

St. Malachy's Infants' School



Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of St Malachy's Infants 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 pupils who attend our school are kept safe from harm and that the wellbeing of our pupils is at the forefront of everything that we do. We recognise the negative impact that bullying behaviour can have on the lives of our pupils 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 pupils 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 such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the 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 each person 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 all have an indispensable 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 core elements of this definition are further described as:

Targeted behaviour

Bullying is intentional, harmful behavior where the person bullying is aware it causes harm. It can be physical, social, or emotional and may have long-term negative effects on the victim. While bullying is deliberate, repeated harm that is unintentional is not considered bullying but should still be addressed by the school.

Repeated behaviour

Bullying involves repeated, intentional behavior that follows a pattern over time. A single incident, while serious, is not bullying but should still be dealt with by the school. However, posting one harmful message or image online can be considered bullying if it is likely to be shared or spread.

Imbalance of power

In incidents of bullying, the pupil 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 power imbalance can stem from factors like physical strength, age, social or economic status, race, religion, gender identity, disability, or other personal circumstances. 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 pupil to remove offensive online material or escape the bullying.



Types of bullying:

Bullying can be:

Direct:

- **Physical:** pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping pupils, Physical assault. Destruction of personal property
- **Verbal:** continual name calling which insults, humiliates the pupil – this may refer to physical appearance, clothes, gender, accent, academic ability, race or ethnic origin.
- **Written:** Writing insulting remarks in public places, passing notes or drawings about the pupil.
- **Extortion:** where something is obtained through force or threats.

Indirect:

- **Exclusion:** where a pupil is deliberately and repeatedly isolated, excluded or ignored by a pupil or group of pupils.
- **Relational:** Where a pupil's attempts to form friendships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined, threats, non-verbal gesturing, malicious gossip, spreading rumours, silent treatment and manipulation of friend groups etc can all form relational bullying for a pupil.

Cyberbullying: *Although the children in St Malachy's Infants' School are very young and not typically active online, we recognize the importance of understanding cyberbullying—including sending hurtful messages, sharing embarrassing photos or videos online, creating fake profiles, and online exclusion—as part of our broader commitment to safeguarding and digital awareness.*

What is not bullying behaviour:

- If the repeated harm is real for the pupil experiencing the behaviour, but unintended by the other pupil, this is not bullying, but, importantly, must be addressed under the school's code of behaviour.
- Some pupils 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 cannot control.
- Disagreement between pupils is not considered bullying unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.



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	November, 2024	Questionnaire
	January 30 th , 2025	Bí Cineálta training day was attended.
	March 27 th , 2025	Half day school closure. All teachers and SNAs accessed, discussed and gave feedback on the content of the Bí Cineálta procedures.
Pupils	February 2025	Questionnaires and focus groups. Children's feedback was recorded and used to inform the policy
	May/June, 2025	Child friendly policy/poster
Parents	February, 2025	Questionnaires
	April 2 nd , 2025	Parents association consulted and updated
Board of Management	January – June 2025	Engaged with the procedures Updated on developments at every meeting Ratified policy
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	N/A	N/A
Date policy was approved: June 17 th , 2025		
Date policy was last reviewed:		



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 all types of bullying (see Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

The four key areas of Wellbeing Framework for Practice are essential for a holistic, whole school approach to wellbeing promotion. These key areas are considered when developing measures to prevent bullying behavior in our school.

(i) Culture and Environment

We strive to:

- Create a school culture where bullying behaviour is unacceptable and there is a consistent approach to addressing bullying behaviour.
- Foster a school environment that is a space where pupils and school staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported.
- Relationships between all members of the school community should be based on respect, care, integrity and trust
- Open communication between the patron, boards of management, school staff, pupils and their parents help to foster a collaborative approach and shared responsibilities in relation to preventing and addressing bullying behavior.
- The school leadership team influences the school culture and set the standards and expectations for the school community when preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.
- Each member of the school community (Staff, children and parents) holds a shared responsibility to cultivate and uphold a culture in which bullying behaviour is not accepted. Through consistent actions that promote kindness, inclusion, empathy, and respect, all individuals contribute to a safe, supportive, and positive school environment.
- **A Telling Environment** It is important that the school community supports a ‘telling’ environment. Pupils should feel comfortable to talk about concerns regarding bullying behavior without fear of:
 - I. retaliation,
 - II. being labelled a ‘tell-tale’,
 - III. the adult making the situation worse
 - IV. the adult not having the knowledge and skills to deal appropriately with the bullying behavior
 - V. not being believed
 - VI. getting into trouble
- A trusted adult: Pupils who witness bullying behaviour are supported and encouraged to report the behaviour to a trusted adult in the school so that the behaviour can be addressed.
- Ensure all areas in the school are safe physical spaces where there is a clear line of sight between children and adults at all times.
- The school promotes positive behavior strategies.
- The school promotes an physical environment that shows respect for diversity and inclusion for all through signage and displays



(ii) Curriculum

- We promote teaching and learning that is collaborative and respectful. Pupils have regular opportunities to work in small groups with their peers, to help build sense of connection, belonging and empathy among pupils.
- Teachers and SNAs are committed to continued professional development in areas that promote wellbeing and anti-bullying strategies
- The curricular subjects offered to pupils provide opportunities to foster inclusion and respect for diversity. Schools are encouraged to provide opportunities for pupils to develop a sense of self-worth through both curricular and extra-curricular programmes:
- SPHE curriculum
- Stay Safe
- Walk Tall
- Grow in Love
- Incredible years
- Fun Friends

(iii) Policy and planning

The school has robust policies to support the schools Bí Cineálta anti-bullying policy

- Code of Behaviour
- Relationships and sexuality
- Equal opportunity and gender equality
- Religious Education
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Supervision Policy
- SPHE Policy
- Stay Safe Policy
- Wellbeing School Self Evaluation
- Inclusion Plan

(iv) Relationships and Partnerships

Strong interpersonal connections are a vital part of effectively preventing and addressing bullying behavior in this school. These interpersonal connections are supported through a range of formal and informal structures: (the below list is non exhaustive)

- Liaise with preschool by principal and teacher
- School links with feeder schools
- Positive home school links and relationships.
- Active and supportive parents association
- Links with outside agencies such as NEPS, Primary Care, OT, ST, Óide, NCSE,
- Mentoring of NQTs and new staff
- Links with IPPN support groups
- Buddy system/peer support
- Ensuring children know who to tell and how to tell. Encouraging ‘Trusted Adult’ concept.
- Age appropriate initiatives such as Friendship week
- Assemblies
- Use of website and other technologies to communicate with wider community
- Promoting acts of kindness in class and as a whole school community



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.

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 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 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.

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):

- Supervision rotas are adhered to and monitored daily by the principal
- Children are supervised at all times
- Teachers seek supervision cover if they need to leave their room during teaching time
- Each class is supervised in their classrooms during break times
- Each class is supervised on the yard during play time
- Teachers and SNAs monitor every area of the yard. They are assigned an area to supervise and insure the children can see and approach them at all times.
- Teachers and SNAs are aware of and watch out for the signs of bullying behaviour at break times.
- No class should be left without supervision. Teachers will wait and perform official handovers before leaving the class.



Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

- Class Teacher
- SET Teacher
- Principal/Deputy Principal

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):

Approach

The primary aim in addressing reports of bullying behaviour should be to stop the bullying behaviour and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.

When bullying behaviour occurs, the school will:

- ensure that the pupil 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 pupil 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

Stage 1 - Identifying if bullying has occurred

The core definition of bullying behaviour should be considered when identifying bullying behavior. 'Bullying is defined 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.

- In investigating and dealing with bullying the teacher(s) will exercise his/her/their judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred, what type if it has and how best the situation might be resolved.
- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the 'Relevant Teacher(s)'. 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 instances of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.
- Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, SNAs, caretakers and cleaners are encouraged to report any incidences of bullying behaviour witnessed by them or mentioned to them to the Class Teacher.



- Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents
- On being informed of an alleged incident of bullying, the teacher dealing with the report will first interview the victim(s) and discuss the feelings which the victim(s) experienced because of the bullying behaviour

To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour the person/persons involved in identifying should consider the following questions:

- I. Is the behaviour **targeted** at a specific pupil or group of pupils?
- II. Is the behaviour **intended to cause physical, social or emotional harm**?
- III. Is the behaviour **repeated** ?

If the answer is **YES** to all of these questions, then the behavior is deemed to be bullying behavior and it should be addressed using the Bí Cineálta Procedures.

Note: Although the children in St Malachy's Infants' School are very young and not typically active online, we acknowledge that one-off incidents may be considered bullying behaviour 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 is **NO** to any of these questions, then the behavior is not bullying behavior and should be dealt with by referring to the school's Code of Behaviour.

When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred teachers should **consider what, where, when and why?**

- if a group of pupils is involved, each pupil should be engaged with individually at first
- thereafter, all pupils involved should be met as a group
- at the group meeting, each pupil should be asked for their account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's views
- each pupil should be supported as appropriate, following the group meeting

Stage 2: Where bullying behaviour has occurred

- Schools are not expected to deal with bullying behaviour that occurs when pupils 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 pupils involved. Where the bullying behaviour continues in school, schools should deal with it in accordance with their Bí Cineálta policy.
- 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 pupils 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.
- Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to her how she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts should be made to try to get her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied;



- The “Relevant Teacher” does not apportion blame but should make an effort to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied. S/he emphasises that the intention is not to punish perpetrators but to talk to them, to explain how harmful and hurtful bullying is and to seek a promise that it will stop. If that promise is forthcoming and is honoured there will be no penalty and that will be the end of the matter.
- It must also be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parent(s)/guardian(s)) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school;
- All bullying behaviour will be recorded. This will include the form and type of behaviour if known (see pages 20-24, Section 2.5 and 2.7 of the BÍ Cineálta procedures for descriptions/examples of the forms and types of bullying behaviour), where and when it took place, and the date of the engagement with pupils 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
- The record should be shared with the Principal.

Stage 3: Follow up where bullying behaviour has occurred

- The teacher must engage with the pupils 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 pupils involved.
- The teacher should document the review with pupils and their parents to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased and the views of pupils 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 pupils 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 pupils involved and their parents. A timeframe should be agreed for further engagement until the bullying behaviour has ceased.
- If it becomes clear that the pupil who is displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behaviour, then 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 pupil, 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 (available on our website).
- 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 pupil.



Requests to take no action

If a child makes a report of bullying, but asks that nothing is to be done about it, the relevant teacher will support the child appropriately to explore how it will be handled sensitively and how parents may be notified. If a parent does so, they must submit in writing that they require no further action to be taken, but even so, the school may still deem it necessary to be investigated and handled appropriately.

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):

The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying involves a whole school approach. Given the complexity of bullying behaviour, no one intervention/support programme works in all situations.

Supporting Bullied pupils:

- Ending the bullying behaviour,
- Fostering respect for bullied pupils and all pupils,
- Fostering greater empathy towards and support for bullied pupils,
- Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through annual awareness-raising programmes.
- Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through the speedy identification of those responsible and speedy resolution of bullying situations,
- Helping bullied pupils raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that help develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school).

Supporting Bullying pupils:

- Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are not blamed or punished and get a 'clean sheet,'
- Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are doing the right and honourable thing and giving them praise for this,
- Making adequate supports available to help those who need it learn other ways of meeting their needs besides violating the rights of others,
- Helping those who need to raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school),
- Using learning strategies throughout the school and the curriculum to help enhance pupils' feelings of self-worth,
- In dealing with negative behaviour in general, encouraging teachers and parents to focus on, challenge and correct the behaviour while supporting the child,
- In dealing with bullying behaviour seeking resolution and offering a fresh start with a 'clean sheet' and no blame in return for keeping a promise to reform.



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 pupils 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 pupil 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:** 17/06/2025
Catriona Murphy
(Chairperson of the Board of Management)

Signed: _____ **Date:** 17/06/2025
Teresa McCarthy
(Principal)