



Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

Our Lady's Secondary School values teaching as one of the most important of all human activities.

Our school seeks to
Promote Spiritual and Human Development
Achieve Quality in Teaching and Learning
Show Respect for Every Person
Create Community
Be Just and Responsible

Bí Cineálta

Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

Reviewed	Ratified by the Board of Management	Review Date
May – Sept 2026	22 nd Sept 2026	Sept 2027

INTRODUCTION

Our Lady's Secondary School is a Catholic co-educational voluntary secondary school with a Catholic ethos under the trusteeship of CEIST (Catholic Education an Irish Schools' Trust).

In accordance with S.15 (2) (b) of the Education Act, 1998, the Board of Management of Our Lady's Secondary School shall uphold, and be accountable to the patron for upholding the characteristic spirit of the school as determined by the cultural, educational, moral, religious, social, linguistic and spiritual values and traditions which inform and are characteristic of the objectives and conduct of the school.

The Board of Management of Our Lady's Secondary School has adopted the following policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

This policy fully complies with the requirements of *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2024*.

The 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.

In this policy, Our Lady's Secondary School 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.

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	12 th Nov 2024 to 14 th March 2025	CPD / anti bullying committee / AP1 middle leaders / Full staff communication and participation via email, staff meeting and staff workshop
Students	2024-2025 School Year	Presentation/ focus group/ Student Council
Parents	2024-2025 School Year	Parents Association Meetings
Board of Management	2024-2025 School Year	Board of Management Meetings
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	2024-2025 School Year	Publication on Website Whole staff communication
Date policy was approved: 04/06/2025		
Date policy was last reviewed:		

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):

Culture and Environment

Our Lady's Secondary school has a positive and inclusive school culture and environment which is essential to prevent and address Bullying behaviour.

Relationships between all members of our school community are based on respect, care, integrity and trust.

The promotion of the value of diversity in Our Lady's to address issues of prejudice and stereotyping highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour.

Our Lady's promotes school wide awareness raising and training on all aspects of bullying, to support students, parent(s)/guardian(s) and the wider school community.

The school provides a safe physical space which supports psychological safety and is an important measure in preventing Bullying behaviour.

Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, outside toilets, school grounds, school tours and extra- curricular activities are essential to this safe physical space. Non-teaching and ancillary staff are encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers.

There is a strong emphasis on pastoral care in the school and the system is supported by teachers, class tutors, yearheads, guidance counsellor, subject teachers, ancillary staff, the deputy principal and principal. Through the Pastoral care system, students who witness Bullying behaviour are supported and encouraged to report the behaviour to a trusted adult.

Our school promotes an environment and culture where students feel safe and supported to share information around bullying incidents.

Our Lady's encourages a culture of reporting, with particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders. In that way students will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It will be made clear to all students that when they report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.

Ensuring that students know who to tell and how to tell, e.g.:

- Direct approach to teacher at an appropriate time, for example after class.
- Email/message to teacher
- Phone call to the school or to a trusted teacher in the school.
- Get a parent(s)/guardian(s) or friend to tell on the student's behalf.
- Administer a confidential questionnaire to all students

Parent(s)/guardian(s) are also encouraged to approach the school if they suspect that any child is being bullied.

Curriculum

At Our Lady's, Teaching and Learning is a collaborative and respectful practice. Students can grow, learn and interact with their peers in a safe and empathetic environment.

The fostering and enhancing of the self-esteem of all our students is central to both the curricular and extracurricular programmes. Students are provided with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth through formal and informal interactions.

Student engagement with the topic of bullying is facilitated through the SED and Wellbeing Programme (PE, SPHE, CSPE, Guidance) other curricular programmes and extra curricular programme .

The guiding vision for our school is governed by the CEIST charter whose values underpin our values and teaching and learning in all subjects on the curriculum.

The Care Team including year heads, tutors and mentor create awareness of student welfare and provide ongoing support to students at individual and class level throughout the school year.

Invited speakers make presentations on bullying and students engage in various anti bullying workshops. Our Lady's provides students with a wide delivery of lessons on bullying from evidence-based programmes, e.g. Classroom Guidance and FUSE Anti-Bullying and Online Safety Programme (including Generative AI).

Policy and Planning

Whole staff professional learning on bullying is facilitated to ensure that staff develop an awareness of what bullying is, how it impacts on students' lives and the need to respond to prevent and intervene

The student version of the Bi Cinealta is included in the student journal and is displayed in classrooms and common areas of the school.

The school's Bi Cinealta policy has been developed in partnership and will be reviewed annually. It is available on the school website or on request from the school office.

The implementation of whole school awareness measures e.g. Awareness Days, Wellbeing Week, Anti-Bullying Awareness events and students' surveys. Surveys of all year groups are conducted, and the results are analysed by the Guidance Counsellor and Year head. Reported incidents are followed up.

The Bi Cinealta policy is supported by the following school policies -

- Child Safeguarding statement
- Code of Positive Behaviour
- Acceptable User Policy
- Whole School Guidance
- Health & Safety statement

- Attendance and Participation
- Dignity in the Workplace
- RSE policy

Relationships and Partnership

Strong interpersonal connections are a vital part of effectively preventing and addressing Bullying behaviour in Our Lady's. These interpersonal connections are supported through a range of formal and informal structures, including:

- Student Support Team
- Cairdeas and other peer mentoring support
- Student Council
- Lunchtime activities
- External agencies
- Whole school initiatives e.g. One Good School, Anti Bullying week, Stand up Awareness week

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):

Preventing Cyberbullying behaviour

Our Lady's addresses the challenges posed by cyberbullying and unacceptable online behavior through a proactive and comprehensive approach. Key initiatives include:

- Implementing the SPHE curriculum and Digital Literacy programme.
- Implementing and communicating the Acceptable Users Policy and referring to appropriate online behaviour as part of the standards of behaviour in the school's Code of Behaviour.
- Having regular conversations with students about developing and maintaining respectful and kind relationships online.
- Recognizing the importance of a collaborative approach, Our Lady's offers resources and online safety events for parents who are responsible for overseeing their children's activities online.
- Holding an Internet safety day to reinforce awareness around appropriate online behaviour.
- The school's pastoral care system provides students with a support system that allows them to feel safe and supported when dealing with cyberbullying or other online challenges.
- The school's IT infrastructure is designed to ensure students have safe access to online platforms.

Through these measures and others, Our Lady's fosters a respectful and safe online environment, helping students develop positive digital habits and resilience against cyberbullying.

Preventing homophobic/transphobic bullying behavior

All students have a right to feel safe and supported at school. Our Lady's adopt a number of strategies to prevent homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour including the following:

- Maintaining an inclusive physical environment through the provision of Universal Toilets and the display of relevant posters
- Encouraging students to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour.
- RSE programme at Senior Cycle and the updated SPHE at Junior Cycle teach students about healthy respectful relationships
- **Stand Up Awareness Week** provides a valuable opportunity for Our Lady's to promote awareness and support for issues affecting LGBTQ+ youth, including combating bullying and fostering inclusivity.

Preventing racist bullying behaviour

Our Lady's has a diverse student population attending from many different cultures and backgrounds. The following strategies are in place to prevent racist bullying behavior

- Fostering an environment where diversity is celebrated, through displays, curriculum and celebration of cultural events
- Inputs for students, staff and external sources around awareness of racism and inclusion
- Curriculum to support diversity and education around tolerance with students from culturally diverse backgrounds
- Allocation of Leadership role around diversity and inclusion
- Provision for students where English is not their first language in terms of language support and modified curriculum.

Preventing sexist bullying behaviour

Our Lady's is committed to fostering gender equality as a key element in creating a supportive and respectful learning environment. Strategies to prevent sexist bullying include the following:

- Ensuring all students have the same opportunities to engage in school activities and access to a broad range of school subjects irrespective of their sex.
- Celebrating diversity at school and acknowledging the contributions of all students
- Students of all genders are encouraged to take on leadership roles within student councils, committees, and class projects, ensuring equal representation and voice in decision-making.

Prevent sexual harassment

Our Lady's has zero tolerance to sexual harassment. The following strategies are used to prevent sexual harassment

- RSE programme at Senior Cycle and updated SPHE at Junior Cycle to teach students about healthy respectful relationships
- Promoting positive role models and challenging gender stereotype which exist in society.

Addressing Bullying Behaviour

Students should discuss any incident of bullying or suspected bullying with a teacher or another trusted adult within the school system e.g. SNA, School Secretary etc. this is responsible behaviour.

Parents/guardians should contact the school regarding incidents of bullying behaviour which they might suspect or that have come to their attention through their children or other parents/guardians.

Any student or parent(s)/guardian(s) may bring a bullying incident to any teacher in the school.

All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying, will be investigated and dealt with.

Teaching and non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), caretakers, cleaners must report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher.

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

- > Principal
 - > Deputy Principal
 - > Yearheads
 - > Guidance Counsellor
 - > Tutors
 - > First Year Mentor
 - > Class Teacher
 - > Any teacher may act as a relevant teacher if circumstances warrant it.
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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 all students who are experiencing the bullying behaviour so as to determine how best to address the situation
- > take action in a timely manner
- > inform parents of those involved

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

Identifying if Bullying Behaviour has occurred

In dealing with an incident, the (relevant) teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred. The (relevant) teacher will communicate any concern to the yearhead/guidance counsellor/deputy principal/principal. The relevant teacher will provide feedback where required to the individual who reported the incident.

When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred the teacher should consider the following: what, where, when and why? (Appendix A)

The following questions should be used as a guide to determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour or not:

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

If the answer to each of the above questions is Yes, then the behaviour is bullying behaviour and should be addressed using the procedures outlined in this policy.

Incidents can occur where behaviour is unacceptable and hurtful but not bullying behaviour. Strategies to address these incidents are outlined in the school's Code of Behaviour.

Where bullying Behavior has occurred

The school is not expected to deal with bullying behaviour that occurs when students are not under the care or responsibility of the school. However, where bullying behaviour has an impact in school, the school is required to support the students involved. Where the bullying behaviour continues in school, the school should deal with it in accordance with the Bi Cinealta policy.

The following principles should 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

In circumstances where a student expresses concern about their parents being informed, the school should develop an appropriate plan to support the student and for how their parents will be informed.

- Bullying can lead to the imposition of sanctions in line with the Code of Behaviour (e.g. detention, withdrawal of privileges, verbal reprimand from yearhead/deputy principal/principal).
- If there is a serious incident, the matter should be reported to the Deputy Principal/Principal. Sanctions up to and including suspension will be considered by the Principal.
- Where the incident is deemed more serious the Principal will refer the matter to the Board of Management. Sanctions up to and including expulsion will be considered by the Board of Management.
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) and students are required to co-operate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving any issues and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved as quickly as possible.
- If a parent/guardian is not satisfied with how bullying has been addressed by the school, in accordance with these procedures, they should be referred to the school's complaints procedure.
- Bullying of a teacher by a student or group of students will be dealt with in line with the Code of Positive Behaviour.

Requests to take no action

Where bullying behavior occurs parents/guardians of all students involved must be informed. Requests may come from the students/parents/guardians to take no action. This request needs to be made in writing to the school. While acknowledging the parents/guardians request the school may decide it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour.

Determining if bullying behaviour has ceased

The relevant Teacher must revert to the students and parents involved in the bullying behavior 20 school days after the initial report to review progress.

The relevant Teacher will assess the effectiveness of the strategies and interventions involved whilst acknowledging that it may not always be possible for the relationships between the parties to be restored to how they were prior to the incident.

If the behavior has ceased ongoing supervision will be arranged to ensure the relevant students can access support if further instances occur.

If the bullying behavior has not ceased the relevant teacher should review the strategies with the students and parents and agree a timeframe to review.

In the event that bullying continues the relevant teacher should use the school's code of behaviour and school management systems to address the issue.

Recording Bullying Behaviour

All staff must keep a record of any incidents witnessed by them or notified to them and report same to the relevant teacher (Yearhead/Guidance Counsellor/Deputy Principal/Principal).

Details of the incident and the investigation process should be recorded using the school's 'Bullying Reporting Form' - Appendix B. It is imperative that recording of all bullying incidents is done in an objective and factual manner. Completed forms will be retained in the Deputy Principal's office.

Where a Student Support File exists for a student, a copy of the record will be added to the student's support file by the student support team. This will assist the school's student support team in providing a consistent and holistic response to support the wellbeing of the students involved. The student support plan will be updated to incorporate response strategies and associated supports.

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):

Student Supports -

- All students affected by bullying, whether as a victim, perpetrator, or witness, will have access to support through the school's pastoral care system. Opportunities are provided for students to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop friendships and social skills and build resilience.
- Support will be tailored to meet the unique needs of the individual, ensuring confidentiality and sensitivity in all interactions within the constraints of the school environment and sensitivity.
- As part of the review process, a follow-up check-in will be conducted to assess progress and decide on a support plan as necessary.

External supports available to support students, parents and/or schools in relation to Bullying include:

- External counselling providers including Jigsaw
- NEPS
- Oide
- Neart
- Webwise
- National Parents Council
- DCU Anti Bullying Centre
- TUSLA

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*.

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, on the school's website and in the student journal.

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: Mellie Butler Date: 22/9/2026
(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: R. J. Ly Date: 22/9/2026
(Principal)

Bi Cinealta

Appendix A - Examples of bullying behaviours

General behaviours which apply to all	• Harassment based on any of the nine grounds in the equality legislation e.g. sexual harassment, homophobic bullying, racist bullying etc. • Physical aggression • Damage to property • Name calling • Slagging • The production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other materials aimed at intimidating another person • Offensive graffiti • Extortion • Intimidation • Insulting or offensive gestures • The “look” • Invasion of personal space • A combination of any of the types listed. • Mocking students
Cyber	• Denigration: Spreading rumors, lies or gossip to hurt a person’s reputation • Harassment: Continually sending vicious, mean or disturbing messages to an individual • Impersonation: Posting offensive or aggressive messages under another person’s name • Flaming: Using inflammatory or vulgar words to provoke an online fight • Trickery: Fooling someone into sharing personal information which you then post online • Outing: Posting or sharing confidential or compromising information or images • Exclusion: Purposefully excluding someone from an online group • Cyber stalking: Ongoing harassment and denigration that causes a person considerable fear for his/her safety • Silent telephone/mobile phone call • Abusive telephone/mobile phone calls • Abusive text messages • Abusive email • Abusive communication on social networks e.g. Facebook/Snapchat/Instagram/ Twitter/You Tube or on games consoles • Screenshots • Abusive website comments/Blogs/Pictures • Abusive posts on any form of communication technology • Sexting

	• Abusive content created by Generative Artificial Intelligence • Posting without consent
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Identity Based Behaviours Including any of the nine discriminatory grounds mentioned in Equality Legislation (gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community).	
Homophobic and Transgender	• Discussing a person's sexual orientation • Taunting a person of a different sexual orientation • Name calling e.g. Gay, queer, lesbian...used in a derogatory manner • Physical intimidation or attacks • Threats
Race, nationality, ethnic background and membership of the Traveller community	• Discrimination, prejudice, comments or insults about colour, nationality, culture, social class, religious beliefs, ethnic or traveller background • Exclusion on the basis of any of the above
Relational	This involves manipulating relationships as a means of bullying. Behaviours include: • Malicious gossip • Isolation & exclusion • Ignoring • Excluding from the group • Taking someone's friends away • "Bitching" • Spreading rumours • Breaking confidence • Talking loud enough so that the victim can hear • The "look"
Sexual	• Unwelcome or inappropriate sexual comments • Unwanted physical touching • Harassment • Sexting
Special Educational Needs, Disability	• Name calling • Taunting others because of their disability or learning needs • Taking advantage of some students' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to

	recognise and defend themselves against bullying • Taking advantage of some students' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to understand social situations and social cues. • Mimicking a person's disability • Setting others up for ridicule
Gifted Students	• Name calling • Taunting others because of their ability or talents • Setting others up for ridicule

Appendix B – Bullying Reporting Form (To be completed by the relevant person investigating the incident)

1. Name(s) and class(es) of all student(s) involved in the bullying incident

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2. Source of bullying concern/report box(es)

Student concerned	
Other student	
Parent/Guardian	
Teacher	
Other	

- Location of incidents (tick relevant)

Yard	
Classroom	
Corridor	
Toilets	
School Bus	
Online	
Other	

3. Name of person(s) who reported the bullying concern and date of initial report

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4. How Bullying has occurred (tick relevant box(es))

Physical		Verbal	
Written		Extortion	
Exclusion		Relational	
Online		Intimidation	
Damage to property		Other	

5. Type Of Bullying (tick relevant box(es))

Disablist		Exceptionally able	
Gender Identity		Homophobic/transphobic (LGBTQ+)	
Physical appearance		Racist	
Poverty		Religious Identity	
Sexist		Sexual Harassment	
AEN related		Other	

6. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact including where and when bullying took place (if known)

7. Details of actions taken by YH/relevant person including conversation with parents -

8. Views of students and their parents regarding the actions taken -

9. Review Process - Date(s) of review: _____

Has the bullying behaviour ceased? Yes No

Views of students and parents following review -

Details of external support (if applicable) -

10. Signed: _____ Date: _____

Yearhead/Relevant Person