



Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of St. Mary's Boys' 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.

Definition of bullying (see section 2.1 of *Bí Cineálta Procedures*)

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 ie bullying behaviour is "*behaviour that is targeted, repeated and intended to cause harm*". 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.

Behaviour that is not bullying behaviour (see section 2.2 of *Bí Cineálta Procedures*)

- 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. 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(s), this is not bullying.

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	February 2025 22/01/2025 26/03/2025 06/01/2026 28/01/2026	Survey Staff Meeting Half day closure to facilitate Bí Cineálta training and policy development Aladdin noticeboard message inviting feedback. Discussed/reviewed at staff meeting.
Students	February 2025 February 2026	Survey Feedback sought from Student Council
Parents	February 2025 06/01/2026	Survey Aladdin noticeboard message inviting feedback.
Board of Management	25/01/2024 10/06/2025 04/03/2026	Details of Circular 0055/2024 and the Bí Cineálta Procedures shared with Board members and discussed. Reviewed and ratified policy. Reviewed at Board meeting.
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	26/03/2025	Half day school closure. SNAs, school secretary, school caretaker, school cleaner participated in Bí Cineálta training and the development of the Bí Cineálta Policy
Date policy was approved: 10/06/2025		
Date policy was last reviewed: 04/03/2026		

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 the Bí Cineálta procedures):

The following education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyberbullying, homophobic and transphobic bullying) will be used:

Culture and Environment (see section 5.1 of Bí Cineálta Procedures)

- A school-wide approach to the fostering of respect for all members of the school community.
- Recognition for acts of kindness/friendship each Friday and *Friendship February*
- The promotion of the value of diversity to address issues of prejudice and stereotyping and highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour.
- The fostering and enhancing of the self-esteem of all our pupils through both curricular and extracurricular activities. Pupils will be provided with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth and a sense of belonging through formal and informal interactions.

- Whole staff professional development on bullying to ensure that all staff develop an awareness of what bullying is, the prevention and intervention strategies, how it impacts on pupils' lives and the need to respond to it.
- An annual audit of professional development needs with a view to assessing staff requirements through internal staff knowledge/expertise and external sources.
- Professional development with specific focus on the training of the relevant teachers eg Friends for Life, Zippy's Friends, Rainbows, Weaving Wellbeing
- School wide awareness raising and training on all aspects of bullying, to include pupils, parents/guardians and the wider school community.
- Visibility of staff. Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extracurricular activities. Non-teaching and ancillary staff will be encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers. Supervision will also apply to monitoring student use of communication technology within the school.
- There is adequate lighting throughout the school and this is monitored/checked at regular intervals throughout the year.
- Promotion of pupil voice and other student support activities that can help to support pupils and encourage a culture of peer respect and support e.g. Student Council, Green School Committee, Buddy System, Pupil surveys etc. Feedback from pupils led for example to the installation of games benches in the yard; development of a sensory trail in school corridor; purchasing board games for each class. Pupils also play a lead role in organising particular events and fundraisers and have a voice in determining how funding might be spent. Such activities /involvement helps to create a sense of belonging/ownership/responsibility.
- Development and promotion of a Bí Cineálta code for the school to be displayed publicly in classrooms and in common areas of the school.
- The school's Bí Cineálta Policy is discussed with pupils and all parents/guardians are given a copy as part of the Code of Behaviour of the school on enrolment.
- The implementation of regular (e.g. per year) whole school awareness measures e.g. a dedicated notice board on the promotion of friendship, and bullying prevention; annual Anti bullying Week/Friendship February; parents/guardians seminars organised by P/A.; annual student surveys; regular class visits by principal.
- Encourage a culture of telling, with particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders. In that way pupils will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It should be made clear to all pupils that when they report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.
- Use of worry boxes/monsters
- Ensuring that pupils know who to tell and how to tell
 - Direct approach to teacher at an appropriate time, for example after class.
 - Hand note up with homework.
 - Make a phone call to the school
 - Anti-bullying or Worry box
 - Get a parent/guardian or friend to tell on your behalf.
- Staff reinforce the concept of a "trusted adult" by letting pupils know that they can talk to them
- Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place.
- Identify clear protocols to encourage parents/guardians to approach the school if they suspect that their child is being bullied. The protocol should be developed in consultation with parents.
- The development of an Acceptable Use Policy in the school to include the necessary steps to ensure that the access to technology within the school is strictly monitored. Mobile phones are not permitted in school.
- Teachers' classroom organisation and seating plan is considered. Handover meetings between teachers at the end of the year to highlight concerns/issues etc.

Preventing cyberbullying (see Section 5.5/p.39 of the Bí Cineálta Procedures):

- 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

Preventing homophobic/transphobic bullying behaviour (see Section 5.6/p.40 of the *Bí Cineálta Procedures*):

- 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
- Conducting workshops and seminars for students, school staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of homophobic bullying behaviour
- Encouraging students to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour

Strategies to prevent racist bullying behaviour include the following (see Section 5.7/p.40 of the *Bí Cineálta Procedures*):

- 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
- Ensuring that library reading material and textbooks represent appropriate lived experiences of students and adults from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds

Strategies to prevent sexist bullying behaviour include the following (see Section 5.8/p.40 of the *Bí Cineálta Procedures*):

- Ensuring all members of our school community model respectful behaviour and treat everyone equally irrespective of their sex.
- Ensuring all students have the same opportunities to engage in school activities
- Celebrating diversity at school and acknowledging the contributions of all students
- Organising awareness campaigns, workshops and presentations on gender equality and respect
- Encouraging parents to reinforce these values of respect at home

Strategies to prevent sexual harassment include the following (see Section 5.9/p.41 of the *Bí Cineálta Procedures*):

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

Curriculum (see section 5.2 of *Bí Cineálta Procedures*)

- The full implementation of the SPHE, RSE and Stay Safe Programmes.
- Continuous Professional Development for staff in delivering these programmes.
- School wide delivery of lessons on bullying from evidence-based programmes.
- School wide delivery of lessons on:
 - Relational aggression - Cool School Programme: A Friend in Deed,
 - Cyber Bullying - Be Safe-Be Web wise, Think Before you Click, Let's Fight it Together, Web wise Primary teachers' resources, #UP2US, Internet Safety Day
 - Homophobic and Transphobic Bullying - Growing up LGBT, Stand Up Programme, The Trust pack
 - Diversity and Interculturalism, Yellow Flag Programme.
- Delivery of the Garda SPHE Programmes at primary level. These lessons, delivered by Community Gardai, cover issues around personal safety and cyber-bullying

- Use of Friends for Life Programme with specific classes. Two staff members received training in the 2023/24 school year. Two more staff are undertaking the training in 2024/25.
- The school will specifically consider the additional needs of SEN pupils with regard to programme implementation and the development of skills and strategies to enable all pupils to respond appropriately.
- Model respectful behaviour towards colleagues, pupils and visitors in our school environment.
- 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, events.
- Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils
- SMART Moves programme in 6th for transitioning to secondary school

Policy and Planning (see section 5.3 of Bí Cineálta Procedures)

- Raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with school management, teachers, pupils, parents/guardians.
- Promote a school ethos which encourages children to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.
- Ensure appropriate supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of school activity are kept under observation.
- Develop procedures for noting, investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour. All required documents for Bí Cineálta are on the shared drive, highlighted to all staff, and made available in each teacher's red folder.
- Implement a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and for those involved in bullying behaviour.
- Work with appropriate agencies in countering all forms of bullying and promoting anti bullying behaviour.
- Effective leadership is a key component with Principal, Deputy Principal, DLP, DDLP, and all middle management focused on supporting the implementation of this policy.
- School policies, practices and activities that support the implementation of our Bí Cineálta Policy include:
 - Code of Behaviour
 - Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment
 - Supervision Policy
 - Acceptable Use policy
 - Attendance Policy
 - Guidance around birthday party invitations/Christmas cards
 - Sporting Activities/ Extra Curricular Activities Policy
 - Mobile Phone and Personal Electronic Device Policy
 - School Tours Policy
 - Swimming Policy
 - SEN Policy
 - Health and Safety Statement
 - SPHE Policy (including Stay Safe and RSE Policies)

Relationships and Partnerships (see section 5.4 of Bí Cineálta Procedures)

- Interpersonal connections are supported through a range of formal and informal structures:
 - parents' association
 - our various and multiple student committees and groups eg Student Council, Green Schools Committee
 - Grandparents' Day
 - Spring Clean
 - Intercultural Day
- Age and stage appropriate awareness initiatives that look at the causes and impacts of bullying behaviour including those dealing with navigating friendships, identity based bullying, racist bullying, homophobic/transphobic bullying, sexism and sexual harassment
- Engage the student body in looking at their own behaviour – promoting acts of kindness and friendship, being helpful 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.
- Supporting activities that build empathy, respect and resilience.
- Highlighting positive behaviour - ClassDojo
- Using Check -Ins, Circle Time, Class Contracts to support the development of positive relationships/partnerships
- Encouraging peer mentoring and peer support
- Buddy system which can include explicitly teaching junior pupils new playground games
- 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.

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

The Board of Management confirms that appropriate supervision and monitoring policies and practices are in place to both prevent and deal with bullying behaviour and to facilitate early intervention where possible.

- There are agreed supervision and monitoring practices in the school
- Mobile phones are generally not permitted on school tours/outings except in special circumstances, and with prior consent, and must remain switched off during school.
- Bullying danger spots have been identified as the playground, school tours, swimming lessons, when lining up, the bike rack.
- Parents and pupils have been consulted in the identification of these danger spots
- Pupils will be involved as a resource to assist in counteracting bullying through the Student Council
- In relation to the Acceptable Use Policy in the school the following issues are addressed:
 - All Internet sessions are supervised by a teacher
 - The school regularly monitors pupils 'Internet usage within school time.
 - Pupils are not permitted access to discussion forums and messaging or other electronic communication fora that have not been approved by the school.

(Note that the School's Broadband Programme has blocked all social networking sites on the basis that they waste time and take up too much of the bandwidth which is been provided for educational purposes only).

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

the class teacher

When bullying behaviour occurs, the school will:

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

The steps that will be taken by the school to determine if bullying behaviour has occurred, the approaches taken to address the bullying behaviour and to review progress are as follows (see Chapter 6 and Appendix C of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

Identifying if Bullying Behaviour Has Occurred (see Section 6.1/p.43 of the Bí Cineálta Procedures)

- The teacher gathers information by considering the what, where, when, and why of the reported incident.
- If multiple students are involved, each is interviewed individually first before conducting a group meeting.
- During the group meeting, each student provides their account to clarify the situation and ensure mutual understanding.
- Students may also be asked to write down their version of events for documentation if deemed appropriate by the teacher.
- The school's definition of bullying, and the following guiding questions, will be used to assess whether bullying has occurred:
 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.
- Some incidents may involve inappropriate but non-bullying behaviour, which will be addressed using the school's Code of Behaviour.

Addressing Confirmed Bullying Behaviour (see Section 6.2/p.43 of the Bí Cineálta Procedures)

- School staff act according to the Bí Cineálta policy and student-friendly policy.
- When is bullying behaviour not dealt with under the Bí Cineálta Policy/procedures:
 - A school is not expected to deal with bullying behaviour that occurs when students are not under the care or responsibility of the school.
 - 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.
- If the bullying behaviour involves a student from another school, the school will support the affected student and engage with their parents to explore solutions.
- The response is fair and consistent, ensuring both the student experiencing bullying and the student displaying the behaviour receive support.
- The affected student is engaged with immediately to reassure them and determine their preferred approach to resolving the issue. The teacher listens to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation.
- A record is kept by the teacher of engagement with all parties (See Appendix 1 or [click here](#))
- Parents of all involved students are informed by the teacher at an early stage.
- Privacy and sensitivity are maintained in all discussions, considering the students' age and ability.
- Action is taken promptly, and students are actively involved in decisions about resolving the situation.
- Approaches such as restorative practice or mediation may be used only if staff have received training and students consent.

Handling Requests to Take No Action (see Section 6.3/p.45 of the Bí Cineálta Procedures)

- A student may request that no action be taken beyond staff monitoring the situation. Where this occurs, the member of staff will speak 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.
- The staff member acknowledges the student's feelings and works with them to determine appropriate next steps.
- Parents may also make schools aware of bullying behaviour and specifically request that no action be taken. Where parents request that a 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.

Reviewing Progress and Ensuring Behaviour Has Ceased (see Section 6.4/p.45 of the Bí Cineálta Procedures)

- The teacher conducts a follow-up review within 20 school days of the initial intervention.
- The review considers:
 - The nature and impact of the bullying behaviour.
 - The effectiveness of strategies used.
 - Changes in relationships between students involved.
- Even if bullying has ceased, ongoing support/supervision may be needed for both students.
- If the bullying behaviour persists, strategies are reviewed with students and parents, and additional actions are planned within an agreed timeframe.
- If the student displaying bullying behaviour continues their actions, the school may apply disciplinary measures under the Code of Behaviour.

Recording and Documentation (see Section 6.5/p.45 of the Bí Cineálta Procedures)

Note, the recording template is available [here](#), on the shared drive and in the Red Folder in each classroom.

- All incidents are recorded, including:
 - The form and type of bullying behaviour.
 - The date, time, and location of incidents.
 - Initial engagement details with students and parents.
 - Student and parent perspectives on actions taken are documented.
 - A review meeting is recorded, including whether the bullying has stopped.
- If applicable, records are stored in the Student Support File and used to inform future support strategies.
- Even if bullying has ceased, ongoing support may be needed for both students.
- Records are kept in compliance with the school's data protection policies. A copy of the record will be shared with the school principal and stored in the office.

Complaint Process (see Section 6.6/p.46 of the Bí Cineálta Procedures)

- If a parent is dissatisfied with how the bullying behaviour has been handled, they may use the school's Parental Complaints Procedure.
- If unresolved, they may escalate the complaint to the Ombudsman for Children (ococomplaint@oco.ie).

The school will use the following approaches to support those who experience, witness and display bullying behaviour (see Chapter 6 - Section 5.7/p.46 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 pupils experiencing bullying behaviour:

- 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).

- Buddy/peer mentoring programme
- Continued contact with parents
- Continued monitoring of particular situations

Supporting pupils engaging in bullying behaviour:

- 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 the pupils who engage in bullying behaviour to learn other ways of meeting their needs besides violating the rights of others
- 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 behaviour 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
- Continued contact with parents
- Continued monitoring of particular situations

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 and Appendix D 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: Carmel Wemyss
(Chairperson of board of management)

Date: 04/03/2026

Signed: James Robinson
(Principal)

Date: 04/03/26