

St. Mary's College Dundalk



Bí Cineálta Policy

Ratified by the Board of Management 10th June 2025

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

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The Board of Management of St Mary's College 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

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.

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.

School Community	Date Consulted	Method of Consultation
School Staff	08/01/2025 21/05/2025	One workshop on procedures through Carousel and invite to contribute through Microsoft Forms. One further staff consultation on the policy and procedures
Students	13/05/2025	Student Council discussed the procedures and the design/information for the Student Friendly Version.
Parents	02/12/2024	Presentation of Procedures. Input given from parents on strategies to prevent bullying behaviour and on how to encourage a 'telling' environment.
Board of Management	14/04/2025	Presentation to the Board
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	27/03/2025	Ms Brady spoke with several bus drivers from a range of companies at the gates of the school.
Date policy was approved		
Date Policy was reviewed		

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

St Mary's College will use the following strategies to prevent bullying behaviour in our College. 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):

Culture and Environment:

- As a Catholic Marist school, we will promote a positive culture and environment through the Christian values of 'Love one another' and our Marist ethos.
- We will promote an inclusive culture and environment in St Mary's College to provide a space where students and school staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported.
- Extra-curricular and co-curricular activities will be supported to promote positive engagement in College life.

A Telling Environment:

- St Mary's College will sensitively deal with bullying behaviour in line with the procedures outlined in section C
- A Trusted Adult: Students will be reminded and reassured by their teachers that there are personnel in the college who have responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour: The Principal, Deputy Principals, their Year Head, and members of the Student Support Team.
- Our Year Team will check in with students through Link Meetings which will provide an opportunity for students to discuss wellbeing issues with a trusted adult.
- Display information in relation to student supports including identifying staff members and where to find them.

Safe Physical Spaces:

- St Mary's College hosts wide corridors and good lighting within the building. Stairwells, corridors and the perimeter are monitored by CCTV.
- In line with Child Safeguarding and Protection guidelines, classrooms door are fitted with a glass panel.
- Designated canteen for First Year students to allow integration into lunchtime routines in smaller numbers.
- Provide space for vulnerable students with additional medical and/or education needs within the Group Room when necessary.
- Students regularly create visual displays to support inclusion, Examples of these are displays that highlight 'Stand Up Week', 'Black History Month', the 'Belong To' awareness campaign and year-round displays such as the multi-cultural welcome flags at our College entrance.
- 'Hidden Heroes' Awards: The College celebrates kindness by nominating students who have shown compassion through good deeds in ordinary everyday school life. Awardees are commended over the intercom and presented with a gift token.

Supervision:

- The Senior Leadership Team and teachers are scheduled for supervision duties before school, during small break, lunchtime and at after school.
- The college operates a split lunch to minimize crowding in canteen lines, social areas and playing grounds.
- Supervision is scheduled for ground and first floor corridors, junior and senior canteens, internal

courtyard, basketball courts, polytunnel area and the 'Mound'.

- A member of the Senior Leadership Team supervises the College gate in the morning and after school.
- The Library hosts lunchtime activities which are supervised by student leaders and a member of staff.
- Senior Buddies organize activities for First Year students up to the October mid-term break to establish a culture of community and peer engagement.
- College trips are supervised with SNAs accompanying students with care needs.

Curriculum

- Curricular subjects offer the opportunity to foster inclusion and respect for diversity. Wellbeing subjects, Religious Education, History, and Politics and Society are examples of some of the subjects studied in St Mary's College which encourage awareness of the detrimental effects of bullying behaviour and the cohesive impact of tolerance, respect and healthy relationships.
- Diversity and inclusion are a consideration when choosing texts for study in English at Junior Cycle, Senior Cycle and in activities such as Book Club.
- Where an issue or behaviour has been identified as having an impact on student wellbeing, a targeted approach to addressing the behaviour may be used as a strategy to raise awareness through assemblies and/or in delivery of a relevant lesson(s) in the Wellbeing subjects.

Policy and Planning

- This policy outlines the procedures to prevent and address bullying behaviour.
- St Mary's College have also produced a student friendly version of these procedures and have displayed them in prominent place around the College where students and their parents can see them.
- St Mary's College BÍ Cineálta policy is supported by a range of college policies ratified by our board of management including, our Code of Behaviour, our Acceptable Use Policy, our Admissions Policy, our Child Safeguarding and Protection Policy.

Relationships and Partnerships

St Mary's College connects with our community through the following activities:

- Regular meeting with our Parents' Council,
- Establishment of and engagement with our Student Council,
- Ongoing initiatives that look at the causes and impacts of bullying behaviour such as the FUSE anti bullying programme, Lockers Module and Pieta House Resilience Programme,
- Delivering the College Wellbeing Programme,
- Regular meetings with our Student Support Team with representatives from the Senior Leadership Team, Guidance Department, Additional Education Needs Team and Wellbeing Co-ordinator.
- Year Team meetings led by respective Year Heads who in turn attend fortnightly Middle Leadership meetings.
- Transition to Post Primary School Processes.

St Mary's College uses the following strategies to prevent the following bullying behaviours:

Preventing Cyberbullying behaviour by:

- Implementing the SPHE Programme,
- Delivering a Digital Literacy Programme to 1st year students,
- Delivering an online safety seminar to all students on cyber safety, which include cyber bullying

behaviour,

- Delivering a safety seminar on cyber safety to parents,
- Displaying our Acceptable Use Policy on our website and implementing its procedures,
- Displaying our Code of Behaviour policy on our website and implementing its procedures.

Preventing Racist Bullying Behaviour by:

- Celebrating the cultures represented in the college through the welcome flags at the College entrance,
- Inviting pupils of diverse religious/culture backgrounds to share their heritage with peers
- Offering opportunities for cultural awareness activities like Diversity Week, Black History Month, Show Racism the Red Card,
- Providing inclusive reading materials in the College library,
- Having robust procedures in the Code of Behaviour for dealing with incidents of racist behaviour,
- Encouraging students to speak out against racist behaviour.

Preventing Sexist Behaviour by:

- 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,
- Encouraging parents to reinforce these values of respect at home,
- Inviting speakers from a balance of genders to speak to students about career paths and job opportunities.

Preventing Sexual Harassment by:

- Ensuring all students are aware that there is a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment,
- Using the updated SPHE specifications to teach students about healthy relationships,
- Ensuring RSE is delivered to all year groups,
- Challenge gender stereotypes that can contribute to sexual harassment which might arise in conversations or by addressing the topic in SPHE, CSPE, RE, English curricular material etc.

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):

- Supervision Policy.
- Code of Behaviour.
- Acceptable Use Policy.
- Admissions Policy.
- Child Safeguarding and Protection Policy.
- Additional Education Needs Policy.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

- The Principal.
- Deputy Principals.
- Year Heads.
- Members of The Student Support Team.
- Appointed person agreed by the Principal.

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 (Chapter 6 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

1. Determine if the behaviour is bullying behaviour.

Gather accounts of the bullying behaviour by engaging with each student involved and encouraging them to give a written account. Each student should be supported following the meeting.

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).

To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour the teacher will consider the following questions:

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

If the answer to **each** of the questions above is **Yes**, then the behaviour is bullying behaviour and the behaviour will be addressed using the Bí Cineálta Procedures.

If the answer to any of these 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.

2. Where it is determined that bullying behaviour has occurred the following procedure should be followed:

- The parents of the students involved will be contacted at an early stage and consult with them on the actions to be taken to address the behaviour.
- Where a student reporting bullying behaviour has requested the staff member does nothing about the bullying behaviour, the staff member will sensitively work with the student to work out what steps can be taken to address the behaviour and how their parents will be informed.
- Where a parent has made the College aware of bullying behaviour and specifically request that no action be taken, the parent should put this request in writing. However, while acknowledging the parent's request, the College may decide that based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour.
- A record will be kept of the engagement of all involved.
- 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 involved and their parents. (Section 2.5 and 2.7)
- The record will include the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour.

3. Follow-up Procedures when behaviour has been deemed as bullying behaviour:

- Strategies are implemented as agreed with students and parents.
- Teacher engages with the students and their parents again **no more than 20 days** after the initial engagement.
- This engagement reviews the effectiveness of the strategies used and the relationship between the students involved.
- The teacher documents the review with the students and their parents to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased and the views of the parents and the students in relation to this.
- If it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased, the teacher should document and date this.
- Teacher should note any engagement with outside agencies/supports.
- If the bullying behaviour has not ceased, the teacher should review the strategies used in consultation with the students involved and their parents. A timeframe should be agreed for further engagement until the bullying behaviour has ceased.
- If it becomes clear that the student displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing to display the bullying behaviour, then the school may further consider addressing the behaviour through the College Code of Behaviour.
- If a parent is not satisfied with how the bullying behaviour has been addressed, by the College, in accordance with *the Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post Primary Schools*, they should be referred to the College Complaints Procedure.
- If a parent is dissatisfied with how a complaint has been handled, they may make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children if they believe that the school's actions have had a negative effect on the student.

4. Where it is determined that the behaviour is not bullying behaviour, the strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour as provided for in the College Code of Behaviour

The school will use the following approaches to support those who experience, witness and display bullying behaviour (see Chapter 6 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

- Student(s) will be referred to the Student Support Team and a member of this team will be assigned as the support person.
- A sanction may apply for the person(s) displaying bullying behaviour in accordance with the Code of Behaviour, as well as being referred to the Student Support Team.
- The assigned support person will oversee the agreed plan with the student and their parent.
- The plan will be reviewed and the end of an agreed designated time.

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*.

Additional Supports for Schools and Parents: [Bí Cineálta Resources for Primary Schools, Post-Primary Schools and Parents](#)

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: 10th June 2025

(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: 

Date: 10th June 2025

(Principal)

Appendix D:

Guide to Providing Bullying Behaviour Update

Date of Meeting: _____

Having reviewed the details of the incidents of bullying behaviour that have been reported since the previous Board of Management meeting, the principal must provide the following information at each ordinary meeting of the Board of Management.

Total number of NEW incidents of bullying behaviour reported since the last board of management.	
Total number of incidents of bullying behaviour currently ongoing.	
Total number of incidents of bullying behaviour reported since the beginning of the school year.	

Where incidents of bullying behaviour have been reported since the last meeting, the update must include a verbal report which should include the following information where relevant:

- The trends and patterns identified such as the form of bullying behaviour, type of bullying behaviour if known, location of bullying behaviour, when it occurred etc.
- the strategies used to address the bullying behaviour
- any wider strategies to prevent and address bullying behaviour
- if any serious incidents of bullying behaviour have occurred which have had a serious adverse impact on a student
- if a parent has informed the school that a student has left the school because of reported bullying behaviour
- if any additional support is needed from the board of management
- if the school's Bí Cineálta policy requires urgent review in advance of the annual review
- This update should not include any personal information or information that could identify the students involved.

Appendix E

Review of the Bí Cineálta Policy

The Board of Management (the Board) must undertake an annual (calendar) review of the school's Bí Cineálta policy and its implementation in consultation with the school community. As part of the review, this document must be completed.

Bí Cineálta Policy Review

When did the Board formally adopt its Bí Cineálta policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour in accordance with the *Bí Cineálta Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*? Insert date when the Bí Cineálta policy was last adopted by the school. ____/____/20____

1. Where in the school is the student-friendly Bí Cineálta policy displayed?

2. What date did the Board publish the Bí Cineálta policy and the student-friendly policy on the school website? ____/____/20____

3. How has the student-friendly policy been communicated to students?

4. How has the Bí Cineálta policy and student-friendly policy been communicated to parents

5. Have all school staff been made aware of the, school's Bí Cineálta policy and the *Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post- Primary Schools*?

☐ Yes ☐ No

6. Does the Bí Cineálta policy document the strategies that the school uses to prevent bullying behaviour?

☐ Yes ☐ No

7. Has the Board received and minuted the Bullying Behaviour update presented by the principal at every ordinary board meeting over the last calendar year? ☐ Yes ☐ No

8. Has the Board discussed how the school is addressing all reports of bullying behaviour? ☐ Yes ☐ No

9. Is the Board satisfied that all incidents of bullying behaviour are addressed accordance with the school's Bí Cineálta Policy? ☐ Yes ☐ No

10. Have the prevention strategies in the Bí Cineálta policy been implemented? ☐ Yes ☐ No

11. Has the Board discussed the effectiveness of the strategies used to prevent bullying behaviour? ☐ Yes ☐ No

12. How have (a) parents, (b) students and (c) school staff been consulted with as part of the review of the Bí Cineálta Policy?

13. Outline any aspects of the school's Bí Cineálta policy and/or its implementation that have been identified as requiring further improvement as part of this review:

14. Where areas for improvement have been identified, outline how these will be addressed and whether an action plan with timeframes has been developed

15. Does the student-friendly policy need to be updated as a result of this review and if so why?

16. Does the school refer parents to the complaints procedures if they have a complaint about how the school has addressed bullying behaviour?

Yes ☐ No ☐

17. Has a parent informed the school that a student has left the school due to reported bullying behaviour?

☐Yes ☐No

18. Has the Office of the Ombudsman for Children initiated or completed an investigation into how the school has addressed an incident of bullying behaviour?

☐Yes ☐No

Appendix F

Notification regarding the board of management's annual review of the school's Bí Cineálta Policy.

The Board of Management of St Mary's College confirms that the board of management's 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 ____/____/____.

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: _____ Date: _____
(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(Principal)

Date of next review: ____/____/____