



St. Margaret's National School

School Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of St. Margaret's National School has adopted the following policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

This policy fully complies with the requirements of *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2024*.

The board of management acknowledges that bullying behaviour interferes with the rights of the child as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. We all, as a school community, have a responsibility to work together to prevent and address bullying behaviour and to deal with the negative impact of bullying behaviour.

We are committed to ensuring that all students who attend our school are kept safe from harm and that the wellbeing of our students is at the forefront of everything that we do. We recognise the negative impact that bullying behaviour can have on the lives of our students and we are fully committed to preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.

We confirm that we will, in accordance with our obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the harassment of students or staff on any of the nine grounds specified: gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.

We confirm that we will take all steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent all bullying or harassment of our students in whatever form and however motivated.

Catholic schools have a distinctive understanding of the human person, recognising that every person is created in God's image and likeness and has inherent dignity as a child of God. This is the basis for ensuring that everybody in our school is treated with respect and care, in accordance with the Catholic Schedule.

As a Catholic school, we are committed to respecting the dignity of every individual. No human person is to be devalued and everybody has a part to play in the school community, regardless of

difference.

Definition of bullying

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

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

The core elements of the definition are further described below:

> Targeted behaviour

Bullying is deliberate, unwanted behaviour that causes harm to others, and where the 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 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 198911, and those engaging in such behaviour may face criminal charges. If bullying behaviour involves sexual harassment or sexual assault, this may also be considered criminal behaviour.

An Garda Síochána is the appropriate authority to investigate alleged criminal behaviour.

When bullying behaviour becomes a child protection concern

Section 10 of the Children First Act, 2015 places a statutory obligation on schools, as a “provider of a relevant service” to ensure, as far as practicable, that each child attending the school is safe from harm while attending school or otherwise participating in school activities.

Teachers registered with the Teaching Council are Mandated Persons under the Children First Act. They have a legal obligation under the Act to report harm of children that meets or is above a defined threshold to Tusla, and also to assist Tusla if requested, in assessing a concern which is the subject of a mandated report. If the concern does not reach the threshold for mandated reporting, but a teacher feels that it is a reasonable concern about the welfare or protection of a child, a report should be made to Tusla under the Children First National Guidance. The Children First National Guidance applies to everyone. All school staff and volunteers must report reasonable concerns to Tusla.

The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (Revised 2023) provide that all school staff should report reasonable concerns to the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) who may take advice and/or report the concerns to Tusla. If the staff member is a registered teacher and the concern is at or above the threshold of harm at which a mandated report must be made the concern shall be submitted as a mandated report to Tusla jointly by the DLP and the registered teacher. See Chapter 5 of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (Revised 2023).

The Children First Act defines harm as assault, ill-treatment, neglect or sexual abuse and covers single and multiple instances.

The threshold of harm is reached where the mandated person believes that a child's health, development or welfare have been, or are being seriously affected, or are likely to be seriously affected.

The Children First National Guidance document 2017 is the national, overarching guidance with regard to child safeguarding. The Guidance provides that in cases of serious instances of bullying where the behaviour is regarded as possibly abusive, a referral may need to be made to Tusla or An Garda Síochána as appropriate.

Generally, bullying behaviour can be addressed without the involvement of Tusla. However, bullying behaviour may become a child protection concern when it results in significant physical or emotional harm, or where it becomes a persistent and severe problem and

measures taken to address it are not effective.

In determining when bullying behaviour should be reported to Tusla the following factors should be considered:

- the impact on the child
- protective/appropriate action taken by the parents
- protective/appropriate action taken by the school
- engagement of child/family with support services such as NEPS

If there is doubt about whether bullying behaviour is a child protection concern schools should contact Tusla's social work department for advice. This will enable the social worker to explore the situation with school staff and provide advice on the best course of action.

Click here for more information on the Department's Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools¹²:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/fe465-child-protection-procedures-for-primary-andpost-primary-schools-2017/>

How bullying behaviour occurs

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

Direct bullying behaviour:

Physical bullying behaviour:

> Physical bullying behaviour includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping students. It may also take the form of severe physical assault. While students can often engage in "mess fights" they can sometimes be used as a disguise for physical harassment or inflicting pain.

> Personal property can be a focus of attention for bullying behaviour. This may result in damage to clothing, mobile phone or other devices, schoolbooks and other learning material or interference with a student's property. The contents of school bags and pencil cases may be scattered on the floor. Items of personal property may be defaced, broken, stolen or hidden.

Verbal bullying behaviour:

> Continual name-calling directed at a student which hurts, insults or humiliates the student should be regarded as a form of bullying behaviour. Often name-calling of this type refers to physical appearance; for example, size or clothes worn or gender identity. It can also refer to a student's accent, distinctive voice characteristics, academic ability, race or ethnic origin.

Written bullying behaviour:

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

Extortion

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

Indirect bullying behaviour:

Exclusion

> Exclusion bullying behaviour occurs where a student is deliberately and repeatedly isolated, excluded or ignored by a student or group of students.

Relational

> Relational bullying behaviour occurs when a student's attempts to socialise and form relationships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined. Common forms include control: "Do this or I won't be your friend anymore"; a group of students ganging up against one student; non-verbal gesturing; malicious gossip; spreading rumours about a student; giving a student the "silent treatment"; and the deliberate manipulation of friendship groups to make someone unpopular.

Online bullying behaviour:

Online bullying behaviour (cyberbullying) is carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as text or direct messaging/instant messaging, social media platforms, e-mail, apps, digital gaming sites, gaming consoles, chatrooms and other online technologies.

This form of bullying behaviour can include:

- sending or sharing nasty, insulting, offensive, and/or intimidating messages or images via text messages, emails, direct messages or other websites or apps
- posting information considered to be personal, private and sensitive without consent
- making and/or participating in fake profiles on a social network to impersonate and/or humiliate other students
- excluding or disrupting access to a student on purpose from online chat groups, access to accounts or from an online game

Even though a message may be posted online just once by a student it can be considered bullying behaviour as it may be seen by a wide audience where it is intended to be shared or has a likelihood of being shared multiple times and is thus repeated.

As online bullying uses technology to carry out bullying behaviour and does not require face-to-face contact it can occur at any time. Many types of bullying behaviour can be facilitated through online bullying. In many cases online bullying can relate to an “offline” experience with someone known to the student. This type of bullying may involve forms of sexual exploitation including but not limited to, sextortion and the non-consensual sharing of intimate images. The sharing or threatened sharing of images without consent is a criminal offence.

Where bullying behaviour can occur

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

Inside School

School physical environments can have a significant influence on social relationships among students and can impact on the ability of school staff to effectively prevent and address bullying. Well-designed school environments play a vital role in preventing bullying behaviour and promoting inclusion, positive relationships, and a safe and supportive learning environment.

School yard: Bullying behaviour can take place in the school yard. School grounds with hidden or obscure parts may provide an environment where bullying behaviour is more likely to occur. Many common school yard games present opportunities for bullying behaviour because of their physical nature. Continuing provocation may lead to a physical fight and in some cases the student experiencing bullying behaviour may appear to be the aggressor as they give vent to their frustration.

In the classroom: Bullying behaviour can take place in class. It may occur subtly through glances, looks, sniggers or may take the more overt form of physical intimidation or deliberate isolation. Bullying behaviour may also occur between class periods when the students or the teacher moves.

Other areas: Bullying behaviour can take place in other areas such as toilets, corridors, cloakrooms, hall.

Outside School

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, schools should deal with it in accordance with their Bí Cineálta policy. See Section 6.2 of these procedures.

Coming to and from school: Bullying behaviour can occur in the area immediately outside the school, the local shops and the wider local area. Bullying behaviour can take place at the bus stop or on the journey to and from school whether the students are walking, cycling or on school buses.

Bullying behaviour can also take place in organised clubs and groups outside of school such as sports clubs.

Online bullying (cyberbullying) behaviour, along with all other types of bullying behaviour, can cause significant harm and can have a lasting impact on students who experience this behaviour. Access to technology means that online bullying behaviour can happen anytime, and the student's home is no longer a safe place. The nature of these technologies means that digital content can be shared and seen by a very wide audience almost instantly and the content is almost impossible to delete permanently.

Types of bullying behaviour

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

- **disablist bullying behaviour:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of a perceived or 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 (LGBTQ+) 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 Traveller or Roma community. Racism is defined in the National Action Plan Against Racism¹³ 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”¹⁴

- **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, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature or other conduct based on sex which affects the dignity of the student

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	Staff meeting 8 th January	Staff Meeting Staff questionnaire
Students	In class lessons on anti-bullying	Gardaí talk on Cyber bullying Google forms pupil questionnaire Pupil friendly policy
Parents	20 th January	Newsletters Parent survey
Board of Management	22 nd January	BOM meeting
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	n/a	n/a
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 this school to address all forms of bullying behaviour, in whatever form and however motivated, including online

bullying behaviour, homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour, racist bullying behaviour, sexist bullying behaviour and sexual harassment. (see Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

In developing the preventative strategies which this school will use to prevent all forms bullying behaviour, we come from the context of our Catholic ethos, where inclusivity permeates our school in a real way.

This school takes positive steps to ensure that the culture of the school is one which welcomes a respectful dialogue and encounter with diversity and difference by ensuring that prevention and inclusivity strategies are given priority and discussed regularly at our board of management and staff meetings.

The dignity and the wellbeing of the individual person is of paramount our concern in Christian response. This school will listen closely to and dialogue with parents, thereby building a relationship of mutual understanding, respect, trust and confidence." "In continuing to develop prevention strategies, this school will listen to young people and parents, to help establish their particular context and needs. Frequent periods of reflection and further engagement by the school, young people and parents, will be used to discern appropriate supports for young people in this school and to help inform future prevention strategies.

Culture and Environment: We strive to :

- Create a school culture where bullying behaviour is unacceptable and a consistent approach to addressing bullying behaviour is utilized ie. culture of kindness, use of Restorative Practices and processes (RP Qs/chats, RP Circles, RP Meetings, RP Conferences, RP Agreements/Action PLAN.
- Involve parents as active partners in fostering an environment where bullying behaviour is not tolerated.
- **Support the idea that our school is a telling environment.**
- Promote the concept of a **trusted adult** – stay safe linkage – who to tell.
- Create **safe spaces** in our school building and yards – visibility
- Incorporate artwork and signs to promote our school values – creation of a school charter promoting rights – equality, inclusion and respect.
- Encourage a sense of belonging with ownership over their own space through art and creativity.
- Create a positive school culture and climate which is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity; encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment; and promotes respectful relationships across the school community; a culture of kindness

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

- Staff are briefed on the uniform approach we must take to handle all reports of bullying – this is distributed to staff and a copy is displayed on the Staff Room

noticeboard for ease of access also.

- Anti Bullying week activities such as Random acts of Kindness homework, Poster making, slogan making, etc
- Playground helpers – students in higher classes volunteer to support younger classes on yard to help with games and positive interactions. Minders at lunchtime also.
- Child Friendly Anti- Bullying Policy was formed with pupil and parent input and is distributed to parents, children and staff to discuss. This policy outlines various ways to tell.
- Parents receive information at times regarding useful information on Anti Bullying.
- Stay safe and SPHE lessons focusing on positive behaviour form part of curricular content in all classes, use of RP Qs/chats, RP circles, RP Meetings and Conferences
- Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils.
- Class and School Charter development as well as noticeboard to promote kindness and build responsibility amongst pupils.

Curriculum (teaching and learning)

We strive to :

- Provide teaching and promote learning which is collaborative and respectful, fostering inclusion and respect for diversity.
- Display a shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact.

Ways in which we work to achieve this:

- Ensuring clarity among the school staff on what we are currently working to achieve across the 4 areas of the Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice
- Teach SPHE and RSE content which fosters student's well-being and self confidence as well as promoting personal responsibility for their own behaviours and actions.
- Engage in continued CPD in the area of Restorative Practice, teach and model RP questions, chats, circles
- Model respectful behaviour towards colleagues, pupils and visitors in our school environment.
- Promotion of a culture of kindness - explicitly teaching what this looks like
- Promotion of knowledge and self-development of the five ways to wellbeing - connect, take notice, be active, keep learning, give
- Curricular and Extra-curricular activities can help to develop a sense of self-worth, working together, inclusion and respect.
- Students are given regular opportunities to work in small groups with peers, which can help build a sense of connection, belonging and empathy.

- Acknowledgment of our diverse school population – celebrating diversity and culture in our school through art, displays, photographs, international events.
- Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying.
- Supports for staff;
 - Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies); and
 - On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

Policy and planning

The aim of St. Margaret's National School's Bi Cinealta policy is

- To raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with school management, teachers, pupils, parents/guardians.
- To promote a school ethos which encourages children to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To ensure appropriate supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of school activity are kept under observation.
- To develop procedures for noting, investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To implement a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and for those involved in bullying behaviour.
- To work with appropriate agencies in countering all forms of bullying and promoting anti bullying behaviour.

The Acceptable Use Policy, Supervision policy, Special Education Policy and Code of Behaviour all support the implementation of the Bi Cinealta policy.

Effective leadership is a key component with Principal (DLP), Deputy Principal (DDL), and the Assistant Principal II postholder focused on supporting the implementation of this policy.

Relationships and Partnerships

- Interpersonal connections are supported through a range of formal and informal structures such as our parents' association and our various student committees and groups.
- Age and stage appropriate awareness initiatives that engage the student body in looking at their own behaviour – promoting acts of kindness and friendship, being an active help to others and looking at the causes of and impact of bullying

during SPHE lessons.

- Conducting workshops and seminars for students, staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of bullying.
- Encouraging peer mentoring and peer support
- Supporting active participation of students in school life and active participation of parents in school life also.
- Engaging parents and students in actively contributing to the formation of a Child Friendly Anti Bullying Policy to make them active participants in promotion of and discussion of useful ways to identify and reduce bullying behaviour and highlight procedure and how to deal with it if it does occur.

Preventing cyberbullying behaviour

Technology and social media have provided many positive opportunities for entertainment, social engagement and education. Technology is a part of life that can impact even the youngest members of society. However, the increase in the use of technology can lead students becoming increasingly vulnerable to cyberbullying or unacceptable online behaviour.

St. Margaret's N,S proactively addresses these challenges by promoting digital literacy, digital citizenship, and fostering safe online environments. Strategies to prevent cyberbullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- implementing the SPHE curriculum
- implementing the Digital Media Literacy curriculum which teaches students about responsible online behaviour and digital citizenship
- having regular conversations with students about developing respectful and kind relationships online
- developing and communicating an acceptable use policy for technology referring to appropriate online behaviour as part of the standards of behaviour in the Code of Behaviour
- promoting or hosting online safety events for parents who are responsible for overseeing their children's activities online
- holding an Internet safety day to reinforce awareness around appropriate online behaviour

The digital age of consent is the minimum age a user must be before a social media or internet company can collect, process and store their data. **In Ireland the digital age of consent is 16.**

It is important for their child's safety, that parents are aware of their children's use of technology including smartphones and gaming consoles.

Preventing homophobic/transphobic bullying behaviour

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

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

- maintaining an inclusive physical environment such as by displaying relevant posters
- encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities challenging gender-stereotypes
- encouraging students to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour

Preventing racist bullying behaviour

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

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

- fostering a school culture where diversity is celebrated and where students “see themselves” in their school environment
- having the cultural diversity of the school visible and on display
- encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
- encouraging bystanders to report when they witness racist behaviour
- providing supports to school staff to respond to the needs of students for whom English is an additional language and for communicating with their parents
- providing supports to school staff to support students from ethnic minorities, including Traveller and Roma students, and to encourage communication with their parents
- inviting speakers from diverse ethnic backgrounds
- ensuring that library reading material and textbooks represent appropriate lived experiences of students and adults from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds

Preventing sexist bullying behaviour

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

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

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

Preventing sexual harassment

Preventing sexual harassment requires an approach that focuses on education, awareness and clear enforceable policies. St. Margaret's NS makes it clear that there is a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment. Sexual harassment should never be dismissed as teasing or banter.

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

- teach students about healthy relationships and how to treat each other with respect and kindness
- promoting positive role models within the school community

The school has the following supervision and monitoring policies in place to prevent and address bullying behaviour:

In addition to above mentioned strategies, the school has the following in place to prevent and address bullying:

- Staff at all times endeavour to encourage pupils to show respect for each other - promotion of a culture of kindness.
- Implementation of the SPHE curriculum and use of restorative practices and processes
- Positive self-esteem is fostered among the pupils by celebrating individual differences, by acknowledging good behaviour and by providing opportunities for success.
- Digital Media Policy includes learning about responsible online behaviour and digital citizenship. AUP also developed for technology in our school.
- The school's anti-bullying policy is discussed regularly with the pupils.
- Staff are particularly vigilant in monitoring pupils who are considered at risk of bullying/ being bullied.
- All disclosed incidents of bullying are investigated thoroughly and consistently by following the correct procedure as outlined to staff and recorded on Aladdin using the template for this.
- School wide awareness raising on all aspects of bullying, supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extracurricular activities.
- Involvement of pupils in contributing to a safe school environment e.g. Well-being, diversity, friendship, cheer and anti-bullying weeks, and other activities that encourage a culture of peer respect and support, promotion of the Five Ways to Wellbeing with staff, parents, pupils and the whole school community
- Ensuring that pupils know who to tell and how to tell.
- Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place.
- Refer to appropriate online behaviour when using devices and in SPHE lessons.
- Promote online safety events or material for parents
- The listing of supports currently being used in the school and the identification of other supports available to the school e.g. www.tacklebullying.ie, www.antibullyingcentre.ie, www.fuse.ie, www.webwise.ie
- Shared folder of resources for teaching of bullying including lessons from above websites – shared Google drive for all teachers to access.
- Challenge gender- stereotypes – equal participation of all. Equal recognition.
- Foster a culture where diversity is celebrated and students “see themselves” in the school environment.
- Ensuring the library has material which reflects our diverse school population from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.
- Modelling of respectful behaviour by staff.
- Making clear that our school has a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment of any kind with enforceable policy - See Code of Behaviour.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

The class teacher, Deputy Principal and Principal.

The whole school community has a responsibility to prevent and address bullying behaviour. St. Margaret's NS will work in partnership with their patron, board of management, staff, students and their parents to develop and implement their Bí Cineálta policy.

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

Schools are not expected to address bullying behaviour that occurs when students are not under the care or responsibility of the school. However, if this bullying behaviour, including cyber bullying behaviour, continues into the school environment, schools are required to address the bullying behaviour.

Where a school is made aware of cyberbullying behaviour that has occurred while a student was not under the care or responsibility of the school, the school is required to support the student. Ways that the school could support the student include listening, showing empathy, reassuring the student, and asking the student to let the school know if the bullying behaviour occurs in school.

Where a student engages in cyberbullying behaviour when in school, the school must address the bullying behaviour.

Where a student experiences cyber bullying behaviour in school, the school must address the bullying behaviour.

If bullying behaviour occurs when students are on a school trip and are therefore under the care and responsibility of the school, the school must address the bullying behaviour.

Parents who request that the school take no action when their child is experiencing bullying behaviour, should be asked to put the request in writing. While acknowledging the parents request, schools may decide that, based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour. Section 6.3 of the Bí Cineálta procedures provides more information on this.

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 (see Chapter 6 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

Approach

The primary aim in addressing reports of bullying behaviour should be to stop the bullying behaviour and to restore, as far as practicable, the relationships of the students involved, rather than to apportion blame.

When addressing bullying behaviour teachers should:

- 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 the students 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

Identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred

To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour St. Margaret's NS should consider the following questions:

1. Is the behaviour targeted at a specific student or group of students?
2. Is the behaviour intended to cause physical, social or emotional harm?
3. Is the behaviour repeated?

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

If the answer to any of these questions is No, then the behaviour is not bullying behaviour. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

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

- if a group of students is involved, each student should be engaged with individually at first
- thereafter, all students involved should 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)

Where bullying behaviour has occurred

➤ parents are an integral part of the school community and play an important role, in partnership with schools, in addressing bullying behaviour. 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

- 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
- a record should be kept of the engagement with all involved
- this record should document the form and type of bullying behaviour, if known (see Section 2.5 and 2.7 of the Bí Cineálta procedures), where and when it took place and the date of the initial engagement with the students involved and their parents
- the record should include the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour

Follow up where bullying behaviour has occurred

- the teacher must engage with the 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 school consideration should be given to 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 the school
- if a parent(s) is not satisfied with how the bullying behaviour has been addressed by the school, in accordance with the Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and

Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools they should be referred to the school's complaints procedures

- if a parent is dissatisfied with how a complaint has been handled, they may make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children if they believe that the school's actions have had a negative effect on the student

The school will use the following approaches to support those who experience, witness and display bullying behaviour (see Chapter 6 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying involves a whole school approach. Given the complexity of bullying behaviour, no one intervention/support programme works in all situations.

- Supporting Bullied pupils:

- Ending the bullying behaviour,
- Fostering respect for bullied pupils and all pupils,
- Fostering greater empathy towards and support for bullied pupils,
- Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through annual awareness-raising programmes,
- Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through the speedy identification of those responsible and speedy resolution of bullying situations,
- Helping bullied pupils raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that help develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school).

- Supporting Bullying pupils:

- Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are not blamed or

punished and get a 'clean sheet,'

- Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are doing the right and honorable thing and giving them praise for this,
- Helping those who need to raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school),
- Using learning strategies throughout the school and the curriculum to help enhance pupils' feelings of self-worth,
- In dealing with negative behavior in general, encouraging teachers and parents to focus on, challenge and correct the behaviour while supporting the child ,
- In dealing with bullying behaviour seeking resolution and offering a fresh start with a 'clean sheet' and no blame in return for keeping a promise to reform.

Supports

These include the following:

National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)

The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) of the Department of Education provides a comprehensive, school-based psychological service to all primary and postprimary schools to support the wellbeing, academic, social and emotional development of all students. The NEPS model of service is a consultative, capacity-building model, in which there is a balance between casework and support and development work.

The psychological services which NEPS provides for students are differentiated in terms of whether the service involves the psychologist's direct involvement with the student, known as Direct Casework, or involves the psychologist working through teachers or teachers/parents to provide a psychological service for a student, known as Indirect Casework. NEPS staff can support schools with issues around bullying through this direct or indirect case work service.

In relation to bullying, NEPS psychologists often advise schools on best practice to prevent and address bullying when issues arise in schools and/or provide training in preventative initiatives, such as developing social and emotion skills, social skills, executive function skills, promoting resilience and skills in relationship repair between peers as appropriate.

More information on the supports provided by NEPS is included in the Resources Guide which accompanies these procedures.

Oide

Oide is the Department of Education's support service for schools, and it supports professional learning for primary and post-primary school leaders and teachers in recognized schools and centres for education.

Oide fosters a culture of continuing professional learning among school leaders and teachers encouraging lifelong learning, reflective and enquiry-based practices. The work of Oide contributes to school improvement by providing high quality professional learning experiences, supports and resources relating to curricular developments, broader educational goals and national priorities, such as wellbeing which includes preventing and addressing bullying.

Oide provides continuing professional learning support to schools to support implementation of these procedures. More information on the supports provided by Oide is included in the Resources Guide which accompanies these procedures.

Webwise

Webwise is the online safety initiative of the Department of Education and is co-funded by the European Commission. Webwise promotes safer, better internet use through awareness raising and education initiatives targeting teachers, students and parents. Webwise develops and disseminates resources that help teachers integrate digital citizenship and online safety into teaching and learning in their schools. Webwise also provides information, advice, and tools to parents to support their engagement in their children's online lives. With the help of the Webwise Youth Advisory Panel, Webwise develops youth-oriented awareness raising resources and training programmes that promote digital citizenship and address topics such as online wellbeing and cyberbullying.

More information on the supports provided by Webwise is included in the Resources Guide which accompanies these procedures.

National Parents Council

The National Parents Council (NPC) is the representative organisation for parents of children in early years, primary and post-primary education. NPC was established as a charitable organisation in 1985, under the programme for Government, as the representative organisation for parents of children attending school. It received statutory recognition in the Education Act 1998.

The NPC works to ensure that all parents are supported and empowered to become effective partners in their children's education. NPC seeks to achieve true partnership and deliver better outcomes for all students.

The NPC delivers online and in-person courses to support parents of both primary and post-primary students to prevent and address bullying behaviour. Details on these programmes are included in the Resources Guide which accompanies these procedures.

Dublin City University (DCU) Anti-Bullying Centre

The DCU Anti-Bullying Centre is a university-designated research centre located in DCU's Institute of Education. The centre is known globally for its research in bullying and online

safety. The Anti-Bullying Centre offers a range of modules as part of its FUSE programme for the entire school community that can be used to help to promote a positive school culture and assist in preventing and addressing bullying behaviours. Details on these programmes are included in the Resources Guide which accompanies these procedures.

Tusla

Schools should contact Tusla directly for advice in cases where it is considered that bullying behaviour is a child protection concern. See section 2.4 for guidance on when bullying behaviour becomes a child protection concern.

Contact details for Tusla are included in the Resources Guide which accompanies these procedures.

All bullying behaviour will be recorded. This will include the 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. 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*.

Section D: Oversight

The principal will present an update on bullying behaviour at each board of management meeting. This update will include the number of incidents of bullying behaviour that have been reported since the last meeting, the number of ongoing incidents and the total number of incidents since the beginning of the school year. Where incidents of bullying behaviour have occurred, the principal will also provide a verbal update which will include where relevant, information relating to trends and patterns identified, strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and any wider strategies to prevent and address bullying behaviour where relevant. This update does not contain personal or identifying information. See Chapter 7 of the *Bí Cineálta* procedures.

This policy is available 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: _____ Date: _____

(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: _____ Date: _____

(Principal)