



Mercy Primary School  
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Roll No.: 04515G

# Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of **The Mercy Primary School Galway** 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.

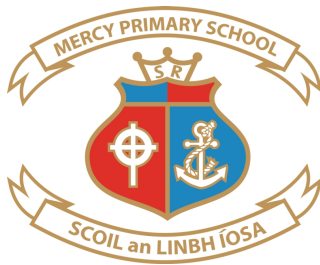
Each school is required to develop and implement a *Bí Cineálta* policy that sets out how the school community prevents and addresses bullying behaviour. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour that is not bullying behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.



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There are many different types of bullying behaviour. These can include the following which is not an exhaustive list:

- > **disablist bullying behaviour:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of a perceived or actual disability or additional need
- > **exceptionally able bullying:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their high academic ability or outstanding talents
- > **gender identity bullying:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their perceived or actual gender identity
- > **homophobic/transphobic (LGBTQ+) bullying:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their perceived or actual membership of the LGBTQ+ community
- > **physical appearance bullying:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their physical appearance. Students who “look different” can be mocked or criticised about the shape, size or appearance of their body
- > **racist bullying:** behaviour or language that intends to harm a student because of their race or ethnic origin which includes membership of the Traveller or Roma community. Racism is defined in the National Action Plan Against Racism<sup>13</sup> as “a form of domination which manifests through those power dynamics present in structural and institutional arrangements, practices, policies and cultural norms, which have the effect of excluding or discriminating against individuals or groups, based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin”<sup>14</sup>
- > **poverty bullying:** behaviour that intends to humiliate a student because of a lack of resources
- > **religious identity bullying:** behaviour that intends to harm a student because of their religion or religious identity
- > **sexist bullying:** behaviour that intends to harm a student based on their sex, perpetuating stereotypes that a student or a group of students are inferior because of their sex
- > **sexual harassment:** any form of unwanted verbal, nonverbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature or other conduct based on sex which affects the dignity of the student



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## Behaviour that is not bullying behaviour

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.

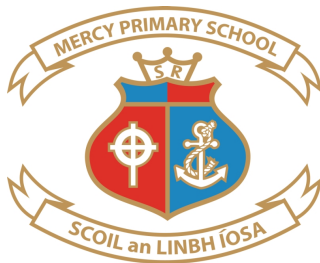


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## **Section A: Development/review of our Bí Cineálta policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour**

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  | 8 <sup>th</sup> April 2025<br>22 <sup>nd</sup> May 2025 | Survey via Google Forms<br>Half Day closure for Bí Cineálta<br>whole staff In-Service |
| Students  | 9 <sup>th</sup> April 2025                              | Survey via Google Forms   |
| Parents   | 8 <sup>th</sup> April 2025                              | Survey via Google Forms   |
| Board of Management   | 28 <sup>th</sup> May 2025                               | Overview by Principal and consulted<br>at BOM meeting                                 |
| Wider school community<br>as appropriate, for<br>example, bus drivers | 8 <sup>th</sup> April 2025                              | Survey via Google Forms   |
| Date policy was approved:   |   |   |
| Date policy was last reviewed:  |   |   |



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## 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):

*The Board of Management recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of pupils and is therefore fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour:*

- ***A positive school culture and climate which***
  1. is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity;
  2. encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment; and
  3. promotes respectful relationships across the school community
- ***Effective leadership in which***
  1. all staff are supported in their continuous professional development and encouraged to seek CPD opportunities
- ***A school-wide approach which***
  1. uses positive behaviour support systems which reinforce respectful and inclusive behaviour e.g Incredible Years)
  2. has regular assemblies and awareness days/weeks which focus on kindness, empathy and respect
- ***A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact through curriculum integration***
  1. Include social-emotional learning topics in lessons (e.g., empathy, conflict resolution).
  2. Use literature, role-play, and discussion to explore bullying scenarios.
  3. SPHE class lessons and engagement.
- ***Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that-***
  1. build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and



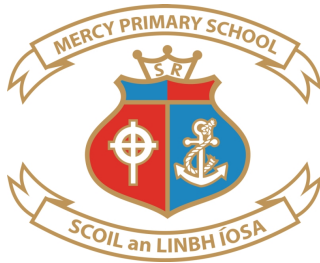
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2. explicitly address the issues of online bullying behaviour, homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour, racist bullying behaviour, sexist bullying behaviour and sexual harassment

- *Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils*
- *Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies)*
- *On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.*

**The education and prevention strategies that will be used by the school are as follows:**

- A close eye should be kept on any signs of bullying at home or in school.
- A record should be kept on all types of bullying that occur.
- Pupils will be reminded regularly that bullying of any sort is never tolerated in school.
- Every effort should be made to create a positive atmosphere in the school, and to encourage cooperation.
- Constant monitoring will be kept in place.
- At home and in school, emphasis will be placed on activities to enhance the child's self-esteem and self-image through positive communication and praise where due.
- At school children will learn methods to avoid and resolve bullying e.g. It will be explained to children how to conduct themselves in different situations, and how to get support from others: e.g. learning appropriate social behaviour and manners; using "I" statements like "I want you to stop", and assertive, but not aggressive behaviour.
- Children will be encouraged to "Tell", ie to tell true friends, parents or adults they can trust and who can support them.
- Teachers can choose from a menu of bullying resolution methods that he/she finds suitable to the particular situation in his/her class.
- The school will provide numerous resources to help with the anti-bullying policy e.g. Religious Education, Assembly Reminders, S.P.H.E., Walk Tall, Code of
- Behaviour, Artwork, website, visiting speakers (School Community Guard Talk for 4th to 6th Class), etc.
- Parents will be informed of the prevention strategies in use in the school; parents will also be provided regularly with information on counteracting Cyber-Bullying. (eg Visiting Speaker).
- The school will avail of the many resources and speakers available on the very pertinent issue of Cyber-Bullying – eg liaison with Gardaí and parents, etc.



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- Children will be taught that collusion in bullying is wrong, unacceptable and cowardly. Those who collude are partially culpable also. Bystanders will be encouraged to avoid collusion, support the victim and to prevent bullying, as peers have a major influence on each other.
- The school takes particular care of 'at risk' pupils and uses its monitoring system (e.g. teacher observation, leisure time behaviour, peer attitudes) to provide early intervention when/if necessary and responds to the needs, fears or anxieties of individual members in a sensitive manner.
- A culture of responsibility for each other will be promoted throughout all classes, particularly with senior pupils, who will be encouraged to look out for other pupils and to report any concerns to a responsible adult.
- A culture of inclusivity will be fostered in the school, to encourage acceptance and positive integration of those from all backgrounds, gender, race, orientation, religion, etc.
- To aid the prevention of bullying involving pupils with Special Educational Needs, focus will be placed on Social Skills and Effective Communication Strategies. Assistance will be sought, where necessary, from other educational personnel – eg Psychologists, Occupational Therapists, Speech & Language Therapists, etc.
- The school requires each child, from 1st to 6th class to annually sign an Anti-Bullying Pledge.



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**The school has the following supervision and monitoring policies in place to prevent and address bullying behaviour (see Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):**

The Board of Management confirms that appropriate supervision and monitoring policies and practices are in place to both prevent and deal with bullying behaviour and to facilitate early intervention where possible.

**1. Increased Staff Presence and Vigilance**

- Staff are assigned to key supervision areas such as corridors, playgrounds, school entrances/exits during break times.
- Teachers and SNAs are vigilant for signs of bullying and engage positively with students to promote a supportive environment.

**2. Structured Supervision Schedules**

- A rota system ensures consistent and fair supervision across all school areas and times.
- Records of supervision duties are kept to track coverage and accountability.

**3. Observation and Monitoring of Student Behaviour**

- Staff are trained to recognise early indicators of bullying (withdrawal, changes in mood, social exclusion).
- Teachers regularly monitor classroom interactions to identify any ongoing issues.

**4. Use of CCTV**

- CCTV is used in communal areas to assist in monitoring and investigating bullying incidents, in line with data protection and CCTV policies.

**5. Monitoring of Online Behaviour**

- Awareness campaigns and digital literacy lessons help students understand cyberbullying.
- Staff encourage students to report online issues, and incidents are followed up per school policy.
- Preventing Cyberbullying Behaviour
- Parents are reminded of how their children are increasingly vulnerable to cyberbullying or unacceptable online behaviour through the use of technology including smart phones and gaming consoles at every Parent Meeting.
- The SPHE curriculum has been introduced across all year groups and specifically addresses online behaviour and bullying behaviour.
- The school runs Safer Internet Day every year with 1st – 6th class students.



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- Parents are invited to Safety Talks delivered by our local community Gardaí or guest speakers.

#### **6. Recording and Reviewing Incidents**

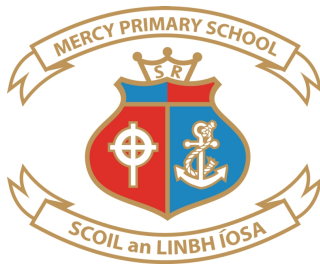
- Bullying concerns are documented and reviewed regularly by school leadership.

#### **7. Student Involvement and Peer Support**

- Students are encouraged to support peers and report concerns.

#### **8. Safe and Inclusive Environment**

- The school promotes a positive school culture where respect, kindness, and inclusion are central.
- Staff model respectful behaviour and reinforce school values daily.
- Preventing Homophobic/Transphobic/Racist/Sexist Bullying Behaviour/Sexual Harassment -
- Students are encouraged to speak up when they witness any form of bullying behaviour.
- Students are taught what bullying behaviour looks like, sounds like and feels like. Students are explicitly taught what to do if they witness bullying behaviour or experience bullying behaviour: tell a trusted adult.
- The school maintains an inclusive physical environment.
- The school fosters a culture where diversity is celebrated and where students see themselves in their school environment. The Student Friendly version of the Bliain Cineálta Policy demonstrates this.
- School supports are in place to support students from ethnic minorities, including Traveller students.
- Classroom libraries are stocked with reading material that represent lived experiences of students and adults from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.
- SPHE curriculum teaches students about healthy relationships and how to treat each other with respect and kindness.
- The school runs an annual Kindness Week.
- School staff model respectful behaviour and treat students equally irrespective of their sex.
- Parents are encouraged to reinforce the values of respect at home.



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## Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

- Class teachers
  - In-School Management team (Principal, Deputy Principal, Teachers with Special Duties).
  - Other teachers who may investigate and deal with bullying include any teacher who has witnessed an incident of concern – for example, while supervising the school yard or on the corridor.
  - Occasionally, substitute teachers and ancillary staff (eg SNAs and Secretary) may also be required to assist with investigations.
- 

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



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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):

### ***1. Determining Whether Bullying Has Occurred***

#### **□ Reporting and Initial Response:**

Any member of the school community (student, staff member, or parent/guardian) may report a concern related to bullying behaviour. All reports are treated seriously and addressed in a timely and sensitive manner.

#### **□ Preliminary Inquiry:**

The relevant teacher will engage with the student(s) involved to establish the facts of the situation in a calm, supportive, and non-judgmental manner.

The teacher should consider the following: *what, where, when and why?*

If a group of students is involved, each student should be engaged with *individually* at first. Thereafter, all students should be met as a *group*.

Each student should be asked for their account of what happened and *write down their account of what happened*

#### **□ Assessment Against Definition of Bullying:**

The teacher will assess the behaviour against the definition of bullying as outlined in the *Bí Cineálta* procedures:

*“Unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against another person (or persons), and which is repeated over time.”*

Consideration will also be given to the presence of a power imbalance.

#### **□ Record-Keeping:**

- Where bullying is not confirmed, the concern will be recorded informally, and the situation will continue to be monitored.
- Where bullying is confirmed, the teacher will complete the formal *Bullying Behaviour Record Template* (In line with Appendix 3 of *Bí Cineálta*), and



the matter will proceed to the next stage.

## ***2. Addressing Bullying Behaviour***

### **□ Educational and Restorative Approach:**

The school adopts a restorative and educative approach to managing bullying, focusing on building empathy, accountability, and positive behavioural change.

### **□ Support for the Student Who Was Targeted:**

The school will offer support appropriate to the needs of the student, including reassurance, follow-up meetings, and access to other supports as required.

### **□ Intervention with the Student Who Engaged in Bullying Behaviour:**

The student will be supported to understand the impact of their actions and encouraged to change their behaviour. Interventions may include:

- Restorative conversations
- Behavioural expectations and monitoring
- Referral to school support services if needed
- Mediation with the student who was targeted
- Referral to Deputy Principal/Principal

### **□ Parental Engagement:**

Parents/guardians of all parties involved will be informed of the issue and will be engaged as partners in resolving the matter. Communication will be respectful, constructive, and solution-focused.

## ***3. Reviewing Progress and Monitoring Outcomes***

*The teacher must engage with the students and parents involved no more than 20 school days after the initial discussion to review progress.*

### **□ Follow-Up and Monitoring:**

Regular check-ins will be conducted with all students involved to ensure the bullying has ceased and that relationships are improving. The situation will



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continue to be monitored for an appropriate period.

□ **Evaluation of Actions Taken:**

The effectiveness of the interventions will be reviewed by the relevant teacher and/or the Principal. Where necessary, adjustments will be made to ensure long-term resolution.

□ **Wider School Reflection (if required):**

Where patterns of bullying are identified, the school may implement additional preventative actions such as class discussions, SPHE lessons, or assemblies to reinforce the school's anti-bullying ethos.

□ **Documentation and Accountability:**

All steps taken will be documented in accordance with the *Bí Cineálta* procedures. Records will be maintained securely and reviewed regularly to ensure compliance and effectiveness.

□ **Policy Review and Communication**

- Reviewed **annually** by staff and leadership.
- Policy posted on the school website.
- Annual surveys to assess bullying climate and policy effectiveness.

**The Principal will include all bullying behaviour in their update to the Board of Management. The Principal will provide a verbal (anonymized) update to the Board.**



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**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 recognises the importance of providing appropriate support to all students affected by bullying behaviour, whether they are the target, the bystander, or the student engaging in bullying. The following supports will be implemented in line with the principles of prevention, intervention, and restoration.

The class teacher will identify if bullying behaviour has occurred by ascertaining what has happened, where, when, why and if this behaviour is targeted, harmful and repeated and or involves an imbalance of power. Schools are not expected to deal with bullying behaviour that occurs when students are not under the care or responsibility of the school.

Incidents can occur where behaviour is unacceptable and hurtful, but the behaviour is not bullying behaviour. These incidents will be dealt with within the school's *Code of Behaviour*.

### ***1. Support for Students Who Experience Bullying Behaviour***

The school is committed to ensuring that students who are the target of bullying behaviour feel safe, heard, and supported. Measures may include:

- Providing immediate emotional support and reassurance through trusted staff members (e.g. class teacher, SNA)
- Facilitating restorative conversations where appropriate
- Ongoing monitoring and check-ins to ensure the bullying behaviour has ceased
- Referrals to external or internal supports (e.g. NEPS psychologist, or support agencies), where appropriate
- Empowering the student through social skills programmes, assertiveness training, or confidence-building activities



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- Ensuring the student is aware of how to seek help and is encouraged to report any further incidents

### ***2. Support for Students Who Witness Bullying Behaviour***

Students who witness bullying may be emotionally affected and may also require support to process what they have seen or heard. The school will:

- Encourage a culture of reporting by affirming that speaking up is a courageous and positive action
- Provide opportunities for upstanders to discuss their feelings and receive reassurance
- Use class-based discussions or SPHE lessons to explore responsible upstander behaviour and ethical decision-making
- Involve upstanders in restorative practices, where appropriate, to help repair relationships and build peer responsibility

### ***3. Support for Students Who Engage in Bullying Behaviour***

The school will respond to bullying behaviour with a view to helping the student understand the impact of their actions and to promote positive behavioural change.

Supports include:

- One-to-one conversations focused on building empathy and personal accountability
- Engagement in restorative processes, where appropriate and agreed upon by all parties
- Implementation of a behaviour support plan tailored to the student's needs
- Close monitoring and regular check-ins with a designated staff member
- Referral to appropriate internal or external services (e.g. counselling, psychological support) when necessary
- Involvement of parents/guardians in supporting behaviour change and ensuring a consistent message between home and school



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#### ***4. Whole-School and Preventative Supports***

The school recognises that effective support is reinforced by a strong culture of respect, inclusion, and kindness. Preventative and supportive measures include:

- Delivery of SPHE, Wellbeing, and Restorative Practice programmes
- Promotion of a positive school climate through whole-school activities and campaigns
- Ensuring all students are familiar with school procedures for reporting and responding to bullying
- Encouraging student voice and participation in creating a respectful school community

**In cases where the school deems that bullying behaviour is a child protection concern, TUSLA will be contacted directly for advice.**

#### **Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools**

All bullying behaviour will be recorded. This will include the type of behaviour, where and when it took place, and the date of the engagement with students and parents. The actions and supports agreed to address bullying behaviour will be documented. If the bullying behaviour is a child protection concern the matter will be addressed without delay in accordance with *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.



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## Section D: Oversight

The principal will present an update on bullying behaviour at each board of management meeting. This update will include the number of incidents of bullying behaviour that have been reported since the last meeting, the number of ongoing incidents and the total number of incidents since the beginning of the school year. Where incidents of bullying behaviour have occurred, the principal will also provide a verbal update which will include where relevant, information relating to trends and patterns identified, strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and any wider strategies to prevent and address bullying behaviour where relevant. This update does not contain personal or identifying information. See Chapter 7 of the Bí Cineálta procedures.

This policy is available to our school community on the school's website and in hard copy on request. A student friendly version of this policy is displayed in the school and is also available on our website and in hard copy on request.

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed, following input from our school community, each calendar year or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which this policy refers.

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

(Chairperson of board of management)

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

(Principal)