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St Vincent's School Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

Bí Cineálta 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. The term Bí Cineálta comes from the Irish word for kindness. Showing kindness to others, modelling kindness for our pupils and promoting kindness always underpins our anti-bullying policy.

This policy sets out St Vincent's School's procedures for dealing with bullying. This policy should also be read in conjunction with St. Vincent's School's Code of Behaviour Policy. The pupils at St. Vincent's School all have moderate learning difficulties. The nature of their disability means that children may not have sufficient understanding or awareness that certain behaviours directed towards others may be undesirable or that they might be construed as bullying. Similarly, some children who are the recipients of such behaviours may be unable to express or communicate their aversion to such behaviours or to tell adults. This means that all staff at St. Vincent's School have a duty to not only be aware of such behaviours and of any child involved, but also to respond appropriately to instances of bullying behaviours.

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 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	April 2025	Presentation of <i>Bí Cineálta</i> Webinar and discussion at whole staff meeting.
Students		
Parents	October 2025	Survey
Board of Management	November 2025	Board Discussion
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers		
Date policy was approved: 25/11/25		
Date policy was last reviewed: 18/9/26		

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

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

sexual harassment as appropriate (see Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

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.

Whole School Approach

The children attending St. Vincent's School have a diagnosis of moderate learning difficulties and in addition many have autism spectrum disorder. This means that they are likely to have a limited ability to comprehend that they may be engaging in activities which have the characteristics of bullying behaviour.

Children with ASD are likely to be unaware that certain behaviours are socially unacceptable. It is possible that one child may develop an obsession with another child which may cause distress or anxiety for the recipient. Such behaviour might include wanting to be near the 'target' child or having an interest in making physical contact with that child, such as touching a particular part of his or her body; demonstrating potentially physically harmful behaviours such as kicking, pinching or throwing objects.

Staff have a duty to be vigilant and alert to these behaviours. For example, the child who is the target may show fear or anxiety when he/she sees the child who targets him/her. This information must be shared amongst all members of the class team, and also shared with other members of staff as soon as possible, particularly with those on duty during playtimes and lunchtime.

Record Keeping

Incidents of bullying with or without intent are recorded in school Incident Reports which are logged by the principal and deputy principal. Parents are also informed of incidents of bullying.

In St Vincent's School we acknowledge that children with special educational needs and disabilities may not be able to articulate their experiences

The school has the following supervision and monitoring policies in place to prevent and address bullying behaviour (see Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

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.

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.

Approaches to Managing Behaviour

Staff will observe the outcome of the behaviour and establish the function of a behaviour in order to identify an appropriate strategy.

Once the function of a behaviour has been determined an appropriate tactic is chosen to decrease the behaviour.

The possible functions of behaviour may include:

Pupil being overwhelmed by their environment or experiencing sensory overload.

Reliving an earlier trauma or event where they experienced anxiety.

Attention (from the child, from another child or from an adult)

Escape (i.e. the child may not want to be out in the playground)

Intrinsic Reinforcement (i.e. the child is reinforced by the sensory input they receive from emitting behaviour)

Access to a tangible object (i.e. snatching a toy from another child).

Some children may seek attention. For them, using a behaviour directed against another child is a way of achieving this attention. Adult intervention could potentially reinforce the bullying behaviour. In these circumstances, the strategy should be to break this cycle to eliminate the reinforcement of the behaviour

This could involve:

- providing the child with a continuous positive engagement during playtime to prevent attention seeking behaviour from occurring in the first place;
- Redirection: adults deliberately diverting the child's attention away from one behaviour to a new activity;
- Planned ignoring withdrawal of direct attention but monitoring possible escalation of behaviour. Giving time to emotionally regulate can be an effective way of de-escalating a situation.
- Assigning a one-to-one adult to monitor the bullying child at playtimes.

Some children with ASD emit behaviours to receive sensory input. For example, a child may bite another child because they are reinforced by the sensation of biting. A tactic to decrease this behaviour could involve:

- Introducing the child to an activity that provides him/her with the same sensory input, e.g. biting on a chewy tube, offering crunchy foods at snack time.
- Conditioning playground equipment: pairing positive reinforcement with using playground equipment so that the child learns to gain reinforcement from other activities.

Some children may display behaviours of concern to gain access to a tangible item. For

example, a child may push a child off a scooter to gain access to that scooter. Strategies to avoid this could include

- Teaching the child appropriate communication skills to request access to favourite items; ·
- Teaching the child to share or take turns using different toys (under staff supervision)
- . The strategies being employed to overcome a child's potential or actual bullying behaviour must be discussed with senior staff and recorded in the child's Student Support Plan / Positive Behaviour Plan. In this way all staff working with children are aware of what approach/strategy is in place.

It is important that strategies are shared with parents and carers of the children involved so that there is a consistency of approach at school and at home. Strategies are recorded in the pupil's Positive Handling plan and are reviewed and updated regularly.

In all work with children, staff emphasise the importance of developing social skills, being kind to others, using phrases such as "nice hands" or "quiet hands".

Where children have difficulties interacting appropriately with their peers or with adults, then staff aim to help them develop an awareness of why particular behaviours are valued socially and what is inappropriate.

The St. Vincent's School Curriculum builds on this through activities which include Music Sessions, PE, Break Time, Swimming sessions, Movement Breaks, Multisensory access, sensory activities in the classroom and soft play activities.

Activities to support wellbeing include SPHE lessons and activities. Group work and circle time strive to develop an ethos of cooperation and respect for all.

Staff are important role models for the pupils. The behaviour of adults towards each other and towards children is a potentially highly effective tool for preventing and for decreasing bullying behaviour in pupils.

It is also important to help the child who is the target of bullying behaviour, particularly as he or she may have difficulty communicating about their experiences.

The child may be able to communicate in his or her preferred mode, i.e. Coreboards visuals, AAC device, Lámh signing, gesture or speech.

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Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

When bullying 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 bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation
- > take action in a timely manner
- > inform parents of those involved

The steps that will be taken by the school to determine if bullying behaviour has occurred, the approaches taken to address the bullying behaviour and to review progress are as follows (see Chapter 6 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

Procedures for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying

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); The school's procedures must be consistent with the following approach. Every effort will be made to ensure that all involved (including pupils, parents/guardians) understand this approach from the outset.

Identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred 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 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.

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

1. Is the behaviour targeted at a specific student or group of students?
2. Is the behaviour intended to cause physical, social or emotional harm?
3. Is the behaviour repeated?

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

NOTE:

In a special school setting behaviours of concern occur for a variety of reasons which may include

- Pupils' ability to self-regulate
- Sensory overload
- Communication difficulties
- Environmental factors
- Anxiety
- Triggers that cause behaviour to escalate
- Re-living previous trauma
- Sudden/unplanned changes in classroom staff or timetable

A pupil may engage in behaviours of concern which may not be targeted at a specific child or staff, and it is an indicator that a situation is escalating. The pupils' Risk Assessment in their Positive Behaviour Plan should be adhered to.

These instances of behaviours of concern are not considered bullying.

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):

Where bullying behaviour has occurred

> parents are an integral part of the school community and play an important role, in partnership with schools, in addressing bullying behaviour. Where bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the students involved must be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and to consult with them on the actions to be taken to address the behaviour

> it is important to listen to the views of the student who is experiencing bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation

> a record should be kept of the engagement with all involved

> this record should document the form and type of bullying behaviour, if known (see Section 2.5 and 2.7 of the Bí Cineálta procedures), where and when it took place and the date of the initial engagement with the students involved and their parents

> the record should include the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour

All bullying behaviour will be recorded. This will include the type of behaviour, where and when it took place, and the date of the engagement with students and parents. The actions and supports agreed to address bullying behaviour will be documented. If bullying is a child protection concern the matter will be addressed without delay in accordance with *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools

Section D: Oversight

The principal will present an update on bullying behaviour at each board of management meeting. This update will include the number of incidents of bullying behaviour that have been reported since the last meeting, the number of ongoing incidents and the total number of incidents since the beginning of the school year. Where incidents of bullying behaviour have occurred, the principal will also provide a verbal update which will include where relevant, information relating to trends and patterns identified, strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and any wider strategies to prevent and address bullying behaviour where relevant. This update does not contain personal or identifying information. See Chapter 7 of the Bí Cineálta procedures.

This policy is available to our school community on the school's website and in hard copy on request. A student-friendly version of this policy is displayed in the school and is also available on our website and in hard copy on request.

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed, following input from our school community, each calendar year or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which this policy refers.



Signed:

Date: 18/9/26

(Chairperson of board of management)



Signed:

Date: 18/9/26 (Principal)