of particular approaches continues to be reviewed.

Requests to take no action

A student reporting bullying behaviour may ask that a member of staff does nothing about the behaviour. 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 the school 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 may decide that, based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour.

Determining if bullying behaviour has ceased

The teacher must engage with the students and parents involved no more than 20 school days after the initial discussion to review progress following the initial intervention. Important factors to consider as part of the review 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.

Even though the bullying behaviour may have ceased, 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 behaviour. It can take time for relationships to settle and for support to take effect. In some cases, relationships may never be restored to how they were before the bullying behaviour occurred.

If the bullying behaviour has not ceased, the teacher should review the strategies used in consultation with the students and parents and agree to meet again over an agreed timeframe until the bullying behaviour has ceased. This agreed date will not exceed 10 school days.

Where it becomes clear that the student who is displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behaviour, then the school should consider using the strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour as provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour. If disciplinary sanctions are considered, this is a matter between the relevant student, their parents and the school.

Complaint process

If a parent is not satisfied with how bullying behaviour has been addressed by the school, in accordance with these procedures, they should be referred to the school's complaints procedure.

Additional Information relating to schools' complaint procedures are available at the following link: <https://www.gov.ie/en/policyinformation/parentalcomplaints/>

In the event that a student and/or parent is dissatisfied with how a complaint has been handled, a student and/or parent 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 Office of the Ombudsman for Children can be contacted at ococomplaint@oco.ie.

Recording bullying behaviour

All allegations of Bullying Behaviour will be recorded. All incidents of bullying behaviour will be recorded. This record will document the form and type of bullying behaviour, if known, where and when it took place and the date of the initial engagement with the students and their parents.

The record will include the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour. It will 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 school will document the date of each of these engagements and the date that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased. Any engagement with external services/supports should also be noted. A recording Template (to be used by St.Patrick's N.S.) is found in **Appendix C**.

These records will be retained in accordance with the school's record keeping policy and in line with data protection regulations.

In the event(s) of bullying incidents and where a Student Support Plan exists, the plan should be updated to incorporate response strategies and associated supports.

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):

Supports

Support is available to support those who experience, witness and display bullying behaviour. St.Patrick's N.S have identified the following services to be utilised:

- *National Educational Psychological Services*

In relation to bullying, NEPS psychologists often advise schools on best practice to prevent

and address bullying when issues arise in schools and/or provide training in preventative

initiatives, such as developing social and emotional skills, social skills, executive function skills,

promoting resilience and skills in relationship repair between peers as appropriate.

- *Oide*

Oide fosters a culture of continuing professional learning among school leaders and teachers encouraging lifelong learning, reflective and enquiry based practices. The work of Oide contributes to school improvement by providing high quality professional learning experiences, supports and resources relating to curricular developments, broader educational goals and national priorities, such as wellbeing which includes preventing and addressing bullying. Oide provides continuing professional learning support to schools to support

implementation of these procedures.

- *Webwise*

Webwise is the online safety initiative of the Department of Education and is co-funded by the European Commission. Webwise promotes safer, better internet use through awareness raising and education initiatives targeting teachers, students and parents. Webwise develops and disseminates resources that help teachers integrate digital citizenship and online safety into teaching and learning in their

schools. Webwise also provides information, advice, and tools to parents to support their engagement in their children's online lives.

- *Anti Bullying Centre (DCU FUSE Programme)*

The AntiBullying Centre offers a range of modules as part of its FUSE programme for the entire school community that can be used to help to promote a positive school culture and assist in preventing and addressing bullying behaviours.

- *Tusla*

Schools should contact Tusla directly for advice in cases where it is considered that bullying behaviour is a child protection concern.

Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and PostPrimary Schools

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.

The Board of Management officially ratified the policy in May 2025.

Chairperson, Board of Management Mary McKenna Date: 27/6/25

Principal  Date: 27/6/25

Further Information

- **When Bullying Behaviour becomes a Child Protection Concern**

When bullying behaviour becomes a child protection concern Section 10 of the Children First Act, 2015 places a statutory obligation on schools, as a “provider of a relevant service” to ensure, as far as practicable, that each child attending the school is safe from harm while attending school or otherwise participating in school activities.

Teachers registered with the Teaching Council are Mandated Persons under the Children First Act. They have a legal obligation under the Act to report harm of children that meets or is above a defined threshold to Tusla, and also to assist Tusla if requested, in assessing a concern which is the subject of a mandated report. If the concern does not reach the threshold for mandated reporting, but a teacher feels that it is a reasonable concern about the welfare or protection of a child, a report should be made to Tusla under the Children First National Guidance. The Children First National Guidance applies to everyone. All school staff and volunteers must report reasonable concerns to Tusla. The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (Revised 2023) provide that all school staff should report reasonable concerns to the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) who may take advice and/or report the concerns to Tusla. If the staff member is a registered teacher and the concern is at or above the threshold of harm at which a mandated report must be made the concern shall be submitted as a mandated report to Tusla jointly by the DLP and the registered teacher. See Chapter 5 of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (Revised 2023). The Children First Act defines harm as assault, illtreatment, neglect or sexual abuse and single and multiple instances. The threshold of harm is reached where the mandated person believes that a child’s health, development or welfare have been, or are being seriously affected, or are likely to be seriously affected. The Children First National Guidance document 2017 is the national, overarching guidance with regard to child safeguarding. The Guidance provides that in cases of serious instances of bullying where the behaviour is regarded as possibly abusive, a referral may need to be made to Tusla or An Garda Síochána as appropriate.

Generally, bullying behaviour can be addressed without the involvement of Tusla. However, bullying behaviour may become a child protection concern when it results in significant physical or emotional harm, or where it becomes a persistent and severe problem and measures taken to address it are not effective. In determining when bullying behaviour should be reported to Tusla the following factors should be considered:

- > the impact on the child
- > protective/appropriate action taken by the parents
- > protective/appropriate action taken by the school
- > engagement of child/family with support services such as NEPS

If there is doubt about whether bullying behaviour is a child protection concern schools should contact Tusla's social work department for advice. This will enable the social worker to explore the situation with school staff and provide advice on the best course of action.