St. Mel's College, Longford

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour
September 2026
School Roll No: 63750B

Diocese of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise



Contents

*Introduction to the Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

Definition of Bullying

*Section A: Development / Review of our Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

*Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

- Culture and Environment
- A Telling Environment
- Supervision
- Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)
- Policy and Planning
- Relationships and Partnerships
- Preventing Specific Types of Bullying Behaviour-cyber bullying behaviour, homophobic/ transphobic behaviour, racist bullying behaviour, sexist bullying behaviour, sexual harassment

*Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

*Section D: Oversight

*Appendixes:

1.Chapter 2 of Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

2.Questionnaire for the Wider Community

3. Anti-Bullying Team Survey

4.Form A: Initial Report of Alleged Bullying Behaviour

5.Form B: Year Head Bullying Behaviour Incident Report Form

6.Form C: 20 Day Follow Up Report

7: Guide to Providing Bullying Behaviour Update for Board of Management

8.Review of the Bí Cineálta Policy Document

9.Notification Regarding the Board of Management's Annual Review of the School's Bí Cineálta Policy

10.Student Friendly Bí Cineálta Policy

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour.

The Board of Management of St. Mel's College has adopted the following policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

This policy fully complies with the requirements of *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2024*.

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

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

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

Definition of bullying

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

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

Section A: Development/ Review of our Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

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

	Date consulted	Method of consultation
School staff	August/September 2026 September 2026 September 2026	Staff Meeting-staff were reminded of the new Bí Cineálta Procedures by the SLT. The SLT met AP1 Team and staff to further emphasise the policy and procedures. Policy sent to staff for input/amendments.
Students	August/September 2026 September 2026 September/October 2026	At assemblies students were made aware of the Bí Cineálta procedures to prevent and address bullying behaviour in schools by Year Heads and SLT. First year SPHE classes deal with the procedure and awareness of the programme. Policy given to the Student Council for review and input. Student surveys and further consultation carried out.
Parents	September 2026	Parents made aware of our Bí Cineálta Policy and updates on the website. Communication to parents regarding the Bí Cineálta policy shared with parent body for feedback and input into the policy.
Board of Management	September 2026	Review new policy draft-leading to consultation and final ratification after amendments made.
Wider school community	September 2026	Canteen staff, ancillary staff, local shops, bus drivers and caretaker consulted on bullying behaviour and awareness of new procedures.
Date policy was approved: 16th September 2026		
Date policy was last reviewed: 11th June 2025		

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

Culture and Environment

A positive and inclusive school culture and environment is essential to prevent and address bullying behaviour. St. Mel's College is an environment where students and school staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe connected and supported.

Relationships between all members of the school community are based on respect care integrity and trust. Open communication between the patron, board of management school staff, students and parents help to foster a collaborative approach and shared responsibilities in relation to preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.

The school leadership team influences the school culture and sets the standards and expectations for the school community. Each member of school staff has a responsibility to develop and maintain a school culture where bullying behaviour is unacceptable and to take a consistent approach to addressing bullying behaviour. Students shape the school culture by promoting kindness and inclusion within their peer group and maintaining a positive and supportive school environment for all. Parents, as active partners in their child's education, help foster an environment where bullying behaviour is not tolerated through promoting empathy and respect.

A telling environment.

St. Mel's College supports a telling environment. Students are provided with an environment where they feel comfortable to talk about concerns regarding bullying behaviour. Students realise that it is important to tell a trusted adult when they see any form of bullying. Telling or reporting of bullying behaviour is encouraged. St. Mel's College also has an Anti-Bullying Team. Two teachers take responsibility for each year group and carry out surveys three times a year to address if there is any bullying behaviour. This ensures each student can report their own or another student's experience of bullying behaviour. Students are also made aware that they can approach a 'trusted adult', a member of staff if they have concerns if they have witnessed bullying behaviour in any way.

The creation of a safe physical space in school supports psychological safety and it is an important measure in prevention of bullying behaviour. Good lighting is used to avoid dark corners in spaces, school staff who are supervising at break times are visible including during yard duty, posters and signs promoting the school's values create a sense of belonging to our school community, our school grounds are well maintained promoting a sense of ownership, belonging and respect in the school community.

Supervision

Appropriate supervision helps to prevent and address bullying behaviour. In St. Mel's College reasonable measures are taken to ensure the safety of our students and the supervision of our students when attending school and attending school activities.

Our school offers a mix of organised activities during break times such as lunchtime clubs and various sports to accommodate a range of preferences and interests.

Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)
At St. Mel's College teaching and learning is collaborative and respectful. Students have opportunities to work in small groups with their peers building a sense of connection, belonging and empathy among students.

The curricular subjects offered to students provide opportunities to foster inclusion and respect for diversity. Students are also encouraged to participate in curricular and extracurricular programmes. This fosters a sense self-worth in students.

The SPHE specifications help students to feel empowered to create, nurture and maintain respectful and healthy relationships with themselves and others. The RSE strand of the specification provides space for students to examine and consider relationships and human sexuality which can foster an understanding of diversity which helps to reduce gender and identity-based bullying as well as sexism and sexual harassment.

Subjects such as RE and CSPE also provide a forum to allow students to discuss differing viewpoints, differing beliefs perspectives on ways of living. History can be 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. Relationships, partnerships and strong interpersonal connections are a vital part of effectively preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.

Interpersonal connections are supported through a range of formal and informal structures in St. Mel's College such as the student council, school lunchtime clubs, parent associations and student support teams.

Policy and Planning
The wellbeing of the school community is at the heart of school policies and plans. In this policy we are committed to preventing and addressing bullying behaviour, we acknowledge that bullying behaviour interferes with the rights of the child, the ore definition of bullying is stated, the school community has engaged in the development of the policy. The policy also outlines how we strive to prevent bullying behaviour, how we support students who experience, witness and display bullying behaviour, what happens when bullying behaviour if reported, the teachers responsible for addressing incidents of bullying, the oversight of bullying behaviour will be managed and how we communicate our Bí Cineálta Policy.

Other policies such as the Code of Behaviour, Additional Educational Needs Policy, Acceptable Use Policy support the implementation of our Bí Cineálta Policy.

Supporting the participation of students in the development and implementation of our school policies and plans helps increase awareness and ensure effective implementation.

Engaging in appropriate teacher professional learning courses supports school staff to prevent and address bullying behaviour. This is enhances by sharing experiences and examples of best practice. There is a range of training available for school staff which relates to promoting inclusion and diversity in schools.

Supports are available to help prevent and address bullying behaviour. These include National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), Oide, Webwise, National Parents Council, DCU Anti-Bullying Centre, Tusla.

Relationships and partnerships
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 such as our student council, lunch-time clubs, parents' associations and student support teams.

Examples in our school to strengthen relationships and partnerships between members of the school community are:
> age appropriate awareness initiatives that look at the causes and impacts of bullying behaviour including those dealing with navigating friendships, identity based bullying, racist bullying, homophobic/transphobic bullying, sexism and sexual harassment such as Stand Up Week, Anti-Bullying Team surveys, assemblies

> supporting the active participation of students in school life through student council

> supporting the active participation of parents in school life, including those who may find it difficult or daunting to engage with the school due to being unfamiliar with the education system or due to language or cultural barriers. Parents' Association, translators at PT meetings.

> conducting workshops and seminars for students, school staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of bullying

> supporting activities that build empathy, respect and resilience

> encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring

> promoting acts of kindness

> teaching problem solving

>The meaningful involvement of the board of management, staff, students and their parents in the development, implementation and review of their school's Bí Cineálta policy and student friendly version is essential to effectively prevent and address bullying behaviour.

Preventing specific types of bullying behaviour
There is a variety of prevention strategies implemented in St. Mel's College. The school's Student Support Team supports the development, implementation and review of the school's strategies to prevent bullying behaviour. When implementing our prevention strategy the school engaged with members of the wider school community who are in regular contact with students, such as the following:

> school bus drivers

> education welfare officers

> homeschool community liaison officers

> school completion project workers

> local businesses that are close to the school .

These members of the wider school community are encouraged to report any bullying behaviour to the school as appropriate.

Preventing cyber bullying behaviour
Due to the increase in the use of technology students have become increasingly vulnerable to cyber bullying or unacceptable online behaviour. To address these challenges St. Mel's College:

-Promotes digital literacy in order to foster safe online environments. This teaches students about responsible online behaviour and digital citizenship.

-Implements the SPHE curriculum.

-Has regular conversations with students about developing respectful and kind relationships online.

-Refers to appropriate online behaviour as part of the standards of behaviour in the Code of Behaviour

-Through the Wellbeing Hub issues of promoting self-care, good mindset and looking out for others are addressed.

Preventing homophobic/transphobic bullying behaviour
All students including gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students have a right to feel safe and supported at St. Mel's College. Each year we mark Stand Up Week. Posters maintaining an inclusive physical environment are placed around the school, students are encouraged to speak up when or if they witness homophobic behaviour. Many members of our school community wear the rainbow badge/sticker.

Preventing racist bullying behaviour
Our school is culturally diverse with many of our students coming from different cultures and backgrounds. At St. Mel's we foster a school of culture where diversity

is celebrated and students are encouraged to report when they witness racist behaviour. St. Mel's College fosters a school culture where diversity if celebrated.

Preventing sexist bullying behaviour
Gender equality is important in creating a supportive and respectful environment. St. Mel's College is a school for boys where there is respectful behaviour shown towards staff and students irrespective of their sex.

Preventing sexual harassment
Preventing sexual harassment requires an approach that focuses on education, awareness and clear enforceable policies. St. Mel's College makes it clear that there is a zero tolerance approach to sexual harassment. Sexual harassment should never be dismissed as teasing or banter.

Strategies to prevent sexual harassment include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

> using the updated SPHE specifications to teach students about healthy relationships and how to treat each other with respect and kindness

> promoting positive role models within the school community

> challenging gender stereotypes that can contribute to sexual harassment procedures.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

The teachers with responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour are as follows:

Year Heads: Padraig O'Connell (First Year), Mchael Galvin (Second Year), Padraic McWeeney (Third Year), Emma Dempsey (TY), Trudy Farrell (Fifth Year), Mary Hayden (Sixth Year)

R. Dolan (Deputy Principal), J. Gacquin (Deputy Principal) M. Flanagan (Principal)

St. Mel's College also has a Bí Cineálta Team (Anti-Bullying Team) who will carry out surveys throughout the year with each year group. (First-third years shall be surveyed three times during the school year with the first taking place before the October mid-term. TYs, fifth and sixth years to be surveyed at least twice in the school year. Two/three teachers take responsibility for each year group. Students are also made aware that they can approach these teachers if they have a concern at any time or another member of staff.

First Year- M. Quinn, D. Tiernan and L. Noone
Second Year-M. Mulvihill, K. Farrell and N. Sheridan
Third Year-C. Connell, D. Cannon and Micheál Lyng
TY-C. Clyne and N. Rabbitt
Fifth Year-N. Cassidy and C. Moore
Sixth Year-C. Garvey and R.Harvey

When bullying occurs, the school will:

-ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour is heard and reassured

-seek to ensure the privacy of those involved

-conduct all conversations with sensitivity

-consider the age and ability of those involved

-listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation

-take action in a timely manner

-inform parents of those involved

The steps that will be taken by the school to determine if bullying has occurred, the approaches taken to address the bullying behaviour and to review progress are as follows:

-The harm caused by bullying can be physical, social and or emotional in nature. Bullying behaviour is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power and relationships between two people or groups of people in society.

To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour the following questions would be considered:

1.Is the behaviour targeted at a specific student or group of students?

2.Is the behavior intended to cause physical, social or emotional harm?

3.Is the behaviour repeated?

If the answer to these questions is yes, then the behaviour is bullying behaviour and will 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 the above questions is no, then the behaviour is not bullying behaviour. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour are provided for within our school’s code of behaviour.

If bullying behavior has occurred teachers will consider what, where, when and why?

-if a group of students is involved, each student will be engaged with individually at first

-thereafter, all students involved will be met as a group

-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

-it may be helpful to ask the students involved to write down their account of the incident

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

-parents are an integral part of the school community and play an important role, in partnership with schools, in addressing bullying behaviour. Where bullying behavior has occurred, the parents of the students involved will be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and to and to consult with them on the actions to be taken to address the behaviour.

-the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour will be listened to so as to know how to best address the situation

-a record will be kept of the engagement with all involved

-the record will document the form and type of bullying behaviour, if known, where an incident took place and the date of the initial engagement with the students involved and their parents

-the record will include the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour.

Follow up where this bullying behaviour has occurred:

-the teacher will engage with the students involved on their parents again no more than 20 school days after the initial engagement

-factors that will be considered as part of this engagement are the nature of the bullying behaviour, the effectiveness of the strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and the relationship between the students involved

-the teacher will document the review with students and their parents to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased and the views of students and their parents in relation to this

-the date it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased will also be recorded

-Any engagement with external services slash supports will also be noted

-ongoing supervision and support may be needed for students involved even when bullying behaviour has ceased

-if the bullying behaviour has not ceased the teacher will review the strategies used in consultation with the students involved and their parents. A time frame will 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 consideration will be given to using 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.

-if a parent is not satisfied with how the bullying behaviour has been addressed by the school in accordance with the *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying and Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, they should be referred to the school's complaint 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.

* 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 the 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.

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 practical after there has been a material change in any matter to which this policy refers.

Signed: Fr Seán Lynch Date: 16/09/26

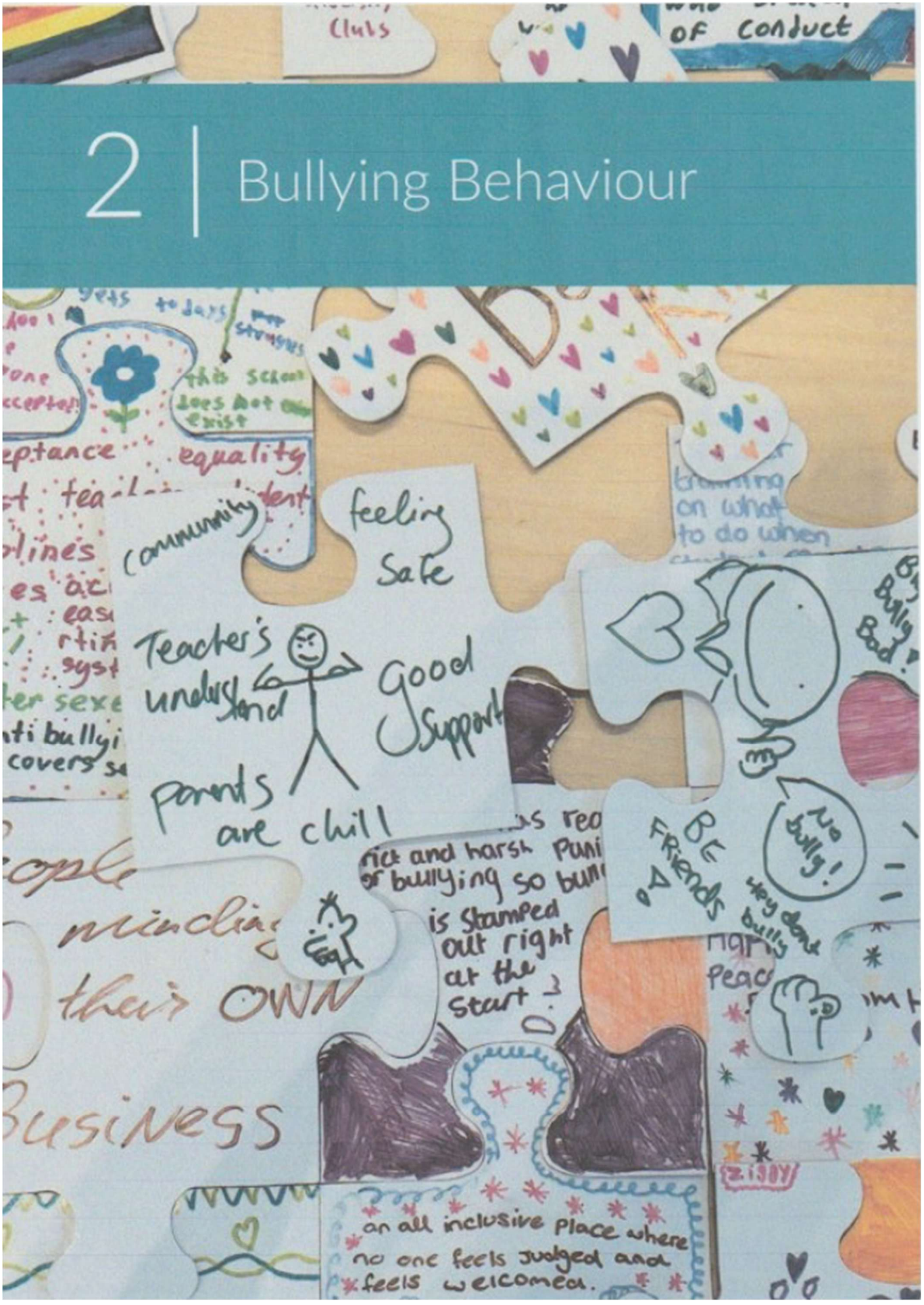
(Chairperson of the board of ~~management~~)

Signed: M. Flanagan Date: 16/09/26

(Principal)

Appendixes

2 | Bullying Behaviour



2.1 Definition of bullying behaviour as outlined in *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying*

Core definition of Bullying Behaviour

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.

Building on many years of international research, the core definition above sets out clear criteria to help school communities to 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.

There are many different methods of bullying behaviour, including physical, verbal and relational forms, and it can take place online and offline. There are also many different motives for bullying behaviour which can be understood on an individual level (for example, desire for dominance, status, revenge) and/or on a societal level (for example, identity-based bullying such as racist, disablist, sexist or LGBTQ+ bullying). Bullying behaviour in schools is often strongly influenced by attitudes, behaviours, norms and power dynamics that are deeply engrained in our society.

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 (for example, personal injury, damage to or loss of property), social (for example, withdrawal, loneliness, exclusion) and/or emotional (for example, low self-esteem, depression, anxiety) and can have a serious and long-term negative impact on the student experiencing the bullying behaviour. If the repeated harm is real for the student experiencing the behaviour but unintended by the other student, this is not bullying but, importantly, must still be addressed under 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.

2.2 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.



2.3 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[11], 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.



11 Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989
https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1989/act/19/enacted/en/print.html

2.4 When bullying behaviour becomes a child protection concern

Section 10 of the Children First Act, 2015 places a statutory obligation on schools, as a "provider of a relevant service" to ensure, as far as practicable, that each child attending the school is safe from harm while attending school or otherwise participating in school activities.

Teachers registered with the Teaching Council are Mandated Persons under the Children First Act. They have a legal obligation under the Act to report harm of children that meets or is above a defined threshold to Tusla, and also to assist Tusla if requested, in assessing a concern which is the subject of a mandated report. If the concern does not reach the threshold for mandated reporting, but a teacher feels that it is a reasonable concern about the welfare or protection of a child, a report should be made to Tusla under the Children First National Guidance. The Children First National Guidance applies to everyone. All school staff and volunteers must report reasonable concerns to Tusla.

The *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (Revised 2023)* provide that all school staff should report reasonable concerns to the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) who may take advice and/or report the concerns to Tusla. If the staff member is a registered teacher and the concern is at or above the threshold of harm at which a mandated report must be made the concern shall be submitted as a mandated report to Tusla jointly by the DLP and the registered teacher. See Chapter 5 of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (Revised 2023)*.

The Children First Act defines harm as assault, ill-treatment, neglect or sexual abuse and covers single and multiple instances.

The threshold of harm is reached where the mandated person believes that a child's health, development or welfare have been, or are being seriously affected, or are likely to be seriously affected.

The Children First National Guidance document 2017 is the national, overarching guidance with regard to child safeguarding. The Guidance provides that in cases of serious instances of bullying where the behaviour is regarded as possibly abusive, a referral may need to be made to Tusla or An Garda Síochána as appropriate.

Generally, bullying behaviour can be addressed without the involvement of Tusla. However, bullying behaviour may become a child protection concern when it results in significant physical or emotional harm, or where it becomes a persistent and severe problem and measures taken to address it are not effective.

In determining when bullying behaviour should be reported to Tusla the following factors should be considered:

- the impact on the child
- protective/appropriate action taken by the parents
- protective/appropriate action taken by the school
- engagement of child/family with support services such as NEPS

If there is doubt about whether bullying behaviour is a child protection concern schools should contact Tusla's social work department for advice. This will enable the social worker to explore the situation with school staff and provide advice on the best course of action.

Contact details for Tusla are included in the Resources Guide which accompanies these procedures.

Click here for more information on the Department's Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools[12]:

Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools

2.5 How bullying behaviour occurs

Bullying behaviour can take many forms, which can occur separately or together. These can include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

Direct bullying behaviour:

Physical bullying behaviour:

- Physical bullying behaviour includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping students. It may also take the form of severe physical assault. While students can often engage in "mess fights" they can sometimes be used as a disguise for physical harassment or inflicting pain.
- Personal property can be a focus of attention for bullying behaviour. This may result in damage to clothing, mobile phone or other devices, schoolbooks and other learning material or interference with a student's locker or bicycle. The contents of school bags and pencil cases may be scattered on the floor. Items of personal property may be defaced, broken, stolen or hidden.

Verbal bullying behaviour:

- Continual name-calling directed at a student which hurts, insults or humiliates the student should be regarded as a form of bullying behaviour. Often name-calling of this type refers to physical appearance; for example, size or clothes worn or gender identity. It can also refer to a student's accent, distinctive voice characteristics, academic ability, race or ethnic origin.

Written bullying behaviour:

- Written bullying behaviour includes writing insulting remarks about a student in public places, passing around notes about or drawings of a student.

Extortion

- Bullying behaviour can involve extortion. Extortion is where something is obtained through force or threats.

Indirect bullying behaviour:

Exclusion

- Exclusion bullying behaviour occurs where a student is deliberately and repeatedly isolated, excluded or ignored by a student or group of students.

12 Child Protection Procedures https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/d7be05-child-protection/

Relational

- Relational bullying behaviour occurs when a student's attempts to socialise and form relationships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined. Common forms include control: "Do this or I won't be your friend anymore"; a group of students ganging up against one student; non-verbal gesturing; malicious gossip; spreading rumours about a student; giving a student the "silent treatment"; and the deliberate manipulation of friendship groups to make someone unpopular.

Online bullying behaviour:

Online bullying behaviour (cyberbullying) is carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as text or direct messaging/instant messaging, social media platforms, e-mail, apps, digital gaming sites, gaming consoles, chatrooms and other online technologies.

This form of bullying behaviour can include:

- sending or sharing nasty, insulting, offensive, and/or intimidating messages or images via text messages, emails, direct messages or other websites or apps
- posting information considered to be personal, private and sensitive without consent
- making and/or participating in fake profiles on a social network to impersonate and/or humiliate other students
- excluding or disrupting access to a student on purpose from online chat groups, access to accounts or from an online game

Even though a message may be posted online just once by a student it can be considered bullying behaviour as it may be seen by a wide audience where it is intended to be shared or has a likelihood of being shared multiple times and is thus repeated.

As online bullying uses technology to carry out bullying behaviour and does not require face-to-face contact it can occur at any time. Many types of bullying behaviour can be facilitated through online bullying. In many cases online bullying can relate to an "offline" experience with someone known to the student. This type of bullying may involve forms of sexual exploitation including but not limited to, sextortion and the non-consensual sharing of intimate images. The sharing or threatened sharing of images without consent is a criminal offence.

2.6 Where bullying behaviour can occur

Bullying behaviour can happen anywhere, online or offline and at any time, but there are certain places and times where bullying behaviour can be more likely to occur. These can include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

Inside School

School physical environments can have a significant influence on social relationships among students and can impact on the ability of school staff to effectively prevent and address bullying. Well-designed school environments play a vital role in preventing bullying behaviour and promoting inclusion, positive relationships, and a safe and supportive learning environment.



School yard: Bullying behaviour can take place in the school yard. School grounds with hidden or obscure parts may provide an environment where bullying behaviour is more likely to occur. Many common school yard games present opportunities for bullying behaviour because of their physical nature. Continuing provocation may lead to a physical fight and in some cases the student experiencing bullying behaviour may appear to be the aggressor as they give vent to their frustration.

In the classroom: Bullying behaviour can take place in class. It may occur subtly through glances, looks, sniggers or may take the more overt form of physical intimidation or deliberate isolation. Bullying behaviour may also occur between class periods when the students or the teacher moves.

Other areas: Bullying behaviour can take place in other areas such as toilets, corridors, cloakrooms, locker areas, changing rooms, showers, gym, canteen and assembly hall.

Outside School

A school is not expected to deal 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, schools are required to support the students involved. Where the bullying behaviour continues in school, schools should deal with it in accordance with their Bí Cineálta policy. See Section 6.2 of these procedures.

Coming to and from school: Bullying behaviour can occur in the area immediately outside the school, the local shops and the wider local area. Bullying behaviour can take place at the bus-stop or on the journey to and from school whether the students are walking, cycling or on school buses.

Bullying behaviour can also take place in organised clubs and groups outside of school such as sports clubs.

Online bullying (cyberbullying) behaviour, along with all other types of bullying behaviour, can cause significant harm and can have a lasting impact on students who experience this behaviour. Access to technology means that online bullying behaviour can happen anytime, and the student's home is no longer a safe place. The nature of these technologies means that digital content can be shared and seen by a very wide audience almost instantly and the content is almost impossible to delete permanently.

2.7 Types of bullying behaviour

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

- **disablist bullying behaviour:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of a perceived or actual disability or additional need
- **exceptionally able bullying:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their high academic ability or outstanding talents
- **gender identity bullying:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their perceived or actual gender identity
- **homophobic/transphobic (LGBTQ+) bullying:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their perceived or actual membership of the LGBTQ+ community
- **physical appearance bullying:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their physical appearance. Students who "look different" can be mocked or criticised about the shape, size or appearance of their body
- **racist bullying:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their race or ethnic origin which includes membership of the Traveller or Roma community. Racism is defined in the *National Action Plan Against Racism*[13] as "a form of domination which manifests through those power dynamics present in structural and institutional arrangements, practices, policies and cultural norms, which have the effect of excluding or discriminating against individuals or groups, based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin"[14]
- **poverty bullying:** behaviour that intends to humiliate a student because of a lack of resources
- **religious identity bullying:** behaviour that intends to harm a student because of their religion or religious identity
- **sexist bullying:** behaviour that intends to harm a student based on their sex, perpetuating stereotypes that a student or a group of students are inferior because of their sex
- **sexual harassment:** any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature or other conduct based on sex which affects the dignity of the student

13 National Action Plan Against Racism 2023-2027 can be accessed here https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/d157a-minister-obrien-announces-publication-of-irelands-national-action-plan-against-racism-2023-2027/

14 ibid, p8.

Questionnaire for the Wider Community

Q1. How would you rate your understanding of what constitutes bullying.

- Very clear
- Somewhat clear
- Not Clear

Q2. Do you consider St. Mel's College to be a safe environment for students?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Q3. Are you aware that St. Mel's College has an Anti-bullying policy?

- Yes
- No

Q4. Have you witnessed anything that you would consider to be bullying behaviour by students of St. Mel's College?

- Yes
- No

Q5. Do you know who to contact if you have a concern regarding bullying behaviour you may witness?

- Yes
- No

Q6. Is there anything else you think is necessary for the school to be aware of in their efforts to address/prevent bullying behaviour which occurs outside of the school grounds.

- Yes
- No

If yes, please explain:

_____

_____

St Mel's College
Anti-Bullying Campaign

Student Survey

Name (Block Letters): _____ Class: _____

Name any student(s) in your year who gets more teasing, hassle or disrespectful treatment or are more left out, ignored or isolated than others:

_____

Did this unfair treatment involve?

Name-calling ☐ Jeering ☐ Interfering with property ☐

Racist Comments ☐ Pushing ☐ Exclusion ☐ Striking with hand/foot ☐

Other unfair treatment (explain): _____

_____

Have you ever treated them this way? Yes ☐

Never ☐

Name any student **in this school** who has treated them in this way:

_____

Do you think you suffer more disrespectful treatment than others in school?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Do you consider naming and commenting on someone using **Facebook / Snapchat** etc. a form of bullying?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Do you know anyone who is being bullied on Social Media? _____

_____

I know that it is unfair, wrong and very serious for an individual or group to treat others in this way. I also know that if I see this kind of behaviour going on, or hear that it is happening, I should report it to a teacher. If I do not I am supporting the bullying behaviour and helping it to continue.

The information I have given above is true.

Signed: _____ Date: ____/____/____

Form A:

St. Mel's College

Initial Report of Alleged Bullying Behaviour

Incident Details		
Part A: Complete by person reporting incident		
When did it occur?	Where did it occur?	Reported by:
Describe what happened		
Part B: Complete with relevant Year Head		
Is the behaviour:	Targeted Yes ☐ No ☐	Intentional Yes ☐ No ☐	Repeated Yes ☐ No ☐
Has bullying behaviour occurred?	Yes ☐	No ☐	
Name of person reporting:			
Year Head involved:		Date:	

Form B: Year Head

St. Mel's College

Bullying Behaviour Incident Report Form

Student(s) Name:	**Parents/Guardians Name**	**Date of meeting:**	
Details- Bully Behaviour Incident			
Date:	**Location:**	**Reported by:**	
Form of bullying	Physical / Verbal / Written / Exclusion / Extortion / Relational		
Type of bullying	Cyberbullying / Homophobic / Transphobic / Racist / Sexist Sexual Harassment / Religious Identity		
Impact on student(s)	**Student response**	**Parent/Guardian response**	
Agreed Actions			
Follow up date (within 20 days)			
Signatures:	**Parents/Guardians**	**Student(s)**	**Year Head**

Form C: SLT

St. Mel's College

20 Day Follow Up Report

Date:	DP/P:	Student(s):	Parents/Guardians
Nature of Bullying behaviour	Type:	Form:	
Actions taken:			
Effectiveness of actions:			
Has the bullying ceased?	Yes ☐ No ☐	Date ceased:	
External Services involved:			
More supports/supervision needed:	Yes ☐	No ☐	
Part B: Bullying has not ceased:			
Further actions agreed:			
External Supports needed:			
Follow Up date: (within 20 days)			
Signatures:	P/DP:	Student(s)	Parents/Guardians:

Appendix E
Review of the Bí Cineálta Policy

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.*
   11 / 06 /2025
2. Where in the school is the student-friendly Bí Cineálta policy displayed?
   AT THE ENTRANCE DOORS THROUGHOUT THE SCHOOL AND ON THE NOTICE BOARD AT RECEPTION.
3. What date did the Board publish the Bí Cineálta policy and the student-friendly policy on the school website? 13 / 06 /2025
4. How has the student-friendly policy been communicated to students?
   IT HAS BEEN SPOKEN ABOUT AT ASSEMBLIES BY YEAR HEADS AT YEAR GROUP ASSEMBLIES.
5. How has the Bí Cineálta policy and student-friendly policy been communicated to parents
   PARENTS HAVE BEEN INFORMED VIA THE SCHOOL COMMUNICATION PLATFORMS: iCLASS & EMAIL.
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?* ☑ Yes ☐ No
7. Does the Bí Cineálta policy document the strategies that the school uses to prevent bullying behaviour? ☑ Yes ☐ No

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? ☑ Yes ☐ No

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

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

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

12. Has the Board discussed the e ectiveness of the strategies used to prevent bullying behaviour? ☑ Yes ☐ No

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

SURVEYS + FOCUS GROUPS HAVE BEEN USED, INCLUDING THE STUDENT COUNCIL AND PARENTS ASSOCIATION.

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:

NONE.

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

NOT RELEVANT.

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

No.

17. Does the school refer parents to the complaints procedures if they have a complaint about how the school has addressed bullying behaviour? ☑ Yes ☐ No

18. Has a parent informed the school that a student has left the school due to reported bullying behaviour? ☐ Yes ☑ No

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? ☐ Yes ☑ No

Student-Friendly Bí Cineálta Policy

Bí Cineálta!

We want everyone at our school to feel safe and happy.

If you think that you are being bullied or someone else is being bullied, you need to tell a teacher or another adult that you trust. They will know what to do to help.



If a student tells a staff member that they think they are being bullied, we will:

- talk with the student
- ask the student what they want to happen
- work out a plan together
- talk to their parents
- talk to the other student(s) involved
- talk with the other student's parents

Bullying behaviour is when someone keeps being mean or hurtful to others on purpose over and over again.

Please
tell someone if you
think that you are
being bullied or
someone else is
being bullied.

Our school
has a Bí Cineálta policy to try
to stop bullying behaviour.

We look at this policy every year to
see what is working well or what could
work better.

We will ask you what
you think.



When it happens a lot.
Not just once.

Bí Cineálta!

Get Help!

Tell Someone!

Please tell someone if you think that you are being bullied or someone else is being bullied

Be Kind.



Our school has a Bí Cineálta policy to try to stop bullying behaviour.

We look at this policy every year to see what is working well or what could work better

We will ask you what you think



Bullying behaviour is when someone keeps being mean or hurtful to others on purpose over and over again.

When it happens a lot. Not just once

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

The Board of Management of St. Mel's College confirms that the board of management's annual review of the school's Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour and its implementation was completed at the board of management meeting of 16th September 2026.

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: Fr Seán Mac

(Chairperson of Board of management)

Date: 16/09/26

Signed: M. Flanagan

(Principal)

Date: 16/09/26

Guide to Providing Bullying Behaviour Update

Guide to providing Bullying Behaviour Update for board of management meeting of _____

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

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

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

> the trends and patterns identified such as the form of bullying behaviour, type of bullying behaviour if known, location of bullying behaviour, when it occurred etc

> the strategies used to address the bullying behaviour

> any wider strategies to prevent and address bullying behaviour

> if any serious incidents of bullying behaviour have occurred which have had a serious adverse impact on a student

> if a parent has informed the school that a student has left the school because of reported bullying behaviour

> if any additional support is needed from the board of management

> if the school's Bí Cineálta policy requires urgent review in advance of the annual review .

This update should not include any personal information or information that could identify the students involved.