



Convent of Mercy N.S.

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Convent of Mercy N.S. has adopted the following policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

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

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

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

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

Definition of bullying

Bullying is defined in *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* and *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* as **targeted behaviour**, online or offline **that causes harm**. The harm caused can be physical, social and/or emotional in nature. Bullying behaviour is **repeated over time** and involves **an imbalance of power** in relationships between two people or groups of people in

society. The detailed definition is provided in Chapter 2 of the Bí Cineálta procedures.

Each school is required to develop and implement a Bí Cineálta policy that sets out how the school community prevents and addresses bullying behaviour. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour that is not bullying behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

Section A: Development/review of our Bí Cineálta policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour

All members of our school community were provided with the opportunity to input into the development/review of this policy.

	Date consulted	Method of consultation
School Staff	25/03/2025	Staff Meeting Half-day Training Read review & give feedback on Bí Cineálta Guidelines
Students	Academic Year 24/25	Meeting with Student Council Well-Being Warriors Amber Flag Committee meetings – Monthly Playground Leaders timetable
Parents	Academic Year 24/25	Email to parents Inclusion on school newsletter Parents Association – meeting on the formulation of the Bí Cineálta Policy.
Board of Management	Draft Policy discussed in 24/ 25 school year.	Meeting
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	Website	Published on school website www.comns.com
Date policy was approved: September 2025		
Date policy was last reviewed: September 2025		

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

This section sets out the prevention strategies that will be used by the school. These include strategies specifically aimed at preventing online bullying behaviour, homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour, racist bullying behaviour, sexist bullying behaviour and sexual harassment as appropriate (see Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

Culture & Environment:

- Positive & inclusive school culture, including EAL translations i.e. welcome door signs, other classroom displays
- Positive relationships
- Effective leadership
- Positive culture & environment
- A Telling Environment
- A Trusted Adult
- Supervision
- ‘Check-In’ Box – termly (last week of each month)
- Kindness Mottos & affirmations in corridors & classroom toilets
- Kindness Display Board
- Opportunities to participate in class & whole-school activities to raise self-esteem & create a telling environment.
- EAL Welcome signs
- Awareness of hidden spaces
- Various school committees i.e. Student Council, Well-Being Warriors, Playground Leaders, Amber Flag Committee, Active School Committee, Buddy system
- Organized Playground Activities at break-times
- Staff CPD

Curriculum

- Teaching & Learning in SPHE
- RSE Curriculum
- DEIS PALN – Well-Being Framework
- Child Protection Policy
- Student Participation
- SPHE Methodologies/Stay Safe/A whole school approach to addressing who is the child's trusted adult & the definition of bullying
- Code of Behavior
- Critical Incident
- Religion Policy
- Student Council Policy
- Extra - Curricular activities to develop positive self-worth
- Group work/Collaboration
- Role-play, acting out scenarios
- Circle time
- Morning Check-In's

Policy & Planning

- Bí Cineálta policy
- Student friendly Bí Cineálta policy
- Code of behavior
- Child safeguarding statement
- Acceptable use policy
- Supervision
- RSE Policy
- SPHE Policy Two-Year Plan, including Stay Safe
- SEN policy
- DEIS Plan

Relationships & Partnerships

- DEIS Plan
- Peer Support (Buddy-system)
- Playground leaders
- Student Council
- Parents Association
- Board of Management
- Critical Thinking Skills
- Support activities that build empathy, respect & resilience

Preventing cyber bullying behaviour: (Note - the digital age of consent is the minimum age a user must be before a social media or internet company can collect, process and store their data. In Ireland the digital age of consent is 16. Children between 13 and 16 must have parental permission to sign up to social media services. Most social media platforms have a minimum age requirement and for the majority of these, it is 13 years old. Therefore, children under the age of 13 should not have a social media account)

- Promoting digital citizenship
- Implementing SPHE curriculum
- Open conversations with students about developing respectful and kind relationships online
- Referring to appropriate online behaviour as part of the standards of behaviour in the Code of Behaviour
- Promoting online safety events for parents who are responsible for overseeing their children's activities online
- Holding internet safety day

Preventing homophobic/ transphobic bullying behaviour.

- maintaining an inclusive physical environment such as displaying relevant posters
- encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities challenging gender-stereotypes.
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Preventing racist bullying behaviour

- fostering a school culture where diversity is celebrated and where students “see themselves” in their school environment
- encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
- encouraging bystanders to report when they witness racist behaviour
- providing supports to school staff to support students from ethnic minorities, including Traveller and Roma students, and to encourage communication with their parents
- ensuring that library reading material and textbooks represent appropriate lived experiences of students and adults from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds

Preventing sexist bullying behaviour:

- ensuring members of staff model respectful behaviour and treat students equally irrespective of their sex
- ensuring all student have the same opportunities to engage in school activities irrespective of their sex
- celebrating diversity at school and acknowledging the contribution of all students
- encouraging parents to reinforce these values of respect at home

Preventing sexual harassment:

- promoting positive role models within the school community

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):

- Appropriate pupil-teacher ratio present to supervise at breaktimes, including SNA's
- Children are accompanied by the appropriate staff pupil-teacher ratio on school trips
- Children are allocated class-based places on yard/Astro
- Playground leaders supporting younger pupils
- Code of Conduct
- Open-door policy

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

Class Teachers/SET Teachers involvement if required.

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):

- Two staff members can be present when engaging with children individually initially without parents' notification and presence.
- Two staff members can be present when engaging with a group of children to investigate what happened without parents' notification and presence.
- A group meeting will provide the opportunity for the children to give 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 also be helpful to ask the students involved to write down their account of the incident.

The following three questions will be considered to determine if bullying has occurred;

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

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.

If the answer is **No**, then the behaviour is not bullying behaviour. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour are provided for within the school's behaviour.

Requests no action taken:

A student who reports bullying behaviour may ask a member of staff not to do anything and just "look out" for them due to not wanting to be identified as having told someone about the bullying behaviour. They might feel that telling someone might make things more difficult for them. Where this occurs, it is important that the member of staff shows empathy to the student, deals with the matter sensitively and speaks with the student to work out together what steps can be taken to address the behaviour. It must be made clear to the pupil that other parties may need to be informed for their welfare. Parents may also make the school aware of bullying behaviour and specifically request that no action is to

be taken by the school. Parents should put this in writing to the school. However, schools may decide that based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour through the Bí Cineálta procedures and/or the Code of Behaviour where appropriate.

Determining if the bullying behaviour has ceased:

The teacher must engage with the students and parents involved no more than 20 school days after the initial discussion to review progress.

Factors to consider in the review include:

- the nature of the bullying
- the effectiveness of strategies used to address the bullying behaviour
- the relationship between the students involved

Ongoing supervision of both the child experiencing bullying behaviour and the child displaying bullying behavior may be required as well as continued support. It can take time for relationships to settle and for supports to take effect. In some cases, relationships may never be restored to how they were before the bullying behaviour occurred.

If the bullying behaviour has not ceased, the teacher should review the strategies used in consultation with the students 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, then the school should consider 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.

Recording bullying behaviour:

All incidents of bullying behaviour should be recorded. The following details should be included on the record: (See appendix 1)

- Form (see section 2.5 of Bí Cineálta procedures)

- Type (see section 2.7 of Bí Cineálta procedures)
- Where and when (if known)
- The date of initial engagement with the students and their parents
- The views of the students and their parents* regarding the action to be taken to address the bullying behaviour (*only in relation to their own child)
- When review takes place, it should be noted if the bullying behaviour has ceased and the views of the students and parents in relation to this.
- Note the date of reviews and engagements
- Note the date that the bullying behaviour has ceased
- Any engagement with external services/ supports should also be noted
- If a student support file exists for a pupil involved, schools are encouraged to place a copy of the record on the student's support file

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 complaints procedure. In the event that a student and/or parent is dissatisfied following the complaints procedure, they may make a complaint to the Ombudsman for children.

Supports:

- NEPS
- Oide
- Webwise
- National Parents Council
- DCU Anti bullying centre
- Tusla

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):

Where bullying behaviour has occurred:

A school is not expected to deal with bullying behaviour that occurs when students 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 students involved.

Where the bullying behaviour continues in school, then school can deal with it in accordance with Bí Cineálta policy.

It is important for staff to be fair and consistent in their approach to address bullying behaviour. Both the student who is experiencing bullying behaviour and the student who is displaying bullying behaviour need support. Engage with the student who is experiencing bullying without delay. School staff should identify the supports needed for the student who is displaying bullying behaviour to better manage relational difficulties.

It is important that a student's agency is not decreased further by adults deciding what will happen next without listening to the student and involving them in deciding on the actions that will be taken.

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

- ensure the child 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 those involved
- listen to the view 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

Parents of both parties 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 as outlined in the school's Bí Cineálta policy.

In circumstances where student expresses concern about their parents being informed, the school should develop an appropriate plan to support the student and for how their parents will be informed

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

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: _____

(Chairperson of board of management)

Date: _____

22/09/2025

Signed: _____

(Principal)

Date: _____

22/09/2025