



St. Mary's Primary (16112a) Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of St. Mary's Primary Nenagh 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.

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.

We confirm that we will take all steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent all 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 everybody 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 everybody has a part to play in the school community, regardless of difference.

Definition of bullying

Bullying is **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.

It is behaviour which is deliberate in nature and is unwanted. It is not accidental or reckless behaviour.

The harm can be:

- Physical (personal injury, damage to or loss of property)

- Social: (withdrawal, loneliness, exclusion)
- Emotional: (low self-esteem, depression, anxiety)

A one-off instance of negative behaviour towards a student is not bullying behaviour. However, a single hurtful message posted on social media can be considered bullying behaviour as it may be visible to a wide audience and has a high likelihood of being shared multiple times and so becomes a repeated behaviour.

Behaviour that is not bullying behaviour:

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

Types of Bullying:

There are many different types of bullying behaviour. These can include directing bullying at someone focused on the following: disability, exceptional ability, gender identity, LGBTQ+, physical appearance, racism, poverty status, religious identity, sexism and sexual harassment. This is not an exhaustive list.

Bullying can be: Direct:

- Physical: pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping students. Physical assault. Destruction of personal property.
- Verbal: continual name calling which insults, humiliates the student – this may refer to physical appearance, sex, clothes, gender, accent, academic ability, race or ethnic origin.
- Written: Writing insulting remarks in public places, passing notes or drawings about the student.
- Extortion: Where something is obtained through force or threats
- Exclusion: Where a student is deliberately and repeatedly isolated, excluded or ignored by a student or group of students.

Bullying can be: Indirect:

- Exclusion: Where a student is deliberately and repeatedly isolated, excluded or ignored by a student or group of students.
- Relational: Where a student'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 student.

Online bullying behaviour:

Cyber bullying is carried out via text, direct messaging/instant messaging, social media platforms, e-mail, apps, digital gaming sites, gaming consoles, chatrooms and other online technologies.

This can include:

- Sending or sharing of insulting and offensive or intimidating messages or images via online means as mentioned above.
- Posting information which is personal, private or sensitive without consent.
- Making and/or participating in fake profiles on a social network to impersonate and/or humiliate other students.
- Exclude/disrupt access to a student on purpose on online chat groups/access to accounts/from an online game.

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 6 th 2025	Questionnaire sent to teachers on Aladdin
	March 25 th 2025	Staff Meeting – staff provided with the opportunity to discuss the new Bí Cineálta action plan. Staff were also invited to review the new Bí Cineálta draft policy and provide feedback.
	May 2 nd 2025	Bí Cineálta staff training day
Students	March 5 th 2025	Written questionnaire given to each class to seek their input in developing an Anti-Bullying policy.
	March 25 th 2025	Staff Meeting – Teachers informed about our student friendly Bí Cineálta policy.
Parents	March 7 th 2025	Questionnaire sent to teachers on Aladdin
	April 2025	Parents sign the back of student friendly Bí Cineálta policy.
Board of Management	May 2025	Review and discussion of policy – leading to consultation and ratification
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	March 2025	Questionnaire sent to wider school community through email. Cleaner, caretaker, GAA and basketball coaches and traffic warden.
Date policy was approved: May 27 th 2025		
Date policy was last reviewed:		

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

This section sets out the prevention strategies that will be used by this school to address all forms of bullying behaviour, in whatever form and however motivated, including online bullying behaviour, homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour, racist bullying behaviour, sexist bullying behaviour and sexual harassment.

In developing the 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 our 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 our 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 further 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

Culture and Environment – We strive to:

Create a positive and inclusive school culture and climate which is essential to prevent and address bullying behaviour. The school environment should be a space where students 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.

Encourage open communication between the patron, boards of management, school staff, students and their parents help to foster a collaborative approach and shared responsibilities in relation to preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.

Having a leadership team that influences the school culture and set the standards and expectations for the school community when preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.

Ensuring each member of school staff has a responsibility to develop and maintain a school culture where bullying behaviour is unacceptable and to take a consistent approach to addressing bullying behaviour.

Helping students shape the school culture by promoting kindness and inclusion within their peer group and maintain a positive and supportive school environment for all.

Involve parents, as active partners in their child's education, can help foster an environment where bullying behaviour is not tolerated through promoting empathy and respect.

Support the idea that our school is a **telling Environment** - It is important that the school community supports a 'telling' environment.

Promote the concept of a **trusted adult** – Stay Safe: Who to tell.

Create **safe physical spaces** in school - The creation of safe physical spaces supports psychological safety and is an important measure to prevent bullying behaviour.

Ensuring sufficient **supervision** - Appropriate supervision is an important measure to help prevent and address bullying behaviour. Schools are required to take all reasonable measures to ensure the safety of their students and to supervise students when students are attending school or attending school activities.

Ways in which we work to achieve these goals are as follows:

- Staff are briefed on the uniform approach we must take to handle all reports of bullying – this is distributed to staff and a copy is displayed on the Staff Room notice board for ease of access also.
- Anti-Bullying week activities such as Random acts of Kindness homework, Poster making, slogan making, etc.
- Playground helpers – students in older classes volunteer to support younger classes on yard to help with games and positive interactions. Minders at lunchtime also. We have split our yards with age appropriateness in mind – Junior and senior yards.
- Have a 'Buddy bench' on both yards.
- All staff to praise good behaviour and 'catch' the children showing respect and kindness.
- Child Friendly Anti- Bullying Policy was formed with pupils' input and is distributed to parents, children and staff to discuss. This policy outlines various ways to tell.
- Parents receive information at times regarding useful information on Anti Bullying.
- Stay safe and SPHE lessons focusing on positive behaviour form part of

curricular content in all classes.

- Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils.

Class and School Charter development as well as notice board to promote kindness and build responsibility amongst pupils.

1. Curriculum (Teaching and Learning) – We strive to:

Provide teaching and learning opportunities that are collaborative and respectful ensuring our students have regular opportunities to work in small groups with their peers, which can help build sense of connection, belonging and empathy among students.

Ensuring our curricular subjects offered to students provide opportunities to foster inclusion and respect for diversity. Providing opportunities for students to develop a sense of self-worth through both curricular and extracurricular programmes.

Ways in which we work to achieve this:

- Teach SPHE and RSE content which fosters student's well-being and self-confidence as well as promoting personal responsibility for their own behaviours and actions.
- Model respectful behaviour towards colleagues, pupils and visitors in our school environment.
- Curricular and Extra-curricular activities can help to develop a sense of self-worth, working together, inclusion and respect.
- Students are given regular opportunities to work in small groups with peers, which can help build a sense of connection, belonging and empathy.
- Acknowledgment of our diverse school population – celebrating diversity and culture in our school through art, displays, photographs, international events, school library books.
- Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that
 - build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and
 - explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.
- Supports for staff;
- Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies); and
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

- ### **2. Policy and Planning -** The wellbeing of the school community should be at the heart of school policies and plans.

The aim of St. Mary's Primary Bí Cineálta policy is

- To raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with school management, teachers, pupils, parents/guardians.
- To promote a school ethos which encourages children to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour – All school policies to support our Bí Cineálta policy e.g Inclusion, acceptable use, ethos etc.
- To ensure appropriate supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of school activity are kept under observation.
- To develop procedures for noting, investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To implement a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and for those involved in bullying behaviour.
- To work with appropriate agencies in countering all forms of bullying and promoting anti bullying behaviour.

3. **Relationships and Partnerships** - Strong interpersonal connections are a vital part of effectively preventing and addressing bullying behaviour. These interpersonal connections are supported through a range of formal and informal structures such as student councils, after school clubs, gaelbhreach committee, green school committee, parents' associations and other student committees and groups.

The following, could be considered to strengthen relationships and partnerships between members of the school community:

Age appropriate awareness initiatives that look at the causes and impacts of bullying behaviour including those dealing with navigating friendships, identity-based bullying, racist bullying, homophobic/transphobic bullying, sexism and sexual harassment

Supporting the active participation of students in school life – Student council, active schools, gaelbratach etc.

Supporting the active participation of parents in school life, including those who may find it difficult or daunting to engage with the school due to being unfamiliar with the education system or due to language or cultural barriers.

Conducting workshops and seminars for students, school staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of bullying.

Supporting activities that build empathy, respect and resilience. (Friends for life)

Participating in activities with other schools whilst promoting respectful behavior.

Encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring – Change groups to give all children the opportunity to work with each other.

Promoting acts of kindness – weekly kindness winners.

Engaging students in actively contributing to the formation of a Child Friendly Anti Bullying Policy to make them active participants in promotion of and discussion of useful ways to identify and reduce bullying behaviour and highlight procedure and how to deal with it if it does occur.

When implementing a prevention strategy St Mary's Primary has engaged with the wider school community who are in regular contact with students, such as the following.

Traffic warden

Cleaner

Caretaker

Coaches

These members of the wider school community can be encouraged to report any bullying behaviour to the school as appropriate.

Preventing Cyber Bullying, Homophobic/Transphobic bullying, Racist bullying, Preventing sexual harassment.

In addition to above mentioned strategies, the school has the following in place to prevent and address bullying:

- Staff at all times endeavour to encourage pupils to show respect for each other.
- Implementation of the SPHE curriculum.
- Positive self-esteem is fostered among the pupils by celebrating individual differences, by acknowledging good behaviour and by providing opportunities for success.
- Lessons about responsible online behaviour and digital citizenship. AUP also developed for technology in our school.
- The school's anti-bullying policy is discussed regularly with the pupils.
- Staff are particularly vigilant in monitoring pupils who are considered at risk of bullying/ being bullied.
- All disclosed incidents of bullying are investigated thoroughly and consistently by following the correct procedure as outlined to staff and

recorded using the agreed template for this.

- School wide awareness raising on all aspects of bullying, supervision and monitoring of classrooms, school grounds, school tours and extracurricular activities.
- Involvement of pupils in contributing to a safe school environment e.g. Kindness/ Anti-Bullying week, and other activities that can help pupils and encourage a culture of peer respect and support
- Ensuring that pupils know who to tell and how to tell.
- Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place.
- Refer to appropriate online behaviour when using devices and in SPHE lessons.
- Promote online safety events or material for parents
- The listing of supports currently being used in the school and the identification of other supports available to the school e.g. www.tacklebullying.ie, www.antibullyingcentre.ie, [fuse](http://fuse.ie), www.webwise.ie
- Shared folder of resources for teaching of bullying including lessons from above websites – shared on Aladdin for all teachers to access.
- Challenge gender- stereotypes – equal participation of all. Equal recognition.
- Raise awareness of the impact of homophobic bullying behaviour and encourage students to speak up if they witness homophobic behaviour.
Foster a culture where diversity is celebrated and students “see themselves” in the school environment.

- Modelling of respectful behaviour by staff of all irrespective of sex.
- Ensuring all students have the same opportunities to engage in school activities irrespective of sex.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

- The class teacher will oversee recording of bullying reports for students in their class – this includes using the procedure guidelines to investigate reports of bullying and recording bullying behaviour on the correct form that's placed child's file
- The DLP will follow up after twenty days to investigate if bullying has ceased.
- All staff will be vigilant to bullying behaviour.
- Principal will inform Board of Management of incidences of Bullying.
- Deputy principal /SENCO
- Assistant Principal 2 Anti- Bullying Policy co-ordinator is available to provide up to date information and supports if needed to assist class teacher in addressing concern

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.

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.

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?

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.

The school's procedures for investigation, follow-up and recording of bullying behaviour and the established intervention strategies used by the school for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour are as follows: (See chapter 6 of the BÍ Cineálta procedures)

- a. While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the 'Relevant Teacher(s)', the 'Relevant Teacher(s)' will use his/her/their professional judgement in relation to the records to be kept of these reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same.
- b. If it is established by the 'Relevant Teacher(s)' that bullying has occurred, the 'Relevant Teacher(s)' must keep appropriate written records which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.
- c. The 'Relevant Teacher(s)' must record the bullying incident by adding an Alleged Bullying Behaviour Report to the relevant pupil's file. The 'Relevant Teacher' must inform the Principal.

The primary aim in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame). With this in mind the school's procedures are as follows:

- 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 wwhich the victim(s) experienced because of the bullying behaviour.
- Initial investigations of bullying will be done in class where possible but some incidents might be best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.
 - When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the 'Relevant Teacher(s)' should seek answers to questions of what, where, who, when and why. This

- should be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non- aggressive manner.
- If a group is involved each member should be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved should be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member should be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about the other's statements.
 - Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that they may face from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher.
 - Where the 'Relevant Teacher(s)' has/have determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts should be made to try to get him/her to see 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.
 - When an investigation is completed and/or a bullying situation is resolved the "Relevant Teacher" will complete a report, to include the findings of the investigation, the strategy adopted and the outcome of the intervention, as well as any other relevant information. This will be recorded on the "Alleged Bullying Behaviour Report", that is placed in the relevant child's file
 - If a pupil chooses to continue the bullying behaviour, this can then no longer be considered a once off occurrence. In this event parent(s)/guardian(s) will be contacted. The school should give parents an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports for the pupil.
 - Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved may be arranged separately with a view to bringing them together at a later date if the pupil who has been bullied is ready and agreeable.
 - Depending on the seriousness of the bullying some or all of Level 2 Supportive Interventions will be utilized (See School Code of Behaviour)
 - Repeated incidents of bullying behaviour will result in the imposition of sanctions. Such sanctions will be proportionate to the seriousness of the bullying behaviour. It must be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parents) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required that this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parents and the school
 - Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parent must be referred to the school's complaints procedure.
 - In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parents of their rights to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.
 - The School will maintain care for the victim over time. This will be done by

speaking to the child a number of weeks after the incident to check on their continuing welfare. The child's parents will also be consulted.

- 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,
- Making adequate counselling facilities available to pupils who need it in a timely manner (subject to available funding)

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 Pupils who have engaged in bullying:

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 counselling facilities 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 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.

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 every classroom in St. Mary's Primary 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: _____
(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(Principal)