



Mount Sackville Secondary School

Bí Cineálta Policy

to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

1. Introduction

Every person in Mount Sackville Secondary School has the right to learn and work in a caring, nurturing and safe environment. In accordance with our Mission Statement and inspired by our school's Catholic ethos, we strive to ensure each student's full and God-given potential.

As testament to our Cluny ethos, all members of this school community treat each other with kindness, consideration, respect and dignity, irrespective of any social or personal difference. Bullying of any form, including cyberbullying is neither accepted nor tolerated in this school.

The educational philosophy of Mount Sackville Secondary School is the holistic development of the student: religious, spiritual, moral, intellectual, emotional, physical, social and cultural. We strive to bring about this process of maturing in a Christian context. 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. As a Catholic school,

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

The school is committed to respecting the individuality of each student and helping her to realise her full potential.

The school encourages the pursuit of academic excellence, and a high standard of teaching and learning opportunities is offered.

Regular opportunities for prayer and reflection are offered.

The school community works together to create a caring school community based on respect, integrity, honesty, kindness and justice underpinned by our Catholic ethos. We prepare our students to take their place as self-confident, articulate young women who will meet the challenges of modern life with serenity and courage.

The Board of Management of Mount Sackville Secondary 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. As a school community, we 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 Mount Sackville Secondary 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.

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 each person in our school is treated with respect and care.

As a Catholic school, we are committed to respecting the dignity of every individual. No human person is to be diminished or devalued, and all have an indispensable part to play in the school community, regardless of difference.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the school's Code of Positive Behaviour.

2. 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.

Mount Sackville Secondary School is committed to developing and implementing a Bí Cineálta policy that outlines how the school community prevents and addresses bullying behaviour. Strategies to address inappropriate behaviour that is not bullying behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

2.1 Bullying Behaviour

When determining whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour, the following should be considered:

- **Is the behaviour targeted at a specific student or group of students?**
- **Is the behaviour intended to cause physical, social or emotional harm?**
- **Is the behaviour repeated?**

If the answer to each of the above questions is **Yes**, the behaviour will be addressed as per the procedures as set out in the school's Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour.

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. The behaviour may be Direct or Indirect.

Direct: Physical bullying, verbal bullying, cyberbullying, written bullying or extortion.

Indirect: Exclusion or relational.

Bullying Behaviour Outside of School

Schools are not expected to deal with bullying behaviour which occurs outside of school when students are not under the care or responsibility of the school. School staff should support students who are impacted by bullying behaviour that occurs outside of school. However, if this bullying behaviour continues into the school environment, schools are required to address the bullying behaviour.

Cyberbullying

A single hurtful message posted on social media is bullying behaviour. Bullying behaviour including cyberbullying behaviour, which has occurred outside of school can often continue in school. Where a student engages in cyberbullying behaviour when in school, the school must address the bullying behaviour. Where a student experiences cyberbullying behaviour in school, the school must address bullying behaviour. In the case of cyberbullying, although the hurtful message may have been sent outside of school hours, the student may view the message while in school. Where this happens, the school must address bullying behaviour.

Criminal Behaviour

Bullying behaviour can be considered criminal behaviour under certain circumstances and legal consequences can apply. The age of criminal responsibility in Ireland is 12 years. Some online behaviour may be illegal, and students need to be aware of the far-reaching consequences of posting inappropriate or harmful content online. In cases of intimate imagery, the Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020, also known as Coco's Law,

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

An Garda Síochána is the appropriate authority to investigate alleged criminal behaviour.

2.2 Behaviour that is not deemed to be 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.

Disagreement between students, or instances where students do not 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 behaviour that can hurt themselves or others. It is important to note that such behaviour may not be deliberate or planned but, in certain situations, an automatic response which they cannot control.

Bullying is not accidental or reckless behaviour. If repeated harm is real for the student experiencing the behaviour but unintended by the other student, this is not bullying. This type of behaviour, 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 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 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.

2.4 Recording of Bullying Behaviour

All incidents of bullying behaviour must be recorded in the school’s Bí Cineálta official record form. This record includes:

- Where and when the negative behaviour took place.
- Date of initial engagement with student(s) and parent(s)/guardian(s).
- Views of student(s) and parent(s)/guardian(s) regarding the actions to be taken.
- Date to be reviewed with student(s) and parent(s)/guardian(s) to determine if behaviour has ceased.
- If there is need for an engagement with external support and services. The views of students and their parents/guardians in relation to this should be recorded.
- The official report form is kept in a secure location and will be retained in accordance with the school’s record keeping and data protection policies.
- More in-depth information on the stages and course of the investigation will be retained by the Dean of Year.

3. Development/Review of our Bí Cineálta policy to Prevent and Address Bullying behaviour.

	DATE CONSULTED	METHOD OF CONSULTATION
School Staff	15 October 2024 02 December 2024 15 March 2025 25 August 2025 06 September 2025	Two-hour Online Oide Training Training Session Kildare Education Centre Whole-School Staff Meeting. Group Feedback from Staff. Draft of policy presented at staff meeting. Review of Draft with Anti-bullying Coordinator and Deputy Principal.
Students	08-12 September 2025 Week beginning 1 st September 2025	Student survey completed and responses collected by the Deans of Year Bí Cineálta Assemblies held with each year group
Parents and Guardians	Academic Year 2025/2026 May 2025	Regular updates on the drafting and implementation of Bí Cineálta provided by DP to parents/ guardians at Parents Association meetings.
Board of Management	16 October 2025	The Board reviewed and sanctioned the policy.
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	September/October 2025	Final draft shared with premises staff, canteen staff, student supervisors and extracurricular coaches.
Date policy was approved: 16 th October 2025		
Date policy was last reviewed: 16 th October 2025		

4. Preventing Bullying Behaviour

In developing 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 the school in a real way.

The 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 and staff meetings.

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

Students of Mount Sackville Secondary School are expected to treat all members of the school community with kindness and respect.

- The Class Tutor has primary responsibility for the pastoral care of each Tutor Group.
- A student-friendly Bí Cineálta Charter is visible in all classrooms. This charter is discussed at assemblies and during tutorial time.
- Tutors deliver kindness workshops during Friendship Week. Issues such as online safety, isolation and exclusion, bullying behaviour and acceptance of difference are addressed.
- Students do not have access to their mobile phones during school hours. Each phone is pouched in a Yondr pouch at the beginning of the school day. 6th year students may access their phones at break and lunchtimes in the 6th year Common room. 6th year students are permitted to use a Velcro Yondr pouch.
- Teachers and student members of the Positive Action Leader (PAL) group work together to embed the school Bí Cineálta policy.
- The importance of kindness and acceptance of difference is highlighted in CSPE and SPHE classes.
- Seating plans are put in place for all lessons.

- The school Friendship Wall is located in the senior lunch hall. This wall symbolises our sense of community and togetherness.
- The school's extracurricular programme promotes inclusion and respect and supports students in developing teamwork skills.
- Students are encouraged to participate in all aspects of school life. Many accept leadership roles, including class representative, prefectship, PALS, Gaisce, Green School committee.
- The school has a vibrant, proactive Student Council, ensuring that students feel heard and valued. Student voice informs decisions made by the school leadership teams.
- Members of the teaching staff carry out supervision duties before and after school.
- Teaching and Learning is collaborative and respectful. A broad range of curricular subjects are offered, providing students with opportunities to foster inclusion and respect for diversity.

4.1 Wellbeing

The wellbeing of all students and staff is key to the promotion of kindness, empathy and respect that we seek to instill in our school community.

Our commitment to kindness, empathy, and wellbeing is encapsulated in our Amber flag which we were awarded in 2024. This acknowledges commitment to promoting positive mental health for everyone in our community.

The school's wellbeing provision includes timetabled lessons in C.S.P.E. S.P.H.E. P.E. Choir, Drama, Digital Literacy and a weekly tutorial session.

S.P.H.E. and C.S.P.E. lessons cover a wide range of important topics that foster students' wellbeing and self-confidence. Respect for diversity and inclusion is promoted so that everyone is made to feel welcome and valued in Mount Sackville Secondary School. P.E. fosters a sense of respect for others in our class and wider school community as students are invited to engage in the curriculum in a respectful way that values fair competition and cooperation with fellow students. Choir for wellbeing allows students to foster friendships and to work collaboratively in a musical environment. Drama allows students the freedom to develop a new skills while working collaboratively with others. Mount Sackville Secondary School has implemented a Digital Literacy curriculum for Junior Cycle students. Students are taught about online safety,

responsible behaviour online and digital citizenship. Each student in Mount Sackville Secondary School is a member of a Tutor group, which is led by a team of Tutors and the Dean of Year. All Tutors and Deans instill a sense of teamwork and camaraderie within each tutor group. Students are encouraged to treat one another with kindness and respect. Tutor time once a week allows the Tutor and Dean to build a relationship with their pupils that opens lines of respectful and kind communication for the betterment of everyone within the Tutor group, year group and our wider school community.

5. Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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:

5.1 Reporting and establishing if bullying has occurred

When bullying behaviour is reported to a staff member, the school's official Bí Cineálta report form must be completed by that staff member and forwarded to the Bí Cineálta Coordinator. The Dean and/or Tutor will be informed. Both Dean and/or Tutor will begin to investigate the incident in a timely manner.

The Bí Cineálta policy will be consulted to establish if:

- The behaviour is targeted at an individual or group,
- The behaviour was intended to cause physical, social or emotional harm and
- The behaviour has been repeated.

If the answer to all three questions is **YES**, then the behaviour is addressed by the Bí Cineálta policy.

If the answer to any one of the three questions is **NO**, then the behaviour is addressed under the school's Code of Positive Behaviour.

5.2 Approaches taken to address the bullying behaviour

- Parents/guardians form 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/guardians 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.

- Every report or incident will be handled with sensitivity by the teacher/Tutor/Dean.
- Each student will be afforded an opportunity to share their experience of bullying behaviour verbally and in written format.
- The Tutor and/or Dean will establish what took place, where did it take place, when did it take place.
- If a group of students is involved, each student should be engaged individually by a teacher/Tutor/Dean.
- Each student should be asked for their account of what occurred.
- 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/guardians regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour.
- Each student should be supported, as appropriate.
- To bring the incident to a conclusion a group meeting may take place if all parties are agreeable.

5.3 The following principles must be adhered to when addressing bullying behaviour

- The student experiencing bullying behaviour feels listened to and reassured.
- Seek to ensure the privacy of those involved and conduct all conversations with sensitivity.
- Consider the age and ability of those involved. Listen to the views of the student who is experiencing bullying as to how best they would like the situation to be addressed.
- Act in a timely manner.
- Each student will be spoken to separately in a calm environment.
- Consider if those involved have additional needs.

- If bullying has occurred a ladder of referral will operate:

Staff Member → Tutor → Dean → Deputy Principal → Principal

- Each student involved will be treated in a fair manner using a restorative approach.
- Students may be referred to the student support team
- In serious cases the Principal and Deputy Principal may meet with the student and their parents/guardians.
- After the initial report and investigation of any bullying incident **a follow up with parents/student/s must take place within 20 school days after the incident has occurred.**
- The **Dean/Tutor** must follow up with parents/guardians by email/phonecall and a check-in meeting with the student/s should take place. The follow-up report must be then **completed by the Dean** and forwarded to the Bí Cineálta Coordinator.
- These reports are submitted to the principal, who makes a monthly report to the Board of Management.
- If a cyberbullying incident occurs, this is dealt with directly by the principal.

5.4 Requests for no intervention

- Parents/guardians may make the school aware of bullying behaviour that has occurred and specifically request that the school take no action.
- Parents/guardians should put this request in writing to the school or be facilitated to do so where there are literacy, digital literacy or language barriers.
- However, while acknowledging the parent's/guardian's request, schools may decide that based on exceptional circumstances, it is appropriate to address the negative behaviour.

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

- Students may be referred to their Tutor, Dean, the student support team or the School Chaplain. In exceptional circumstances, students will be referred to the Senior Leadership Team.
- All students involved will be supported and have regular check-ins by a designated member of staff/Tutor /Dean .

- Short term interventions may be put in place if students are struggling either emotionally or academically.
- Depending on the severity of the reported behaviour, the parents/guardians may be invited to attend a meeting. The Dean and Tutor will both attend and, in some cases, a member of the Student Support Team will also be present.
- Where a serious incident occurs, the Principal or Deputy Principal will be present at the meeting.
- A Restorative Justice approach is used when dealing with all parties involved.
- In some cases, students may be referred to outside support systems including NEPS and TUSLA.

5.6 Determining if bullying behaviour has ceased

- The Tutor/Dean will engage with the students/parents involved no more than 20 school days after the initial discussion to review progress following the initial intervention.
- If the bullying behaviour has not ceased, the school will review the strategies used in consultation with the student and parents and agree to meet again over an agreed timeframe until the bullying behaviour has ceased.
- Where it becomes clear that the student who is displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behaviour, strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour as provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour, will be implemented.
- If the bullying behaviour is a child protection concern, the matter will be addressed in accordance with **Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025**.

6. Complaint process

If a parent is not satisfied with how bullying behaviour has been addressed by the school, in accordance with these procedures, they should be referred to the school's complaints procedure. Additional Information relating to schools' complaint procedures are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-education/policy-information/complaints-about-schools/#parental-complaints>

7. Oversight

At each meeting of the Board of Management the Principal will be present and update on the number of incidents of bullying behaviour and the measures taken to prevent and address bullying behaviour. The update will include the following:

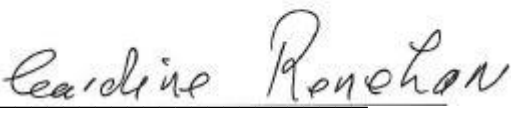
- the number of incidents of bullying behaviour that have been reported since the last meeting
- the number of incidents of bullying behaviour that are currently ongoing
- the number of incidents of bullying behaviour that have been reported since the beginning of the school year

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.
- The strategies used to address the bullying.
- 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/guardian 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.

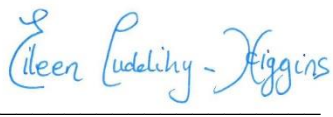
This policy is available to our school community on the school website and in hard copy on request. A student-friendly version of this policy is displayed in the school and is also available on our website and in hard copy on request.

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: 16th October 2025

(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: 

Date: 16th October 2025

(Principal)