



Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

September 2026

The Board of Management of Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan has adopted the following policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour with, and within the framework of the school's overall Code of Behaviour.

This policy fully complies with the requirements of the *Education (Welfare) Act 2000* and the *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 1990* and is therefore fully committed to ensuring that policy and practice in the school is guided by the four key principles of *Cineáltas; Prevention, Support, Oversight and Community*

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 such 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.

Bullying is an experience that no child or young person should have to endure. It can affect engagement with school, self-confidence and the child or young person's sense of self and belonging.

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*

1. Scope

The School's Bí Cineálta Policy applies in the following contexts:

- The relationships between students and other students.
- The relationships between students and staff members.

2. Application:

The Policy applies to the following:

- When students are on the school grounds.
- When students are travelling to and from school.
- When students are on school tours and trips.
- When students are in school uniform.
- When students are engaged in extracurricular activities organised by the school.
- To any bullying behaviour outside school which seriously impacts on a student's participation in school.
- To any behaviour that adversely affects the school reputation or the education of any student in the school.

3. 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**.

That harm can be:

- Physical (e.g.: personal injury, damage to or loss of property)
- Social (e.g.: withdrawal, loneliness, exclusion)
- Emotional (e.g.: low self-esteem, depression, anxiety)
- Bullying behaviour is **repeated** over time and involves an **imbalance of power** in relationships between two people or groups of people in society.
- It is behaviour which is deliberate in nature and is unwanted. It is not accidental or reckless behaviour.

A one-off instance of negative behaviour towards a student is **not** bullying behaviour.

However, **a single hurtful message posted on social media can be considered bullying behaviour as it may be visible to a wide audience and has a high likelihood of being shared multiple times and so becomes a repeated behaviour.**

4. Behaviour that is not bullying behaviour

- Disagreements 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 Additional Educational Needs (AEN) 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 cannot be controlled.
- 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 and will be addressed under the school's Code of Behaviour.

5. Bullying as Criminal Behaviour

Bullying behaviour can be considered criminal behaviour under certain circumstances and legal consequences can apply. The age of criminal responsibility in Ireland is 12 years.

- Some online behaviour may be illegal, and students need to be aware of the far-reaching consequences of posting inappropriate or harmful content online. In cases of intimate imagery, the *Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020*, also known as *Coco's Law*, criminalises the non-consensual sharing of intimate images and also criminalises threatening to share these images
- If bullying behaviour involves physical violence or threats of violence, it may be considered assault.
- If bullying behaviour involves discrimination or hate speech targeting a student based on their race, religion, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation or membership of the Traveller community, it may be considered a hate crime under the *Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989*.
- If bullying behaviour involves sexual harassment or sexual assault, it may be considered criminal behaviour.
- An Garda Síochána is the appropriate authority to investigate alleged criminal behaviour.

- Section 10 of the Children First Act 2015 places a statutory obligation on schools to ensure that each child attending the school is safe from harm while attending school or otherwise participating in school activities. Teachers registered with the Teaching Council are Mandated Persons under the Children First Act. All school staff should report reasonable concerns to the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) or the Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDL) who may take advice and /or report the concern to TUSLA – The Child and Family Agency.

6. Types of Bullying

Bullying behaviour can take many forms, which can occur separately or together. These can include the following, which is not an exhaustive list;

6.1 Direct Bullying Behaviour:

- **Physical:** pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping students. Physical assault. Destruction of personal property.
- **Verbal:** continual name calling which insults or humiliates the student – this may refer to one's physical appearance, size, clothes worn, gender, accent, academic ability, race or ethnic origin.
- **Written:** writing insulting remarks about a student in public places, passing around notes about, or drawings of a student.
- **Extortion:** where something is obtained through force or threats.

6.2 Indirect Bullying Behaviour:

- **Exclusion:** where a student is deliberately and repeatedly isolated, excluded or ignored by a peer or group of peers.
- **Relational:** where a student's attempts to form friendships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined, threats, non-verbal gesturing, malicious gossip, spreading rumours, silent treatment and manipulation of friend groups etc. can all constitute as relational bullying for a student.

6.3 Online Bullying Behaviour

Cyberbullying is carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as text, direct messaging, instant messaging, social media platforms, email, apps, digital gaming sites, gaming consoles, chatrooms and other online technologies.

This form of bullying can include:

- Sending or sharing insulting and offensive or intimidating messages or images via online means as mentioned above.
- Posting information which is personal, private or sensitive without consent.
- Making and or participating in fake profiles on a social media network to impersonate and or humiliate other students.

- Exclude / disrupt access to a student on purpose to online chat groups/access to accounts/from an online game.

Bullying behaviour can happen anywhere, online or offline and at any time, but there are certain places and times where bullying behaviour can be more likely to occur. These can include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

Inside school: school yard, in the classroom, toilets, lockers, corridors, changing rooms, canteen and the gym.

Outside school: coming to and from school, the local shop, online.

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. Where the bullying behaviour continues in school, it will be dealt with in accordance with our Bi Cineálta Policy.

Basic Considerations:

- Every case of bullying is unique and different.
- Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan reserves the right at all times to protect the students in its care from bullying behaviour.
- Parents and Guardians should inform the school of episodes which they suspect to be bullying which have come to their attention through their children or through other parents and guardians or through social or personal media and have a negative impact on a student's participation in school.
- Investigations of alleged bullying can take a considerable amount of time.
- Investigations and resolutions of bullying behaviour must follow the process as outlined in this policy.
- Negative behaviour that does not meet this definition of bullying will be dealt with in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour.

7. 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.

	<u>Date consulted</u>	<u>Method of consultation</u>
School Staff	26 th February 2025 12 th March 2025 May 2025	- Staff meeting training day to discuss & review the new Bí Cineálta Action Plan. - Staff questionnaire circulated to gather feedback from entire cohort. - Working group formed and met to draft Bí Cineálta Policy - Working Group Meeting 1 - Working Group Feedback 2 - Working Group Feedback 3 - Student Friendly version of policy shared with staff for consultation. - Student Friendly Version approved by staff.
Students	12 th December 2024 14 th January 2025 28 th January 2025 24 th February 2025 20 th March 2025 April 2025 May 2025	- Initial introduced to Bi Cinealta with Student Council - Student Council were asked for their input to generate student Bí Cineálta questionnaire. - Follow up meeting and Review with Student Council - Bí Cineálta questionnaire circulated among entire student body. - In school visit / talks on dangers of online / cyber bullying for all students - Results correlated and used in wider discussion on policy formation - Volunteers formed committee to draft Student Friendly Version of policy – Student Council, Wellbeing Committee and Year Groups - Student Friendly Version published by working group.
Parents	21 st January 2025 6 th February 2025 26 th February 2025 10 th March 2025	- Feedback sought from parents through Bí Cineálta questionnaire (In-person & Online) - Survey circulated via text message to entire school community.
Board of Management	7 th November 2024 12 th December 2024 6 th February 2025 13 th March 2025 8 th May 2025 13 th June 2025	- Bí Cineálta introduced to BOM - Update on progress to date. - Update on progress including views of student council - Results of surveys (to date) and early draft of policy shared with BOM. - Updated draft of policy discussed with BOM - Policy ratified by the BOM.
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	March / April/ May 2025	Interviews / Discussions with other key stakeholders including bus drivers, local shopkeeper and an Garda Síochána.

Date policy was approved:

Date policy was last reviewed:

8. 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):

8.1 Culture and Environment

At Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan we strive to:

- Create a positive and inclusive school culture where bullying behaviour is unacceptable.
- Create a school environment that is a space where students and school staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported.
- To ensure appropriate supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of school activity are under observation.
- Open communication between patrons, board of management, school staff, students and parents as active partners in fostering an environment where bullying behaviour is not tolerated.
- The school leadership team influences the school culture and sets standards and expectations for the school community when preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.
- Promote the concept of a trusted adult. Support a “telling” environment by encouraging students to talk about concerns they have regarding bullying behaviour.
- Encourage relationships between all members of the school community that are based on care, integrity and trust.
- Each member of school staff has a responsibility to develop and maintain a school culture where bullying behaviour is unacceptable and to take a consistent approach to addressing bullying behaviour.
- Support students to shape the culture of the schools by promoting kindness and inclusion within their peer group and maintain a positive and supportive environment for all.

Ways we work to achieve these goals:

- Staff are briefed on the uniform approach to handle all incidents of bullying behaviour.
- Effective high visibility supervision and monitoring of students, especially in hidden spaces (hallway, staircases, etc.) where there is a greater risk for bullying behaviour.
- Anti-bullying activities (Random Acts of Kindness, Anti-Bullying Week, Wellbeing Committee).
- School Self Evaluation to Evaluate and Reflect how we are doing and where we can improve.
- Students who witness bullying behaviour are supported and encouraged to report the behaviour to a trusted adult in the school so that the behaviour can be addressed.
- SPHE, RSE, CSPE, Religious Education lessons focusing on positive behaviour are part of the curriculum. Common approach to lessons on Bullying adopted by all teachers.
- Incorporate artwork, murals and signs to promote school values such as equality, diversity, inclusion and respect.
- Mentor systems (TY & 6th Year) and Support for staff

- Wellbeing student committee to promote kindness and build responsibility amongst students by planning activities and events.

8.2 Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)

At Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan we strive to:

- Promote teaching and learning that is collaborative and respectful.
- Provide regular opportunities for students to work in small groups with their peers, which can help build a sense of connection, belonging and empathy among students.
- Provide opportunities for students to foster inclusion and respect for diversity and to develop a sense of self-worth through both curricular and extra-curricular programmes.
- Display a shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact.
-

Ways we work to achieve these goals:

- Teach SPHE, RSE, CSPE, Religious Education content which fosters students' wellbeing and self-confidence as well as promoting personal responsibility for their own behaviours and actions.
- Model respectful behaviour towards colleagues, students, visitors in our school environment.
- Students are given regular opportunities for students to work together in groups.
- Students are afforded lots of opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities to develop a sense of self-worth, working together, inclusion and respect.
- Acknowledgement of our diverse school population – celebration of diversity and culture in our school through art, displays, photographs, international events, Sanctuary.
- Implementation of education and prevention strategies that build empathy, respect and resilience in students, explicitly address the issues of cyberbullying.
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8.3 Policy and Planning

The Wellbeing of the school community at Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan is at the heart of all school policies and plans. All school policies support the implementation of the Bí Cineálta Policy.

As well as developing the Bí Cineálta Policy, a student friendly Bí Cineálta Policy was also designed and is displayed around our school to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

The aim of the Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan Bí Cineálta Policy is:

- To raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with school management, staff, students, parents, patrons and the wider school community.
- To promote a school ethos which encourages students to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To ensure that students can flourish and be educated in a safe and supported environment.
- To develop procedures for noting, investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.

- To implement a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and for those involved in bullying behaviour.
- To support the participation of students in the development and implementation of school policies to increase awareness and ensure effective implementation.
- To support the engagement of teachers in professional learning courses to prevent and address bullying behaviour.
- Effective leadership is a key component with Principals, Deputy Principals, DLP, DDLP and all middle management focused on supporting the implementation of the Bí Cineálta Policy.
- Consistent recording, investigation and follow-up of bullying behaviour.
- Ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the Bí Cineálta Policy.

8.4 Relationships and Partnerships

Strong interpersonal connections and a vital part of effectively preventing and addressing bullying behaviour. These interpersonal connections are supported through a range of formal and informal structures such as student councils, school clubs, parents' associations and student support teams.

The following which is not an exhaustive list, could be considered to strengthen relationships and partnerships between members of the school community:

- Age-appropriate awareness initiatives that look at the causes and impacts of bullying behaviour including those that promote acts of kindness, looking at their own behaviours, and being an active help to others.
- Supporting the active participation of students in school life.
- Conducting workshops and seminars for students, school staff and parents to raise awareness of the impact of bullying.
- Promoting the active participation of parents in school life, including those who may find it difficult or daunting to engage with the school due to being unfamiliar with the education system or due to language or cultural barriers.
- Engaging parents and students in actively contributing to the formation of a Student Friendly Bí Cineálta Policy to make them active participants in the promotion of and the discussion of useful ways to identify and reduce bullying behaviour and highlight procedure and how to deal with it if it does occur.
- Encourage members of the wider school community (bus drivers, local businesses that are close to the school) to report any bullying behaviour to the school as appropriate.

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

- School staff at all times endeavour to encourage students to show respect for each other.
- Positive self-esteem is fostered among the students by celebrating individual differences, by acknowledging good behaviour and by providing opportunities for success.

- Foster a school culture where diversity is celebrated and where students see themselves in their school environment.
- Implementation of SPHE curriculum to teach students about healthy relationships and how to treat each other with kindness and respect.
- Implementation of the Digital Media Literacy curriculum which teaches students about responsible online behaviour and digital citizenship. Digital media policy and Acceptable Usage Policy developed for technology usage in our school.
- Having regular conversations with students about developing respectful and kind relationships.
- Staff are vigilant in monitoring students who are considered at risk of bullying/being bullied.
- All disclosed incidents of bullying are investigated thoroughly and consistently by following the correct procedures as outlined to staff.
- School wide awareness raising of all aspects of bullying.
- Involvement of students in contributing to a safe school environment.
- Ensuring students know who to tell and how to tell.
- Ensuring bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place.
- Encourage peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities.
- Referring to appropriate online behaviour when using school devices.
- All students have the right to feel safe and supported in school, including gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students. Maintain an inclusive physical environment such as by displaying relevant posters.
- Provide support to school staff to support students from ethnic minorities, including Traveller and Roma students and to encourage communication with their parents.
- Ensure that library reading material and textbooks represent appropriate lived experiences of students and adults from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.
- Promote gender equality to create a supportive and respectful environment.
- Provide opportunities for a diverse range of student voices in leadership roles.

9. Addressing Bullying Behaviour

- The teacher(s) with responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour are as follows:
 - Class Teacher, Class Tutor, Year Head, Guidance Counsellor, School Chaplain, Principal and Deputy Principals.
- Teaching Staff should report reasonable concerns of bullying behaviour to the Principal and/or Deputy Principal(s).
- Teachers registered with the Teaching Council are Mandated Persons under the Children First Act. They have an obligation under the Act to report harm of children, this includes threats of bullying behaviour.____

- SNA & Ancillary staff will also be vigilant to bullying behaviour and should report any concerns to the Principal and/or Deputy Principal(s)

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
- consult with all parties involved on the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour. Given the complexity of bullying behaviour there is no one approach works best in all situations. The approach for each case of bullying behaviour must be decided on based on an approach that is best suited to the case circumstance.
- Encourage restorative practice interventions.

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):

9.1 Identify if bullying behaviour has occurred.

When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred the school will consider the following: what, where, when and why? The definition of bullying in the Bí Cineálta Policy sets out clear criteria to help this school identify bullying behaviour.

1. Is it **targeted** behaviour at a specific student or group of students?
2. Is the behaviour intended to cause physical, emotional or social **harm**?
3. Is the behaviour **repeated**?

9.2 Where bullying behaviour has occurred

- If a group of students is involved, each student should be engaged with individually at first. Thereafter, all students involved should 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. The students may also be asked to write down their account of the incident.
- Incidences can occur where behaviour is unacceptable and hurtful but the behaviour is not bullying behaviour. Strategies that deal with inappropriate behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour Policy.
- The following principles must be adhered to when addressing bullying behaviour:

- Ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour feels listened to 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
- When bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties 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.

1. Initial steps to be taken following a report of bullying behaviour are detailed below:

Action Taken By	Procedure	Support / Sanctions may include
Principal / Deputy Principal(s)	Speak to student(s) involved Speak to parent(s) Speak with any relevant others (class/peers/witnesses) Monitor the situation Follow up progress with all parties involved	• Serious talk with student(s) • Verbal warning • Any issues at this stage should be followed up in a compassionate and nonconfrontational way. • Outline a fair and mutually agreed outcome. • Any sanctions imposed are the responsibility of the Year Head / Deputy Principal/Principal and will be applied as per the Code of Behaviour.

2. Subsequent incidents/reports of bullying behaviour

Action Taken By	Procedure	Support / Sanctions may include
Principal / Deputy Principal(s) Year Head and Pastoral Care Team	Incident should be investigated using the Restorative model. Parents of students involved should be contacted. Keep a record (Bi Cinealta Bullying Incident Report) D.P, Year Head and Pastoral Care Team to monitor progress with all parties Follow up meeting /conversation with parties involved within 20 days.	- Serious talk with the student(s) - Second verbal warning - Any sanctions imposed are the responsibility of the Year Head / Deputy Principal/Principal and will be applied as per the Code of Behaviour. - D.P, Year Head & Pastoral Care Team to monitor behaviour

3. Where bullying behaviour persists/ serious incidents of bullying

Action Taken By	Procedure	Support / Sanctions may include
Principal / Deputy Principal(s) Year Head and Pastoral Care Team Board of Management will be notified at the discretion of the Principal, once a term or in the case of Suspension.	Parents to meet the Deputy Principal / Principal/ Year Head Use Restorative approach where possible and appropriate Keep a record (Bi Cinealta Bullying Incident Report) Progress to be monitored by the Pastoral Care Team and / or the Year Head / Deputy Principal / Principal. Follow up meeting /conversation with parties involved within 20 days.	- Detention / Suspension as per the Code of Behaviour - Parents to agree to a set of conditions for behaviour - Counselling suggested - Referral to external supports e.g. Child Psychologist may be suggested - The future of the student in the school may be considered.

9.3 Requests to take no action

- A student reporting bullying behaviour may ask that a member of staff does nothing about the behaviour other than “look out” for them. Where this occurs, it is important that the member of staff shows empathy to the student, deals with the matter sensitively and speaks with the student to work out together the steps that can be taken to address the matter and how their parents and the Principal and Deputy Principal will be informed of the situation. It is important that the student who experiences the 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 must put this request in writing.** Based on the circumstances, schools may decide that it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour.

9.4 Determining if bullying behaviour has ceased

- The Principal and/or Deputy Principal must engage with the students and parents involved no more than 20 school days after the initial discussion to review progress following the initial intervention. At this meeting they must consider the effectiveness of the strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and the relationship between the students involved.
- Even though the bullying behaviour may have ceased, ongoing supervision and support may be required for both the student who has experienced the bullying behaviour as well as the student who has displayed the behaviour. It can take time for relationships to settle and for supports to take effect. In some cases, relationships may never be restored to how they were before the bullying behaviour occurred.
- If the bullying behaviour has not ceased, the Principal and/or Deputy Principal should review the strategies used in consultation with the students and their parents and agree to meet again over an agreed timeframe until the bullying behaviour has ceased.
- When it becomes clear that the student who is displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behaviour, then the school should consider using 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.

9.5 Recording bullying behaviour

- All incidents of bullying behaviour should be recorded using the school’s Bullying Behaviour Incident Report Form (Appendix 1) to include the type of bullying behaviour, where and when it took place and the date of initial engagement with students 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. It should document the review with the students and their parents to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased and the views of the students and their parents in relation to this. It is important to document the date of each of these engagements and the date that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased.
- 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.
- These records should be retained in accordance with the school’s record keeping policy and in line with data protection regulations.

- Where a Student Support File exists for a student, a copy of the record should be placed on the student's support file. The plan should be updated to incorporate response strategies and associated supports.
- If a parent is not satisfied with how bullying behaviour has been addressed by the school, in accordance with these procedures, they should be referred to the school's complaints procedure.
- If in the event that a student and/or parent is dissatisfied with how a complaint has been handled, a student and/or parent 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.
- Supports are available to help prevent and address bullying behaviour. These include:
 - National Education Psychological Service (NEPS)
 - Oide
 - Webwise
 - National Parents Council
 - Dublin City University (DCU) Anti-Bullying Centre
 - Tusla

In relation to staff incidents, the matter should be referred directly to the Principal where an Incident report is to be filled out. Refer also to the ASTI / TUI Grievance procedure and the school's Dignity in the Workplace Policy.

10. Supporting those who experience, witness and display bullying behaviour

The school's programme of support for working with students affected by bullying behaviour involves a whole school approach. Given the complexity of bullying behaviour, no one intervention/support programme works in all situations.

The school will endeavour to do the following for the student(s) who have experienced bullying behaviour and for those who displayed bullying behaviour.

- The victim will receive the utmost privacy and confidentiality in the initial, and subsequent, investigations.
- A series of events will be organised, relating to raising awareness of bullying, during AntiBullying week.
- Teach SPHE, RSE and Religious Education content where bullying will be incorporated into lessons to foster students' wellbeing and self-confidence as well as promoting personal responsibility for their own behaviours.
- In a case where sanctions need to be imposed, they will be enforced, as per the school's Code of Behaviour, by the Year Heads, the Deputy Principals or the Principal.
- Following an investigated incident of bullying, Class Tutors, Year Heads, members of the Pastoral Care Team and break-time Supervisors will monitor the behaviour of the students involved.

- Staff will be informed of necessary developments in bullying incidents, at regular intervals They will be asked to monitor and observe the students or classes involved in specific incidents and to pass on these observations to a member of the Pastoral Care Team.
- Adequate counselling facilities available to students who need it in a timely manner.
- Encourage bullied students and students who displayed bullying behaviour to become involved in extra-curricular/lunch time activities in the school to develop friendships and social skills and raise their self-esteem.
- Parents or guardians will be informed of bullying incidents in accordance with this policy, and if necessary, they may be required to join in the restorative based approach to resolving the issue.
- Make it clear that students who displayed bullying behaviour are not blamed or get punished, they are encouraged to seek resolution and reform using restorative practice methods.
- Make it clear to student(s) who reform that they are doing the right and honourable thing and give them praise for this.

11. 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: ***Theresa Dunne***
 Chairperson of Board of Management
 Date: **10th September 2026**

Signed: ***Garrett Farrell***
 Principal/Secretary to the Board of Management
 Date: **10th September 2026**

Appendix 1.

Bí Cineálta Bullying Incident Report Form:



Before completing this form, consider the following:

Does the incident(s) being reported meet the **three** criteria to be treated as bullying behaviour under the Bí Cineálta policy?

Please tick:

Targeted ☐ Repeated ☐ Involving an Imbalance of Power ☐

1. Name of Pupil being bullied & Class Group:

Name: _____ Class: _____

2. Pupils Engaged in Bullying Behaviour.

Name	Class

3. Source of Bullying Concern / Report

Pupil Concerned	
Other Pupil	
Parent	
Teacher	
Other (Please specify)	

4. Location

Classroom	
Corridors	
Toilets	
School Bus	
Playground	
Other (Please specify)	

5. Type of Bullying Behaviour displayed.

Direct Bullying Behaviour		Indirect Bullying Behaviour	
Physical Aggression		Purposeful Exclusion	
Destruction of Personal Property		Malicious Gossip / Non-Verbal Gesturing	
Verbal / Written insults		Manipulation of Friend Groups	
Extortion		Other (Please Specify)	
Cyber-Bullying			

6. Where behaviour is regarded as identity-based bullying, indicate the relevant category.

Homophobic / Transphobic		Religious Identity	
Disablist		Poverty	
Racist	17	Other (Please specify)	

7. Brief Description of the behaviour and its impact

8. Details of Actions Taken

Signed: _____
(Principal / Deputy Principal)

Date: _____

Appendix 2.

Annual 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 – Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan.

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*?

Date: **12th June 2025**

2. Where in the school is the student friendly Bí Cineálta policy displayed?

Entrance area, every classroom and website

3. What date did the Board publish the Bí Cineálta policy and the student friendly policy on the school website?

Date: **13th June 2025**

4. How has the student friendly policy been communicated to students?

Bi Cineala Day in September 2025
Well Being Co-ordinator visited the SPHE Classes
Website & Posters

5. How has the Bí Cineálta policy and student friendly policy been communicated to parents

Website & Text
QR Code at P/T Meetings
Parents Association

6. 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

7. Does the Bí Cineálta policy document the strategies that the school uses to prevent bullying behaviour?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
Yes ☐ No ☐

8. Has the Board discussed how the school is addressing all reports of bullying behaviour? ☐Yes ☐No

9. Is the Board satisfied that all incidents of bullying behaviour are addressed in accordance with the school's Bí Cineálta Policy? ☐Yes ☐No

10. Have the prevention strategies in the Bí Cineálta policy been implemented? ☐Yes ☐No

11. Has the Board discussed the effectiveness of the strategies used to prevent bullying behaviour? ☐Yes ☐No

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

Consultation with Student Council / Staff Meeting / Parents AGM

13. 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:

None

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

Updated Supervision Rota to include Zone B – two members of staff

Does the student friendly policy need to be updated as a result of this review and if so why?

No

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

☐ Yes ☐ No

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

☐ Yes ☐ No

17. 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

Any other relevant information;

Signed: _____

Date: _____

(*Garrett Farrell – Secretary BOM*)

Signed: _____

Date: _____

(*Theresa Dunne – Chairperson BOM*)

Appendix 3

Bí Cineálta Principal's Report: Bullying Behaviour Update to Board of Management



Date of Meeting: _____

Having reviewed the details of incidents of bullying behaviour that have been reported since the previous Board of Management meeting, the total to be shared with the Board today are as follows;

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, this update must include a verbal report which should detail 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.

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

Signed: _____

Date: _____

(Garrett Farrell – Principal)

