

Bí Cineálta Policy

To

Address and Prevent

Bullying

Stakeholders Consultation

	Date Consulted	Method of Consultation
School Staff	8-5-25	Meeting Drive Website OIDE CPD Days
Students	1-5-25	Surveys Student Council Assembly SPHE
Parents	1-5-25	Letters Website VShare Parents Association Meetings Surveys
Board Of Management	12-5-25	
Wider School Community Date Approved	12-5-25	As appropriate
Date of Review	May 26	

Communication Of Policy

Staff – Meetings, Shared Drive, Website

Students – Journal, Website, Media

Parents – Vsware, website

Rationale:

The Board of Management of St Mary's Secondary School 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 on a whole education basis (World Anti Bullying Forum, Stockholm 2021) 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 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.

Source: Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying (2024)

Section 2: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

St Mary's secondary school expects members of the school community to act with respect, dignity and kindness at all times. Our mission statement clearly states that:

"The aim of St Mary's Secondary School is to provide holistic education in the Catholic tradition for all our students. We are committed to the academic, creative, emotional, spiritual and physical development of each student, in a caring and safe environment."

This section sets out the prevention strategies that will be used in our 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 (Chapter 5 of the Bi Cinealta Procedures)

- Board of Management oversight of practice policy and procedures
- School staff can prevent and address bullying behaviour by promoting empathy, and a positive and inclusive environment. The primary aim in addressing bullying behaviour is to stop the bullying behaviour and to restore, as far as practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.
- Students have an important role to play by supporting their peers, reporting incidents of bullying behaviour and working in partnership with our school community.
- Parents also have an important role to play. Collaboration between parents and school staff is essential to effectively prevent and address bullying behaviour. Our school promotes active partnership with parents which can help reinforce values that discourage bullying behaviour.

Wellbeing Promotion -

- Wellbeing Policy, Child Protection, Code of Conduct, Acceptable User Policy, Attendance, Health and Safety, Supervision, Trips, Sport
- Timetable consideration for opportunities to explore bullying prevention in the mainstream classroom and as part of our school provision map using UDL and NCSE continuum approach and structures.
- Student support team members and meetings are planned as part of core timetable to include structured weekly Student Support Weekly Meetings including meetings with Year Heads, AEN Core Team, TY Core Team and the school Guidance Team.
- Links between the GC and those running the lunchtime clubs to encourage student involvement in lunchtime activities.
- Each year group is supported with a check and connect assembly once per week led by their Year Head and their tutor.
- Lunch and social spaces, extra-curricular zones and quiet spaces are planned as part of core timetables and room allocations
- Designated specific zones and rooms for different year groups are provided before school, at break and lunch times.
- Supervision is planned and provided in the best possible arrangement and spread to actively observe and prevent bullying behaviour.
- Identifying opportunities within the curriculum and in extra curricular for students to develop their relational and social skills.

- Prizes and Awards ceremony to recognise informal leadership is demonstrated by our staff and students through their engagement with the extra-curricular life of the school. This important layer is planned annually to provide a broad range of activities to suit the aptitudes, interests and needs of our students.
- Student Council representatives, Rotary Youth Leaders, Digital Leaders Gaisce leaders, Treoraí leaders, sports and extra-curricular student leaders.
- A culture of a learning community is encouraged.
- School building maintenance and refurbishment
- 5th and 6th year students are given mentors who check in on students on a regular basis to ensure they are managing the academic and non-academic aspects of their lives.
- Wellbeing week

• Relationships and Partnerships:

- DCU Anti-Bullying Centre through the [FUSE anti-bullying and online safety programme](#) for bullying prevention. We have installed the [ISPCC Anti-Bullying Reporting toolkit](#) which allows for parents and or students to report bullying in
- a confidential manner online. This support is part of the [ISPCC Shield Programme](#) supported by [DCU Anti-Bullying Centre](#). Such evidence based education and training programmes form part of our teaching curriculum and
- school based support approaches at the college.
- Our Code of Behaviour is reviewed regularly with all partners and supports
- positive school culture and parameters for high expectations of positive behaviours in our school community amongst all partners.
- Year Heads / Class Tutors periodically and proactively [survey](#) students anonymously
- Where necessary the school will seek the assistance of and work with external agencies such as Tusla, NEPS, the HSE and the Gardaí, as appropriate, to combat bullying by identifying the perpetrators and supporting the victims.
- Our inclusive approach focuses on enhancing social skills, paying particular attention to student induction and transitions experienced in the lives of students and staff members at the college. This approach cultivates a culture that respects everyone and values helping and supporting one another. In addressing bullying, the College will take particular account of the needs of pupils with additional needs.
- The school may, where appropriate, establish links with school bus drivers and others who come in to daily contact with our students in order to enlist them in countering bullying behaviour by reporting it to parents.
- Parents are actively encouraged to participate with school life and welcomed to the college at all available opportunities. Our Parents' Association is also supported.
- Students are presented with many opportunities to develop their understanding of themselves and others across their five or six years at the college.
- Transfer students are buddied up with prefects on commencement in school.

Culture and Environment:

- Student Voice – student prefects and student council as engaged member of our community
 - Extracurricular Activities – where respect for all skills and ranges of abilities is fostered
 - Additional supports for students with diagnosed AEN needs as part of induction where required.
 - The College will regularly host extra-curricular events in addition to it's house system which seek to improve understandings around inclusion. Examples of such events may include:
 - Breakfast Club
 - Easter Camp available to incoming first year students
 - Stand Up Awareness Week
 - Anti Bullying Week
 - Retreats
 - Field Trips
 - Bonding Days
 - Graduations Ceremonies
 - Masses & Liturgical Services
 - Induction Days For AEN students
 - First Year Induction Week
 - Induction Days & First Year Induction Week
 - Safer Internet Day
 - Nations Together Day
 - Student Support Team – Years Heads and Tutors Teaching Staff and SNAs
 - Whole School Guidance Programme
 - External Speakers
 - Sensory Room/ sensory garden
 - Mural design and execution within school and charleville town.
 - Getting commissions for art students from local businesses. ●
- Art students create artwork for the school.
- Woodwork students create pieces for the school.
 - Leaving cert students design and create artwork for graduation mass.
 - Poster design for ty musical
 - Lunchtime clubs 1
 - 1st year / Ty Buddy system
 - Ty musical- involving students in non performing roles.
 - 5th and 6th year mentors for students academic and non academic pursuits ●
- 6th yr graduation mass- involving students outside of the music class in the music.

Curriculum and Teaching:

- SPHE & RSE curriculum
- Digital Media Literacy classes
- FUSE programme
- RSE Programmes
- Music performance module for TY

- First year choir.
- Wellbeing Policy
- Webwise
- Anti Bullying Resources
- Bi Cinealta Resources from Oide
- Focus on friendship building
- Internet Safety Presentations from External Agencies
- RE Curriculum
- Staff Training
- Mind Out Programmes
- Anti Bullying Programmes

Policies

- Supervision and Substitution is across the school
- Staff observation of students
- Provision of quieter spaces e.g. sensory room and library
- Extracurricular activities
- Team teaching/SNA observations

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

The teacher(s) with responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour are the yearheads in the first instance

- When bullying behaviour occurs, the school will:
- ensure that students experiencing bullying behaviour are 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
- to resolve and restore an isolated incident of bullying behaviour without consequence

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):

In investigating and dealing with bullying the focus is to restore relationships as they were before any incident

In investigating and dealing with bullying, the year head will exercise their professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved

Students are reminded of the role of “The Bystander”. We encourage

students to take a stand and behave responsibly and that the well-being of other students is dependent on them reporting such behaviour to a teacher or their Year Head

All staff, teaching clerical and ancillary staff will be expected to report alleged bullying behaviour that they are aware of.

Incidents of bullying will be investigated in a calm, unemotional problem-solving manner.

All interviews will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard for the rights of students, irrespective of whether they are allegedly involved in bullying behaviour or in a position to provide information about the behaviour being investigated

Questions such as what, where, when, who and why will be asked in an impartial and fair manner.

Where a group is allegedly involved in bullying behaviour, each student will be met individually

Students may be asked to write down their account of what happened, always individually.

In accordance with Section 6.8.9 of the [Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools](#) *'parents and students are expected to co-operate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving any issues and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved as quickly as possible'*

St. Mary's will give parents an opportunity to discuss ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school. Restorative practices/meetings may be used if deemed appropriate. Equally students may be told not to interact.

Where the school deems it necessary to impose disciplinary sanctions, it will be made clear to all involved (both the bullied and those doing the bullying and their parents) that the code of behaviour will be applied. Year Heads will monitor/contact both parties separately to review progress.

Where the relevant Deputy Principal considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, the bullying incident must be recorded in the recording template at Appendix 1

In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant teacher must, as part of his/her professional judgement, take the following factors into account

- whether the bullying behaviour has ceased
- whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable
- whether the relationships between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable; and
- any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents/guardians or the school Principal or Deputy Principal

Appeals under this policy can be made to the Board of Management. Subsequent appeals can be made to The Ombudsman for Children.

St Mary's Secondary School will put in place a programme of support

for students who have been bullied or engaged in bullying behaviour.

This programme will involve the following elements

- offering appropriate guidance counselling
- providing opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise their self esteem, to develop their social skills and to build their resilience.

Students who observe incidents of bullying behaviour will be encouraged to discuss them with their teachers and their parents and to avail of counselling where they feel it may assist them to cope effectively with what they have experienced. While, when investigating and dealing with bullying the primary focus is on resolving differences and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than apportioning blame), the College nevertheless reserves the right to take disciplinary action (up to and including suspension and expulsion), where such is warranted, in accordance with the college's [Code of Conduct & Cooperation](#), against those who bully others.

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*.

Step 1: Identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred

- consider what, where, when and why
- engage with students individually
- engage with students as a group
- each student gives/ writes an account of what happened
- offer supports to students
- is it bullying (three questions)
- If yes: Bi Cinealta If no: Code of Behaviour

Step 2: Where bullying behaviour has occurred

- ensure staff are aware of how to report bullying
- ensure that the matter being investigated has taken place within school - support both parties with reassurance, sensitivity, agenda ability sensitive appropriateness - inform parents where bullying has occurred

Step 3: Requests to take no action

- support student

Step 4: Determining if bullying has ceased

- designated person ceased: pastoral supports in place with check in
- has not ceased: code of behaviour and further meetings

Step 5: Recording bullying behaviour:

- all instances: GDPR compliant
- record: form and types of bullying, where and when, dates of

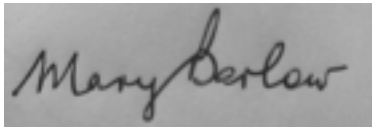
student and parent first engagement, comprehensive records of all engagement, date bullying ceased
- add record of instance in Student Support File and update student support plan.

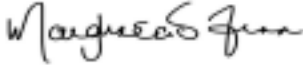
Section D: Oversight

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:  Date: 28-5-26
(Chairperson of the board of management)

Signed:  Date: 28-5-26
Principal