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Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Our Lady 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	20/05/2026	In-Person and online survey
Students	20/05/2026	Online survey
Parents	20/05/2026	Online Survey
Board of Management	23/06/2026	Draft Policy emailed to Board Members
Wider school community as appropriate, e.g. bus drivers		Informal chat
Date policy was approved: 23/06/2026		
Date policy was last reviewed: 11/06/2025		

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

This section sets out the prevention strategies that will be used by Our Lady of Mercy National 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 in line with Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures.

At Our Lady of Mercy National School, we consider the following to be key elements of a Positive and Inclusive School Culture:

- We will endeavour to ensure that the school environment is a space where students and all school staff experience a sense of belonging, feel safe, connected and supported.
- We acknowledge the uniqueness of each individual and their worth as a human being.
- We promote positive habits of self-respect, self–discipline, care, responsibility and trust amongst all members of the school community.
- The school In-School Leadership & Management team influences the school culture and sets the standards and expectations for the school community when preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.
- Each member of the school staff has a responsibility to develop and maintain a school culture where bullying is unacceptable and to take a consistent approach to addressing bullying behaviour.
- We actively prohibit offensive or aggressive behaviour in the school.

- We will strive to take particular care of 'at risk' pupils, identifying needs and facilitating early intervention where necessary. Thus, responding to the needs, fears and anxieties of individual members in a sensitive manner.
- Students are encouraged to shape the school culture by promoting kindness and inclusion within their peer group, thus contributing to a positive and supportive school environment for all through e.g. Student Council Initiatives, Breaktime Buddies, Active Inclusive Play, 'Talk to Teacher', modelling such behaviour, praise of kind behaviour etc.
- Parents, as active agents in their child's education, can help foster an environment where bullying behaviour is not tolerated through the promotion of empathy & respect.
- Our Lady of Mercy N.S will actively support a "telling environment" Where bullying behaviour can be reported through writing a note to a friend, worry box or telling a teacher or a trusted adult. Bí Cineálta child-friendly policy will be highly visible throughout the school building as a reminder for students.
- There will be appropriate supervision at all times, thus ensuring that all students experience a safe physical space both in and during out of school extra- curricular activities - an important measure to prevent bullying behaviour.

Curriculum Teaching & Learning:

- At Our Lady of Mercy N.S. We will endeavour to promote teaching and learning that is collaborative and respectful.
- The pupils in Our Lady of Mercy N.S will be given opportunities to foster inclusion, well-being, self-confidence, a sense of belonging, a sense of personal responsibility and diversity through the following curricular subjects & initiatives:
    - SPHE & RSE: Some of the resources available to be used in the classroom include: Stay Safe, Weaving Wellbeing, Walk Tall, Be Safe, Mighty Moe, Talk about, Internet Safety Talks for children and parents, Web wise, Busy Bodies, A Lust for Life.
    - Religious Education - Catholic Schools Week, attendance at religious ceremonies, Sacraments, Grow in Love, visits from Parish Priest & Diocesan Advisor.
    - Internet Acceptable Usage Policy.
    - Code of Behaviour.
    - Active participation of students in school life through extra- curricular activities such as The Green School Committee, The Student Council, Sporting Events, Quizzes, School Fundraisers, Phone Free Charter, Peace Proms, Debating.
- We actively engage with other education partners in the wider school community who can support the prevention of bullying behaviour such as:
    - The Community Garda Liaison Officer
    - The Education Welfare Officer
    - National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)
    - It's a Child's Life Preschool and Maud's Little Learner Preschool.
    - Local Sports Clubs
    - Tusla

- We support the active engagement of parents in school life, through the Parents` Association, through the use of workshops and seminars given by outside agencies etc. to raise awareness of bullying behaviour.

The following strategies will be utilised to prevent Cyberbullying Behaviour:

Our Lady of Mercy N.S will actively promote digital literacy, digital citizenship as well as fostering safe online environments through:

- Implementing the SPHE Curriculum.

- Implementing the Digital Media Literacy Curriculum which teaches students about online responsibility, online behaviour and digital citizenship - e.g. Web wise, Zeeko Presentation or Ger Brick Presentation, Focus on National Online Safety Day, Oide document with resources for class teachers on school's Teacher Share folder, NCTE Firewall in place.
- Regular conversations about developing respectful and kind relationships online.
- Referring to appropriate online behaviour as part of the standards of behaviour in The Code of Behaviour.
- Holding an Internet Safety Day to reinforce awareness around appropriate online behaviour.
- Promoting the GenFree Charter - a voluntary charter for parents to sign up to, if they so wish.
- Promoting or hosting online safety events for parents who are responsible for overseeing their children's activities online.
- Communicating the acceptable use policy for technology.
- Reminding children and parents that the digital age of consent is 13.

The following strategies will be utilised to prevent Homophobic/Transphobic Bullying Behaviour:

- Teaching the definition of the above through the SPHE Curriculum.
- By maintaining an inclusive physical environment through the use of inclusive displays.
- By challenging gender-stereotypes.
- By encouraging peer support, thus building empathy.
- By encouraging children to speak up if they witness any type of bullying behaviour including homophobic bullying behaviour.
- By celebrating Diversity, through visible signage on display.
- By supporting school staff to respond to the needs of students where English is an Additional Language e.g. NCSE support, Oide training events.
- By providing library material that represents the lived experiences of students and adults from different national, ethnic & cultural backgrounds.

The following strategies will be utilised to prevent Racist Bullying Behaviour, Sexist Bullying Behaviour & Sexual Harassment:

- All members of the staff of Our Lady of Mercy N.S. will model respectful behaviour, promote positive role models and treat students equally irrespective of their sex.
- All members of the staff of Our Lady of Mercy N.S. will ensure that all students have the same opportunities to engage in school activities irrespective of their sex.
- Sexual harassment will never be dismissed as teasing or banter.
- The contributions of all students will be celebrated, thus celebrating diversity.
- Gender stereotypes that can contribute to sexual harassment will actively be challenged by school staff.
- Encouraging bystanders to report when they witness racist behaviour.
- Having the cultural diversity of the school visible and on display.
- Providing support to school staff to respond to the needs of the students for whom English is an additional language and for communicating with parents.
- Inviting speakers from diverse ethnic backgrounds.
- Including a cultural section in our library.
- Promoting the use of positive language and terminology in the school environment.

The school has the following supervision and monitoring policies in place to prevent and address bullying behaviour:

- A Yard Supervision Rota developed by the principal teacher.
- The Child Protection Policy, Child Safe-Guarding Statement & Child Safe-Guarding Risk Assessment.
- The Health, Safety & Welfare Policy.
- Internet Safety & Acceptable Usage Policy.
- The Health & Safety Authority Risk Assessments which have been completed in full & are reviewed annually.
- The Code of Behaviour.
- Regular Risk Assessments completed for in-school and out of school activities.
- Policy for Student Teachers and work experience staff.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

All teachers have a responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour in Our Lady of Mercy National School.

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 Our Lady of Mercy National 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):

The primary aim in addressing reports of bullying behaviour should be to stop the bullying behaviour and to restore, as far as practicable, the relationships of the students involved, rather than to apportion blame.

When addressing bullying behaviour teachers should:

- Ensure that the student 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 the students 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

Identifying if Bullying Behaviour has occurred

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.

To determine whether the behaviour reported is Bullying Behaviour you should consider the following questions:

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?
4) **If the answer to all of the questions above is Yes**, then the behaviour is bullying behaviour and the behaviour should be addressed using the Bí Cineálta Procedures.

Note: One-off incidents may be considered bullying 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 to any of these questions is No, then the behaviour is not bullying behaviour. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour are provided for within 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 students is involved, each student should be engaged with individually at first
- Thereafter, all students involved should be met as a group
- At the group meeting, each student should be asked for 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 be helpful to ask the students involved to write down their account of the incident(s).

Where Bullying Behaviour has occurred:

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 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.

- It is important to listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation.
- 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 regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour.

Follow up where Bullying Behaviour has occurred:

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

The school may use the following approaches to support those who experience, witness and display Bullying Behaviour:
• Best Practices as advised by NEPS. • Training in Preventative Approaches Provided by Neps e.g. Friends for Life. • Training in Preventative Approaches provided by Oide. • Training in Preventative Approaches provided by the HSE e.g. Zippy's Friends. • Utilising the Web wise Online Safety Initiative. • Training Seminars provided by The National Parents' Council. • Training provided by Tusla.

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: Nina Fee
Date: 23.6.26
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: Tomás Walsh
Date: 23/6/2026
(Principal)