St. James' National School
Bí Cineálta Policy
to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of St. James' 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 pupils who attend our school are kept safe from harm and that the wellbeing of our pupils is at the forefront of everything that we do. We recognise the negative impact that bullying behaviour can have on the lives of our pupils 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 pupils 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 such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the bullying or harassment of our pupils 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 each person 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 all have an indispensable 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.**

A detailed definition is set out below as per Chapter 2 of the Bí Cineálta procedures.

This Bí Cineálta policy sets out how our school community prevents and addresses bullying behaviour. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour that is not bullying behaviour are provided for within our school's Code of Behaviour.

Building on many years of international research, the core definition above sets out clear criteria to help school communities to prevent, correctly identify and address bullying among pupils. Alleged incidents of bullying are however often complex and must be considered on a case-by-case basis. There are many different methods of bullying behaviour, including physical, verbal and relational forms, and it can take place online and offline.

There are also many different motives for bullying behaviour which can be understood on an individual level (for example, desire for dominance, status, revenge) and/or on a societal level (for example, identity-based bullying such as racist, disablist, sexist or LGBTQ+ bullying). Bullying behaviour in schools is often strongly influenced by attitudes, behaviours, norms and power dynamics that are deeply engrained in our society.

The core elements of the definition are further described below:

- **Targeted behaviour**

Bullying is deliberate, unwanted behaviour that causes harm to others, and where the pupil displaying bullying behaviour knows that their behaviour is or will be perceived as harmful by the child or young person experiencing the behaviour. Bullying is not accidental or reckless behaviour. The harm can be physical (for example, personal injury, damage to or loss of property), social (for example, withdrawal, loneliness, and exclusion) and/or emotional (for example, low self-esteem, depression, and anxiety) and can have a serious and long-term negative impact on the pupil experiencing the bullying behaviour. If the repeated harm is real for the pupil experiencing the behaviour but unintended by the other pupil, this is not bullying but, importantly, must still be addressed under the school's code of behaviour.

- **Repeated behaviour**

Bullying takes the form of a systematic pattern of behaviour which is repeated over time. Single offline incidents of intentional negative behaviour involving an imbalance of power are not considered bullying but must 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 therefore be seen as bullying behaviour.

- **Imbalance of power**

In incidents of bullying, the pupil experiencing the bullying behaviour finds it hard to defend themselves as a result of the abuse of a real or perceived imbalance of power. This imbalance of power may manifest itself through differences in size, strength, age, ability, peer group power, economic status, 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 pupil to remove offensive online material or escape the bullying.

Behaviour that is not bullying behaviour

A one-off instance of negative behaviour towards another pupil 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.

Disagreement between pupils, or instances where pupils don't want to be friends or to remain friends, is not considered bullying behaviour unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others including deliberate manipulation of friendship groups.

Some pupils with special educational needs may have social communication difficulties which may make them communicate their needs through behaviours that can hurt themselves or others. It is important to note that these behaviours are not deliberate or planned but, in certain situations, they are an automatic response which they can't control.

Bullying is not accidental or reckless behaviour. If the repeated harm is real for the pupil experiencing the behaviour but unintended by the other pupil, this is not bullying.

These behaviours, while not defined as bullying can be distressing.

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

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 pupils 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 non-consensual 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 pupil 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 198911, 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.

An Garda Síochána is the appropriate authority to investigate alleged criminal 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	7/2/2025 17/2/2025	Full Day training for two staff members. Staff Meeting.
	24/3/2025	Online Survey sent to and completed by all staff.
	2/5/2025	Half Day Closure: staff provided with the opportunity to discuss the new Bí Cineálta action plan and stemming from this discussion, staff were informed of the important points in dealing with an incidence or report of bullying –resources and record form were provided to all staff.
	June 2025	Staff given time to discuss and relay feedback. Staff reviewing draft policy and giving feedback
Pupils	March 2025	Survey completed by pupils in school. Feedback discussed in classes.
Parents	13/3/2025 June 2025	All parents invited to express an interest in giving Bí Cineálta feedback. Online Survey sent to and completed by parents who volunteered. A copy of Circular Number 0055/2024 was provided to the Parents' Association.
Board of Management	June 2025	Consultation at BOM Meetings.
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	May/ June 2025	Consultation as deemed necessary CPSMA input.
Date policy was approved:	June 2025	
Date policy was last reviewed:		

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.

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.

Culture and Environment:

We strive to :
• Create a school culture where bullying behaviour is unacceptable and where there is a consistent approach to addressing bullying behaviour.

• Involve parents as active partners in fostering an environment where bullying behaviour is not tolerated.

• Support the idea that our school is a safe environment in which reporting of bullying behaviour is acceptable and necessary:
A Telling Environment
It is important that the school community supports a 'telling' environment. According to research conducted in Ireland, there is a persistent tendency not to report bullying incidents. Pupils should feel comfortable to talk about concerns regarding bullying behaviour.
The reasons why pupils may not report include the following:
  • fear of retaliation from the pupil displaying the bullying behaviour or their friendship group
  • concerns about being seen as a "tell-tale" for reporting bullying behaviour
  • fear that the adult may make the situation worse

- fear that the adult doesn't have the knowledge and skills to deal appropriately with the bullying behaviour
- fear that the adult may deny access to their smart phone
- not knowing what will happen when they report bullying behaviour
- fear that they will not be believed
- concerns about "getting into trouble" for reporting bullying behaviour
- not having evidence to back up the allegation of bullying behaviour, this can be seen particularly with relational bullying behaviour

• Promote the concept of a trusted adult – stay safe linkage – who to tell.

A Trusted Adult

The concept of "a trusted adult" can be an effective strategy to encourage pupils to report if they or another pupil is experiencing bullying behaviour. Pupils who witness bullying behaviour are supported and encouraged to report the behaviour to a trusted adult in the school so that the behaviour can be addressed. Pupils who witness bullying behaviour on social media have an important role in helping to address the behaviour by reporting the witnessed behaviour to a trusted adult.

All staff members in St. James' N.S. uphold this strategy by letting pupils know that they can talk to them about their concerns confidentially and be fully supported in resolving a situation that is causing them distress. All staff members work to establish a culture of trust and reliability with the pupils in our care and are vigilant in observing behavioural changes or indications of anxiety in our pupils.

The trusted adult should reassure the pupil that they have done the right thing by reporting the behaviour. The trusted adult should, without delay, inform the member of staff who has responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour.

In the first instance this is the Class Teacher. If unsure who to inform or in the absence of the regular class teacher, the trusted adult should inform the Principal or Deputy Principal. The trusted adult should continue to support the pupil, as appropriate, while the behaviour is being addressed by the relevant member of staff.

• Create safe spaces in our school building and yards – visibility is important.

Creating safe physical spaces in schools

The creation of safe physical spaces supports psychological safety and is an important measure to prevent bullying behaviour. Spaces that have a clear line of sight make it easier for school staff to supervise pupils. Hidden spaces in hallways, and in the schoolyard can be areas where there is a greater risk for bullying behaviour to occur.

In St. James' N.S. we
- ensure the provision of good lighting in classrooms and on corridors
- ensure that all doors are kept open during supervised breaks.
- ensure that school staff who are supervising at break times, including during yard duty, have full visibility of all areas in which pupils are playing.
- ensure that all school staff are proactive in monitoring children on corridors etc. irrespective of whether they are directly involved in their care.
- promote the school's values such as equality, diversity, inclusion and respect through visual aids, posters, relevant picture books and class novels.

• Encourage a sense of belonging with ownership over their own space through art and creativity.

• Create a positive school culture and climate which is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity; encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment; and promotes respectful relationships across the school community.

Ways in which we work to achieve these goals are as follows:

• Staff are briefed on the uniform approach we must take to handle all reports of bullying – this is distributed to staff and a copy is displayed on the Staff Room notice board for ease of access also.

• Anti Bullying week activities such as Random acts of Kindness homework, Poster making, slogan making, etc

• Playground helpers – pupils in higher classes volunteer to support younger classes on yard to help with games and positive interactions.

• Child Friendly Anti- Bullying Policy to be distributed to parents, children and staff to discuss. This policy outlines various ways to tell.

• Parents receive information at times regarding useful information on Anti Bullying.

• Stay safe and SPHE lessons focusing on positive behaviour form part of curricular content in all classes.

• Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils:

Supervision
Appropriate supervision is an important measure to help prevent and address bullying behaviour. Schools are required to take all reasonable measures to ensure the safety of their pupils and to supervise pupils when they are attending school or attending school activities.
In St. James' N.S., we strive to ensure that full supervision is maintained at all times during the school day. Our supervision timetable is planned so that class group teachers, SETs and SNAs generally supervise the children with whom they are directly involved. The allocation of personnel for supervisory duty is regularly reviewed at staff meetings and additional staff provided where necessary. Local arrangements are in place between class teachers who have been on yard duty to ensure their class is supervised while they have their break. Class teachers (or teachers on duty) accompany their classes to the yard at break times to ensure supervision is maintained on corridors. Additional supervision is provided for school tours and other events which take place off the school premises such as theatre visits, school tours and trips, sporting events etc.

• Class and School Charter development as well as notice board to promote kindness and build responsibility amongst pupils.

Curriculum (teaching and learning)

Teaching and learning that is collaborative and respectful should be promoted. Pupils should have regular opportunities to work in small groups with their peers, which can help build a sense of connection, belonging and empathy. Schools are encouraged to provide opportunities for pupils to develop a sense of self-worth through both curricular and extra-curricular programmes.

Parents are informed in advance of the delivery of SPHE modules and encouraged to reinforce central messages through home discussions.
We strive to:

• Provide teaching and promote learning which is collaborative and respectful, fostering inclusion and respect for diversity.

• Display a shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact.

Ways in which we work to achieve this:

• Teach SPHE and RSE content which fosters pupil's well-being and self-confidence as well as promoting personal responsibility for their own behaviours and actions.

The Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) curricula at primary level aim to foster pupils' well-being, self-confidence and sense of belonging and to develop pupils' sense of personal responsibility for their own behaviour and actions. Pupils' social and emotional learning skills can be improved through the SPHE curriculum.

St. James' N.S. upholds the SPHE and RSE curricula with planned modules from the Weaving Wellbeing, Stay Safe, Walk Tall and Cyber-Safety programmes delivered at various times during the school year.

• Model respectful behaviour towards colleagues, pupils and visitors in our school environment.

• Curricular and Extra-curricular activities can help to develop a sense of self-worth, working together, inclusion and respect.

• Pupils are given regular opportunities to work in small groups with peers, which can help build a sense of connection, belonging and empathy.

• Acknowledgment of our diverse school population – celebrating diversity and culture in our school through art, displays, photographs and activities.

• Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying.

Supports for staff:
• Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies)

• On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

Policy and planning

The wellbeing of the school community should be at the heart of school policies and plans.

The aim of St. James' National School's Bí Cineálta Policy is:

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

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

•Through the development of our Pupil Council, monthly assemblies, in-class discussions and surveys we seek to involve pupils proactively in Wellbeing and Anti-Bullying initiatives and their implementation.

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

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

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

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

The Acceptable Use Policy, Additional Support Policy, Autism Policy, Dignity at Work Policy, Code of Behaviour and Mission Statement support the implementation of the Bí Cineálta policy.

Effective leadership is a key component with Principal, Deputy Principal, DLP, DDLP, and all middle management focused on supporting the implementation of this policy.

Relationships and Partnerships

Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying recognises the importance of positive relationships across the whole education community to promote empathy, understanding and respect. The meaningful involvement of the Board of Management, staff, pupils and their parents in the development, implementation and review of their school's Bí Cineálta policy and pupil- friendly version is essential to effectively prevent and address bullying behaviour

• Age and stage appropriate awareness initiatives that engage the pupils in looking at their own behaviour – promoting acts of kindness and friendship, being an active help to others and looking at the causes of and impact of bullying during SPHE lessons.

• Encouraging peer mentoring and peer support.

• Supporting active participation of pupils in school life and active participation of parents in school life also.

• Engaging parents and pupils in actively contributing to the formation of a Child Friendly Bí Cineálta Policy to make them active participants in promotion of and discussion of useful ways to identify and reduce bullying behaviour and highlight procedure and how to deal with it if it does occur.

Preventing cyberbullying behaviour

Technology and social media have provided many positive opportunities for entertainment, social engagement and education. Technology is a part of life that can impact even the youngest members of society. However, the increase in the use of technology has led to pupils becoming increasingly vulnerable to cyberbullying or unacceptable online behaviour.
St. James' N.S. proactively addresses these challenges by promoting digital literacy, digital citizenship, and fostering safe online environments. Strategies to prevent cyberbullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:
- implementing the SPHE curriculum
- having regular conversations with pupils about developing respectful and kind relationships online
- developing and communicating an acceptable use policy (AUP) for technology
- referring to appropriate online behaviour as part of the standards of behaviour in the Code of Behaviour
- promoting or hosting online safety events for parents who are responsible for
- overseeing their children's activities online, for example, Zeeko.
- becoming part of the Go Phone-Free school initiative in 2025.

The digital age of consent is the minimum age a user must be before a social media or internet company can collect process and store their data. In Ireland the digital age of

consent is 16.

For the purposes of data collection, pupils between the age of 13 and 16 years old must have parental permission to sign up to social media services where companies use the legal basis of consent to collect process and store users' data. Most social media platforms and services have a minimum age requirement and for the majority of these services it is 13 years' old. Therefore, technically, children under the age of 13 should not have a social media account.

It is important for their child's safety, that parents are aware of their children's use of technology and monitor the age appropriateness of games they play online and on devices. St. James' National School, with the support of the Parents' Association, school staff and the BOM, has introduced a voluntary smartphone code which actively encourages parents to delay giving their child a smartphone until they have completed their primary schooling.

Preventing homophobic/transphobic bullying behaviour.

All pupils including gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender pupils, have a right to feel safe and supported at school.

Strategies to prevent homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- maintaining an inclusive physical environment such as by displaying relevant posters.
- encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
- challenging gender stereotypes.
- exploring gender diversity and various family structures through picture books and the Arts.
- encouraging pupils to speak up if they witness homophobic behaviour.

Preventing racist bullying behaviour

Schools have become much more culturally diverse over the last number of decades. Pupils attending schools come from many different cultures and backgrounds. Pupils from diverse backgrounds may face discrimination and prejudice and may be subject to racist bullying behaviour.

Strategies to prevent racist bullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- fostering a school culture where diversity is celebrated and where pupils "see themselves" in their school environment
- having the cultural diversity of the school visible and on display
- encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
- encouraging bystanders to report when they witness racist behaviour
- providing supports to school staff to respond to the needs of pupils for whom English is an additional language and for communicating with their parents
- providing supports to school staff to support pupils from ethnic minorities, including Traveller pupils, and to encourage communication with their parents

Preventing sexist bullying behaviour

Schools should focus on gender equality as part of the school's measures to create a supportive and respectful environment.

St. James' N.S. is a mixed school from Infant to 6th class. Gender equality is woven into every aspect of our programme for learning.

Strategies to prevent sexist bullying behaviour include the following:

- ensuring members of staff model respectful behaviour and treat pupils equally irrespective of their sex
- ensuring all pupils have the same opportunities to engage in school activities irrespective of their sex
- celebrating diversity at school and acknowledging the contributions of all pupils
- encouraging parents to reinforce these values of respect at home.

Preventing sexual harassment

Preventing sexual harassment requires an approach that focuses on education, awareness and clear enforceable policies. Schools must make it clear that there is a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment. Sexual harassment should never be dismissed as teasing or banter.

Strategies to prevent sexual harassment include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- using the updated SPHE specifications to teach pupils about healthy relationships and how to treat each other with respect and kindness promoting positive role models within the school community
- challenging gender stereotypes
- providing equal opportunities to access activities insofar as is possible

James' N.S. has the following supervision and monitoring policies in place to prevent and address bullying behaviour

School-wide approach

• A school-wide commitment to the fostering of respect for all members of the school community.

• A school-wide commitment to proactively supervise and monitor pupils during break times to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all.

• A school-wide commitment to following up any instances of conflict (physical or verbal) during break time by informing the relevant teacher and recording in the Yard Book if necessary.

• The promotion of the value of diversity to address issues of prejudice and stereotyping and to highlight the complete unacceptability of bullying behaviour.

• The fostering and enhancing of the self-esteem of all our pupils through both curricular and extracurricular activities.

• Whole staff professional development on the Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour to ensure that all staff members are fully cognisant of what

bullying is, how it impacts on pupils' lives and the need to respond to it in a clear and consistent way.

• Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extra- curricular activities. SET teachers, SNAs and ancillary staff are encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers. Supervision will also apply to monitoring pupil use of technology within the school.

• Buddy Benches and other pupil support activities that can help to support pupils and encourage a culture of peer respect and support.

• Bí Cineálta pupil-friendly posters displayed publicly in classrooms and in common areas of the school.

• The school's Bí Cineálta policy is discussed with pupils and all parents/guardians are given a copy as part of the Code of Behaviour of the school upon entry. It is also available on the school website and on request from the Office.

• The implementation of regular whole school awareness measures including posters, competitions, group assemblies etc.

• Age-appropriate introduction and discussion of the various roles that pupils might take in a bullying scenario; ringleader, target, assistant, bystander to ensure that pupils have a clear understanding and responsibility in stopping bullying by telling

• Ensuring that pupils know who to tell and how to tell, e.g.

☐ Direct approach to teacher, SET teacher or SNA at an appropriate time

☐ Note included with homework.

☐ "Worry box" for older children

☐ Getting a parent/guardian or friend to tell on your behalf.

☐ Identifying clear protocols to encourage parents/guardians to approach the school if they suspect that their child is being bullied.

☐ Ensuring pupils and parents/guardians and staff members agree and sign the Acceptable Use Policy (AUP)

In developing 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 the 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 ensuring that prevention and inclusivity strategies are given priority and discussed regularly at 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 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 teacher(s) with responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour is (are) as follows:
All class teachers, SET teachers where relevant, Principal and Deputy Principal,

When bullying behaviour occurs, St. James' N.S. will:
- ensure that the pupil experiencing bullying behaviour is heard and reassured
- seek to ensure the privacy of those involved
- conduct all conversations with sensitivity
- consider the age and capacity of those involved
- listen to the views of the pupil who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation
- take action in a timely manner
- inform parents of those involved

The 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.

St. James' N.S. fully endorses the aims of stopping bullying behaviour and seeking to restore the relationships of the parties involved through open and respectful communication, restorative language, and, if appropriate, respectful behaviour contracts and additional supports for pupils.

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 behaviour is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power in relationships between two people or groups of people in society.

To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour the relevant teacher(s) should consider the following questions:

1. Is the behaviour targeted at a specific pupil or group of pupils?
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: One-off incidents may be considered bullying 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.

If the answer to any of these 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.

When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred, teachers should consider what, where, when and why?

- if a group of pupils is involved, each pupil should be engaged with individually at first
- thereafter, all pupils involved should be met as a group
- at the group meeting, each pupil should be asked for their account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's views
- each pupil should be supported as appropriate, following the group meeting it may be helpful to ask the pupils involved to write down their account of the incident(s)

Where bullying behaviour has occurred:

- Parents are an integral part of the St. James' School community and play an important role, in partnership with the school in addressing bullying behaviour. Where bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents 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 the school's Bí Cineálta policy. In circumstances where a pupil expresses concern about their parents being informed, the school should develop an appropriate plan to support the pupil, and plan for how their parents will be informed.
- it is important to listen to the views of the pupil who is experiencing the 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 (as per Section 2.5 and 2.7 of the Bi Cineálta procedures), where and when it took place and the date of the initial engagement with the pupils involved and their parents
- the record should include the views of the pupils and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour

Follow up where bullying behaviour has occurred:

- the teacher must engage with the pupils involved and their parents again no more than 20 school days after the initial engagement
- important factors to consider as part of this engagement are the nature of the bullying behaviour, the effectiveness of the strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and the relationship between the pupils involved

- The teacher should document the review with pupils and their parents to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased, and the views of pupils and their parents in relation to this.

- The date that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased should also be recorded,
- Any engagement with external services/supports should also be noted.
- Ongoing supervision and support may be needed for the pupils involved even where bullying behaviour has ceased,
- If the bullying behaviour has not ceased the teacher should review the strategies used in consultation with the pupils involved and their parents. A timeframe should be agreed for further engagement until the bullying behaviour has ceased,
- If it becomes clear that the pupil 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 our Code of Behaviour. If disciplinary sanctions are considered, this is a matter between the relevant pupil, their parents and the school.
- If parents are not satisfied with how the bullying behaviour has been addressed by the school, in accordance with the Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, they should be referred to the school's complaints procedures.
- If a parent is dissatisfied with how a complaint has been handled, they may make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children if they believe that the school's actions have had a negative effect on the pupil. Additional Information relating to schools' complaint procedures are available at the following link: https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/parental-complaints/

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

A school is not expected to deal with bullying behaviour that occurs when pupils 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 pupils involved. Where the bullying behaviour continues in school, St. James' National School will deal with it in accordance with our Bí Cineálta policy.

Where the pupil displaying the bullying behaviour is not a pupil in St. James' N.S., but the pupil who is experiencing the bullying behaviour is a pupil in St. James' N.S., we will support the pupil who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as appropriate and engage with them and their parents 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 pupil who is experiencing bullying behaviour and the pupil who is displaying bullying behaviour need support. It is important that the pupil who is experiencing bullying behaviour is engaged with without delay so that they feel listened to, supported and reassured. School staff should identify the supports needed for the pupil who

is displaying bullying behaviour to better manage relational difficulties and ensure that their needs are met.

St. James' National School is committed to fairness and consistency in managing conflict and the broader issues around behaviour. We endeavour to support and reassure those who experience bullying behaviour and to help those displaying bullying behaviour by identifying and addressing their needs to the best of our ability in the school context.

A pupil's agency or sense of power can be decreased when they experience or witness bullying behaviour. When a pupil 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 pupil's agency is not decreased further by adults deciding what will happen next without listening to the pupil and involving them in deciding on the actions that will be taken.
Pupil agency and voice are fostered and respected in St. James' N.S.

We undertake to consider communication barriers that may exist when communicating with parents, for example, literacy, digital literacy or language barriers.

Approaches such as restorative practice and mediation should only be used to address bullying behaviour when the teachers involved have been trained in how to engage in these methods and the pupils involved have agreed to their use. To ensure clarity among the school community about how instances of bullying behaviour will be dealt with, the approaches that will be used by the school are specified in this policy,

Requests to take no action

A pupil reporting bullying behaviour may ask that a member of staff does nothing about the behaviour other than "look out" for them. The pupil 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 pupil, deals with the matter sensitively and speaks with the pupil 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 pupil who has experienced bullying behaviour feels safe.

Parents may also make schools aware of bullying behaviour that has occurred and specifically request that the school take no action. Parents should put this request in writing to the school or be facilitated to do so where there are literacy, digital literacy or language barriers. However, while acknowledging the parent's request, schools may decide that, based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour.

Determining if bullying behaviour has ceased

The teacher must engage with the pupils and parents involved no more than 20 school days

after the initial discussion to review progress following the initial intervention.
Important factors to consider as part of the review are the nature of the bullying behaviour, the effectiveness of the strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and the relationship between the pupils involved.

Even though the bullying behaviour may have ceased, ongoing supervision and support may be required for both the pupil who has experienced the bullying behaviour as well as the pupil who has displayed the behaviour. It can take time for relationships to settle and for supports to take effect. In some cases, relationships may never be restored to how they were before the bullying behaviour occurred.

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

Where it becomes clear that the pupil who is displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behaviour, the school should consider using the strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour as provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour. If disciplinary sanctions are considered, this is a matter between the relevant pupil, their parents and the school.

Recording bullying behaviour

All incidents of bullying behaviour should be recorded. The record should document the form and type of bullying behaviour (as per Sections 2.5 and 2.7 of the Bí Cineálta Procedures), if known, where and when it took place and the date of the initial engagement with the pupils and their parents.

Forms of Bullying Behaviour
Bullying behaviour can take many forms, which can occur separately or together. These can include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

Direct bullying behaviour:

• Physical bullying behaviour:
Physical bullying behaviour includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping pupils. It may also take the form of severe physical assault. While pupils can often engage in "mess fights" they can sometimes be used as a disguise for physical harassment or inflicting pain.
Personal property can be a focus of attention for bullying behaviour. This may result in damage to clothing, mobile phone or other devices, schoolbooks and other learning material or interference with a pupil's locker or bicycle. The contents of school bags and pencil cases may be scattered on the floor. Items of personal property may be defaced, broken, stolen or hidden.

• Verbal bullying behaviour:
Continual name-calling directed at a pupil which hurts, insults or humiliates the pupil should be regarded as a form of bullying behaviour. Often name-calling of this type refers

to physical appearance; for example, size or clothes worn or gender identity. It can also refer to a pupil's accent, distinctive voice characteristics, academic ability, race or ethnic origin.

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

• Extortion:
Bullying behaviour can involve extortion. Extortion is where something is obtained through force or threats.

Indirect bullying behaviour:

• Exclusion:
Exclusion bullying behaviour occurs where a pupil is deliberately and repeatedly isolated, excluded or ignored by a pupil or group of pupils.

• Relational:
Relational bullying behaviour occurs when a pupil's attempts to socialise and form relationships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined. Common forms include control; a group of pupils ganging up against one pupil; non-verbal gesturing; malicious gossip; spreading rumours about a pupil; giving a pupil 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, e-mail, 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, 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 pupils
☐ excluding or disrupting access to a pupil on purpose from online chat groups, access to accounts or from an online game

Even though a message may be posted online just once by a pupil it can be considered bullying behaviour as it may be seen by a wide audience where it is intended to be shared or has a likelihood of being shared multiple times and is thus repeated.
As online bullying uses technology to carry out bullying behaviour and does not require face-to-face contact it can occur at any time. Many types of bullying behaviour can be facilitated through online bullying. In many cases online bullying can relate to an "offline" experience with someone known to the pupil. This type of bullying may involve forms of sexual exploitation including but not limited to, sextortion and the non-consensual sharing of

intimate images. The sharing or threatened sharing of images without consent is a criminal offence.

Types of bullying behaviour

Where behaviour is regarded as identity-based bullying, indicate the relevant category on the record. There are many different types of bullying behaviour. These can include the following which is not an exhaustive list:

- **disablist bullying behaviour:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a pupil because of a perceived or actual disability or additional need
- **exceptionally able bullying:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a pupil because of their high academic ability or outstanding talents
- **gender identity bullying:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a pupil because of their perceived or actual gender identity
- homophobic/transphobic (LGBTQ+) bullying: behaviour or language that intends to harm a pupil because of their perceived or actual membership of the LGBTQ+ community
- **physical appearance bullying:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a pupil because of their physical appearance. Pupils 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 pupil because of their race or ethnic origin which includes membership of the Traveller or ethnic minority community. Racism is defined in the National Action Plan Against Racism as "a form of domination which manifests through those power dynamics present in structural and institutional arrangements, practices, policies and cultural norms, which have the effect of excluding or discriminating against individuals or groups, based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin"
- **poverty bullying:** behaviour that intends to humiliate a pupil because of a lack of resources
- **religious identity bullying:** behaviour that intends to harm a pupil because of their religion or religious identity
- **sexist bullying:** behaviour that intends to harm a pupil based on their sex, perpetuating stereotypes that a pupil or a group of pupils are inferior because of their sex
- **sexual harassment:** any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature or other conduct based on sex which affects the dignity of the pupil.

The record should include the views of the pupils and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour. It should document the review with pupils and their parents to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased and the views of pupils and their parents in relation to this. It is important to document the date of each of these engagements and the date that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased.

These records should be retained in accordance with the school's record keeping policy and in line with data protection regulations.

Where a Pupil Support File exists for a pupil, schools are encouraged to place a copy of the record on the pupil's support file. This will assist the school's pupil support team, where they exist, in providing a consistent and holistic response to support the wellbeing of the pupils involved. Where a Pupil Support Plan exists, the plan should be updated to incorporate response strategies and associated supports.

St. James' National School subscribes to the Continuum of Support model. Some pupils exhibiting bullying behaviour may have a Classroom Support plan, School Support Plan or School Support Plus Plan already in place which can be reviewed and updated to include additional supports and strategies.

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.

In the event that a pupil and/or parent is not satisfied with how a complaint has been handled, a pupil 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 pupil.
The Office of the Ombudsman for Children can be contacted at ococomplaint@oco.ie

Supports

Supports are available to help prevent and address bullying behaviour. These include the following:
National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)
Oide
Webwise
National Parents Council (NPC)
Dublin City University (DCU) Anti-Bullying Centre
Tusla

Schools should contact Tusla directly for advice in cases where it is considered that bullying behaviour is a child protection concern (as per section 2.4 Bí Cineálta Procedures) for guidance on when bullying behaviour becomes a child protection concern.

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 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: _Gil Madigan_ Date: _June 2025_

(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: _Fiona Keane_ Date: _June 2025_

(Principal)

Appendix E
Review of the Bí Cineálta Policy

The Board of Management (the Board) must undertake an annual (calendar) review of the school's Bí Cineálta policy and its implementation in consultation with the school community. As part of the review, this document must be completed.

Bí Cineálta Policy Review

1. When did the Board formally adopt its Bí Cineálta policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour in accordance with the *Bí Cineálta Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*? *Insert date when the Bí Cineálta policy was last adopted by the school.*
   _____/_____/20_____

2. Where in the school is the student-friendly Bí Cineálta policy displayed?

   On all classroom walls and in the corridors.

3. What date did the Board publish the Bí Cineálta policy and the student-friendly policy on the school website? 02/09/2025

4. How has the student-friendly policy been communicated to students?

   The principal visited all classes and spoke with the pupils

5. How has the Bí Cineálta policy and student-friendly policy been communicated to parents

   Via email and on the school website

6. Have all school staff been made aware of the, school's Bí Cineálta policy and the *Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post- Primary Schools*?   Yes

7. Does the Bí Cineálta policy document the strategies that the school uses to prevent bullying behaviour?   Yes

8. Has the Board received and minuted the Bullying Behaviour Update presented by the principal at every ordinary board meeting over the last calendar year? ☐ Yes ☐ No

9. Has the Board discussed how the school is addressing all reports of bullying behaviour? ☐ Yes ☐ No

10. Is the Board satisfied that all incidents of bullying behaviour are addressed in accordance with the school's Bí Cineálta Policy? ☐ Yes ☐ No

11. Have the prevention strategies in the Bí Cineálta policy been implemented? ☐ Yes ☐ No

12. Has the Board discussed the effectiveness of the strategies used to prevent bullying behaviour? ☐ Yes ☐ No

13. How have (a) parents, (b) students and (c) school staff been consulted with as part of the review of the Bí Cineálta Policy?

14. Outline any aspects of the school's Bí Cineálta policy and/or its implementation that have been identified as requiring further improvement as part of this review:

15. Where areas for improvement have been identified, outline how these will be addressed and whether an action plan with timeframes has been developed?

16. Does the student-friendly policy need to be updated as a result of this review and if so why?

17. Does the school refer parents to the complaints procedures if they have a complaint about how the school has addressed bullying behaviour? ☐ Yes ☐ No

18. Has a parent informed the school that a student has left the school due to reported bullying behaviour? ☐ Yes ☐ No

19. Has the Office of the Ombudsman for Children initiated or completed an investigation into how the school has addressed an incident of bullying behaviour? ☐ Yes ☐ No