Bí Cineálta Policy

San Carlo Senior National School, Leixlip, Co. Kildare

Scoil San Carlo SNS
Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Scoil San Carlo SNS 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.

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.

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	March/ May 2025	Use of standard questionnaire on google forms via Aladdin/ In-school training provided on the guidelines/ consulted on draft policy
Students	May 2025	Use of standard questionnaire via paper copy/ Google Drive / Student Council involved in development of pupil-friendly version.
Parents	May/June 2025	Use of standard questionnaire via Google Drive link on Aladdin/ consulted on draft policy
Board of Management	June 2025	Provided with policy guidelines, CPSMA explanatory video/ consulted on draft policy draft policy
Wider school community (bus driver, bus escort, secretaries, caretaker, cleaners)	May 2025	Use of standard questionnaire via paper copy
Date policy was approved: 16th June 2025		
Date policy was last reviewed: N/A – This is the initial ratification of the policy (Original Anti-Bullying Policy was reviewed on 27th January 2025)		

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.

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:

- ➢ The school acknowledges the right of each member of the school community to enjoy school in a secure environment.

- ➢ The school acknowledges the uniqueness of each individual and his/her worth as a human being.

- ➢ The school promotes positive habits of self-respect, self-discipline and responsibility among all its members.

- ➢ The school prohibits vulgar, offensive, sectarian or other aggressive behaviour or language by any of its members.

- ➢ The school has a clear commitment to promoting equity in general and gender equity in particular in all aspects of functioning.

- ➢ The school identifies aspects of curriculum through which positive and lasting influences can be exerted towards forming pupils' attitudes and values.

- ➢ The school takes particular care of *at risk pupils* and uses its monitoring systems to facilitate early intervention where necessary and it responds to the needs, fears or anxieties of individual members in a sensitive manner.
  * *At risk pupils* - Both Irish and international research shows that physical appearance is the most common reason for being bullied, with race, nationality and skin colour as the second most common reason. Children from poorer families, migrants, and those who are gender nonconforming have also been found to be more vulnerable to bullying behaviour (UNESCO, 2019) Source: Cinéaltas Action Plan on Bullying 2022.
  Other vulnerable groups include pupils with disabilities or special educational needs, those who have difficulty communicating or who do not understand social cues.* (Source:Anti-bullying Procedures 2013)

- ➢ The school recognises the need to work in partnership with and keep parents informed on procedures to improve relationships on a school-wide basis.

- ➢ The school recognises the role of parents in equipping the pupil with a range of life-skills.

- ➢ The school recognises the role of other community agencies in preventing and dealing with bullying.

- ➢ The school promotes habits of mutual respect, courtesy and an awareness of the interdependence of people in groups and communities.

- ➢ The school promotes qualities of social responsibility, tolerance and understanding among all its members both in school and out of school.

- ➢ The school supports a 'telling' environment where reporting of bullying behaviour is encouraged. Ensuring bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place; "If you don't tell, then you are a part of it". At the same time, it's important to understand reasons why pupils do not report and try to address them. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It should be made clear to all pupils that when they report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.

- ➢ The school attempts to adhere to the concept of 'a trusted adult' as a strategy to encourage pupils to report bullying behaviour.

- ➢ The school considers the maintenance of a safe physical environment through murals and signage promoting the school values of inclusion and respect and giving

pupils a sense of ownership of their own space, including the display of the pupil-friendly Cineáltas policy and the Cineáltas flag.

➢ The school takes all reasonable measures to ensure adequate supervision is provided at yard-times and at school activities.

➢ Staff members share a collegiate responsibility, under the direction of the Principal, to act in preventing bullying/aggressive behaviour by any member of the school community.

Curriculum (Teaching and Learning):

➢ Teaching and learning that is collaborative and respectful is promoted. Pupils are given regular opportunities to work in small groups with their peers to develop a sense of connection, belonging and empathy among pupils.

➢ There is full implementation of the SPHE curriculum, which includes delivery of the RSE and Stay Safe Programmes as required by the Department of Education as well as delivery of lessons on bullying from Cool School Lessons and The Walk Tall Programme; school wide delivery of lessons on Cyber Bullying from Web-Wise Primary teachers' resources where possible, from outside organisations who have expertise in the area of Cyber-safety.

➢ Staff are encouraged to take part in Continuous Professional Development in relation to delivering these programmes.

➢ We hold an annual Friendship/Anti-Bullying Week with associated activities.

➢ When possible, there is delivery of the Garda SPHE Programme. These lessons, delivered by Community Gardai, cover issues around personal safety and cyber-bullying.

➢ The school specifically considers 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. Learning support teachers will reinforce class lessons on anti-bullying through Social Skills groups, Nurture group, etc.

Policy and Planning:

The aim of Scoil San Carlo SNS Bi Cinealta policy is;

➢ 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.

➢ To raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with school management, teachers, pupils, parents/guardians.

➢ To promote a school ethos which encourages children to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.

➢ To ensure appropriate supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of school activity are kept under observation.

➢ To develop procedures for noting, investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.

➢ To implement a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and for those involved in bullying behaviour.

➢ To work with appropriate agencies in countering all forms of bullying and promoting anti bullying behaviour.

➢ The Acceptable Use Policy, Supervision Policy, Special Education Policy and Code of Behaviour all support the implementation of the Bi Cinealta policy.

- ➢ Inclusion of pupils in the development of this policy through questionnaires, the development of the Pupil-friendly Bí Cineáltas policy and promotion by the Student Council
- ➢ Effective leadership is a key component with Principal, Deputy Principal, DLP, DDLP, and all middle management focused on supporting the implementation of this policy.

Relationships and Partnerships:

- ➢ 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.

- ➢ A school-wide approach is adopted to the fostering of respect for all members of the school community.
- ➢ Interpersonal connections are supported through a range of formal and informal structures such as our Parents' Association, our Student Council and other pupil-led committees such as Green Schools, Active Schools.
- ➢ Age and stage-appropriate awareness initiatives engage the student body in looking at their own behaviour – promoting acts of kindness and friendship, teaching problem-solving strategies, hosting debates, and considering the causes of and impact of bullying during SPHE lessons.
- ➢ Conducting of workshops for pupils, staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of bullying.
- ➢ Encouraging peer mentoring and peer support.
- ➢ Supporting active participation of pupils in school life to promote a sense of belonging and ownership.
- ➢ Encouraging active participation of parents in school life, for example - engaging parents in actively contributing to the formation of this Policy.
- ➢ Parent(s)/guardian(s) are encouraged to approach the school if they suspect that their child is being bullied.
  The first point of contact should be with the class teacher.
- ➢ The Parents' Association has introduced a 'No Smartphones' initiative to which parents of the school can sign up.

Preventing Cyberbullying Behaviour:

- ➢ Staff encourage pupils to show respect for each other and 'Be Kind Online'.

- ➢ Implementation of the SPHE curriculum.

- ➢ Digital Media Literacy Policy includes learning about responsible online behaviour and digital citizenship.

- ➢ The Acceptable Use Policy is regularly reviewed regarding the use of technology in our school.

- ➢ The school's Code of Behaviour refers to appropriate and inappropriate direct online behaviour.

- ➢ The school's anti-bullying policy is discussed regularly with the pupils, in the classroom and at termly assemblies, with reference to acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in the online space.

- ➢ Involvement of pupils in contributing to a safe school environment e.g. Kindness/ Anti-Bullying week, and other activities that can help to pupils and encourage a culture of peer respect and support,

- ➢ Referral to appropriate online behaviour when using devices and in SPHE lessons.

- ➢ Promotion of online safety events or material for parents via Aladdin /school website.

- ➢ The listing of supports currently being used in SPHE is included on the school website.

Preventing Homophobic/Transphobic bullying, Racist bullying, Sexist bullying, Sexual harassment:

- ➢ Raise awareness of the impact of homophobic bullying behaviour and encourage students to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour.

- ➢ Challenging gender stereo-types and promoting positive role models.

- ➢ Foster a culture where diversity is celebrated and students "see themselves" in the school environment, though materials and relevant posters or symbols such as the Pride flag.

- ➢ Ensuring class libraries have material with reflects our diverse school population from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

- ➢ Modelling of respectful behaviour by staff of all irrespective of sex.

- ➢ Ensuring all students have the same opportunities to engage in all school activities, irrespective of sex.

- ➢ Making clear that our school has a zero tolerance approach to sexual harassment of any kind with an enforceable policy - See Code of Behaviour.

The school has the following supervision and monitoring policies in place to prevent and address bullying behaviour

- ➢ Child- Safeguarding Policy which is reviewed annually.

- ➢ Code of Behaviour.

- ➢ Policy in relation to Supervision and Monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds.

- ➢ School Tours Policy.

- ➢ Special Education Policy

- ➢ Acceptable Use Policy - Supervision also applies to the monitoring of student use of communication technology within the school.

- ➢ Digital Learning framework is in place for online learning situations.

- ➢ Non-teaching and ancillary staff are encouraged to be vigilant and report any issues to relevant teachers

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

The teachers with responsibility for addressing bullying behavior are as follows:

➢ Principal
➢ Deputy Principal
➢ All Class Teachers.

When bullying behaviour occurs, the school will:

➢ Ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour is heard and reassured.
➢ Seek to ensure the privacy of those involved.
➢ Conduct all conversations with sensitivity.
➢ Consider the age and ability of those involved.
➢ Listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation.
➢ Take action in a timely manner.
➢ Inform the 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 behavior and to review progress are as follows:

The primary aim in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame. Every effort will be made to ensure that all involved (including pupils, parent(s)/guardian(s)) understand this approach from the outset.

Reporting Bullying Behaviour
Any pupil or parent(s)/guardian(s) may bring a bullying incident to any teacher in the school. All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying, will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. Teaching and non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), caretakers, cleaners must report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher.

Investigating and Dealing with Incidents
In investigating and dealing with bullying, the (relevant) teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved.
Parent(s)/guardian(s) and pupils are required to co-operate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving any issues and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved as quickly as possible.
Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach.

Identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred
Where possible, incidents will be investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved. All interviews will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this way. When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher will seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why.
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 will be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved will be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member will be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements.
Each member of a group will be supported through the possible pressures that may face them from the other members of the group after the interview by the teacher.
It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s)

Where bullying is deemed to have occurred:
In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the parties involved will be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken (by reference to the school policy). The school will give parent(s)/guardian(s) an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports provided to the pupils.

Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been 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 situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied.
It must also be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parent(s)/guardian(s)) that

in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school.

The 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.

Requests to take no action
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 should 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 parent's request, schools may decide that, based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour.

Follow Up/Determining whether bullying behaviour has ceased.
In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant teacher must, as part of his/her professional judgement, take the following factors into account:

➢ Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased.

➢ Whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable.

➢ Whether the relationships between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable.

The teacher will 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.
Even though the bullying behaviour may have ceased, ongoing supervision and support may be required for both the student who has experienced the bullying behaviour as well as the student who has displayed the behaviour. 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 will 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, 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 the school.

Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parent(s)/guardian(s) or the school Principal or Deputy Principal should be noted.

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

Recording of Bullying Behaviour
All incidents of bullying behaviour should be recorded using the school's template for recording bullying behavior which documents 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. The record may include the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour. It documents 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 dates of each of these engagements and the date that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased are also recorded.

Complaints Process
If a parent is not satisfied with how bullying behaviour has been addressed by the school, in accordance with these procedures, they can be referred to the school's complaints procedure. In the event that a student and/or parent is dissatisfied with how a complaint has been handled, a student and/or parent may make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children if they believe that the school's actions have had a negative effect on the student. The Office of the Ombudsman for Children can be contacted at ococomplaint@oco.ie.

The school will use the following approaches to support those who experience, witness and display bullying behaviour.

Supports are available to help prevent and address bullying behaviour. These include the following:
➢ The use of the 'One Good/Trusted Adult' approach.
➢ The implementation of the 'Stay Safe' and 'Walk Tall' programmes.
➢ National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS).- provides a comprehensive, schoolbased psychological service to all primary and post primary schools to support the wellbeing, academic, social and emotional development of all students. In relation to bullying, NEPS psychologists often advise schools on best practice to prevent and address bullying when issues arise in schools and/or provide training in preventative initiatives, such as developing social and emotion skills, social skills, executive function skills, promoting resilience and skills in relationship repair between peers as appropriate.
➢ Web-wise - the online safety initiative of the Department of Education, co-funded by the European Commission. Webwise provides information, advice, and tools to teachers and

parents to support their engagement in children's online lives.The school uses Webwise materials in SPHE lessons.

➢ <u>Tusla</u> - schools contact Tusla directly for advice in cases where it is considered that bullying behaviour is a child protection concern.

➢ <u>Oide</u> - the Department of Education's support service for schools, and it supports professional learning for primary and post-primary school leaders and teachers in recognised schools and centres for education. Oide provides continuing professional learning support to schools to support implementation of these procedures.

➢ Any engagement with external services/supports will also be noted.
These records should be retained in accordance with the school's record keeping policy and in line with data protection regulations.
Where a Student Support File exists for a student, a copy of the record will be placed 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. Where a Student Support Plan exists, the plan should be updated to incorporate response strategies and associated supports.

All bullying behaviour will be recorded using the template as provided in the guidelines. 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 using the template provided in the Guidelines (Appendix D).
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.

This policy will be made available to our school community on the school's website and in hard copy on request.
A student friendly version of this policy has been developed with input from pupils and the Student Council and is displayed in the school, in each classroom, 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: Tony Boland   Date: 16/06/2025

   (Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: Clare McHugh   Date: 16/06/2025

    (Principal)