Bí Cineálta Policy
to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour
St. John's Education Centre

Introduction

St. John's Education Centre is committed to creating and maintaining a safe, inclusive, and respectful learning environment where all individuals feel valued and supported. Our ethos promotes mutual respect, trust, care, consideration and compassion for every member of the Centre's community. The wellbeing of our students is at the forefront of everything we do.

The aim of this policy is to prevent bullying behaviour and ensure a consistent, effective response when it occurs. We are fully committed to cultivating a culture where bullying is not tolerated and where all students feel protected, heard and respected.

The Management Committee of St. John's Education Centre has adopted this policy in line with *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2024*. The policy is also informed by the *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying*, which sets out four key principles that guide our approach:

1. **Prevention**
2. **Support**
3. **Oversight**
4. **Community**

We recognise that bullying behaviour infringes upon the rights of the child as outlined in the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*. As a school community, we share a collective responsibility to prevent bullying and respond effectively to its negative impact on individuals.

The policy has been developed in consultation with all members of the school community, ensuring that students, staff, and families had the opportunity to contribute their views and experiences.

Finally, in accordance with our obligations under equality legislation, we commit to taking all reasonably practicable steps to prevent harassment of students or staff on any of the nine protected grounds: gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community

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. Alleged incidents of bullying are however often complex and must be considered in a case-by-case basis. (p.30)

Core Elements

The core elements of the definition include:

- **Targeted behaviour**
  Bullying is deliberate, unwanted behaviour that causes harm to others, and where the student 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, exclusion) and/or emotional (for example, low self-esteem, depression, anxiety) and can have a serious and long-term negative impact on the student experiencing the bullying behaviour. If the repeated harm is real for the student experiencing the behaviour but unintended by the other student, 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 student 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 student to remove offensive online material or escape the bullying.

Behaviour that is not bullying behaviour

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

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.

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 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 student experiencing the behaviour but unintended by the other student, 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 constitute criminal behaviour under certain circumstances, with legal consequences potentially applying. In Ireland, the age of criminal responsibility is 12 years.

Certain online activities may also be illegal, and students should be aware of the far-reaching consequences of posting inappropriate or harmful content. For instance, the Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020 (commonly known as Coco's Law) criminalises the non-consensual sharing of intimate images and the threat to share such images.

If bullying behaviour involves physical violence or threats of violence, it may be classified as assault. Additionally, if bullying behaviour involves discrimination or hate speech targeting an individual based on their race, religion, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or membership in the Traveller community, it may be deemed a hate crime under the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989. Those involved in such behaviour could face criminal charges.

Finally, bullying involving sexual harassment or assault may also be considered criminal conduct

An Garda Síochána is the appropriate authority to investigate any alleged criminal behaviour related to bullying. If necessary, the school will work closely with the Gardaí to address these serious issues

Different Forms of Bullying Behaviour

At St. John's Education Centre, we pride ourselves on being an inclusive and supportive community. We strive to provide a secure, accepting, and stimulating environment where every individual is valued and respected. Our student body includes individuals with learning disabilities and communication difficulties and we recognise that these students can be especially vulnerable to bullying. As such, we are committed to maintaining a vigilant and proactive approach to ensure the safety and well-being of all students.

Below is a comprehensive list of the various forms of bullying that we are committed to addressing and preventing within St John's Education Centre (this list is not exhaustive).

General behaviours which apply to all	• Harassment based on any of the nine grounds in the equality legislation e.g. sexual harassment, homophobic bullying, racist bullying, etc. • Physical aggression • Damage to property • Name calling • Slagging • The production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other materials aimed at intimidating another person • Offensive graffiti • Extortion • Intimidation • Insulting or offensive gestures • The "look"

	• Invasion of personal space • Exclusion • No innocent bystander • A combination of any of the types listed.
Cyber	• **Denigration**: Spreading rumors, lies or gossip to hurt a person's reputation • **Harassment**: Continually sending vicious, mean or disturbing messages to an individual • **Impersonation**: Posting offensive or aggressive messages under another person's name • **Flaming**: Using inflammatory or vulgar words to provoke an online fight • **Trickery**: Fooling someone into sharing personal information which you then post online • **Outing**: Posting or sharing confidential or compromising information or images • **Exclusion**: Purposefully excluding someone from an online group • **Cyber stalking**: Ongoing harassment and denigration that causes a person considerable fear for his/her safety • Silent telephone/mobile phone call • Abusive telephone/mobile phone calls • Abusive text messages • Abusive email • Abusive communication on social networks e.g., Facebook/Instagram/Tik Tok/Be Real/You Tube, etc. or on games consoles • Abusive website comments/Blogs/Pictures • Abusive posts on any form of communication technology
Identity Based Behaviours	Including any of the nine discriminatory grounds mentioned in Equality Legislation (gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community).
Homophobic and Transgender	This includes any behaviour or language intended to harm, intimidate or isolate a person because of their actual or perceived membership of the LGBTQ+ community. Examples include: • Spreading rumours about a person's sexual orientation or gender identity • Taunting, mocking, or making derogatory comments toward someone because of their sexual orientation or gender identity • Name-calling (e.g, using terms such as *gay* or *queer*, in a derogatory or insulting way) • Physical intimidation or assaults motivated by bias • Verbal or written threats linked to a person's LGBTQ+ identity
Race, nationality, ethnic background and membership of the Traveller community	This involves behaviour or language intended to harm, demean or isolate an individual based on their race, colour, ethnic origin, or membership of a minority group, including the Traveller or Roma communities. 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." Such behaviour may include verbal abuse, exclusion, stereotyping, physical intimidation or the use of racial slurs.
Relational	This involves manipulating or damaging a person's social relationships and reputation as a means of causing harm. It can be subtle and difficult to detect, but its impact can be deeply distressing. Examples of relational bullying include: • Deliberate exclusion from a group • Ignoring or socially isolating someone • Spreading malicious rumours or gossip • Breaking confidences or sharing private information • Talking loudly or making comments intended to be overheard by the targeted individual • Giving intimidating or disparaging looks ("the look") • Using derogatory terms - such as *nerd, loser, weirdo* - to undermine or belittle • Attempting to damage friendships or turn others against the individual • Name-calling or verbal taunts framed in a socially manipulative way ("bitching")
Sexual	This behaviour involves: • **Unwelcome sexual comments or gestures**: This can include jokes, taunts or remarks that are sexual in nature • **Inappropriate physical contact**: This includes any unwanted or inappropriate touching or physical interactions that are sexual in nature. • **Sexual harassment**: Any persistent behaviour that causes discomfort or distress to the individual because it is sexual or suggestive in nature. This can involve unwelcome advances, verbal comments or spreading inappropriate rumours about someone's sexual behaviour or preferences
Special Educational Needs, Disability, Learning Difficulties and Gifted	This type of behaviour includes: • **Name-calling** and derogatory remarks related to a person's disability learning needs or exceptional abilities. • **Taunting** or mocking others due to their disability, learning or special educational needs. • **Exploiting vulnerabilities**, particularly when individuals have a limited ability to recognise or defend themselves. • Taking advantage of **difficulties in understanding social cues or situations** and using this to manipulate or ridicule the individual. • **Mimicking** or imitating a person's disability, learning or special educational needs in a mocking manner. • **Setting up individuals for ridicule** by highlighting their differences, often in front of others to create shame or embarrassment. • **Excluding** individuals from group activities or making them feel unwelcome • **Mocking or belittling** someone for the way they speak, act, or move.

The means of bullying are constantly changing and types of bullying behaviour can be expanded in light of the experience of the school.

Recognising Spaces Where Bullying Can Happen

Bullying can occur in various locations within the school environment, both in physical spaces and online. At St. John's, we are committed to ensuring that all areas of the school environment - both physical and digital - are safe and conducive to positive, respectful interactions. A proactive approach to monitoring and fostering a culture of respect throughout the education centre is essential in preventing and addressing bullying. Vigilance and supervision are key to identifying and tackling bullying, regardless of where it occurs. At St. John's, this responsibility is shared by all members of our community, ensuring a collective effort in maintaining a safe and supportive environment for all our students.

Bullying behaviour can happen anywhere, online or offline, at any time, but there are certain times and places where bullying behaviour can be more likely to occur. These can include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

Inside and Outside the Centre: Due to the size and layout of the building, with its various hidden or less visible areas, some spaces may inadvertently provide opportunities for bullying to take place. Certain activities or games can also allow students to single out, isolate or harass others, with noise levels often masking these actions. It is important to ensure these spaces are adequately monitored to minimise such opportunities.
In the Classrooms: Bullying can occur in the classroom, sometimes subtly through body language such as glances, snickers or whispered comments. In other instances, bullying may be more overt, taking the form of physical intimidation or verbal abuse. This behaviour can be worsened in a classroom atmosphere where derogatory remarks or inappropriate comments are overlooked or not addressed by staff.
Toilets: The "one at a time" rule should be enforced wherever possible to reduce the likelihood of bullying in these areas.
Games/Activities: During physical activities, bullying may manifest as rough or aggressive play, such as a hard tackle, which may disguise more malicious intent. There is also potential for bullying through exclusion, where certain students may be deliberately left out of games.
Walks and Outings: During walks around the grounds some students may be deliberately excluded or ignored by their peers. Such exclusion can be subtle but harmful, and staff should remain attentive to group dynamics during these times. Bullying can also occur during trips and outings, where the less supervised environment may provide opportunities for bullying behaviours to unfold.
Online (Cyberbullying):
Bullying can also happen in digital spaces such as messaging apps, social media platforms or online gaming. This includes hurtful messages, the spreading of rumours or the sharing of inappropriate or private content. At St. John's, we recognise the serious impact of online bullying and promote digital responsibility through supervision and adherence to our Acceptable Use Policy. All members of the St John's community share a duty to model respectful behaviour and report any concerning online activity.

Indications of Bullying Behaviour - Signs and Symptoms

Bullying can have a serious and enduring impact on an individual's social, emotional, mental and physical wellbeing, both in the short and long term.
At St. John's Education Centre, we are committed to promptly identifying and addressing any signs of bullying, ensuring that every student feels safe, respected and supported. If not addressed, bullying can lead to anxiety, depression, low self-esteem and behavioural changes such as difficulty concentrating, social withdrawal or heightened irritability. By recognising these indicators early, we can provide timely, effective support to help students cope, recover and thrive.

Below are some common indicators that may suggest a student is being bullied (this list is not exhaustive):

Physical Signs

- Unexplained injuries such as bruises, cuts, scratches, or damage to personal belongings (e.g. clothing, electronics)
- Pattern of physical illnesses, such as headaches, stomach aches or frequent illnesses without medical explanation
- Sudden changes in appetite, eating habits or sleeping patterns

Emotional and Behavioural Changes

- Increased anxiety or fear, including fear of traveling to or from St. John's Education Centre (e.g. requesting parents to drive or collect them, changing travel routes or avoiding regular travel times)
- Reluctance or refusal to go outside or enter the centre
- A noticeable shift in mood, such as becoming more withdrawn, sad or irritable
- Visible signs of distress, such as vomiting, stammering, crying, nightmares, bedwetting or exhibiting extreme fear or anxiety
- Becoming disruptive or aggressive, out of character for the student
- Spontaneous out-of-character comments or negative comments about peers or staff, possibly suggesting unresolved emotional distress

Social Indicators

- Becoming isolated from classmates or avoiding group activities, including avoiding participation in extracurricular activities or social events
- Avoiding certain people or locations at the school,
- A sudden refusal or unwillingness to attend St John's, including "mitching" or unexplained absences
- Increased isolation in the classroom, reluctance to interact with peers or seeking to be alone
- Developing a pattern of negative behaviour, including becoming disruptive or aggressive towards peers, possibly bullying others
- Unexplained changes in friendships or losing previously close friends due to social exclusion

Academic Impact

- Loss of concentration, enthusiasm and interest in the educational programme at St John's
- Declining engagement with lessons or activities
- Increased absences or a reluctance to attend classes, including unexplained refusals to participate in daily activities

Signs of Financial Distress or Extortion

- Increased requests for money or attempts to steal money to meet bullying demands
- Discovering that possessions are missing or damaged, potentially due to extortion or bullying behaviour

Reluctance to Discuss the Issue

- Reluctance or refusal to speak about what is troubling them, often characterised by avoidance of questions or defensiveness

If any of these signs are observed, it is crucial for staff, parents and guardians to stay vigilant, provide support and maintain open communication with the student. Early intervention and creating a safe space for dialogue are key to addressing and resolving bullying behaviour while safeguarding the student's social, emotional, mental and physical wellbeing. However, it's important to note that these signs do not automatically indicate bullying; they may also point to other underlying issues. If these signs persist or occur in combination, they should be investigated further to determine whether bullying is the underlying cause.

Preventing Bullying Behaviour

At St. John's Education Centre we strive to cultivate a caring and inclusive environment where every student feels safe, respected and supported. Bullying, by its very nature, undermines these core values and negatively impacts not only the individuals directly affected but also the wider school community. Recognising that bullying often thrives in environments of silence and uncertainty, we take a proactive approach that centres on education, the consistent vigilance of staff and the fostering of positive peer relationships. Every reported incident is addressed with fairness, consistency and a steadfast commitment to upholding the dignity and wellbeing of all students involved.

Our commitment to creating a safe and supportive environment for all students is reflected in our proactive bullying prevention strategies. These strategies are organised under four key pillars, aligned with the Wellbeing Guidelines and referenced in the Bí Cineálta procedures. By focusing on these areas, we aim to foster a positive school culture, where respect, inclusivity and empathy are the foundation of all interactions

The following four key areas are essential for a holistic, whole-school approach to wellbeing promotion:

Culture and Environment

Fostering a positive and inclusive culture is essential to the prevention of bullying. At St. John's Education Centre, we are committed to cultivating an environment where all students feel safe, respected and supported. Through everyday practices and purposeful design, we promote empathy, connection and a strong sense of belonging.

- **Open Door Policy**: Staff maintain an approachable and accessible presence, encouraging students to voice concerns freely and seek support without fear of judgment.
- **Individual Support Sessions**: Regular one-to-one check-ins between staff and students provide a trusted space for raising concerns, building rapport and addressing issues before they escalate.
- **Promoting Visibility and Belonging**: Respect-focused visuals, student artwork and inclusive messaging are prominently displayed throughout the Centre, reinforcing core values of dignity, diversity and inclusion. St. John's three guiding Respect Rules—*Respect Myself, Respect Others, Respect Our School*—are visibly displayed throughout the school, serving as daily reminders of our shared commitment to a positive and respectful community.

- **Dedicated Student Spaces**: A variety of welcoming, student-friendly areas—such as quiet, safe zones and a read and relax space - are available to meet the diverse needs of learners, By encouraging the use of these spaces, we help students develop important self-regulation skills, enabling them to manage stress, refocus their attention, and return to learning with a greater sense of balance and control.

Curriculum and Education

Education plays a vital role in bullying prevention. At St. John's Education Centre, we are committed to equipping students with the knowledge and skills necessary to foster respect, celebrate diversity, and promote inclusion. This is achieved through structured lessons, one-on-one support, group discussions and activities that encourage perspective-taking, empathy and positive social interaction. Examples include:

- **Wellbeing integration**: Wellbeing is embedded throughout the curriculum, with a strong emphasis on developing emotional regulation, conflict resolution and an understanding of inclusivity.
- **Mental health and resilience sessions**: Students regularly engage in sessions focused on mental health awareness, emotional resilience and learning practical coping strategies for personal challenges. These sessions are designed to enhance emotional intelligence and equip students to respond to difficulties with empathy and confidence.
- **Targeted programmes**: Initiatives such as *Why Try* and *Alert* help students manage relationships, make informed decisions and cultivate respect and kindness in their interactions.
- **Creative expression through therapy**: Weekly drama and art therapy sessions provide a safe, creative space for students to explore personal and social issues. These activities support emotional growth, build self-awareness and nurture empathy by allowing students to process complex feelings constructively.
- **Peer Teaching**: Past students are encouraged to support and guide younger peers, fostering positive relationships, promoting a culture of support and reinforcing shared values of respect and inclusion.

Relationships and Partnerships

Effective bullying prevention requires strong relationships between students, staff and parents. We work collaboratively to build a network of support for students, ensuring that bullying is addressed from multiple perspectives.

- **Engagement with External Services:** We link with services such as NEPS, CAMHS, and Tusla to provide additional support for students facing emotional and psychological challenges related to bullying.
- **Links with the Local Community:** We engage with local organisations. partnerships and youth groups, fostering a sense of belonging and inclusivity beyond the school environment.
- **Parent and Guardian Involvement:** Parents and guardians are essential partners in the bullying prevention process. We encourage open communication between home and school, ensuring parents are informed about school policies and are involved in the resolution of bullying issues. Our Home School Liaison Teacher maintains regular contact with families and coordinates weekly workshops and support sessions, empowering parents with practical strategies to support their child's social and emotional development both at home and in school.

Policy and Planning

Clear and consistent policies are essential to the effective implementation of bullying prevention strategies. At St. John's, we have a comprehensive framework in place to guide the entire school community in addressing bullying and fostering a safe, respectful, and positive learning environment.

- **Bi Cineálta Policy:** Our school follows the Bi Cineálta procedures to prevent bullying behaviour, ensuring that respect, kindness, and inclusivity are at the core of our school culture. This policy is regularly reviewed and updated to reflect evolving best practices in bullying prevention.
- **Code of Positive Behaviour and Acceptable Use Policies:** Our Code of Positive Behaviour outlines expectations for student behaviour, while our Acceptable Use Policy provides guidelines for responsible and respectful use of technology, reducing the risk of cyberbullying.
- **Child Safeguarding and Protection Procedures:** Designated staff members are trained and aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons under child protection guidelines.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** We monitor and evaluate bullying incidents through regular surveys, providing valuable data that helps us assess the effectiveness of our strategies. We adapt our approach as necessary to ensure continuous improvement.
- **Professional Development:** We provide ongoing professional development opportunities for staff, ensuring they are equipped with the skills and knowledge to effectively prevent and address bullying.

By addressing bullying prevention through these four interconnected pillars, St. John's Education Centre ensures that every student is given the tools and support they need to thrive in a safe and respectful environment.

Addressing Bullying Behaviour

At St. John's Education Centre, addressing bullying is a shared responsibility that involves management, staff, students, and parents/guardians. Our approach is guided by the principles outlined in the *Bí Cineálta* procedures and our commitment to fostering a safe, inclusive, and respectful learning environment.

Management Committee Role and Responsibilities

The Management Committee plays a central role in supporting the Center's anti-bullying efforts. Responsibilities include:

- Ensuring staff, students and parents are equipped to address bullying effectively.
- Providing time, training and resources for the implementation of **the Bí Cineálta** Anti-Bullying Policy.
- Establishing and maintaining strong supervision and monitoring structures.
- Supporting staff and the Education Programme Leader in managing reported cases.
- Undertaking an annual review of the policy and its implementation by the school.

School and Staff Role and Responsibilities

At St. John's, we are committed to providing a safe, respectful, and supportive learning environment. Our anti-bullying ethos is central to this commitment and we take proactive measures to prevent bullying and address incidents when they arise. Our approach includes:

- **Proactive Measures:** We implement programmes, structures and support systems to foster a positive school culture and ensure all students and staff feel safe and valued.
- **Student and Parent Involvement:** Students and parents are included in decisions about resolving bullying incidents.
- **Regular Policy Reviews:** We review our anti-bullying policies regularly with input from students, parents/guardians and staff.
- **Fair and Consistent Responses:** All incidents of bullying will be addressed equitably and in a timely manner.

Bullying undermines the quality of education and the Center's environment. Our goal is to prevent bullying through effective classroom management, vigilant monitoring and a clear focus on respect, tolerance and inclusion.

All staff at St. John's play an integral role in creating a safe, positive learning environment. Our staff responsibilities include:

- **Modelling Respectful Behaviour:** Staff will model and promote appropriate behaviour, good manners and respect.
- **Whole-School Approach:** A shared understanding of bullying ensures consistency in addressing incidents across the school.
- **Vigilant Monitoring:** Teachers, administrators and all staff monitor classrooms, corridors, and other school spaces for signs of bullying.
- **Collaborative Responsibility:** All members of St John's Education Centre share the responsibility to prevent and address bullying.

When bullying occurs, the Centre will:

- **Reassure and listen:** Ensure that the student experiencing bullying feels heard, supported, and safe.
- **Prioritise privacy and sensitivity:** Maintain confidentiality and handle all communications with the utmost sensitivity.
- **Consider the context:** Take into account the age, developmental stage and individual needs of those involved.
- **Take prompt action:** Address the situation quickly and appropriately to prevent further harm.
- **Consult with the student**: Engage the student affected by the bullying to understand their perspective and to collaboratively explore how best to resolve the issue.
- **Keep parents informed**: Maintain open lines of communication with parents throughout the process to ensure transparency and partnership in resolving the situation.

By working together, we ensure that St. John's remains a safe and nurturing environment for learning and personal development.

Students' Role and Responsibilities

At St. John's Education Centre, we believe that students are key partners in creating and maintaining a safe, respectful and inclusive learning environment. A strong and supportive school community relies on each individual taking responsibility for their behaviour and interactions with others. We actively promote personal growth, empathy and mutual respect - qualities that are essential in preventing and responding to bullying.

Expectations of Students

All students are expected to:

- Show respect for themselves and for others, regardless of differences in background, ability, identity or opinion.
- Demonstrate kindness, compassion and tolerance in their daily interactions.
- Understand that bullying—whether physical, verbal, relational or online—is never acceptable and goes against the values of St. John's.
- Be proactive in creating a positive social atmosphere by including others and promoting respectful peer relationships.

Understanding the Dynamics of Bullying

Bullying is often a group phenomenon. It may begin between two individuals but quickly involves others - whether actively or passively. Recognising the various roles students may play in bullying scenarios is essential:

- **Assistants**: Actively participate in the bullying by helping or joining in with the negative behaviour.
- **Reinforcers**: Provide encouragement to the person bullying by laughing, watching or spreading rumours - even if they don't directly take part.
- **Outsiders**: Choose not to get involved, often staying silent or walking away. While not actively harmful, this response can enable the behaviour by signalling passive acceptance.
- **Defenders**: Take a stand against bullying by supporting the targeted student, offering comfort, and reporting the incident to a trusted adult.

At St. John's, we aim to shift as many students as possible into the role of **Defender**, fostering a climate where students feel responsible for one another's wellbeing and confident in speaking up.

Why Students May Stay Silent

We understand that many students witness bullying but may hesitate to act for several reasons:

- Fear of retaliation or becoming the next target.
- Uncertainty about what to say or do in the moment.
- Belief that adults may not take action.
- Misunderstanding that reporting bullying is the same as 'snitching' or being a 'rat' or 'grass'.

Empowering Students to Act

Through our Anti-Bullying Policy and Wellbeing Programme, students are taught how to:

- **Recognise** the signs of bullying, in themselves and in others.
- **Reject** bullying behaviour by choosing not to support or engage in it.
- **Report** incidents to a trusted staff member, knowing they will be taken seriously and handled with sensitivity.

We reinforce the message that reporting is not 'telling tales' or 'snitching' - it is an act of courage and a vital step toward keeping everyone safe. Students are also encouraged to look out for peers who may be vulnerable or socially isolated and to offer support whenever possible.

Parents'/Guardians' Role and Responsibilities

Parents and guardians are key partners in supporting their child's experience at St. John's. They are often the first to be made aware of bullying and play a vital role in initiating the Centre's response. Parents are encouraged to:

- Remain calm and adopt a problem-solving approach.
- Collect relevant information.
- Contact the Centre promptly if bullying is suspected.

Procedures for Reporting and Investigating Bullying

General Guidelines

In line with our ethos that "**If you don't report it, you support it**," all students are encouraged to report incidents of bullying to any staff member.

- All reports will be documented, investigated promptly and addressed fairly.
- Serious cases will be referred to the Education Programme Leader and Core Team.
- A calm, constructive and solution-focused approach will be used throughout.

Investigation Process

All reports - no matter how minor - will be taken seriously and managed in line with our anti-bullying policy.

- **I**nterviews will be conducted by appropriate staff (e.g. the Programme Leader or designated teacher), either individually or collectively, in a safe and private setting.
- Staff will gather detailed information using the "5Ws and How" approach: Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How.
- Students involved will be asked to complete a written **Bullying Report Form** (see Appendix). Additional written statements may also be gathered and attached to the Report Form.
- Interviews will be sensitive and uphold the rights and dignity of all involved.
- Students will be reassured that reporting bullying is responsible behaviour—not "telling tales."
- Parents/guardians will be informed as appropriate. In circumstances where a student expresses concerns about parents/guardian being informed, St John's will develop an appropriate plan to support the student and how their parent/guardian will be informed.
- Follow-up meetings will be held with all parties to monitor progress and resolution.
- Records will be kept of all incidents and of the procedures that were followed

Response to Bullying Behaviour

When bullying is identified, St. John's will:

- Listen to the student being bullied and offer reassurance.
- Respond with sensitivity and consideration for the age and needs of those involved.
- Develop a plan to inform parents where appropriate, especially if a student has concerns about this step.

Depending on the severity and frequency of the behaviour

- **Minor incidents** may result in a verbal warning and restorative conversation to increase understanding and empathy.
- **Persistent behaviour** will involve parent/guardian meetings and appropriate sanctions.
- **More serious cases** (e.g. physical assault or repeated harassment) will be referred immediately to the Programme Leader and the Management Committee. Further disciplinary measures may be taken and outside agencies involved where necessary.

Additional Supports

- Victims and perpetrators may be referred for counselling or support programmes.
- If bullying is found to be potentially abusive, the Centre will consult with Tusla (Child and Family Agency) and/or An Garda Síochána, in line *with Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.*

Special Procedures

- **Complaint Against a Staff Member:** Referred to the Programme Leader and Chairperson of the Management Committee.
- **Complaint Against the Programme Leader:** Referred to the Chairperson of the Management Committee.
- **Complaint by a Teacher Against a Student:** The teacher reports the matter to the Programme Leader.

Preventing Cyber bullying

At St. John's Education Centre, we are committed to creating a safe and supportive online environment, where students are equipped with the skills and awareness to navigate the digital world responsibly. We employ a variety of strategies to ensure online safety.
At St. John's, we teach students that all forms of bullying, including cyberbullying, are harmful and unacceptable. Our goal is to foster a respectful online community where students treat each other with kindness and empathy. To reinforce this message, all staff are familiar with the Centre's Acceptable Use Policy and the consequences of misusing school computers to cause distress to others.

For more detailed information on acceptable online conduct and the consequences of misuse, please refer to our Acceptable Use Policy (AUP), which outlines the guidelines for using technology and the internet in a responsible and safe manner.

Key Measures to Prevent Cyberbullying

- **Active supervision**: Staff are present and monitor students when they are online to ensure appropriate and safe use of technology.
- **Website evaluation**: All websites accessed by students are previewed and evaluated to ensure they align with our educational standards and are safe for student use.
- **Firewalls and filters**: Our computers are equipped with firewalls and content filters, which are regularly updated to block inappropriate content and provide a secure online experience for students.
- **Monitoring Internet Usage**: Students' internet activity is monitored through regular checks of user files, temporary files and browsing history. This helps us ensure that online behaviour aligns with our safety protocols.
- **Curriculum-based internet use**: Students have access to computers solely for academic and educational purposes, ensuring that their time online is focused on learning.

- **Digital media education**: Students are taught about responsible online behaviour and digital as part of the induction process. This empowers students to make safe, respectful decisions both online and offline.

The Parents' Response to Cyberbullying

Parents play a critical role in supporting their child's online safety and are encouraged to take the following steps:

- **Offer support and reassurance**: Comfort your child and let them know that they are not alone in dealing with the situation.
- **Preserve evidence**: Help your child keep relevant evidence for investigation, such as printing webpages, saving mobile messages, screenshots, photos or other digital media related to the incident.
- **Prevent future incidents**: Show your child how to prevent further harm by changing passwords, blocking harmful contacts and reporting abusive content to the relevant platform or service.
- **Discourage retaliation**: Make sure your child understands that responding with retaliatory messages will not resolve the situation and may escalate the issue.
- **Promote online privacy**: Encourage your child to keep personal information, such as passwords, addresses and phone numbers, private and never share them online - even with friends.
- **Emphasise trustworthy online relationships**: Teach your child never to accept a stranger as an "online friend" and to be cautious about whom they interact with online.
- **Password security**: Ensure that your child understands the importance of keeping personal passwords private and never sharing them with anyone, even friends.

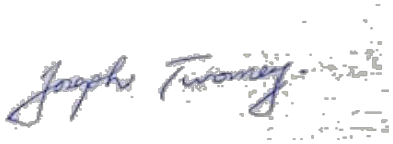
By working together, we can create a safe online environment that empowers students to thrive in their school, personal and digital lives.

Oversight

The Education Programme Leader will provide an update on bullying behaviour at each Board of Management meeting. This update will include the number of reported bullying incidents since the previous meeting, the number of ongoing incidents and the total number of incidents for the current school year. For each incident of bullying behaviour, the Programme Leader will also provide a verbal report that may include, where relevant:

- Identified trends or patterns in bullying behaviour
- Strategies implemented to address the bullying
- Wider preventative measures taken to address and reduce bullying behaviour.
- Any serious incidents that have had a significant adverse impact on a student.
- Instances where a parent has informed the Centre that their child has left the programme due to reported bullying.
- Any additional support needed from the Management Committee.
- Any urgent need to review the Bí Cineálta policy before the scheduled annual review.

Ratification: This policy was adopted by the Management Committee on



_____

Signed: (Chairperson of the management committee) Date: 25th September 2025

Signed:(Education Programme Leader) Date: 25th September 2025

Notification regarding the Management committee annual review of St John's Education Center Bí Cineálta Policy.

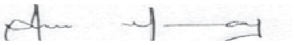
The Management committee of St John's confirms that the Management Committee annual review of the Canter's Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour and its implementation was completed at the Management Committee meeting of 25th September 2025.

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 Schools.

Signed:

(Chairperson of the management committee) Date: 25th September 2025

Signed:



(Education Program Leader) Date: 25th September 2025

Appendix 1. Bullying Report Form

Bullying Record Form
Date: _____ **Time:** _____

Staff Member: _____ **Activity :** _____

Names of those involved: _____
_____
_____

Details of Incident: _____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Action Taken (Warning, Agreement, Mediation, Sanctions, Referral, Other)
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

SIGNED: **Student:** _____

Staff Member: _____

Parent/guardian: _____

Suggestions for follow-up

_____
_____
_____