



# VIRGIN MARY GIRLS' NATIONAL SCHOOL

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Roll No. 19303W

2025-2026

## **Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour**

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The Board of Management of Virgin Mary Girls' National School has adopted the following policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

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

The board of management acknowledges that bullying behaviour interferes with the rights of the child as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. We all, as a school community, have a responsibility to work together to prevent and address bullying behaviour and to deal with the negative impact of bullying behaviour.

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

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

### **Definition of bullying**

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

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

## 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	March 14 <sup>th</sup> 2025	Half day closure
Students	April 9 <sup>th</sup> and 10 <sup>th</sup> 2025	Online survey conducted by student council
Parents	May 22 <sup>nd</sup> 2025	Meeting and feedback.
Board of Management	12/06/2025	Board of Management Meeting
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	N/A	N/A
Date policy was approved: 12/06/2025		
Date policy was last reviewed: 12/06/2025		

## Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

This section sets out the prevention strategies that will be used by the school. These include strategies specifically aimed at preventing online bullying behaviour, homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour, racist bullying behaviour, sexist bullying behaviour and sexual harassment as appropriate (see Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

- A positive school culture and climate which –
  - is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity;
  - encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment; and promotes respectful relationships across the school community;
  - Effective leadership;
  - A school-wide approach;
  - A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact;
  - Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that –
    - Build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and
    - Explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying;

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

The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber-bullying and identity based bullying) used by the school are as follows:

- The anti-bullying module of the SPHE programme as it applies during each school year (Stay Safe Programme)
- At least five awareness-raising exercises per school year for each class group (e.g. *National anti-bullying campaign and use of website resources*), pro-actively explaining the nature and variety, causes, consequences and unacceptability of bullying.

Pupils are helped to examine the issue of bullying in a calm rational way, outside of the tense context of particular bullying incidents. In the process they are made more aware of the nature of bullying and the various forms that it can take.

Pupils are made aware that the consequences of bullying behaviour are always bad for those who are targeted, even if this is not always obvious at the time.

Pupils are encouraged to recognise, reject and report bullying behaviour.

Through presentations or other exercises, the school staff and parents/guardians are made aware of the nature of bullying and the signs that might indicate that a pupil is being bullied. They are encouraged to be vigilant in watching out for signs of bullying and to report any suspicion of bullying they may have to the "Relevant Teachers.

What strategies do we use in class room and school?

#### **Immediate Response**

- De-escalate incidents calmly to ensure safety.
- Acknowledge and validate the affected student's distress.
- Separate the individuals involved if necessary to prevent further conflict.

#### **Reporting and Documentation**

- Encourage students to report incidents as soon as they occur.
- Record all details of the incident accurately and confidentially.
- Communicate with relevant staff members and involve the principal when required.

#### **Investigation and Assessment**

- Interview the individuals involved, including witnesses, to understand the situation.
- Identify underlying reasons behind the behavior by asking the 'why' questions.
- Keep detailed notes to ensure accurate tracking of repeated incidents or patterns.

#### **Intervention and Support**

- Implement restorative justice interventions when appropriate.
- Offer counseling or support services to affected students.
- Facilitate reconciliation and conflict resolution discussions.
- Apply consequences fairly and consistently as outlined in the Code of Behaviour.

#### **Follow-Up and Monitoring**

- Check in regularly with affected students to ensure their well-being.
- Monitor behavior changes and ensure incidents do not recur.
- Continue communication with parents and guardians throughout the process.

This response outline ensures consistency and fairness when addressing bullying incidents, while prioritizing student safety and support.

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):

- Teachers are constantly on the lookout for behaviour that might give rise to bullying.
- Anxious and vulnerable pupils are kept under close observation by yard supervisors.
- Ensuring children line up in a disciplined manner, can avoid harassment for some pupils.
- Teacher on the yard is responsible for recording & informing the class teacher.

**Discussion with Involved Parties:**

- A meeting was held involving all three parties to address the behavior and its impacts.
- The discussion was aimed at understanding the situation and fostering resolution.

**Parent Communication:**

- A phone call was made to the parent to inform them of the incident and the steps being taken.

**Documentation and Escalation:**

- The incident was recorded as Stage 1 under the Anti-Bullying Policy.
- The matter has been handed over to the Deputy Principal, who is liaising with the parent and monitoring the situation.

**Follow-Up Actions:**

- A follow-up chat was conducted with all parties involved to ensure clarity and understanding.
- Management was consulted for additional support and guidance.
- The outcome of the discussion was satisfactory to all parties.

**Further Monitoring:**

- The class teacher has been informed and will continue to monitor the situation.
- If unresolved, the matter will be escalated to the Principal.

**Student Support:**

- One student expressed feelings of exclusion and was visibly upset.
- A conversation with the teacher took place to identify the reasons behind these feelings and plan an appropriate response.

## Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

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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 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

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):

The school's procedures for investigation, follow-up and recording of bullying behaviour and the established intervention strategies used by the school for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour, (e.g. the six step approach available from the "Dealing with Incidents" section of the Anti-Bullying Campaign website) are as follows:

- The 'Relevant Teacher(s) investigates all instances of reported or suspected bullying behaviour with a view to establishing the facts and bringing any such behaviour to an end.
- The School, through the 'Relevant Teacher(s) reserves the right to ask any pupil to write an account of what happened, as part of an investigation. This will be a standard procedure and does not necessarily imply that a pupil is guilty of misbehaviour.
- Pupils who are alleged to have been involved in bullying behaviour are interviewed by the 'Relevant Teacher(s) to establish the nature and extent of the behaviour and any reasons for it. In the event that they have been involved in bullying behaviour they are asked to sign a binding promise that they will treat all pupils fairly, equally and respectfully including the targeted pupil(s).
- The 'Relevant Teacher' does not apportion blame but rather treats bullying behaviour as a "mistake" that can and must be remedied. She emphasises that the intention is not to punish perpetrators but to talk to them, to explain how harmful and hurtful bullying is and to seek a promise that it will stop. If that promise is forthcoming and is honoured there will be no penalty and that will be the end of the matter. Pupils who report bullying therefore are not getting others "in trouble" so much as enabling them to get out of trouble into which they may ultimately get if the bullying continued.
- When an investigation is completed and/or a bullying situation is resolved the 'Relevant Teacher's will complete a report, to include the findings of the investigation, the strategy adopted and the outcome of the intervention, as well as any other relevant information.
- If a pupil has signed such a promise but then chooses to break that promise and continue the bullying behaviour, this can then no longer be considered a "mistake." In this event, parent(s)/guardian(s) will be informed and requested to countersign their daughter's promise. Breach of this additional promise by further bullying behaviour is regarded as a very grave matter and a serious sanction may be imposed by the school authorities (See sanctions below).
- All documentation regarding bullying incidents and their resolution is retained securely in the school.
- Sanctions:

Where a pupil has been found to be engaged in bullying behaviour, has formally promised to stop and has broken that promise, any sanction may be imposed in accordance with the school code of behaviour, please see the schools Code of Behaviour Policy.

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):

- Bullied pupils:
- Ending the bullying behaviour,
- Reemphasizing the school culture to foster more respect for bullied pupils and all pupils,
- Reemphasizing the school culture to foster greater empathy towards and support for bullied pupils,
- Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through the awareness-raising programme,
- Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through the speedy identification of those responsible and speedy resolution of bullying situations,
- Making adequate counselling facilities available to pupils who need it in a timely manner,
- Helping bullied pupils raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that help develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school).
  
- Bullying pupils:
- Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are not blamed or punished and get a “clean sheet,”
- Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are doing the right and honorable thing and giving them praise for this,
- Making adequate counseling facilities available to help those who need it learn other ways of meeting their needs besides violating the rights of others,
- Helping those who need to raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school),
- Using learning strategies throughout the school and the curriculum to help enhance pupils’ feelings of self-worth,
- In dealing with negative behaviour in general, encouraging teachers and parents to focus on, challenge and correct the behaviour while supporting the child,
- In dealing with bullying behaviour seeking resolution and offering a fresh start with a “clean sheet” and no blame in return for keeping a promise to reform.

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*.

## 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: Pat Kenny Date: 12/06/2025  
(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: Dián O'Donovan  
Date: 12/062025  
(Principal)



## Appendix 2

Practical tips for building a positive school culture and climate

Model respectful behaviour to all members of the school community at all times.

Explicitly teach pupils what respectful language and respectful behaviour looks like, acts like, sounds like and feels like in class and around the school.

Display key respect messages in classrooms, in assembly areas and around the school. Involve pupils in the development of these messages.

Catch them being good - notice and acknowledge desired respectful behaviour by providing positive attention.

Consistently tackle the use of discriminatory and derogatory language in the school – this includes homophobic and racist language and language that is belittling of pupils with a disability or SEN.

Give constructive feedback to pupils when respectful behaviour and respectful language are absent.

Have a system of encouragement and rewards to promote desired behaviour and compliance with the school rules and routines.

Explicitly teach pupils about the appropriate use of social media.

Positively encourage pupils to comply with the school rules on mobile phone and internet use.

Follow up and follow through with pupils who ignore the rules.

Actively involve parents in awareness raising campaigns around social media.

Actively promote the right of every member of the school community to be safe and secure in school.

Highlight and explicitly teach school rules in pupil friendly language in the classroom and in common areas.

All staff can actively watch out for signs of bullying behaviour.

Ensure there is adequate playground/school yard/outdoor supervision.

School staff can get pupils to help them to identify bullying “hot spots” and “hot times” for bullying in the school.

Hot spots tend to be in the playground/school yard/outdoor areas, changing rooms, corridors and other areas of unstructured supervision.

Hot times again tend to be times where there is less structured supervision such as when pupils are in the playground/school yard or moving classrooms.

Support the establishment and work of student councils.

Special attention should be med to potential hot spots when on school outings.

### Appendix 3

### Template for recording bullying behaviour

Online Form Also Available

<https://forms.office.com/e/auJH8hcb7w>

#### 1. Name of pupil being bullied and class group

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_

#### 2. Name(s) and class(es) of pupil(s) engaged in bullying behaviour


#### 3. Source of bullying concern/report (tick relevant box(es))\*

Pupil concerned	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Pupil	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parent	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>
Anonymous Online	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### 4. Location of incidents (tick relevant box(es))\*

Playground	<input type="checkbox"/>
Classroom	<input type="checkbox"/>
Corridor	<input type="checkbox"/>
Toilets	<input type="checkbox"/>
School Bus	<input type="checkbox"/>
Online	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### 5. Name of person(s) who reported the bullying concern

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#### 6. Type of Bullying Behaviour (tick relevant box(es)) \*

Physical Aggression	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cyber-bullying	<input type="checkbox"/>
Damage to Property	<input type="checkbox"/>	Intimidation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Isolation/Exclusion	<input type="checkbox"/>	Malicious Gossip	<input type="checkbox"/>
Name Calling	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

**7. Where behaviour is regarded as identity-based bullying, indicate the relevant category:**

Homophobic	Disability/SEN related	Racist	Membership of Traveller community	Other (specify)

**8. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact**

**9. Details of actions taken**

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ (Relevant Teacher) Date \_\_\_\_\_

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix E

# 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

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*? Insert date when the Bí Cineálta policy was last adopted by the school.

12 / 06 / 2025

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

In the Hallways

3. What date did the Board publish the Bí Cineálta policy and the student-friendly policy on the school website? 26/06/2025

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

YES

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

Alladin Ap

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

7. Does the Bí Cineálta policy document the strategies that the school uses to prevent bullying behaviour?  Yes

8. 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

9. Has the Board discussed how the school is addressing all reports of bullying behaviour?  Yes

10. Is the Board satisfied that all incidents of bullying behaviour are addressed in accordance with the school's Bí Cineálta Policy?  Yes

11. Have the prevention strategies in the Bí Cineálta policy been implemented?  Yes

12. Has the Board discussed the effectiveness of the strategies used to prevent bullying behaviour?  Yes

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

N/A

14. 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:

N/A

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

N/A

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

N/A
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17. Does the school refer parents to the complaints procedures if they have a complaint about how the school has addressed bullying behaviour?  Yes

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

19. 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

## Notification regarding the board of management's annual review of the school's Bí Cineálta Policy

The Board of Management of Virgin Mary Girl's National School confirms that the board of management's annual review of the school's Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour and its implementation was completed at the board of management meeting of \_\_\_\_\_

This review was conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Department of Education's Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.

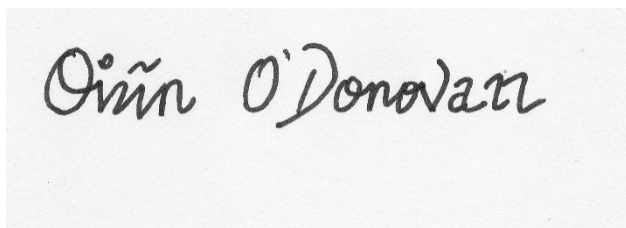
Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pat Kenny". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

(Chairperson of board of management)

Date: 12/06/2025

Date of next review: March 2026

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Oisín O'Donovan". The signature is written in a cursive style and is contained within a light grey rectangular box.

Signed:

(Principal)

Date: 12/06/2025