



**Mountrath
Community School**
Pobalscoil Mhaighean Rátha

Mountrath Community School



Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

School Patrons: Le Chéile & LOETB

Policy Created By	Mountrath Community School
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Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Mountrath Community 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

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.

Mary Kavanagh (Acting Chairperson of Board of Management)

Date: 23rd June 2025

Kathryn O’Brien (Principal)

Date: 23rd June 2025

Link to Mission Statement & Key Principles of Best Practice

The Board of Management recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of students and is therefore fully committed to ensuring that policy and practice in the school is guided by the four key principles of Cineáltas:

1. Prevention
2. Support
3. Oversight
4. Community

The Board of Management of Mountrath Community 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*.

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.

We have developed and implemented a *Bí Cineálta* policy that sets out how we, as a school community, prevent and address bullying behaviour.

Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour that is not bullying behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

The core definition above sets out clear criteria to help prevent, correctly identify and address bullying among students. Alleged incidents of bullying are however often complex and must be considered on a case-by-case basis.

The core elements of the definition are further described below:

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 (e.g. personal injury, damage to or loss of property), social (e.g. withdrawal, loneliness, exclusion) and/or emotional (e.g. 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 the 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 behaviour

A one-off instance of negative behaviour towards another student is not bullying behaviour.

However, a single hurtful message posted on social media can be considered bullying behaviour as it may be visible to a wide audience and has a high likelihood of being shared multiple times and so becomes a repeated behaviour.

Disagreement between students, or instances where students don't want to be friends or to remain friends, is not considered bullying behaviour unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others including deliberate manipulation of friendship groups.

Some students with special educational needs may have social communication difficulties which may make them communicate their needs through behaviours that can hurt themselves or others. 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.

Criminal Behaviour

Bullying behaviour can be considered criminal behaviour under certain circumstances and legal consequences can apply. The age of criminal responsibility in Ireland is 12 years.

Some online behaviour may be illegal, and students need to be aware of the far-reaching consequences of posting inappropriate or harmful content online. In cases of intimate imagery, the Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020, also known as Coco's Law, **criminalises the non-consensual sharing of intimate images and also criminalises threatening to share these images.**

If bullying behaviour **involves physical violence or threats of violence**, it may be considered **assault**.

If bullying behaviour involves **discrimination or hate speech** targeting a student based on their race, religion, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation or membership of the Traveller community, it may be **considered a hate crime** under the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989, and those engaging in such behaviour may face criminal charges.

If bullying behaviour involves sexual harassment or sexual assault, this may also be considered criminal behaviour. *An Garda Síochána is the appropriate authority to investigate alleged criminal behaviour.*

Types of Bullying behaviour deemed to be inappropriate: *(this list is not exhaustive)*

<p>General behaviours which apply to all</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harassment based on any of the nine grounds in the equality legislation e.g., sexual harassment, homophobic bullying, racist bullying etc. • Physical aggression, Physical abuse or threatened abuse. • Aggressive or obscene language • Humiliation • Intimidation; including aggressive use of body language. • Verbal abuse, anonymous or otherwise. • Offensive joke; whether spoken or by email, text messaging etc. • Victimisation; including very personal remarks. • Exclusion and isolation. • Intrusion through interfering with personal possessions or locker. • Threats, including demands for money. • An attack by rumour, gossip, innuendo or ridicule on any individual's reputation either verbally or through electronic media • Posting insults about a person on a website or sending upsetting text messages on a mobile. • Posting pictures on a message board, pretending to be someone else in a chat room or on a web page. • Damage to personal property • Name calling • The production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other materials aimed at intimidating another person • Offensive graffiti • Extortion • Insulting or offensive gestures • Invasion of personal space • Support those who bully
<p>Cyber</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Denigration: Spreading rumours, lies or gossip to hurt a person's reputation • Harassment: Continually sending vicious, mean or disturbing messages to an individual • Impersonation: Posting offensive or aggressive messages under another person's name • Flaming: Using inflammatory or vulgar words to provoke an online fight • Trickery: Fooling someone into sharing personal information which you then post online • Outing: Posting or sharing confidential or compromising information or images • Exclusion: Purposefully excluding someone from an online group • Cyber stalking: Ongoing harassment and denigration that causes a person considerable fear for his/her safety • Silent/ Abusive telephone/mobile phone call /Text messages/email • Abusive communication on social networks or on games platforms • Abusive website comments/Blogs/Pictures • Abusive posts on any form of communication technology

Identity Based Behaviours	<p>Including any of the nine discriminatory grounds mentioned in Equality Legislation (gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offensive remarks or jokes • Exclusion
Homophobic and Transphobic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spreading rumours about a person's sexual orientation • Taunting a person of a different sexual orientation • Name calling e.g., gay, queer, lesbian ... used in a derogatory manner • Physical intimidation/ attacks or threats
Race, nationality, ethnicity and membership of the Traveller community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discrimination, prejudice, comments or insults about colour, nationality, culture, social class, religious beliefs, ethnic or traveller background • Exclusion on the basis of any of the above • Name calling • Derogatory gestures • Enticing others to bully
Relational	<p>This involves manipulating relationships as a means of bullying. Behaviours include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Malicious gossip • Isolation & exclusion • Spreading rumours
Sexual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unwelcome or inappropriate sexual comments or touching • Harassment
Special Educational Needs, Disability – Learning Difficulties and Gifted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name calling • Taunting others because of their disability or learning needs • Taking advantage of some students' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to recognise and defend themselves against bullying or to understand social situations and social cues. • Mimicking/mockng a person's disability • Setting others up for ridicule
Medical-those with chronic, invisible and visible medical conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making comments/noises/gestures based on medical conditions – including symptoms such as fatigue or appearance • Taunting/isolating because of medical needs

This Policy Applies

- In class, between classes and while on the school premises
- While in school uniform
- On the way to and from school
- On school-based activity, school tours etc.
- To anything done in the school name
- To any behaviour that adversely affects the school reputation or the education of any student in the school

Rights and responsibilities of each member of the school community

I have a right to be:	I have the responsibility to ensure that:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> safe in school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> our school is a safe and secure place for others

Rights and responsibilities of students and staff

I have a right to be:	I have the responsibility to ensure that:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Treated with respect Physically safe and to expect my property to be safe at school Free from all forms of bullying Able to learn & teach without disruption 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Others are treated with respect Others are physically safe and the property of others is safe Others are free from all forms of bullying Others/students are able to learn without disruption Bullying behaviour is acted upon as appropriate

Rights and responsibilities of parents

I have a right to:	I have the responsibility to ensure that:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expect that my child is safe in school and can learn without disruption 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I report bullying behaviour to the school Co-operate fully with the implementation of school policy

Responsibilities of bystanders/witnesses

I should:	I should not:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Say 'no' or 'stop' when I see or hear someone behaving unfairly - be assertive but not aggressive Seek help immediately from an adult, if the situation is dangerous. Tell when I know a student is being bullied. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Join in bullying behaviour for example, laughing at, sneering, 'slagging' or fighting etc. Cheer on somebody who is bullying. Stay in a dangerous situation, e.g. a fight. Bully the 'bully'.

Section A: Development/review of our Bí Cineálta policy

All school community members were provided with the opportunity to input into the development/review of this policy.

	Date consulted	Method of consultation
School Staff	10 th April 2025	Whole staff meeting & survey
Students	27 th May 2025	Focus group meetings and whole school survey
Parents	26 th May 2025	Invitation to all parents for input
Board of Management	23 rd June 2025	Individual & whole group

Wider school community	27 th May 2025	Through school website
Date policy was last reviewed: 20 th June 2025		
Date policy was approved: 23 rd June 2025		

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

This section sets out the prevention strategies that are used by the school. These include strategies specifically aimed at preventing online bullying behaviour, homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour, racist bullying behaviour, sexist bullying behaviour and sexual harassment as appropriate (see Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures).

The four key areas that are essential for a holistic, whole school approach to wellbeing promotion: **Culture and Environment; Curriculum (Teaching and Learning); Policy and Planning; and Relationships and Partnerships** are in line with the national Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice.

Bullying Prevention aligned with Key Areas of Wellbeing Promotion

Culture and Environment	Curriculum
<p><i>A positive and inclusive school culture and environment is essential to prevent and address bullying behaviour. The school environment should be a space where students and school staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported. Relationships between all members of the school community should be based on respect, care, integrity and trust. This is how we create this:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Door Policy- always there to listen • A high standards and expectations in relation to preventing and addressing bullying behaviour is set by senior school leaders through whole school assemblies, parents’ evenings and all interactions with students when and where appropriate • Student Support Team • Consistent approach taken to addressing Bullying behaviour • Students promoting kindness, respect and inclusion through their daily interactions. • Holistic Mentoring System • Seating Plans • Visible Displays around the school • Display of students’ work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We promote an approach to teaching and learning that is both collaborative and respectful in Mountrath Community School. Students are given regular opportunities to work in small groups with their peers, which help build sense of connection, belonging and empathy among students. • Subject and Programme Provision <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The curricular subjects offered to students provide opportunities to foster inclusion and respect for diversity, we have a wide array of subjects at both Junior and Senior Cycle and offer all programmes at Senior Cycle (TY, LCA and LCVP). We provide opportunities for students to develop a sense of self-worth through both curricular and a wide variety extra-curricular programme. • Subject content <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The updated SPHE specifications aim to help students to feel empowered to create, nurture and maintain respectful and healthy relationships with themselves and others. • The RSE strand of the specification also provides space for students to examine and consider relationships and human sexuality which can foster an understanding of diversity which may help to reduce gender and identity-based bullying as well as sexism and sexual harassment. • SPHE, CSPE and many other subjects aim to encourage respect and understanding of different beliefs, perspectives and ways of living, and this is delivered in a

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of a safe to report environment (through the website, in person and through surveys) • Student Journal messages and helplines. • Messages on digital screens • Designated area to report bullying issues • Empowerment of student voice- Students' Council, Class Captains, Prefects, Meitheal, Student Ambassadors & Focus Groups • By creating safe physical spaces throughout the school - Designated areas for students-Seating plan in Canteen for each year group, Library, Games Room – all under the supervision of school staff • Autism Centre/ Sensory room • Events weeks throughout the year e.g. Random Acts of Kindness, Stand Up week • Respect posters displayed in all classrooms • Designated notice Board for 'Bí Cineálta'. Road map of events are listed throughout the school year. • Announcements are made on the loudspeaker from the office emphasising the various events occurring in the school that focus on 'Bí Cineálta'. 	<p>cross curricular way through assemblies. In CSPE, there is a focus on the interdependence of people in communities, at local as well as national and international levels.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through subjects such as History and, at Senior Cycle, Politics and Society is used to raise awareness of racism and colonialism. By examining historical and contemporary examples of racial discrimination and colonial legacies, students can develop an understanding of the root causes of bias and prejudice. • 1st year transition programme through SPHE/Wellbeing • SEN/ASD: Primary school visits, weekly SEN meetings, school, culture of inclusion • Staff CPD on area of anti-bullying • Whole school survey regarding bullying at Year head Assemblies • Themed weeks highlighting action and awareness
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Relationships and Partnerships	Policy and Planning
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<p>Strong interpersonal connections are a vital part of effectively preventing and addressing bullying behaviour. These interpersonal connections are supported through a range of formal and informal structures and activities such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Council • School clubs • Parents Association • Student Support team • Linking with external services e.g. NEPS, CAMHS, Tusla, Gardaí • YSI Community • Activities, Mini Projects, Subject specific • CBAs e.g. CSPE Action Project, SPHE CBA • Class events, Fundraising events • Guest Speakers • Extra-Curricular- Coaches, • Choreographers, Creative Schools Engagements • Year Head & tutor mentoring 	<p>The wellbeing of the school community is at the heart of school policies and plans. This policy clearly details how we try to prevent and address bullying behaviour. We use many of the resources and practices as recommended in the Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post Primary Schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student and Parent Voice <p>Supporting the participation of students and Parents in the development and implementation of school policies and plans helps increase awareness and ensure effective implementation. We do this by surveying all - parents through focus groups with the parent's association and the student council.</p> <p>There are a range of other policies that support the implementation of our school's Bí Cineálta policy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bi Cineálta Policy • Code of Behaviour Policy • Acceptable Use Policy • Child Safeguarding • Data Protection
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- Constant updating of information on Compass on issues known to SST, Year Heads and other relevant *adults (issues are dealt with sensitively and confidentially)*.
- Awareness weeks highlighting various events throughout the school year
- Year Head Assemblies
- Staff Updates
- Work experience
- Weekly and Monthly newsletters

- Acceptable use policy
- Wellbeing Policy
- Staff aware that they are all mandated persons, child protection procedures presented each year as reminder and complete Children First E-Learning Programme.
- Principal & Deputy Principals complete DLP/DDLP training

Supervision & Monitoring

The school has the following supervision and monitoring policies in place to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

In addition to all the practices identified above under Culture and Environment, Curriculum, Planning and Policy and Relationships and Partnerships Mountrath Community School has the following supervision and monitoring policies to prevent and address bullying behaviour:

- Yard and Corridors and in class - A weekly schedule of student supervision on corridors and yard is developed to monitor student behaviour and wellbeing. Any causes for concern are dealt with and reported to school management.
- All staff are watchful and observe relationships between students in class, note absence patterns and let it be known that high standards of behaviour are always expected.
- Class seating plans in place. Teachers regularly check these.
- Survey of Students - Students are surveyed through an online form regularly throughout the year regarding bullying behaviour as part of the school's mentoring sessions.
- Student Support Team – the student support team meet weekly and operate a check and connect system where teachers meet students where concerns may have been brought to their attention
- An online form has been developed which can be completed by students or parents.

Preventing cyberbullying behaviour

Technology and social media have provided many positive opportunities for entertainment, social engagement and education. Technology is a part of life that can impact even the youngest members of society. However, the increase in the use of technology has led to students becoming increasingly vulnerable to cyberbullying or unacceptable online behaviour.

In Mountrath Community School strategies to prevent cyberbullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- We proactively address these challenges by promoting digital literacy, digital citizenship, and fostering safe online environments through our IT classes, through assemblies, SPHE and visiting speakers
- We have developed and communicate to students and parents our Acceptable Use Policy for technology
- Appropriate online behaviour is referenced as part of the standards of behaviour in the Code of Behaviour
- We hold an Internet safety day to reinforce awareness around appropriate online behaviour.
- Strict policy in place for use of Mobile Phones in school.

Preventing homophobic/transphobic bullying behaviour

All students including gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students, have a right to feel safe and supported at school. In Mountrath Community School strategies to prevent homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- We maintain an inclusive physical environment such as by displaying relevant posters and flags in classrooms and around the school
- Conducting workshops and seminars for students, school staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of bullying including homophobic bullying behaviour
- Encouraging students to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour
- Stand Up week
- Encourage upstanders
- Poster Awareness campaigns

Preventing racist bullying behaviour

Schools have become much more culturally diverse over the last number of decades. Students attending schools come from many different cultures and backgrounds. Students from diverse backgrounds may face discrimination and prejudice and may be subject to racist bullying behaviour.

In Mountrath Community School strategies to prevent racist bullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- We foster a school culture where diversity is celebrated
- We have the cultural diversity of the school visible and on display in photos and on social media
- We conduct bullying workshops and seminars for students, school staff and parents raising awareness of racism
- We encourage bystanders to report when they witness racist behaviour
- We ensure that library reading material and textbooks represent appropriate lived experiences of students and adults from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds
- We host a culture week celebrating our variety of cultures in an immersive experience

Preventing sexist bullying behaviour

As a mixed school we place a particular focus on gender equality as part of our school's measures to create a supportive and respectful environment. In Mountrath Community School strategies to prevent sexist bullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- We ensure members of staff model respectful behaviour and treat students equally irrespective of their sex
- We ensure all students have the same opportunities to engage in school activities irrespective of their sex
- We celebrate diversity at school and acknowledging the contributions of all students
- We encourage parents to reinforce these values of respect at home

Preventing sexual harassment

Preventing sexual harassment requires an approach that focuses on education, awareness and clear enforceable policies. We make it clear that there is a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment. Sexual harassment should never be

dismissed as teasing or banter. In Mountrath Community School strategies to prevent sexual harassment include the following, *which is not an exhaustive list*:

- We use the updated SPHE specifications to teach students about healthy relationships and how to treat each other with respect and kindness
- We promote positive role models within the school community
- We challenge gender stereotypes that can contribute to sexual harassment

Preventing bullying due to medical issues

Preventing bullying due to medical issues requires an approach that focuses on education, awareness and clear enforceable policies. We make it clear that there is a zero-tolerance approach to bullying due to medical issues. Bullying due to medical issues should never be dismissed as teasing or banter. In Mountrath Community School strategies to prevent such issues include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- We promote our message of Bí Cineálta throughout the school and model to students how to treat each other with respect and kindness
- We promote positive role models within the school community
- We encourage bystanders to report when they witness bullying behaviour

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

- The Year Head for each year group assisted by Principal and Deputy Principals

The primary aim in addressing reports of bullying behaviour should be to stop the bullying behaviour and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties 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 outlined here.

Students and or/parents should report bullying behaviour to any member of staff with whom they feel comfortable, but their main point of contact will be their Year Head and they should be contacted first. All staff, students or parents may:

- Directly approach at an appropriate time
- Hand up a signed note e.g. with homework
- Email the Year Head
- Make a phone call to the school
- Ask a parent/guardian or friend to talk on your behalf
- Report on the school website at the following link “Report Bullying”

Incidents of bullying behaviour, no matter how trivial, which are drawn to the attention of a staff member, will be dealt with in the following manner:

The staff member will

- Listen, make notes, reassure the student, ensure the student’s safety as far as possible
- Ensure that all reported instances will be passed on to the Year Head for investigation

We work to ensure that the person being bullied feels safe and secure at all times. The person being bullied will be consulted in conjunction with their parents about the matter and how the school is to proceed in the first instance.

- Where a member of the teaching staff has a concern about a student being bullied, either as a result of a personal observation or as a result of receiving a report from a third party, the teacher will refer the matter to the Year Head, Deputy Principal or Principal.

Identifying if Bullying behaviour has occurred:

In investigating bullying behaviour or addressing bullying behaviour in any way, Year Heads may seek the assistance and support of the Principal, the Deputy Principal or the Student Support Team at any time.

The School reserves the right, in accordance with Section 6 Bi Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post Primary Schools to seek the assistance of agencies such as NEPS, the HSE, and the Gardaí, where it deems such assistance is necessary to dealing effectively with bullying behaviour. In any case, where the School deems bullying behaviour to be potentially abusive (Section 2 Bi Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post Primary Schools) it will consult with the HSE's Children and Family Services to assist it in drawing up an appropriate response or to obtain advice or to make a formal child protection report to the HSE or the Gardaí (as appropriate) in accordance with the DES Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary (revised 2023).

Concerns about or allegations of bullying will be investigated and addressed in accordance with Section 6 Bi Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post Primary Schools. The school will:

- 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
- act in a timely manner
- inform parents of all those involved

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.

When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred the Year head will

- Identify if bullying behaviour has occurred by analysing incidents of alleged bullying and seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why.
- This will be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with conflict in a non-aggressive manner.
- Engage with each student individually in the first instance (if a group of students is involved). Thereafter, all students involved should be met as a group (this will only happen by agreement with students and parents)

- Ask for their individual account of what happened. This helps to ensure clarity as to whether everyone is aware about what has occurred. **Appendix A.**
- Each student will be supported, as appropriate, following the group meeting.

The definition of bullying provided above sets out clear criteria to help the Year Head to identify bullying behaviour. **The Year Head will use Appendix B to make this determination.**

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

Where bullying behaviour has occurred

Where the Year Head has deemed Bullying has occurred the Year Head will record any instances of bullying on a school record form - 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. All files and documents will be stored with a Bullying Case file number in the Year Heads Office and will be documented in the Student Support Team notes.

In the first instance a restorative practice and mediation approach to dealing with the bullying behaviour will be taken by the Year Head.

The Year Head will:

- Consult with parents: parents are an integral part of the school community and play an important role, in partnership with schools, in addressing bullying behaviour. Where bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the students involved will be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and to consult with them on the actions to be taken to address the behaviour
- listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation
- Ask the person who has bullied will be asked to sign and complete **Appendix C.** Sanctions may apply in line with the schools Code of Behaviour for serious or a repeated instance of Bullying with a second student. Repeat instances of Bullying with the same student is dealt with below.
- Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved will be arranged separately with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date if the student who has been bullied is ready and agreeable.

Follow up where bullying behaviour has occurred

The Year Head will

- engage with the students involved and their parents again no more than 20 school days after the initial engagement
- In cases where the Year Head considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after they have determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, it will be recorded by the Year Head and passed on to the Principal with all other documentation.

In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the Year Head must, as part of their professional judgement, must document and take the following factors into account:

- Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased and the date
- The views of the parents and students
- Any engagement with external services and supports
- If the bullying behaviour has not ceased the Year Head will 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 who is displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behaviour, then the school will use the strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour as provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour. If disciplinary sanctions are considered, this is a matter between the relevant student, their parents and the school
- Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures;
- 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

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.

However, while acknowledging the parent's request, schools may decide that, based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour.

Support

The school will use the following approaches to support those who experience, witness and display bullying behaviour:

Students who experience bullying or witness bullying:

The school's programme of support for working with students affected by bullying is as follows:

Students may need counselling and/or opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop their friendship and social skills and thereby build resilience whenever this is needed.

In this regard the relevant Student Support Team will work closely with the student to ensure they are actively supported in the school and to engage in school-based activities they enjoy. They may be placed on our school's focus for support.

Students who display bullying behaviour:

Students who engage in bullying behaviour may need counselling to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others.

The Year Head in conjunction with the relevant Student Support Team person will work closely with the student in this regard.

Outside agency support:

The school in certain circumstances may also seek the support and advice of TUSLA, EWO, HSC, NEPS, NCSE, second level school support services, HSE and any other agency deemed appropriate to support the school in dealing with incidents of bullying.

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 been reported since the last meeting, 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
- any wider strategies to prevent and address bullying behaviour where relevant.
- 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 needs urgent review in advance of the annual review.

This update does not contain personal or identifying information.

The minutes of the Board of Management meeting will document the number of new incidents of bullying behaviour; the number currently ongoing and the total number of incidents of bullying behaviour since the beginning of the school year.

The minutes will also note where the Board has considered the bullying behaviour verbal update and document when the Board has decided that an urgent review of the policy is required.

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.

Appendix A - Alleged Bullying Incident Student Statement Form

Date: _____ Student: _____

DETAILS: Include time, place, names of alleged perpetrators, names of bystanders. Detail here both sides of the event

Appendix B- Identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred

To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour the Year Head 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.

Note: 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.

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.

Student Behaviour Promise

Student Name: _____ Class: _____

I recognise that my fellow students and I are all unique in many ways - such as our hair colour, skin colour, clothing, height, weight, size, accents, religions, nationalities, sexual orientations, past and current homes, hobbies, personalities, academic abilities, study habits, athletic skills, musical preferences, health conditions, disabilities and much more.

I don't want to be treated unfairly or made to feel bad because of any of these differences, or simply because someone might not like me.

I understand that I have the right to be different, and no one has the right to treat me unfairly or be unkind because of that.

I know I am entitled to fair and respectful treatment, in line with the school's Bí Cineálta Policy & Code of Behaviour, both in Mountrath Community School and outside of school as well.

Likewise, I recognise that all students deserve to be treated with fairness, equality, and respect. It is wrong to treat anyone in any other way. Therefore, I promise to treat all my fellow students with fairness, equality, and respect, regardless of our differences or personal feeling.

In particular: (Handwrite below "I will always treat (Name) equally, fairly and respectfully")

Signed: Student: _____ Date: _____

Year Head: _____

Appendix D - Bullying Behaviour Update

Bullying Behaviour Update for Board of Management meeting of Mountrath Community School

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 meeting.	
Total number of incidents of bullying behaviour currently ongoing.	
Total number of incidents of bullying behaviour reported since the beginning of this 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.

Signed: Mary Kavanagh Date: 23rd June 2025
Acting Chairperson of the Board of Management

Signed: Kathryn O'Brien Date: 23rd June 2025
Principal

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

1. 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. _____

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

3. What date did the Board publish the Bí Cineálta policy and the student friendly policy on the school website? _____

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

5. How has the Bí Cineálta policy and student friendly policy been communicated to parents?

6. 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?

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

8. Has the Board received and minuted the Bullying Behaviour Update presented by the Principal at every ordinary Board meeting over the last calendar year?

9. Has the Board discussed how the school is addressing all reports of bullying behaviour?

10. Is the Board satisfied that all incidents of bullying behaviour are addressed in accordance with the school's Bí Cineálta Policy? _____

11. Have the prevention strategies in the Bí Cineálta policy been implemented? _____

12. Has the Board discussed the effectiveness of the strategies used to prevent bullying behaviour?

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

Parents: _____

Students: _____

School Staff: _____

14. 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:

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

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

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

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

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

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Chairperson of the Board of Management

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Principal

Date of Next Review: _____

Appendix F

Notification regarding the Board of Management's annual review of the school's Bí Cineálta Policy

The Board of Management of Mountrath Community School 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 on

(Date) _____

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: _____