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## Bi Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The board of management of Sapling Special school kill has adapted 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 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 ensure that all students who attend our schools are kept safe from harm and that the well-being of our students is at the fore line 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 their obligations under equality legislation, take all steps that are responsible practise to prevent their harassment of students or staff on any of our nine grounds specified: gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the travelling of the travelling community.

### Definition of Bullying Behaviour

Bullying is defined in Cineálta: Action plan on bullying and Bi Cineálta: procedures to prevent and address bullying behaviour for primary and post primary schools as:

- 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 repetitive 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 Bi Cinealta procedures.

### Types of bullying behaviour:

there are many different types of bullying behaviour. These can include the following which is not an exhaustive list.

- Disability bullying: behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of a perceived actual disability or additional need.
- Exceptionally able bullying: behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their high academic ability or outstanding talents.
- Gender identity bullying: behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their perceived or actual gender identity.
- Homophobic/transphobic bullying: Behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their perceived or actual membership of the LGBTQ+ community.
- Physical appearance bullying: behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their physical appearance. Students who “look different” can be mocked or criticised about the shape, size or appearance of their body.
- Racist bullying: behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their race or ethnic origin which includes membership of the travelling or Roma community. Racism is defined in the national action plan against racism 13 as “a form of domination which manifests through those power dynamics present in structure and institutional arrangement, practises, policies and cultural norms, which have the effect of excluding or discriminating against individuals or groups, based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin”.
- Poverty bullying: behaviour that intends to humiliate a student because of a lack of resources.
- Religious identity bullying: behaviour that intends to harm a student because of their religion or religious identity.
- Sexist bullying: behaviour that intends to harm a student based on their sex, perpetuating stereotypes that a student or a group of students are inferior because of their sex
- Sexual harassment: any form of unwanted verbal, nonverbal or physical conduct of sexual nature or other conduct based on sex which affects the dignity of the student

Behaviour that is not bullying behaviour:

- Disagreement between students is not considered bullying unless it involves deliberate and repetitive attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.
- Behaviour that does not fall within the definition of bullying will be addressed separately under the school’s code of behaviour.

It should be noted that as Saplings is a school for children with Autism and Complex Needs, the staff, parents and Board of Management recognise that most of our students do not have the intent to bully. The students in our school have social communication difficulties which may make them communicate their needs through behaviours that can hurt themselves or others. These behaviours are not deliberate or planned and are an automatic response which they cannot control. These behaviours should be dealt with in accordance with the school’s Behaviour Support Policy. Any such behaviour will be assessed by the Behaviour Analyst, Principal and Teacher using a comprehensive functional assessment which will, if appropriate, assess if the behaviour meets the specified criteria for bullying as outlined in this policy. It is also important that the

effects of these behaviours on other students should be addressed, and protocols established to deal with same.

**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/reviews of this policy.

	Date consulted	Method of consultation
School Staff:		Staff meeting and Pamphlet
Students:		In Class lessons (Based upon child friendly slides and Posters in school environment)
Parents:		Parent/Guardian Pamphlet Draft Policy circulated to parent body
Board of Management		Initial consultation and sharing of draft policy Ratification of new policy
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers		Bí Cineálta Policy uploaded on school website

Date policy was approved:

Date policy was last reviewed:

**Section B: Preventing Bullying behaviour**

This section sets out the prevention strategies that will be used by the school. These include strategies specifically aimed at preventing online bullying behaviour, homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour, racist bullying behaviour, sexist bullying behaviour and sexual harassment as appropriate (See chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures).

*The Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice* provides the following four key areas that are essential for a holistic, whole-school approach to wellbeing promotion: Culture and Environment; Curriculum; Policy and Planning and Relationships and Partnerships. This section sets out the prevention strategies that are used by the school to prevent bullying behaviour.

### **Culture and environment:**

A positive and inclusive school culture and environment is essential to prevent and address bullying behaviour. Saplings Special School environment is a space where students and school staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported. The whole school community fosters kindness and inclusion and maintains a positive and supportive school environment for all. Parents, as active partners in their child's education, can help nurture an environment where bullying behaviour is not tolerated through promoting empathy and respect.

Relationships between all members of the school community is based on respect, care, integrity and trust. Open communication between the patron, boards of management, school staff, students and their parents help 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.

- Pleasant environment and spaces
- Good supervision
- Effective communication between home and school
- Policies continually updated
- Child centred environment
- Training in school for staff
- Integration into community
- Celebration of diversity
- Culture of pairing
- Low demand, high preference schedules to build trust
- Choice for students
- Individualised curriculum
- Culture of respect
- Respectful of environment as modelled by staff
- Inclusive culture modelled by staff
- Accepting everyone as an individual
- Respecting boundaries
- Staff model appropriate behaviour

### **Curriculum:**

- SPHE, Stay Safe and RSE curriculum individualised for each student

- Individualised education plans that work for the needs of the student
- Group work/collaboration: encourage peer respect
- Project work in JCSP curriculum
- Morning circle in classes
- Celebrating diversity
- Effective monitoring and supervision of students
- Social stories
- Modelling respectful relationships
- Teaching life skills

**Policy and planning:**

- School Ethos
- New Bí Cineálta policy/Anti bullying policy
- Student friendly Bí Cineálta poster
- Code of Behaviour policy
- Child safeguarding statement
- RSE policy
- Acceptable usage policy
- Behaviour support policy
- Children First course
- SPHE/Stay safe policy
- SSE wellbeing policy
- Teachers engaging in appropriate Teacher Professional learning (TPL)
- Working together 2024

**Relationships and partnerships:**

- Strong interpersonal relationships
- Student and parent participation
- TPL: Teacher professional learning
- Peer pairing
- Staff/student pairing
- Group work
- Building trust between staff and students
- Staff have good knowledge of students with parent support
- Excellent teamwork across the school
- Connections to the local community
- Staff team building

The school has the following supervision and monitoring policies in place to prevent and address bullying behaviour (see Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

- Code of Behaviour
- Child Safeguarding and Risk assessment policy
- Acceptable usage policy
- Scheduled supervision of yard and break times

**Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour:**

The teachers with responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour are as follows:

- The class teacher will oversee recording of bullying reports for students in their class – this includes using the procedure guidelines to investigate reports of bullying and recording bullying behaviour.
- The Behaviour Analyst will carry out assessments of behaviour as required and ensure the Behaviour Support Policy is followed if appropriate.
- The DLP/DDLP will follow up after twenty days to investigate if bullying has ceased.
- All staff will be vigilant to bullying behaviour.
- Principal will inform Board of Management of incidences of Bullying.
- Deputy Principal is available to provide up to date information and supports if needed to assist class teacher in addressing concern.

When bullying behaviour occurs, the school will:

- Ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour is heard and reassured.
- Seek to ensure the privacy of those involved.
- Conduct all conversations with sensitivity.
- Consider the age and ability of those involved.
- Listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation.
- Take action in a timely manner.
- Inform parents of those involved.

The steps that will be taken by the school to determine if bullying behaviour has occurred, the approaches taken to address the bullying behaviour and to review progress are as follows:

**Identify if bullying behaviour has occurred.**

- Two staff members can be present when engaging with children individually initially without parents' notification and presence.
- Two staff members can be present when engaging with a group of children to investigate what happened. Teacher's discretion can be used with this approach about when best to use it.
- A group meeting will provide the opportunity for the children to give 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 also be helpful to ask the students involved to write down their account of the incident.
- The Behavioural Analyst and Principal will carry out an assessment as appropriate on a behaviour if the school feels this is warranted. This assessment will look at the behaviour from a comprehensive perspective and in specific relation to the questions outlined below.

The following three questions should be considered to determine if bullying has occurred:

- 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?

If the answer to each of the questions above is Yes, then the behaviour is bullying behaviour, and the behaviour should be addressed using the Bí Cineálta Procedures.

**Where Bullying Behaviour has occurred:**

- The parents of the students involved must be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and to consult with them on the actions to be taken to address the behaviour.
- The school is obliged to fully investigate any alleged incidents of bullying which are reported by parents.
- It is important to listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation.

**Recording Bullying Behaviour:**

All bullying behaviour will be recorded on the 'Bullying Behaviour Report Form' (Appendix 1).

- A record should be kept of the engagement with all involved including the initial 'Bullying Incident Report Form' (Appendix 1).
- This will include the form and type of behaviour, where and when it took place, and the date of the engagement with students and parents.
- The actions and supports agreed to address bullying behaviour will be documented.
- The record should include the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour.
- 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.
- This will be added to the students support file.

**Follow-Up:**

- The Teacher must engage with the students involved and their parents again no more than 20 school days after the initial engagement.
- Important factors to consider as part of this engagement are the nature of the bullying behaviour, the effectiveness of the strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and the relationship between the students involved.
- The Teacher should 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 should also be recorded.
- Any engagement with external services/supports should also be noted.
- Ongoing supervision and support may be needed for the students involved even where bullying behaviour has ceased.
- If the bullying behaviour has not ceased the Teacher should review the strategies used in consultation with the students involved and their parents. A timeframe should be agreed for further engagement until the bullying behaviour has ceased.
- If it becomes clear that the student who is displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behaviour, then the schools consideration should be

given to using the strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour as provided for within the school's Code of Positive Behaviour. If disciplinary sanctions are considered, this is a matter between the relevant student, their parents and the school.

### **Complaint Process:**

- If parents are not satisfied with how the bullying behaviour has been addressed by the school, in accordance with the Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, they should be referred to the school's complaints procedures.
- If a parent is dissatisfied with how a complaint has been handled, they may make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

### **Requests no action taken:**

A student who reports bullying behaviour may ask a member of staff not to do anything and just "look out" for them due to not wanting to be identified as having told someone about the bullying behaviour. They might 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 behaviour. It must be made clear to the student that other parties may need to be informed for their welfare.

Parents may also make the school aware of bullying behaviour and specifically request that no action is to be taken by the school. Parents should put this in writing to the school. However, schools may decide that based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour through the Bí Cineálta Procedures and/or the Code of Behaviour where appropriate.

### **Determining if the bullying behaviour has ceased:**

The Teacher must engage with the students and parents involved no more than 20 school days after the initial discussion to review progress. Factors to consider in the review include:

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

Ongoing supervision of both the student experiencing bullying behaviour and the student displaying bullying behaviour may be required as well as continued support. It can take time for relationships to settle and for supports to take effect. In some cases, relationships may never be restored to how they were before the bullying behaviour occurred.

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

Where it becomes clear that the student who is displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behaviour, and then the school should consider using the strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour as provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

If disciplinary sanctions are considered, this is a matter between the relevant student, their parents and school.

The school will use the following approaches to support those who experience, witness and display bullying behaviour: A school is not expected to deal with bullying behaviour that occurs when students are not under the care or responsibility of the school. However, where this bullying behaviour has an impact in school, schools are required to support the students involved. Where the bullying behaviour continues in school, then school can deal with it in accordance with Bí Cineálta Procedures.

It is important for staff to be fair and consistent in their approach to address bullying behaviour. Both the student who is experiencing bullying behaviour and the student who is displaying bullying behaviour need support. Engage with the student who is experiencing bullying without delay. School staff should identify the supports needed for the student who is displaying bullying behaviour to better manage relational difficulties.

It is important that a student's agency is not decreased further by adults deciding what will happen next without listening to the student and involving them in deciding on the actions that will be taken.

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

- Ensure 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 view 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 of those involved.

Parents of both parties involved must be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and to consult with them on the actions to be taken to address the behaviour as outlined in the school's Bí Cineálta Policy. In circumstances where a student expresses concern about their parents being informed, the school should develop an appropriate plan to support the student and for how their parents will be informed.

**Supports:**

The school may seek the support of any of the following when working with students affected by bullying –

- NEPs
- Oide
- Webwise
- National Parents Council
- Dublin City University (DCU) Anti Bullying Centre
- Tusla

**Section D: Oversight:**

The principal will present an update on bullying behaviour at each board of management meeting.

This update will include the number of incidents of bullying behaviour that have been reported since the last meeting, the number of ongoing incidents and the total number of incidents since the beginning of the school year.

Where incidents of bullying behaviour have occurred, the principal will also provide a verbal update which will include, where relevant, information relating to trends and patterns identified, strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and any wider strategies to prevent and address bullying behaviour where relevant. This update does not contain personal or identifying information.

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:   
(Chairperson of board of management)

Date: 30/9/25

Signed:   
(Principal)

Date: 30/09/2025

**Appendix 1**  
**Bullying Behaviour Recording Sheet**

**1. Name of student being bullied and class group**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Name(s) and class (es) of student(s) engaged in bullying behaviour**

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**3. Source of bullying concern/report (tick relevant box(es))\***

**4. Location of incidents (tick relevant box(es))\***

Student concerned	
Other Student	
Parent	
Teacher/SNA	
Other	

Playground	
Classroom	
Corridor	
Toilets	
School Bus	
Out-of -school	
Other	

**5. Name of person (s) who reported the bullying concern**

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**6. Type of Bullying Behaviour (tick relevant box (es)) \***

Physical		Gender-identity bullying	
Verbal		Extortion	
Damage to personal property		Written Bullying	
Exclusion/Isolation		Relational Bullying	
Cyber – Bullying		Other (specify)	
Intimidation			

**7. Where behaviour is regarded as identity-based bullying, indicate the relevant category:**

Homophobic	Disability/SEN related	Racist	Membership of Traveller community	Other (specify)
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Homophobic	Disability/SEN related	Racist	Membership of Traveller community	Other (specify)

**5. Brief Description of bullying behaviour:**

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**6. Impact of bullying behaviour:**

**7. Details of actions taken:**

**Signed \_\_\_\_\_ (Relevant Teacher/SNA)**

**Date \_\_\_\_\_**

**Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal/Behaviour Analyst \_\_\_\_\_**