

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of St. Declan's Special 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.

A one-off instance of negative behaviour towards a student is not bullying behaviour. However, a single hurtful message posted on social media can be considered bullying behaviour as it may be visible to a wide audience and has a high likelihood of being shared multiple times and so becomes a repeated behaviour.

Examples of behaviours that are not bullying behaviour:

- If the repeated harm is real for the student experiencing the behaviour, but unintended by the other student, this is not bullying, but importantly, must be addressed under the school's code of behaviour.
- Some students with special educational needs, may have social communication difficulties which may make them communicate their needs through behaviours that can hurt themselves or others. It is important to note that these behaviours are not deliberate or planned, but in certain situations, they are an automatic response which they cannot control.
- Disagreement between students is not considered bullying unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.

Types of Bullying

There are many types of bullying, and 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: Behaviour or Language, can include continual name calling which insults, humiliates the student – 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.

It can also 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.

Types of Bullying Behaviour

Bullying behaviour may also be directed at a student because of, or in relation to, a particular characteristic. This can include, but is not limited to:

- disablist bullying behaviour;
- bullying behaviour relating to exceptional ability;
- gender identity bullying behaviour;
- homophobic or transphobic bullying behaviour;
- bullying behaviour relating to physical appearance;
- racist bullying behaviour;
- bullying behaviour relating to poverty or socioeconomic circumstances;
- bullying behaviour relating to religious identity;
- sexist bullying behaviour; and
- sexual harassment.

The school recognises that bullying behaviour may involve more than one form or type of behaviour at the same time.

Cyber bullying is carried out via text, messaging/instant messaging, social media platforms, email, apps, digital gaming sites, gaming consoles, chatrooms and other online technologies. It 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.

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	Friday, 28 th March	Closure for training day, staff survey
Students	Monday, 9 th June	Survey groups
Parents	Tuesday, 10 th June	Parents surveyed using template

Board of Management	Various	Discussions with head of Board of Management
Wider School Community	Thursday, 28 th of August	Phone calls with bus escorts and bus drivers
Date Policy was approved:		
Date Policy was last reviewed: N/A		

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 school culture where bullying behaviour is unacceptable and a consistent approach to addressing bullying behaviour is adopted.
- Involve parents as active partners in fostering an environment where bullying behaviour is not tolerated.
- Support the culture of the school as a safe environment.
- Establish clear expectations for behaviour and enforce them consistently.
- Promote the concept of a trusted adult.
- Create a positive school culture and climate which is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity.
- Encourage pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment and to promote respectful relationships across the school community.
- Foster and enhance the self-esteem of all our pupils through both curricular and extracurricular activities. Pupils will be provided opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth through formal and informal interactions.

How the Culture and Environment is created:

- Staff are briefed on the uniform approach we must take to handle all reports of bullying.
- A Wellbeing Week in October each year.
- Child Friendly *Bí Cineálta Policy* was formed with pupil and parent input and is distributed to parents, children and staff to discuss.
- Parents receive information at times regarding useful information on Anti Bullying, Stay Safe and SPHE lessons which focus on positive behaviour.
- Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils.
- Celebrating school, class and individual achievements through our weekly assemblies.
- Foster positive relationships between pupils and staff members to nurture connections and establish open communication.

Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)

- Provide teaching and promote learning which is collaborative and respectful, fostering inclusion and respect for all.
- Display a shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact.

How this is achieved:

- Teach SPHE and RSE content which fosters students' well-being and self-confidence as well as promoting personal responsibility for their own behaviours and actions.
- One anti-bullying/friendship lesson at the start of each term.
- Model respectful behaviour towards colleagues, pupils and visitors in our school environment.
- Curricular and extracurricular activities can help to develop a sense of self-worth, working together, inclusion and respect.
- Students are given regular opportunities to work in small groups with peers, which can help build a sense of connection, belonging and empathy.
- Support for staff including access to CPD when and as required.
- Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour.
- Ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the *Bí Cineálta* Policy through our yearly reviews.

The Aims of our *Bí Cineálta* Policy are:

- To establish understanding that bullying is unacceptable behaviour among school management, teachers, pupils, and parents/guardians.
- To promote a school culture that all school community members treat each other with kindness and respect.
- To promote a culture that encourages children to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To ensure appropriate supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of school activity are kept under observation.
- To develop procedures for noting, investigating, and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To implement a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and for those involved in bullying behaviour.

Relationships and Partnerships:

- Catch the children being good - notice and acknowledge desired respectful behaviour by providing positive attention.
- Reminder of school rules at assemblies, raise awareness of bullying definition.

- Give constructive feedback to pupils when respectful behaviour and respectful language are absent.
- Support the active participation of parents in school life, e.g. contributing to the Christmas Fair, Fundraising Initiatives, Social Evenings, etc.
- Actively promote the right of every member of the school community to be safe and secure in school.
- Support the active participation of students in school life through formal and informal structures, e.g. circle-time activities, assemblies, sports' teams, student council, etc.

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):

- Code of Behaviour
- Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

The teachers with responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour are as follows:

Class teachers.

The Principal / Deputy Principal where appropriate.

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.
- Act 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):

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

Approach:

The primary aim in addressing reports of bullying behaviour should be to stop the bullying behaviour and to restore, as far as practicable, the relationships of the students involved, rather than to apportion blame. When addressing bullying behaviour, the teachers with responsibility will:

1. Ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour feels listened to and reassured.
2. Seek to ensure the privacy of those involved.
3. Conduct all conversations with sensitivity.
4. Consider the age and ability of the students involved.
5. Listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation.
6. Take action in a timely manner.
7. Inform parents of those involved.

Stage 1. Identifying if Bullying Behaviour has occurred.

To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour we will consider the following questions:

1. Is the behaviour targeted at a specific student or group of students?

2. Is the behaviour intended to cause physical, social or emotional harm?

3. Is the behaviour repeated?

If the answer to each of the questions above is **Yes**, then the behaviour is bullying behaviour, and the behaviour should be addressed using the *Bí Cineálta Procedures*.

Reminder: One-off incidents may be considered bullying behaviour in certain circumstances. A single hurtful message posted on social media can be considered bullying behaviour as it has a high likelihood of being shared multiple times and thus becomes a repeated behaviour.

If the answer to any of these questions is **No**, then the behaviour is not bullying behaviour. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour. When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred (**Stage 1**), teachers should consider what, where, when and why? as follows: (Note that these steps are required – as outlined in the Procedures):

- Where one student is reported to be involved, the student should be engaged with individually at first.
- Thereafter, this student and the student who is reported to be experiencing the bullying behaviour should be met together.
- If a group of students is involved, each student should be engaged with on an individual basis at first.
- Thereafter, all students involved and the student who is reported to be experiencing the bullying behaviour should be met as a group.
- At the group meeting, each student should be asked for their account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's views.
- Each student should be supported as appropriate, following the group meeting. It may be helpful to ask the students involved to write down their account of the incident(s).
- Parents will be supported by the school, if needed, with recommendations for useful resources/guides to help them.

Stage 2. Where Bullying Behaviour has occurred.

- Parents are an integral part of the school community and play an important role, in partnership with schools, in addressing bullying behaviour. Where bullying behaviour has occurred the parents of the students involved must be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and to consult with them on the actions to be taken to address the behaviour.
- It is important to listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation.
- All bullying behaviour will be recorded. This will include the form and type of behaviour if known (see pages 20-24, Section 2.5 and 2.7 of the *Bí Cineálta procedures* for descriptions/examples of the forms and types of bullying behaviour), where and when it took place, and the date of the engagement with students and parents. The actions and supports agreed to address bullying behaviour will be documented.
- If the bullying behaviour is a child protection concern the matter will be addressed without delay in accordance with Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.
- The record should be shared with the Principal.

Stage 3. Follow up where Bullying Behaviour has occurred.

- The teacher must engage with the students involved and their parents again no more than 20 school days after the initial engagement. Important factors to consider as part of this engagement are the nature of the bullying behaviour, the effectiveness of the strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and the relationship between the students involved.
- The teacher should document the review with students and their parents to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased and the views of students and their parents in relation to this the date that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased should also be recorded.
- Any engagement with external services/supports should also be noted.
- Ongoing supervision and support may be needed for the students involved even where bullying behaviour has ceased.
- If it becomes clear that the student who is displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behaviour, then consideration should be given to using the strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour as provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour. If disciplinary sanctions are considered, this is a matter between the relevant student, their parents and the school.
- If a parent(s) is not satisfied with how the bullying behaviour has been addressed by the school, in accordance with the *Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* they should be referred to the schools complaints procedures.

- If a parent is dissatisfied with how a complaint has been handled, they may make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children if they believe that the school's actions have had a negative effect on the student.

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. Given the complexity of bullying behaviour, no one intervention/support programme works in all situations.

Supporting bullied pupils:

- Ending the bullying behaviour.
- Fostering respect for bullied pupils and all pupils.
- Fostering greater empathy towards and support for bullied pupils.
- Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through our anti-bullying programs.
- 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.
- Helping bullied pupils raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that help develop friendships and social skills.

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 honourable thing and praising them 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.
- Using strategies throughout the school and the curriculum to help enhance pupils' feelings of self-worth.
- In dealing with negative behaviour 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 improve.

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.

There are two forms used when concerns about possible bullying behaviour are reported.

The first is an Initial Incident Report. This form is used to record the initial concern or allegation and the information available at that stage. The matter will then be investigated to determine whether the behaviour meets the definition of bullying behaviour under the Bí Cineálta Procedures.

See forms in Appendix 1.

Where, following investigation, it is determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, the second form will be completed, and the incident will be formally recorded as bullying behaviour

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: _____

Date: _____

(Chairperson Board of Management)

Signed: _____

Date: _____

(Principal)



St. Declan's BÍ Cineálta Initial Incident Report

Date of Meeting: _____

Child(ren) involved: _____

Class(es) of child(ren) involved: _____

Adults present at the meeting: _____

Details of Incident:

Where? When? What? Who?

Signed : _____

Following further investigation and in consultation with our BÍ Cineálta policy, the above is deemed:

Bullying behaviour	
Not bullying behaviour	



Template for Recording Bullying Behaviour

This template is only to be used when bullying behaviour has been identified, in line with the Bí Cineálta Procedures.

1. Date of initial engagement with pupil(s) and parent(s)

2. Pupil who has experienced bullying behaviour and class group

Pupil(s) _____ Class _____

3. Pupil(s) and class(es) of pupil(s) engaged in bullying behaviour

Pupil(s) _____ Class(es) _____

4. Source of bullying concern/report (tick relevant box(es)*)		5. Location of incidents (tick relevant box(es)*)	
Pupil concerned		Yard	
Other Pupil		Classroom	
Parent		Corridor	
Teacher		Toilets	
Other		Other (specify)	

6. Person(s) who reported the bullying concern and/or relationship to the pupil(s)

7. Dates of when bullying behaviour occurred

8. Form of Bullying Behaviour (tick relevant box/boxes)

Physical Bullying Behaviour		Exclusion Bullying Behaviour	
Verbal Bullying Behaviour		Relational Bullying Behaviour	
Written Bullying Behaviour		Online Bullying Behaviour	
Extortion		Other (specify)	

9. Type of Bullying Behaviour (tick relevant box/boxes)

Disablist Bullying Behaviour		Homophobic/Transphobic (LGBTQ+) Bullying Behaviour	
Exceptionally Able Bullying Behaviour		Physical Appearance Sexual Harassment	
Gender Identity Bullying Behaviour		Racist Bullying Behaviour	
Sexist Bullying Behaviour Sexual Harassment		Religious Identity Bullying Behaviour	
Poverty Bullying Behaviour		Other (specify)	

10. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact

11. Views of pupil(s) and parent(s) regarding the actions to be taken

12. Date of review with pupil(s) and parent(s) (within 20 days)	
13. Has bullying behaviour ceased?	
14.Views of pupil(s) and parents in relation to this	
15. If bullying behaviour has not ceased, set an agreed timeframe to meet again and review strategies	
16. Engagement with external services or supports (if any)	

Signed: _____
(Relevant Teacher)

Date: _____

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal: _____