Bí Cineálta Policy

St. Mary's Academy CBS

Approved by:

Board of Management 17th June 2026

Date Issued: 19th June 2026

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St. Mary's Academy CBS
Railway Road
Carlow

Appendix A

School Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of St. Mary's Academy CBS 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	04.04.2025	Staff meeting
Students	24.03.2025	Meeting with the Student Council
Parents	19.03.2025	Meeting with the Parents Association, Open Night, School Newsletter
Board of Management	01.04.2025	Board of Management Meeting
Wider school community	10.06.2025	Policy sent to bus companies, outside agencies & clubs involved in working with the students of our school.
Date Policy was approved: 05.06.2025		
Date Policy was last reviewed: 21.09.2026		

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

This section sets out the prevention strategies that will be used by the school. These include strategies specifically aimed at preventing online bullying behaviour, homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour, racist bullying behaviour, sexist bullying behaviour and sexual harassment as appropriate (see Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):	
Prevention Strategy	Details
SPHE and Wellbeing Programmes	Integration of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) with Wellbeing curriculum to promote empathy, respect and inclusivity with a focus on social and emotional learning, appropriate language (peer to peer), White Ribbon Programme & Friendship Week.
Cyberbullying Prevention and Digital Literacy	Regular sessions in digital citizenship, responsible online behaviour and digital literacy with a focus on teaching students about respectful online interactions and the impacts of online bullying. Creation of parental awareness as to responsible online

	behaviour and the necessity of involvement of An Garda Síochana in certain instances. Reinforcement through the Acceptable Use Policy, SPHE class, Forás, and specific training days (Internet Safety Day).
Promoting Inclusion for LGBTQ+ students	Creating an inclusive environment for LGBTQ+ students through displaying links to support services, peer mentoring programmes, challenging gender stereotypes & addressing homophobic and transphobic bullying. Celebration of annual Stand Up Week. Staff training on promoting inclusion for LGBTQ+ students.
Anti- Racism and Cultural Diversity Programmes	Fostering a culturally rich environment through visible representation of diverse cultures and backgrounds. Hosting workshops on racial awareness, supporting students from ethnic minorities and encouraging peer support and respect. Incorporating diverse materials in curriculum to reflect the backgrounds of all students. Celebrating Cultural Awareness through display of countries flags, food and music. Discussion of same in TÚS class and CSPE. 'Show Racism the Red Card' school event. Assistance and support is offered to parents/ guardians by our HSCL.
Gender Equality Initiatives	Promoting gender equality by ensuring all students have equal opportunities to participate in school activities, organising campaigns and educating students on recognising and challenging sexist stereotypes. Staff are encouraged to model respect and challenge gender-based assumptions.
Sexual Harassment Awareness and Prevention	Using SPHE and Wellbeing modules (TÚS) to discuss healthy relationships and respectful behaviour. Awareness campaigns that teach students about the impact of sexual harassment - exploring curricular links through CSPE, RE, Geography, SPHE, Business and History.
Promoting a Telling Environment	Creating a supportive atmosphere where students feel they can report bullying incidents in an safe and secure environment. Encouraging students to reach out to a 'trusted adult' and providing regular reminders that reporting is safe and supported. Celebration of Anti Bullying Week, engagement with the FUSE programme and the support of our Meitheal Team. TÚS teachers and the Year Head facilitate a 'reporting' environment.
Safe Physical Spaces	Designing safe physical spaces by increasing visibility in areas prone to bullying. Effective supervision of school grounds. Identification of 'hot spots' and an increase in staff presence during break times and in areas identified as 'hot spots in

	addition to the classroom, school yard and school trips. Effective use of our CCTV system to ensure that 'hotspots' are monitored.

The school has the following supervision and monitoring policies in place to prevent and address bullying behaviour	
Increased supervision during break times and in hidden & obscure areas 'Hot Spots'	Staff members are assigned to monitor high-traffic areas such as the schoolyard, hallways, locker rooms, canteen, and bathrooms during all break times to prevent and identify potential bullying incidents.
Visible Staff Presence	Teachers and staff members are visibly stationed at key areas throughout the school, particularly in less visible or secluded spaces, to increase supervision and create a safe environment. Promotion of respectful interactions between staff members and students.
Classroom Supervision	Teachers are instructed to monitor student interactions in classrooms, particularly during unstructured periods such as transitions between lessons, to ensure that all students feel safe and included. Physical intimidation or deliberate isolation will be carefully monitored.
Use of CCTV in Key Areas	CCTV cameras are installed in select common areas, such as hallways and entrances, to assist in monitoring behaviour. CCTV is used in line with privacy regulations to deter bullying and ensure student safety.
Student Engagement in Monitoring	Students are encouraged to report bullying behaviour they witness or experience, fostering a "telling environment" where students feel comfortable speaking up. Peer mentors and Student Council are also involved in promoting positive behaviour.
School Bus and Off-Site Monitoring	School staff coordinate with bus drivers and external facilitators (e.g., after-school activity leaders) to ensure that bullying prevention strategies extend to travel and off-site activities where possible.
Regular Spot Checks and Walk- Throughs	Staff perform unscheduled checks and walk-throughs in common areas and hallways to provide additional oversight and discourage bullying behaviours in secluded areas.
Monitoring of Online behaviour (where possible)	The school promotes safe online behaviour by educating students in Forás and SPHE about digital citizenship. While direct monitoring of online activity outside school is limited, teachers and parents are encouraged to stay vigilant about students' online interactions. The school also has an Acceptable Use Policy that sets clear guidelines on technology use within

	school grounds. Promotion and facilitation of awareness campaigns - Guest speakers invited to speak with staff, parents/ guardians and students.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

Year Heads, Deputy Principal.

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 behaviour has occurred, the approaches taken to address the bullying behaviour and to review progress are as follows (see Chapter 6 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):	
1. Initial Listening and Documentation	The designated teacher(s) will meet with the student(s) reporting the incident to listen to their account and record details accurately. The focus is on ensuring the student feels heard, safe, and supported. The provision of an online form for parents and students so that information can be relayed swiftly and confidentially to the senior leadership team.
2. Investigation and Information Gathering	The Year Head and Deputy Principal will gather information by speaking with all students involved individually to understand different perspectives on the incident. If necessary, teachers may ask each student to

	provide a written account of their experience.
3. Assessment of Bullying Criteria	Based on the gathered information, the Year Head and Deputy Principal assesses whether the behaviour meets the criteria of bullying, focusing on aspects such as repetition, intentional harm, and power imbalance. The Bí Cineálta definition of bullying is applied for clarity.
4. Consultation with Relevant Staff and Parents	The designated teacher consults with other relevant staff (e.g. Year Heads, student support team) and informs the parents or guardians of the students involved. Parents are included early in the process to foster a collaborative approach.
5. Development of an Intervention Plan	If bullying is confirmed, an intervention plan is created to stop the bullying behaviour and support all parties involved. This may include mediation (if appropriate), counselling support, and additional monitoring of the students involved.
6. Implementing Restorative Approaches (as appropriate)	Where possible, restorative practices are used to encourage accountability and facilitate reconciliation between parties. Mediation or restorative meetings are conducted only if all involved students consent and staff have been trained in these methods.
7. Ongoing Monitoring and Support	Both the student experiencing bullying and the student displaying bullying behaviour receive ongoing support and monitoring. This may include regular check-ins, peer support, and additional supervision in shared areas.
8. Progress Review and Follow-Up	Within 20 school days of implementing the intervention plan, the designated teacher meets with all involved parties to assess if the bullying behaviour has ceased and if support needs have been met. Parents are also updated on the progress.
9. Further Actions if Necessary	If the bullying behaviour persists, additional disciplinary measures may be applied in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour. Further support strategies, including engagement with external services, may also be considered.

The school will use the following approaches to support those who experience, witness and display bullying behaviour (see Chapter 6 of the Bí Cineálta procedures)	
Students Who Experience Bullying	**Counselling and Emotional Support:** Access to the school guidance counsellor and/ or external support services for

	individual sessions to help manage the impact of bullying. **Safe Spaces:** provision of 'safe spaces', such as the counselling room or serenity room where students can feel secure and supported during school hours. **Regular Check-Ins:** Scheduled meetings with a designated teacher or trusted adult to ensure the student feels supported and safe. **Peer Support Programmes:** Encouraging positive peer connections through mentorship and buddy systems to build resilience and foster supportive friendships. **Encouragement to Report:** Reinforcing the importance of reporting bullying behaviour and providing clear guidance on how to report safely. Regular monitoring will be maintained by the Student Support Team.
Students Who Witness Bullying	**Support and Education on Bystander Impact**: Offering information on the positive role bystanders can play. Conducting empathy-building activities to foster a culture of kindness and inclusion. **Counselling Access:** Witnesses of bullying may experience anxiety or guilt; offer access to the guidance counsellor if they need to discuss the impact of witnessing such behaviour. Referral through the Student Support Team.
Students Who Display Bullying Behaviour	**Restorative Practices:** Using restorative conversations or mediation to help the student understand the impact of their behaviour, fostering accountability and empathy (where appropriate and consented by both parties) **Regular Monitoring and mentorship**: Assigning a staff mentor to monitor and support the student as they work towards positive behaviour changes, with regular check-ins **Parental Involvement and Support Programmes**: Collaborating with parents to reinforce positive behaviour at home, ensuring a consistent approach between school and family. The HSCL will provide parents with the opportunity to engage in support programmes. **Counselling or Additional Support:** Providing counselling to address underlying issues, such as low self-esteem or past experiences of bullying, which may be influencing the students' behaviour. Referral through the Student Support Team.

All bullying behaviour will be recorded on the bullying behaviour template. This will include the type of behaviour, where and when it took place, and the date of the engagement with students and parents. The actions and supports agreed to address bullying behaviour will be documented. If the bullying behaviour is a child protection

concern the matter will be addressed without delay in accordance with *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

Section D: Oversight

The principal will present an update on bullying behaviour at each Board of Management meeting. This update will include the number of incidents of bullying behaviour that have been reported since the last meeting, the number of ongoing incidents and the total number of incidents since the beginning of the school year. Where incidents of bullying behaviour have occurred, the principal will also provide a verbal update which will include where relevant, information relating to trends and patterns identified, strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and any wider strategies to prevent and address bullying behaviour where relevant. This update does not contain personal or identifying information. See Chapter 7 of the Bí Cineálta procedures.

This policy is available to our school community on the school's website and in hard copy on request. A student friendly version of this policy is displayed in the school and is also available on our website and in hard copy on request.

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed, following input from our school community, each calendar year or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which this policy refers.

Signed: _____ Date: 21/09/2026

Ronan Mulhall
Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed: _____ Date: 21/09/2026

Fiona Lennon
Principal