



St. Mary's High School
'Bí Cineálta' Policy
2025-2026

Mission Statement

St. Mary's High School, Midleton is a Catholic Voluntary Secondary School for girls only which was founded to care for the poor and disadvantaged in every sense, and to give priority to religious and moral education.

In accordance with this tradition, it seeks to:

- Provide a broad curriculum catering for the needs of all students and to prepare them for their role as citizens of Europe and the World
- Help each student achieve her full potential in academic, personal, social and moral development and to provide Pastoral Care and Remedial Education as required.
- Foster the personal and professional growth of staff reflecting change in society.
- Establish and welcome the investment of the total school community
- Agus chun ár n-oidhreacht, gur dlúth chuid di ár greideamh agus béasa agus bealaí ár dtíre, a chur ar aghaidh.

St. Mary's High School is committed to:

- Witness of Gospel values
- Curriculum innovations
- Leisure education
- Media education
- Civil, social and political education
- Social, personal and health education
- Equality
- Respect for the environment
- Justice

Introduction

St Mary's High School 'Bí Cineálta' Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour.

The Board of Management of St Mary's High School, Midleton 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.

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 | 30.04.2025 | Bi Cinealta staff in-service day |
| | 11.09.2025 | Student Support Team via Teams |
| | 15.09.2025 | School Self-Evaluation Team |
| Students | 11.09.2025 | Survey via Teams |
| | | SPHE Classes |
| Parents | 11.09.2025 | Survey via School Tyro App |

| | | |
|--|--|----------------|
| Board of Management | | |
| Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers. | | As appropriate |
| Date policy was approved: | | |
| Date policy was last reviewed: | | |

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):

At St. Mary's High School, preventing bullying behaviour is a whole-school priority. Our prevention work is structured under the four wellbeing domains outlined in the Bí Cineálta procedures: Culture & Environment, Curriculum, Policy & Planning, and Relationships & Partnerships.

1. Culture & Environment

At St. Mary's High School, we actively foster a respectful, inclusive, and supportive culture where all students feel safe, valued, and respected. Our aim is to build an environment in which bullying is less likely to occur and more likely to be challenged when it does.

Student Voice

- The Student Council and Class Representatives are engaged members of the school community who help promote kindness, respect, and inclusion.
- Students are consulted regularly through surveys, focus groups, and assemblies, and their feedback informs school planning and reviews of this policy.

Extracurricular Activities

- Respect for all skills and abilities is encouraged through a broad range of extracurricular opportunities, including sport, music, debating, drama, choir, art, and lunchtime clubs.
- The Transition Year musical offers roles both on stage and behind the scenes (set design, poster design, costumes, stage crew), allowing students of all abilities to contribute.
- Meitheal leaders in 5th Year mentor younger students, fostering leadership and community spirit.

Student Contributions to the School Environment

- Art students create murals, posters, and displays to celebrate diversity and inclusion.

- TY students contribute design work for posters and programmes for school events, building pride and ownership of their school.

Additional Supports for Students with AEN

- Students with Additional Educational Needs are supported through individualised planning, teacher collaboration, and access to resources.
- A Wellbeing Room, Student Hubs and Sensory Garden provide safe, calm spaces for students to self-regulate and recharge.
- Supports are coordinated through the Student Support Team (Year Heads, Tutors, Guidance Counsellors, Deputies, SEN staff, and SNAs).

Whole-School Events and Activities

We host regular events that highlight inclusion, kindness, and empathy, including:

- Stand Up Awareness Week
- Anti-Bullying Week
- Safer Internet Day
- First Year Induction
- Retreats, bonding days, and field trips
- Graduation ceremonies, Masses, and liturgical services
- Annual Students Awards
- Whole-school wellbeing days with external speakers and workshops

These events provide shared experiences that strengthen positive relationships and school community spirit.

Culture of Charity

- Our school community is committed to service and giving.
- Each year, students take the lead in organising fundraising events and charitable activities, supporting both local and global causes.
- These events foster empathy, social awareness, and collective responsibility, further embedding a culture of kindness and respect.

Culture of Telling

- We actively promote a culture in which students feel safe to report concerns.
- Students are reminded that reporting is not “telling tales” but a responsible and courageous action that protects others and ensures our community is safe.

2. Curriculum

- SPHE, CSPE, RSE, PE, Wellbeing, Digital literacy and RE programmes explicitly address respect, inclusion, and bullying prevention.
- Continuous Professional Development for staff in delivering these programmes.
- We deliver evidence-based programmes, including and not limited to:
 - *FUSE Anti-Bullying Programme (DCU)*, *Webwise resources*, *Be Safe – Be Webwise*, *Think Before You Click* (cyberbullying and online safety)
 - *Stand Up Week*, *Leadership training*
- Delivery of the Garda SPHE Programmes. These lessons, delivered by Community Gardai, cover issues around personal safety and cyber-bullying.

3. Policy & Planning

- Supervision plans are in place for classrooms, corridors, outdoor areas, and known “hot spots.”
- Digital safety is promoted through our Acceptable Use Policy, Digital Learning Policy, and mobile phone rules. Student use of technology is closely monitored.
- Regular reviews of prevention measures are carried out by the Student Support Team.
- All new staff and ancillary staff (SNAs, bus escorts, cleaners, secretaries, etc.) are informed of their role in preventing and reporting bullying.
- Ongoing professional development is provided, with a focus on restorative practices and effective intervention strategies.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Bullying Behaviour

- The school recognises that online bullying may include the misuse of AI tools and technologies.
- Bullying through AI includes creating, sharing, or promoting harmful, false, or offensive content.
- Examples may include deepfake images or videos, impersonation, or AI-generated harassment.
- Such behaviour is considered bullying in line with *Bí Cineálta: Procedures* (2024).
- Students are expected to use AI tools responsibly, respecting the dignity of all.
- The Acceptable Use Policy applies equally to AI platforms and applications.
- Any AI-related bullying will be reported and investigated under school procedures.
- Sanctions and restorative measures will apply where misuse is identified.
- Staff, students, and parents will receive guidance on safe and ethical use of AI.
- The school promotes awareness of AI risks as part of digital citizenship education.

This area of policy will be reviewed and updated in line with Department of Education and Youth (DEY) guidance when issued.

4. Relationships & Partnerships

- The Student Council plays an active role in awareness-raising and peer support initiatives.
- Senior students are encouraged to model positive relationships and act as a resource for younger students.
- Parent(s)/Guardian(s) are partners in prevention. They are provided with clear protocols on how to report concerns and how to approach the school if they suspect that their child is being bullied.
- The school works with external agencies (e.g., BelongTo, GLEN, Barnardo's, community Gardaí) to enhance prevention efforts.
- Strong pastoral supports (Care Team, Deputies, Year Heads, Guidance, SEN team) ensure every student has access to trusted adults.

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)

- **Classroom Supervision:** Teachers actively supervise their classrooms to create a safe and positive environment. They record concerns and, where necessary, contact

parents/guardians following the ladder of referral (subject teacher → class teacher → Year Head).

- Corridors and Common Areas: Corridors, lockers, canteen, and communal areas are monitored by staff according to a supervision roster, ensuring consistent visibility.
- Outdoor Supervision: Breaktimes and outdoor areas are supervised by staff positioned to observe and prevent potential bullying.
- Extracurricular Activities and Trips: Teachers supervise all school trips, sports events, and extracurricular activities. Students are reminded of school behavioural expectations, and concerns are dealt with immediately.
- Monitoring Digital Spaces: Student use of school-provided digital platforms and devices is actively monitored. The AUP sets out rules for responsible use. Breaches are addressed promptly.
- Non-Teaching Staff: Administrative staff, caretakers, and SNAs are encouraged to report concerns they observe to the relevant teacher or Year Head.
- Year Heads and Senior Management: Year Heads and SMT track patterns of behaviour across year groups, allowing for early intervention.
- CCTV Monitoring: In certain areas, CCTV enhances safety and oversight. Any footage is used strictly under data protection policies to address bullying or safety concern

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

When bullying behaviour occurs, the school will:

1. ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour is heard and reassured
2. seek to ensure the privacy of those involved
3. conduct all conversations with sensitivity
4. consider the age and ability of those involved
5. listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation
6. take action in a timely manner
7. inform parents of those involved

The steps that will be taken by the school to determine if bullying behaviour has occurred, the approaches taken to address the bullying behaviour and to review progress are as follows (see Chapter 6 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

1. Initial Response and Listening

- The relevant teacher (class teacher, Year Head, Guidance Counsellor, Deputy Principal, or Principal) listens carefully to the student reporting bullying, whether they are experiencing it or witnessing it.
- Students are reassured, and their privacy is respected.
- The teacher explores what the student would like to happen, including whether they would prefer the school to “keep an eye on things” initially.

2. Early Recording and Monitoring

- *All incidents*, even those resolved quickly at an early stage, are recorded in line with Bí Cineálta requirements.
- Where a concern may indicate a pattern, the teacher completes Form AB1.

- If three AB1s are logged for the same student or behaviour, an AB2 is completed to formally identify it as bullying and notify the Year Head and Principal.

3. Investigation and Information Gathering

- The relevant teacher investigates sensitively, using professional judgement to establish whether bullying has occurred.
- Interviews are carried out privately and calmly, with all parties treated fairly.
- For group bullying, students may first be interviewed individually, then together.
- Parents/guardians of all students directly involved are informed at an early stage.

4. Interventions and Actions

- The goal is to stop the bullying and restore relationships where possible.
- Interventions may include:
 - Teacher-student discussions
 - Restorative interviews
 - Agreements between students, monitored for progress
 - Referral to the Care Team, Guidance, SEN supports or external services
- Disciplinary measures, where necessary, are applied in line with the Code of Behaviour and are kept private between the school, the student, and their parents/guardians.

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):

5. Ongoing Support

- Students who experience bullying are offered support through the Student Support Team, Guidance Counsellor.
- Students displaying bullying behaviour are also supported to understand the impact of their actions and to change their behaviour.
- The school reinforces that there are no innocent bystanders. All students share responsibility to report bullying.

6. Follow-Up and Review

- The relevant teacher reviews progress with the students involved after an agreed period.
- Follow-up meetings with parents are arranged as needed.
- If the behaviour continues, the case is escalated to the Year Head, Deputy Principal, or Principal for further action.
- Records of all actions and supports remain on file in line with data protection requirements.

Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post Primary Schools

All incidents, even those resolved quickly at an early stage, will be recorded in line with Bí Cineálta requirements. 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. See Chapter 7 of the Bí Cineálta procedures.

In addition to Board oversight, the school will provide an annual report to the Department of Education on the operation and effectiveness of this policy, in line with Bí Cineálta requirements. This report will be based on anonymised data gathered from AB1 and AB2 forms, patterns identified by the Student Support Team, and Principal's termly updates.

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.

Review of Policy:

The 'Bí Cineálta' will be reviewed by all stakeholders and, if required, updated every **two** years in line with our school policy review cycle.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on _____

Signed: _____
Mick Evans- Chairperson of the Board of Management

Date : _____

Signed: _____
Donnchadh Ó' Briain- Principal

Date: _____

Date of next review: