

**Bí Cineálta: Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour (Discussion Draft)**

**Mission Statement**

Our Lady’s Secondary School is a voluntary Catholic secondary school operating under the trusteeship of CEIST according to the traditions of the Sisters of Mercy. We, the staff and students, enjoy working together to realise our full potential in a healthy, safe, stimulating and friendly environment where the atmosphere is one of mutual respect, cooperation and challenge. We take a holistic approach focusing on the wellbeing and development of each individual socially, culturally and academically. Within our school community, each student is treated equally. All are considered uniquely talented, with effort valued as much as excellence. On a day-to-day basis, the Christian message inspires everyone in the school to be charitable, inclusive and compassionate

**School Context**

Our Lady’s Secondary School is a Voluntary Catholic School under the trusteeship of CEIST. The school is Co-Educational and currently has approximately 860 students and over 60 teachers as well as a range of ancillary and support staff. The school has a Board of Management comprised of Trustee Nominees, Teacher Nominees and Parent Nominees. The Board of Management delegates the day-to-day running of the school to the Principal. The school supports the principles of inclusiveness, equality of access and parental choice in relation to enrolment. In supporting these principles, it also recognizes the rights of the Trustees CEIST, the Religious and Educational Philosophy of the Sisters of Mercy and the funding and resources available.

**Mercy Philosophy of Education**

Inspired by the vision of Catherine McAuley, Mercy Education is committed to holistic development and to the achievement of the full potential of each student, particularly those who are disadvantaged or marginalised. It is a process informed and influenced by the teaching and example of Jesus Christ and is conducted in an atmosphere of care, respect and joy. Mercy Education is committed to ongoing whole school development in collaboration and partnership with the Board of Management, Staff, Students, Parents/Guardians and the wider community.

**CEIST Core Values**

 The Core Values of CEIST are:

* Promoting Spiritual & Human Development
* Achieving Quality in Teaching and Learning
* Showing Respect for Every Person
* Creating Community
* Being Just and Responsible

**Policy Statement**

The Board of Management of Our Lady’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 policy now explicitly acknowledges that some bullying behaviours may constitute criminal offences. In such cases, the school will immediately liaise with An Garda Síochána, TUSLA, or relevant statutory agencies as appropriate**.**

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 and a synopsis of this information is presented in Appendix 1 of this policy document.

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.

*Bí Cineálta: Procedures*were drawn up at a national level after widespread consultation with parents, students and teachers. Moreover, there was significant input from those with academic expertise and advocacy groups. The *Bí Cineálta Procedures* are, therefore, used in this policy document not just as a set of guidelines, but as a resource to share insights and knowledge with regard to defining, preventing and investigating bullying.

**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 | TBC | A subcommittee of staff with an interest in the area was established to lead development of this policy. All staff surveyed using template provided by Department of Education.Half day closure April 2, 2025? To consult with staff.Council of Discipline & Student Support Team reviewed the draft policy and provided feedback.Draft policy emailed to staff for final consultation. |
| Students | TBC | Focus groups of students were surveyed using template provided by the Department of Education. A subcommittee of the Student Council was involved in drafting the policy. A draft version of the policy (in full and child-friendly form) was emailed to all students with a digital form provided for feedback. A meeting of the Student Council was held to discuss the draft policy.A draft version of the student friendly policy was discussed during tutor class and feedback provided by students. |
| Parents/Guardians | TBC | Parents were surveyed using template provided by the Department of Education. A draft version of the policy was emailed to all parents/guardians with a digital form provided for feedback. A meeting of the Parents Association was held to discuss the draft policy. |
| Board of Management | TBC | A draft version of the policy was emailed to all Board of Management for discussion and feedback. A meeting of the Board of Management was held to discuss the draft policy. |
| Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers | TBC | A draft version of the policy was emailed to all service providers and follow-up conversations held with management of transport operators. |
| Date policy was approved: TBC |
| Date policy was last reviewed: February 29, 2024 |

**Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour**

**This section sets out the prevention strategies that will be used by the school. These include strategies specifically aimed at preventing online bullying behaviour, homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour, racist bullying behaviour, sexist bullying behaviour and sexual harassment as appropriate.**

The Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice provides the following four key areas that are essential for a holistic, whole ­school approach to wellbeing promotion: Culture and Environment; Curriculum (Teaching and Learning); Policy and Planning; and Relationships and Partnerships. These four areas were considered by the school when developing measures to prevent bullying behaviour.

**Culture & Environment**

As a school, we aim in our Mission Statement for a healthy, safe, stimulating and friendly environment where the atmosphere is one of mutual respect, cooperation and challenge. In this environment each member of the 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.

Staff promote a ‘telling environment’ where reporting of bullying is encouraged as part of the school’s **culture**. Through daily contact with class tutors and regular interactions with Year Heads, Student Support and school management, each student has access to a ‘trusted adult.’

At the start of each day, every student meets their class tutor. The tutor has a pivotal role in promoting Wellbeing and promoting the school culture generally. Tutors proactively position themselves as a ‘trusted adult’. Additionally, every student has at least two one-to-one meetings with either their year head/member of senior management each year. These meetings build relationships and also facilitate a ‘telling environment.’

If a bullying incident or suspected bullying, is reported, the trusted adult should reassure the student that they have done the right thing by reporting the behaviour. The trusted adult should, without delay, report the incident(s) to the deputy principal, year head, or a member of the student support team. If unsure who to inform, the trusted adult should inform the principal or deputy principal.

To prevent bullying in the **physical spaces** in the school, a range of actions are taken by the school.

* Appropriate supervision is provided throughout the school during break and all reasonable measures are taken to ensure the safety of their students and to supervise students when students are attending school or attending school activities.
* A range of extracurricular lunchtime activities are also organized to cater for students of all abilities.
* Every effort is made to ensure the built environment limits the possibility of bullying. Steps taken include;
* Good lighting is present to avoid dark corners or spaces
* Visual barriers from windows such as posters are removed
* Cameras are strategically positioned around the school to aid supervision
* Split breaks are scheduled to separate junior and senior students and reduce congestion
* Staff supervising are encouraged to be a visible and continuous presence
* Murals, artwork and signage are prominently displayed to promote school’s values such as equality, diversity, inclusion and respect.

**Curriculum**

Teaching and learning that is collaborative is promoted in the school through the Teaching & Learning committee and subject departments. Students have regular opportunities to work in small groups with their peers, which can help build sense of connection, belonging and empathy among students.

The updated SPHE specifications aim to help students to feel empowered to create, nurture and maintain respectful and healthy relationships with themselves and others. The RSE strand of the specification also provides space for students to examine and consider relationships and human sexuality which can foster an understanding of diversity which may help to reduce gender and identity ­based bullying as well as sexism and sexual harassment. In Civic Social and Political Education (CSPE), there is a focus on the interdependence of people in communities, at local as well as national and international levels. History and, at Senior Cycle, Politics and Society are used to raise awareness of racism and colonialism. By examining historical and contemporary examples of racial discrimination and colonial legacies, students develop an understanding of the root causes of bias and prejudice. Religion class and Tutor class both explore issues related to student Wellbeing and help students develop skills to identify and counteract bullying behavior.

At five points during the year, the school has Wellbeing Weeks. During each of these weeks there are awareness activities that impact on how the Curriculum is delivered. These activities have a focus on Wellbeing and, by extension, inclusion and anti-Bullying.

**Policy & Planning**

Policy planning at Our Lady’s includes all stakeholders. In particular, Student Voice is central to the policy making process and a subcommittee of the Student Council is tasked with ensuring student input. As a school community, we find that supporting the participation of students in the development and implementation of school policies and plans increases awareness and ensure effective implementation.

There are a range of other policies such as our school’s acceptable use policy, additional education needs policy, Child Safeguarding Statement and Code of Behaviour that support implementation of a school’s Bí Cineálta policy. This policy is therefore drafted in conjunction with reviews of these policies.

Training from Oide and Monaghan Education Centre was provided to those staff that had responsibility for leading the development of this policy.

**Relationship & Partnerships**

A key focus of the school’s Strategic Plan 2022-26 is to improve communication between all stakeholders.

‘The process of reviewing school policies will involves the meaningful participation of all relevant parties, including parents and students and that the review process is, as far as possible, communicated in a way that is accessible to all stakeholder groups.’

Our Teaching & Learning Committee and Students Council are increasingly interacting and working together. Meanwhile, the Parents Association and Board of Management have a pivotal role in policy formation.

Strong interpersonal connections between parents, teachers and students are a vital part of effectively preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.

To further build positive relationships;

* A class tutor meets a student at the start of every day
* Year Head/Senior Management have one-to-one meetings with each student twice a year
* The Student Council is resourced and supported. Regular meetings between the Student Council and school management occur.
* Parents and students attend parent-teacher meetings together
* Students and parents are surveyed on bullying related issues
* Our Strategic Plan 2022-26 has a focus on broadening participation in extracurricular activities to promote greater inclusion
* Clubs & Societies day is organized annually to profile the activity of school clubs for all students
* The Student Support team including Chaplain, Guidance Counsellors, Year Head and Senior Management meet weekly to coordinate supports for students
* Senior Management, Year Heads and members of the Student Support Team are visible and available to meet students throughout the school day.
* The Parents Association is an integral part of the school community

**Preventing specific types of Bullying**

**Preventing Cyber bullying**

Technology and social media have provided many positive opportunities for entertainment, social engagement and education. However, the increase in the use of technology has led to students becoming increasingly vulnerable to cyberbullying or unacceptable online behaviour. We aim to counter this by promoting digital literacy, digital citizenship, and fostering safe online environments.

Strategies undertaken to prevent cyberbullying behaviour may include;

* implementing the SPHE curriculum
* Prohibiting the use of mobile phones in school and requiring students to use Yonder pouches if taking digital technologies on site.
* Having regular conversations, particularly in tutor class, with students about developing respectful and kind relationships online
* development and communication of an acceptable use policy for technology
* appropriate online behaviour is referenced in the Code of Behaviour & Acceptable Usage Policy
* promoting online safety events for parents who are responsible for overseeing their children’s activities online
* holding an Internet safety day to reinforce awareness around appropriate online behaviour

**Preventing Homophobic Bullying**

All students including gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students, have a right to feel safe and supported at Our Lady’s. Strategies taken to prevent homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour may include;

* Maintaining an inclusive physical environment by displaying relevant posters
* Encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities including profiling the positive role ‘allies’ can play through Wellbeing Awards
* Encouraging students and teachers to challenge gender­ stereotypes
* Organising workshops and talks for students, school staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of homophobic bullying behaviour
* Encouraging students to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour

**Preventing racist bullying**

Our school has become much more culturally diverse over the last number of decades. Students from diverse backgrounds may face discrimination and prejudice and may be subject to racist bullying behaviour. Strategies taken to prevent racist bullying behaviour include;

* fostering a school culture where diversity is celebrated and where students “see themselves” in their school environment
* having the cultural diversity of the school visible and on display
* conducting workshops and seminars for students, school staff and parents to raise awareness of racism
* encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
* encouraging bystanders to report when they witness racist behaviour
* providing supports to school staff to respond to the needs of students for whom English is an additional language and for communicating with their parents
* providing supports to school staff to support students from ethnic minorities, including Traveller and Roma students, and to encourage communication with their parents
* inviting speakers from diverse ethnic backgrounds
* ensuring that library reading material and textbooks represent appropriate lived experiences of students and adults from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds

**Preventing Sexist Bullying**

As a mixed school we place a particular focus on gender equality as part of our school’s measures to create a supportive and respectful environment. To prevent sexist bullying, we;

* ensure members of staff model respectful behaviour and treat students equally irrespective of their sex
* ensure all students have the same opportunities to engage in school activities irrespective of their sex
* celebrate diversity at school and acknowledging the contributions of all students
* organise awareness campaigns, workshops and presentations on gender equality and respect
* encourage parents to reinforce these values of respect at home

**Preventing Sexual Harassment**

Our approach to preventing sexual harassment focuses on education, awareness and clear enforceable policies. There is a zero­ tolerance approach to sexual harassment. It is never dismissed as teasing or banter.

Strategies used to prevent sexual harassment include

* using the updated SPHE specifications at post ­primary level to teach students about healthy relationships and how to treat each other with respect and kindness
* promoting positive role models within the school community
* challenging gender stereotypes that can contribute to sexual harassment

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

* **Supervision on Yard and Corridors and in class**: A schedule of student supervision on corridors and yard is developed to monitor student behaviour and wellbeing. Any causes for concern are dealt with and reported to school management/Year Head. Year Heads meet weekly/fortnightly to address issues raised. The Student Support Committee meets weekly to coordinate Pastoral support.
* All **staff are watchful** and observe relationships between students in class, note absence patterns and let it be known that high standards of behaviour are expected at all times Annual Survey of Students
* **Tutors** meet students each morning. They report to the Year Head issues that may prompt concern over bullying (e.g. poor attendance, isolation, etc)
* Each **Year Head** is assigned a link person in Senior Management. The Year Head briefs that link person with any reports of bullying/possible bullying.
* The bi-annual **one-to-one** meeting between Year Heads and students is used to identify cases of bullying
* Students in each year group and their parents are **surveyed** each year to identify trends with regard to bullying behaviour
* The **student support email** smt@olss.ie is highlighted on posters around the school. This email has automatic notifications to the principal for emails received
* The Principal reports on cases of bullying at each Board of Management meeting.

**Part C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour**

The teacher(s) with responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour is (are) as follows: Principal, Deputy Principals, ~~t~~he Council of Discipline (i.e. Year Heads, Chaplain, Guidance Counsellors) and the Student Support Team.

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.**

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 (see Appendix 2 for suggested template). 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*.

The primary aim in addressing reports of bullying behaviour should be to stop the bullying behaviour and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.

To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour, the following questions should be considered with the definition of bullying in mind;

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*. If the answer to any of these questions is ‘No’, then the behaviour is not bullying behaviour. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour not defined as bullying are provided for within the school’s Code of Behaviour.

**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.

The school is not expected to deal with bullying behaviour that occurs when students are not under the care or responsibility of the school. However, where this bullying behaviour has an impact in school, we will support the students involved. Where the bullying behaviour continues in school, we will deal with it in accordance with their Bí Cineálta policy. Where the student displaying the bullying behaviour is not a student in the school, but the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour is a student in the school, the school will support the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as appropriate and engage with them and their parents to determine what steps can be taken.

**Investigation**

When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred teachers should consider what, where, when and why? The investigation teacher (usually a Year Head) should consult with their link person in Senior Management during the investigation.

* If a group of students is involved, each student should be engaged with individually at first. A written statement may be taken from each individual.
* 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 help to ask the students involved to write down their account of the incident(s)

**Where bullying behaviour has occurred**

* 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 or* Appendix 1 of this policy) 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

The form in Appendix One of this document must be used to record details of the bullying investigation and stored in line with the School’s Data Protection Policy.

**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):**

**Followup**

* 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 (see Appendix A) 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 consideration will 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 School*, they should email their complaint to smt@olss.ie.
* 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’s **programme of support** for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows:

* The Student Support Team will work closely with the student to ensure they are actively supported in the school and to engage in school based activities they enjoy
* The schools guidance department will also put in place a program of support in conjunction with the Year Year Head
* In some circumstances, depending on resources, the services of an outside private Counsellor may be provided.
* If beneficial a ‘Check-and-Connect’ teacher mentor may be provided to help a student
* Restorative Practice- these can only be provided by those trained in the practice and a list of names will be offered to pupils in the event of any incident.
	+ Restorative circles to help rebuild trust and mutual respect.
	+ Training for staff in restorative approaches to ensure effective implementation.
	+ A clear system for students to voluntarily engage in restorative discussions in a safe and supportive manner.
* The school in certain circumstances may also seek the support and advice of TUSLA, EWO, NEPS, NCSE, second level school support services, HSE and any other agency deemed appropriate to support the school in dealing with incidents of bullying.
* The school recognises that intervention is necessary not only for those experiencing bullying but also for those engaging in bullying behaviour. The following supports will be provided:
	+ Behavioural intervention programmes and supports tailored to help students understand the impact of their actions.
	+ Counselling support where required to address underlying issues leading to bullying behaviour.
	+ Implementation of behaviour contracts with clear expectations and support structures.

Parental Engagement Strategy

To ensure greater parental involvement, the school will:

* Organise annual parental workshops on appropriate areas identified through consultation with parents.
* Develop informational guides for parents on handling bullying incidents, understanding online risks, and promoting positive student behaviour.
* Provide regular updates through Compass Education to ensure parents remain informed of school policies and approaches.
* Ensure that all parents are aware of the official complaint procedures if they feel bullying has not been adequately addressed.

**Requests to take no action**

A student reporting bullying behaviour may ask that a member of staff does nothing about the behaviour. They may feel that telling someone might make things more difficult for them. Where this occurs, the member of staff should show empathy to the student and deal with the matter sensitively. They should speak with the student to work out what steps can be taken to address the matter and how their parents will be informed of the situation. It is important that the student who has experienced bullying behaviour feels safe. Parents may also make schools aware of bullying behaviour that has occurred and specifically request that the school take no action. **Parents should put this request in writing to the school** or be facilitated to do. However, while acknowledging the parent’s request, the school may decide that, based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour.**Section D: Oversight**

The principal will present an update on bullying behaviour at each Board of Management meeting (see Appendix 3). 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.

The update must include a verbal report which should include the following information where relevant:

* the trends and patterns identified such as the form of bullying behaviour, type of bullying behaviour if known, location of bullying behaviour, when it occurred
* the strategies used to address the bullying behaviour > any wider strategies to prevent and address bullying behaviour
* if any serious incidents of bullying behaviour have occurred which have had a serious adverse impact on a student
* if a parent has informed the school that a student has left the school because of reported bullying behaviour
* if any additional support is needed from the board of management
* if the school’s Bí Cineálta policy requires urgent review in advance of the annual review

Appendix 3 may be useful for the Principal in preparing this report

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. Appendix 4 must be used to complete this review. The school community will be informed that this review has taken place using Appendix 5 as a template.

Signed: Date: (Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: Date: (Principal)

# Appendix 1

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 core elements of this definition are described in the Bí Cineálta procedures;

**‘Targeted behaviour:** Bullying is deliberate, unwanted behaviour that causes harm to others, and where the student displaying bullying behaviour knows that their behaviour is or will be perceived as harmful by the child or young person experiencing the behaviour. Bullying is not accidental or reckless behaviour. The harm can be physical (for example, personal injury, damage to or loss of property), social (for example. withdrawal, loneliness, exclusion) and/or emotional (for example, low self-esteem, depression, anxiety) and can have a serious and long-term negative impact on the student experiencing the bullying behaviour. 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 still be addressed under the school’s code of behaviour.

**Repeated behaviour:** Bullying takes the form of a systematic pattern of behaviour which is repeated over time. Single offline incidents of intentional negative behaviour involving an imbalance of power are not considered bullying but must still be addressed under the school’s code of behaviour. Posting a single harmful message/image/video online, and which is highly likely to be reposted or shared with others can therefore be seen as bullying behaviour.

**Imbalance of power:** In incidents of bullying, the student experiencing the bullying behaviour finds it hard to defend themselves as a result of the abuse of a real or perceived imbalance of power. This imbalance of power may manifest itself through differences in size, strength, age, ability, peer group power, economic status, social status, religion, race, ethnic origin including membership of the Traveller and/or Roma communities, sexual orientation, family circumstances, gender, gender identity, gender expression, experience of the care system, disability or the receipt of special education. In incidents of online (or cyber) bullying, the imbalance of power may relate to online anonymity, technical proficiency and possession of information/images/video, and the inability of the targeted student to remove offensive online material or escape the bullying.’

**What is NOT bullying?**

The *Procedures* (p. 18) also clarify what is **not** bullying.

* A one ­off instance of negative behaviour towards another 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.
* Disagreement between students, or instances where students don’t want to be friends or to remain friends, is not considered bullying behaviour unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others including deliberate manipulation of friendship groups.
* 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 can’t control.
* Bullying is not accidental or reckless behaviour. If the repeated harm is real for the student experiencing the behaviour but unintended by the other student, this is not bullying. These behaviours, while not defined as bullying can be distressing. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour are provided for within the school’s Code of Behaviour.

**An Garda Síochána & TUSLA**

The *Bí Cineálta Procedures* further note (p.19) ‘Bullying behaviour can be considered criminal behaviour under certain circumstances and legal consequences can apply’. A list of examples are cited in the procedures that may constitute criminal offences. An Garda Síochána is judged ‘the appropriate authority to investigate alleged criminal behaviour.’

In certain circumstances other statutory agencies may have a role in bullying incidents. The *Procedures* state;

Generally, bullying behaviour can be addressed without the involvement of Tusla. However, bullying behaviour may become a child protection concern when it results in significant physical or emotional harm, or where it becomes a persistent and severe problem and measures taken to address it are not effective.

**How bullying behaviour occurs?**

Bullying behaviour can take many **forms**, which can occur separately or together. In a non-exhaustive list, the *Bí Cineálta Procedures* (p.21) identify a number of ways bullying can occur. Teachers investigating incidents of bullying ideally should report the ‘form’ bullying takes;

**Direct bullying behaviour**

**Physical bullying** behaviour includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping students. It may also take the form of severe physical assault. While students can often engage in “mess fights” they can sometimes be used as a disguise for physical harassment or inflicting pain.

**Personal property** can be a focus of attention for bullying behaviour. This may result in damage to clothing, mobile phone or other devices, schoolbooks and other learning material or interference with a student’s locker or bicycle. The contents of school bags and pencil cases may be scattered on the floor. Items of personal property may be defaced, broken, stolen or hidden.

**Verbal bullying** behaviour: Continual name­ calling directed at a student which hurts, insults or humiliates the student should be regarded as a form of bullying behaviour. Often name ­calling of this type refers to physical appearance; for example, size or clothes worn or gender identity. It can also refer to a student’s accent, distinctive voice characteristics, academic ability, race or ethnic origin.

**Written bullying** behaviour includes writing insulting remarks about a student in public places, passing around notes about or drawings of a student.

**Extortion**: Bullying behaviour can involve extortion. Extortion is where something is obtained through force or threats.

**Indirect bullying behaviour:**

**Exclusion:** Exclusion bullying behaviour occurs where a student is deliberately and repeatedly isolated, excluded or ignored by a student or group of students

**Relational:** Relational bullying behaviour occurs when a student’s attempts to socialise and form relationships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined. Common forms include control: “Do this or I won’t be your friend anymore”; a group of students ganging up against one student; non­verbal gesturing; malicious gossip; spreading rumours about a student; giving a student the “silent treatment”; and the deliberate manipulation of friendship groups to make someone unpopular.

**Online bullying behaviour** (cyberbullying) is carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as text or direct messaging/instant messaging, social media platforms, e­mail, apps, digital gaming sites, gaming consoles, chatrooms and other online technologies. This form of bullying behaviour can include:

* sending or sharing nasty, insulting, offensive, and/or intimidating messages or images via text messages, emails, direct messages or other websites or apps
* posting information considered to be personal, private and sensitive without consent
* making and/or participating in fake profiles on a social network to impersonate and/or humiliate other students
* excluding or disrupting access to a student on purpose from online chat groups, access to accounts or from an online game.

 Even though a message may be posted online just once by a student it can be considered bullying behaviour as it may be seen by a wide audience where it is intended to be shared or has a likelihood of being shared multiple times and is thus repeated. As online bullying uses technology to carry out bullying behaviour and does not require face-­to-­face contact it can occur at any time. Many types of bullying behaviour can be facilitated through online bullying. In many cases online bullying can relate to an “offline” experience with someone known to the student. This type of bullying may involve forms of sexual exploitation including but not limited to, sextortion and the non­consensual sharing of intimate images. The sharing or threatened sharing of images without consent is a criminal offence.

The *Procedures* (p.23) note that bullying can take place anywhere but certain locations are seen as more likely inside school (schoolyard, classroom, toilets, corridors, lockers etc) and outside school (online and coming to and from school). The *Procedures* state;

‘A school is not expected to deal with bullying behaviour that occurs when students are not under the care or responsibility of the school. However, where this bullying behaviour has an impact in school, schools are required to support the students involved.’ [ADD FULL VERSION OF THIS BASED ON MEC]

**Types of bullying behaviour**

The Guidelines (p.24) differentiate between types of bullying in a non-exhaustive list. Again, teachers investigating incidents should record the type of bullying;

* disablist bullying behaviour
* exceptionally able bullying
* gender identity bullying
* homophobic/transphobic (LGBTQ+) bullying
* physical appearance bullying:
* racist bullying
* poverty bullying
* religious identity bullying
* sexist bullying
* sexual harassment

**Signs of bullying & those at risk**

The *Procedures* (p26) identify signs that a student may be experiencing bullying behaviour;

* anxiety about travelling to and from school
* not wanting to go to school, refusal to attend
* a change in how the student performs in school
* pattern of physical illnesses for example; headaches, stomach aches
* unexplained changes either in mood or behaviour which may be particularly noticeable before returning to school after weekends or after school holidays
* visible signs of anxiety or distress for example; stammering, withdrawing, nightmares, difficulty in sleeping, crying, not eating, vomiting, bedwetting
* spontaneous out­ of ­character comments about either students or teachers
* possessions missing or damaged
* increased requests for money or stealing money
* unexplained bruising or cuts or damaged clothing
* reluctance and/or refusal to say what is troubling them

Meanwhile, those that may be at risk of bullying are identified (p.27);

* students who have additional learning needs
* students with disabilities
* students from an ethnic minority background and migrant students
* students who are members of the Traveller and Roma communities
* students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ+)
* students who practice or display a religious faith
* students experiencing homelessness
* students experiencing health or mental health issues

**Appendix 2: Investigation/Reporting form**

**Our Lady’s Secondary School Report Form**

**Part 1 Alleged bullying behaviour**

|  |
| --- |
| Date of Alleged bullying behaviour: |
| Date Part 1 of form completed: |
| Staff member report was made to:Behaviour reported by:Student(s) who experienced the behaviour:  |
| Summary of Behaviour (please included nature of the behaviour, where it occurred, when it occurred): |
|
| To determine whether the behaviour is bullying behaviour please answer the following questions:  |
| 1) Is the behaviour targeted at a specific student or group of students? | YES □ NO □ |
| 2) Type of harm caused? | Physical □ |
| Emotional □ |
| Social □ |
| 3) How did the incident take place? | In-person □Online □ |
| 4) Is the behaviour repeated? | YES □ NO □ |
| 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.  |
| 5) Based on the above is it determined that the behaviour is bullying behaviour? |
| YES □Proceed to Part 2: Record of Bullying Behaviour. | NO □Address the behaviour under the Code of Behaviour. |

Signature of teacher: Date:

**Part 2: Record of Bullying Behaviour**

Date Part 2 of form completed:

Staff member report was made to: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Where did the bullying behaviour take place? (Check as appropriate – can be more than one)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Online |  | Changing Room |  |
| In the Classroom |  | Toilets |  |
| School Common Areas |  | Outside School Gates |  |
| School Yard |  | Other |  |
| Locker Room |  |  |  |

When did the bullying behaviour take place? (Check as appropriate- can be more than one)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| During Lessons |  | Online during school hours |  |
| During Lunch or Break times |  | Online outside of school hours |  |
| During Extra-Curricular activities |  | On the way to or from school |  |
| During Unsupervised Times in School |  | Outside of school hours |  |

|  |
| --- |
| What **form** of bullying behaviour was reported? (Refer to section 2.5 of the procedures for description of forms) |
| **7) Type** | **Description** |
| **□** DirectPhysical |  |
| **□** Direct Verbal |
| **□** Indirect Isolation/Exclusion/Relational |
| **□**Cyber (Online)  |
| What was the **motivation** that initiated the bullying behaviour? (not an exhaustive list) (Refer to section 2.7 of the procedures for description of motivations) |
| **Motivation** | **Description & Impact** |
| **□**Academic Ability (high/low) |  |
| **□**Additional Education Need |
| **□**Cultural Background  |
| **□**Disability |
| **□**Family Status |
| **□**Gender Identity |
|  **□** Homophobia |
| **□**Member of Travelling Community/Roma |
| **□**Peer Conflict |
| **□**Physical Appearance |
| **□**Poverty |
| **□**Racist |
| **□**Religious Identity |
| **□** Sexism  |
| **□** Sexual Harassment |
| **□**Transphobia |
| **□**Other |

Signature of teacher: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Part 3: Actions to be taken**

|  |
| --- |
| **Actions to prevent further bullying behaviour** |
| For students involved; / for whole class or year group/ for whole school: |

|  |
| --- |
| **Actions to address bullying behaviour** |
| To support student experiencing bullying behaviour: To support student(s) displaying bullying behaviour:To support student(s) witnessing bullying behaviour: |

|  |
| --- |
| **Discussions** |
| Date of Discussion with the student experiencing bullying behaviour: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_What are the views of the student in relation to the proposed actions?Date of discussion with parents of student experiencing the bullying behaviour \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_What are their views?Agreed actions for parents (as appropriate)Date of discussion with student displaying the bullying behaviour \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_What are their views?Date of discussion with parents of student displaying the bullying behaviour \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_What are their views?Agreed Actions for Parents (as appropriate) |

|  |
| --- |
| **Collaboration with external agencies or bodies (if appropriate)** |
| Name of Agency/Body:Date of engagement: Name of individual engaged with:Description of discussion and outcome:  |

Signature of teacher: Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Part 4. Follow Up in Relation to Effectiveness of Measures Taken**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Date of review |  |
| Views of student who experienced the bullying behaviour:Views of their parents:Views of student who displayed the bullying behaviour:Views of student who witnessed the bullying behaviour:Views of the relevant teacher on the relationship between the students, the effectiveness of the strategies used Has the bullying behaviour been resolved? YES □ NO □If “No” the strategies used should be reviewed and/or support should be sought from external agencies. |

Signature of teacher: Date:

**Part 5. Report to the Board of Management**

All incidents of bullying behaviour should be reported to the Board of Management at each meeting of the Board. When this record has been included in the Bullying Behaviour Oversight Report to the Board of Management the date of the Board of Management meeting should be inserted below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Date Reported to Board of Management |  |

Signature of Principal Date:

**Appendix 3: Guide to Providing Bullying Behaviour Update**

**Guide to providing Bullying Behaviour Update for board of management meeting of Our Lady’s Secondary School.**

Having reviewed the details of the incidents of bullying behaviour that have been reported since the previous board of management meeting, the principal must provide the following information at each ordinary meeting of the board of management:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Total number of new incidents of bullying behaviour reported since the last board of management meeting |  |
| Total number of incidents of bullying behaviour currently ongoing.  |  |
| Total number of incidents of bullying behaviour reported since the beginning of this school year |  |

Where incidents of bullying behaviour have been reported since the last meeting, the update must include a verbal report which should include the following information where relevant:

* the trends and patterns identified such as the form of bullying behaviour, type of bullying behaviour if known, location of bullying behaviour, when it occurred etc
* the strategies used to address the bullying behaviour
* any wider strategies to prevent and address bullying behaviour
* if any serious incidents of bullying behaviour have occurred which have had a serious adverse impact on a student
* if a parent has informed the school that a student has left the school because of reported bullying behaviour
* if any additional support is needed from the board of management
* if the school’s Bí Cineálta policy requires urgent review in advance of the annual review

**Note:** This update should not include any personal information or information that could identify the students involved.

**Appendix 4**

Review of the Bí Cineálta Policy

The Board of Management (the Board) must undertake an annual (calendar) review of the school’s Bí Cineálta policy and its implementation in consultation with the school community. As part of the review, this document must be completed.

**Bí Cineálta Policy Review**

1. When did the Board formally adopt its Bí Cineálta policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour in accordance with the *Bí Cineálta Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*? *Insert date when the Bí Cineálta policy was last adopted by the school.*

 / /20

1. Where in the school is the student­friendly Bí Cineálta policy displayed?

|  |
| --- |
|  |

1. What date did the Board publish the Bí Cineálta policy and the student­friendly policy on the school website? / /20
2. How has the student­friendly policy been communicated to students?

|  |
| --- |
|  |

1. How has the Bí Cineálta policy and student­friendly policy been communicated to parents

|  |
| --- |
|  |

1. Have all school staﬀ been made aware of the, school’s Bí Cineálta

policy and the *Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post- Primary Schools*?

Yes No

1. Does the Bí Cineálta policy document the strategies that the school uses to prevent bullying behaviour?

Yes No

1. Has the Board received and minuted the Bullying Behaviour Update presented by the principal at every ordinary board meeting over the last calendar year?

Yes No

1. Has the Board discussed how the school is addressing all reports of bullying behaviour?

Yes No

1. Is the Board satisfied that all incidents of bullying behaviour are addressed in accordance with the school’s Bí Cineálta Policy?

Yes No

1. Have the prevention strategies in the Bí Cineálta policy been implemented?

Yes No

1. Has the Board discussed the eﬀectiveness of the strategies used to prevent bullying behaviour?

Yes No

1. How have (a) parents, (b) students and (c) school staﬀ been consulted with as part of the review of the Bí Cineálta Policy?

|  |
| --- |
|  |

1. Outline any aspects of the school’s Bí Cineálta policy and/or its implementation that have been identified as requiring further improvement as part of this review:

|  |
| --- |
|  |

1. Where areas for improvement have been identified, outline how these will be addressed and whether an action plan with timeframes has been developed?

|  |
| --- |
|  |

1. Does the student­friendly policy need to be updated as a result of this review and if so why?

|  |
| --- |
|  |

1. Does the school refer parents to the complaints procedures if they have a complaint about how the school has addressed bullying behaviour?

Yes No

1. Has a parent informed the school that a student has left the school due to reported bullying behaviour?

Yes No

1. Has the Oﬃce of the Ombudsman for Children initiated or completed an investigation into how the school has addressed an incident of bullying behaviour?

Yes No

Signed: (Chairperson of board of management)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 Date of next review: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signed: (Principal)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix 5**

**Notification regarding the board of management’s annual review of the school’s Bí Cineálta Policy**

The Board of Management of confirms that the board of management’s annual review of the school’s Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour and its implementation was completed at the board of management meeting of **[date].** This review was conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Department of Education’s Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.

Signed: (Chairperson of board of management)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 Date of next review: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signed: (Principal)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_