



# St. Patrick's Junior School

TENNIS COURT LANE, SKERRIES, CO. DUBLIN

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## Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of St. Patrick's Junior National School, Skerries, 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	16/05/2025 10/06/2025	Training workshop, discussion. Feedback also invited and accepted via email. Draft policy circulated to all staff with response invited via survey
Students	Terms 2 & 3 2024/25	Age appropriate discussion on kind and unkind behaviour & bullying. Reminder that staff members in the school will help them if they are experiencing bullying (delivered via SPHE curriculum)
Parents	10/06/2025	Draft Policy circulated to all parents with response invited via survey
Board of Management	16/06/2025	Draft Policy forwarded to all Board of Management members and discussed at a meeting on
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	10/06/2025	Draft policy circulated to all staff with response invited via survey
Date policy was approved: 16/06/2025		
Date policy was last reviewed: 16/06/2025		

## 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

The school maintains a school wide approach to fostering respect for all members of the school community. The school promotes and nurtures the value of diversity throughout the school. This is valuable in addressing issues of prejudice and stereotyping and to highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour. The school fosters and endeavours to enhance the self esteem of all our pupils through the culture and environment of the school as well as curricular and extracurricular activities. Pupils are provided with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self worth through formal and informal interactions.

Whole staff professional development on bullying is provided where needed to ensure that all staff members develop an awareness of what bullying is, how it impacts on pupils' lives and the need to

respond to it through prevention and intervention. The school conducts an annual audit of professional development needs with a view to meeting staff requirements through internal staff knowledge/expertise and external sources. There is specific focus in professional development in the school on the training of relevant teachers. All members of the school community are included in awareness raising and, where relevant, training on all aspects of bullying.

All members of staff in the school are aware of the importance of supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extra-curricular activities. On yard, children are not allowed to remain in areas that are not visible to supervising adults. Non-teaching and ancillary staff are vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers. All areas of the school buildings are well lit and children are never on site during hours of darkness.

Yard is zoned for breaks with one area reserved for quiet play, one area reserved for Junior & Senior Infants, another for First and Second class children, and an indoor space reserved for children who either find yard difficult or who are temporarily excluded from yard due to physical injury (e.g. where they are wearing a cast). Four teachers are rostered for yard for every break with one of those providing "indoor yard" for those who need it for 15 minutes each day. Staff are sensitive to the difficulties some children have during unstructured times and support those children appropriately.

SNAs supervise and support their charges on yard. In our junior school, children do not use communication technology (social media, messaging apps, text messaging etc) while in school. Where pupils use communication technology in school as part of a lesson, this will be directly supervised by a staff member.

Our behaviour rules are based around the concept of Kindness – Kind Hands, Kind Words, Kind Actions. These rules are age appropriate and easy to understand and are reinforced with great frequency. The child friendly version of the Bí Cineálta Policy is explicitly taught from the very beginning of Junior Infants onwards. The Bí Cineálta rules are reinforced at every opportunity. Respect for peers and staff is constantly promoted and reinforced through daily use of our "Kindness" rules: Kind Hands, Kind Words, Kind Actions.

Teachers check in with pupils frequently to build and nurture the pupil teacher relationship so that pupils are comfortable sharing their news, feelings and worries with teachers. The following classroom practices contribute to a school culture and environment where pupils feel seen, heard and respected, incorporating ways to let their teacher know how they are feeling.

- The school's child friendly Bí Cineálta Policy is included in Homework Journals and displayed publicly in classrooms and in common areas of the school.
- Classrooms have a "Wellness Wall" where a Growth Mindset is promoted and messages promoting values of equality, diversity, inclusion and respect are displayed
- Classrooms have "check in" areas where pupils can let teacher know how they are feeling (by clipping a peg with their name on it to a happy/sad/angry/worried etc face).
- Classrooms have a "worry box" where pupils can post a note describing their worries.

Pupils in the school are involved in contribution to a safe school environment. Two Kindness Ambassadors are appointed on each class on a rota basis to support those who can't find friends to play with while on yard. Frequent reinforcement of our anti-bullying code both through the SPHE curriculum and informally in class when appropriate supports pupils and encourages a culture of peer respect and support.

The school encourages a culture of telling, with particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders. The child friendly version of the Bí Cineálta policy states that this is a "telling" school. Pupils are taught that reporting incidents of bullying is not telling tales but behaving responsibly. It is hoped that in that way pupils will gain confidence in "telling". It is recognised that this confidence factor is of vital importance.

The school ensures that pupils know who and how to tell, e.g.

- Direct approach to a teacher at an appropriate time, for example after class
- Hand a note up with homework
- Note to teacher in the worry box
- Get a parent or friend to tell on your behalf

The school ensures that bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place.

The school's Bí Cineálta policy is discussed with pupils and all parents/guardians are given a copy along with the code of behaviour of the school on enrolment. Parents must sign to indicate that they have read, understood and will support their children in abiding by the school's code of behaviour and Bí Cineálta policies as a condition of enrolment in the school.

Due to the young age of our pupils, in most instances a pupil will tell their parent if bullying incidents are occurring. Parents should approach the class teacher / school in order to report an incident or if they suspect that their child is being bullied. The protocol for this is outlined in the Parent Teacher Communication Policy. Teachers always take reports of bullying incidents seriously and will take immediate action appropriate to the situation in question.

The school has a central focus on pupil and staff wellbeing. Good communication between home and school is encouraged and ensure that teachers are informed of issues as they arise at home and parents are informed about incidents as they occur in school.

### **Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)**

All curricular and extra-curricular activities undertaken with our pupils promote the values of inclusion and respect. Pupils are seated in groups and frequently work together in pairs or small groups. This promotes respectful collaboration among pupils.

Programmes currently used to support the teaching of the code of behaviour and the Bí Cineálta Policy include:

- The SPHE programme
- Walk Tall
- Stay Safe
- The RSE Programme
- Amber Flag
- Roots of Empathy (when available)
- Kindness Ambassadors
- Welcome to Wellbeing/Weaving Wellbeing Programmes
- Paws B (when available)

As new programmes come onstream they will be evaluated. Where they are useful and age appropriate, they will be incorporated into the school programme for SPHE.

St. Patrick's JNS fully implements the SPHE curriculum including the full RSE and Stay Safe programmes. There is school wide delivery of age appropriate lessons to combat bullying from evidence based programmes suitable for the Junior Primary School. Pupils are visited occasionally by the community Garda. Lessons delivered by the Community Garda at Junior Primary level cover issues around personal safety. The school implements the advice in "Sexual Orientation Advice for Schools" (RSE Primary).

### **Policy and Planning**

Other school policies which support the objectives of the Bí Cineálta Policy are listed below. This Bí Cineálta Policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant school policies.

- Code of Behaviour
- Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment



- Supervision of Pupils Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Wellbeing Policy

Whole staff professional development on bullying is provided where needed to ensure that all staff members develop an awareness of what bullying is, how it impacts on pupils' lives and the need to respond to it through prevention and intervention. Teachers share best practices they have learned about with colleagues. The school conducts an annual audit of professional development needs with a view to meeting staff requirements through internal staff knowledge/expertise and external sources. There is specific focus in professional development in the school on the training of relevant teachers. All members of the school community are included in awareness raising and, where relevant, training on all aspects of bullying.

Training on Restorative Practice to help support healthy peer to peer relationships in our school is planned for the 2025 / 26 school year.

### **Relationships and Partnerships**

All staff members in St. Patrick's JNS are aware that strong interpersonal relationships are key to a healthy and respectful school culture. Staff work together as a team to support pupil progress in all areas of school life. All staff members are vigilant for bullying/unsafe behaviour and will step in to rectify the situation and report same to the class teacher / principal where relevant.

Teachers and SNAs support pupils in building and maintaining healthy peer relationships through various curricular and extra-curricular activities as outlined above.

The school provides and supports the following additional activities which, while not directly related to combating bullying, nevertheless build wellbeing, empathy, respect and resilience while also being valuable educational activities in their own right:

GAA training  
Soccer training  
Violin (1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> classes)

Pupils are supported to participate in school life in a way that is appropriate to their needs.

Pupils who need them are offered

- soft starts in the morning,
- regulation breaks with an SNA,
- time in the sensory room
- time in the calm room
- We have a communication board available to all pupils in the school yard.
- Pupils have various ways to communicate privately with the teacher as detailed above.
- Pupil voice is heard and valued as a matter of daily routine in all classrooms.

The school works in full partnership with parents to ensure that our pupils' needs are met and their experience in school is enjoyable and educational.

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):

Bí Cineálta Policy  
Code of Behaviour  
Child Safeguarding Statement  
(Yard) Supervision Policy  
Acceptable Use Policy  
Attendance Policy  
Parent Teacher Communication Policy  
Phone Policy

## Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

- Class teachers are each responsible for addressing bullying in their own classroom.
- Where a teacher is absent and a bullying incident is reported to a substitute teacher, that teacher will report it to a member of the school leadership team.
- Teachers in job sharing arrangements will keep their partners informed of any incidents of bullying occurring in their classroom.
- All teachers will keep the principal/deputy principal informed of incidents of bullying occurring in their classrooms.

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):

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

1. Is the behaviour targeted at a specific pupil or group of pupils?
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.

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

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 teachers should consider what, where, when and why?

- if a group of pupils is involved, each pupil should be engaged with individually at first
- thereafter, all pupils involved should be met as a group
- at the group meeting, each pupil should be asked for their account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's views
- each pupil should be supported as appropriate, following the group meeting
- it may be helpful to ask the pupils involved to write down their account of the incident(s).
- The teacher should clearly explain that the behaviour is bullying behaviour, that this is a serious matter and that the bullying behaviour must stop immediately.
- All pupils involved (both the person displaying bullying behaviour and the person who has experienced it) will need support from the teacher to ensure that the behaviour is not repeated.

#### 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 pupils 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 pupil who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation
- a record should be kept of the engagement with all involved using the template document provided to all teachers.

#### Requests to take no action

- A pupil reporting bullying behaviour may ask that a member of staff does nothing about the behaviour other than "look out" for them. The student may not want to be identified as having told someone about the bullying behaviour. They may feel that telling someone might make things more difficult for them. Where this occurs, it is important that the member of staff shows empathy to the pupil, deals with the matter sensitively and speaks with the pupil to work out together what steps can be taken to address the matter and how their parents will be informed of the situation. It is important that the student who has experienced bullying behaviour feels safe.
- Parents may also make schools aware of bullying behaviour that has occurred and specifically request that the school take no action. Parents should put this request in writing to the school or be facilitated to do so where there are literacy, digital literacy or language barriers. However, while acknowledging the parent's request, schools may decide that, based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour.

#### 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 pupils and their parents to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased and the views of pupils 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 pupils involved even where bullying behaviour has ceased
- if the bullying behaviour has not ceased the teacher should review the strategies used in consultation with the pupils involved and their parents. A timeframe should be agreed for further engagement until the bullying behaviour has ceased
- if it becomes clear that the pupil who is displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behaviour, the school will use 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 pupil, 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 school's 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 teacher will continue to monitor all those involved in the incident and provide each pupil with appropriate support to regain their self-esteem and self confidence and to rebuild healthy classroom relationships.

If required, teachers can avail of advice in the first instance from colleagues who have experience in this area who will be happy to share best practice and expertise.

Where further help and support is necessary, the school will engage with Oide, the National Educational Psychological Service, Webwise, Túsla or other appropriate agencies to help support pupils who experience, witness and display bullying behaviour.

#### 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: V. Dav. Fr. O'Leary O'Leary Date: 16/06/2025  
(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: Forve O'Leary Date: 16/06/2025  
(Principal)