St. Paul's National School Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of St. Paul's N.S. 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	15/01/2025 21/01/2025 12/02/2025 30/09/2026	R.MCD & GS attended Bí Cineálta Seminar Staff Meeting – staff provided with the opportunity to discuss the new Bi Cinealta action plan. Staff given time to discuss and relay feedback. Watched Oide webinar. Half day closure - Filled in our school staff questionnaire and began to draft policy. Annual review by staff
Students	14/05/2025 01/10/2026	Students were given a questionnaire to seek their input in developing an Anti-Bullying policy in Child Friendly Format. Pupil questionnaire readministered
Parents	08/04/2025 01/10/2026	Online survey given to parents to help inform our policy. Policy sent to parents to review
Board of Management	22/05/2025 19/10/2026	Review new policy draft – leading to consultation and final ratification after amendments made where necessary. Due to be ratified at BOM meeting.
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	12/02/2025	Email sent to bus drivers informing them of the new anti-bullying policy.
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):

Policy and planning

The aim of St.Paul's Bí Cinealta policy is:

- To raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with school management, teachers, pupils, parents/guardians.
- To promote a school ethos which encourages children to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour through the SPHE curriculum.
- 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.
- To work with appropriate agencies in countering all forms of bullying and promoting anti bullying behaviour.
- The Acceptable Use Policy, Supervision policy, Special Education Policy and Code of Behaviour all support the implementation of the Bi Cinealta policy.
- Effective leadership is a key component with Principal, Deputy Principal, DLP, DDLP, 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 and our various and multiple student committees and groups (e.g. Green Schools Committee, Active Flag Committee, Student Council.)
- 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.
- 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 Bí Cineálta 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.
- Ensuring the library has material that reflects our diverse school population from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.
- Ensuring all students have the same opportunities to engage in school activities.
- Ensuring all students are aware of the Code of Behaviour Policy.

Culture and Environment:

- Create a school culture where bullying behaviour is unacceptable and a consistent approach to addressing bullying behaviour.
- Involve parents as active partners in fostering an environment where bullying behaviour is not tolerated.
- Support the idea that our school is a telling environment.
- Promote the concept of a trusted adult – stay safe linkage.
- Ensuring that the school building and yard are safe spaces.
- Incorporate artwork and signs to promote our school values
- Create class contract/classroom rules
- Encourage a sense of belonging with ownership over their own space through art and creativity.
- Create a positive school culture and climate which is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity; encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment; and promotes respectful relationships across the school community.

<u>Ways in which we work to achieve these goals are as follows:</u>

- Staff are briefed on the approach we must take to handle all reports of bullying – this is

incorporated into our Bí Cineálta policy.
- Anti Bullying / Friendship week activities such as Random acts of Kindness homework, Poster making, slogan competition, etc
- Playground leaders – students in the senior room support younger classes on the yard to help with games and positive interactions (Friendship Squad).
- Bí Cineálta Policy was formed with pupil and parent input and is distributed to parents, children and staff to discuss. This policy outlines various ways to tell.
- Parents receive information regarding useful information on Anti Bullying.
- Stay safe and SPHE lessons focusing on positive behaviour form part of curricular content in all classes.
- Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils.

Curriculum: Teaching and Learning

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

Ways in which we work to achieve this:

- Teaching of SPHE and RSE content which fosters student's well-being and self confidence as well as promoting personal responsibility for their own behaviours and actions.
- 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.
- Acknowledgment of our diverse school population – celebrating diversity and culture in our school through art, displays, photographs, e.g Multicultural Day.
- Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying.
- Supports for staff: Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour and on-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

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):
• Child Safeguarding statement and Risk Assessment • Acceptable Use Policy • Bí Cineálta Policy • Code of Behaviour • Supervision policy • SPHE curriculum Policy • Wellbeing Framework • School Self-Evaluation

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

All teachers have responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour.

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):

- While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the teacher will use his/her/their professional judgement to establish if it is bullying behaviour using the three questions below;
    1. Is the behavior 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 should be addressed using the Bí Cineálta procedures.

If it is established that bullying has occurred, the teacher must keep appropriate written records which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as practicable, the relationships of the parties involved. With this in mind the school's procedures are as follows:

1. *Investigate:* Initial investigations will be carried out outside the classroom to ensure the privacy of all involved.
2. *Listen to both sides:* 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.
3. *Calm approach:* Ensure a calm approach to the investigation.
4. *Record*: Document the form and type of bullying behaviour *(See chapter 2 of Bí Cineálta Procedures)*, where and when it took place and the date of initial engagement with the students involved and their parents. This is Day 1. The record should include the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour.
5. *Review:* Within 20 days the relevant teacher must review to see if it has stopped and if so confirm with all parties involved. The date the bullying behaviour has ceased should be recorded. Any engagement with external services/supports should be noted.
   If the bullying behaviour has not ceased, the teacher should review the strategies used in consultation with the students/parents. A timeframe should be agreed for further engagement until the bullying behaviour has ceased.
6. *Code of Behaviour:* If the student who is displaying the bullying behaviour continues to display the behaviour then the school will refer to the Code of Behaviour.
7. *Parental Complaints Procedure*: If the parent is not satisfied with how the bullying behaviour has been addressed, then they should be referred to the Parental Complaints Procedure. St. Paul's NS is covered by the Parental Complaints Procedure agreed between the INTO and the management bodies of primary schools, including the General Synod Board of Education of the Church of Ireland. The procedure is available on the school website and can be accessed here.
8. *Ombudsman for Children:* If a parent is dissatisfied with how a complaint has been handled, they may make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

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):

- Ensure all issues have been resolved.
- Restore relationships between parties.
- All reports must be investigated and recorded by the relevant teacher.
- In any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parents/guardians and the school.
- Continue to support the children involved;

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 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 adequate counselling facilities available to pupils 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.

Supporting Bullying pupils:

- Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are not blamed or punished and get a 'clean sheet'.
- Making adequate counseling facilities available to help those who need it learn other ways of meeting their needs besides violating the rights of others.
- Helping those who need to raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that develop friendships and social skills.
- Using learning 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 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 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)