Mountmellick Community School

Bí Cineálta Policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour

"In Mountmellick Community School we aim to provide a caring community which will foster the development of the whole pupil, empowered to lead effective lives in the wider society. To this end we provide opportunities to promote the fulfilment of academic potential, while fostering healthy emotional adjustment, encouraging growth, interpersonal skills and self-esteem. We also provide opportunities to promote physical and spiritual development, while training pupils in responsibility and discipline, at the same time celebrating our school and its successes".

The Board of Management of Mountmellick Community School has adopted the following Bí Cineálta 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 OF THIS POLICY
All members of our school community were provided with the opportunity to input into the development/review of this policy.

BÍ CINEÁLTA SURVEY 2025 – SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

As part of the review of this Anti-Bullying Policy, Mountmellick Community School conducted the Bí Cineálta Anti-Bullying Survey on 25 May 2025, gathering feedback from staff, parents/guardians, and students. The findings informed the development and refinement of this policy.

Staff Findings

- 100% had received the Anti-Bullying Policy, 73% had read it and 71% knew it could be accessed online.
- 78% had received relevant CPD and identified further training needs.
- Staff most frequently encountered verbal (43.8%), written (18.8%), and physical (12.5%) bullying.
- Bathrooms, the school yard, and areas outside the school were identified as hotspots.
- Staff highlighted strong student–staff rapport and effective communication as strengths.

Parent/Guardian Findings

- 83% reported their child feels safe in school.
- Two-thirds had accessed the Anti-Bullying Policy and knew how to contact staff with concerns.
- 98% were satisfied with how bullying concerns were handled.
- 100% agreed the school is fully committed to addressing bullying.

Student Findings

- 33% reported witnessing bullying; 11.5% reported experiencing it themselves.
- 100% were aware of the different types of bullying and had received preventative education.
- 87% knew about support services within the school.
- Students participated fully in Anti-Bullying Week activities.
- Many students were unsure whether the policy was effective, highlighting the need for increased visibility.

	Date consulted	Method of consultation
School Staff	28 / 05 / 2025	Staff Training Staff Training and Questionnaire
Students	12 / 11 / 2025	Student Questionnaire
Parents	12 / 11 / 2025	Parent Questionnaire
Board of Management	11 / 12 / 2025	Questionnaire
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	11 / 12 / 2025	Questionnaire

Date policy was approved:	07 / 01 / 2026
Date policy was last reviewed:	N/A

SECTION B: PREVENTION OF 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):

Culture and Environment

Inclusive School Culture

The school fosters a positive and inclusive school culture where students and school staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported. This is reflected through inclusive displays, diverse resources, and school-wide events that represent the backgrounds and identities of our students. Initiatives are also led through our Meithal and Prefect Groups.

Creating a Telling Environment

The school promotes a safe and supportive culture where students feel confident speaking up about bullying. A 'telling environment' is encouraged, with all community members urged to seek help and share concerns. Students are reminded that reporting bullying is a responsible action, and bystanders are encouraged to report witnessed bullying behaviour. All concerns are taken seriously and addressed appropriately

A Trusted Adult

The school encourages each student to identify a *trusted adult* they feel comfortable speaking to. This strategy supports help-seeking behaviour and makes it more likely that bullying concerns will be reported. Staff reinforce this by being approachable and assuring students they will be listened to and supported.

School Ethos and Values

Assemblies bring the whole school community together, reinforcing shared values. Staff model respectful behaviour, and clear signage throughout the building reminds students what to do if they experience or witness bullying. Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils and consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour.

Are there new strategies we can implement?

- Expand the variety of extracurricular activities to include options such as darts/punching bag.
- Launch a "Cultural Day" to celebrate diversity and promote inclusion.
- Host parent information evenings focused on addressing emerging behaviours and trends.
- Use VSware to record and recognise positive student actions, such as including others in social and learning settings.

Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)

SPHE and RSE Programmes

SPHE and RSE programmes help students develop empathy, respect for diversity, and an understanding of healthy relationships and online behaviour. They also foster wellbeing, build self-confidence, and encourage personal responsibility.

Civic Social and Political Education (CSPE)

CSPE focuses on the interdependence of individuals within communities, both locally and globally, promoting an understanding of social responsibility.

Religious Education

Religious Education explores themes of diversity and inclusion, encouraging students to reflect on the values of acceptance and respect.

History

History lessons raise awareness of issues such as racism and colonialism, helping students understand the historical and contemporary roots of bias and prejudice.

Promoting Student Involvement

A wide range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities foster student engagement, strengthen peer relationships, and support self-worth. Clubs like the *STEM* and *Literacy* Clubs promote participation, belonging, and relationship-building across year groups.

Digital Literacy Education

The Digital Media Literacy curriculum teaches students about responsible online behaviour, digital citizenship, and the impact of cyberbullying. Digital resilience is fostered through lessons on privacy, reporting tools, and respectful online communication.

Groupwork Across All Subjects

Cooperative and project-based learning promotes teamwork, builds social skills, reduces isolation, and strengthens peer relationships throughout the school. Groupwork in SPHE, RSE, and CSPE

fosters inclusion, mutual respect, and awareness of different perspectives. Regular small-group activities across all subjects help students develop a sense of connection, belonging, and empathy.

Are there new strategies we can implement?
- Improved visual displays around the school.
- A student-led anti-bullying group will be established.
- Introduction of a Multicultural Day/Week to celebrate diversity.

Policy and Planning
Supporting School Policies
The implementation of the school's *Bí Cineálta* policy is supported by a range of related policies. These include the Code of Behaviour, Acceptable Use Policy for Digital Technology, Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment, Special Education Teaching policy, Data Protection Policy, Wellbeing Policy, Role of the Class Tutor, Anti-Bullying Policy in the Workplace, and the Workplace Harassment and Sexual Harassment Policy.

Review of Policies
School policies are reviewed regularly to ensure they reflect best practice in promoting a safe, respectful, and inclusive learning environment. They set clear expectations for behaviour and outline consistent procedures for preventing and responding to incidents.

Teacher Professional Learning
Staff engage in professional learning to support the prevention and response to bullying behaviour, and to promote inclusion and diversity. Staff are encouraged to share experiences and examples of best practice to strengthen whole-school approaches and foster a collaborative learning culture.

Relationships and Partnerships
Reinforcing School Values
Year group assemblies bring the whole school community together, reinforcing shared values and expectations. Staff model respectful behaviour, while clear signage throughout the building reminds students what to do if they experience or witness bullying.

Whole-School Awareness
Whole-school awareness initiatives such as *Diversity Week, Anti-Bullying Week, Live Well Expo*, along with guest speakers and other themed events, further embed a culture of empathy, mutual respect, and emotional wellbeing.

Promotion of Respect, Kindness, and Active Bystandership
Age-appropriate initiatives such as Stand-Up Awareness Week are used to explore the causes and impacts of bullying behaviour, including challenges around friendships, identity-based bullying, racist bullying, homophobic/transphobic bullying, sexism, and sexual harassment. These initiatives also focus on promoting acts of kindness as a proactive way to build a respectful and supportive school culture. Students are explicitly encouraged to speak up when they witness harmful behaviour, and bystanders are supported in taking safe, responsible steps to report incidents.

Parental Involvement
The school is committed to supporting active participation of parents in all aspects of school life.

The Parents' Association plays a key role in fostering strong home-school partnerships.

Peer Mentoring

Leadership opportunities such as the *Cairde Programme* and the *Student Council* empower students to actively contribute to school culture, support their peers, and model positive behaviour.

Supporting Student Participation in Policy Development

Students are encouraged to take an active role in shaping and implementing school policies and plans. Their involvement builds awareness, deepens engagement, and contributes to more effective and meaningful implementation across the school community.

Are there new strategies we can implement?

- Promoting or hosting online safety events for parents who are responsible for overseeing their children's activities online
- Holding an Internet safety day to reinforce awareness around appropriate online behaviour.

The school has the following supervision and monitoring policies in place to prevent and address bullying behaviour (see Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

Culture and Environment

Year Group Assemblies

Year Group Assemblies are used to promote key messages around inclusion, kindness, and respect, helping to create a strong sense of community and belonging and to remind students of related policies.

Creating Safe Physical Spaces

Active supervision during break and lunch times ensures staff visibility and presence, with teachers consistently monitoring communal areas such as corridors, the canteen, and the school yard. This ongoing supervision helps maintain safe physical spaces throughout the school environment.

Inclusive Breaktime Engagement

The school provides a mix of organised activities during break times to accommodate a range of preferences and interests, supporting student inclusion and positive social interaction.

Staff Vigilance

Staff maintain a high level of vigilance at all times to deter and respond promptly to any incidents of bullying or exclusion, reinforcing a culture of safety and care.

Student Support Team

The Student Support Team meets regularly to monitor student wellbeing, coordinate interventions, and ensure early and effective support for vulnerable students.

Cairde (Peer Mentoring System)

Senior students support younger peers, helping them settle in and fostering a culture of care, trust, and inclusion.

Bullying Report System

The school also operates a *Bullying Report system*, which allows students to report concerns confidentially. This system has proven to be an effective tool in identifying and addressing bullying incidents that might otherwise go unreported.

New Strategies:
- **Designate student 'Hall Monitors' to complete brief walk-throughs** on each floor, ensuring a visible and supportive presence during transition times.
- **Appoint a responsible prefect to oversee the collection and return of laptops**, providing structure and reducing unstructured time, which can be a risk for bullying.
- **Develop a "Break Room" as a safe, welcoming space** where students can unwind and recharge before class — this helps create monitored spaces during informal times of the school day.

SECTION C: ADDRESSING BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

The teachers with responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour are: Year Heads.

When bullying behaviour occurs, teachers should:
- 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 the students 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):

Is the Behaviour Bullying Behaviour?

To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour you should consider the following questions:
1. Is the behaviour <u>targeted</u> at a specific student or group of students?
2. Is the behaviour intended to cause physical, social or emotional <u>harm</u>?
3. Is the behaviour <u>repeated</u>?

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

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Behaviour.

Approach

The primary aim in addressing reports of bullying behaviour should be to stop the bullying behaviour and to restore, as far as practicable, the relationships of the students involved, rather than to apportion blame.

When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred

Teachers should consider what, where, when and why?

- ➤ if a group of students is involved, each student should be engaged with individually at first.
- ➤ thereafter, all students involved should be met as a group.
- ➤ at the group meeting, each student should be asked for their account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's views.
- ➤ each student should 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(s).

Where bullying behaviour has occurred

- ➤ 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 must 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.
- ➤ it is important to listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation.
- ➤ a record should be kept of the engagement with all involved.
- ➤ this record should document the form and type of bullying behaviour, if known (see Section 2.5 and 2.7 of the Bi Cineálta procedures), where and when it took place and the date of the initial engagement with the students involved and their parents.
- ➤ the record should include the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour.

Follow up where bullying behaviour has occurred

- ➤ the teacher must engage with the students involved and their parents again no more than 20 school days after the initial engagement.
- ➤ important factors to consider 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 should 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 that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased should also be recorded.
- ➤ any engagement with external services/supports should also be noted.

- ➢ ongoing supervision and support may be needed for the students involved even where bullying behaviour has ceased.
- ➢ if the bullying behaviour has not ceased the teacher should 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 consideration should 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(s) is not satisfied with how the bullying behaviour has been addressed by the school, in accordance with the Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools. they should be referred 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.

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):

Support for Students Who Experience Bullying Behaviour
- Students are supported in a compassionate, safe environment.
- Targeted pastoral care and wellbeing supports are offered.
- Restorative practices may be used if appropriate.
- Parents/guardians are engaged.
- Ongoing monitoring ensures the student continues to feel safe.

Support for Students Who Witness Bullying Behaviour
- Students are encouraged to report incidents and act as active bystanders.
- Through SPHE and whole-school initiatives, students learn how to respond appropriately.
- Safe reporting channels and regular check-ins are maintained.
- School values of kindness and respect are reinforced regularly.

Support for Students Who Engage in Bullying Behaviour
- Students are supported in reflecting on and changing their behaviour.
- Behaviour education, restorative practices, and appropriate consequences are used.
- Parents/guardians are actively involved.
- Students may be referred to internal or external supports.
- Progress is monitored over time to ensure behaviour has improved.

All bullying behaviour will be recorded. This will include the type of behaviour, where and when

it took place, and the date of the engagement with students and parents. The actions and supports agreed to address bullying behaviour will be documented. If the bullying behaviour is a child protection concern the matter will be addressed without delay in accordance with Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.
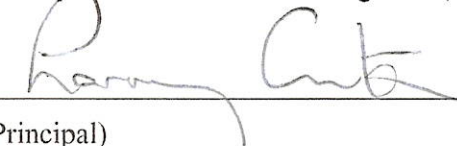
SECTION D: OVERSIGHT

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

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

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

Signed: _____ Date: __7/1/26.__

(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: _____ Date: __7/1/26.__

(Principal)

Review of policy This Bí Cineálta policy is reviewed in compliance with the Board of Management's policy for the cyclical review of all school policies as set out in The School Plan. Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Association.