Bí Cineálta

Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

Maria Immaculata Community College

Dunmanway



Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of **Maria Immaculata Community College, Dunmanway** 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	14th March 2025	Half Day School Closure
Students	19th May 2025	Distributed via Microsoft Teams
Parents	19th May 2025	Online availability

Board of management	TBC	Board Meeting
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	19th May 2025	Email and school website
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 included 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 Bí Cineálta procedures):

Prevention Strategies to Address All Forms of Bullying Behaviour

Our school is committed to fostering a positive and inclusive school culture where all students feel safe, respected, and supported. As part of our proactive approach, we implement a range of **whole-school and targeted prevention strategies** to reduce the likelihood of bullying behaviour, including specific forms such as **online bullying, homophobic/transphobic bullying, racist bullying, sexist bullying, and sexual harassment**.

1. Whole-School Preventative Measures

- **Positive School Culture**
  We promote a culture of kindness, empathy, and respect through the implementation of the **SPHE and RSE curriculum**, student-led initiatives, and staff modelling inclusive behaviour.
- **'Telling' Environment**
  We actively foster an environment where students feel safe to report concerns. All students are encouraged to speak to a **trusted adult**, and we ensure that they are reassured and supported throughout.
- **Physical Environment and Supervision**
  We identify and monitor high-risk areas, improve visibility through supervision, and maintain well-lit, welcoming spaces. Regular review of school yard and corridor supervision occurs.
- **Student Voice and Participation**
  Students are meaningfully involved in developing and reviewing school policy, including through **student councils** and **focus groups**.

- **Friendship Week** – each year MICC will run a Friendship Week which will promote the benefits of being kind to everyone.

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2. Prevention of Online Bullying Behaviour

We aim to ensure safe and responsible use of technology through:

- Teaching **Digital Media Literacy** and responsible online behaviour as part of the curriculum.
- Promoting **safe use of devices** through our Acceptable Use Policy (AUP).
- Hosting regular events such as **Safer Internet Day** and **online safety workshops** for students and parents.
- Explicitly addressing cyberbullying scenarios through SPHE and Digital Technology related learning.
- Encouraging students to report harmful online behaviour and supporting them in managing their digital presence.

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3. Prevention of Homophobic and Transphobic Bullying Behaviour

We are committed to creating an inclusive environment for LGBTQ+ students by:

- Displaying **LGBTQ+ affirming materials** and posters throughout the school.
- Providing training for staff on **inclusive language and practices**.
- Promoting **peer mentoring** and **empathy-building activities** that foster understanding and support.
- Challenging gender stereotypes through curriculum, assemblies and school-wide messages.
- Hosting awareness campaigns during **Stand Up Week** or other relevant times.
- Our weekly **Bród Club** meetings

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4. Prevention of Racist Bullying Behaviour

To ensure that all cultural and ethnic identities are respected, we implement the following:

- Celebrating **diversity through displays, cultural events**, and curriculum content that reflects all backgrounds.
- Supporting **English as an Additional Language (EAL)** students through communication aids and inclusion practices.
- Including anti-racism education in SPHE, History, CSPE, Religion and a range of other classes.

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5. Prevention of Sexist Bullying Behaviour

We encourage gender equality and respect by:

- Promoting **equal access to all school activities** for all genders.
- Using **gender-inclusive language** and challenging sexist assumptions in all school interactions.
- Including **gender equality education** in curriculum areas such as SPHE and CSPE.
- Organising workshops or campaigns on **respect and equality** for all.

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6. Prevention of Sexual Harassment

We adopt a zero-tolerance stance and aim to prevent sexual harassment through:

- Delivering **age-appropriate RSE** education that covers boundaries, consent, respect, and healthy relationships. (Bystander programme)
- Making clear that all unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature is unacceptable.
- Encouraging students to speak up and **report inappropriate conduct** immediately.
- Promoting **positive role models** and respectful interactions throughout the school.

These strategies form part of our **whole-school approach to wellbeing, prevention, and inclusion** and will be reviewed regularly in consultation with students, parents, staff, and the wider 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):

Supervision and Monitoring to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

Our school recognises that active supervision and structured monitoring are essential components in preventing and responding to bullying behaviour. We are committed to maintaining a safe and inclusive environment through consistent oversight of student interactions across all settings within the school community.

1. Supervision Policy

We have in place a comprehensive supervision plan that includes the following measures:

- **Structured Supervision Rota**
  Staff participate in a supervision schedule to ensure a visible adult presence during break times, before and after school.
- **High-Risk Areas Monitored**
  Particular attention is given to high-risk areas such as corridors, social area, toilets,

and school yards. These areas are regularly assessed and supervised during non-class time.

- **Line of Sight**
  We work to eliminate physical blind spots by maintaining clear lines of sight.
- **Before- and After-School Oversight**
  Staff supervise students before and immediately after school to support safe travel and discourage inappropriate behaviour on school grounds.

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2. Monitoring Policies

To detect patterns of behaviour and ensure early intervention, we implement the following monitoring strategies:

- **Behavioural Records and Documentation**
  Staff maintain up-to-date records of all reported bullying incidents, student behaviour concerns, and actions taken. This includes informal observations and formal reports as per the school's Code of Behaviour and Bí Cineálta policy.
- **Regular Student Check-Ins**
  Teachers and support staff conduct regular informal check-ins with students to monitor wellbeing, especially those previously involved in bullying incidents either as targets or perpetrators.
- **Use of Feedback from Students**
  Anonymous surveys are conducted periodically to assess student perception of safety and to identify potential bullying hotspots.
- **Communication with Parents**
  Parents are encouraged to report concerns and are kept informed of ongoing concerns or investigations involving their child.

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3. Continuous Review and Oversight

- **School Leadership Oversight**
  The school leadership team, in collaboration with the Board of Management, regularly reviews supervision and monitoring practices to ensure effectiveness and address any emerging issues.
- **Incident Analysis and Response**
  Data from incident reports is analysed to identify patterns, recurring locations, or times associated with bullying behaviour, allowing for targeted intervention and resource allocation.

Through these supervision and monitoring practices, our school aims to create an environment that proactively deters bullying behaviour, supports early identification and response, and reinforces the values of kindness, inclusion, and safety for all.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

Principal, Deputy Principal, Year Head, Deputy Year Head, School Chaplain

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. Determine if Bullying Behaviour Has Occurred

Step-by-step Process:

1. **Initial Engagement**
   - The staff member gathers details on what happened, where, when, and why.
   - Each student involved is spoken to individually first. Students may also be asked to write down their version of events.
2. **Group Discussion (if applicable)**
   - After individual interviews, a group meeting is held to clarify different perspectives.
   - Students may also be asked to write down their version of events.
3. **Definition Alignment**
   - Use the definition from Chapter 2: **bullying is targeted, repeated behaviour involving a power imbalance**.
4. **Distinguish from Misbehaviour**
   - If the incident is not bullying (e.g. one-off or not targeted), address it under the school's **Code of Behaviour** instead.

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2. Approaches Taken to Address Bullying Behaviour

Core Principles:

- Focus on stopping the behaviour.
- Restore relationships as far as is practicable using the Restorative Practice model

- Support all parties involved.

Approach Steps:

1. **Ensure the student experiencing bullying behaviour is listened to and feels supported.**
2. **Timely and Sensitive Action:**
    - Consider age and ability.
    - Maintain privacy.
    - Listen to the views of the student experiencing bullying behaviour when deciding next steps.
3. **Parent Involvement:**
    - Inform the parents of all students involved.
    - If a student is reluctant to involve parents, develop a support plan and communicate sensitively.
4. **Choose Appropriate Interventions:**
    - Restorative practice is our appropriate intervention as we aim to restore a relationship between those involved. This will only be done with the consent of the students.
5. **Document Actions Taken** (per 6.6 of Bí Cineálta procedures):
    - Maintain accurate, factual records of the incident, actions, and outcomes.
    - This ensures consistency and accountability.

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3. Review of Progress

Ongoing Monitoring and Follow-Up:

1. **Continuous Support:**
    - Ensure follow-up conversations with both the student who experienced bullying behaviour and the student who displayed it.
    - Monitor their wellbeing and the school environment for recurrence.
2. **Review Effectiveness:**
    - Evaluate whether the intervention stopped the behaviour.
    - Review if relationships have been restored and supports are effective.
3. **Reinforce Positive Behaviour:**
    - Acknowledge and reward efforts by students to repair relationships or demonstrate kindness.
4. **Feedback from Students and Parents:**
    - Use surveys or check-ins to evaluate student perception of safety and support.
    - Update strategies as needed based on this feedback.
5. **Oversight by School Leadership:**
    - The board and leadership team should periodically review trends and interventions to ensure effectiveness as part of the school's **Bí Cineálta policy oversight.**

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):

Our school is committed to ensuring that all students involved in bullying incidents—whether experiencing bullying behaviour, the witness, or the student displaying the behaviour—receive timely and appropriate support. The goal is to stop the behaviour, repair relationships, and promote long-term wellbeing for all involved.

1. Supporting Students Who Experience Bullying Behaviour

Students who experience bullying behaviour will be supported through:

- **Immediate and Reassuring Engagement**
  Students will be listened to and supported without delay. They will be given a clear explanation of the actions the school will take.
- **Involvement in Decision-Making**
  Students will be included in discussions about how the bullying behaviour will be addressed to help restore their sense of agency and control.
- **Ongoing Monitoring and Check-Ins**
  Staff will follow up regularly with the student to assess their emotional wellbeing and ensure that the bullying behaviour has ceased.
- **Wellbeing Support**
  Where needed, referrals will be made to internal or external support services such as GP, School Chaplain, NEPS (National Educational Psychological Service). etc
- **Safety Planning**
  A personalised plan will be put in place to ensure the student feels safe, including supervision in identified high-risk areas and access to a trusted adult.

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2. Supporting Students Who Witness Bullying Behaviour

Students who witness bullying behaviour are also affected and will be supported through:

- **Reassurance and Validation**
  Students who report or witness bullying will be acknowledged for their role and reassured that their actions are valued.
- **Guidance on How to Help Safely**
  Students will be educated on safe ways to respond to bullying as bystanders, including speaking up, seeking adult help, and offering support to their peers.
- **Follow-Up Support**
  Trusted staff will check in with these students periodically to monitor their wellbeing and engagement.

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3. Supporting Students Who Display Bullying Behaviour

Our school understands that students who display bullying behaviour often have underlying needs that must be addressed. These students will be supported through:

- **Restorative and Reflective Conversations**
  Staff will use structured conversations to help students understand the impact of their behaviour and to promote accountability and empathy.
- **Behavioural Interventions**
  Individual or group interventions may be used to help students develop healthier peer relationship skills, emotional regulation, and conflict resolution strategies.
- **Goal Setting and Monitoring**
  Specific behaviour goals will be agreed upon with the student and monitored over time with staff support.
- **Family Involvement**
  Parents or guardians will be engaged early in the process and will be partners in addressing underlying causes and promoting positive behavioural change.
- **Referral to Additional Supports**
  If needed, students may be referred for additional assessment or intervention via internal support teams or external professionals.

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4. Inclusive and Collaborative Practice

All support strategies are underpinned by:

- **Confidentiality and Respect**
  Interventions are conducted in a sensitive and private manner to protect the dignity of all involved.
- **Student-Centred Approaches**
  Responses are tailored based on the age, ability, and specific needs of the student.
- **Staff Collaboration**
  Our staff, including teachers, support teams, and leadership, work together to coordinate responses and share responsibility for student wellbeing.

By addressing the needs of students across all roles in bullying incidents, our school fosters a culture of compassion, accountability, and growth in line with the core principles of the **Bí Cineálta** framework.

A wide range of supports are available from the Department of Education on the following link Resources for 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: Aoife Power Date: 28th May 2025

(Acting Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: _____ Date: 28th May 2025

(Principal)