St. Ita’s National School, Loughrea.

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour.

# Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of St Ita’s Primary 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.

We confirm that we will take all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the 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 each person 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 all have an indispensable part to play in the school community, regardless of difference.

# Core definition of Bullying Behaviour

**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.**

# 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.

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|  | Date consulted | Method of consultation |
| School Staﬀ | April 2025 | Questionnaire |
| Students | April 2025 | Questionnaire |
| Parents | April 2025 | Questionnaire |
| Board of Management | June 2025 | Discussion of Draft Policy |
| Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers | May 2025 | Discussion. Copy of existing Code of Behaviour provided.  Feedback invited. |
| Date policy was approved: 25/06/2025 | | |
| Date policy was last reviewed: | | |

**Preventing Bullying Behaviour**

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| 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. |
| In developing 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 the 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 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 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. |

As part of a holistic, whole­ school approach, measures to prevent bullying behavior,were developed under the following headings

**Culture and Environment:**

* 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. The inspectorate during their visit in January 2025 commented on the warm and welcoming atmosphere in this school. The responses to the questionnaires were very positive. The current Parent Association / School initiatives such as the uniform recycling project, promotes empathy, respect and co-operation.
* 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. It is important that the school community supports a ‘telling’ environment.
* Staff will encourage students to report if they or another student is experiencing bullying behaviour and support this as part of a “trusted adult” strategy by letting students know that they can talk to them.
* All reasonable measures will be employed to ensure the safety of students and to supervise students when students are attending school or attending school activities.
* 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.

**Curriculum (Teaching and Learning):**

* The Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) curricula at primary level aim to foster students’ well­being, 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.
* Students can also consider diversity and inclusion through Religious Education via the Patron’s Curricula which aim to encourage respect and understanding of different beliefs, perspectives and ways of living.
* The anti- bullying slides from Anti- Bullying W 2024, will be discussed in each class once a term (ideally at the start of the term). An art competition on the anti-bullying theme will be organized in each classroom.
* Weaving Well Being from First to Sixth Class, Stay Safe in infants and friendship week
* Art competition

**Policy and Planning**:

The following school policies support the implementation of the Bí Cineálta policy

* Acceptable Use Policy
* Supervision Policy
* Special Education Teaching Policy
* Code of Behaviour

**Relationships and Partnerships:**

These interpersonal connections are supported through a range of formal and informal structures such as student councils, school clubs, parents’ associations and student support teams.

* supporting activities that build empathy, respect and resilience
* encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring
* promoting acts of kindness
* teaching problem solving – Friends for Life
* hosting debates
* conducting assemblies for students, school staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of bullying
* Parents to be made aware of our Policy on Cineáltas during the preschool visits in June and at the Induction Meeting for junior infant parents held in September each year.
* supporting the active participation of students in school life e.g. Green Schools Committee, Student Council, sport etc., school band
* supporting the active participation of parents in school life, including those who may find it difficult or daunting to engage with the school due to being unfamiliar with the education system or due to language or cultural barriers
* Age-­appropriate awareness initiatives that look at the causes and impacts of bullying behaviour including those dealing with navigating friendships, identity-­based bullying, racist bullying, homophobic/transphobic bullying, sexism and sexual harassment e.g. anti-bullying art competition, guest speakers such as the visiting garda Michelle Sands, Aoife Noone, Declan Moran (Jeremy).

Our school has the following supervision and monitoring policies in place to prevent and address bullying behavior:

* Artwork ( buddy bench) and signage can help schools to promote the school’s values such as equality, diversity, inclusion and respect
* Two adults on duty at break and lunch times.
* School Tour Policy- supervision 1 teacher for every 10 children

**Addressing Bullying Behaviour**

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

Relevant Teacher(s) Principal

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

As a staff we will be fair and consistent in our approach to address bullying behaviour. We are conscious that the student who is **experiencing bullying behaviour** and the student who is **displaying bullying behaviour** need support. We acknowledge that it is important that the student who is experiencing bullying behaviour is engaged with without delay so that they feel listened to, supported and reassured. School staff will identify the supports needed for the student who is displaying bullying behaviour to better manage relational difficulties and ensure that their needs are met.

**Identification:**

1. When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred the teacher will consider the following: what, where, when and why?
2. Students involved may be asked to write down their account of the incident if this is deemed appropriate.
3. If a group of students is involved, each student will be engaged with individually at first.
4. Thereafter, all students involved will meet as a group.
5. At the group meeting, each student will be asked for their account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other’s views.
6. Each student will be supported, as appropriate, following the group meeting.

**Approaches:**

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

1. Ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour feels listened to and reassured and seek to ensure the privacy of those involved

1. Conduct all conversations with sensitivity
2. Consider the age and ability of those involved
3. Listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation
4. Take action in a timely manner
5. Inform parents of those involved

# Where bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved will 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 will develop an appropriate plan to support the student and for how their parents will be informed. The school will consider communication barriers that may exist when communicating with parents, for example, literacy, digital literacy or language barriers.

Ultimately it is the decision of the school to decide on the most suitable course of action. The school may the parent’s decision not to proceed witjh an investigation if it is deemed to be in the best interest of those involved.

The teacher must engage with the students and parents involved no more that 20 school days after the initial discussion.This engagement is to review progress following the initial intervention.

During this review it is important to consider the nature of the bullying behaviour, the effectiveness of the strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and the relationship between the pupils involved.

The oral handover of information from one class teacher to another teacher will include information about bullying behaviour or incidents. This handover will take place during a Croke Park Hour. In the event of a class teacher being on leave or absent, an SET teacher will take responsibility for the handover of this information.

Written reports to be stored in the Principal’s Office.

**All bullying behaviour will be recorded. Please see template provided**

**Template for Recording Incidents of Bullying Behaviour**

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| **Date:** |  |
| **Person making the report** |  |
| **Teacher responsible for investigating the bullying behaviour** |  |
| **Name of student experiencing bullying behaviour** |  |
| **Name of student engaging in bullying behaviour** |  |
| **Form and type**   * **Physical** * **Emotional** * **Social** |  |
| **Where and When**  **Date:**  **Time:** |  |
| **Summary of the bullying behaviour:** |  |
| **Views of student(s) and parent(s) regarding the actions to be taken** |  |
| **Date of Review with student(s) and parent(s)**  **(no more than 20 school days post report of the incident** |  |
| **Account of the Review with students and their parents** |  |
| **Engagement with external services/supports (if any)** |  |
| **Ongoing supervision and support if required** |  |
| **Date that the Bullying behaviour ceased** |  |
| **Date that the Log of Actions was updated for Support team to access (if applicable)** |  |
| **Date of email to Support team to inform them of an update to the file (if applicable)** |  |

# 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.

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)