

St. Flannan's College, Ennis, Co. Clare.

Bí Cineálta Anti Bullying Policy

1. Introduction

The Board of Management of St. Flannan's College has adopted the following policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour. This policy fully complies with the requirements of *Bi 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 ham 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.

2. Aim

The aim of this policy is to ensure the School is a safe and secure environment for all. 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 is therefore fully committed to ensuring that policy and practice in the school is guided by the four key principles of the *Bí Cineálta* procedures:

- Prevention
- Support
- Oversight
- Community

This policy has been adopted within the framework of the school's Code of Behaviour and is supported by the School's:

- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Acceptable Use Policy (AUP)
- Electronic Devices Policy
- School Tour Policy
- SPHE/RSE Policy

3. Scope:

The School's Bí Cineálta Anti Bullying Policy ("the Policy") applies in the following contexts:

• The relationships between students and other students.

The relationships between students and all members of the school community.

4. Application:

The Policy applies to the following:

- · When students are on the School grounds.
- When students are travelling to and from School on school busses.
- When students are on School tours and trips.
- When students are engaged in extracurricular activities organised by the School.
- To any bullying behaviour outside School which impinges on the work or wellbeing of a student in the school
- To any behaviour that adversely affects the school's reputation or the education of any student in the School.

5. Definition of Bullying

Bullying is defined in *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* and *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* as targeted behaviour, online or offline that causes harm. The harm caused can be physical, social and/or emotional in nature. Bullying behaviour is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power in relationships between two people or groups of people in society. The detailed definition is provided in Chapter 2 of the Bí Cineálta procedures.

The core definition above sets out clear criteria to help school communities to prevent, correctly identify and address bullying among students. Alleged incidents of bullying are however, often complex and must be considered on a case-by-case basis. The central elements of the definition are further described in detail below:

> 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)
- 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.

Criminal Behaviour

Bullying behaviour can be considered criminal behaviour under certain circumstances and legal consequences can apply. The age of criminal responsibility in Ireland is 12 years.

Some online behaviour may be illegal, and students need to be aware of the far-reaching consequences of posting inappropriate or harmful content online. In cases of intimate imagery, the Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020, also known as Coco's Law, criminalises the 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 student based on their race, religion, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation or membership of the Traveller community, it may be considered a hate crime under the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989, 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 behavior.

6. Behaviour That Is Not Bullying

A once-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.

7. Culture and Environment

A positive and inclusive school culture and environment is essential to prevent and address bullying behaviour. The school environment should be a space where students and school staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported. Relationships between all members of the school community should be based on respect, care, integrity and trust.

How we create this culture and environment:

- Open communication between all members of the school community helps to foster a collaborative approach and shared responsibilities in relation to preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.
- ➤ The school leadership team influences the school culture and sets the standards and expectations for the school community when preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.
- Each member of school staff has a responsibility to develop and maintain a school culture where bullying behaviour is unacceptable and to take a consistent approach to addressing bullying behaviour.
- > Students can shape the school culture by promoting kindness and inclusion within their peer group and maintain a positive and supportive school environment for all.
- ➤ Parents/ Guardians, as active partners in their child's education, can help foster an environment where bullying behaviour is not tolerated through promoting empathy and respect.

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	March 21 st , 2025 April 2 nd , 2025	Quantitative survey Whole staff half day closure. Information sessions, PowerPoint presentation by management
	April 2025	Student Support Team - links sent to Year Heads. Draft design of bullying recording template
	April 2025	Notice boards in staff room outlining our progress in the drafting of the policy
Students	March 21 st , 2025	Meeting of Student Council focus group Meeting of Junior and Senior focus groups.
	April 2025	Student quantitative survey and QR Code Design Student Friendly Bí Cineálta
	April 2025	policy – Focus group Teachers and students
	August 2025	School Assemblies
Parents	March 2025 March 2025 May 2025 September 2025	Consultation with Parents Association Parent quantitative survey Draft Policy sent to P.A. Information Video
Board of Management		Final draft of policy to be ratified by BOM August 2025
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	August 2025	Principal/ Deputy Principal(s) to liaise with auxiliary staff and bus companies by August 2025
Date policy was approved: September 15, 2025		
Date policy was last reviewed:		

Section B Preventing Bullying Behaviour

Prevention Strategy

The Board of Management of St. Flannan's College recognises the very serious nature of bullying behavior and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of students or any member of our school community. St. Flannan's College makes it clear to all members of the school community that bullying behaviour of any kind is unacceptable, irrespective of whether it is a student, a staff member or any other person who is the subject of such behaviour.

The school community aims to prevent cyberbullying, homophobic and transphobic bullying, racist bullying, sexist bullying and sexual harassment as outlined in sections 5.5, 5.6, 5.7, 5.8 and 5.9 of the Bí Cineálta procedures. These include:

- Promotion of 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 nonthreatening environment;
 - promotes respectful relationships across the school community.
- Effective leadership.
- A school wide approach.
- A shared understanding of what bullying behaviour is and its impact.
- Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that:
 - build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils;
 - explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying behaviour including in particular homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour.
- Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils.
- Supports for staff.
- Support for students in devising and implementing anti-bullying initiatives.
- Fair and transparent Code of Behaviour
- Acceptable Use Policy
- SPHE/RSE Policy
- Electronic Devices Policy
- School Tour Policy
- Digital Wellbeing classes
- Support for students with SEN
- Support for EAL students
- Wellbeing Co-ordinator
- Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies).
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of this Bí Cineálta Anti-Bullying Policy.

The prevention and awareness of bullying behaviour is integral to this policy and students will, through both their curricular and extra-curricular programmes, be provided with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth.

- Students will be provided with opportunities to understand the causes and effects of bullying behaviour, the issue of identity-based bullying behaviour and in particular homophobic and trans-phobic bullying behaviour. This will be a component of the S.P.H.E. course. St Flannan's College recognises that the SPHE curriculum makes specific provision for exploring bullying as well as the inter-related areas of belonging and integrating, communication, conflict, friendship, personal safety and relationships. Also, that the Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) programme provides opportunities to explore and discuss areas such as human sexuality and relationships, which have particular relevance to identity-based bullying. The College will make every reasonable effort to ensure that the full potential of these programmes to combat bullying is exploited.
- > St Flannan's College recognises and promotes the potential within the teaching of all subjects and within extracurricular activities to foster an attitude of respect for all; to promote the value of diversity; to address prejudice and stereotyping and to highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour.
- Prevention and awareness-raising measures will also deal explicitly with cyber-bullying, educating students about appropriate online behaviour, how to stay safe while online and also through developing a culture of reporting any concerns about or incidents of bullying to a member of the teaching staff.
- St. Flannan's College will, in all its communications with students and their parents/ guardians, commencing with the induction of the student into the College, make every effort to highlight the importance of students reporting incidents of or concerns about bullying behaviour to a member of the teaching staff on the clear understanding that these matters are being reported in confidence. More than anything else, the combating of bullying behaviour will depend on the extent to which students note and report bullying behaviour. In this context, the happiness of students is very much dependent on the vigilance of their fellow students and their preparedness to report concerns about bullying behaviour to the teaching staff and/or school management. All teaching staff will reinforce this point to students on an ongoing basis.
- > St. Flannan's College will adopt a school-wide approach (involving management, staff, parents/guardians, students, the P.A. and members of the wider community with a connection to the College) to prevent and combat bullying behaviour.

Our engagement with Parents/Guardians includes:

- Involving Parents/ Guardians in the development of policies and practices to combat bullying behaviour.
- Informing Parents/ Guardians at information evenings of the way the College deals with bullying and that they will be provided with reliable information on how they may contribute towards combating bullying behaviour.
- The College may invite guest speakers to address Parents/ Guardians on how they may contribute towards combating bullying behaviour.

It is important that Parents/Guardians realise that anyone display or participate in bullying behavior and that anyone can be a target of bullying behaviour.

- In combating bullying behaviour, St. Flannan's College will take particular account of the needs of pupils with disabilities or with special educational needs. This will involve improving inclusion, focusing on developing social skills, paying particular attention to student induction and cultivating a school culture that respects everyone and values helping one another.
- ➤ St. Flannan's College will seek to devote a staff development session (for teaching and non-teaching staff as appropriate) each school year towards raising the awareness of bullying behaviour among staff, building an understanding of what bullying behaviour is and providing guidance on how it is best combated prevented, detected, investigated, documented (as appropriate) and resolved
- St. Flannan's College is committed to surveying the student body to identify the extent of bullying behaviour and, in so far as is possible, the students that are affected by it.
- > St. Flannan's College's RSE and SPHE programmes will specifically address the issue of bullying behaviour with each year group each year.
- St. Flannan's College will hold a Safe Internet Awareness Day and an Anti-bullying Awareness Day to highlight the whole issue of bullying behaviour and staying safe using modern technology.
- St. Flannan's College students will be encouraged to recognise bullying behaviour, bring concerns about bullying behaviour to the attention of a teacher and support vulnerable students in relation to bullying behaviour.
- Our student-friendly Bí Cineálta Anti-Bullying Policy will be displayed in poster format throughout the school and will be included in the School Journal.
- > Students will be reminded regularly to report any concerns they may have about bullying behaviour.
- The School will publish our Bí Cineálta Anti-Bullying Policy on the school website.

8. Supervision

The Board of Management of St. Flannan's College confirms that appropriate supervision and monitoring policies and practices are in place to both prevent and deal with bullying behaviour and to facilitate early intervention where possible.

- A pro-active approach is encouraged during periods of supervision.
- > Supervision is provided before and after school and during morning and lunch breaks, which includes supervision in the school canteen, assembly hall, outside seating area, handball alleys, and internal corridors.
- > Designated supervision areas will be reviewed on a regular basis.
- > Classroom design and visibility features (e.g. clear door windows) support physical safety

9. Student Support

All Year groups have a Year Head

Every base Junior class has a Tutor.

A Student Support Team, comprising of the Principal, Deputy Principals, Year Heads, Guidance Counsellors and AEN Coordinators is in place.

SNA Support: Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) offer additional support to students with special educational needs, ensuring they are included and supported within the school community.

Guidance Support: The Guidance Counsellors provide individual support to students, helping them navigate personal and academic challenges.

Student Council and Voice: The Student Council provides a platform for students to voice their opinions and contribute to school policies and initiatives

Check and Connect: A designated staff member regularly check in with the identified students to provide support and ensure their wellbeing

Get up Stand up Programme: A resilience programme offered to identified First Year students

Rainbows Programme: Held at regular intervals throughout the school year

Shona Project: Workshops focused on promoting kindness and building mindset, resilience and confidence.

Outside Agencies: Support available to our identified students from Cahms, Tusla, the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

➤ The relevant Year Head for each year group assisted by the Principal and/or Deputy Principal(s)

However, any teacher may be involved in the investigation of alleged bullying behaviour if circumstances warrant it.

Identifying if Bullying Behaviour has Occurred

Concerns about or allegations of bullying behaviour will be investigated and addressed in accordance with Section 6 *Bi Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2024.* The steps that will be taken by St. Flannan's College are as follows:

- 1. To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour, the School will consider the following questions:
- Is the behaviour targeted at a specific student or group of students?
- Is the behaviour intended to cause physical, social or emotional harm?
- Is the behaviour repeated?
- When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred, the Year Head and Deputy Principal(s) will consider: what, where, when and why? as documented in Appendix A, Alleged Bullying Incident Student Statement.
- If a group of students is involved, each student will be engaged with individually at first
- Thereafter, all students involved will be met as a group
- At the group meeting, each student should be asked for their account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's views.
- Each student should be supported as appropriate, following the group meeting
- It may be helpful to ask the students involved to write down their account of the incident(s)

- 2. When addressing bullying behaviour the School will:
 - ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour feels listened to and reassured
 - · seek to ensure the privacy of those involved
 - conduct all conversations with sensitivity
 - consider the age and ability of those involved
 - listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation
 - take action in a timely manner
 - inform parents/ guardians of those involved
- In investigating bullying behaviour or addressing bullying behaviour in any way, Year Heads may seek the assistance and support of the Principal, the Deputy Principal(s) or the Student Support Team at any time.
- When investigating and dealing with bullying behaviour the principle focus is on resolving differences and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than apportioning blame).
- The School reserves the right to investigate allegations of bullying behaviour (and to take disciplinary action where necessary) where bullying behaviour is perpetrated by a member of the school community and it impinges on the work or well-being of a student in the school, even where the bullying acts are committed outside of the school/college.
- The School reserves the right, in accordance with Section 6 *Bi Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2024* to seek the assistance of agencies such as NEPS, the HSE, and the Gardaí, where it deems such assistance is necessary to dealing effectively with bullying behaviour.

In any case, where the School deems bullying behaviour to be potentially abusive (Section 2 Bi Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post Primary Schools) it will consult with the HSE's Children and Family Services to assist it in drawing up an appropriate response or to obtain advice or to make a formal child protection report to the HSE or the Gardaí (as appropriate) in accordance with the DES Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary (revised 2023).

Where Bullying Behaviour has Occurred

Where bullying behaviour has occurred, the Parents/ Guardians of the parties will 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 Anti Bullying Policy.

In circumstances where a student expresses concern about their parents/ guardians being informed, the school may develop an appropriate plan to support the student and for how their parents will be informed.

The school will consider communication barriers that may exist when communicating with parents, for example, literacy, digital literacy or language barriers.

It is imperative that all recording of bullying behaviour incidents must be done in an objective and factual manner. The School's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour are as follows:

- Record all incidents of bullying behaviour using Appendix B, the Template for Recording Bullying Behaviour
- Document the following details:
 - Type and form of bullying behaviour (if known).
 - Where and when it took place.
 - The date of the first engagement with the students and their Parents/ Guardians.
- Document the actions and supports agreed to address bullying behaviour, (these actions and supports must include the views of students and parents)
- If the bullying behaviour is a child protection concern the matter will be addressed without delay in accordance with Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2023.

Follow up where Bullying Behaviour has occurred

Engagement with Students and Parents/ Guardians:

- ➤ The Year Head/Deputy Principal/Principal must engage again with the students involved in the bullying and their Parents/ Guardians.
- This engagement should occur no later than 20 school days after the initial contact.

Factors to Consider:

During this engagement, important factors to consider include:

The nature of the bullying behavior.

- The effectiveness of the strategies used to address the bullying.
- > The relationship between the students involved.

Review of Strategies:

- ➤ the School will document the review with students and their parents to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased and the views of students and their parents in relation to this
- the date that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased will be recorded
- any engagement with external services/supports will be noted
- ongoing supervision and support may be needed for the students involved even where bullying behaviour has ceased

Further Action if Bullying Continues:

- ➤ If the bullying behaviour continues, the school may consider using strategies from the school's Code of Behaviour to address the inappropriate behavior.
- ➤ A timeframe should be set for further engagement and follow-up until the bullying behavior ceases.

Disciplinary Sanctions:

If disciplinary sanctions are necessary, the matter will be handled between the student, their Parents/ Guardians, and the School.

If Parents/ Guardians Are Unsatisfied:

If a Parent/ Guardian is not satisfied with how the bullying has been addressed, they should refer to the school's complaints procedures, as outlined in the Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.

Complaint to Ombudsman for Children:

If a Parent/ Guardian remains dissatisfied after the complaint process, they can contact the Ombudsman for Children if they believe the school's actions negatively affected the student.

Requests to take no Action

A student reporting bullying behaviour may ask that a member of staff does nothing about the behaviour other than "look out" for them. The student 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 student, deals with the matter sensitively and speaks with the student to work out together what steps can be taken to address the matter and how their parents will be informed of the situation. It is important that the student who has experienced bullying behaviour feels safe.

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Parents/ Guardians may also make schools aware of bullying behaviour that has occurred and specifically request that the school take no action. Parents/Guardians 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.

Support for Students who experience Bullying Behaviour or Witness Bullying Behaviour:

All in-school supports and opportunities will be provided for the students who experience, witness and display bullying behaviour (see Chapter 6 of the Bí Cineálta procedures). Students may need counselling and/or opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop their friendship and social skills and thereby build resilience whenever this is needed.

This can include any combination of the following in-school supports as considered appropriate by the personnel involved:

- The Student Support Team will work closely with the student to ensure they are actively supported in the school and to engage in school based activities they enjoy.
- The student may be placed on our school's active alerts list
- The student may engage in check and connect (teacher/student mentoring programme)
- The school's Guidance Department will also put in place a program of support in conjunction with the Year Head
- The learning strategies applied within the school will also allow for the enhancement of the pupil's self-worth

Referral to Outside Agency: If students require further supports the school will liaise with the appropriate agencies to organise same. This may be for the students affected by bullying behaviour or involved in the bullying behaviour.

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
- any wider strategies to prevent and address bullying behaviour

where relevant.

This update does not contain personal or identifying information. See Chapter 7 of the Bí Cineálta procedures.

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

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

Signed: Mr. Leonard Cleary Signed: Mr. Donal Cahir

Chairperson, Board of Management Principal

Date: September 15, 2025 Date: September 15, 2025