Mary, Help of Christians G.N.S.

Bí Cineálta Policy

Mary, Help of Christians Girls' National School

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Mary, Help of Christians Girls' National School has adopted the following policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

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

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

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

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

We confirm that we will take all steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent all bullying or harassment of our students in whatever form and however motivated.

Catholic schools have a distinctive understanding of the human person, recognising that every person is created in God's image and likeness and has inherent dignity as a child of God. This is the basis for ensuring that everybody in our school is treated with respect and care, in accordance with the Catholic Schedule.

As a Catholic school, we are committed to respecting the dignity of every individual. No human person is to be devalued, and everybody has a part to play in the school community, regardless of difference.

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 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	11th March 2025 25th March 2025 8th April 2025 *13th May 2026* *19th May 2026*	Staff completed a questionnaire as part of a staff meeting. Half-day closure for in-service. Staff Meeting *Staff focus group review.* *Staff meeting review.*
Students	14th – 21st March 2025 *11th May 2026* *18th May 2026*	Pupils from 2nd – 6th Class completed the pupil questionnaire. *Student Council Focus Group - discussion.* *Senior Class Focus Group - discussion*
Parents	21st March *18th May 2026*	Parents took part in a focus group, facilitated by Ú. Kelly and R. Moran *Parents' Association invited to comment on policy.*
Board of Management	28th April 2025 *20th May 2025*	Policy was shared with BOM members in advance of the meeting on 28th April 2025. *Policy shared with BOM in advance of meeting on 25th May 2026.*
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers		
Date policy was approved: 23rd June 2025		
Date policy was last reviewed: 22nd June 2026		

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

This section sets out the prevention strategies that will be used by this school to address all forms of bullying behaviour, in whatever form and however motivated, including online bullying behaviour, homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour, racist bullying behaviour, sexist bullying behaviour and sexual harassment.

In developing the preventative strategies which this school will use to prevent all forms of bullying behaviour, we come from the context of our Catholic ethos, where inclusivity permeates our school in a real way.

This school takes positive steps to ensure that the culture of the school is one which welcomes a respectful dialogue and encounter with diversity and difference, by ensuring that prevention and inclusivity strategies are given priority and discussed regularly at board of management meetings and staff meetings.

The dignity and the wellbeing of the individual person is of paramount concern in our Christian response. This school will listen closely to and dialogue with parents, thereby building a relationship of mutual understanding, respect, trust and confidence.

In continuing to develop prevention strategies, this school will listen to young people and parents, to help establish their particular context and needs. Frequent periods of reflection and further engagement by the school, young people and parents, will be used to discern appropriate supports for young people in this school and to help inform future prevention strategies.

Culture and Environment

- Encourage a culture of telling, with particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders. In that way pupils will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It should be made clear to all pupils that when they report incidents of bullying, they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.

- Ensure that pupils know who to tell and how to tell, e.g.:
  - Direct approach to teacher at an appropriate time, for example immediately following incident or after class.
  - Hand note up with homework.
  - Get a parent(s)/guardian(s) or friend to tell on your behalf.
  - Niggle Box in classroom, where necessary.

- Teachers explain what a bystander is.

- Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place.

- Provide class lessons to enable pupils 'how to tell' (telling protocol).

- Reinforce the message from teachers to pupils that if anyone is the victim of bullying behaviour, they should not retaliate in any way but should tell an adult. Victims should be reassured that if they tell, something will be done about the bullying in a safe manner and all reported incidents will be dealt with.

- Reinforce the message that those who challenge or resist bullying behaviour can be the key to resolving bullying and if anyone witnesses bullying behaviour, they should always tell a member of staff. This is not telling tales. This is protecting the victims.

- Identify clear protocols to encourage parent(s)/guardian(s) to approach the school if they suspect that their child is being bullied i.e. contact class teacher in the first instance.
- Restorative questions are displayed as posters in the yard.
- Yard games – all classes have designated days when they play with games in the yard.
- Supervision Policy is in place and reviewed at regular intervals.
- Buddy Classes – each senior class is paired with a junior class for activities throughout the school year.
- Lunch time activities in the courtyard – reading, board games.
- Friendship/Wellbeing Week – organised as necessary
- Development of pupil leadership capacity
  - 6th Class deliver the roll pockets to all classes each morning.
  - 5th Class is given responsibility for distributing milk, sandwiches and fruit each morning.

    - 4th Class collects compostable waste for the compost bins each afternoon.
    - 5th Class and 4th Class organise the games at each yard time.
    - Girls in each of the senior classes are given the responsibility of collecting the iPads and making sure that they are correctly stored in the charging units.
    - Friend-Ship – 5th Class pupils are given the task to help younger children find their classmates in the yard.
- 'Treat others as you would like to be treated' This is displayed in every classroom and throughout the school.
- School Gatherings – Seó Beag, Christmas performances, live performance in the hall annually.
- School Teams – football, athletics, soccer, camogie, quiz.
- Accessible school – markings for visually impaired pupils, ramps to prefab classrooms, mobile ramp to school building
- Sensory Corridor for pupil use
- Courtyard garden for pupil use
- Multicultural Celebrations

Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)

- SPHE Programmes – Weaving Wellbeing Programme is taught from 2nd – 6th Class, Stay Safe Programme, RSE lessons, Zones of Regulation lessons taught to some classes and some groups, Walk Tall Programme is taught.
- FUSE lessons taught in 3rd Class.
- Religion – Grow in Love lessons are taught, other religious beliefs are discussed openly
- Drama Lessons – role play used as a methodology to address certain issues and work out scenarios.
- Geography – plan addresses different cultures, customs and backgrounds.
- Teach the Teacher Lessons – pupils choose a topic of particular interest and share their knowledge with the class.
- Internet Safety Day – highlighting how to be responsible online.
- Accord Talks – facilitators visit 5th and 6th Class for a day seminar.
- Transition to Second Level – examples of strategies used: Get Up! Stand Up! Programme (GUSU), Drama lessons.
- Novels and picture books are used to address issues.
- Library books in each classroom ensure that diverse groups are represented.
- Social Skills Groups, Nurture Groups – organised by SEN provision in the school.
- Affirmations and inspirational quotes are displayed throughout the school.

- Multicultural Celebrations are organised where the pupils can learn about different cultures, customs and backgrounds of their classmates.
- Neurodiversity awareness is raised in every classroom– through textbooks and storybooks.
- LEANS Programme (Learning about Neurodiversity in School) taught in some classes, when necessary.

Policy and Planning

- The following policies are in place in the school and reviewed regularly:

Code of Behaviour
Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment
Supervision Policy
Special Educational Needs Policy
Wellbeing Policy
School Tour Policy
Dublin 7/15 Schools Keeping Childhood Smartphone Free Charter
Acceptable Use Policy

- Teaching Council Code of Professional Conduct
- Student Council
- Whole School Events
- Health and Safety Audit
- Consultation process with whole school community for Bí Cineálta.

Relationships and Partnerships

- Student Council meets with designated teacher and principal regularly.
- Parents' Association communicates with principal regularly.
- Friend-Ship – 5th Class girls help younger children in the yard.
- Buddy Classes helps junior girls get to know senior girls.
- SNA/Teacher/Pupil Relationship – regular communication is encouraged.
- Family Days in a school
- Guest speakers for parents/pupils
- Play therapist – presentation for staff, placement with pupils
- Agencies that assist the school:

National Council for Special Education
Barnardos
Daughters of Charity
Children's Disability NetworkTeam (CDNT)
Tusla Child and Family Agency
National Educational Psychology Service – Naoise Delaney (Psychologist), Amie O'Brien (Wellbeing Practitioner)
Webwise
Zeeko
Cyber Safe Kids
Sticks and Stones
St Oliver Plunkett Eoghan Ruadh
Coolmine Rugby Club

- Coaches – Games Promotion Officer (GAA), IRFU Coaches, Soccer Coaches
- Chess – Gabrielle Martin
- Visiting Teacher Service –Donal McSweeney (Visiting Teacher)
- Parish Team who organises sacramental preparation with the school
- Todds Breakfast Club in School Hall
- Todd's After-School in Prefab 8
- After-School Provision in the Community
- ADHD Ireland – our school is part of the School Accreditation Programme
- Outside agencies providing workshops to classes
- Community Gardaí
- Local second level schools

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):

- Code of Behaviour
- Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment
- Supervision Policy
- Special Educational Needs Policy
- Wellbeing Policy
- School Tour Policy
- Dublin 7/15 Schools Keeping Childhood Smartphone Free Charter
- Acceptable Use Policy

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

- The staff member to whom the bullying behaviour is reported, in the first instance
- The class teacher
- Assistant principal with responsibility for discipline
- The principal

When bullying behaviour occurs, the school will:

> ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour is heard and reassured
> seek to ensure the privacy of those involved
> conduct all conversations with sensitivity
> consider the age 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):

Identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred

We ascertain the following:

- *What* has occurred?
- *When* it occurred?
- *Where* it occurred?
- *Why* it occurred?
- *Who is involved?*

1. Meet each pupil individually at first.
2. Where appropriate and possible, each child writes their account of events.
3. Where a group is involved, meet pupils in a group so that everyone is clear about each other's views, if/*when it is necessary*.

Does the behaviour meet the criteria for bullying?

- Is it harmful?
- Is it repeated?
- Is it targeted?

If it has been deemed bullying behaviour, parents of all pupils involved are informed that the behaviour has occurred. School staff do not identify the children involved.

If a serious incident is being dealt with through the Code of Behaviour, parents of all pupils involved are also informed.

Where bullying behaviour has occurred

Staff know that Bí Cineálta procedures must be followed once this has been established. Bullying behaviour is not dealt with through the Code of Behaviour.

School will support the pupil who is being bullied, if the behaviour is taking place inside the school or outside the school.

School will support the pupil/pupils displaying the bullying behaviour by listening and seeking understanding.

School will not investigate incidents of bullying that are taking place outside the school but will support the pupil in school.

Staff will involve the pupils in the actions that need to be taken – what happens next.

1. If bullying behaviour is occurring for the first time between two pupils or groups of pupils, a verbal warning is given by the teacher, a verbal apology offered and a verbal promise agreed.
2. Strategies agreed to stop the bullying behaviour.
3. This is recorded (Appendix 1).
4. Parents of all pupils involved are informed. This can be done by phone consultation by the class teacher as the information must be shared in a timely manner.

Determining if bullying behaviour has ceased

Parent, pupil and class teacher (of all pupils involved) meet individually 10 school days after the bullying behaviour (no more than 20 school days after initial phone call/meeting) to review progress.

If it has ceased?

- Ongoing supervision and support will be provided for both parties.

If it has not ceased or the behaviour occurs again before the agreed date for meeting?

1. The pupil/pupils will be asked to sign a 'Pupil Behaviour Promise' which will also be signed by the parents/guardians.
2. Review the strategies used.
3. This is recorded. (Appendix 1)
4. Arrange a meeting again within an agreed time frame. AP with responsibility for discipline will attend the meeting with the class teacher, where necessary.

If it has ceased?

- Ongoing supervision and support will be provided for both parties.

If it has not ceased?

1. Meeting with parents, pupil, class teacher and principal is arranged.
2. Review the strategies used.
3. This is recorded. (Appendix 1)

Requests to take no action

If a student does not want to be identified as reporting a bullying incident:

- Show empathy to the pupil.
- Deal with the matter sensitively.
- Create an action plan to address the issue.
- Make the pupil aware of how their parents will be involved.

If a parent requests that the school is not to act, they must put this request in writing.

The school may deem it appropriate to address the issue further in the interests of the health and safety of the pupil (contrary to the parent's wishes).

Recording Bullying Behaviour

If a teacher is investigating an allegation of bullying, all incidents of note are recorded in the Incident Book. Registration numbers are used in place of names for all involved, as per GDPR Policy.

Phone calls to parents or meetings with parents are recorded on the School Phone Consultation/Meeting Form. These can be kept with the incident book.

If bullying behaviour is occurring:

1. The agreed school recording template is used from this point.
2. School Phone Consultation/Meeting Form is used for recording for phone calls or meetings with parents and pupils.
3. All written descriptions that pupils have contributed are kept.
4. Documents from 1 – 3 are kept in the Confidential File until the bullying behaviour has ceased. Initial record in the Incident Book is copied and transferred to the file. The Confidential File is kept in a secure location in the classroom.
5. Once bullying behaviour has ceased, all documents are then sent to the principal.

   Names can be used in these records and redacted as necessary.

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):

National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)

The NEPS model of service is a consultative, capacity-building model, in which there is a balance between casework and support and development work. In relation to bullying, NEPS psychologists advise schools on best practice to prevent and address bullying when issues arise in schools and/or provide training in preventative initiatives, such as developing social and emotional skills, social skills, executive functioning skills, promoting resilience and skills in relationship repair between peers as appropriate.

Oide

Oide is the Department of Education's support service for school, and it supports professional learning for primary and post-primary school leaders and teachers in recognized schools and centres for education. The work of Oide contributes to school improvement by providing high quality professional learning experiences, supports and resources relating to curricular developments, broader educational goals and national

priorities, such as wellbeing which includes preventing and addressing bullying.

Webwise

Webwise promotes safer, better internet use through awareness raising and education initiatives targeting teachers, pupils and parents. Webwise develops and disseminates resources that help teachers integrate digital citizenship and online safety into teaching and learning in their schools.

Dublin City University (DCU) Anti-Bullying Centre

The DCU Anti-Bullying Centre is a university-designated research centre located in DCU's Institute of Education. The Centre offers a range of modules as part of its FUSE programme for the entire school community that can be used to help to promote a positive school culture and assist in preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.

Tusla

Schools contact Tusla directly for advice in cases where it is felt that bullying behaviour is a child protection concern.

Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary School

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: Patrick Reynolds Date: 22nd June 2026

(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: Renee Moran Date: 22nd June 2026

(Principal)