MALLOW COMMUNITY NATIONAL SCHOOL

Kingsfort Avenue, Castlepark, Mallow, County Cork

Bí Cineálta Policy

to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Mallow Community 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.

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Section A: Development/review of our Bi 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	Oct 2024 and Jan 2025 Aug 2025 Sept 2026	Leadership Team Meeting - 15.10.24, 08.04.25 Email to staff - 16.11.24 Staff Meeting - 29.01.25, 28.08.25, 28.09.26 Staff Survey - Sept 2026 *Staff email - reminder of the school's anti-bullying procedures along with teaching resources.* *Staff Meeting – The new Bi Cinealta procedures were discussed. Sharing of draft policy with staff to discuss / consult and make any amendments*
Students	Nov 2024 Dec 2024 Jan 2025 June 2026 Sept 2026	Pupil Survey - June 2026 Bi Cinealta Art Competition - Wellbeing Committee Assembly on Anti- Bullying - Dec 2024, Jan 2025, Sept 2026 *Students from 3rd to 6th were surveyed to* assess how they feel about their school environment and their safety. *The answers were taken into account when drafting this Policy.* *An art competition and an assembly was held after the survey to consolidate their knowledge about bullying.*
Parents	May 2024 April 2025 Sept 2025 June 2026	Parent Surveys - May 2024, April 2025, June 2026 PA meeting - 23.09.25 *Parents were surveyed to assess their opinions on the safety of the school environment currently. They were given an opportunity to suggest ways to improve the safety in our school. Parents were also given an opportunity to comment on the school's approach to addressing and preventing bullying behaviour.*
Board of Management	April 2025 Oct 2025 Oct 2026	Email to BOM Apr 2025 - Link to Bí Cinealta information video sent to board members. BOM Meeting - 29.04.25, 15.10.25, 13.10.26 *Reviewed new policy draft – leading to consultation and*

		final ratification after amendments made where necessary.
Wider school community	April 2025 Sept 2026	Discussed new policy and procedures with secretary and bus escort.
Date policy was approved: 13.10.26		
Date policy was last reviewed: 14.10.25		

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):

Culture and Environment:
We aim to

- Create a positive and inclusive school culture and environment
- Relationships between all members of the school community based on respect, care, integrity and trust.
- Effective leadership
- Maintain a school culture where bullying behaviour is unacceptable
- School staff maintains a consistent approach to bullying behaviour
- Pupils promote kindness and inclusion
- Parents promote empathy and respect
- A telling environment
- A trusted adult that pupils can speak to
- Create safe physical spaces in schools
- Ensure appropriate supervision at school or when attending school activities

Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)
We aim to

- Promote teaching and learning that is collaborative and respectful
- Provide opportunities to foster inclusion and respect for diversity
- SPHE and RSE curricula aim to foster students' wellbeing, self confidence and sense of belonging and to develop students' sense of personal responsibility for their own behaviour and actions
- diversity and inclusion can be experienced via the Patron's Curriculum which aims to encourage respect and understanding of different beliefs, perspectives and ways of living.

Policy and Planning

We aim to

- Keep the wellbeing of the school community at the heart of school policies and plans.
- Support the participation of pupils in the development and implementation of school policies and plans.
- School staff will be encouraged to engage in teacher professional learning courses to support them to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

Relationships and Partnerships
We aim to:

- Promote strong interpersonal connections
- Foster a range of formal and informal structures such as pupil committee, parents association, student support teams.
- Support the active participation of parents in school life

Preventing Cyber Bullying
We aim to:

- Promote digital literacy,
- Promote digital citizenship
- Foster safe online environments.

Note: The digital age of consent is the minimum age a user must be before a social media or internet company can collect, process and store their data. In Ireland the digital age of consent is 16. Most social media platforms and services have a minimum age requirement and for the majority of these services it is 13 years' old. Therefore technically, children under the age of 13 should not have a social media account. It is important for their child's safety, that parents are aware of their children's use of technology including smartphones and gaming consoles.

Preventing homophobic/transphobic bullying behaviour
We aim to:

- maintain an inclusive physical environment such as by displaying relevant posters
- encourage peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
- challenge gender stereotypes
- conduct lessons for students and school staff to raise awareness of the impact of homophobic bullying behaviour
- encourage students to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour

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Preventing racist bullying behaviour
We aim to:

- foster a school culture where diversity is 'the norm' and where students "see themselves" in their school environment
- have the cultural diversity of the school visible and on display
- conduct lessons for students and school staff to raise awareness of racism
- encourage peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
- encourage bystanders to report when they witness racist behaviour
- provide supports to school staff to respond to the needs of students for whom English is an additional language and for communicating with their parents
- provide supports to school staff to support students from ethnic minorities, including Traveller and Roma students, and to encourage communication with their parents
- invite speakers from diverse ethnic backgrounds
- ensure that library reading material and textbooks represent appropriate lived experiences of students and adults from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds

Preventing sexist bullying behaviour
We aim to:

- ensure members of staff model respectful behaviour and treat students equally irrespective of their sex
- ensure all students have the same opportunities to engage in school activities irrespective of their sex
- celebrate diversity at school and acknowledging the contributions of all students
- organise awareness campaigns, workshops and presentations on gender equality and respect
- encourage parents to reinforce these values of respect at home

Preventing sexual harassment
We aim to:

- teach students about healthy relationships and how to treat each other with respect and kindness
- promote positive role models within the school community
- challenge gender stereotypes that can contribute to sexual harassment

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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):

- All staff should be trained to recognise and respond to bullying behavior. Staff should be present and visible in common areas and in the playground during break times.
- Appropriate supervision is an important measure to help prevent and address bullying behaviour.
- Incident Reporting: The class teacher and/ or the link SEN teacher investigates all instances of reported or suspected bullying behavior with a view to establishing the facts.
- Incident investigation: All reports of bullying should be investigated promptly and thoroughly using the steps from the antibullyingcampaign.ie. Records of the investigation should be kept. All identified incidents of bullying should be recorded on an Incident Report Form.

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.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

- The class teacher will oversee recording of bullying reports for students in their class – this includes using the procedure guidelines to investigate reports of bullying and recording bullying behaviour on the correct form on Aladdin
- The Principal and/ or Deputy Principal will follow up after twenty days to investigate if bullying has ceased.
- All staff will be vigilant to bullying behaviour.
- Principal will inform the Board of Management of incidents of Bullying.

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):

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To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour you should consider the following questions:

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 questions above is Yes, then the behaviour is bullying behaviour and the behaviour should be addressed using the Bí Cineálta Procedures.

If the answer to any of these questions is No, then the behaviour is not bullying behaviour. Note: One off incidents may be considered bullying in certain circumstances. A single hurtful message posted on social media can be considered bullying behaviour as it has a high likelihood of being shared multiple times and thus 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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Outside School
A school is not expected to deal with bullying behaviour that occurs when students are not under the care or responsibility of the school. However, where this bullying behaviour has an impact in school, schools are required to support the students involved.

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):

Where bullying behaviour has occurred

- Parents are an integral part of the school community and play an important role, in partnership with schools, in addressing bullying behaviour. Where bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the students involved must be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and to consult with them on the actions to be taken to address the behaviour
- it is important to listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation
- a record should be kept of the engagement with all involved
- this record should document the form and type of bullying behaviour, if known (see Section 2.5 and 2.7 of the Bi Cineálta procedures), where and when it took place and the date of the initial engagement with the students involved and their parents
- the record should include the views of the students and their parents regarding the actions to be taken to address the bullying behaviour

Follow up where bullying behaviour has occurred

- the teacher must engage with the students involved and their parents again no more than 20 school days after the initial engagement
- important factors to consider as part of this engagement are the nature of the bullying behaviour, the effectiveness of the strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and the relationship between the students involved
- the teacher should document the review with students and their parents to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased and the views of students and their parents in relation to this
- the date that it has been determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased should also be recorded
- any engagement with external services/supports should also be noted
- ongoing supervision and support may be needed for the students involved even where bullying behaviour has ceased
- if the bullying behaviour has not ceased the teacher should review the strategies used in consultation with the students involved and their parents. A timeframe should be agreed for further engagement until the bullying behaviour has ceased

- If it becomes clear that the student who is displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing to display the behaviour, then school consideration should be given to using the strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour as provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour. If disciplinary sanctions are considered, this is a matter between the relevant student, their parents and the school (Child may be given a chance (20 days) to change their behaviour before disciplinary sanctions are considered. Reform not blame as per antibullyingcampaign.ie)
- if a parent(s) is not satisfied with how the bullying behaviour has been addressed by the school, in accordance with the Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, they should be referred to the school's complaints procedures
- if a parent is dissatisfied with how a complaint has been handled, they may make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children if they believe that the school's actions have had a negative effect on the student

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: Lia Aher (Chairperson of board of management) Date: 13/10/26

Signed: Jane' O Connor (Principal) Date: 13.10.26