

St. Patrick's Boys' National School

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Principal : Mr. Alan Foley



Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

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

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

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

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

	Date consulted	Method of consultation
School Staff	April 1st 2025 May 6th 2025	Staff Meeting Online Survey
Students	April 28th – May 2nd 2025	Online Surveys Individual Pupil Surveys
Parents	March 26th	Online Surveys
Board of Management	July 1st – 11th	Policy Consultation & Board Meeting
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	N/A	
Date policy was approved: 11 th July 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

- Create a positive and inclusive school culture where children feel safe, respected and valued.
- Promote inclusion in all aspects of school life so that both students and staff feel safe and respected.
- Support respectful and open dialogue across the whole school community to prevent and address bullying behaviour.
- Establish clear expectations for behaviour and enforce them consistently in line with our school behaviour policy.
- Students and parents can help foster an environment where bullying behaviour is not tolerated through promoting kindness, inclusion, empathy, and respect.
- Reassure children that the reporting of bullying behaviour is encouraged and that they will be listened to.
- Promote the concept of a trusted adult. Let students know who they can talk to. If a child feels unable to vocalise their worry, they can submit it in writing to a 'Worry Box' in Lorraine's office.
- Assess the school building periodically for spaces where bullying may occur and address

appropriately.

- Provide resources, such as a library, toys, games, art work, displays, photographs, international event days, and signage etc, that reflect and include the diverse ethnicities, religions and LGBTQ+ community around our school.
- Provide appropriate supervision to prevent bullying behaviour.
- Offer a mix of activities during break times with a view to accommodate diverse interests.

Teaching and Learning

- Provide students regular opportunities to work in small groups across the age ranges in order to build connections, a sense of belonging, and empathy.
- Model respectful behaviour towards colleagues, students, and visitors in our school environment.
- Teach SPHE, RSE and Stay Safe content which fosters student's wellbeing and self-confidence as well as promoting personal responsibilities for their own behaviours and actions.
- Support the students by providing activities and group opportunities such as Amber Flag Committee and activities, Student Council, regular assemblies, Wellness and Inclusion Week, Silly Sock Day, Mental Health Awareness: this list is not exhaustive.
- Code of Conduct for the classroom and playground drawn up with the class in September, with gentle reminders through assembly times.

Policy and Planning

- Develop a clear and consistent anti bullying policy across the school community that is implemented by all staff members.
- The policy should be easily accessible by all in the school community.
- The Bí Cineálta Policy takes into particular consideration the needs of SEN pupils
- This policy should be reviewed and updated regularly.
- Establish clear procedures for reporting any bullying incidences.
- The Bí Cineálta policy will be used in conjunction with – Student Friendly Bí Cineálta Policy, Supervision of Pupils, Code of Behaviour Policy, Child Safeguarding Policy, Attendance Policy, S.P.H.E., R.S.E.
- Teacher Training and sharing of expertise is an important aspect of policy implementation.
- To work with appropriate agencies in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all pupils in line with the Bí Cineálta Policy.

Relationships and Partnerships –

- Strong interpersonal connections are a vital part of effectively preventing an addressing anti bully policy in behaviour. With this in mind the Bí Cineálta policy puts emphasis on:
 - School staff and student relationships
 - Peer relationships
 - Parents to School relationships
 - Wider school community relationship
- Those relationships play an important role in creating an atmosphere of wellbeing, trust, approach around reporting, a sense of accountability and an awareness of a vested interest in bullying
- Developing contacts with the community
- Support the active participation of parents in school life
- Conduct workshops and seminars for students, staff and parents to raise awareness of the impacts of bullying and to foster a shared approach

Preventing Cyberbullying Behaviour –

- Explicitly teach the issues of cyber bullying and the importance of using technology safely.

- Have regular conversations with students about developing respectful and kind relationships online as part of the implementation of the S.P.H.E. curriculum.
- Refer to appropriate online behaviour as part of the standards of behaviour in the code of behaviour.
- Work with parents to educate them about the dangers of cyber bullying by facilitation outside speakers, with a view to including students in these workshops.
- Implementing the Digital Media Literacy Curriculum which teaches students about responsible online behaviour and digital citizenship.
- Host an Internet Safety Day

Preventing homophobic transphobic bullying behaviour

- Create a safe and inclusive environment for all students regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Educate students about the importance of respecting all people regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity in an age specific way as part of the RSE programme.
- Maintain an inclusive physical environment by displaying relevant posters and books.
- Raise awareness on the impact of homophobic bullying behaviour and encourage students to speak up when they witness homophobic behavior.
- Challenge gender stereotypes by encouraging and facilitating a diverse range of activities that appeal to all students.
- Encourage peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities.

Preventing racist and bullying behaviour.

- We foster a school culture where diversity is celebrated and where students see themselves in their school environment.
- Have the cultural diversity in school visible and on display
- Encourage peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
- Encourage people to report where they witnessed racist behaviour .
- Provide supports to school staff to respond to the needs of students for whom English is an additional language and for communicating with their parents.
- Ensure that library reading material and textbooks represent appropriate lived experience of students and adults from different national ethnic and cultural backgrounds.
- Where appropriate we encourage the families to share their experiences and culture with classmates.
- Ensure that library reading material and textbook represent appropriate lived experiences of students and adults from different national ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

Preventing sexist bullying behaviour

- Ensure that staff model respectful behavior and treat students equally.
- Staff are particularly vigilant on monitoring pupils who are considered at risk of being bullied.
- Celebrating diversity at school and acknowledging the contribution of all students.
- Encourage parents to reinforce these values of respect at home.

Preventing sexual harassment

- Promoting positive role models within the school community.
- Challenging gender stereotypes that can contribute to sexual harassment.

The school has the following supervision and monitoring policies in place to prevent and address bullying behaviour (see Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

- Two staff members on supervision each morning from 8.45am in the yard before school starts
- Two teachers and relevant SNAs on yard supervision for all breaks.
- Teachers and SNAs supervise first 10 minutes of big break while pupils eat their lunches. SNAs are assigned to relevant classrooms and teachers on duty move between other rooms
- Teachers accompany their classes to the school gate at home time
- Adequate supervision provided for all school trips
- The concept of “A trusted adult” is promoted within the school
- All students are encouraged to speak to a trusted adult if they feel bullying is happening to them or to others

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

- All class teachers
- In school management team

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):

Identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred:

- When a teacher is trying to determine if bullying behaviour has occurred, the answers to what, where, when and why need to be considered.
- One or two staff members to be present when engaging with children individually initially without parents’ notification and presence.
- Two staff members can be present when engaging with a group of children to investigate what happened. Teacher’s discretion can be used with this approach.
- A group meeting will provide the opportunity for the children to give 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.

The following three questions should be considered to determine if bullying has occurred:

1. Is the behaviour targeted at a specific student or a 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.

Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour that is not bullying behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

Where bullying behaviour has occurred

As a school, we recognise that every person has the potential to bully or to be bullied. Our aim will always be to help our pupils to understand the difference between right and wrong; to develop empathy and resilience; and to rebuild and restore friendships and relationships where possible. We will encourage parents to work collaboratively with us in supporting their child. When dealing with bullying behaviour, we will strive to explain how harmful and hurtful bullying is and to see the situation from the perspective of the person being bullied. We will not apportion blame or label children. We will also strive to do this without need for sanctions and punishments – instead with an emphasis on restoring and rebuilding relationships.

A school is not expected to deal with bullying behaviour that occurs when a student is 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, then the school can deal with it in accordance with the Bí Cineálta Policy.

It is important for staff to be fair and consistent in their approach to addressing bullying behaviour. Both the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour and the student who is displaying bullying behaviour need support. Staff should engage with the student who is experiencing the bullying without delay. Refer to Appendix A: Steps to take following a bullying allegation.

It is 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.

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

- Ensure the child 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 view of the student experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation
- Take action in a timely manner
- Inform parents of those involved

Parents of both 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 outlined in the Bí Cineálta 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.

Request for no action to be taken:

A student who reports bullying behaviour may ask a member of staff not to do anything and just 'look out' for them due to not wanting to be identified as having told someone about the bullying behaviour. They might

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 behaviour. It must be made clear to the student that other parties may need to be informed for their welfare.

Parents may also make the school aware of bullying behaviour and specifically request that no action is to be taken by the school. Parents should put this in writing to the school. However, schools may decide that based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour through the Bí Cineálta procedures and/or the Code of Behaviour where appropriate.

Determining if the 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. Factors to consider in the review include:

- The nature of the bullying
- The effectiveness of strategies used to address the bullying behaviour
- The relationship between the students involved

Ongoing supervision and support of both the child experiencing bullying behaviour and the child displaying bullying behaviour may be required. It can take time for the relationship to settle and for supports 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 strategies used in consultation with the students and parents and agree to meet again over an agreed timeframe until the bullying behaviour has ceased.

Where it becomes clear that the student who is displaying bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behaviour, then the school should consider using 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.

Recording Bullying Behaviour

- All incidents of bullying behavior will be recorded
- The template for Recording Bullying Behaviour will be filled out and signed by the relevant teacher
- The form will be included in the relevant pupil's files.
- The incident should be recorded in the pupil's Log of Actions on Aladdin
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Complaint Process

- If a parent/guardian is not satisfied with how the bullying behaviour has been addressed by the school, in accordance with the school's Bí Cineálta policy, they should be referred to the school's Parental complaints procedures.
- If a student and or parent/guardian 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 Ombudsman for Children can be contacted at ococomplaint@oco.ie

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):

The following supports are available to help prevent bullying behaviour

- NEPS- National Educational Psychological Services. NEPS provides a comprehensive, school based psychological service to support wellbeing, academic, social and emotional development. www.neps.ie
- Oide- supports professional learning and fosters a culture of continuous professional development amongst school leaders and teachers. www.oide.ie
- Webwise. This is an online initiative which promotes safer, better internet use through awareness raising and education initiatives targeting teachers, parents and students. www.webwise.ie
- NPC. The NPC provides a variety of resources and courses for parents to help prevent and address bullying behaviour. www.npc.ie
- DCU Anti Bullying centre. The centre offers a range of modules that can be used to help promote a positive school culture and assist in preventing and addressing bullying behaviours. www.antibullyingcentre.ie
- TUSLA. Tusla can be contacted directly for advice in cases where it is considered that bullying behaviour is a child protection concern. www.tusla.ie

Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary 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.

Signed:  (Chairperson BOM) Date: 11th July 2025

Signed:  (Principal) Date: 11th July 2025

Appendix A - Steps to take following a bullying allegation

- In investigating and dealing with bullying the teacher(s) will exercise his/her/their judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred, what type if it has and how best the situation might be resolved.
- The “relevant” teacher is generally the class teacher. However, depending on circumstances, this may be an SEN teacher, a member of the In School Management Team or the Principal.
- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the ‘Relevant Teacher(s)’. 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 instances of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.
- Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, SNAs, caretakers, cleaners and bus escorts are encouraged to report any incidences of bullying behaviour witnessed by them or mentioned to them to the Class Teacher.
- Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents.
- On being informed of an alleged incident of bullying, the teacher dealing with the report will first speak with the victim(s).
- Initial investigations will normally be carried out outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved, meaning a support teacher may have to cover the class.
- When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour the ‘Relevant Teacher(s)’ should seek answers to questions of what, where, who, when and why. This should be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner.
- If a group is involved each member should be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved should be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member should be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about the other's statements.
- Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that they may face from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher.
- The following three questions should be considered to determine if bullying has occurred:
 - Is the behavior targeted at a specific student or a group of students?
 - Is the behaviour intended to cause physical, social or emotional harm?
 - Is the behaviour repeated?
- Where the ‘Relevant Teacher(s)’ has/have determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts should be made to try to get him/her to see the perspective of the pupil being bullied.
- The “Relevant Teacher” does not apportion blame but should make an effort to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied. S/he emphasises that the intention is not to punish perpetrators but to talk to them, to explain how harmful and hurtful bullying is and to seek a promise that it will stop. If

that promise is forthcoming and is honoured there may be no penalty and that will be the end of the matter. However, the school has the discretion to impose sanctions depending on the seriousness of the incidents.

- The relevant teacher must contact the parents of all parties involved whenever it is determined that bullying has occurred. This should happen without delay. The approach taken should be one of parents and teachers working together to collaboratively help their child to navigate through and learn from the issue.
- When an investigation is completed and/or a bullying situation is resolved the "Relevant 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. This should be kept in the relevant pupils files and should be noted in each pupil's Log of Actions on Aladdin.
- If a pupil chooses to continue the bullying behaviour, this can then no longer be considered a once off occurrence. In this event parent(s)/guardian(s) will again be contacted. The school should give parents an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports for the pupil.
- Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved may be arranged separately with a view to bringing them together at a later date if the pupil who has been bullied is ready and agreeable.
- Repeated incidents of bullying behaviour will result in the imposition of sanctions. Such sanctions will be proportionate to the seriousness of the bullying behaviour. It must be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parents) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required that this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parents and the school.
- Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parent must be referred to the school's complaints procedure.
- In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parents of their rights to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.
- The School will maintain care for the victim over time. This will be done by speaking to the child a number of weeks after the incident to check on their continuing welfare. The child's parents will also be consulted.
- If a child makes a report of bullying, but asks that nothing is to be done about it, the relevant teacher will support the child appropriately to explore how it will be handled sensitively and how parents may be notified. If a parent does so, they must submit in writing that they require no further action to be taken, but even so, the school may still deem it necessary to be investigated and handled appropriately.