Bí Cineálta Policy

St. Ultan's Special School

19216E

June 2025

Introduction:

By the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the code of behaviour guidelines issued by the NEWB, the Board of Management of St. Ultan's school has adopted the following Bi Cinealta Policy within the framework of the school's overall code of behaviour. This policy fully complies with the requirements from Cinealtas: Action Plan on Bullying, which were published in June 2024. These procedures replace the 2013 Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools. They apply to all recognised primary and Post-primary schools and to centres for education, as defined in the Education Act 1998, which are attended by students under the age of 18 years.

Aims:

To raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with school management, teachers, SNAs, students and parents/guardians.

To create a school ethos which encourages students to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.

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

To ensure that all members of the school community are enabled to act effectively in dealing with bullying behaviour.

To provide an environment where the health and safety of all school members is protected to the best of our ability.

Rationale:

The Board of Management recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of students and staff. It is therefore fully committed to the following **key principles of best practice** in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour:

(a) A positive school culture and climate, which:

is welcoming of difference and diversity, and is based on inclusivity;

encourages students to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment and

promotes respectful relationships across the school community;

(b) Effective leadership

(c) A telling environment

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(d) A trusted adult

(e) Creating a safe space in school

(f) A school-wide approach

(g) A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact

(h) Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness-raising measures) that-

build empathy, respect and resilience in students and;

explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying, including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying;

(i) Adequate supervision and monitoring of students

(j) Curriculum (Teaching and Learning/SPHE Policy)

(k) Policy and Planning (Code of Behaviour)

(l) Relationships and Partnerships (Friendship Week)

(m) Support for staff

(n) Preventing cyberbullying behaviour (online safety training for parents and pupils)

(o) Preventing homophobic/transphobic bullying behaviour (display relevant posters)

(p) Preventing racist bullying behaviour (workshops for parents and pupils to raise awareness)

(q) Preventing sexist bullying behaviour (acknowledging the contribution of all pupils, irrespective of their sex)

(r) Preventing sexual harassment (SPHE lesson)

(s) Consistent recording, investigation and follow-up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies); and

(t) Ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

Definition of bullying behaviour as outlined in Cinealtas: Action Plan on Bullying

"Bullying is targeted behaviour, online or offline, that causes harm. The harm caused can be physical, social, and/or emotional in nature. Bullying behaviour is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power in relationships between two people or groups of people in society".

Behaviour that is not bullying behaviour:

1. A one-off incident of negative behaviour towards a student is not bullying behaviour. However, a single hurtful message posted on social media can be considered bullying behaviour as it may be visible to a wide audience and has a high likelihood of being shared multiple times and so becomes a repeated behaviour.

2. Disagreement between students, or instances where students 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.

3. Some students 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 boss, in certain situations, they are an automatic response which they can't control.

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

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

Direct bullying behaviour includes the following:

1. Physical bullying behaviour (pushing, shoving, punching, poking, and tripping pupils, physical assault, "mess fights" can sometimes be used to disguise physical harassment or inflicting pain. Personal property, damage to clothing, mobile phones, school books, pencil case, and school bag)
2. Verbal bullying behaviour (continual name calling, often commenting on size or clothes, gender or identity, accents, distinctive voice characteristics, academic ability, race or ethnic origin.
3. Written bullying behaviour (writing insulting remarks about a pupil in public places, passing around notes/drawings of a pupil)
4. Extortion (where something is obtained through force or treat).

Indirect bullying behaviour includes the following:

1. Exclusion (where a pupil is deliberately and repeatedly isolated, excluded or ignored by a student or group of students).
2. Relational (when a pupil attempts to socialise and form relationships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined.

Online bullying behaviour:

1. Sending or sharing nasty, insulting, offensive and or intimidating messages or images via text messages emails direct messages or other websites or apps.
2. Posting information considered to be personal, private and sensitive without consent.
3. Making and or participating in fake profiles on a social network to impersonate and or humiliate other students
4. Excluding or disrupting access to a student 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 student, 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 student. 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 threatening sharing of images without consent is a criminal offence.

Types of bullying behaviour include:

1. Disablist behaviour
2. Exceptionally able bullying
3. Gender identity bullying
4. Homophobic/transphobic bullying
5. Physical appearance bullying
6. Racist bullying
7. Poverty bullying

8. Religious bullying
9. Sexist bullying
10. Sexual harassment

Dealing with Bullying:

The relevant teacher(s) for investigating and dealing with bullying in St. Ultan's are:

The class teachers initially, "while every staff member has a responsibility to implement their school's Bi Cinealta policy, the school's Bi Cinealta policy must clearly indicate the teachers in the school who are responsible for addressing bullying behaviour" followed by the principal, deputy principal and assistant principal.

Principal:	**Jean Cunningham**
Deputy Principal:	**Caoimhe Cunningham**
Assistant Principal:	**Karen Smith**

All staff members, teachers, SNA's and ancillary staff are required to be vigilant at all times and have a duty to report suspected and potentially bullying behaviour.

Education and Prevention Strategies:

One of the main aims of St. Ultan's School as identified in our mission statement is the development of positive behaviours, social skills, respect and self-esteem. This is integral to our ethos and daily work and activities. In so doing, we will promote an affirmative school culture in which good behaviour is encouraged and bullying behaviour is discouraged. Whole school approaches, education and prevention strategies that enable the development of this objective include:

- Modelling of respectful behaviour to all members of the school community at all times.
- Explicitly teaching pupils what respectful language and behaviour looks like, acts like, feels like in class and around the school.
- Consistently tackling the use of discriminatory and offensive language in the school including homophobic, racist and language.
- Positive acknowledgement and feedback of good behaviour
- Positive classroom rules (with older children compiling and agreeing their own classroom rules)
- Yard Supervision
- Yard Incident Book recording system
- Wet break time supervision of classrooms and corridors
- Supervision of all use of the Internet
- Assemblies
- Student awards for good behaviour and compliance with school rules
- Individual Education Plans (IEPs)
- Behaviour Contracts
- Individual Behaviour Plans
- Dedicated themes and events e.g. Friendship Friday, Friendship week, friendship posters and notice boards, safe internet use, dedicated SPHE lessons and boards on use of the internet

- Explicitly teaching students about the appropriate use of social media.
- Workshops on internet safety for pupils and parents
- All staff will be vigilant in watching out for and in implementing measures to prevent and deal with bullying behaviours
- Students will be taught that reporting incidents of bullying is not telling tales but responsible behaviour. The importance of the bystander will be emphasised.
- Students will be given strategies and procedures to tell about incidents of bullying.

These will include:
1. directly approaching a teacher/SNA
2. asking a parent/guardian to tell on their behalf
3. handing a note with homework/classwork
4. Ensuring by standing students understand the importance of informing if they witness or know that bullying is taking place.

Implementation of Curricula

Programmes followed in the school that help develop positive behaviours and social skills as well as attitudes such as empathy, respect, resilience, self-worth and self-esteem, thereby developing an awareness of aspects of bullying and providing students with strategies to deal with bullying behaviour include:

- Circle Time
- Stay Safe
- Walk Tall
- Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)
- SPHE programmes in all classes contain specific lessons on bullying and each class teacher will cover these during each school year
- Dedicated themes and events e.g. Friendship Week, friendship posters and notice boards, specific lessons on safe internet use for senior students
- L2LP and QQI programmes contain targets/modules on safe computer and Internet use as well as materials on social skills such as personal effectiveness and making choices
- Teachers will use programmes and resources currently available on the Internet. These will include programmes/aspects of programmes such as Cool School Programme, #UP2US, FUSE online safety, and Be Safe—Be Webwise. Teachers review these each year and use them according to their classes' needs and levels. The class teacher can provide information on the specific programmes being used in any class in any school year.
- Positive Health Coaching Programme

Continuous Professional Development :

Staff are qualified to deliver the SPHE programme and develop positive behaviours and aspects of bullying. Members of staff have been trained in additional programmes including:
- Incredible Years (NEPS)
- Oide Stay Safe and RSE (Department of Education)
- Positive Health Coaching

Professional support includes:

- Webwise (Department of Education and the European Commission)
- National Parents Council (Education Act 19980
- Dublin City University (DCU) Anti-Bullying Centre (FUSE Programme)
- Tusla (Section 2.4 Child Protection Concern)

Partnership/Communication with Parents/Guardians:

The following forms of communication with parents are used:
1. Newsletters from school
2. Communication notebooks/ notes in homework journals
3. Parent-teacher meetings
4. IEP meetings/Behaviour planning meetings
5. Relevant homework
6. Information meetings
7. Parent Association activities
8. Publication of Bi Cinealta Policy on the school website
9. All parents/guardians are given a copy of the school's Code of Behaviour and Bi Cinealta Policy upon their child's enrolment.
10. Parents/guardians are advised to read and discuss the Code of Behaviour with their children at the beginning of each school year and term.
11. Parents/guardians should contact the class teacher, principal/deputy principal if they suspect that their child is being bullied.
12. The school has an Acceptable Use and Mobile Phone Policy and strictly monitors and supervises access to technology and the Internet. Mobile phones are not permitted in the school.

Links to other School Policies :

The following policies link to the Anti-Bullying policy and are reviewed in light of the need to prevent and address bullying issues.
1. Code of Behaviour
2. Child Protection Policy
3. Supervision Policy
4. Acceptable Use Policy
5. Attendance Policy
6. Mobile Phone Policy
7. SPHE Policy

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.

Recording Bullying Behaviour

The primary aim of St. Ultan's School staff when investigating and dealing with bullying is to encourage all parties involved to reconcile and resolve the conflict as much as practicable. We also believe it is essential to enable students to understand what bullying behaviour looks and feels like and how it can negatively impact the other person. It is also necessary to allow all students to develop positive behaviours and social skills.

When a complaint of bullying is made or when bullying behaviour is observed, the procedures for investigation, follow-up, and documentation of the bullying behaviour are as follows:
All incidents of bullying behaviour will be recorded on our **Bullying Incident Form**

Any engagement with external services/supports will be noted.

Complaint Process:

If a parent is not satisfied with how the school has addressed bullying behaviour through these procedures, they can:

1. Refer to the school's complaint procedure (website)
2. Seek additional information www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/parental-complaint
3. Make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children ococomplaint@oco.ie

Bullying Incident Form

19216E

2025

St. Ultan's Special School

1. Names of Children Involved:
   Student(s) Experiencing Bullying _____
   Student(s) Engaging in Bullying Behaviour: _____

2.

   Other Witnesses (if any) _____

   3. Form of Bullying:
   (Refer to Section 2.5 – Tick all that apply)
   - [ ] Physical (e.g., hitting, kicking, pushing)
   - [ ] Verbal (e.g., name-calling, teasing, insults)
   - [ ] Psychological (e.g., intimidation, manipulation)

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- [ ] Cyberbullying (e.g., harmful messages, social media misuse)
- [ ] Relational (e.g., exclusion, spreading rumours)
- [ ] Other: _____

4. Type of Bullying
(Refer to Section 2.7 – Tick all that apply)
- [ ] Peer-to-Peer
- [ ] Teacher-to-Student
- [ ] Group Bullying
- [ ] Prejudicial Bullying (e.g., based on race, religion, gender)
- [ ] Sexual Bullying (e.g., inappropriate comments, harassment)
- [ ] Other: _____

5. Where and When
(If known)
-Location:_____
-Date/Time:_____

6. Date of Initial Engagement
- With Student(s): _____
- With Parent(s): _____

7. Views of Student(s)/Parent(s)
(Regarding the actions to be taken to address bullying behaviour)

_____

_____

8. Date of Review
(To determine if bullying behaviour has ceased) (reminder - 20 days)
- Review Date: _____

-Outcome: _____
- Views of Student(s): _____
- Views of Parent(s): _____

9. Engagement with External Services/Supports
(If any)
- Services Contacted: _____
- Details of Engagement: _____

10. Recording Teacher
- Name: _____
- Date Recorded: _____

Programmes of Support:

The staff at St. Ultan's are committed to supporting all students affected by bullying. The school has a strong pastoral care system that includes all teachers and SNA's. When incidents of bullying have been

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observed and reported, all staff working with the students involved will be briefed, and a plan will be put in place to monitor behaviour and enable students to talk to a teacher/SNA about how they are getting on and or provide a safe space.

The school's ethos is embedded in the development of students' self-esteem, friendships, and social skills. Opportunities and activities will be provided in the curriculum and everyday life of the school to enable students to participate and develop resilience and positive skills and behaviour. These include a twelve-week coaching programme for senior pupils focusing on resilience for well-being, circle time in the junior school, sporting, art, and music activities, the catering and quiz teams, and the green school committee.

Students will be taught that reporting bullying behaviour is responsible behaviour and that they should report it to a teacher, SNA, or other trusted person.

If necessary, the school will also liaise with agencies to obtain additional support and help for students impacted by bullying behaviour. These include NEPS, CAMHS, Enable Ireland, the 6 – 18 Disability Team, Oide, Webwise, NPC, DCU Anti-Bullying Centre and Tusla.

Rights and Responsibilities:

In school, the ways in which people interact with each other significantly affect each person's sense of self-worth, belonging, and well-being. Fostering high-quality interpersonal relationships among teachers, students, parents, and ancillary staff is a responsibility shared by everyone. All members of the school community have a role to play in preventing bullying.

Responsibilities of Board of Management:

The Board of Management is responsible for ensuring that all members of the school community are enabled to deal effectively with bullying. The Board is committed to providing time and resources for the implementation of the policy, as well as proper supervision and monitoring to ensure that bullying does not occur.

Responsibilities of School Staff:

- To acknowledge that bullying is a shared responsibility within the school
- To implement prevention and intervention strategies which build and maintain a safe learning environment for the whole school community
- To empower students to understand what bullying is, how it impacts on people and how to deal with bullying behaviour and conflict constructively.
- To take all bullying reports seriously and report them to the Principal.
- To document bullying incidents using the Bullying Incident Form.

Responsibilities of Pupils:

- To show consideration, respect and support towards others
- To be able to identify bullying behaviour
- To not bully others
- To tell if they are being bullied or if they see someone else being bullied
- To engage in responsible reporting when witnessing or experiencing bullying behaviour

- To feel empathy for targeted school community members and, as a result, take safe and sensible action as a bystander.

Responsibilities of Parents:

- To support the school in the implementation of the policy
- To watch out for signs that their child may be being bullied
- To speak to the class teacher if their child is being bullied or they suspect that this is happening
- To instruct their children to tell if they are bullied or if they have seen other students being bullied
- To notify the school if they think that their child is displaying bullying behaviour, and to work with the school in addressing this problem
- Never directly approach a student or the parent of a student at the school to intervene in behavioural issues.

Supervision and Monitoring of Pupils:

The Board of Management confirms that appropriate supervision and monitoring policies and Practices are in place to prevent and address bullying behaviour and facilitate early intervention where possible.

Prevention of Harassment:

The Board of Management confirms that the school will, by its obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the sexual harassment of pupils or staff or the harassment of pupils or staff on any of the nine grounds specified i.e. culture and environment, curriculum, policy and planning, relationships and partnerships, cyberbullying behaviour, homophobic/transphobic behaviour, racist bullying, sexist bullying behaviour and sexual harassment.

The Board of Management adopted this policy on **4th June 2025.**

This policy has been made available to school personnel and parents and will be published on the school website in due time. It was provided to the Parents' Association in **June 2025. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron.**

The Board of Management will review this policy and its implementation once every school year. Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, parents, and the Parents' Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available to the patron and the Department.

Signed: _Patrick M°Creanor_   Date: _04/06/25_

Patrick McCreanor Chairperson

Appendix A
School Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of St. Ultan's Special School Navan, Co. Meath 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 such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the 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 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.