



17th June 2025

St. Mary's N.S Cobh Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of St. Mary's N.S Cobh 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.**

Targeted behaviour : Bullying is deliberate, unwanted behaviour that causes harm to others, and where the student displaying bullying behaviour knows that their behaviour is or will be perceived as harmful by the child or young person experiencing the behaviour. Bullying is not accidental or reckless behaviour. The harm can be physical (for example, personal injury, damage to or loss of property), social (for example, withdrawal, loneliness, exclusion) and/or emotional (for example, low self esteem, depression, anxiety) and can have a serious and long term negative impact on the student experiencing the bullying behaviour. If the repeated harm is real for the student experiencing the behaviour but unintended by the other student, this is not bullying but, importantly, must still be addressed under our school's code of behaviour.

Repeated behaviour: Bullying takes the form of a systematic pattern of behaviour which is repeated over time. Single offline incidents of intentional negative behaviour involving an imbalance of power are not considered bullying but must still be addressed under the school's code of behaviour. Posting a single harmful message/image/video online, and which is highly likely to be reposted or shared with others can therefore be seen as bullying behaviour. >

Imbalance of power: In incidents of bullying, the student experiencing the bullying behaviour finds it hard to defend themselves as a result of the abuse of a real or perceived imbalance of power. This imbalance of power may manifest itself through differences in size, strength, age, ability, peer group power, economic status, social status, religion, race, ethnic origin including membership of the Traveller and/or Roma communities, sexual orientation, family circumstances, gender, gender identity, gender expression, experience of the care system, disability or the receipt of special education. In incidents of online (or cyber) bullying, the imbalance of power may relate to online anonymity, technical proficiency and possession of information/images/video, and the inability of the targeted student to remove offensive online material or escape the bullying.

Behaviour that is not bullying: 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. See Coco's Law above. 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.

This BÍ Cineálta policy 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 our 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	Friday 17th Jan Half Day Closure- staff consulted and asked to contribute to policy. May 6th- Finalised policy circulated to staff, asking for any feedback to be given by May 16, 2025	Online Survey In Person- group meeting involving Teaching and SNA staff.
Students	17th February 2025	In school Survey/ In school chatting and asking questions from survey.
Parents	Friday 17th Jan	Online Survey- results recorded under Bi Cineálta folder in G suite.
Board of Management	June Board meeting.	In person at meeting.
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	Lollipop man Brenda (School Secretary) Dave (School Caretaker) Taxi drivers and escorts that accompany children to school	Via email- Email sent with final policy attached and also invited to ask questions if they have any.
Date policy was last reviewed: 06/05/2025		

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

This section sets out the prevention strategies that will be used by our 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.

In developing 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 the 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 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 engagement by the school, young people and parents, will be used to discern appropriate supports for young people in this school and to help inform future prevention strategies.

Culture and Environment A positive and inclusive school culture and environment is essential to prevent and address bullying behaviour. Our school environment is a space where students and school staff should experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported.

These are some of the ways in St. Mary's that we do this:

- A telling environment: We support 'a telling environment' and encourage pupils to feel comfortable to talk about concerns regarding bullying behaviour. Strategies such as worry boxes, circle times, writing a note and regular reminders help with this. **This also goes for being a 'bystander'** ('be an upstander, not a bystander') and regular talks are had around this through the 'Stay Safe' programme and during general classroom chats.
- Safe Physical spaces: - We ensure visibility of school staff who are supervising at break times including during yard duty.
- Our school uses murals, artwork and signage that can help to promote our school's values such as equality, diversity, inclusion and respect.
- Well-being quote of the week.

Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)

Teaching and learning that is collaborative and respectful is promoted in our school in the following ways:

- Students have regular opportunities to work in small groups with their peers, which help build a sense of connection, belonging and empathy among students.
- The curricular subjects offered to students provide opportunities to foster inclusion and respect for diversity such as SPHE and R.E.
- The Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) curricula aim to foster students' wellbeing, self confidence and sense of belonging and to develop students' sense of personal responsibility for their own behaviour and actions. Students' social and emotional learning (SEL) skills can be improved through the SPHE curriculum.
- Stay Safe teaches about Bullying and we use the Stay Safe rules of 'Say no, get away and tell'
- Walk Tall
- RSE
- Weaving Well-being and Welcome to Well-being
- FUSE anti-bullying lessons are taught at the relevant levels.
- Critical Thinking Books that deal with many issues associated with bullying and feeling 'different'.
- Safer Internet Day

Policy and Planning:

Here are a list of the policies and planning that may help prevent and address bullying behaviour.

- Bí Cineálta Policy
- Student Friendly Bí cineálta policy
- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Health and Safety policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Wellbeing SSE- ongoing
- SEN policy
- Staff - ensuring that they are very familiar and up to date with Child Protection Guidelines.
- Staff engage in appropriate teacher professional learning courses. This can support school staff to prevent and address bullying behaviour. School staff should also share their experiences and examples of best practice. Any relevant CPD courses are regularly shared via email by the principal and are available to all staff members.

Relationships and Partnerships

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

- Student council
- School clubs (for example: chess club)
- Parents' association
- Committees- Library committee, Green Schools Committee, Well-being and Amber Flag Committee, Sports committee, Student Council, Playground Pals.
- School Choir
- Playground Pals
- Social Committee (Staff)

- Student of the Week/ Principal's award
- Social media pages give an insight to parents on how their child is getting on in school and during the school day.
- Age appropriate resources where available (books/ video clips/ websites) 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
- Supporting activities that build empathy, respect and resilience- Roots of empathy, Stay Safe, Walk Tall, RSE, Welcome to Wellbeing, Weaving Well-Being.
- Encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring- Playground Pals, Reading Buddies
- Promoting acts of kindness (wellbeing committee)
- Teaching problem solving, understanding and respect.
- Involvement of multiple parties (pupils, staff, parents, wider community, Board of Management in developing the BÍ CINEÁLTA Policy.
- My Canine Companion- Flossy the school therapy dog. She currently helps with many cases of school refusal and when children need a little sensory or emotional break.
- SOTW/ Principal's award/ Assembly

Preventing cyberbullying behaviour

We promote digital literacy, digital citizenship, and foster safe online environments in the following ways:

- Implementing the SPHE curriculum
- Implementing the Digital Media Literacy curriculum which teaches students about responsible online behaviour and digital citizenship
- Safer Internet Day- lessons and helpful websites shared with staff.
- having regular conversations with students about developing respectful and kind relationships online
- 6th class engage in a 'Cyber Safe' talk.
- 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
- Arranging for talks from outside agencies to be given to the relevant classes e.g. Cyber Safe Kids talks for senior class
- Community Garda visit where internet safety and cyber bullying are addressed.
- Using WebWise as a resource for teaching about cyber-bullying.
- HTML heroes from 1st -4th Class
- Holding an Internet safety day to reinforce awareness around appropriate online behaviour- *It is important to know that parental permission is needed to sign up to social media services where companies use the legal basis of consent to collect process and store users' data. Most social media platforms and services have a minimum age requirement and for the majority of these services it is 13 years' old. Therefore technically, children under the age of 13 should not have a social media account. It is important for their child's safety, that parents are aware of their children's use of technology including smartphones and gaming consoles.*

Preventing homophobic/transphobic bullying behaviour

All students including gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students, have a right to feel safe and supported at school. Strategies to prevent homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour include the following:

- Encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
- Challenging gender stereotypes when the appropriate opportunity arises.
- Encouraging students to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour.
- Circle time- a time where students feel comfortable to share views and opinions.

Preventing racist bullying behaviour

Strategies to prevent racist bullying include the following:

- Fostering a school culture where diversity is celebrated and where students "see themselves" in their school environment
- Cultural diversity of the school is visible and on display in our School vision and through social media pages/ websites.
- Encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
- Encouraging bystanders to report when they witness racist behaviour
- Availing of resources and supports 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

Procedures to prevent sexist bullying behaviour include the following.

- Celebrating diversity at school and acknowledging the contributions of all students
- Encouraging parents to reinforce these values of respect at home

Preventing sexual harassment:

There is a zero tolerance approach to sexual harassment in our school. Sexual harassment should never be dismissed as teasing or banter. Strategies to prevent sexual harassment include the following

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

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):

- Teacher and relevant SNAs supervising each corridor for 10 minutes from 8:40-8:50 am
- Multiple staff (including the principal) on yard in the morning when children arrive. School secretary stands at door to greet the children.
- Teacher supervising each corridor for 10 minutes during wet break.
- 4 teachers supervising on yard during small and big break, all visible to children.
- Playground Pals on yard alert teachers to any issues that might relate to bullying or upset.
- Teachers are all up to date with Anti- bullying guidelines and Bí cineálta guidelines.
- Teachers are all up to date and familiar with Child Protection guidelines.
- School outings have a minimum of 12-1 pupil teacher ratio.
- Teacher's ask neighbouring teacher to supervise if they have to leave the classroom for any reason (for example bathroom)
- Bathroom breaks at break time- Children are encouraged to take their toilet break during the 10 minutes prior to going on yard. If a child must use the toilet, a staff member should accompany them to the toilet along with one other child.
- Teachers accompany children to yard at hometime.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

Class teachers in collaboration with Principal

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:

1. Identify if bullying has occurred- What? Where? When? Why?

When considering if bullying behaviour has occurred, the teacher should consider the following: **What, where, when, and why?**

Children should be engaged with individually at first, then as a group. At the group meeting, each person should be asked about their own version of events so that everyone in the group is aware of the others view. Each person should be supported. It may be helpful for the children to write down their account of events.

To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour you should consider the following questions:

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

If the answer to **each** of the questions above is Yes, then the behaviour is bullying behaviour and the behaviour should be addressed using the Bí Cineálta Procedures outlined below. If it is No, you should refer to our school's Code of Behaviour.

For bullying to have taken place, all three of the following must have occurred:

A. Targeted B. Repeated C. Imbalance of power

Please note: 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

2. Where Bullying Behaviour has occurred:

The following principles must 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 or be facilitated to do so where there are literacy, digital literacy or language barriers. However, while acknowledging the parent's request, schools may decide that, based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour

3. Recording Bullying Behaviour:

All incidents of bullying behaviour should be recorded. The record should document

- the form (Section 2.5) and type (See Section 2.7) of bullying behaviour, if known.
- where and when it took place
- the date of the initial engagement with the students and their parents.
- The record should include the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour.
- 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 Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and PostPrimary Schools 46 has ceased.
- Any engagement with external services/supports should also be noted. These records should be retained in accordance with the school's record keeping policy and in line with data protection regulations.
- place a copy of the record on the student's file.

4. Determining if Bullying Behaviour has ceased:

- The 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.
- Ongoing supervision and support may be needed by both the student experiencing the bullying behaviour and the student displaying the behaviour.
- 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.
If, after an agreed frame time, bullying behaviour is still taking place, we may have to implement sanctions/ strategies outlined in our Code of Behaviour.

The following supports are available to those who experience, witness and display bullying behaviour (see Chapter 6 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

➤ **National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)**

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

promoting resilience and skills in relationship repair between peers as appropriate.

- **Oide:** Oide contributes to school improvement by providing high quality professional learning experiences, supports and resources relating to curricular developments, broader educational goals and national priorities, such as wellbeing which includes preventing and addressing bullying.
- **WebWise:** Webwise promotes safer, better internet use through awareness raising and education initiatives targeting teachers, students and parents
- **National Parents Council:** The NPC delivers online and in person courses to support parents of both primary and post primary students to prevent and address bullying behaviour.
- **Dublin City University- Anti Bullying Centre;**
The AntiBullying Centre offers a range of modules as part of its **FUSE** programme for the entire school community that can be used to help to promote a positive school culture and assist in preventing and addressing bullying behaviours.
- **Tusla:** Schools should contact Tusla directly for advice in cases where it is considered that bullying behaviour is a child protection concern. See section 2.4 for guidance on when bullying behaviour becomes a child protection concern.

All bullying behaviour will be recorded. This will include the type of behaviour, where and when it took place, and the date of the engagement with students and parents. The actions and supports agreed to address bullying behaviour will be documented. If the bullying behaviour is a child protection concern the matter will be addressed without delay in accordance with *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

Section D: Oversight

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

This policy is available to our school community on the school's website and in hard copy on request. A student friendly version of this policy is displayed in the school and is also available on our website and in hard copy on request.

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed, following input from our school community, each calendar year or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which this policy refers.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: _____ Date: _____

(Principal)

Appendix H : Types of Bullying Behaviour

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

- > **disablist bullying behaviour:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of a perceived or actual disability or additional need
- > **exceptionally able bullying:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their high academic ability or outstanding talents
- > **gender identity bullying:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their perceived or actual gender identity
- > **homophobic/transphobic (LGBTQ+) bullying:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their perceived or actual membership of the LGBTQ+ community > **physical appearance bullying:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their physical appearance. Students who "look different" can be mocked or criticised about the shape, size or appearance of their body
- > **racist bullying:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their race or ethnic origin which includes membership of the Traveller or Roma community. Racism is defined in the National Action Plan Against Racism¹³ as "a form of domination which manifests through those power dynamics present in structural and institutional arrangements, practices, policies and cultural norms, which have the effect of excluding or discriminating against individuals or groups, based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin"
- > **poverty bullying:** behaviour that intends to humiliate a student because of a lack of resources > **religious identity bullying:** behaviour that intends to harm a student because of their religion or religious identity
- > **sexist bullying:** behaviour that intends to harm a student based on their sex, perpetuating stereotypes that a student or a group of students are inferior because of their sex
- > **sexual harassment:** any form of unwanted verbal, nonverbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature or other conduct based on sex which affects the dignity of the student