

St. Mary's Knockbeg College

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of St. Mary's Knockbeg College 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	March/April 2025	Two Staff meetings and Microsoft Forms survey
Students	March 2025	Microsoft Forms Survey circulated to students
Parents	March 2025	Microsoft Forms Survey circulated to all parents
Board of Management	April 2025	Board of Management meeting
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	April 2025	Policy sent to the bus companies to share with their bus drivers
Date policy was approved:		
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 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):

Prevention Strategy Details

SPHE and Wellbeing Programs	Integration of Social, Personal, and Health Education (SPHE) with Wellbeing curriculum to build empathy, respect, and inclusivity, focusing on social and emotional learning. Use of Restorative Practice to restore harmed relationships between individuals.
Cyberbullying Prevention and Digital Literacy	Regular sessions in digital citizenship, responsible online behaviour, and digital literacy to teach students about respectful online interactions and the impacts of online bullying. Reinforced through acceptable use policies and specific training days like Internet Safety Day. The school also has an Acceptable Use Policy that sets clear guidelines on technology use within school grounds. There will be a Revision of AUP policy and Cybersecurity practices.
Sexual Harassment Awareness and Prevention	Maintaining a zero-tolerance policy for sexual harassment, using SPHE and Wellbeing modules to discuss healthy relationships and respectful behaviour, and running awareness campaigns that teach students about the impact and seriousness of sexual harassment.
Promoting a Telling Environment	Creating a supportive atmosphere where students feel comfortable reporting bullying incidents. Encouraging students to reach out to a “trusted adult” and providing regular reminders that reporting is safe and supported. As part of developing a ‘telling environment, we will review the role of the class teacher. The class teacher can become the focal point for our ‘telling environment’.
Supervision Practices Review	School Management will oversee a supervision review, paying particular attention to distribution of staff, ‘hidden spaces’ and areas associated with problem behaviour.
Increase sense of ‘Belonging’ to our School community	The concept of belonging will underpin our extra-curricular and co-curricular activities. We aim to provide a wide array of activities. The class teacher can assist in helping students mix and integrate into school life.

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):

Increased Supervision During Break Times	Staff members are assigned to monitor high-traffic areas such as the schoolyard, hallways, locker rooms, canteen, and bathrooms during all break times to prevent and identify potential bullying incidents.
Visible Staff Presence	Teachers and staff members are visibly stationed at key areas throughout the school, particularly in less visible or secluded spaces, to increase supervision and create a safe environment. Teachers are instructed to monitor student interactions in classrooms, particularly during unstructured periods such as transitions between lessons, to ensure that all students feel safe and included.
Use of CCTV in Key Areas	CCTV cameras are installed in select common areas, such as hallways and entrances, to assist in monitoring behaviour. CCTV is used in line with privacy regulations to deter bullying and ensure student safety.
Student Engagement in Monitoring	Students are encouraged to report bullying behaviour they witness or experience, fostering a “telling environment” where students feel comfortable speaking up. Peer mentors and student councils are also involved in promoting positive behaviour.
Regular Spot Checks and Walk-Throughs	Staff perform unscheduled checks and walk-throughs in common areas, bathrooms and hallways to provide additional oversight and discourage bullying behaviours in secluded areas.
Monitoring of Online Behaviour (where possible)	The school promotes safe online behaviour by educating students about digital citizenship. While direct monitoring of online activity outside school is limited, teachers and parents are encouraged to stay vigilant about students' online interactions.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

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):

1. Initial Listening and Documentation	The designated teacher(s) will meet with the student(s) reporting the incident to listen to their account and record details accurately. The focus is on ensuring the student feels heard, safe, and supported.
---	---

2. Investigation and Information Gathering	The teacher will gather information by speaking with all students involved individually to understand different perspectives on the incident. If necessary, teachers may ask each student to provide a written account of their experience.
3. Assessment of Bullying Criteria	Based on the gathered information, the teacher assesses whether the behaviour meets the criteria of bullying, focusing on aspects such as repetition, intentional harm, and power imbalance. The Bí Cineálta definition of bullying is applied for clarity.
4. Consultation with Relevant Staff and Parents	The designated teacher consults with other relevant staff (e.g., year heads, student support team) and informs the parents or guardians of the students involved. Parents are included early in the process to foster a collaborative approach.
5. Development of an Intervention Plan	If bullying is confirmed, an intervention plan is created to stop the bullying behaviour and support all parties involved. This may include mediation (if appropriate), counseling support, and additional monitoring of the students involved.
6. Implementing Restorative Approaches (as appropriate)	Where possible, restorative practices are used to encourage accountability and facilitate reconciliation between parties. Mediation or restorative meetings are conducted only if all involved students consent and staff have been trained in these methods.
7. Ongoing Monitoring and Support	Both the student experiencing bullying and the student displaying bullying behaviour receive ongoing support and monitoring. This may include regular check-ins, peer support, and additional supervision in shared areas.
8. Progress Review and Follow-Up	Within 20 school days of implementing the intervention plan, the designated teacher meets with all involved parties to assess if the bullying behaviour has ceased and if support needs have been met. Parents are also updated on the progress.
9. Further Actions if Necessary	If the bullying behaviour persists, additional disciplinary measures may be applied in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour. Further support strategies, including engagement with external services, may also be considered.

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):	
Students Who Experience Bullying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Counseling and Emotional Support: Access to the school counselor or external support services for individual sessions to help manage the impact of bullying. - Safe Spaces: Provision of safe spaces where students can feel secure and supported during school hours. - Regular Check-Ins: Scheduled meetings with a designated teacher or trusted adult to ensure the student feels supported and safe. - Peer Support Programs: Encouraging positive peer connections

Students Who Witness Bullying

through mentorship and buddy systems to build resilience and foster supportive friendships.

- **Encouragement to Report:** Reinforcing the importance of reporting bullying behaviour and providing clear guidance on how to report safely.
- **Support and Education on Bystander Impact:** Offering information on the positive role bystanders can play and conducting empathy-building activities to foster a culture of kindness and inclusion.

- **Counselling Access:** Witnesses of bullying may experience anxiety or guilt; they have access to the school's counseling resources if they need to discuss the impact of witnessing such behaviour.

- **Behavioural Interventions:** Development of a tailored intervention plan focusing on behaviour change, with specific, positive goals.

- **Restorative Practices:** Using restorative conversations or mediation to help the student understand the impact of their behaviour, fostering accountability and empathy (where appropriate and consented by both parties).

Students Who Display Bullying Behaviour

- **Regular Monitoring and Mentorship:** Assigning a staff mentor to monitor and support the student as they work towards positive behaviour changes, with regular check-ins.

- **Parent/Guardian Involvement and Support Programs:** Collaborating with parents to reinforce positive behaviour at home, ensuring a consistent approach between school and family.

- **Counseling or Additional Support:** Providing counseling to address underlying issues, such as low self-esteem or past experiences of bullying, which may be influencing the student's behaviour.


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: 20/5/25

Signed: 
(Principal)


Date: 20/5/25


Appendix F

Notification regarding the board of management's annual review of the school's BÍ Cineálta Policy

The Board of Management of *St Mary's Knockbeg College* confirms that the board of management's annual review of the school's BÍ Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour and its implementation was completed at the board of management meeting of [date]. *9/9/25*

This review was conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Department of Education's *Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

Signed: 
(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: 
(Principal)

Date: *9/9/2025*

Date: *9/9/25*

Date of next review:

September 2026

