

St. Mary's Secondary School, Nenagh

Roll Number: 65380E



Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of St. Mary's Secondary 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

Bullying is defined in *Cineálta: 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	11 th – 21 st March 2025 30 th April 2025	Staff Survey Staff Meeting
Students	11 th – 21 st March 2025 30 th April 2025	Student Survey Student Council Meeting
Parents	11 th – 21 st March 2025 8 th May 2025	Survey Parents Association Meeting
Board of management	3 rd April 2025 28 th May 2025	Discussion at BOM Meeting Discussion at BOM Meeting
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	N/A	
Date policy was approved: 21 st August 2025		
Date policy was last reviewed: Previous Anti-Bullying Policy was reviewed in September 2024.		

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):

1. Culture and environment

1.1 An environment that supports reporting bullying

- All students have a Class Tutor whom students engage with regularly during the school week. The Tutor's role is to emphasise the importance of respect and to encourage students to report bullying behaviour if they experience or witness it.
- All Year Heads work closely with Class Tutors and subject teachers to remain vigilant to bullying behaviour.
- Staff members engage in regular whole-staff discussion during staff meetings to identify and address challenges that students who wish to report bullying behaviour may encounter.
- The student mentoring system in the school, with mentors being referred to as Cara Leaders, assist 1st Year students with getting to know senior students who can offer support to students

when reporting bullying behaviour. It has been noted by staff that there is a culture of senior students reporting bullying behaviour more readily than junior students where they witness it.

- The school liaises closely with parents/guardians and Year Heads are available to discuss issues relating to bullying behaviour with parents/guardians.
- Staff identified that a longer induction programme would be of benefit to First Year students. This will be implemented from August 2025 (*identified at staff meeting on 30/04/25*).

1.2 A Trusted Adult

- All students are encouraged to report any bullying behaviour to a member of staff whom they trust. This could be a class teacher, Class Tutor, SET teacher, Guidance Counsellor, Year Head, Deputy Principal or the Principal. Members of the Student Support Team may also take on this role.
- The trusted adult will not be involved in investigating the bullying behaviour. For example, if a Year Head is the trusted adult, the Deputy Principal or Principal will investigate and address the reported bullying behaviour. This allows the trusted adult the opportunity to support the student, without leading the investigation.

1.3 Safe Physical Spaces in School

- Staff supervision is an important strategy to assist with the prevention of bullying. A rota is maintained to ensure that supervision before school, during break and lunch time, and after school are in place.
- The lighting in the school is censored so that it comes on automatically once movement is detected in that area of the building.
- Windows are kept free from posters.
- At lunchtime, students are allocated a space for each year group to have lunch.
- An aspect that is the focus of the school's SSE plan for 2025-26 is on finding more social spaces for students at lunchtimes and break times. This is part of the Wellbeing focus of SSE.
- Students are not permitted to use mobile phones during the school day from 9am to 3.20pm/4pm, save in exceptional circumstances and under the supervision of a class teacher. A small number of students have an exemption on medical grounds as the phone is used to monitor certain things such as blood sugar levels.

1.4 Supervision

- Alternative activities are facilitated at lunchtime. This includes a board games club and a chess club for students who wish to get involved in those activities.
- Student feedback is sought via the Student Representative Council (SRC) as to emerging ideas and interests for lunchtime clubs.

2. Curriculum

2.1 Curricular Areas

- The school provides 111 hours of SPHE provision at Junior Cycle as of September 2025
- The school provides 111 hours of CSPE provision at Junior Cycle as of September 2025
- RSE is provided to all students in all year groups.
- The school is implementing 400 hours of Wellbeing at Junior Cycle as of September 2025.

- Other subjects can also contribute to student understanding of bullying and its effects, including History.

2.2 Extra-Curricular Areas

- St. Mary's provides a wide ranging extra-curricular programme incorporating sporting activities, musical activities, artistic activities, debating and other activities.
- Students are encouraged to get involved in extracurricular events from 1st Year onwards.
- Co-Curricular activities such as fundraising, campaigns to raise awareness of specific events/concepts and co-curricular activities such as the student enterprise competition/mini-company.

2.3 SPHE

- SPHE is provided to all students at Junior Cycle level.
- SPHE is being introduced to the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme in September 2025.
- SPHE is being introduced to the TY programme in September 2025.
- Staff are encouraged and facilitated to engage in SPHE CPD.
- SPHE will be introduced to Senior Cycle in September 2027.

2.4 Supports for students with Additional Education Needs

- Guidance and support through the provision of Learning Support for students with additional education needs to help them understand bullying behaviour
- Raising awareness amongst staff that some behaviours exhibited by students with additional educational needs may be linked to difficulties arising from their needs, such as communication difficulties. Some students may have an automatic reaction as a result of their needs.
- All staff will engage with Oide re CPD for additional education needs in 2025/26.

3. Policy and Planning

3.1 Key policies

- St. Mary's has key policies in place that are reviewed annually. This includes the Child Safeguarding Statement, Health and Safety Statement and this Bí Cineálta policy.
- A supervision plan is planned and implemented for before school, during break and lunch and after school. This is reviewed by senior management on an ongoing basis.
- The school has developed a strategic plan to continually focus on policy development and review.

3.2 Consultation

- This policy was developed following significant consultation with the school community, including students, parents, staff and the Board of Management.

3.3 Staff Meetings (Sharing of Practice)

- Staff meetings and development opportunities are designed to allow for sharing of practice, which assists with developing the knowledge and understanding of all staff regarding inclusion and diversity.
- Year Head meetings with senior management are facilitated each term. The Student Support

Team meets weekly.

4. Relationships and partnerships

4.1 Student Support Team

- St. Mary's has developed a Student Support Team, which has evolved from the Care Team that was in operation until May 2025. This team plans and oversees the implementation of initiatives for staff and students. The team also has a role in reviewing initiatives and plans.

4.2 Student Representative Council (SRC)

- The SRC is the formal representative body for students, with all class groups represented. The SRC plans initiatives, such as a Diversity Day, to raise awareness of inclusion and diversity.
- The SRC raises issues and concerns directly with senior management on behalf of students.

4.3 Parents/Guardians

- Parents/Guardians are encouraged to make contact with the school where there is a concern regarding bullying behaviour. This is done by the school during information evenings for First Year parents, and through regular school communication. It is also highlighted at other information evenings during the school year.
- The new school app has made communication with parents more efficient and regular.

4.4 Parents Association

- As the formal representative body for parents/guardians, the Parents Association organises events for parents such as seminars from outside professionals such as psychologists on topics that are of relevance to parents/guardians of students who attend St. Mary's.
- The Parents Association also links with the parents' associations from other primary and post-primary schools in the town to organise events.

4.5 Local Community Links

- The school liaises with An Garda Síochána who run workshops for all year groups around topics such as cyberbullying.
- Other local community organisations, such as the Credit Union, local youth clubs and HSE services also liaise with the school.

5. Preventing Cyberbullying Behaviour

5.1 SPHE

- The SPHE curriculum is implemented as part of the Junior Cycle Wellbeing Programme.
- From September 2025, SPHE will be introduced as part of the Transition Year and Leaving Certificate Applied programmes.
- RSE is provided for students from 1st-6th Year.
- Webwise resources are used to encourage and promote safe online behaviour.

5.2 Acceptable Usage Policy

- The school's Acceptable Usage Policy (AUP) is scheduled to be updated in the 2025/26 school

year. This will set out safe and ethical usage of the internet and IT devices in the school.

5.3 Code of Behaviour

- The Code of Behaviour is underpinned by the CEIST ethos which promotes, respect, community, justice, and fairness. The Code of Behaviour sets out the standards expected of students and the consequences where undesirable behaviour is exhibited.

5.4 Provision of training for staff

- Training is provided to staff on topical issues. Some training has been through Oide's Digital Learning Team.
- Staff surveys completed in March 2025 indicated that 70% of staff had not engaged in professional learning in the area of anti-bullying prior to March 2025.
- As per the SRC recommendation of a student comment box, this will be introduced in Term 1 of 2025/26 and will be managed by the SRC. This feedback will also be used to inform staff professional learning as appropriate.

5.5 Provision of information events for parents

- The school has a close working relationship with the Parents Association whom organize events for parents. Recent events include talks by David Coleman and John Lonergan.
- Parent surveys completed in March 2025 indicate a need for the school to promote awareness of this policy and communicate more regularly with regard to anti-bullying initiatives. This included 33% of respondents who had not seen the school's previous anti-bullying policies.

5.6 Preventing homophobic/transphobic bullying behavior

maintaining an inclusive physical environment such as by displaying relevant posters

- St. Mary's encourages peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities. This includes the Cara programme.
- St. Mary's facilitates workshops and seminars for students, school staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of homophobic bullying behaviour
- Students are encouraged to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour. This can be done by speaking to a member of staff, especially their Class Tutor who meets students regularly.
- The school celebrates events such as Pride Week.

5.7 Preventing racist bullying behaviour

- The school hosts different events during the year to celebrate diversity, including the Culture Day initiative that is led by the Student Representative Council.
- The Cara mentoring programme supports students in First Year by pairing them with senior students who can assist new students during the first year in St. Mary's. This encourages peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
- EAL Support for students for whom English is not their first language.
- Workshops and seminars for students, school staff and parents to raise awareness of racism
- Bystanders are encouraged to report when they witness racist behaviour. This happens through

assemblies with Year Heads and through engagement with Class Tutors.

- The school develops initiatives to acknowledge and celebrate diversity amongst the student population.
- 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

5.8 Preventing sexist bullying behaviour

- Staff are regularly reminded of the need model respectful behaviour and treat students equally irrespective of their sex
- All students have the same opportunities to engage in school activities irrespective of their sex
- Diversity is celebrated at school and the contributions of all students is all acknowledged
- The school is involved in awareness campaigns, workshops and presentations on gender equality and respect. One such initiative is the Choose Respect Campaign.

5.9 Preventing Sexual Harassment

- The updated SPHE specifications are used to teach students about healthy relationships and how to treat each other with respect and kindness
- promoting positive role models within the school community
- Staff and students are encouraged to challenge 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):

- At Board of Management level, the Principal is required to provide a report on bullying behaviour at each board meeting.
- A bullying report is also discussed with staff at all staff meetings.
- Staff are involved in the review of the policy annually, and refresher training is facilitated by senior management each year.
- The Student Representative Council (SRC) and Parents Association (PA) are actively involved in the review of the policy annually. The review assists the school with identifying areas for improvement.
- Staff are facilitated to attend relevant training where appropriate.
- All reports of bullying are recorded and investigated as per section 3 of this policy. The school's Code of Behaviour is also utilised in dealing with issues that are found to not meet the threshold for bullying behaviour, but still is deemed inappropriate behaviour.
- The school places an emphasis on following up with students who experience and exhibit bullying behaviour(s) to identify additional supports to support all parties, and to ensure that the bullying ceases.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

Section C.1

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

- The relevant Year Head(s)
 - The Deputy Principal
 - The Principal
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Section C.2

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, understanding and ability of those involved.
- record the bullying behaviour on the template that is found at Appendix A of this policy.
- 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/guardians of those involved.
- ensure that there is a follow up engagement with the students and parents involved no more than 20 school days after the initial discussion. This follow up allows the school to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased.
- Require parents to indicate in writing where they [parents] wish for no action to be taken. All such requests will be considered by the Principal, but the Principal does have the authority to address the bullying behaviour even where such a request has been made in writing, if the Principal deems it appropriate to do so.

Section C.3

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):

1. All reports and allegations of bullying behaviour will be initially dealt with by either the relevant Year Head, Deputy Principal or Principal. All reports of bullying must be recorded by staff members using the template that is found at Appendix 3 of this policy.

2. The Year Head, Deputy Principal and/or Principal will set out to establish the following information:
 - What has happened?
 - Where has it happened?
 - When did it happen?
 - Why did it happen?
3. If a group of students are involved, each student will be engaged with individually at first. Each student will be provided with an opportunity to provide their account, and they will be invited to write down their account. This will take place outside of the classroom setting, to ensure the privacy of all involved. Students who are not directly involved, but who may have useful information, may also be invited to share any information that they may have.
4. Parents/Guardians will be informed as soon as is practicable.
5. Where it is deemed appropriate by the Year Head, Deputy Principal and/or Principal, the students involved will be met with as a group. The parents/guardians of those involved may also be involved in this discussion, where necessary.
6. At the group meeting, each student will be asked for their account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's views. Each student will be supported, as appropriate, following the group meeting. This support may include, but not be limited to, guidance counsellor support, a go-to member of staff to check in with or other supports available in the school. External supports will also be considered where it is deemed necessary by the Year Head, Deputy Principal and/or Principal.
7. The definition of bullying provided in Chapter 2 of the Bí Cineáltas sets out clear criteria to assist the school to identify bullying behaviour. Bullying is defined as follows:

Bullying is 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.

(Bí Cineáltas Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, pg. 17)

8. The following questions will be considered by the investigating member(s) of staff:
 - 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?

Behaviour will be considered to be bullying behaviour where the answer to each of the three questions is yes.

9. Incidents can occur where behaviour is unacceptable and hurtful but the behaviour is not bullying behaviour. Strategies that deal with inappropriate behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.
10. It should be noted that one-off incidents may be considered bullying in certain circumstances. A single hurtful message posted on social media can be considered bullying behaviour as it has a high likelihood of being shared multiple times and thus becomes a repeated behaviour.
11. As set out in Chapter 6 of the *Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post Primary Schools*, the school will not be responsible for dealing with bullying behaviour that occurs when students are not under the care or responsibility of the school. However, where this bullying behaviour has an impact in school, the school will support the student(s) involved. Where the bullying behaviour continues in school, this will be dealt with by the school in accordance with this policy.
12. Where it is identified that bullying behaviour has taken place, any sanctions that are implemented will be a matter for the school, the student(s) in question and their parents/guardians only.

Section C.4

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):

- Each student who has experienced, witnessed or displayed bullying behaviour will be supported initially by their Year Head, the Deputy Principal and/or the Principal.
- The parents/guardians of each student will be invited to meet with school staff to discuss how best to support the student involved.
- Supports may include support offered by staff within the school, including Guidance Counselling or other supports available within the school.
- A mediation process may be offered to those involved. The school Principal will determine if this is to be facilitated by school staff or by external trained mediators.
- Where a request to take no action is received from a parent/guardian, the school will initially require this request to be made in writing. Where literacy or language barriers may exist for a parent/guardian, the school will facilitate that parent/guardian to do make this request if they wish to do so. The school Principal will consider the request carefully, but reserves the right to deem it appropriate to address the bullying behaviour depending on the specific circumstances involved.

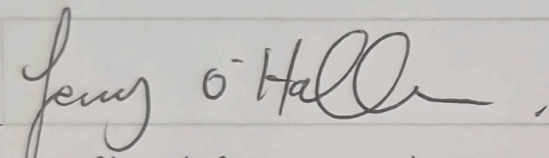
All bullying behaviour will be recorded. This will include the type of behaviour, where and when it took place, and the date of the engagement with students and parents. The actions and supports agreed to address bullying behaviour will be documented. If the bullying behaviour is a child protection concern the matter will be addressed without delay in accordance with *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (revised 2023)*. This will be done by the Principal, who is the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) or the Deputy Principal (Deputy DLP) in the Principal's absence.

Section D: Oversight

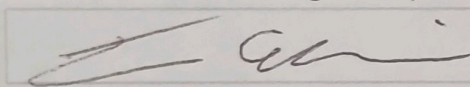
The Principal will present an update on bullying behaviour at each board of management meeting. This update will include the number of incidents of bullying behaviour that have been reported since the last meeting, the number of ongoing incidents and the total number of incidents since the beginning 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: 
(Chairperson of board of management)

Date: 21/8/25

Signed: 
(Principal)

Date: 21/8/25

Reference List

- Department of Education and Skills (2024) *Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post Primary Schools*. [Online] Available from: <https://assets.gov.ie/296487/d0ea26bc-5b6c-45f3-b0fd-2f3e2d3c1f07.pdf> [Accessed 21 November 2024]