



## St. Augustine's School

### Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of St. Augustine's 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 are fully committed to preventing and addressing it.
- 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:
  1. gender, 2. civil status, 3. family status, 4. sexual orientation, 5. religion, 6. age, 7. disability, 8. race, 9. membership of the Traveller community.

***In St. Augustine's School, the primary aim in addressing reports of bullying behaviour should be to stop the bullying behaviour and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.***

**“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:

*Bullying is 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.*

Note: A one-off incident may be considered bullying in certain circumstances. A single hurtful message posted on social media can be considered bullying behaviour as it is highly likely to be shared multiple times and thus becomes repeated behaviour.

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.

### **Targeted behavior**

Bullying is deliberate, unwanted behaviour that causes harm to others.

The harm can be physical (personal injury, damage to or loss of property), social (withdrawal, loneliness, exclusion) and emotional (low self-esteem, depression, anxiety) and can have a serious and long-term negative impact on the student experiencing the bullying behaviour.

### **Repeated behavior**

Bullying is behaviour which is repeated overtime. A single event is not classified as bullying, but will still be addressed under the school's Code of Behaviour.

Posting a single harmful message/image/video online, and which is highly likely to be reposted or shared with others can be seen as bullying behaviour.

### **Imbalance of power**

In incidents of bullying, the student experiencing the bullying behaviour finds it hard to defend themselves as a result of the abuse of a real or imagined imbalance of power.

This imbalance of power may show itself through differences in size, strength, age, ability, peer group power, wealth, social status, religion, race, ethnic origin including membership of the Traveller and/or Roma communities, sexual orientation, family circumstances, gender, gender identity, gender expression, experience of the care system, disability or the receipt of special education.

In incidents of online (or cyber) bullying, the imbalance of power may relate to online anonymity, technical proficiency and possession of information/images/video, and the inability of the targeted student to remove offensive online material or escape the bullying.

### **Behaviour that is not bullying behavior**

A one-off instance of negative behaviour towards another student is not bullying behaviour. However, a single hurtful message posted on social media can be considered bullying

behaviour as it may be visible to a wide audience and has a high likelihood of being shared multiple times and so becomes a repeated behaviour.

### **Bullying behaviour that may be referred to the Garda Síochána**

Some online behaviour may be illegal, and students need to be aware of the consequences of posting inappropriate or harmful content online, this includes:

- Non-consensual sharing of intimate images or threatening to share these images.
- Use of violence or threat of the use of violence.
- Bullying behaviour that involves discrimination, hate speech targeting a student based on their race, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation or membership of the Travelling community.
- Sexual harassment.

An Garda Síochána is the appropriate authority to investigate alleged criminal behaviour.

### **How bullying behaviour happens.**

Bullying behaviour can take many forms, which can happen separately or together. Bullying can either be direct or indirect.

### **Direct bullying behaviour**

#### Physical bullying behaviour.

Physical bullying behaviour includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping students. Personal property can be a focus of attention for bullying behaviour. This may result in damage to clothing, mobile phone or other devices.

#### Verbal bullying behaviour.

Continual name-calling directed at a student which hurts, insults or humiliates the student should be regarded as a form of bullying behaviour. Often name-calling of this type refers to physical appearance, size or clothes worn or gender identity. It can also refer to a student's accent, distinctive voice characteristics, academic ability, race or ethnic origin.

#### Written bullying behaviour.

Written bullying behaviour includes writing insulting remarks about a student in public places, passing around notes about or drawings of a student.

#### Extortion

Bullying behaviour can involve extortion. Extortion is where something is obtained through force or threat of the use of force.

### **Indirect bullying behaviour**

#### Exclusion.

Exclusion bullying behaviour occurs where a student is deliberately and repeatedly isolated, excluded or ignored by a student or group of students.

#### Relational.

Relational bullying behaviour occurs when a student's attempts to socialise and form relationships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined.

Common forms include students ganging up against one student; nonverbal gesturing, malicious gossip, spreading rumors about a student; giving a student the "silent treatment" and the deliberate manipulation of friendship groups to make someone unpopular.

### **Online bullying behaviour.**

Online bullying behaviour (cyberbullying) is carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as text or direct messaging/instant messaging, social media platforms, email, apps, digital gaming sites, gaming consoles, chatrooms and other online technologies.

This form of bullying behaviour can include sending or sharing nasty, insulting, offensive, and/or intimidating messages or images via text messages, emails, and direct messages or other websites or apps. Posting information considered to be personal, private and sensitive without consent. Making and/or participating in fake profiles on a social network to impersonate and/or humiliate other students.

### **Where bullying behaviour can happen.**

Bullying behaviour can happen anywhere, online or offline and at any time, but there are certain places and times where bullying behaviour can be more likely to occur. These can include the following:

#### **School yard.**

Bullying behaviour can take place in the school yard. School grounds with hidden or obscure parts may provide an environment where bullying behaviour is more likely to occur.

#### **In the classroom.**

Bullying behaviour can take place in class. It may occur through glances, looks, sniggers or may take the more overt form of physical intimidation or deliberate isolation.

#### **Other areas.**

Bullying behaviour can take place in other areas such as toilets, corridors, dining room, and on the school bus.

### **Outside School**

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 (Anti Bullying) policy.

#### **Coming to and from school.**

Bullying behaviour can occur in the area immediately outside the school, the local shops and the wider local area. Bullying behaviour can take place at the bus stop or on the journey to and from school whether the students are walking, cycling or on school buses. Bullying behaviour can also take place in organised clubs and groups outside of school such as sports clubs.

Online bullying (cyberbullying).

Access to technology means that online bullying behaviour can happen anytime, and the student's home is no longer a safe place. The nature of these technologies means that digital content can be shared and seen by a very wide audience almost instantly and the content is almost impossible to delete permanently.

### Types of bullying behavior.

- **Disablist bullying behaviour:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of a perceived or actual disability or additional need.
- **Exceptionally able bullying:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their high academic ability or outstanding talents.
- **Gender identity bullying:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their perceived or actual gender identity.
- **Homophobic/transphobic (LGBTQ+) bullying:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their perceived or actual membership of the LGBTQ+ Community.
- **Physical appearance bullying:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their physical appearance. Students who “look different” can be mocked or criticised about the shape, size or appearance of their body.
- **Racist bullying:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their race or ethnic origin which includes membership of the Traveller or Roma community.
- **Poverty bullying:** behaviour that intends to humiliate a student because of a lack of resources.
- **Religious identity bullying:** behaviour that intends to harm a student because of their religion or religious identity.
- **Sexist bullying:** behaviour that intends to harm a student based on their sex, perpetuating stereotypes that a student or a group of students are inferior because of their sex.
- **Sexual harassment:** any form of unwanted verbal, nonverbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature or other conduct based on sex which affects the dignity of the student.

## 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	Alma Conroy Maeve Lynch 29.4.25	LEC Training LEC training x 2
Students	Term 4 & 5	Year 2 Class working on the CBA (Classroom-Based Assessment) for child-friendly policy.
Parents POS and ML	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>23rd May, Parents invited into the school for an information workshop.</li> <li>POS made direct contact with our parents before the meeting.</li> <li>Letter posted to the parents 8.5.25</li> </ul>	
Board of Management	5.6.25 BoM is dedicated to the Bí Cineáltas Procedures, including time with the draft policy	
Wider school community, as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	Email sent to all identified stakeholders. POS & ML	
The date policy was approved: 02/07/2025		

## 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.”**

The Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice provides the following four key areas that are essential for a holistic, whole school approach to wellbeing promotion:

- 1 Culture and Environment
- 2 Curriculum (Teaching and Learning) stay safe, SPHE, books
- 3 Policy and Planning
- 4 Relationships and Partnerships

These four areas have been considered by our school when developing measures to prevent bullying behaviour.

### **1.Culture and Environment:**

**“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.”**

### **Whole School**

Relationships between all members of the school community should be based on respect, care, integrity, and trust. Breakfast club, wellbeing team, robust supervision, pupil teacher ratio, visuals across the school, daily check ins for students and staff, wellness center, relational work, celebrating and embracing inclusion, celebrating all levels of achievement, ongoing communication with parents/guardians /guardians, good relationships with BOM, wholistic activities to support the students to be themselves (you be you). Saint Augustine's school community fosters the modeling of respectful behaviour across all areas of the school.

### **Role of the teacher/SNA**

Greet students, support wellbeing activities, use appropriate school recording procedures to share observations/concerns, celebrate students' work and achievements, help plan/run activities and take part in school events, support the children to engage in thematic events activities that may address issues such as LGBTQ+, anti-bullying, etc., work in a holistic way (not meet resistance with resistance), use oneself as a role model to model a kind and safe environment, weekly meetings to share feedback and updates.

A positive and inclusive school culture and environment are essential to preventing and addressing 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, management boards, school staff, students, and their parents/guardians helps to foster a collaborative approach and shared responsibilities in preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.

The school leadership team influences the school culture and sets the standards and expectations for the school community when preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.

Each member of the school staff has a responsibility to develop and maintain a school culture in which bullying behaviour is unacceptable and to take a consistent approach to addressing it.

Students can shape the school culture by promoting kindness and inclusion within their peer group and maintaining a positive and supportive school environment for all. There is a strong commitment to including student voices in areas such as the student council.

As active partners in their child's education, parents/guardians can help foster an environment where bullying behaviour is not tolerated through promoting empathy and respect.

In St. Augustine's School, this emphasis on Culture and Environment is promoted through:

- An adherence to the school's Catholic Ethos.
- Regular meetings with the pupils (Wellbeing Team & Family and Community Worker).
- A value placed on an inclusive, broad and diverse curriculum.
- Being approachable to parents/guardians and pupils.

## **2. Curriculum (Teaching and Learning):**

Teaching and learning that is inclusive, collaborative and respectful should be promoted and celebrated. Students have regular opportunities to work in small groups with their peers, and on a one to one if deemed needed which can help build a sense of connection, belonging, and empathy among students.

The curricular subjects offered to students provide opportunities to foster inclusion and respect for diversity.

Saint Augustine's School provides students with the opportunities to develop a sense of self-worth through both curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular programmes.

The wellbeing programme (SPHE/RSE/CSPE/PE and guidance) fosters students' well-being, self-confidence and sense of belonging and further develops students' understanding of responsibility for their personal choices in life. Students' social and emotional learning (SEL) skills can be improved through the wellbeing programme.

## **3. Policy and Planning:**

Other policies at St. Augustine's school, such as the acceptable use policy, supervision policy, and Code of Behaviour, can support the implementation of the school's Bí Cineálta policy.

Supporting students' participation in the development and implementation of school policies and plans can help increase awareness and ensure effective implementation.

We will endeavor to engage children in developing school policies relating to their well-being.

Engaging in appropriate teacher professional learning courses can support school staff to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

School staff should also share their experiences and examples of best practice. There is a range of training available for school staff on promoting inclusion and diversity in schools.

## **4. Relationships and Partnerships:**

St Augustine's School recognises the importance of positive relationships throughout the school community in promoting empathy, understanding, and respect.

To effectively prevent and address bullying behaviour, the board of management, staff, students, and their parents/guardians must meaningfully involve themselves in the development, implementation, and review of the school's Bí Cineálta policy and student-friendly version. As staff members, we have identified the following as necessary.

- The importance of positive relationships across the whole school community to promote empathy, understanding, and respect, and raise awareness of unconscious bias
- The importance of all staff having an awareness of child protection procedures with the aim of keeping the young people in their care safe with all school staff being confident in their knowledge of best practice in their knowledge of addressing school bullying behaviour.
- The importance of a trusted adult in the disclosure of incidents of bullying
- The meaningful involvement of children and young people
- The importance of engagement with parents/guardians in recognition of their key role in preventing and addressing bullying

**“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”**

## Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

The Principal and Deputy Principal as DLP and DDLP respectively will provide support and advice to staff and will become involved where appropriate in addressing bullying behaviour as all staff are responsible for addressing bullying behaviour.

When bullying behaviour occurs, the school will:

- > Ensure that the student/students 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/students who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation
- > Take action promptly
- > Inform parents/guardians of those involved
- > An awareness of child protection procedures (the school designated liaison person and the school deputy designated liaison person.)

The Principal and Deputy Principal will provide support and advice and will become involved where appropriate.

- 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):
- The whole school community has a responsibility to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

## **Step 1: Steps that will be taken by the school to determine if bullying behaviour has occurred.**

Where bullying behaviour is suspected, staff, students, or parents/guardians report it to the relevant staff.

To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour, we will consider the following questions:

- 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.

If the answer to any of these questions is No, then the behaviour is not bullying behaviour.

Note: One-off incidents may be considered bullying behaviour in certain circumstances. A single hurtful message posted on social media can be considered bullying behaviour as it has a high likelihood of being shared multiple times and thus becomes a repeated behaviour.

Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred (Stage 1), staff should consider the following:

- What happened?
- Where it happened?
- When it happened?
- Why it happened?

Where one student is reported to be involved, the student should be engaged with individually at first.

Thereafter, this student and the student who is reported to be experiencing the bullying behaviour should be met together.

If a group of students is involved, each student should be engaged with individually at first.

Thereafter, all students involved and the student who is reported to be experiencing the bullying behaviour 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.

## **Step 2: Where Bullying Behaviour Has Occurred**

St. Augustine's School recognises the serious impact bullying behaviour can have on all students and is committed to responding promptly and effectively, whether the bullying occurs within or outside of school, when it affects the school environment.

While the school is not responsible for bullying incidents that take place outside its jurisdiction, where such behaviour affects students in school, appropriate support will be provided. Where the bullying behaviour continues during school time or has an ongoing impact on students' wellbeing in school, it will be addressed in line with this Bí Cineálta policy.

### Engaging with Parents/Guardians

Parents/guardians are essential partners in addressing bullying behaviour. When bullying has been identified:

- Parents/guardians of both the student experiencing the bullying and the student displaying the bullying behaviour will be contacted at an early stage.
- These meetings will be used to inform them of the concerns and to agree on supports and expectations, including the requirement that the bullying behaviour must stop.
- A follow-up review meeting with both sets of parents/guardians will be arranged within 20 school days.

### Student Voice and Support

Students must be engaged without delay. The views of the student experiencing the bullying behaviour are central to how the school responds. They should feel heard, supported, and involved in planning the response. Adults must not take decisions about next steps without first consulting with the student in a developmentally appropriate way.

Both the student who is experiencing bullying and the student displaying the bullying behaviour need tailored support:

- The student experiencing bullying should be reassured, empowered, and protected.
- The student displaying the behaviour should receive support to understand the impact of their actions and to develop healthier ways of relating to others.

### Recording and Reporting

All bullying behaviour brought to the attention of staff will be:

- Documented using the Bullying Behaviour Report Form (Appendix 1).
- Reviewed in consultation with the Principal to agree appropriate actions and support.
- Logged to include the type of bullying, where and when it took place, actions taken, dates of contact with parents/guardians, and review outcomes.

### Additional Considerations

- Where the student displaying bullying behaviour is not a student of St. Augustine's School, but the student experiencing it, the school will support the affected student and consult with their parents/guardians to determine next steps.
- If bullying behaviour raises child protection concerns, it will be referred to the Principal (Designated Liaison Person) or Deputy Principal (Deputy Designated Liaison Person) and addressed without delay according to Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.

Fairness, consistency, and timely action are critical. Every effort will be made to ensure that all students feel safe, respected, and supported in their learning environment.

### **Step 3: Follow-Up Where Bullying Behaviour Has Occurred**

The Principal and relevant staff member will engage with the students involved and their parents/guardians within 20 school days of the initial intervention to review progress.

Key factors to consider during this review include:

- the nature of the bullying behaviour,
- the effectiveness of the strategies used to address it, and
- the current relationship between the students involved.

This review should:

- Document whether the bullying behaviour has ceased,
- Include the views of the students and their parents/guardians, and
- Record the date on which it is determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased. Any involvement with external services or supports must also be noted.

Even if the bullying behaviour has stopped, ongoing supervision and support may be required for both the student who experienced the behaviour and the student who engaged in it. It may take time for relationships to stabilise and for interventions to have a lasting impact.

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#### **If Bullying Behaviour Persists**

If the bullying behaviour has not ceased, the staff member and Principal should:

- Review the strategies used in consultation with students and parents/guardians,
- Agree on further actions and supports, and
- Set a new review date, not exceeding 10 school days.

Where a student continues to display bullying behaviour despite these measures, consideration should be given to addressing the behaviour using the school's Code of Behaviour.

Where disciplinary sanctions are used, this is a matter between the relevant student, their parents/guardians, and the school.

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#### **Recording and Documentation**

All bullying behaviour will be recorded. This includes:

- the type of behaviour,

- where and when it occurred,
- the date of engagement with students and parents/guardians, and
- the actions and supports agreed to address the behaviour.

The review outcomes, including the decision on whether the bullying has ceased, should also be documented.

Records must also indicate any involvement with external services/supports.

Records will be retained according to the school's record-keeping policy and in line with data protection regulations.

Where a Student Support File exists, a copy of the bullying behaviour record will be placed on the file. This ensures that the school's support team can respond holistically.

Where a Student Support Plan exists, it should be updated to reflect the response strategies and supports agreed.

A Recording Template for St. Augustine's School can be found in Appendix C.

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## Requests Not to Take Action

If a student reports bullying behaviour but asks that no action be taken:

- The staff member should respond with empathy,
- Explore ways to handle the matter sensitively and supportively, and
- Agree on how and when parents/guardians will be informed.

If a parent/guardian reports bullying behaviour and requests that the school take no action:

- This request should be submitted in writing to the Principal.
- While the school will acknowledge the request, it may decide—based on the circumstances—that it is necessary to take action in line with its duty of care.

## Complaint Procedures

If a parent/guardian is not satisfied with how bullying behaviour has been addressed by the school, they should be referred to the school's complaints procedures, as per the *Bí Cineálta* Procedures.

Further information on the complaints process is available here:  
[gov.ie](http://gov.ie) – Parental Complaints

If a student or parent/guardian is still dissatisfied with the outcome, they may **contact the Ombudsman for Children** if they believe the school's actions have had a negative impact on the student:

Email: [ococomplaint@oco.ie](mailto:ococomplaint@oco.ie)

## Step 4: Supporting students experiencing and displaying bullying behaviour

### Supporting students experiencing bullying behaviour.

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

- Ending the bullying behaviour.
- Fostering respect for all students, staff and members of the school community.
- Fostering greater empathy towards and support for students experiencing bullying behaviour. Indicating clearly that the bullying behaviour is not the fault of the targeted student.
- Indicating clearly that the bullying behaviour experienced by the student is not the fault of the targeted student through the speedy identification of those responsible and speedy resolution of bullying situations.
- Making adequate counselling facilities available to students who need it in a timely manner
- Helping students experiencing bullying behaviour raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that help develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school).

### Supporting students displaying bullying behaviour.

- Making it clear that students displaying bullying behaviour and who reform are not blamed or punished and get a 'clean sheet.'
- Making it clear students displaying bullying behaviour and who reform are doing the right and honorable thing and giving them praise for this.
- Making counselling available to help those who need it learn other ways of meeting their needs besides violating the rights of others.
- Helping those who need to raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra/co-curricular group or team activities during or after school).
- In dealing with negative behavior in general, encouraging teachers and parents/guardians to focus on, challenge and correct the behaviour while supporting the child.
- Making it clear to students who are displaying bullying behaviour and who do not cease this behaviour that they will be sanctioned under the school Code of Behaviour.

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/guardians. The actions and supports agreed to address bullying behaviour will be documented. If the bullying behaviour is a child protection concern the matter will be addressed without delay in accordance with *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

The steps that the school will take to determine if bullying behaviour has occurred, the approaches taken to address the bullying behaviour, and to review progress are as follows:

### **Identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred**

To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour, we should consider the following questions:

1. Is the behaviour targeted at a specific student or group?
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 this Bí Cineálta Policy.

Incidents can occur where behaviour is unacceptable and hurtful but the behaviour is not bullying behaviour. Strategies that deal with inappropriate behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

### **Where Bullying Behaviour has occurred:**

St. Augustine's 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, the school will support the students involved.

Where the bullying behaviour continues in school, the school will deal with it in accordance with this Bí Cineálta policy.

Where the student displaying the bullying behaviour is not a student in St. Augustine's 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/guardians 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 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 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 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.

In St Augustine's School, 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 1. best to address the situation 2. take action in a timely manner 3. inform parents/guardians of those involved\*

\*parents/guardians are an integral part of the school community and play an important role, in addressing bullying behaviour.

Where bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents/guardians 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 this policy.

In circumstances where a student expresses concern about their parents/guardians being informed, the school should develop an appropriate plan to support the student and for how their parents/guardians will be informed.

If a group of students is involved, each student should be engaged 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 also be helpful to ask the students involved to write down their account of the incident.

Given the complexity of bullying behaviour it is generally acknowledged that no one approach works in all situations.

International and national research also continues to evolve in this area, and the effectiveness of particular approaches continues to be reviewed.

#### **Requests to take no action:**

A student reporting bullying behaviour may ask that a member of staff does nothing about the behaviour.

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/guardians will be informed of the situation. It is important that the student who has experienced bullying behaviour feels safe.

parents/guardians may also make the school aware of bullying behaviour that has occurred and request that the school take no action. parents/guardians 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.

#### **Determining if bullying behaviour has ceased**

The staff member must engage with the students and parents/guardians 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 support 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 staff member should review the strategies used in consultation with the students and parents/guardians and agree to meet again over an agreed timeframe until the bullying behaviour has ceased. This agreed date will not exceed 10 school

days.

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

### **Recording bullying behaviour**

All allegations of Bullying Behaviour will be recorded. All incidents of bullying behaviour will be recorded. This record will 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/guardians /guardians.

The record will include the views of the students and their parents/guardians regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour. It will document the review with students and their parents/guardians to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased and the views of students and their parents/guardians in relation to this. The school will 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.

A recording Template (to be used by St. Augustine's School) is found in **Appendix C**.

These records will 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, St. Augustine's 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 student involved.

Where a Student Support Plan exists, the plan should be updated to incorporate response strategies and associated supports.

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):

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/guardians /guardians.

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*.

### **Complaint process:**

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/policyinformation/parentalcomplaints/>

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](mailto:ococomplaint@oco.ie).

## 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)

## Further Information

- **When Bullying Behaviour becomes a Child Protection Concern**

When bullying behaviour becomes a child protection concern Section 10 of the Children First Act, 2015 places a statutory obligation on schools, as a “provider of a relevant service” to ensure, as far as practicable, that each child attending the school is safe from harm while attending school or otherwise participating in school activities.

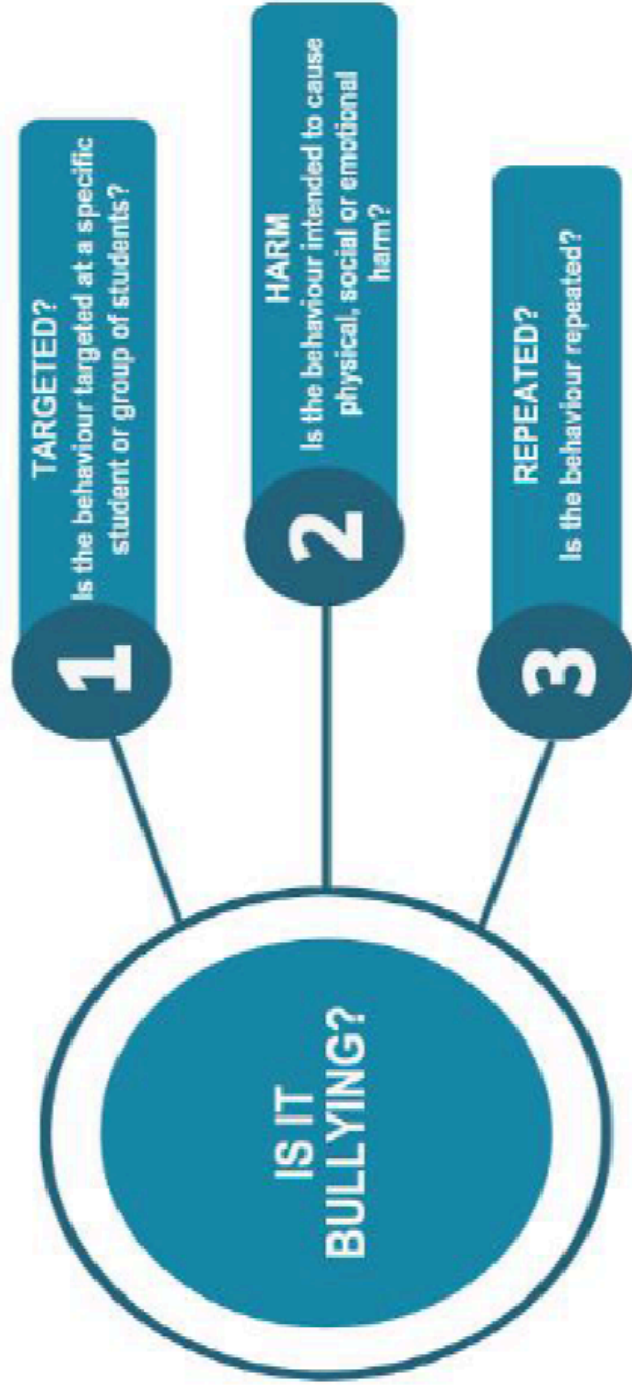
Teachers registered with the Teaching Council are Mandated Persons under the Children First Act. They have a legal obligation under the Act to report harm of children that meets or is above a defined threshold to Tusla, and also to assist Tusla if requested, in assessing a concern which is the subject of a mandated report. If the concern does not reach the threshold for mandated reporting, but a teacher feels that it is a reasonable concern about the welfare or protection of a child, a report should be made to Tusla under the Children First National Guidance. The Children First National Guidance applies to everyone. All school staff and volunteers must report reasonable concerns to Tusla.

The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (Revised 2023) provide that all school staff should report reasonable concerns to the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) who may take advice and/or report the concerns to Tusla. If the staff member is a registered teacher and the concern is at or above the threshold of harm at which a mandated report must be made the concern shall be submitted as a mandated report to Tusla jointly by the DLP and the registered teacher. See Chapter 5 of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (Revised 2023). The Children First Act defines harm as assault, ill-treatment, neglect or sexual abuse and single and multiple instances. The threshold of harm is reached where the mandated person believes that a child’s health, development or welfare have been, or are being seriously affected, or are likely to be seriously affected. The Children First National Guidance document 2017 is the national, overarching guidance with regard to child safeguarding. The Guidance provides that in cases of serious instances of bullying where the behaviour is regarded as possibly abusive, a referral may need to be made to Tusla or An Garda Síochána as appropriate.

Generally, bullying behaviour can be addressed without the involvement of Tusla. However, bullying behaviour may become a child protection concern when it results in significant physical or emotional harm, or where it becomes a persistent and severe problem and measures taken to address it are not effective. In determining when bullying behaviour should be reported to Tusla the following factors should be considered:

- > the impact on the child
- > protective/appropriate action taken by the parents/guardians /guardians
- > protective/appropriate action taken by the school
- > engagement of child/family with support services such as NEPS

If there is doubt about whether bullying behaviour is a child protection concern schools should contact Tusla’s social work department for advice. This will enable the social worker to explore the situation with school staff and provide advice on the best course of action.



If the answer to each of the questions is **Yes**, then the behaviour is bullying behaviour and the behaviour should be addressed using the **Bí Cineálta Procedures**.

If the answer to any of the 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.

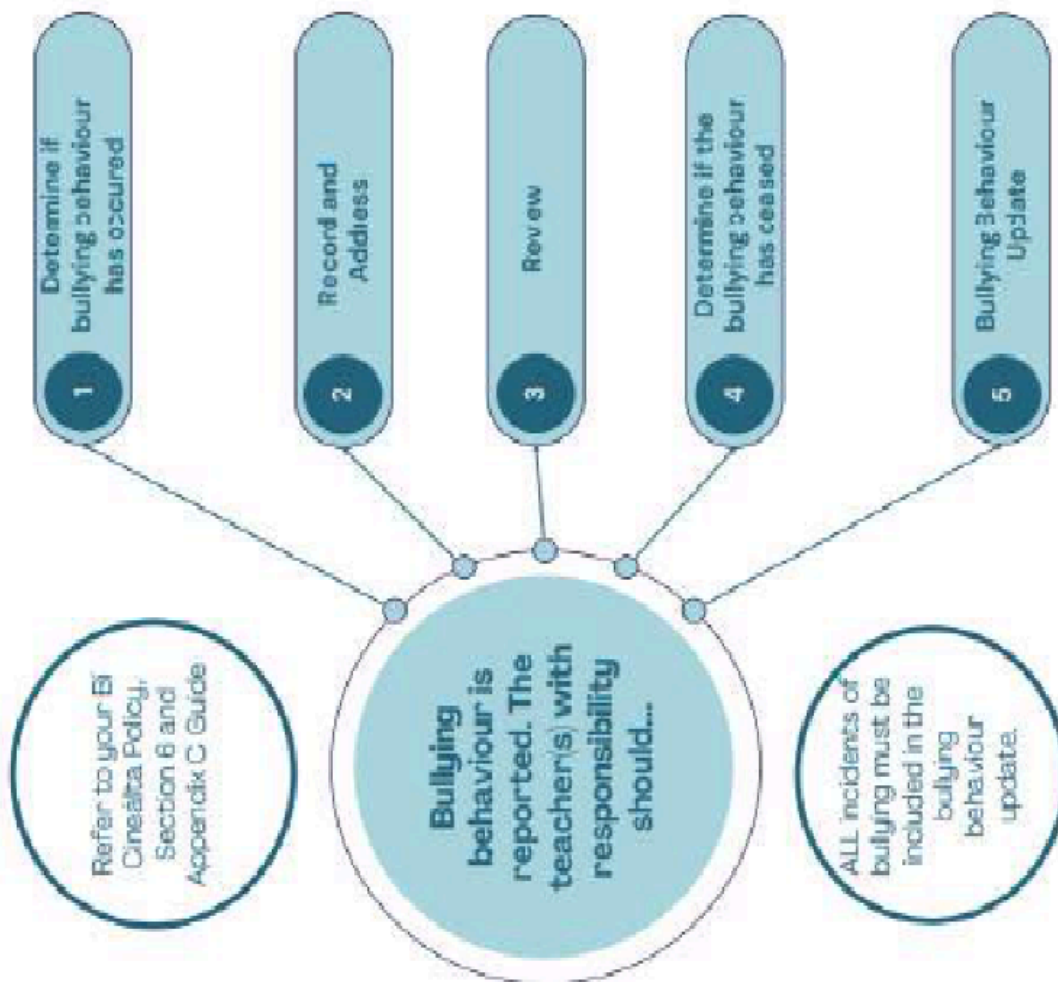


**Oide**

Forbairtíocht in  
Clárúil agus Ceolúil  
Eolaíocht Harúil

Supporting Teachers and  
Learning School Leaders  
and Schools

## Bí Cineálta: Addressing Bullying Behaviour



Teacher(s) investigate as per school policy. Record as per Section 6.5.

If the behaviour **IS NOT** bullying, deal with in line with your Code of Behaviour.

If the behaviour **IS BULLYING**, proceed to Step 2.

Record as per Bí Cineálta policy and Section 6.5, Bí Cineálta.

Inform parent(s) of parties involved at an early stage.

Complete agreed actions, as per your Bí Cineálta policy, monitor and evaluate.

No more than **20 school days** after initial engagement, review with student(s) and parent(s).

If bullying has ceased, continue to monitor.

If bullying has **not ceased**, review strategies, seek external support, if appropriate, and review within the agreed timeframe.

Principal must include all bullying behaviour in their update to the board.

Principal provides verbal update to the board.

Review policy, if needed.



Oide

Supporting the Learning Process  
 Improving the Quality of Irish Schools  
 Supporting the Future

### St Augustine's

### Bullying Behaviour Report Form

This form is only to be used when Bullying Behaviour has been identified in line with Bí Cineálta procedures.

Date Principal informed.

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Date of initial engagement with students and parents/guardians /guardians.

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Name of student who has experienced bullying behaviour and class name.

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Name of student(s) engaging in bullying behaviour and class names.

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<b>Source of Bullying concern /report (Tick relevant box)</b>		<b>Location of Bullying Incident (Tick relevant box)</b>	
Student concerned		Dining Room	
Other Student		Yard	
Parent		Classroom	
Teacher		Corridor	
Other school staff		Other	

Name of person who reported the bullying concern and relationship to the student.

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Date on when bullying behaviour occurred.

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**Form of Bullying Behaviour identified. Tick relevant box.**

Physical Bullying Behaviour		Exclusion Bullying Behaviour	
Verbal Bullying Behaviour		Relational Bullying Behaviour	
Written Bullying Behaviour		Online Bullying Behaviour	
Extortion			

**Type of Bullying Behaviour identified. Tick relevant box.**

Disablist bullying behaviour		Poverty bullying	
Exceptionally able bullying		Religious identity bullying	
Gender identity bullying		Sexist bullying	
Homophobic/transphobic (LGBTQ+) bullying		Sexual harassment	
Physical appearance bullying		Other (specify)	
Racist bullying			

<p>Description of Bullying Behaviour</p>
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<p>Description of previous behaviour that indicates that the behaviour meets definition of bullying behaviour. Repeated, targeted and intended to cause harm.</p>	
<p>Date of review with students and parents/guardians (within 20 school days)</p>	
<p>Has the Bullying Behaviour ceased?</p>	
<p>Views of students and parents/guardians in relation to this.</p>	

If bullying behaviour has not ceased, set an agreed timeframe to meet again and review strategies.	
Engagement with external services or support.	

If it becomes clear that the student who is displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behaviour, then consideration will 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/guardians and the school.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_  
Class Teacher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal \_\_\_\_\_