Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Knockanean 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. The detailed definition is provided in Chapter 2 of the Bí Cineálta procedures.

Each school is required to develop and implement a Bí Cineálta 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.

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 selfesteem, depression, anxiety) and can have a serious and longterm 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 behavior**

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

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	20th Jan 2025 13th March 2025 28th April 2025	Feedback given at staff meeting on training received. Half Day Closure to facilitate discussion on the new Bí Cineálta procedures. Staff given time to discuss. Sharing of draft policy with staff to discuss / consult and make any amendments
Students	February 2025 May 2025	Students surveyed using questionnaire Art competition launched to design an Anti-Bullying poster that will be used for the future Student Friendly Bí Cineálta policy as per Appendix B
Parents	May 2025 June 2025	Draft policy sent to Parents' Council for viewing. Approved by Parents'Council
Board of Management	10th February 2025 7th April 2025 16th June 2025	Board meetings
Date policy was approved: 21st July 2025		
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 as appropriate.

In developing the preventative strategies which this school will use to prevent all forms of 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 concern in our 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.

Prevention of Cyberbullying behaviour (*This is not an exhaustive list*)

- Implementing the SPHE curriculum
- 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

Preventing homophobic/transphobic bullying behaviour (*This is not an exhaustive list*)

- Maintaining an inclusive physical environment
- Encouraging peer support
- Challenging gender stereotypes
- Encouraging students to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour

Preventing racist bullying behaviour (*This is not an exhaustive list*)

- Fostering a school culture where diversity is celebrated
- 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
- 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 (*This 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 (*This is not an exhaustive list)*

- Promoting positive role models within the school community
- Challenging gender stereotypes that can contribute to sexual harassment

Culture & Environment (*This is not an exhaustive list)*

- The school staff foster an atmosphere of friendship and respect, thus creating a caring, safe and positive school environment. Kindness, respect towards each individual and tolerance are advocated and promoted
- A pastoral care system operates in our school whereby teachers seek to build up a relationship of trust and confidence with their pupils with a view to preventing cases of bullying behaviour.
- Teachers are careful to act as good role-models and not misuse their authority. Moreover, they aim to be firm, clear and consistent in their disciplinary measures. Techniques based on positive motivation and recognition have been found to be most effective in promoting desired behaviour.
- The school recognises the right of parents to share in the task of equipping the pupil with a range of life-skills.
- The school takes particular care of "at risk" pupils and uses its monitoring system to provide early intervention when/if necessary and responds to the needs, fears or anxieties of individual members in a sensitive manner
- The school recognises the need to co-operate with and keep parents informed on procedures to improve relationships within the school community.
- Teachers will discuss the school's anti-bullying policy with the pupils. Teachers emphasise that that bullying behaviour is unacceptable and wrong.Each class teacher will complete at least three awareness-raising exercises per school year for each class group (*e.g. from the 'Awareness-Raising' strand of the Anti-Bullying Campaign, via its website*), pro-actively explaining the nature and variety, causes, consequences and unacceptability of bullying. At least one of these awareness raising classes will deal explicitly with cyber bullying and teachers will complete these classes at the beginning of each term.
- Pupils are helped to examine the issue of bullying in a calm rational way, outside of the tense context of particular bullying incidents. In the process they are made

more aware of the nature of bullying and the various forms that it can take.

- Pupils are made aware that the consequences of bullying behaviour are always bad for those who are targeted, even if this is not always obvious at the time.
- Pupils are encouraged to recognise, reject and report bullying behaviour, either spontaneously or through questionnaires that are regularly used in the school.
- Teachers are vigilant, respond sensitively and caringly to pupils who disclose incidents of bullying. All alleged incidents of bullying are investigated.
- The school disapproves of vulgar, offensive, sectarian or other aggressive behaviour by any of its members.
- The school recognises the role of other community agencies in preventing and dealing with bullying. In some cases it may be deemed appropriate to involve the Gardai (Junior Liaison Officer) H.S.E. or counsellors.
- The school has a clear commitment to promoting equity in general and gender equity in particular in all aspects of its functioning. Info re relevant seminars is displayed in staff room

Circle time:

- As self-esteem is the single most influential factor in determining behaviour, teachers aim to provide pupils with opportunities to develop a positive sense of worth.
- Children's self-esteem is developed through celebrating individual differences, achievements, acknowledging and rewarding good behaviour and manners and providing opportunities for success through the curriculum and other activities.
- Pupils are rewarded for effort and improvement and expectations of their performance are positive
- Teachers help pupils to develop *empathy* by discussing feelings and trying to put themselves in the place of others. Relationships with pupils are based on mutual respect and trust so that the pupils will have confidence in the school staff.

Formal School Curriculum:

- The formal curriculum of the school will also be used to educate all pupils against bullying behaviour.
- Anti-bullying issues may be raised through the school's religion programme Grow In Love. The Social, Personal and Health Education Programme, the

Stay Safe programme and the Walk Tall programme may provide opportunities for children to explore issues around keeping themselves and others safe. "We were only messing" is a phrase which could be challenged and discussed. "Altogether Now" *on Homophobic and Transphobic Bullying (4 lessons grounded in the SPHE curriculum for 5th and 6th Class teachers). Initiated under the National Action Plan on Bullying 2013.* Webwise and FUSE Anti-Bullying and Online Safety Programmes.

- In Drama pupils have opportunities to learn coping strategies and through role play they may practice using eye contact, positive body language and phrases e.g. "Please stop! Give me some space".
- English extracts may be used as stimulus for discussion.
- In S.E.S.E. the interdependence of people may be discussed.
- Physical Education: Co-operation and respect for others is promoted through team sports and non-competitive participation in sporting activities. Sporting activities provide excellent opportunities for promoting the importance of conforming and playing fairly and by the rules.
- In the area of Visual Arts pupils may be allowed to explore feelings through colour, illustrate different situations etc.
- At the teacher's discretion a "Worry Box" may be placed in the classroom. The pupils will understand that if they wish they may write a note detailing concerns they may have. This note must be signed.
- Weaving Wellbeing classes 3rd , 4th , 5th & 6th

Policy & Planning

There are a range of other policies such as the school's acceptable use policy, supervision policy, special education teaching policy and Code of Behaviour that can support implementation of a school's Bí Cineálta policy.

Relationships & Partnerships

Strong interpersonal connections are a vital part of effectively preventing and addressing bullying behaviour. These interpersonal connections are supported through a range of formal and informal

structures such as student councils, school clubs, parents' associations and student support teams. The following, which is not an exhaustive list, could be considered to strengthen relationships and partnerships between members of the school community:

- age appropriate awareness initiatives that look at the causes and impacts of bullying behaviour including those dealing with navigating friendships, identitybased bullying, racist bullying, homophobic/transphobic bullying, sexism and sexual harassment
- supporting the active participation of students in school life
- supporting the active participation of parents in school life, including those who may find it difficult or daunting to engage with the school due to being unfamiliar with the education system or due to language or cultural barriers
- conducting workshops and seminars for students, school staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of bullying
- supporting activities that build empathy, respect and resilience > encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring
- promoting acts of kindness
- teaching problem solving
- hosting debates
- Bi Cineálta Action Plan on Bullying recognises the importance of positive relationships across the whole education community

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

Appropriate supervision is an important measure to help prevent and address bullying behaviour. Knockanean NS takes all reasonable measures to ensure the safety of students and to supervise students when students are attending school or attending school activities.

The school yard is split into a Junior and Senior Yard with teachers and SNA's providing supervision at each break.

Particular care needs to be exercised by staff in the following areas;

A. It is the responsibility of individual teachers ensure your yard duty is covered if you cannot do so yourself.

B. All teachers must ensure their class have left the room before the teacher at break times.

C. It is the responsibility of individual teachers to ensure that their class is not left unsupervised in the classrooms/corridors

D. There is a collective responsibility on all teachers to ensure that there are no pupils in the corridors or classroom at break times

E. Pay particular attention to the following areas of the yard at break times –
   - Emergency door beside principal's office
   - In the area adjacent to the bike rack (pupils are not allowed in this area.)
   - Ensure pupils do not go around by the garden area.
   - Emergency exit outside Madge's office
   - The grounds of St Flannans will be explored when we move there and we will identify areas of concern where necessary

F. In relation to Acceptable Use Policy in the school the following issues need to be enforced:
   - All Internet sessions must be supervised by a teacher
   - Pupils are not allowed to use their own email accounts from school laptops/computers.
   - Pupils are only allowed bring mobile phones to school following a written request from parents. Phones then must be handed in to the class teacher in the morning before school starts and collected after school.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

- The class teacher is responsible for addressing bullying behaviour
- All teachers are responsible for reporting bullying behaviour and all SNA's are responsible for reporting any incidents of bullying behaviour to class teachers.
- The class teacher will follow up after 20 days to investigate if bullying has ceased.

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

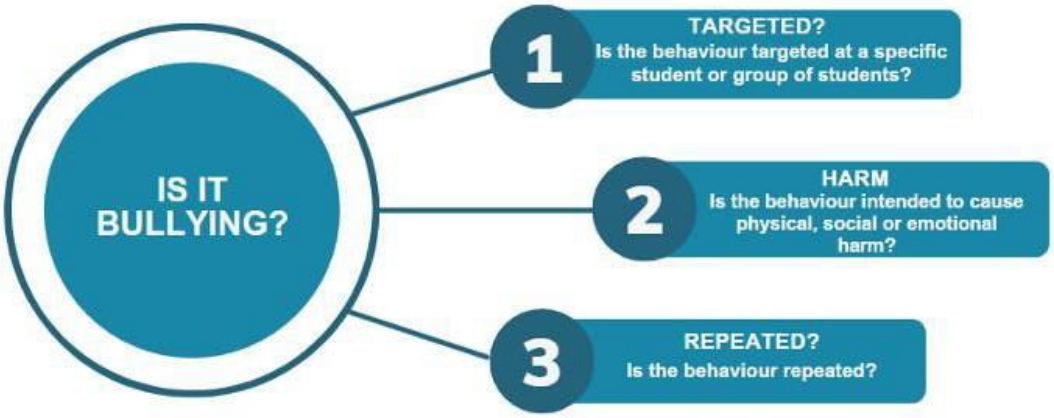
> conduct all conversations with sensitivity

> 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



If the answer to each of the questions 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 the 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.

Oide

Bí Cineálta: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

Teacher(s) investigate as per school policy. Record as per Section 6.5.

If the behaviour **IS NOT** bullying, deal with in line with your Code of Behaviour.

If the behaviour **IS BULLYING**, proceed to Step 2.

Record as per Bí Cineálta policy and Section 6.5, Bí Cinealta.

Inform parent(s) of parties involved at an early stage.

Complete agreed actions, as per your Bí Cineálta policy, monitor and evaluate.

No more than **20 school days after initial engagement**, review with student(s) and parent(s).

If bullying has ceased, continue to monitor.

If bullying has **not ceased**, review strategies, seek external support, if appropriate, and review within the agreed timeframe.

Principal must include all bullying behaviour in their update to the board.

Principal provides verbal update to the board.

Review policy, if needed.

Oide

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

Identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred

When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred the teacher should consider the following: **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 also be helpful to ask the students involved to write down their account of the incident.

Incidents can occur where behaviour is unacceptable and hurtful but the behaviour is not bullying behaviour. Strategies that deal with inappropriate behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of 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, schools should deal with it in accordance with their Bí Cineálta policy

Where bullying behaviour has occurred

- The parents of the students involved will be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and to consult with them on the actions to be taken to address the behaviour
- 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 will be kept of the engagement with all involved. This record will document the form and type of bullying behaviour, where and when it took place and the date of the initial engagement with the students involved and their parents
- The record will include the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour

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

- ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour feels listened to and reassured
- seek to ensure the privacy of those involved
- conduct all conversations with sensitivity
- consider the age and ability of those involved
- listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation
- Take action in a timely manner
- Inform parents of those involved

Requests to take no action

A student reporting bullying behaviour may ask that a member of staff does nothing about the behaviour other than "look out" for them. The student may not want to be identified as having told someone about the bullying behaviour. They may feel that telling someone might make things more difficult for them. Where this occurs, it is important that the member of staff shows empathy to the student, deals with the matter sensitively and speaks with the student to work out together what steps can be taken to address the matter and how their parents will be informed of the situation. It is important that the student who has experienced bullying behaviour feels safe.

Parents may also make schools aware of bullying behaviour that has occurred and specifically

request that the school take no action. Parents should put this request in writing to the school. However, while acknowledging the parent's request, schools may decide that, based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour

Determining if bullying behaviour has ceased

- The class teacher must engage with the students and parents involved no more than 20 school days after the initial discussion to review progress following the initial intervention. Important factors to consider as part of the review 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.
- Even though the bullying behaviour may have ceased, ongoing supervision and support may be required for both the student who has experienced the bullying behaviour as well as the student who has displayed the behaviour. 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, 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 the school.**

Recording bullying behaviour

- All incidents of bullying behaviour will be recorded. The record will 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 and their parents.
- The record will include the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour. It 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. It is important to document the date of each of these engagements and the date that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased. Any engagement with external services/supports should also be noted.
- Where a Student Support File exists for a student, schools are encouraged to place a copy of the record on the student's support file. This will assist the school's student support team, where they exist, in providing a consistent and holistic response to support the wellbeing of the students involved. Where a Student Support Plan exists, the plan should be updated to incorporate response strategies and associated supports.
- Records will be kept in a Bí Cineálta folder in pupil's file (Principal informed) and any reported cases in BOM folder in Principal's Office.
- Class Teacher should make reference to file if necessary in pupil's Log of actions.
- These records should be retained in accordance with the school's record keeping policy and in line with data protection regulations.

The school will use the following approaches to support those who experience, witness and display bullying behaviour.

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- Anti Bullying Week, Friendship Week etc…
- 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

Supporting Pupils who witnessed bullying behaviour

- Reassure them that they are not in trouble for witnessing the bullying.
- Explain that bystanders have the power to help.
- Encourage them to support the victim by being kind and inclusive.
- Teach them safe ways to stand up against bullying, such as speaking up or seeking help from a trusted adult.
- Reinforce that bullying is never acceptable and that everyone deserves respect

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.

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)