

Scoil Mháthair Dé

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

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The Board of Management of Scoil Mháthair Dé has adopted the following policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour. This policy fully complies with the requirements of *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2024*.

The Board of Management acknowledges that bullying behaviour interferes with the rights of the child as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. We all, as a school community, have a responsibility to work together to prevent and address bullying behaviour and to deal with the negative impact of bullying behaviour.

We are committed to ensuring that all students who attend our school are kept safe from harm and that the wellbeing of our students is at the forefront of everything that we do. We recognise the negative impact that bullying behaviour can have on the lives of our students and we are fully committed to preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.

We confirm that we will, in accordance with our obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the harassment of students or staff on any of the nine grounds specified: gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community. We confirm that we will take all steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent all bullying or harassment of our students in whatever form and however motivated.

Catholic schools have a distinctive understanding of the human person, recognising that every person is created in God's image and likeness and has inherent dignity as a child of God. This is the basis for ensuring that everybody in our school is treated with respect and care, in accordance with the Catholic Schedule.

As a Catholic school, we are committed to respecting the dignity of every individual. No human person is to be devalued and everybody has a part to play in the school community, regardless of difference

Definition of bullying

Bullying is defined in *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* and *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* as targeted behaviour, online or offline that causes harm. The harm caused can be physical, social and/or emotional in nature. Bullying behaviour is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power in relationships between two people or groups of people in society. The detailed definition is provided in Chapter 2 of the *Bí Cineálta* procedures.

Each school is required to develop and implement a *Bí Cineálta* policy that sets out how the school community prevents and addresses bullying behaviour. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour that is not bullying behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

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	28 th February 2025	Half-day training for staff. Presented by DP. Plenty of opportunity for discussion and input. Staff survey completed.
Students	15 th May 2025	Focus group of students consulted.
Parents	14 th May 2025	Parent's survey distributed.
Board of Management	19 th May 2025	Circulated to all Board members
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	Bus drivers	16 October 2025
Date policy was approved: 15 th September 2025		
Date policy was last reviewed: N/A		

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

This section sets out the prevention strategies that will be used by Scoil Mháthair Dé school to address all forms of bullying behaviour, in whatever form and however motivated, including online bullying behaviour, homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour, racist bullying behaviour, sexist bullying behaviour and sexual harassment. (see Chapter 5 of the *Bí Cineálta* procedures):

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.

The **Bí Cineálta** procedures emphasise a holistic, whole-school approach to creating a safe and supportive school environment in the following ways:

1. Culture and Environment:

- A positive, inclusive school culture is essential to prevent bullying. The environment should promote a sense of belonging, safety, and respect among students and staff.
- Open communication between all members of the school community fosters shared responsibility in addressing bullying.
- Leadership and consistency: School leaders set the culture, while all staff are responsible for creating an environment where bullying is unacceptable.
- Encouraging reporting: Our school should create a “telling” environment where students feel safe to report bullying.
- Trusted Adults: Students should have trusted adults to report bullying, whether they are victims or witnesses.
- Safe physical spaces: We must ensure areas are visible and well-supervised to reduce opportunities for bullying.

2. Curriculum (Teaching and Learning):

- Collaborative, respectful teaching helps foster a sense of belonging and empathy.
- Curricula such as SPHE (Social, Personal, and Health Education) and RSE (Relationships and Sexuality Education) promote well-being, self-confidence, and respect for diversity.
- Teaching about diversity, inclusion, and mutual respect is key to preventing bullying, particularly identity-based bullying (e.g., racism, homophobia, sexism).

3. Policy and Planning:

- School policies (like this *Bí Cineálta* policy) should focus on well-being and bullying prevention.
- A range of supporting policies (e.g., acceptable use, supervision, and code of behaviour) should align with the bullying prevention approach.
- Student participation in developing policies helps improve awareness and effectiveness.

4. Relationships and Partnerships:

- Strong relationships within our school are vital in preventing bullying, supported by formal and informal structures like student councils, clubs, and parent associations.
- Awareness initiatives about bullying causes and impacts (e.g., identity-based bullying, sexism, homophobia) help educate the community.
- Student and parent involvement: We must engage all students and parents, including those who may face barriers due to language or cultural differences.
- Activities that build empathy and resilience, such as peer mentoring and promoting acts of kindness, are important for creating a supportive school environment.
- The school community (including staff, students, and parents) should actively participate in creating, implementing, and reviewing bullying prevention policies.

5. Preventing Cyberbullying Behaviour:

- Implementing the SPHE curriculum to foster well-being.
- Teaching digital media literacy to encourage responsible online behaviour and digital citizenship.
- Regular discussions with students about respectful and kind online relationships.
- Acceptable use policy to be regularly reviewed and implemented
- Code of Behaviour should include online behaviour
- Hosting online safety events for parents to help them oversee children's online activities.
- Holding an Internet Safety Day to raise awareness about appropriate online behaviour.

Additionally, *the digital age of consent in Ireland is 16*, meaning students under 16 need parental permission to use certain online platforms. Students under 13 should not have social media accounts. We must ensure that students and parents are informed about these guidelines to ensure safety online.

6. Homophobic/Transphobic Bullying:

- Inclusive environment: Display relevant posters and materials.
- Peer support: Encourage activities like peer mentoring and empathy building.
- Challenge gender stereotypes.
- Awareness: Hold workshops for students, staff, and parents on the impact of homophobic bullying.
- Encourage reporting: Promote students speaking up when they witness homophobic behaviour.

7. Racist Bullying:

- Celebrate diversity: Foster a culture where students see themselves reflected in the school environment.
- Visible diversity: Display the cultural diversity of the school.
- Raise awareness: Conduct workshops for students, staff, and parents on racism.
- Peer support: Encourage peer mentoring and reporting of racist behaviour.
- Support for diverse students: Offer assistance for students with English as an additional language, ethnic minorities, and their families.
- Inclusive materials: Ensure that library and reading materials reflect diverse experiences.

8. Sexist Bullying:

- Gender equality: Promote equal treatment and opportunities for all students, regardless of sex.
- Role models: Ensure staff model respectful behaviour and treat students equally.
- Awareness campaigns: Organise presentations and workshops on gender equality.
- Parental involvement: Encourage parents to reinforce respect and equality at home.

9. Sexual Harassment:

- Education and awareness: Focus on teaching students about healthy relationships and respect using the SPHE curriculum.
- Zero-tolerance approach: Ensure the school enforces clear policies against sexual harassment.
- Positive role models: Promote respect and kindness through role models within the school community.
- Challenge stereotypes: Address gender stereotypes that may contribute to sexual

harassment.

This approach emphasizes inclusive education, respect, and awareness-building through community involvement and clear policies to prevent different forms of bullying and harassment. In developing the preventative strategies which this school will use to prevent all forms of bullying behaviour, we come from the context of our Catholic ethos, where inclusivity permeates our school in a real way.

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):

- Adult supervision is provided in the yard 20 minutes prior to school starting.
- Sufficient adult supervision is in place during eating and yard time.
- Children are not permitted to access areas which are out of the line of sight of teachers and these areas are regularly checked and monitored by teachers.
- Teachers on supervision regularly report back to class teachers on emerging situations
- We encourage open communication between pupils and staff to promote a '*telling environment*' to address bullying.
- Through use of appropriate lessons, teachers aim to develop trusting relationships between staff and children.
- Children are never left unsupervised during school time.
- Posters and artwork are frequently displayed to promote the school's values of quality, diversity and inclusion.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

Class teachers with support from Management team where necessary.

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 of the *Bí Cineálta* procedures):

Steps to be taken to determine if bullying behavior has occurred:

- Each child involved will be engaged with individually at first.
- Following this, all students involved will meet as a group, each giving a clear account of their version of events.
- This discussion should result in a decision as to whether bullying behaviour has occurred.
- For each discussion the definition of bullying will be referred to and will help to determine if bullying behavior has occurred.
- If it is deemed that bullying behavior has not occurred then any incidents of bad behaviour will be addressed using the school's Code of Behaviour.

When bullying behaviour occurs, the school will:

- contact the parents of all involved.
- 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
- keep a record of all incidents using the school's bullying recording template
- Each case must be reviewed no more than 20 days after the initial engagement.

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):

Where necessary the school will engage the support of the following agencies:

- National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)
- Oide
- Webwise
- National Parents Council
- DCU anti-bullying centre
- Tusla (where a child-protection concern exists)

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.