Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of St Colman's N.S Cappagh 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 steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent all 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 everybody 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 everybody has a part to play in the school community, regardless of difference.

It is very important to note that this policy is fully aligned with the Bí Cinealta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools and that it should be read in conjunction with the procedures. Schools are required to follow the procedures fully, as set out by the Department of Education.

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.

Behaviour that is not bullying behaviour:

A one-off instance of negative behaviour towards another student is not bullying behaviour. However, 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. Disagreement between two students, or instances where students don't want to be friends or to remain friends, is not considered bullying unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others including deliberate manipulation of friendship groups. 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 their behaviours are not deliberate or planned, but, in certain situations, they are an automatic response which they can't control.

Bullying behaviour that occurs outside of school:

As per the Bí Cinealta Procedures, a school is not expected to deal with bullying behaviour that occurs when students are not under the care or responsibility of the school. However, where bullying behaviour has an impact in school, schools are required to support the students involved. Examples of prohibited bullying behaviours that can occur outside of school (non-exhausted list):
- Bullying behaviour that occurs in the area immediately outside the school, the local shops and the wider local area.
- Bullying behaviour that occurs on the journey to and from school.
- Bullying behaviour that occurs in organised clubs and groups outside of school such as sports clubs.
 - Online bullying (cyberbullying) behaviour, along with other types of bullying behaviour can cause significant harm and have a lasting impact on students who experience this behaviour. Access to technology means that online bullying behaviour can happen any time and that the student's home is no longer a safe place. The nature of these technologies means that digital content can be shared and seen by a very wide audience almost instantly and the content is almost impossible to delete permanently.

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	22/01/25 14/3/25 25/03/25	Staff Training Day in Laois Ed Half Day Closure Staff Survey
Students	09/06/25 13/02/25 10/02/25-14/02/25	Pupil Survey Circle Time/Class Discussions Online Safety Workshop Internet Safety Week
Parents	09/04/25 12/06/25	Parent Survey Feedback on Draft Policy
Board of Management	12/06/25 24/06/25	Feedback on Draft Policy Ratification of Policy
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	10/06/25	Discussion with community Garda. 5th and 6th Workshop on online safety. Discussion with bus drivers about behaviour on bus

Date policy was approved: TBC

Date policy was last reviewed:

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

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. (see Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures): In developing the 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 our school in a real way.

Culture and Environment
• Model respectful behaviour to all members of the school community at all times.
• Consistently tackle the use of discriminatory and derogatory language in the school – this includes homophobic and racist language and language that is belittling of pupils with additional needs and/or differences.
• Systems of encouragement and rewards to promote desired behaviour and compliance with the school rules and routines may be used where appropriate.
• All staff will actively watch out for signs of bullying behaviour.
• Promote acts of kindness and celebrate Friendship Week, Anti Bullying Week. Internet

Safety Weeks.
• 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 our board of management and staff meetings

Curriculum
• Explicitly teach pupils what respectful language and respectful behaviour looks like, acts like, sounds like and feels like in class and around the school.
• The implementation of the Social Physical and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum including the Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE), Weaving Well-being and Stay Safe Programmes.
• School-wide delivery of lessons on bullying from evidence-based programmes, e.g. Stay Safe Programme, programmes to teach about cyberbullying (e.g. Webwise teachers' resources and lessons from (www.cybersafekids.ie)
• Explicitly teach pupils about the appropriate use of social media and how to be safe online..
• Organise seminars/workshops given by relevant professionals focusing on educating pupils on appropriate online behaviour, how to stay safe while online and also on developing a culture of reporting any concerns about cyber-bullying.
• The school will specifically consider the additional needs of SEN pupils with regard to programme implementation and the development of skills and strategies to enable all pupils to respond appropriately.

Policy and Planning
• Have our child-friendly Bí Cinealta Policy on display prominently around the school.
• If pupils bring mobile phones or other smart devices to school they will be confiscated and given to a parent.
• Review policy documents such as the Code of Behaviour (including the Acceptable Use of Devices and the Internet Policy), Child Protection Policy and Attendance.
• All staff to the best of their ability, will ensure there is adequate playground/school yard/outdoor supervision (as per the school's Supervision Policy).

Relationships and Partnerships
• Catch the children being good/kind - notice and acknowledge desired respectful behaviour by providing positive attention.
• At assemblies, school rules are reinforced on a regular basis. Raise awareness of the definition of bullying behaviour and how the school deals with such behaviour.
• Give constructive feedback to pupils when respectful behaviour and respectful language are absent.
• Encourage parents/guardians to sign up to the voluntary agreements to defer smartphone/device ownership during the primary school years.
Encourage parents to take part in Webinars and Workshops on topics like Anti Bullying, Safety Online 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, paired reading etc. .
• Support the active participation of parents in school life, e.g. being a member of the Parents' Association, volunteering in the school etc.
•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 further 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.

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
Code of Behaviour
Acceptable Use of the Internet Policy
Yard Supervision Procedures

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

- Class teachers, SET team, ISM team
- The principal and deputy principal will provide support and become involved when 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 as much as possible.
- 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 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.

Stage 1 - Identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred

Bullying is defined 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.

- Where bullying behaviour is suspected, parents/guardians report it to the relevant class teacher. All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the 'Relevant Teacher(s)', the 'Relevant teacher(s)' must take an account from all parties involved in a supportive manner and log a report on Bí Cineálta document.

- The class teacher will oversee recording of bullying reports for students in their class; this includes using the procedure guidelines to investigate reports of bullying and recording bullying behaviour on the correct form.

- In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher(s) will exercise their judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred, what type if it has and how best the situation might be resolved.

- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the 'Relevant Teacher(s)'. In that way pupils will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It should be made clear to all pupils that when they report instances of bullying, they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.

- Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, SNAs, caretakers and cleaners are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them or mentioned to them (Children First Act 2015)

- Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach ('to the point' facts) when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents.

- On being informed of an alleged incident of bullying, the teacher dealing with the report will first interview the victim(s) and discuss the feelings which the victim(s) experienced because of the bullying behaviour.

- Initial investigations of bullying will be done in class where possible but some incidents might be best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.

- When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the 'Relevant Teacher(s)' should seek answers to questions of **what happened, where, who, when and why (restorative practice).**This should be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non- aggressive manner.

- If a group is involved each member should be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved should be met as a group. At the group meeting, 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. Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that they may face from the other members of the group after an interview by the teacher.

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 question above is **Yes,** then the behaviour is bullying behaviour, and the behaviour should be addressed using the *Bí Cineálta Policy*.

Note: 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. We then follow the *Code of Discipline Policy.*

Stage 2: Where bullying behaviour occurs, the school will:
- ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour is heard and reassured
- listen to the accounts of the reported perpetrator/s
- seek to ensure the privacy of those involved
- conduct all conversations with sensitivity
- consider the age, developmental stage and needs of those involved.
- listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour, involving them in how best to address the situation.
- take action in a timely manner.
- inform parents of those involved.

- If it is established by the 'Relevant Teacher(s)' that bullying has occurred, the 'Relevant Teacher(s)' must record the bullying incident on an *Alleged Bullying Behaviour Report. See appendix A.* The 'Relevant Teacher' must inform the principal.

- Where the 'Relevant Teacher(s)' has/have determined that a pupil has engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts should be made to try to get him/her to see the perspective of the pupil being bullied. The "Relevant Teacher" does not apportion blame but should make an effort to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied. S/he emphasises that the intention is not to punish perpetrators but to talk to them, to explain how harmful and hurtful bullying is and to seek a promise that it will stop. If that promise is forthcoming and is honoured there will be no penalty and that will be the end of the matter.

- When an investigation is completed and/or a bullying situation is resolved the "Relevant Teacher" will complete a report, to include the findings of the investigation, the strategy adopted and the outcome of the intervention, as well as any other relevant information.

- All staff will be vigilant to bullying behaviour.

- The principal will inform the Board of Management of incidents of bullying.

- Deputy principal /SENCO /School management will support by providing staff/class teachers with up-to-date information and assisting them with any uncertainty or concern they may have in addressing bullying issues.

Stage 3: Follow up where bullying behaviour has occurred

- The DLP will engage in a follow up with the students involved and their parents again no more than 20 school days after the initial engagement to investigate if the bullying has ceased. 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 DLP will 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. E.g: NEPS, Oide, NCSE

- On-going supervision and support may be needed for the students involved even where bullying behaviour has ceased.

- If a pupil chooses to continue the bullying behaviour, this can then no longer be considered a once off occurrence. The parent(s)/guardian(s) will be contacted. The school should give parents an opportunity to discuss ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the support for the pupil.

- Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved may be arranged separately with a view to bringing them together at a later date if the pupil who has been bullied is ready and agreeable.

- Depending on the nature and seriousness of the bullying, varying interventions will be utilised depending on, if it is a safe-guarding issue or a school code of behaviour issue. Repeated incidents of bullying behaviour will result in the imposition of sanctions. Such sanctions will be proportionate to the seriousness of the bullying behaviour. It must be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parents) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required that this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parents and the school.

- Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parent must be referred to the *school's complaints procedure*. In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parents of their rights to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

- The school will maintain care for the victim over time. This will be done by speaking to the child a number of weeks after the incident to check on their continuing welfare. The child's parents will also be consulted.

- If a child makes a report of bullying, but asks that nothing is to be done about it, the relevant teacher will support the child appropriately to explore how it will be handled sensitively and how parents may be notified. If a parent does so, they must submit in writing that they require no further action to be taken, but even so, the school under the Children First Act may still deem it necessary to investigate and handle it appropriately.

The school may use some the following approaches to support those who experience, witness and display bullying behaviour (see Chapter 6 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

- For those who experience bullying behaviour:
    - Provide immediate emotional support and reassurance.
    - Offer opportunities to speak privately with a trusted adult or staff member.
    - Involve parents/guardians where appropriate.
    - Develop a support plan, including regular check-ins.

- For those who witness bullying behaviour:
    - Encourage and support them to report incidents in a safe and confidential manner.
    - Educate on the importance of being an upstander, not a bystander.
    - Reinforce that their role in reporting and supporting others is valued and respected.
    - Provide opportunities for discussion in class or small groups (e.g., SPHE lessons or circle time).

- For those who display bullying behaviour:
  - Address the behaviour promptly and clearly, ensuring it is understood that it is unacceptable.
  - Explore the reasons behind the behaviour in a non-judgmental manner.
  - Implement a plan to help the pupil understand the impact of their actions.
  - Involve parents/guardians in the response and agree on a plan for behaviour support and monitoring.
  - Provide support to help the pupil develop empathy, emotional regulation, and positive peer relationships.

These approaches aim to ensure the wellbeing of all pupils, support behaviour change, and uphold the school's commitment to a safe and inclusive learning environment.

Section D: Oversight

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.*

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: _Mary Jo Ke Oughoe_   Date: _24|6|25_
(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: _Natalie Kelly_   Date: _24|6|25_
(Principal)

1. Name of pupil being bullied and class group

Name_____   Class_____

2. Name(s) and class(es) of pupil(s) engaged in bullying behaviour

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3. Source of bullying concern/report (tick relevant box(es))*

Pupil concerned	
Other Pupil	
Parent	
Teacher	
Other	

4. Location of incidents (tick relevant box(es))*

Playground	
Classroom	
Corridor	
Toilets	
School Bus	
Other	

5. Name of person(s) who reported the bullying concern

6. Type of Bullying Behaviour (tick relevant box(es)) *

Physical Aggression		Cyber-bullying	
Damage to Property		Intimidation	
Isolation/Exclusion		Malicious Gossip	
Name Calling		Other (specify)	

7. Where behaviour is regarded as identity-based bullying, indicate the relevant category:

Homophobic	Disability/SEN related	Racist	Membership of Traveller community	Other (specify)

8. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact

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9. Details of actions taken

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10. Date of Review with pupil(s) and parent(s) - within 20 days

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11. Review date: Has bullying behaviour ceased?

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12. Views of pupil(s) and parent(s) in relation to this.

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13. If bullying has not ceased, set an agreed timeframe to meet again.

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14. Engagements with external services or supports (if any)

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Signed _____ (Relevant Teacher)

Date _____

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal _____