Bí Cineálta Policy

St. Declan's NS

The Board of Management of St. Declan's NS 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.
- 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 or loss to property).
- Social: (eg withdrawal, loneliness, exclusion)
- Emotional (eg low self-esteem, depression, anxiety)

A once 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 likelihood of being shared multiple times and so becomes a repeated behaviour. (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.

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 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 directing 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, sex, 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, email, apps, digital gaming sites, gaming consoles, chatrooms 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.

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	April 30th 2025	Staff Meeting delivered by Principal. Principal attended Oide professional development.
Students	Summer Term 2025	Surveys
Parents	Summer Term 2025	Surveys
Board of Management	May 15th 2025 & June 19th 2025	Board of Management Meeting
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	N/A	N/A
Date policy was approved: June 19th 2025		
Date policy was last reviewed:		

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

This section sets out the prevention strategies that will be used in St. Declan's NS. These include strategies specifically aimed at preventing online bullying behaviour, homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour, racist bullying behaviour, sexist bullying behaviour and sexual harassment. In developing prevention strategies which our school will use to prevent all forms of bullying behaviour, we come from the context of our Catholic ethos where inclusivity permeates all aspects of school life.
Culture and Environment • Create a school culture where bullying behaviour is unacceptable and a consistent approach to addressing bullying behaviour. • Build an environment where students feel safe and where they support each other. • Support a telling environment. • Promote kindness and an inclusive atmosphere

- Promote personal responsibility and positive conflict resolution
- Help children to understand the concept of a trusted adult and to know the adults in their environment.
- Strong staff commitment to preventing, recognising and addressing bullying.
- Create and sustain safe spaces in the school and yard.
- Create a culture that celebrates diversity.

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
- Teach SPHE, Walk Tall and RSE content which fosters student's well-being and self-confidence as well as promoting personal responsibility for their own behaviours and actions.
- Teach Grow in Love and embody the Catholic ethos.
- Model respectful behaviour towards colleagues, pupils and visitors in our school environment.
- Students are given regular opportunities to work in small groups with peers, to build connections and a sense of community.
- Acknowledgment of our diverse school population – celebrating diversity and culture in our school for example through art displays.

Policy and Planning

The aim of St. Declan's NS Bi Cineálta 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.
• 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.
• 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 Bí Cineálta policy. Effective leadership is a key component with Principal (DLP), Deputy Principal (DDLP), and all staff focused on supporting the implementation of this policy.

Relationships and Partnerships
• Interpersonal connections are supported through a range of formal and informal structures.
• Age and stage appropriate awareness initiatives that engage the children 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.

• Engaging parents and students 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 that pupils know who to tell and how to tell.
• Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place.

St. Declan's NS has the following supervision and monitoring policies in place to prevent and address bullying behaviour;

- Supervision Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- SEN Policy
- Acceptable Usage Policy
- Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

The steps that will be taken by St.Declan's NS to determine if bullying behaviour has occurred, the approaches taken to address the bullying behaviour and to review progress are as follows:

The teacher(s) with responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour is (are) as follows: Principal, Deputy Principal, all Class teachers, all SET teachers.
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 / guardians 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:
1. Determine if bullying behaviour has occurred
To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour, the following questions will be considered:
• Is the behaviour targeted at a specific student or group of students?
• Is the behaviour intended to cause physical, social or emotional harm?
• Is the behaviour repeated?

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

Note: 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 students is involved, each student should be engaged with individually at first
• thereafter, all students involved may 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)

2. Where bullying behaviour has occurred
• Where bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents/ guardians of the students 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
• the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation should be considered
• a record should be kept of the engagement with all involved
• this record should document the form and type of bullying behaviour, if known (Direct bullying behaviour – physical/ verbal / written / extortion, Indirect bullying behaviour - exclusion / relational / online), where and when it took place and the date of the initial engagement with the students involved and their parents / guardians
• the record should include the views of the students and their parents / guardians regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour

3. Follow up where bullying behaviour has occurred
• the teacher will engage with the students involved and their parents again no more than 20 school days after the initial engagement
• this engagement will consider 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/ guardians 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 the bullying behaviour has not ceased the teacher should review the strategies used in consultation with the students involved and their parents / guardians. A timeframe should be agreed for further engagement until the bullying behaviour has ceased
• if it becomes clear that the student who is displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behaviour, then the school will consider 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) / guardian(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 / guardian 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):

Approaches
The primary aim in addressing reports of bullying behaviour is to stop the bullying behaviour and to restore, as far as practicable, the relationships of the students involved, rather than to apportion blame. The school will use the following approaches to support those who experience, witness and display bullying behaviour ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour feels listened to and reassured

1. Bullied pupils
• All in-school supports and opportunities will be provided for the pupils affected by bullying to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop friendships and social skills and build resilience e.g. - Lessons in SPHE, Walk Tall and Stay safe as appropriate, group work such as circle time.
• Victims are reassured from the outset that they are not to blame.
• If pupils require counselling or further supports, the school will endeavour to liaise with the appropriate agency/professional(s). Strategies for restoring self-esteem are explored between teacher and parents/guardians.
• Staged approach - class support, school support (as per Continuum-Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties- NEPS)
• Where deemed necessary, the child, in consultation with parents / guardians may be advised to seek counselling.

2. Students involved in bullying behaviour
• Where deemed necessary, the child, in consultation with parents / guardians may be advised to seek counselling
• Empathy awareness needs to be developed.
• Clinical referral and assessment may be necessary. - Staged approach - class support, school support (as per Continuum-Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties- NEPS)
• Relevant sections of the Stay Safe, Walk Tall and the RSE Programme.
• Any sanction for the bullying behaviour may be applied as detailed in the school's Code of Behaviour.

3. To the relevant class if deemed necessary, it should be reinforced to students that there are no innocent bystanders and that all incidents of bullying behaviour must be reported to a teacher.

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.

This policy was first adopted by the Board of Management on June 19th 2025.

This policy was reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management on June 11th 2026

Signed: _____ Date: 18/06/26

(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: _____ Date: 18/06/26

(Principal)