St Patrick's National School

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of St. Patrick's National School has adopted the following policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

This policy fully complies with the requirements of *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* 2024.

The Board of Management acknowledges that bullying behaviour interferes with the rights of the child as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. We all, as a school community, have a responsibility to work together to prevent and address bullying behaviour and to deal with the negative impact of bullying behaviour.

We are committed to ensuring that all students who attend our school are kept safe from harm and that the wellbeing of our students is at the forefront of everything that we do. We recognise the negative impact that bullying behaviour can have on the lives of our students and we are fully committed to preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.

We confirm that we will, in accordance with our obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the harassment of students or staff on any of the nine grounds specified: gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.

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.

- 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 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 .

The harm can be :

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

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 it becomes a repeated behaviour.

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, or instances where students do not want to be/remain friends, 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 directed 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, 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, e-mail, apps, digital gaming sites, gaming consoles, chat rooms 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

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.

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	Oct 2024 Jan 2025 May 2025	Online in-service Inservice for AP2 & Principal Staff in service & Staff Meeting
Students	May 2025 Published for Sept 2025	Questionnaire completed by 3rd -6th Anti bullying child friendly format included in the school diary Child friendly format on website
Parents	May 2025 June 2025	Parent Survey prepared Parents asked to complete questionnaire Draft policy published on website for parents' input
Board of Management	May 2025	Draft circulated for input
Wider school community	May 2025	Draft circulated on website
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):

Culture and Environment

- Prevention and awareness raising measures across all aspects of bullying involving strategies to engage pupils in addressing problems when they arise. In particular, such strategies need to build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils.
- Provide pupils with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth.
- Each class will devise classroom rules at the beginning of each year which will promote inclusion, acceptance of difference and respect for one another. Children may sign their acceptance of the Class Code.
- Friendship Week – the school will run an annual anti-bullying awareness week where various classes and events will be run to increase knowledge of what bullying is and what impact it can have.
- An Internet Safety Day will be held annually.
- Activities may be held on the theme in Art, poetry, prose and Drama.
- Anti-bullying posters will be made, discussed and displayed throughout the school (both Bí Cineálta and Kiva).
- All staff will promote co-operation, sharing, and friendship between all the children. Circle-time, class discussions on friendship (making friends, maintaining friendships, resolving conflict, responsibilities towards one another etc.) will regularly take place in class using our KiVa programme.
- The whole school community will be encouraged to become a ‘reporting school’ whereby the whole school community are encouraged to report/speak out if they are being bullied or if they witness a bullying situation. When children inform a staff member of a ‘bullying situation’ which occurred outside of school time, the teacher will advise the child to inform their parents. The child will be encouraged to ask for their support in resolving the situation.
- The number of bullying incidents are reported at the Board of Management meeting as per circular 45/2013.
- Teachers can influence attitudes to bullying behaviour in a positive manner through discussion about reporting the witnessing of bullying behaviour.
- KiVa lessons are completed (2 per month) from 1st to 6th Class.

Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)

- Additional lessons which deal specifically with bullying will be undertaken in each class e.g. KiVa, Walk Tall, Stay Safe and RSE with an emphasis on openness and discussion in this area. Areas covered will include:
    - What is bullying?
    - Forms of bullying
    - Cyber bullying
    - Why do people bully?
    - Bystander bullies
    - Silent witnesses
    - Effects of bullying
    - How does bullying make me feel?
    - What can we do?
    - Preventing bullying
    - Coping with bullying

- Prevention and awareness-raising measures focusing on cyber-bullying will be taken by educating pupils and parents on appropriate online behaviour and how to stay safe while online through the use of resources within Webwise, KiVa and Stay Safe programmes in the relevant classes.

- There are a number of curriculum components and programmes which are particularly relevant to the prevention of bullying and the promotion of respect for diversity and inclusiveness. The SPHE curriculum makes specific provision for exploring bullying as well as the inter-related areas of belonging and integrating, communication, conflict, friendship, personal safety, and relationships. The Stay Safe, KiVa & RSE programmes at primary level are personal safety skills programmes which seek to enhance children's self-protection skills including their ability to recognise and cope with bullying. The Religious Education programme - Follow Me emphasises respect for self and others. We deal with conflict in a way which helps to restore relationships.

- Each year classes from Junior Infants to 6th Class are shown a presentation called "Amazing Things Happen" to foster an awareness and understanding of neurodivergent children both in our special class and our mainstream setting.

- The work may be extended into many other areas such as Art, Drama and Physical Education. Co-operation and group enterprise can be promoted through team sports as well as through practical subjects.

Policy and Planning

The aim of our Bí Cineálta policy is:

- To raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with school management, teachers, pupils, parents, and guardians.
- To promote a school ethos which encourages children to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To continue our current supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of school activity are kept under observation.
- To continue following procedures for noting, investigating and dealing with

incidents of bullying behaviour.

- To discuss the underlying principles of the school's Anti-bullying Policy and Code of Behaviour at staff meetings
- Effective leadership is a key component with the Principal, Deputy Principal, 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, home school community liaison, student council, parents' gatherings and our various student teams.
- 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.

It should be noted that in Ireland the digital age of consent is 16. Most social media platforms and services have a minimum age requirement and for the majority of these services it is 13 years old. Therefore technically, children under the age of 13 should not have a social media account.

It is important for their child's safety, that parents are aware of their children's use of technology including smartphones and gaming consoles.

Preventing homophobic/transphobic bullying, racist bullying, sexual harassment

Strategies to prevent these types of bullying behaviour includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- maintaining an inclusive physical environment such as by displaying relevant posters eg "Different Family, Same Love" poster (INTO)
- encouraging students/bystanders to speak up when they witness bullying behaviour
- fostering a school culture where diversity is celebrated and where students "see themselves" in their school environment
- having the cultural diversity of the school visible and on display including Culture Day biannually
- conducting workshops and seminars for students, school staff and parents to raise

awareness of racism
- encouraging peer support such as peer-mentoring and empathy building activities
- providing supports to school staff to respond to the needs of students for whom English is an additional language and for communicating with their parents
- providing supports to school staff to support students from ethnic minorities, including Traveller and Roma students, and to encourage communication with their parents
- inviting speakers from diverse ethnic backgrounds
- ensuring that library reading material and textbooks represent appropriate lived experiences of students and adults from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds

Schools should focus on gender equality as part of the school's measures to create a supportive and respectful environment.

- ensuring members of staff model respectful behaviour
- ensuring all students have the same opportunities to engage in school activities irrespective of their sex
- celebrating diversity at school and acknowledging the contributions of all students
- organising awareness campaigns, workshops and presentations on topics relevant to our context
- encouraging parents to reinforce these values of respect at home

Strategies to prevent sexual harassment include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:
- teach children how to treat each other with respect and kindness
- 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/procedures in place to prevent and address bullying behaviour (see Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

- Code of Behaviour
- Mobile Phones
- GDPR
- Inclusion for Special Education Needs Pupils (SEN Policy)
- Tours
- Substance Misuse
- SPHE
- Religion
- Health and Safety
- Safe Guarding Statement & Risk Assessment
- Friendship Week

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

The chain of action for addressing bullying behaviour is (are) as follows

- A child / adult reports bullying behaviour to the class teacher
- Deputy Principal/Principal informed thereafter
- KiVa Team
- Any teacher may act as a relevant teacher if circumstances warrant it.

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):
It is imperative that bullying incidents are recorded in an objective and factual manner. Noting and reporting of bullying behaviour is to be documented using the **Kiva Screening and Discussions Document.**. All records must be maintained in accordance with relevant data protection legislation. The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour will adhere to the following: Bullying can be reported to any staff member (including ancillary staff). The staff

member will complete the Kiva screening document to determine if the matter presents as bullying. If so, the matter is directed to the Kiva Team for further investigation. The Kiva team will engage in discussion with the students involved as outlined in the **Kiva Screening and Discussions Document (see attached).**

The principal will contact the parents of the bullied pupil and the pupils involved in the bullying.

After 2-3 weeks the Kiva team will conduct a follow-up discussion with the bullied pupil and the pupils involved in the bullying to ensure that the matter is resolved. The records of all discussions will be stored in the principal's office.

Parents and pupils are required to cooperate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving any issues and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved as quickly as possible.
Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents must be referred, as appropriate, 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 primary aim in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and restore, as far as practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame).

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 school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying involves a whole school approach. All incidents of bullying will be dealt with using the Kiva procedure. The Kiva programme encourages the bystander to have an active role in stopping and preventing bullying. The key message is that *each and every one of us is responsible for our shared well-being, and everyone can influence it.*

Supporting Bullied pupils:
- Ending the bullying behaviour,
- Fostering respect for bullied pupils and all pupils,
- Friends identified by the bullied pupil will be guided on how to support the bullied pupil
- 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 information on adequate counselling facilities and support services available to pupils/parents who need it in a timely manner
- 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 extra-curricular 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 honorable thing and giving them praise for this,
- 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. 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 (poster) 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 necessary.

Signed: Thomas Wheatley Date: 28/8/25

(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: Anthony Brady Date: 28/8/25

(Principal)

Appendix 1: Template for recording bullying behaviour

Insert KiVa Screener

Appendix 2: Parent/Guardian Concern regarding Bullying

Bullying can be defined as:
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**.

Name of Child: _____ Class: _____

Class teacher: _____

Name of pupil(s) engaged in bullying behaviour

_____

Location of incidents -tick relevant box (es)

Playground	
Classroom	
Corridor	
Toilets	
Other (specify)	

Type of Bullying Behaviour - tick relevant box(es)

Physical aggression		Cyber-bullying	
Damage to property		Intimidation	
Isolation/Exclusion		Malicious gossip	
Repeated name calling		Other (specify)	

Detail the incidents that have occurred (include days, dates & times) and effect on child named above:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Signed: _____ (Parent/Guardian) Date: ___ / ___ / _____

Date received: ___ / ___ / _____ Signed: _____ (Principal)