

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

### **Our commitment**

The Board of Management of Mary Queen of Ireland NS has adopted this policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour. This policy is based on *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. As a school community, we have a shared responsibility to work together to prevent and address bullying behaviour and its negative impact.

We are committed to keeping all students safe from harm and placing their wellbeing at the forefront of everything we do. We recognise the negative impact that bullying behaviour can have on students' lives and are fully committed to preventing and addressing it.

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

### **Definition of bullying**

Bullying is defined in *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* and the *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address targeted behavior 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.

This policy sets out how the school community prevents and addresses bullying behaviour. Strategies for dealing with inappropriate behaviour that is not bullying are provided in the school's Code of Behaviour.

### **Section A: Development/ Review of the policy**

All members of the school community were provided with an opportunity to contribute to the development and review of this policy. The original consultation process is recorded below.

#### **School staff**

Consultation date: 9 May 2025

- Half-day school closure using the guidance document, resources and presentations.
- Familiarisation with the *Bí Cineálta* procedures.
- Discussion and agreement on the school's draft policy, including group activities based on scenarios.
- Regular review at staff meetings of the effectiveness of the policy, particularly the strategies for preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.

#### **Students**

Consultation date: May 2025

- Age-appropriate presentation and discussion of *Bí Cineálta* through SPHE, using the child-friendly poster.
- Consultation with the Student Council about the poster and the management of bullying in the school.
- Surveys of children.
- Senior classes to create a display in the school hall.

### **Parents and guardians**

Consultation date: May 2025

- Share a link to the draft policy and invite feedback and suggestions.
- Consult with the Parents' Association.

### **Board of Management**

Consultation date: September 2025

- Circulate the draft policy to all members before the meeting to invite feedback and suggestions.
- Discuss and agree the final draft at the Board of Management meeting scheduled for 1 October 2025.
- Ratify the policy and monitor its implementation and effectiveness through the principal's feedback at each meeting and the annual review.

### **Wider school community**

Consultation date: September 2025

- Professional conversations with bus drivers, the caretaker, secretary, GAA coaches, gymnastics and drama coaches, and other visitors, as appropriate.
- A reminder to undertake this consultation is included at the staff meeting at the start of the school year.

Original proposed approval date: 1 October 2025.

Policy reviewed: 15 September 2026.

Next review: September 2027.

### **Section B Preventing bullying behaviour**

The Board of Management recognises the serious nature of bullying and its negative impact on pupils. The school is committed to the following principles and prevention strategies, including measures to prevent cyberbullying, homophobic and transphobic bullying, racist bullying, sexist bullying and sexual harassment, as appropriate. See Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures.

#### **Culture and environment**

- A positive, inclusive school culture that welcomes difference and diversity.
- A "telling" environment that encourages pupils to disclose and discuss bullying behaviour without fear.
- Respectful relationships promoted and modelled across the school community, as referenced in Appendix C.
- Effective leadership that sets high standards and expectations.
- A consistent school-wide approach to observation and addressing bullying behaviour.
- Students promoting kindness and inclusion within peer groups.
- Parents as active partners in promoting empathy, respect and an environment where bullying is not tolerated.
- Access to a trusted adult who reassures students that they have done the right thing by reporting bullying behaviour.
- Safe, visible physical spaces throughout the school.

#### **Curriculum teaching and learning**

- A shared understanding of bullying, its impact and its unacceptability.

- Education and awareness strategies that build empathy, respect and resilience and promote inclusion and diversity.
- Explicit attention to cyberbullying and identity-based bullying, including homophobic, transphobic, racist and sexist bullying, and sexual harassment, as appropriate.
- SPHE teaching that equips students to build positive relationships, resolve conflict and recognise and address bullying behaviour.

Programmes and resources include Stay Safe, RSE, Walk Tall, Weaving Wellbeing and Grow in Love, as appropriate.

Teaching methods include group work and collaboration; role-play and scenarios; extracurricular activities that develop positive self-worth; Circle Time; and cooperative games, particularly in PE.

### **Policy and planning**

- Develop, communicate, implement and review the Bí Cineálta policy in consultation with all partners.
- Consistently record, investigate and follow up on bullying behaviour using established intervention strategies.
- Evaluate the policy's effectiveness on an ongoing basis.
- Provide effective supervision and monitoring in school, on the yard and during unstructured activities, trips and swimming.
- Support staff through teacher professional learning and other relevant supports.

The policy is supported by the student-friendly Bí Cineálta policy, Code of Behaviour, Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment, Acceptable Use Policy, Supervision Policy, Arrivals and Dismissals Policy, SPHE and RSE Policy, SEN Policy, DEIS policies and Health and Safety Policy Statement. Wellbeing is interwoven throughout DEIS and other school policies.

### **Relationships and partnerships**

- Strong interpersonal connections through the Student Council, Coiste Gaeilge, Parents' Association, focus groups and other formal and informal structures.
- Implementation of the DEIS Partnership with Parents and Others Plan.
- Active participation by students and parents or guardians.
- Workshops and seminars for students, staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of bullying behaviour.
- Acts of kindness and activities that build empathy, respect and resilience, including Random Acts of Kindness Day during Wellbeing Week.
- Teaching problem-solving and critical-thinking skills.
- Promoting self-awareness and awareness of others.
- Encouraging peer tutoring and buddying.

### **Preventing cyberbullying**

Technology and social media offer opportunities for education, entertainment and social engagement. Their increased use can also leave students vulnerable to cyberbullying and unacceptable online behaviour. The school promotes digital literacy, digital citizenship and safe online environments.

- Implement the SPHE curriculum and age-appropriate digital media literacy learning about responsible online behaviour and digital citizenship.
- Hold regular conversations about respectful and kind online relationships.
- Develop and communicate the Acceptable Use Policy.

- Include appropriate online behaviour in the Code of Behaviour.
- Promote or host online safety events for parents, who oversee their children's online activities.
- Hold an Internet Safety Day to reinforce awareness of appropriate online behaviour.

Families should follow the age requirements of online services and seek guidance on consent and safe use. The digital age of consent and a platform's minimum account age are different requirements.

### **Preventing homophobic and transphobic bullying**

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

- Maintain an inclusive physical environment, including relevant posters.
- Encourage peer mentoring and empathy-building activities.
- Challenge gender stereotypes.
- Conduct age-appropriate workshops and seminars for students, staff and parents about the impact of homophobic and transphobic bullying.
- Encourage students to speak up when they witness such behaviour.

### **Preventing racist bullying**

The school strives to prevent racist bullying and to celebrate the cultural diversity of its community.

- Create a culture in which students see themselves represented in their school environment.
- Make the school's cultural diversity visible through displays.
- Provide workshops and seminars for students, staff and parents to raise awareness of racism.
- Encourage peer support, mentoring and empathy-building activities.
- Encourage bystanders to report racist behaviour.
- Support staff to respond to students for whom English is an additional language and to communicate with their parents.
- Support staff in working with students from ethnic minorities, including Traveller and Roma students, and their parents.
- Invite speakers from diverse ethnic backgrounds.
- Ensure library materials and textbooks reflect appropriate lived experiences from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

### **Preventing sexist bullying**

The school promotes gender equality as part of a supportive and respectful environment.

- Staff model respectful behaviour and treat students equally irrespective of sex.
- Provide all students with equal opportunities to participate in school activities.
- Celebrate diversity and acknowledge every student's contribution.
- Encourage parents to reinforce respect at home.

### **Preventing sexual harassment**

The school promotes a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment through education, awareness and clear, enforceable policies. Sexual harassment must never be dismissed as teasing or banter.

- Promote positive role models within the school community.
- Challenge gender stereotypes that can contribute to sexual harassment.

### **Supervision and monitoring**

The Board of Management confirms that appropriate supervision and monitoring policies and practices are in place to prevent and address bullying behaviour and facilitate early intervention.

- A yard supervision rota is in operation.
- Teachers, with SNAs working under the direction of the yard-duty teacher, provide yard supervision and indoor supervision on wet days.
- Classes have designated yard areas to support age-appropriate interactions and effective observation.
- Children are accompanied by at least one teacher, with SNAs and vetted parents or guardians as relevant and necessary, on trips, outings and swimming.
- Supervising personnel are positioned strategically on buses, walks and trips to monitor interactions.
- Patterns of inappropriate behaviour are investigated and documented, as relevant, in an Aladdin Log of Actions.
- Incidents requiring closer monitoring are communicated to relevant staff through Aladdin messages and handover meetings.
- A report on supervision and bullying incidents is given at each Board of Management meeting.

### **Section C Addressing bullying behaviour**

Class teachers have responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour.

#### **Our approach**

The primary aim is to stop the bullying behaviour and restore relationships as far as practicable, rather than to apportion blame.

- Ensure that the student experiencing bullying is heard and reassured.
- Protect the privacy of those involved.
- Conduct conversations sensitively, taking account of age and ability.
- Listen to the affected student's views on how best to address the situation.
- Act promptly and inform the parents of those involved.

#### **Behaviour outside the school's care**

The school is not expected to deal with bullying that occurs when students are not under its care or responsibility. However, where it has an impact in school, the school must support the students involved. Where the behaviour continues in school, it will be addressed under this policy.

If the student displaying bullying behaviour does not attend this school, the school will support the student experiencing the behaviour and engage with the student and their parents to determine appropriate next steps.

#### **Fairness and support**

Staff will be fair and consistent. Both the student experiencing bullying and the student displaying it need support. The student experiencing bullying will be engaged with without delay so that they feel heard, supported and reassured. Staff will identify supports to help the student displaying the behaviour manage relational difficulties and meet their needs.

#### **Requests to take no action**

A student may ask staff to take no action and simply "look out" for them because they fear being identified as having reported the behaviour. Staff will respond with empathy and sensitivity and work with the student to

agree possible steps. It must be made clear that other parties may need to be informed to protect their welfare.

Parents who request that no action be taken should put that request in writing. The school will consider each request individually while reserving the right to address the behaviour through the Bí Cineálta procedures and/or the Code of Behaviour, where appropriate to the circumstances.

### **Identifying bullying behaviour**

Staff will consider the core definition, including the imbalance of power, and ask:

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?

Where the answers to all three questions are yes, the behaviour is addressed using the Bí Cineálta procedures. Where an answer is no, inappropriate behaviour is addressed under the Code of Behaviour, taking account of the exceptions below.

A single incident may constitute bullying in certain circumstances. For example, a hurtful message posted on social media may be shared repeatedly and therefore become repeated behaviour.

Behaviour that is generally not bullying includes a one-off negative incident, a disagreement, a decision not to remain friends, and non-deliberate behaviours associated with special educational needs. Staff must consider the circumstances and the guidance in Section 2.2 of the Bí Cineálta procedures.

### **Cyberbullying affecting students in school**

Cyberbullying that occurs outside school can continue in school. The school must address cyberbullying displayed or experienced in school. This includes a hurtful message sent outside school hours that is viewed by a student while in school.

### **Establishing what happened**

Teachers will consider what happened, where and when it happened, and why.

- Where a group is involved, engage with each student individually first.
- Then meet the students as a group, asking each for their account so that everyone understands each other's views.
- Support each student as appropriate following the group meeting.
- Where helpful, ask students to write down their account of the incidents.

### **When bullying has occurred**

- Contact the parents of the students involved at an early stage, inform them of the matter and consult them on the actions to be taken.
- Listen to the views of the student experiencing bullying on how best to address the situation.
- Keep a record of engagement with all involved.
- Record the form and type of bullying, if known; where and when it occurred; and the date of initial engagement with students and parents, using Appendix B. See Sections 2.5 and 2.7 of the Bí Cineálta procedures.
- Include the views of students and parents on the proposed actions.

### **Follow-up and review**

- Engage again with the students and their parents no more than 20 school days after the initial engagement.

- Consider the nature of the behaviour, the effectiveness of the strategies and the relationships between the students.
- Document the review, including whether the bullying has ceased and the views of students and parents.
- Record the date on which the behaviour is determined to have ceased.
- Record any engagement with external services or supports.
- Continue supervision and support where needed, even after the behaviour has ceased.
- If the behaviour continues, review strategies with the students and parents and agree a timeframe for further engagement until it stops.
- Where the student continues to display bullying behaviour, consider the strategies for inappropriate behaviour in the Code of Behaviour.

Any disciplinary sanctions are a private matter between the student, their parents or guardians and the school. This must be made clear to all concerned.

### **Recording bullying behaviour**

All bullying behaviour will be recorded, including its type, location and timing, engagement dates, and the agreed actions and supports. The school uses the recording template referenced as Appendix B.

- Where a Student Support File exists, place a copy of the record on that file and add a brief reference in the Behavioural Log of Actions, marked as a priority document.
- Where a Student Support Plan exists, update it with response strategies and associated supports.
- Where no Student Support File exists, open a Behavioural Log of Actions on Aladdin, mark it as a priority document and add the date and a reference to the completed record.
- The Bullying Incident Recording Form is accessed through the child's profile, then Documents, New Document and Bullying Incident Recording Form.

Where bullying is a child protection concern, the matter will be addressed without delay in accordance with the applicable Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools. See Section 2.4 of the Bí Cineálta procedures.

### **Complaints process**

Parents who are dissatisfied with how bullying behaviour has been addressed will be referred to the school's complaints procedures. A student and/or parent who remains dissatisfied with how a complaint has been handled may complain to the Ombudsman for Children if they believe the school's actions have negatively affected the student.

### **Supporting students**

The school provides support to students who experience, witness and display bullying behaviour, including the supports described above. The supplied support list includes listening to pupils.

[Editorial note: The supplied text ends after "Listening". Insert the remaining school-approved support strategies here before issuing the policy.]

### **Appendix F Annual review notification**

The Board of Management of \_\_\_\_\_ confirms that the annual review of the school's Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

and its implementation was completed at the board of management meeting of  
\_\_\_\_\_ [date]

This review was conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Department of Education's *Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(Chairperson of board of management)

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

**Date of next review:**  
\_\_\_\_\_