



St. Catherine's Vocational School
Bí Cineálta Policy
to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour



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The Board of Management of St. Catherine's Vocational School 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	30th April 2025	2.5 hr Workshop
Students	20th May 2025 27th May	Survey Focus Group x 16 3rd year students
Parents	20th May 2025	Focus Group Parents Association
Board of Management	27th May 2025	
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers		Conversation with bus driver Conversation with shop keepers
Date policy was approved: 27th May 2025		
Date policy was last reviewed: 27th May 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):

Online bullying behaviour

- > implementing the SPHE curriculum
- > implementing the Digital Media Literacy curriculum which teaches students about responsible online behaviour and digital citizenship (Safer Internet Day)
- > having regular conversations with students about developing respectful and kind relationships online
- > developing and communicating an acceptable use policy for technology
- > referring to appropriate online behaviour as part of the standards of behaviour in the Code of Behaviour
- > promoting or hosting online safety events for parents who are responsible for overseeing their children's activities online*
- > holding an Internet safety day to reinforce awareness around appropriate online behaviour
- > Anti Bullying Awareness Week

Homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour

- > maintaining an inclusive physical environment such as by displaying relevant posters
 - > encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
 - > challenging gender stereotypes
 - > conducting workshops and seminars for students, school staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of homophobic bullying behaviour (SASS Trained staff)
 - > encouraging students to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour
 - > Stand Up week
 - > SPHE curriculum
- Implemented the SASS student & Staff Committee

Racist bullying behaviour

- > fostering a school culture where diversity is celebrated and where students “see themselves” in their school environment
 - > having the cultural diversity of the school visible and on display
 - > conducting workshops and seminars for students, school staff and parents to raise awareness of racism
 - > 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 respond to the needs of students for whom English is an additional language and for communicating with their parents
 - > providing supports to school staff to support students from ethnic minorities, including Traveller and Roma students, and to encourage communication with their parents
 - > inviting speakers from diverse ethnic backgrounds
 - > ensuring that library reading material and textbooks represent appropriate lived experiences of students and adults from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds
- Culture Day - celebrating the schools different cultures

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 contributions of all students
- > organising awareness campaigns, workshops and presentations on gender equality and respect
- > encouraging parents to reinforce these values of respect at home

Sexual harassment

- > using the updated SPHE and RSE specifications at post primary level to teach students about healthy relationships and how to treat each other with respect and kindness
 - > promoting positive role models within the school community
 - > challenging gender stereotypes that can contribute to sexual harassment
- RSE Policy

Wholeschool Practices

- IMBV - promoting values education
- Ethos week
- SASS Training for staff
- Code of Behaviour
- No Phone Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- RSE Policy
- Anonymous Notes in Registration Class
- Student friendly policy displayed in school & in journal
- External Speakers
- RSE Policy
- Dissemination of the Anti-bullying Policy on the school website and in the Homework Diary
- Staff foster a positive atmosphere of tolerance and mutual respect.
- The use of the Pastoral Care class to highlight bullying and the school's response to it.
- Vigilance by all staff in and out of the classroom in relation to bullying.
- A robust supervision system to prevent bullying in the school environs.
- Teaching about bullying when the opportunity arises across the curriculum including in subjects such as CSPE, SPHE, English, Art, PE, Geography and Social Education.
- Specific educational interventions including teaching about bullying in CPSE, SPHE and RSE as well as teaching the acceptance of minority groups.
- The use of the Induction Programme for First Years to ensure early preventative interventions.
- The display of posters and anti-bullying messages in prominent areas both in classrooms and around the school corridors. •
- The use of an Anti-Bullying Charter in the school.
- Observation of National Anti-bullying week.
- The adoption of a Dignity in the Workplace Charter.
- Talks for parents on the school's policy and dealing with bullying as part of Information evenings Outside speakers are invited to address students on bullying, safe internet usage and cyber-bullying.

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):

Cameras are installed in most parts of the school and monitored by the Principal & Deputy Principal.

Supervision of common areas from

8.35 - 8.50 1 teacher

1100 - 11.15 - 3 teachers

1.15 - 1.30 - 1 teacher

1.30 - 1.55 - Activities 1 teacher

1.45 - 2.00 - 3 teachers

Afterschool - 30 minutes 1 teacher

Substitution organised on a daily basis when teachers are off timetable.

Trips out - A teacher & SNA present where appropriate.

No Mobile Phones allowed in the school.

Students can leave the school at lunchtime (with parental consent)

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

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):

Determine if the behaviour is bullying behaviour?

Is it Targeted

Is it Repeated

Did it cause Harm

If all 3 boxes are ticked, it is deemed Bullying Behaviour and the following steps must be completed.

Determine what, where, when and why?

Get the student to write down an account.

Report to the Principal/Deputy Principal

Principal/ Deputy Principal to record using the [Bullying Incident Report Form 2025](#)

The following principles must be adhered to when addressing bullying behaviour:

- > ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour feels listened to 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*

(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)

Contacting Parents

*parents of the parties 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 as outlined in the school's Bí Cineálta policy.

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

Request for No Action

The student may not want to be identified as having told someone about the bullying behaviour. The staff member 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.

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.

However, while acknowledging the parent's request, schools may decide that, based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour

Recording of Bullying Behaviour

All incidents of bullying behaviour should be recorded. The record should document the form and type of bullying behaviour, if known, where and when it took place and the date of the initial engagement with the students and their parents.

include the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour. It 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. It is important to document the date of each of these engagements and the date that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased. Any engagement with external services/supports should also be noted. Where a Student Support File exists for a student, the school will place a copy of the record on the student's support file. This will assist the school's student support team, where they exist, in providing a consistent and holistic response to support the wellbeing of the students involved.

Review Procedure

The teacher must engage with the students and parents involved no more than 20 school days after the initial discussion to review progress following the initial intervention. Important factors to consider as part of the review 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.

Complaints Procedure

If a parent is not satisfied with how bullying behaviour has been addressed by the school, in accordance with these procedures, they should be referred to the school's complaints procedure.

Additional Information relating to schools' complaint procedures are available at the following link: <https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/parental-complaints/>

School Procedures for dealing with Bullying Concerns

The school's procedures for investigation, follow-up and recording of bullying behaviour and the established intervention strategies used by the school for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour are as follows:

A student or parent may bring a bullying concern to any staff member in the school.

The staff member will report the incident to the class teacher of the student affected by the bullying.

In general a shared concern and restorative approach to bullying is adopted.

Depending on the seriousness and nature of the concerns two different procedures may be adopted:

If in the professional judgement of the relevant class teacher the incident is quite small then the following procedure is applied:

- The class teacher (and the Year Head) on receiving the report will listen supportively, treat the incident seriously and subsequently record in writing on the appropriate form the concerns raised.
- The Year Head or Deputy Principal will talk to the other student(s) involved in the incident to ascertain his/her version of events.
- The Year Head or Deputy Principal may talk to other people including teachers, SNAs and other students to get a better picture of the behaviour and so make an informed and balanced judgement.
- All of the above interviews will take place outside of the classroom setting.
- In the first instance a Restorative Practice approach is used to resolve the conflict to avoid apportioning blame and to repair the damaged relationship.

- The teachers will take a calm, unemotional and problem-solving approach with a view to securing a resolution.
- The Year Head/Deputy Principal will contact the parents of the students involved to help reach a resolution.
- The Year Head/Deputy Principal will follow up within 20 school days. If the shared concern or restorative approach has been unsuccessful then the A second approach at a restorative resolution is attempted and if this is unsuccessful the Deputy Principal may apply a sanction provided for in the school's Code of Behaviour. Either the Year Head or the Deputy Principal (if the incident has been passed on) will report the incident and the resolution to a member of the Pastoral Care team and to the Principal.
- The Principal informs the parents of the students involved of the incident and the outcome.
- The Principal informs the Board of Management at the next meeting convened.

If in the professional judgement of the class teacher the incident is of a more serious nature then the following procedure is applied:

- The class teacher (and another member of staff should the class teacher deem this necessary) on receiving the report will listen supportively, treat the incident seriously and subsequently record in writing on the appropriate form the concerns raised.
- The class teacher informs the student affected by the bullying behaviour that the matter will be referred to the Deputy Principal.
- The Deputy Principal (and another member of staff should the class teacher deem this necessary) interviews all of the relevant parties mentioned in the concerns raised in a sensitive manner and keep a written record of all versions of events as well as a record on the appropriate form.
- The Deputy Principal may talk to other people including teachers, SNAs and other students to get a better picture of the behaviour and so make an informed and balanced judgement.
- All of the above interviews will take place outside of the classroom setting.
- The Deputy Principal will use his professional judgement to determine if bullying has occurred.
- The seriousness of the incident will be stressed as well as the school's obligation under law to address the incident.
- Parents will be contacted and required to cooperate with the investigation and efforts to reach a resolution.
- Having heard all versions of the incident(s) the Deputy Principal may invoke the assistance of the Principal as necessary to assist in the investigation and resolution of the incident(s).
- The seriousness of the incident(s) will be reiterated as well as the school's obligation to deal with it.
- In the first instance a Restorative Practice approach is used to resolve the conflict to avoid apportioning blame and to repair the damaged relationship.
- The Deputy Principal will report the incident to a member of the Pastoral care team to ensure proper support is in place for all parties involved.
- The Deputy Principal and/or other relevant person involved will take a calm, unemotional and problem-solving approach with a view to securing a resolution.
- Given the nature of the bullying concern parents will be invited to discuss the situation with a view to finding a resolution.
- If, after an investigation, no resolution has been found and the bullying behaviour continues for more than 20 days, the Deputy Principal will inform the Principal.
- The Principal will review all written records and listen to all parties involved in the matter.
- A further opportunity for a restorative solution will be explored with the students and parents.
- If after 20 days from the first date of reporting there has been no restorative solution the Principal records this on the appropriate form.

Having reviewed all of the reports and having listened to all parties the Principal will present a final opportunity for a restorative resolution to the matter. If this does not occur then a sanction from the Code of Behaviour up to and including suspension or expulsion may be imposed where a judgement of bullying is made against one or more students. Any sanction applied will be proportionate to the behaviour.

The Principal will have regard for the individual merits of each case.

- Expulsion may be invoked where there is clear evidence of serious wrongdoing and bullying as defined and described in this code and where there is no undertaking given that the bullying behaviour will not be repeated or where there is a repeat of the bullying despite assurances given.
- The appeals process for suspension and expulsion as laid out in the Code of Behaviour will be available to parents or students over 18 years of age.
- In extreme cases and depending on the circumstances the Principal may alert the Garda Síochána of the bullying behaviour.
- The Principal informs the parents of the students involved of the incident and the outcome.
- The Principal also informs parents of their right to avail of the school's complaints procedure if they are unhappy with how the procedure was dealt with.
- If the parent is still unhappy the Principal informs them of their right to complain to the Ombudsman for Children
- The Principal informs the Board of Management at the next meeting convened.

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):

Support those who

Experience bullying behaviour

Students who report bullying are listened to sensitively and their concerns are treated with the importance and respect they merit.

Counselling

Restorative Practice - trained staff

Check ins

Referral to relevant agencies

Awareness of school policy

Document their own behaviour sign & date

Reflective Practice Management/parents/guardians

Subject and class teachers may be informed so that they are sensitive and responsive to the on-going needs of all students involved.

Other interventions may be put in place to improve the self-esteem and confidence of the student affected by the behaviour including student mentoring, referral to outside agencies, targeted friendship development initiatives and so forth.

Students may be encouraged to become involved in team-building activities within or outside of the curriculum.

Incidents are reported to the Pastoral Care Team and an appointment is made for the student(s) to discuss emerging issues.

Witness bullying behaviour

Students who report bullying are listened to sensitively and their concerns are treated with the importance and respect they merit.

Encourage a Telling environment

Confidentiality

Anonymous Notes

Reassurance that they have done the right thing

Follow up/Check in

Display bullying behaviour

The student involved in the bullying may be referred to counselling with a view to addressing their behaviour and in particular his/her relational behaviour.

Restorative Practice - trained staff

Check ins

Referral to relevant agencies

Awareness of school policy

Document their own behaviour sign & date

Reflective Practice Management/parents/guardians

Students may be encouraged to become involved in team-building activities within or outside of the curriculum.

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)

