

# **St. Thomas' JNS**

## **Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour**

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### **Policy Summary Details**

|                            |             |
|----------------------------|-------------|
| <b>Policy Title:</b>       | Bí Cineálta |
| <b>Written/Reviewed:</b>   | June 2025   |
| <b>Ratified by the BOM</b> | 3/9/25      |

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## **Introduction**

The Board of Management of St. Thomas' Junior National school has adopted the following policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

This policy fully complies with the requirements of *BI Cinealta: 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.

## **Definition of bullying**

Bullying is defined in Cinealtas: Action Plan on Bullying and Bi Cinealta: 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 Bi Cinealta procedures.

Each school is required to develop and implement a Bi Cinealta policy that sets out how the school community prevents and addresses bullying behaviour. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour that is not bullying behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

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### **Section A: Development/review of our Bí Cineálta policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour**

#### **1.1 Overview of when various members of the school community were consulted about our Bí Cineálta policy**

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                                                    | May 2025       | Half day closure - Focus group/whole staff |
| Students                                                        | May 2025       | Class discussion                           |
| Parents                                                         | May 2025       | Discussion with core group                 |
| Board of Management                                             | June 2025      | Meeting/Discussion                         |
| Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers | N/A            | Questionnaire                              |
| Date policy was approved: September 2025                        |                |                                            |
| Date policy was last reviewed: September 2025                   |                |                                            |
| Next Review due September 2026                                  |                |                                            |

### **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 Bí Cineálta Procedures):

#### **2. Preventative Strategies as Linked to the Wellbeing Framework**

##### **2.1 Culture and Environment**

We strive to create a positive and inclusive culture through :

- Promoting positive attitudes towards everyone through positive affirmations in classes and at assembly
- Focusing on positive behaviours through the implementation of our school rules and code of behaviour

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- Provision of nurture/support groups and soft starts to support children articulate their emotions and to work on social skills (including breakfast club)
- Adults model positive, respectful inclusive and tolerant behaviours
- Inclusive practices such as welcoming phrases for children from differing locations/cultures
- Aesthetically – posters, pictures and decorations all around the school as visual reminders to be kind
- A focus on kindness through kindness assignments and activities

### ***2.1.1 A telling environment as contributing to a positive culture and environment***

We seek to nurture a safe, supportive environment whereby those uninformed in bullying incidents are active opposers of bullying, as opposed to being uninformed bystander. We seek to achieve this through:

- Reinforce at assemblies the importance of telling and the importance of being kind at all time. Telling not only what has happened to you but what you have seen happen to others
- There are visual reminders all around the school reminding children to be kind
- We teach about the importance of telling through the Stay Safe Programme “Say No, Get Away, Tell Someone”
- Teachers are encouraged to allow opportunities through drama for children to practice telling role play scenarios whereby children should tell in class and at assembly
- Use of stories to highlight the importance of telling and honesty eg “The Boy Who Cried Wolf” and the “Witch that Snitched”.
- The concept of telling can be explored through a range of curricular areas, such as story, poetry, art etc,

### ***2.1.2 A positive culture and environment enhanced by safe spaces supervision and trusted adults***

We in St Thomas' JNS recognise the importance of putting structural measures in place to ensure that the children in our school feel that they work and play within a safe and well supervised space. We seek to do this by:

- Staff are made aware of hotspots and ensure that they are high on their radar when supervising, eg when football is allowed, entering and exiting the astro
- Creation of play groups inside the classroom that are encouraged to play together on yard
- Children identify trusted adults with their class teachers
- We recognise that some children find the yard too long and they cannot regulate in that environment and as such we provide a supervised play club where necessary for half of big break
- Teachers remind children of positive affirmations such as “I am loved”
- Staff seek to forge trusting relationships with children that are built on trust and honesty

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- Staff listen to children and act when a problem is reported

### **2.2 Wellbeing Framework Curriculum**

#### *2.2.1 Social Personal and Health Education*

Focus on developing self-esteem, positive self worth as well as assertive and protective behaviour through the delivery of the following programmes

- Mindful Matter (2025)
- Walk Tall resources
- RSE Education
- Stay Safe
- Activities to encourage naming a feeling (picking a colour zone)
- Mindfulness activities
- Golden Rules
- Nurture/Support room activities

#### *2.2.2 Art Drama, Religion, Physical Education*

- Empower children to express their concerns through art
- Equip children with skills to tell through the medium of drama that will empower them to handle a potential bullying situation
- Promotion of co-operation through games and teams

#### *2.2.3 Support, Nurture and Social Skills Groups*

- Children targeted through SCP and teacher observation and recommendation engage in breakfast club, after school club, yard time play club as well as social and nurture groups delivered by the SET team. The focus of these interventions is to address the social, emotional and learning needs of individual students by starting the day without demands and letting them recover from any emotional fallout the morning may have had for them.

### **2.3 Wellbeing framework – Relationship and partnerships**

#### *2.3.1 Parents, Caregivers and Relevant Adults*

- School based parental involvement activities that allow parents and staff to forge relationships with one another whilst focusing on the child through classroom based activities
- Parents Committee – we have an active parents core group who provide a strong link between parents and the school and is a key source of support to parents, staff and the HSCL teacher.
- We have a HSCL teacher who is dedicated to working closely with parents, building up relationships and working as a link between parents and staff
- Grandparents day – recognising the key role that grandparents play in the lives of children and youths

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- We make every effort to accommodate parents who have pressing worries or concerns and to resolve problems at an early stage.
- We strive to ensure that we are available to parents as quickly as possible and we communicate effectively. This includes but is not limited to informal meetings, formal meetings, Aladdin, dojo and text messages
- Parent teacher meetings, support file meetings and reviews as well as junior infant intake meetings ensure we support parents to work in partnership with us in the best interests of their child

### ***2.3.2 Positive Relationships between Staff and Children***

As a staff we strive to nurture warm, trusting, empowering relationships with the children in our school. We seek to achieve this through

- Listening to children and being honest in age appropriate ways with them
- Being consistent in our expectations
- Supporting pupils navigate their feelings
- Emphasising the importance of honesty
- Using fun joviality and calmness when interacting with children
- Helping them with their problem solving skills
- Using bespoke reward systems to acknowledge and celebrate their success
- Building up confidence and actively encouraging children to be active agents in their own words

### ***2.3.3 Positive Peer Relations amongst children***

We seek to promote positive relations among children through the following:

- Golden Rules
- We encourage children to be active agents of change – through their work on committees such as our Yellow Flag committee and through fostering a telling culture
- Yard and other activities such as inter school football tournaments and other activities such as GAA/Dance/Athletics foster team work, communication, shared experiences and a sense of belonging, leading to stronger bonds and improved social skills

### ***2.3.4 Positive relationships with members of the community***

In our school community we strive to forge relationships that allow us to appreciate and reciprocate the care, safety, interactions and engagement with the following

- Mobile Library
- Community Gardai – Santa visit every Christmas in jeep or helicopter
- Church – the second class children regularly visit the church for Mass and Communion preparation
- Senior School – we have a strong transition programme and meetings in June and September

### ***2.3.5 Outside agencies and Services***

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We engage with a range of services to learn best practices when it comes to dealing with bullying and supporting all that have been impacted by bullying. These agencies and services include but are not limited to

- School Completion Programme
- NEPS
- Zeeco
- Webwise
- Oide
- TUSLA

### **3. Preventative Strategies Aimed at Specific Types of Bullying**

#### **3.1 Online Bullying Behaviour**

- Active firewall that blocks social media and inappropriate sites
- Develop a culture of reporting concerns about online activity
- Implementation of Acceptable Usage Policy
- Making parents aware of internet safety resources

#### **3.2 Homeophobic and Transphobic Behaviour**

- Curriculum Mindful Matters/Walk Tall lessons
- Modelling of respectful behaviour to all individuals
- Lessons on Same Love Different Families (into.ie)
- Sourcing and stocking a diverse range of books
- Exposing children to different family compositions
- Developing empathetic capacities in children, reminding them we are all human with feelings
- Display of Pride Flag in school hall and engagement in activities bi annually
- We are actively working on our Yellow Flag programme for inclusion and diversity in our school

#### **3.3 Racist Bullying Behaviour**

- Reading books that focus on challenging racist behaviours such as the Smeds and the Smoos
- We are currently working on increasing our range of books that show more diversity around culture and race
- Developing empathetic capacities with children, reminding them we are all human with feelings
- Red Card Day – We will host a “show racism the red card day”
- In response to the level of tri colours on lamp posts in the community we have put a banner on our main gate stating we proudly say “NO” to racism
- We are endeavouring to be actively anti racist rather than just “not racist”

#### **3.4 Sexist Bullying Behaviour**

- Books that support and promote positive gender roles
- Promoting tolerance

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### **3.5 Harassment**

To prevent sexual harassment and inappropriate manner in junior school, we focus on broad principals of respect and appreciation of one another. We strive to achieve this through a strong, supportive school that promotes respect and trust, modelling respectful behaviours and both appreciating and respecting when someone says "no". In the context of a junior school it may be that a child is saying "no" to playing a particular game or "no" to unwanted attention. The key is teaching children that they can say no and reciprocating appropriately when he/she hears the word "no".

The school will have the following supervision and monitoring in place to prevent and address bullying behaviours (see chapter 5 Bi Cinalta Procedures):

#### **4. Support Policies/Practices (Well Being Framework)**

- Bi Cinalta Policy
- Student Friendly Bi Cinalta Policy
- Child Safeguarding
- Care Team Meetings
- Code of Behaviour
- SEN and Inclusion
- SPHE
- AUP
- Health and Safety Statement
- Intimate Care Needs

### **Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour**

**The teacher(s) with responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour is the Class teacher of pupils involved**

When bullying behaviour occurs the school will

- Ensure that the children 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 students experiencing bullying as to how best 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 (see chapter 6 of the Bi Cinalta procedures):

#### **Introduction to Section**

The primary aim for the relevant aim is investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is reasonably practicable the relationship with those parties

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involved (rather than to apportion blame). For clarity purposes, the relevant teachers in our school are the class teachers involved in the bullying incident.

Relevant teachers will seek to answer the following questions:

- Is the behaviour targeted at a specific student or group?
- Is the behaviour **intended** and fully understood to cause physical, social or emotional harm?
- Is the behaviour repeated?

If the answer to any of these questions is yes then this is bullying behaviour.

***Note: One-off incidences may be considered bullying in certain circumstances. A single hurtful message posted on social media can be considered bullying behaviour as it has a high likelihood of being shared multiple times and thus becoming a repeated behaviour***

If the answer to the above is no, then the behaviour is not bullying behaviour. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour are provided within the Code of Behaviour,

A school is not expected to deal with bullying behaviour that occurs when pupils 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 behaviour continues in school, schools should deal with it in accordance with Bi Cineaalta Policy p. 43

### **5.1 Step 1: Identifying if Bullying Behaviour has occurred**

The relevant teachers will seek to identify if bullying behaviour has occurred by answering the three following questions

- Is the behaviour targeted at a specific student or group?
- Is the behaviour **intended** and fully understood to cause physical, social or emotional harm?
- Is the behaviour repeated?

He or she will do this by adopting the following steps:

- 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 view. 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).

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- It may be helpful to obtain information from pupils not directly involved as they may have useful information to share
- The relevant teacher should open up a "Bi Cincalta investigation file" and use available template entitled "Step 1 – Identifying if Bullying has occurred" they should detail the action and outcome of this individual investigation. If the outcome of the investigation is "no" a file should be printed and placed in a locked drawer (available in principals office). If the outcome is "yes", the teacher of the child experiencing bullying behaviour should place the file in a locked drawer (principal's office).

### **5.2 Step 2 – Where Bullying Behaviour has occurred**

In cases that it has been determined by relevant teachers that bullying has occurred the following action will be taken:

- The parents of the pupil involved must be contacted at an early stage to inform the of the matter and 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 bullying behaviour as how best to address the situation.
- In listening to the students it should be borne in mind that the Bi Cincalta procedure allows for "a request to take no action" by a student. The teacher should work sensitively with the student to work out what steps should be taken to address the matter and how the parents will be informed
- Parents may also request to take no action and this must be in writing to the school. While acknowledging the parent request schools may decide, based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour.
- Using the template entitled "Step 2- Record and Address (Initial engagement with pupils and parents)" The relevant teacher should keep a record with the engagement with all involved. This record should document the form and type of bullying behaviour if known, where and when it took place and the date of the initial engagement with the students involved and their parents. The record should involve the views of the students and their parents regarding actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour.
- A copy of the document (Step 2 – Record and Address) Initial Engagement with pupils and parents should be sent to the principal who will keep the file in a secure filing cabinet in the office. This notification will also serve to notify the principal report to BoM regarding bullying in the school.
- A copy of the document (Step 2 – Record and Address) Initial Engagement with pupils and parents should be placed on the support file if in existence.
- Where relevant, the actions to stop bullying behaviour should be placed on the support file or a support file should be created

### **5.3. Step 3 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 about the engagement are the nature of bullying, behaviour, the effectiveness of the strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and the relationship between the students involved

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- The teacher should document the review with the students and their parents to determine if bullying behaviour has ceased and their views in relation to this.
- The date that it has been determined that bullying behaviour has ceased.
- Any engagement with external services/supports should also be noted
- Ongoing supervision may be needed for the students involved even when bullying behaviour has ceased
- If the bullying behaviour has not ceased the teacher should review the strategies in consultation with the students and parents. A timeframe should be agreed for further engagement until the bullying behaviour has ceased.
- The relevant teacher may engage with the principal and members of the ISM team for advice on the matter.
- If it becomes clear the behaviour continues then the schools consideration should be given to using the strategies dealing with inappropriate behaviour as provided in the Code of Behaviour.
- If the disciplinary sanctions are considered, this is a matter between the student, their parents and the school
- If the parent(s) is not satisfied with how it has been addressed in accordance with the Bi Cinealta Procedures they should be referred to the schools complaints procedure. If a parent is dissatisfied with how the complaint they may seek further address through the ombudsman for children if the schools actions have had a negative impact on the student.

The school will use the following approaches to support those individuals who experienced, witnessed and displayed bullying behaviour (see chapter 6 of Bi Cinealta Procedures) **6.1 support for those effected by bullying**

### **6.1 School Based Supports**

Opportunities will be provided by the pupils effected by bullying to be involved in activities designed to raise their self esteem and to develop friendship and social skills and to build resilience.

- Nurture/social groups
- Circle Time
- SPHE
- Referral to SCP
- Play therapy where available
- Lego Club parent involvement group
- NEPS services
- Focus on telling
- It will be impressed that they must report bullying
- Clear school rules
- Weekly assemblies

### **6.2 Outside Support (chapter 6 Bi Cinealta)**

If the bullying case requires supports that are beyond the remit of the school we will engage with outside agencies to source appropriate supports for instance, for pupils who require

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counselling or further supports the HSCL will liaise with appropriate agencies to try to organise same. This may be for pupils engaging in behaviour or impacted by it.

Other agencies that we may seek support from include:

- NEPS
- Oide
- TUSLA
- Family Resource Centre
- Webwise/Zeeko
- NCSE
- An Garda Siochana

All bullying behaviour will be recorded. This will include the type of behaviour and date of engagement with students and parents, the actions and supports agreed upon will be documented. If there is a child protection concern the matter will be dealt with through the 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 includes the number of instances 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, information relating to trends and patterns identified, strategies used to address the behaviour and wider strategies to prevent it where relevant. This update does not contain personal or identifying information (see ch 7 of B1 Circular Procedures)

This policy will be made available on the website and hard copy on request. A student friendly policy will be displayed in the school.

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed following input from the school community each calendar or as soon as is practicable after there has been a material change to any matter that policy refers to,

Signed Mary Kenny  
Mary Kenny, Chairperson

Date 3/9/25

Signed Suzanne O'Reilly  
Suzanne O'Reilly, Principal

Date: 3/9/25