

Koll No: 11135K
Principal: Mrs. Emer Magee
Chairperson BoM: Mrs. Amy Kidd

Phone/Fax: 059 972 1021
Email: emagee@stmarysnsbagenalstown.ie
Website: www.stmarysnsbagenalstown.ie



Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of St. Mary's National 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 to prevent and address bullying behaviour and to deal with the negative impact of bullying behaviour.

We are committed to ensuring that all students who attend our school are kept safe from harm and that the wellbeing of our students is at the forefront of everything that we do. We recognise the negative impact that bullying behaviour can have on the lives of our students and we are fully committed to preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.

We confirm that we will, in accordance with our obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the harassment of students or staff on any of the nine grounds specified: gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.

Definition of Bullying

Bullying is defined in *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* and *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* as targeted behaviour, online or offline that causes harm. The harm caused can be physical, social and/or emotional in nature. Bullying behaviour is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power in relationships between two people or groups of people in society. The detailed definition is provided in Chapter 2 of the *Bí Cineálta* procedures.

Each school is required to develop and implement a *Bí Cineálta* policy that sets out how the school community prevents and addresses bullying behaviour. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour that is not bullying behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

Bullying can take many forms (See chapter 2 of the *Bí Cineálta* Procedures for more information). These can include the following:

- Direct Bullying Behaviour:
 - Physical Bullying Behaviour, Verbal Bullying Behaviour, Written Bullying Behaviour, Extortion
- Indirect Bullying Behaviour:
 - Exclusion, Relational

There are many types of bullying behaviour. These can include the following:

- Disablist bullying behaviour, exceptionally able bullying, gender identity bullying, homophobic/transphobic bullying, physical appearance bullying, racist bullying, poverty bullying, religious identity bullying, sexist bullying, sexual harassment.

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	28/02/2025 05/03/2025	Microsoft Forms Survey Discussion during half-day closure for Bí Cineálta staff training
Students	28/02/2025	1 st & 5 th Class Surveyed
Parents	27/02/2025 09/04/2025	Microsoft Forms Survey sent to all parents via Aladdin Connect App Draft Policy sent to parent body for feedback via Aladdin Connect App
Board of Management	04/02/2025 28/04/2025	Board of Management Meeting Principal's report Discussed at Board of Management meeting and ratified
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	28/02/2025	Survey sent to Bus Escort & School Cleaner
Date policy was approved: 28/04/2025		
Date policy was last reviewed: 28/04/2025		

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 (see Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures and also The four Key Areas of Wellbeing Promotion from The Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice):

Figure 2: Whole School Approach – Four Key Areas Wellbeing Promotion



5.1 Culture and Environment

A positive and inclusive school culture and environment is essential to prevent and address bullying behaviour. Our school environment is a space where students and school staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported. We strive to foster positive relationships through open communication with all stakeholders in our school community. Our leadership team and staff set high expectations for all, where bullying behaviour is unacceptable. All members of the school community help to shape the school culture by promoting kindness and respect.

At St. Mary's National School, we achieve this through:

- Positive and open communication between staff and parents e.g. Aladdin Connect, Communication diaries, email
- A warm and friendly welcome from our school secretary Catherine on arrival
- A clear and welcoming entrance to the school
- Staff awareness and consistent implementation of our school's Bí Cineálta procedures.
- Excellence in the education of children with autism and associated initiatives e.g. integration, reverse integration
- Clear and visible rules and expectations for positive behaviour. Our golden rule is "Treat others as you would like to be treated". Our school rules are as follows:
C – Co-operate with students and staff
A – Act safely and responsibly
R – Respect yourself, others and property
E – Encourage and help others
- Stay Safe and other appropriate SPHE programmes are taught at all class levels each year and our school promotes a telling environment.
- Initiatives to promote positive behaviour e.g. Kindness Week/ Friendship Fortnight.
- A pupil-friendly Bí Cineálta Policy was developed with pupils, and for pupils so that all children are aware of our school's policy on bullying behaviour and how they can seek support when needed.
- Promoting the concept of "a trusted adult" where pupils can report bullying behaviour to their trusted adult in school e.g. class teacher, a supervising teacher on yard or an SNA.
- Alternative opportunities or activities for children at yard time e.g. Dance Day Friday where the children listen to music on yard, yoga, chess, circuit training, soccer/ GAA coaching.
- Creating safe physical spaces by ensuring staff vigilance on yard and providing appropriate supervision by teaching staff and SNAs throughout the school day and ensuring that our school environment is bright and free from clutter, with no hidden spaces.
- Pupil-friendly murals on yard to promote a creative space and to enable children to feel a sense of fun.
- Staff wellbeing is promoted and encouraged.

5.2 Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)

Teaching and learning that is collaborative and respectful is promoted. The curricular and extra-curricular subjects and activities provide opportunities for inclusion, diversity, connection and aim to improve self-esteem and self-worth.

At St. Mary's National School, we achieve this through:

- Teaching Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) using the following programmes:
 - Stay Safe
 - Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)
 - Weaving Wellbeing
 - Walk Tall
 - Webwise
 - Friends for Life
 - FUSE
 - Brainbox Transition Programme (6th Class)
 - Big Fish, Little Fish
- Modelling respectful interactions between all school personnel and visitors to the school.
- Pupils engaging in meaningful tasks and activities using multiple means of engagement, representation and expression.
- Meaningful engagement with The Follow Me Programme, our religious education programme.
- Engagement with, and review of our Wellbeing Framework for Practice and School Improvement Plan.

5.3 Policy and Planning

The wellbeing of our pupils is at the heart of school policies, plans and procedures. The following policies support the wellbeing of our pupils and the implementation of our anti-bullying procedures:

- Bí Cineálta Policy and our Bí Cineálta Pupil-Friendly Policy.
- Wellbeing School Improvement Plan & Pilot Programme
- Communication Policy
- Supervision Policy
- Special Education & Assessment Policies
- Acceptable Usage Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- School Plan – Wellbeing i.e. SPHE & PE

The following initiatives also support the implementation of anti-bullying procedures in St. Mary's National School:

- Our Student Council which consists of members from each class group from First to Sixth Class.
- Teacher Professional Learning in various areas such as: Emotion Coaching, The Stress Response NCSE courses for Special Education, Child Protection Training, Fire Safety Training, First Aid Training, Friends for Life.
- Effective leadership from the leadership and management team in supporting the consistent implementation of the Bí Cineálta procedures.

5.4 Relationships and Partnerships

Strong interpersonal connections are a vital component of wellbeing and of effectively preventing and addressing bullying behaviour. St. Mary's National School strives to promote positive relationships across the whole education community in the following ways:

- St. Mary's N.S. has excellent outdoor facilities e.g. playground equipment, monkey bars, basketball court, large tarmac area, role-play area, buddy benches. There are also alternative activities available during yard time e.g. yoga, circuit training, chess, soccer & GAA training.
- Initiatives such as : Kindness Week, Active Week, Book Week, Peace Proms, Science Blast, Trips to the Visual Theatre, Student Council, Debate Club.
- Engagement with SSE and the promotion of Wellbeing in our school.
- Positive relationships with parents e.g. Seesaw, Aladdin, Parents Association

5.5 Preventing cyberbullying behaviour

Technology can provide positive opportunities for education, entertainment and social engagement; however, the increase in the use of this technology has led to an increased risk of cyberbullying or unacceptable online behaviour.

St. Mary's National School actively addresses these challenges by:

- Teaching the SPHE curriculum which may include the following programmes: Webwise, Stay Safe
- Having regular conversations about internet safety, reminding children that the digital age of consent is 16 and the minimum age for most social media platforms is 13.
- Ensuring that the school culture allows for a "telling environment"
- Updating and communicating our Acceptable Use Policy and Mobile Phone Policy
- Promoting online safety events for parents
- Referring to appropriate online behaviour in the Code of Behaviour
- Promoting Safer Internet Day – February 11th

5.6 Preventing homophobic/ transphobic bullying behaviour

All students including gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students, have a right to feel safe and supported at school. Strategies to prevent homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- Teaching the following SPHE programmes: Stay Safe and RSE
- Maintaining an inclusive environment
- Challenging gender stereotypes
- Encouraging students to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour

5.7 Preventing racist bullying behaviour

Pupils attending our school may come from many different cultures and backgrounds. Students from diverse backgrounds may face discrimination and prejudice and may be subject to racist bullying behaviour. Strategies to prevent racist bullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- 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
- Encouraging pupils who witness racist bullying behaviour to report it
- 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/ guests 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
- Teach the Stay Safe and RSE programmes in full
- Promoting and celebrating the home language of any pupils with English as an additional language.

5.8 Preventing sexist bullying behaviour

Our school will focus on gender equality as part of the school's measures to create a supportive and respectful environment. Strategies to prevent sexist bullying behaviour include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- Ensuring members of staff model respectful behaviour and treat students equally irrespective of their sex
- Ensuring all students have the same opportunities to engage in school activities irrespective of their sex
- Celebrating diversity at school and acknowledging the contributions of all students
- Organising awareness campaigns, workshops and presentations on gender equality and respect
- Encouraging parents to reinforce these values of respect at home
- Teach the Stay Safe and RSE programmes in full

5.9 Preventing sexual harassment

Preventing sexual harassment requires an approach that focuses on education, awareness and clear enforceable policies. Schools must make it clear that there is a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment. Sexual harassment should never be dismissed as teasing or banter. Strategies to prevent sexual harassment include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- Positive role models within the school community
- Challenging gender stereotypes that can contribute to sexual harassment
- Teach the Stay Safe and RSE programmes in full
- Promoting body-confidence, empowerment, respect and consent in an age-appropriate manner

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

1. Bí Cineálta Policy
2. Bí Cineálta Pupil-Friendly Policy
3. Child Safeguarding Statement & Risk Assessment
4. Acceptable Use Policy
5. Supervision Policy
6. Mobile Phone Policy
7. Communication Policy
8. Special Educational Needs & Assessment Policy
9. Wellbeing SIP, Statement and Framework for Practice

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 behaviour and recording bullying behaviour in the correct manner. Behaviour can be tracked using Aladdin docs.
- All teachers will be vigilant on yard for bullying behaviour and will report any and all instances of bullying behaviour to the class teacher.
- The In-School Leadership Team, including the Principal and Deputy Principal, will support and encourage staff to address bullying behaviour in the correct manner.
- The Principal will provide a bullying behaviour update to the Board of Management at each meeting outlining the number of incidents and the measures taken to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

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 (Appendix C – Bí Cineálta Resources)

Approach

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

Identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred

Bullying is defined in Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying and Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools as targeted behaviour, online or offline that causes harm. The harm caused can be physical, social and/or emotional in nature. Bullying behaviour is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power in relationships between two people or groups of people in society. 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 (all)** of the questions above is Yes, then the behaviour is bullying behaviour and the behaviour should be addressed using the Bí Cineálta Procedures.

Note: One-off incidents may be considered bullying in certain circumstances. A single hurtful message posted on social media can be considered bullying behaviour as it has a high likelihood of being shared multiple times and thus becomes a repeated behaviour.

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

When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred teachers should consider what, where, when and why?

- if a group of students is involved, each student should be engaged with individually at first
- thereafter, all students involved should be met as a group
- at the group meeting, each student should be asked for their account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's views
- each student should be supported as appropriate, following the group meeting
- it may be helpful to ask the students involved to write down their account of the incident(s)

Where bullying behaviour has occurred

- parents are an integral part of the school community and play an important role, in partnership with schools, in addressing bullying behaviour. Where bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the students involved must be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and to consult with them on the actions to be taken to address the behaviour

- it is important to listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation
- a record should be kept of the engagement with all involved
- this record should document the form and type of bullying behaviour, if known (see Section 2.5 and 2.7 of the Bí Cineálta procedures), where and when it took place and the date of the initial engagement with the students involved and their parents
- the record should include the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour

Follow up where bullying behaviour has occurred

- the teacher must engage with the students involved and their parents again no more than 20 school days after the initial engagement
- important factors to consider as part of this engagement are the nature of the bullying behaviour, the effectiveness of the strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and the relationship between the students involved
- the teacher should document the review with students and their parents to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased and the views of students and their parents in relation to this
- the date that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased should also be recorded
- any engagement with external services/supports should also be noted
- ongoing supervision and support may be needed for the students involved even where bullying behaviour has ceased
- if the bullying behaviour has not ceased the teacher should review the strategies used in consultation with the students involved and their parents. A timeframe should be agreed for further engagement until the bullying behaviour has ceased
- if it becomes clear that the student who is displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behaviour, then the school consideration should be given to using the strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour as provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour. If disciplinary sanctions are considered, this is a matter between the relevant student, their parents and the school
- if a parent(s) is not satisfied with how the bullying behaviour has been addressed by the school, in accordance with the Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, they should be referred to the school's complaints procedures
- if a parent is dissatisfied with how a complaint has been handled, they may make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children if they believe that the school's actions have had a negative effect on the student

The school 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 will:

- Follow the procedures as set out in this policy to end bullying behaviour.
- Support the pupils witnessing, experiencing and engaging in bullying behaviour through conversation.
- Engage in anti-bullying training e.g. Oide, NEPS.
- Provide training for parents, where possible.
- Teach SPHE programmes such as Webwise, FUSE, Friends for Life etc.
- Promote positive interactions between pupils, parents and staff.
- Promote awareness initiatives e.g. Kindness Week

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 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: Amy McKidd Date: 28/04/25
(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: Emma Magee Date: 28/4/25
(Principal)