



Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of St. Christopher's Special 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 Policy and the schools Behaviour Support Policy.

It should be noted that as St. Christopher's Special School caters for children with Moderate & Severe/ Profound General Learning Disabilities, the staff, parents and Board of Management recognise that the majority of our students do not have the cognition or intent to engage in bullying behaviour. Many students in our school have social communication difficulties which may result in them communicating their needs through behaviours of concern that can cause hurt to themselves or others. These behaviours are not deliberate or planned and are an automatic response which they cannot control. These behaviours should be addressed in accordance with the schools Behaviour Support Policy. Any such behaviour will be assessed using comprehensive functional assessments which will, if appropriate, assess if the behaviour meets the specified criteria for bullying as outlined in this policy. It is also important that the effects of these behaviours on other students should be addressed and protocols established to deal with same.

Culture and Environment

A positive and inclusive school culture and environment is essential to prevent and address bullying behaviour. The school environment should be a space where students and school staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported. Relationships between all members of the school community should be based on respect, care, integrity and trust. Open communication between the Patron, Board of Management, school staff, students and their parents help to foster a collaborative approach and shared responsibilities in relation to preventing and addressing bullying behaviour. The school leadership team influences the school culture and set the standards and expectations for the school community when preventing and addressing bullying behaviour. Each member of school staff has a responsibility to develop and maintain a school culture where bullying behaviour is unacceptable and to take a consistent approach to addressing bullying behaviour. Students can shape the school culture by promoting kindness and inclusion within their peer group and maintain a positive and supportive school environment for all. Parents, as active partners in their child's education, can help foster an environment where bullying behaviour is not tolerated through promoting empathy and respect.

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	31/08/2025	Read, view and review materials from Resources for Half Day training. Whole Staff Meeting to give feedback. Staff Questionnaires.

Students	Throughout September 2025	Differentiated questionnaires seeking student input into a student-friendly Bí Cineálta policy.
Parents	30/08/2025	Questionnaires seeking feedback/ input on policy.
Board of Management	22/10/2025	Review new Policy draft – leading to consultation and final ratification after amendments made where necessary.
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	23/10/2025	Published on school website.
Date policy was approved:		
Date policy was last reviewed:		

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

This section sets out the prevention strategies that will be used by the school. These include strategies specifically aimed at preventing online bullying behaviour, homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour, racist bullying behaviour, sexist bullying behaviour and sexual harassment as appropriate.

Culture and Environment:

- A positive and inclusive school environment that welcomes and celebrates diversity.
- A safe space that encourages pupils to talk about their feelings and experiences
- Effective leadership.
- A whole-school approach.
- The promotion of respect and kindness across the school community.
- The implementation of education and prevention strategies that build empathy, respect and resilience in our students.
- The effective supervision and monitoring of students in a mindful manner.
- Supports for staff.
- A consistent approach to recording, investigation and follow-up of bullying behaviour – including the use of established intervention strategies.
- Ongoing review and evaluation of our anti-bullying policy and procedures.
- Involve parents as active partners in fostering an environment where bullying behaviour is not tolerated.
- Support the idea that our school is a telling environment.
- Promote the concept of a trusted adult – stay safe linkage – who to tell.

- Create safe spaces in our school building and yards – visibility.
- Ensuring the journey to school on the bus is a happy and safe experience.
- Incorporate artwork and signs to promote our school values and diversity – creation of a student wellbeing charter promoting rights – equality, inclusion and respect.
- Encourage a sense of belonging with ownership over their own space through art, creativity and activities.

Curriculum:

- Teaching and learning in SPHE.
- RSE Curriculum.
- Student participation.
- SPHE Methodologies.
- Promoting inclusion and diversity.
- Group work/Collaboration.
- Encouraging Peer Support.
- Role – play, acting out scenarios.
- Circle time.
- Student meetings.
- Celebrating Diversity.
- Promote awareness of bullying (SPHE, Stay Safe and RSE Programmes).
- Anti-Bullying workshops/guest speakers.
- Effective supervision and monitoring of students.
- Consistent recording, investigation and follow-up of bullying behaviour.
- Ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the Cineáltas Procedures.

Policy and Planning:

- Bí Cineálta Policy
- Student-friendly Bí Cineálta Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Pupil Wellbeing Charter
- Acceptable Use Policy
- RSE Policy
- Attendance Policy
- SPHE/ Stay Safe Policy
- SSE Wellbeing in Education
- Appropriate CPD for staff members.

Relationships and Partnerships

- Strong interpersonal connections.

- Bullying awareness initiatives.
- Student and parent participation.
- TPL (Teacher Professional Learning).
- Critical Thinking Skills.
- Promoting peer support.
- Supporting activities that build empathy, respect and resilience.

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 years. Children between 13 and 16 years 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 years should not have a social media account.

- Promoting digital citizenship
- Implementing SPHE curriculum.
- 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.
- Holding internet safety talks

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 communication with their parents.

- Ensuring that 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 has 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:

In addition to above mentioned strategies, the school has the following in place to prevent and address bullying –

- Positive self-esteem is fostered among the students by celebrating individual differences, by acknowledging good behaviour and by providing opportunities for success.
- Digital Media Policy includes learning about responsible online behaviour and digital citizenship.
- Acceptable Usage Policy also developed for technology in our school.
- The school's Bí Cineálta Policy is discussed regularly with the students.
- Staff are particularly vigilant in monitoring students who are considered at risk of bullying/being bullied.
- All disclosed incidents of bullying are investigated thoroughly and consistently by following the correct procedure as outlined to staff and recorded using the template for this.
- School wide awareness on all aspects of bullying.
- Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, school grounds, school tours and extracurricular activities.
- Involvement of students in contributing to a safe school environment e.g. Kindness/Anti-Bullying Week, and other activities that can help the students and encourage a culture of peer respect and support.
- Shared resources for teaching of bullying which all Teachers and SNA's can

access.

- Making clear that our school has a zero tolerance approach to sexual harassment of any kind with enforceable Policy – See Code of Behaviour Policy.
- Children are provided with adequate staff support when participating in outings in the local and wider community.
- Teachers bear in mind children who may have recently clashed when organising groups for collaborative work/teams etc with a view to giving space to the children involved to heal.
- The Board of Management confirms that appropriate supervision and monitoring policies and practices are in place to both prevent and deal with bullying behaviour and to facilitate early intervention where possible.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

The teachers with responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour are as follows

- 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.
- The DLP/DDLP will carry out assessments of behavior as required and ensure the Behaviour Support Policy is followed if appropriate.
- The DLP/DDLP will follow up after twenty days to investigate if bullying has ceased.
- All staff will be vigilant to bullying behaviour.
- Principal will inform Board of Management of incidences of Bullying.
- Deputy Principal is available to provide up to date information and supports if needed to assist class teacher in addressing concern.

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

Identify if bullying behaviour has occurred

- Two staff members can be present when engaging with children individually, initially without parents' notification and presence.
- Two staff members can be present when engaging with a group of children to investigate what happened.
- A group meeting will provide the opportunity for the children to give 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 also be helpful to ask the students involved to write down their account of the incident.
- The Principal Teacher will carry out an assessment as appropriate on behaviour if the school feels this is warranted. This assessment will look at the behavior from a comprehensive perspective and in specific relation to the questions outlined below.

The following three questions should be considered to determine if bullying has occurred

- 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 Yes, then the behaviour is bullying behaviour and the behaviour should be addressed using the Bí Cineálta Procedures.

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.
- The school is obliged to fully investigate any alleged incidents of bullying which are reported by parents.
- 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.

Recording Bullying Behaviour

All bullying behaviour will be recorded on the 'Bullying Behaviour Report Form'

- A record should be kept of the engagement with all involved including the initial 'Bullying Incident Report Form'

- This will include the form and 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.
- The record should include the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behavior.
- 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.
- This will be added to the students support file.

Complaint Process

- If parents are 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.

Requests no action taken:

- A student who reports bullying behaviour may ask a member of staff not to do anything and just "look out" for them due to not wanting to be identified as having told someone about the bullying behaviour. They might 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 behaviour.
- It must be made clear to the student that other parties may need to be informed for their welfare.
- Parents may also make the school aware of bullying behaviour and specifically request that no action is to be taken by the school.
- Parents should put this in writing to the school.
- However, schools may decide that based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour through the Bí Cineálta Procedures and/or the Code of Behaviour where appropriate.

Determining if the bullying behaviour has ceased:

The Teacher must engage with the students and parents involved no more than 20 school days after the initial discussion to review progress. Factors to consider in the review include:

- The nature of the bullying.

- The effectiveness of strategies used to address the bullying behaviour.
- The relationship between the students involved.

Ongoing supervision of both the student experiencing bullying behaviour and the student displaying bullying behavior may be required as well as continued support. It can take time for relationships to settle and for supports to take effect. In some cases, relationships may never be restored to how they were before the bullying behaviour occurred.

If the bullying behaviour has not ceased, the Teacher should review the strategies used in consultation with the students and parents and agree to meet again over an agreed timeframe until the bullying behaviour has ceased.

Where it becomes clear that the student who is displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behaviour, and then the school should 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 school.

The school will use the following approaches to support those who experience, witness and display 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, then school can deal with it in accordance with Bí Cineálta Procedures.
- It is important for 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. Engage with the student who is experiencing bullying without delay. School staff should identify the supports needed for the student who is displaying bullying behaviour to better manage relational difficulties.
- It is important that a student's agency 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.

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

- Ensure 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 view 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.
- Parents of both 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.

Supports:

The school may seek the support of any of the following when working with students affected by bullying:

- NEPS
- Oide
- Webwise
- National Parents Council
- Tusla

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 (www.stchristophersspecialschool.com) 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:

Fionuala Donnelly

Acting Principal

[Signature]

Chairperson, Board of Management.

Date:

24-10-2025