St. Caillin's National School

Bí Cineálta Policy

School Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of **St. Caillins 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.
- Bullying behaviour is repeated over time. It 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. (pg. 17)

The harm can be:

1. Physical: (e.g.: personal injury, damage to or loss of property)
2. Social: (e.g.: withdrawal, loneliness, exclusion)
3. Emotional: (e.g.: 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 a high likelihood of being shared multiple times and so becomes a repeated 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 that 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 and 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: Cyberbullying is carried out via text, direct messaging/instant messaging, social media platforms, e-mail, apps, digital gaming sites, gaming consoles, chat rooms and other online technologies.

<u>Cyber-bullying can include:</u>

• Sending or sharing of insulting and offensive or intimidating messages or images via online means as mentioned above.

• Posting information or photographs 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 in online chat groups/access to accounts/from an online game.

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.

Groups Consulted	Method and Timeline of Consultation
School Staff	Staff meetings Jan-March 2025, School Leadership team meeting March 2025, Staff surveys May 2025, Half Day Planning May 2025
Students	Surveys May 2025
Parents	Surveys May 2025, Invitation to review draft policy June 2025
Board of Management	Formal policy review meetings
Wider School Community	Communication with local partners and school-linked services (e.g., bus drivers) September 2025

Date policy was approved: 10/02/2026

Date policy was last reviewed: February 2026

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

Culture and Environment

- Positive school environment and culture
- Positive and Effective relationships within the school community
- Wellbeing Wednesday check ins in each classroom
- Opportunities to participate in class and whole school activities to raise self esteem across a variety of disciplines.
- A telling environment is encouraged and the role of the by-stander is emphasised regularly.
- A trusted adult within the school that children can speak to- class teacher/principal/SNA- supports children considered at risk of bullying or being bullied.
- Creating safe physical spaces for children to use during break times.
- Structured play areas with a variety of resources to encourage play and participation.
- Continue to have playground leaders (pupils from 5th/6th) work with the junior room pupils each week, to demonstrate and encourage cooperative games.
- Adequate supervision at all break times.

Curriculum

- Regular anti-bullying lessons each term or more frequently if the need arises.
    - **Term 1: Focus on Cyber Safety and Emotional Literacy**
    - **Term 2: Anti-Bullying Campaign/Stay Safe Programme, safer internet day in February**

- **Term 3: Celebrate Friendship Week**

- Teaching and learning in SPHE in 2-year plan aligned to the curriculum using resources including Walk Tall, RSE, Stay Safe, Webwise, Weaving Wellbeing (Middle & Senior Classes)
- Stay safe lessons covered at each class level as part of 2-year cycle.
- Student voice: Children collaborate developing class rules in line with school rules and child friendly policy development.
- Visual representations of diversity and difference through books/resources promoting inclusion and diversity across the curriculum.
- Group work/Collaboration across the curriculum to foster positive relationships and respectful dialogue.
- Role-play, acting out scenarios developing pupil voice and confidence.
- Circle time fortnightly to consolidate peer relationships and foster empathy.

Policy and Planning

We strive to raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with school management, teachers, pupils, parents/guardians and promote a school ethos which encourages children to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour. Policies and plans which support this include;

- Bí Cineálta Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Supervision Policy
- SPHE Policy
- SEN Policy
- SSE Wellbeing in Education (SIP)

Relationships and Partnerships

- Parental involvement: Focus on developing relationship with Parents/Guardians and wider school community, opportunities for parental/family involvement in school.
- Strong interpersonal connections and communication between staff, parents and pupils.
- Whole School Bullying awareness initiatives and involvement in national campaigns.
- Promoting peer support through Buddy initiatives e.g. buddy reading, playground leaders, cross age team events and quizzes throughout the year.
- Supporting activities that build empathy, respect and resilience e.g. Weaving Wellbeing, Stay Safe, Religious Education, National campaigns including Childline, Trócaire, CHI
- Supporting active participation of students in school life and active participation of parents in school life.

Preventing Cyber-Bullying Behaviour

Note- the digital age of consent is the minimum age a user must be before a social media or internet company can collect, process and store their data. In Ireland the digital age of consent is 16. Children between 13 and 16 must have parental permission to sign up to social media services. Most social media platforms have a minimum age requirement and for the majority of these, it is 13 years old. Therefore, children under the age of 13 should not have any social media accounts

- Promoting digital citizenship
- Implementing SPHE curriculum including digital media literacy
- Open conversations with students about developing respectful and kind relationships online
- Referring to appropriate online behaviour as part of the standards of behaviour in the Code

of Behaviour
- Promoting online safety events for parents who are responsible for overseeing their children's activities online
- Organise a visit from the Community Gardaí
- Celebrate Safer Internet Day annually in February

Preventing homophobic/transphobic bullying behaviour
- Maintaining an inclusive physical environment, such as displaying relevant posters
- Encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
- Challenging gender stereotypes

Preventing racist bullying behaviour
- Fostering a school culture where diversity is celebrated and where students "see themselves" in their school environment
- Encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
- Encouraging bystanders to report when they witness racist behaviour
- Providing supports to school staff to support students from ethnic minorities, including Traveller and Roma students, and to encourage communications with their parents (when applicable)
- Ensuring the library reading material and textbooks represent appropriate lived experiences of students and adults from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds

Preventing sexist bullying behaviour
- Ensuring members of staff model respectful behaviour and treat students equally, irrespective of their sex
- Ensuring all students have the same opportunities to engage in school activities irrespective of their sex
- Celebrating diversity at school and acknowledging the contribution of all students
- Encouraging parents to reinforce these values of respect at home

Preventing sexual harassment
- Promoting positive role models within the school community
- Challenging gender stereotypes that can contribute to sexual harassment

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):

1. **Supervision and Monitoring:** Enhanced supervision and monitoring measures are mandated to ensure all areas of school activity are observed, reducing opportunities for bullying behaviour. This includes regular reviews of supervision schedules and identifying potential hotspots for bullying in our school.
2. **Reporting and Recording:** All incidents of bullying behaviour are recorded. The school principal provides a bullying behaviour update at each Board of Management meeting, ensuring ongoing oversight and accountability.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

The teacher(s) with responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour are:
The class teacher will oversee the 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 on Aladdin. The Principal and Deputy Principal may support the class teacher and students as necessary. All staff will be vigilant for bullying behaviour.

- 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 this bullying behaviour has an impact in school, schools are required to support the students involved. Where the bullying behaviour continues in school, schools should deal with it in accordance with their Bí Cineálta policy.
- Where the student displaying bullying behaviour is not a student in the school, but the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour is a student in the school, the school should support the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as appropriate and engage with them and their parents to determine what steps can be taken.
- It is important for school staff to be fair and consistent in their approach to address bullying behaviour. Both the student who is experiencing bullying behaviour and the student who is displaying bullying behaviour need support.
- It is important that the student who is experiencing bullying behaviour is engaged with, without delay, so that they feel listened to, supported and reassured.
- School staff should identify the support needed for the student who is displaying bullying behaviour to better manage relational difficulties and ensure that their needs are met.
- A student's confidence or sense of power can be decreased when they experience or witness bullying behaviour. When a student tells an adult that they feel that they are experiencing bullying behaviour, they may feel that they are taking back some control over what is happening to them.
- It is very important that a student's confidence is not decreased further by adults deciding what will happen next without listening to the student and involving them in deciding on the actions that will be taken.
- In circumstances where a student expresses concern about their parents being informed, the school should develop an appropriate plan to support the student and for how their parents will be informed. Schools should consider communication barriers that may exist when communicating with parents, for example, literacy, digital literacy or language barriers.
- To ensure clarity among the school community about how instances of bullying behaviour will be dealt with, the approaches that will be used by the school are specified in the school's Bí Cineálta policy and Appendix A Steps to Identify if bullying has occurred and record form.

<u>Requests to take no action</u>

- A student 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 student, deals with the matter sensitively and speaks with the student 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 will be asked to 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 parents'/pupil's request, schools may decide that, based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the 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

Steps Taken to Determine if Bullying Behaviour Has Occurred:

- To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour, teachers should 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.

- Note: Once-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 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).

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.
- A record should be kept of the engagement with all involved. This record should document the form and type of bullying behaviour, if known (see Section 2.5 and 2.7 of the Bi Cineálta procedures), where and when it took place and the date of the initial engagement with the students involved and their parents.
- The record should include the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour.

Approaches Taken to Address Bullying Behaviour:

- Behaviour correction through discussion, reflection, and agreement of behaviour contract.
- Peer group interventions and class-wide discussions where appropriate.
- Formal disciplinary actions in line with the Code of Behaviour.
- Restorative meetings if and when suitable, facilitated by trained staff.

Supports for Students:

- Support through SPHE and individual check-ins.
- Inclusion in peer-led activities.
- Referrals for NEPS or external counselling where needed.
- Promotion of resilience and confidence through structured wellbeing activities.

Recording and Reporting:

All bullying behaviour will be recorded. This will include the type of behaviour, where and when it took place, and the date of engagement with students and parents. The actions and supports agreed to address bullying behaviour will be documented.

Any engagement with external services or supports will also be noted. These records will be retained in accordance with the school's record keeping policy and in line with data protection regulations.

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*. Form is in Appendix A and available to teachers on Aladdin.

The documented record of the bullying behaviour will be saved to the students Aladdin File and where a Student Support plan already exists, the plan should be updated to include response strategies and supports.

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 the bullying behaviour has not ceased, the teacher should review the strategies used in consultation with the students involved and their parents.
- A time frame 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 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 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.

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
- The total number of incidents since the beginning of the school year

- Where relevant, trends and patterns identified, strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and wider strategies to prevent and address bullying behaviour

This update will not contain personal or identifying information.

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: Pat O'Toole **Date:10/02/2026**
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: Orla Redican **Date: 10/02/2026**
(Principal)