

St. Michael's National School



Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of St. Michael's National School has adopted the following policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

This policy fully complies with the requirements of *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2024*.

The Board of Management acknowledges that bullying behaviour interferes with the rights of the child as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. We all, as a school community, have a responsibility to work together to prevent and address bullying behaviour and to deal with the negative impact of bullying behaviour.

We are committed to ensuring that all students who attend our school are kept safe from harm and that the wellbeing of our students is at the forefront of everything that we do. We recognise the negative impact that bullying behaviour can have on the lives of our students and we are fully committed to preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.

We confirm that we will, in accordance with our obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the harassment of students or staff on any of the nine grounds specified: gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.

We confirm that we will take all steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent all bullying or harassment of our students in whatever form in whatever form and however motivated. Catholic schools have a distinctive understanding of the human person, recognizing 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. The detailed definition is provided in Chapter 2 of the *Bí Cineálta* procedures.

Each school is required to develop and implement a *Bí Cineálta* policy that sets out how the school community prevents and addresses bullying behaviour. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour that is not bullying behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

Section A: Development 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 and/or review of this policy.

	Date Consulted	Method of Consultation
School Staff	April 8 th , 2025 May 2 nd , 2025	Questionnaire Half-Day closure for consultation
Students	April 8 th , 2025	Questionnaire to 2 nd , 3 rd & 4 th classes
Parents	April 8 th , 2025	Questionnaire & Newsletter
Board of Management	June 24 th , 2025	Meeting outlining new procedures
Wider School Community	May 27 th , 2025	Discussions with bus drivers and bus escorts re identifying bullying behaviour, strategies to prevent same and proactive communication with school where issues arise
Date policy was approved: 09/10/2025		
Date policy was reviewed:		

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

This section sets out the prevention strategies/resources available to primary schools. These include strategies/resources aimed at preventing online bullying behaviour, homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour, racist bullying behaviour, sexist bullying behaviour and sexual harassment as age appropriate.

In developing the prevention strategies which this school will use to prevent all forms of bullying behavior, we come from the context of our Catholic ethos, where inclusivity permeates our school in a real way. 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 insuring 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. The 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.

Prevention Strategies

- School Ethos promotes respect of everyone
- Our school supports a telling environment
- Our staff let students know they can talk to them-a trusted adult
- Our school yard is well supervised, all areas visible
- Analysis of Questionnaires and action plan drawn up by staff see Appendix1 13/01/25
- Broad teaching methods used to include group work promotes sense of connection, belonging and empathy
- S.P.H.E Programme covered in all classes
- Religion Programme promotes respect, love and gratitude. • Don't be Mean Behind your Screen-online Bullying course (6th Class)
- School Health and Safety Policy
- Webwise.ie online safety and educational resources for all families
- Stay Safe www.staysafe.ie
- Student Council
- Green School Committee
- Whole school assemblies
- Class debates - listening to other points of view and respecting them
- Buddy System
- Participation in Erasmus Programme
- Parent Teacher meetings
- Wholeschool fundraising events
- Annual Christmas carol service
- Integration and reverse integration of pupils
- Newsletter celebrating all the events in the school
- Diverse backgrounds are represented in a range of reading material and textbooks
- Encourage parents to reinforce values taught in school
- Staff model respectful behaviour and treat students equitably. • School ensures all students have the same opportunities to engage in all school activities equitably
- Responding to self-harm in schools for staff (H.S.E)
- FUSE www.antibullyingcentre.ie/fuse/
- MySelfie and the Wider World www.webwise.ie/myselfie.wider.world
- All Together Now Rang 5, Rang 6 (homophobic and transphobic bullying)
- N.E.P.S. supports
- Global Citizenship lessons
- Security system on school tablet devices
- Reward systems in place in all classrooms to encourage team work
- School Therapy Dog

St. Michael's has the following supervision and monitoring policies in place to prevent and address bullying behaviour:

- Acceptable Use Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Class Rules in each classroom
- School yard supervision
- School yard divided by class
- School's wellbeing policy framework
- Health and Safety Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy/Bí Cineálta procedures
- S.P.H.E
- S.E.T. policy
- Well-being Policy Statement and Framework for Practice
- Stay Safe Programme and Policy
- S.S.E Process
- Child Safeguarding and Risk Assessment Statement 2024-25

St. Michael's National School is a Bí Cineálta school. We follow these anti-bullying procedures and we consider the following to be key elements of a positive school culture:

- We acknowledge the right of each member of the school community to enjoy school in a secure environment
- We acknowledge the uniqueness of each individual and their worth as a human being
- We promote positive habits of self- respect, self -discipline and responsibility among all its members.
- We actively discourage vulgar, offensive, sectarian or other aggressive behaviour by any of its members
- We have a clear commitment to promoting equity in general, and gender equity in particular, in all aspects of its functioning
- We have the capacity to change in response to our pupils' needs
- We identify aspects of its curriculum through which positive and sustainable influences can be exerted towards forming pupils' attitudes and values
- We take particular care of 'at risk' pupils and use systems to identify needs and facilitate early intervention where necessary, thus responding to the needs, fears & anxieties of individual members in a sensitive manner.
- St..
- Michael's National School recognises the need to work in partnership with and keep parents informed on procedures to improve relationships within the school community.
- We recognise the right of parents to share in the task of equipping pupils with a range of life skills
- We recognise the role of other community agencies in preventing and dealing with bullying
- We promote habits of mutual respect, courtesy and an awareness of the interdependence of people in groups and communities
- We promote qualities of social responsibility, tolerance and understanding among its members both in school and outside of school
- 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

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

The Principal and all 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
- act 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 the progress are as follows:

A. Identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred

When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred the teacher should consider the following: what, where, when and why?

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.

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

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

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

Thereafter, all students involved should be meet 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.

B. Where bullying behaviour has occurred

School staff should know what to do when bullying behaviour is reported to them or when they witness bullying behavior. The School's Bí Cineálta policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour and the student friendly policy should clearly explain what actions will be taken when bullying behavior is reported.

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

- ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour feels listened to and reassured
- seek to ensure the privacy of those involved
- conduct all conversations with sensitivity
- consider the age and ability of those involved
- listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation
- act in a timely manner
- inform parents of those involved

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

D. Recording bullying behaviour

All incidents of bullying behaviour should be recorded. The record should document the form (Appendix C) and type of bullying behavior, if known and when it took place and the date of the initial engagement with the students and their parents. A copy of the record will be attached to the student's file on Aladdin and a hard copy in their file in a filing cabinet.

E. Determining if bullying behaviour has ceased

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

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

Where it becomes clear that the student who is displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behaviour, then the school should consider using the strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour as provided

for within the school's Code of Behaviour. If disciplinary sanctions are considered, this is a matter between the relevant student, their parents and the school.

F. Complaint process

Where a parent(s)/guardian(s) is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parent(s)/guardian(s) must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures.

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 parent/guardian is dissatisfied with how a complaint has been handled, a parent/guardian 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.

G. Criminal behaviour

Bullying behaviour can be considered criminal behaviour under certain circumstances and legal consequences can apply. The age of criminal responsibility in Ireland is 12 years. Some online behaviour may be illegal, and students need to be aware of the far reaching consequences of posting inappropriate or harmful content online. In cases of intimate imagery, the Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020, also known as Coco's Law, criminalises the nonconsensual sharing of intimate images and also criminalises threatening to share these images.

If bullying behaviour involves physical violence or threats of violence, it may be considered assault.

If bullying behaviour involves discrimination or hate speech targeting a student based on their race, religion, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation or membership of the Traveller community, it may be considered a hate crime under the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989/11, and those engaging in such behaviour may face criminal charges. If bullying behaviour involves sexual harassment or sexual assault, this may also be considered criminal behaviour. Garda Síochána is the appropriate authority to investigate alleged criminal behaviour.

H. 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.

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.

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

- NEPS - Best Practice
- Oide- Professional supports for schools
- Webwise online safety guidelines and supports
- National Parents Council: Online courses to support parents
- Dublin City University Anti-bullying Centre: FUSE
- Tusla

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

Section D: Oversight

The principal will present an update on bullying behaviour at each Board of Management meeting. This update will include the number of incidents of bullying behaviour that have been reported since the last meeting, the number of ongoing incidents and the total number of incidents since the beginning of the school year (Appendix A). 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 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 front hall of our 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. (Appendix B).

Signed: *Mary Hilliard*
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Date: 24/06/2025

Signed: *Brid Gorry*
(Principal)

Date: 24/06/2025

Appendix A

Guide to Providing Bullying Behaviour Update

Guide to providing Bullying Behaviour Update for board of management meeting of DD/MM/YYYY

Having reviewed the details of the incidents of bullying behaviour that have been reported since the previous board of management meeting, the principal must provide the following information at each ordinary meeting of the board of management:

Total number of new incidents of bullying behaviour reported since the last board of management meeting.	
Total number of incidents of bullying behaviour currently ongoing.	
Total number of incidents of bullying behaviour reported since the beginning of this school year.	

Where incidents of bullying behaviour have been reported since the last meeting, the update must include a verbal report which should include the following information where relevant:

- > the trends and patterns identified such as the form of bullying behaviour, type of bullying behaviour if known, location of bullying behaviour, when it occurred etc.
- > the strategies used to address the bullying behaviour
- > any wider strategies to prevent and address bullying behavior
- > if any serious incidents of bullying behaviour have occurred which have had a serious adverse impact on a student
- > if a parent has informed the school that a student has left the school because of reported bullying behavior
- > if any additional support is needed from the board of management
- > if the school's Bi Cinealta policy requires urgent review in advance of the annual review

This update should not include any personal information or information that could identify the students involved.

Appendix B

Notification regarding the board of management's annual review of the school's BÍ Cineálta Policy

The Board of Management of _____ confirms that the Board of Management's annual review of the school's BÍ Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour and its implementation was completed at the Board of Management meeting [date].

This review was conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Department of Education's *BÍ Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary School*

Signed _____
(Chairperson of the Board of Management)

Date:

Signed:
(Principal)

Date:

Appendix C

Recording of Bullying Behaviour

1. Names of Children Involved

Student(s) Experiencing Bullying: _____

Student(s) Engaging in Bullying Behaviour: _____

Other Witnesses (if any): _____

2. Form of Bullying

- Physical (e.g., hitting, kicking, pushing)
- Verbal (e.g., name-calling, teasing, insults)
- Psychological (e.g., intimidation, manipulation)
- Cyberbullying (e.g., harmful messages, social media misuse)
- Relational (e.g., exclusion, spreading rumors)
- Other: _____

3. Type of Bullying

- Peer-to-Peer
- Teacher-to-Student
- Student-to-Teacher
- Group Bullying
- Prejudicial Bullying (e.g., based on race, religion, gender)
- Sexual Bullying (e.g., inappropriate comments, harassment)
- Other: _____

4. Where and When

Location: _____

Date/Time: _____

5. Date of Initial Engagement

With Student(s): _____

With Parent(s): _____

6. Views of Student(s)/Parent(s)

7. Date of Review

Review Date: _____

Outcome: _____

Views of Student(s): _____

Views of Parent(s): _____

8. Engagement with External Services/Supports

Services Contacted: _____

Details of Engagement: _____

9. Recording Teacher

Name: _____

Date Recorded: _____

