

Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour



Seamount College

May 2025

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Seamount College Mission Statement

Our aim is to provide, with the support of parents, a holistic, Christian education in a caring, respectful environment where teaching and learning lead to the development of the full potential of each individual in the school community.

The Board of Management of Seamount College 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.

We confirm that we will take all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the bullying or harassment of our students in whatever form and however motivated. Catholic schools have a distinctive understanding of the human person, recognising that every person is created in God's image and likeness and has inherent dignity as a child of God. This is the basis for ensuring that each person in our school is treated with respect and care, in accordance with the Catholic Schedule.

As a Catholic school, we are committed to respecting the dignity of every individual. No human person is to be devalued, and all have an indispensable part to play in the school community, regardless of difference.

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.

Building on many years of international research, the core definition above sets out clear criteria to help school communities to prevent, correctly identify and address bullying among students. Alleged incidents of bullying are however often complex and must be considered on a case-by-case basis. There are many different methods of bullying behaviour, including physical, verbal and relational forms, and it can take place online and offline.

There are also many different motives for bullying behaviour which can be understood on an individual level (for example, desire for dominance, status, revenge) and/or on a societal level (for example, identity-based bullying such as racist, disablist, sexist or LGBTQ+ bullying). Bullying behaviour in schools is often strongly influenced by attitudes, behaviours, norms and power dynamics that are deeply ingrained in our society. The core elements of the definition are further described below:

> **Targeted behaviour**

Bullying is deliberate, unwanted behaviour that causes harm to others, and where the student displaying bullying behaviour knows that their behaviour is or will be perceived as harmful by the child or young person experiencing the behaviour. Bullying is not accidental or reckless behaviour. The harm can be physical (for example, personal injury, damage to or loss of property), social (for example, withdrawal, loneliness, exclusion) and/or emotional (for example, low self esteem, depression, anxiety) and can have a serious and long term negative impact on the student experiencing the bullying behaviour. If the repeated harm is real for the student experiencing the behaviour but unintended by the other student, this is not bullying but, importantly, must still be addressed under the school's code of behaviour.

> **Repeated behaviour**

Bullying takes the form of a systematic pattern of behaviour which is repeated over time. Single offline incidents of intentional negative behaviour involving an imbalance of power are not considered bullying but must still be addressed under the school's code of behaviour. Posting a single harmful

message/image/video online, and which is highly likely to be reposted or shared with others can therefore be seen as bullying behaviour.

> Imbalance of power

In incidents of bullying, the student experiencing the bullying behaviour finds it hard to defend themselves as a result of the abuse of a real or perceived imbalance of power. This imbalance of power may manifest itself through differences in size, strength, age, ability, peer group power, economic status, social status, religion, race, ethnic origin including membership of the Traveller and/or Roma communities, sexual orientation, Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 18 family circumstances, gender, gender identity, gender expression, experience of the care system, disability or the receipt of special education. In incidents of online (or cyber) bullying, the imbalance of power may relate to online anonymity, technical proficiency and possession of information/images/video, and the inability of the targeted student to remove offensive online material or escape the bullying.

> Behaviour that is not bullying behaviour

A one off instance of negative behaviour towards another student is not bullying behaviour. However, a single hurtful message posted on social media can be considered bullying behaviour as it may be visible to a wide audience and has a high likelihood of being shared multiple times and so becomes a repeated behaviour. Disagreement between students, or instances where students don't want to be friends or to remain friends, is not considered bullying behaviour unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others including deliberate manipulation of friendship groups. Some students with special educational needs may have social communication difficulties which may make them communicate their needs through behaviours that can hurt themselves or others. It is important to note that these behaviours are not deliberate or planned but, in certain situations, they are an automatic response which they can't control. Bullying is not accidental or reckless behaviour. If the repeated harm is real for the student experiencing the behaviour but unintended by the other student, this is not bullying. These behaviours, while not defined as bullying, can be distressing. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour. Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 19.

>Criminal behaviour

Bullying behaviour can be considered criminal behaviour under certain circumstances and legal consequences can apply. The age of criminal responsibility in Ireland is 12 years. Some online behaviour may be illegal, and students need to be aware of the far reaching consequences of posting inappropriate or harmful content online. In cases of intimate imagery, the Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020, also known as Coco's Law, criminalises the non consensual sharing of intimate images and also criminalises threatening to share these images. If bullying behaviour involves physical violence or threats of violence, it may be considered assault. If bullying behaviour involves discrimination or hate speech targeting a student based on their race, religion, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation or membership of the Traveller community, it may be considered a hate crime under the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989, and those engaging in such behaviour may face criminal charges. If bullying behaviour involves sexual harassment or sexual assault, this may also be considered criminal behaviour. An Garda Síochána is the appropriate authority to investigate alleged criminal 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	26/03/2025 30/05/2025	Half Day Closure
Students	September 2025	Student Representative Council Tutor Time
Parents	June 2025 June 2025	Parents Council Policy to all parents
Board of Management	June 2025	Board of Management meeting
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	September 2025	School website
Date policy was approved: 18/06/2025.		
Date policy was last reviewed: June 2025.		

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

This section sets out the prevention strategies that will be used by this school to address all forms of bullying behaviour, in whatever form and however motivated, including 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):

In developing preventative strategies which this school will use to prevent all forms of bullying behaviour, we come from the context of our Catholic ethos where inclusivity permeates the school in a real way.

This school takes positive steps to ensure that the culture of the school is one which welcomes a respectful dialogue and encounter with diversity and difference, by ensuring that prevention and inclusivity strategies are given priority and discussed regularly at board of management and staff meetings.

The dignity and the wellbeing of the individual person is of paramount concern in our Christian response. This school will listen closely to and dialogue with parents, thereby building a relationship of mutual understanding, respect, trust and confidence.

In continuing to develop prevention strategies, this school will listen to young people and parents, to help establish their particular context and needs. Frequent periods of reflection and engagement by the school, young people and parents, will be used to discern appropriate supports for young people in this school and to help inform future prevention strategies.

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.

A proactive approach is encouraged during periods of supervision. Supervision is provided before and after school and at morning and lunch breaks. We operate split lunch breaks to maximise available spaces and to allow for more effective levels of supervision. To support this, specific rooms and areas, which have been identified as carrying a higher risk, are deemed out of bounds at break and lunch time.

Every base class is assigned a Class Tutor, who meets with their class at designated times of the school year. The Class Tutor is a pastoral role, aimed at promoting positive behaviours, emphasising personal responsibility and fostering a supportive atmosphere within the class and wider school community.

There is a Student Support Team in place which comprises Principal, Deputy Principals, Year Heads, Guidance Counsellors and AEN Coordinators.

The school community aims to prevent cyberbullying, homophobic and transphobic bullying, racist bullying, sexist bullying and sexual harassment as outlined in sections 5.5, 5.6, 5.7, 5.8 and 5.9 of the Bí Cineálta procedures. These include:

- Promotion of a positive school climate and culture where RESPECT is key
- Effective Leadership
- Whole-school approach
- Fair and transparent Code of Behaviour
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Digital Awareness
- Encouraging Peer Support
- Celebrating diversity
- Support for EAL students
- Promote awareness of bullying (CSPE, SPHE AND RSE Programmes)
- Implementation and review of our Wellbeing Policy
- Anti-Bullying workshops/guest speakers
- Effective supervision and monitoring of students
- Consistent recording, investigation and follow-up of bullying behaviour
- On going evaluation of the effectiveness of the Cineáltas Procedure

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

The school has the following supervision and monitoring policies in place to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

- A rota is in place to cover the school grounds, classrooms and corridors at key times to monitor student behaviour and wellbeing. Teaching Staff are assigned areas in which to circulate, in order to ensure adequate supervision of students. Causes for concern are acted upon and reported to school management, if necessary.
- All staff are watchful, observe relationships between students in class, note absence patterns and remind students that high standards of behaviour are always expected.
- Student Support Team – the student support team meets weekly and operates a check and connect system where teachers meet students where concerns may have been brought to their attention.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

The primary aim in addressing reports of bullying behaviour should be to stop the bullying behaviour and to restore, as far as practicable, the relationships of the students involved, rather than to apportion blame.

All staff have a responsibility to report suspected incidences of bullying.

The report should be made using the template available on the Digital Notice Board and given to the relevant Year Head(s).

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 reserves the right to investigate allegations of bullying (and to take disciplinary action where necessary) where bullying is perpetrated by a member of the school community and it impinges on the work or well-being of a student in the school, even where the bullying acts are committed outside of the school.

To establish if bullying has occurred;

- At least two of the following; Year Head(s), Deputy Principal and/or Principal will examine the report made.
- Further investigations will take place where necessary.
- Once relevant parties are consulted and an instance of bullying has been confirmed, parents will be informed.

In line with Section 6 Bi Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post Primary Schools, Seamount College will endeavour to:

- 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
- Follow up with parents of those involved

The School reserves the right, in accordance with Section 6 Bi Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post Primary Schools to seek the assistance of appropriate outside agencies where it deems such assistance is necessary to dealing effectively with bullying behaviour.

When identifying if bullying behaviour has occurred relevant teachers will consider: what, where, when and why?

- If a group of students is involved, each student may be engaged with individually, at first. Similarly, all students involved may be met as a group.
- In circumstances where a student expresses concern about their parents being informed, the school will develop an appropriate plan to support the student and for how their parents will be informed. The school will consider communication barriers that may exist when communicating with parents, for example, literacy, digital literacy or language barriers.

Requests to take no action

A student reporting bullying behaviour may ask that a member of staff does nothing about the behaviour other than "look out" for them. The student may not want to be identified as having told someone about the bullying behaviour. They may feel that telling someone might make things more difficult for them.

Where this occurs, it is important that the member of staff shows empathy to the student, deals with the matter sensitively and speaks with the student to work out together what steps can be taken to address the matter and how their parents will be informed of the situation.

It is important that the student who has experienced bullying behaviour feels safe.

Parents may also make schools aware of bullying behaviour that has occurred and specifically request that the school take no action.

Parents should put this request in writing to the school or be facilitated to do so where there are literacy, digital literacy or language barriers. However, while acknowledging the parent's request, schools may decide that, based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour.

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):

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 the 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
- 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

Recording of bullying behaviour

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: *Seiríle Quinn* Date: 11/12/2025
(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: *Maighrhead Mhic' Dhonnai* Date: 18/06/2025
(Principal)

Appendix 1: Identifying Bullying Behaviour Checklist

What is Bullying Behaviour?

Bullying is 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.

Once off incidents may be considered bullying in certain circumstances, e.g., a single hurtful message posted on social media as there is a likelihood of it being shared.

Bí Cineálta Section 2.1

Types of Bullying

Physical bullying

Written bullying

Verbal bullying

Extortion

Exclusion

Racial bullying

Disablist bullying

Exceptionally able

Gender/sexuality

Poverty bullying

Religious identity

What is not bullying behaviour?

- A once off instance of negative behaviour
- Disagreement between students
- Instances where students don't want to remain friends
- Non-deliberate behaviours of students with additional needs

Bí Cineálta Section 2.2

An Roinn Oideachais | Department of Education



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Appendix 2: Bullying Behaviour Report Form

This form is available to all Seamount College Staff here- <https://forms.gle/rxSgEQAdFJmRQ8jHA>



Seamount College
KINVARA, CO GALWAY

Bullying Behaviour Report Form

Please note that by submitting this form it will come to the attention of the Principal/Deputy Principal and relevant Year Head(s)

* Indicates required question

Email *

☐ Record responses ☐ deputyprincipal@seamountcollege.ie as the email to be included with my

Name of Student being bullied *

Your answer

Base Class *

Choose

Name(s) and class(es) of students allegedly engaged in bullying behaviour *

Your answer

Source of bullying concern/report (tick as relevant): *

- ☐ Student concerned
- ☐ Other student (s)
- ☐ Teacher
- ☐ Parent
- ☐ Other

Location of incident(s) (tick as relevant) *

- ☐ School Yard/Pitches
- ☐ Classroom
- ☐ Bus
- ☐ Toilets
- ☐ Out of school
- ☐ Changing Rooms
- ☐ Corridor
- ☐ Other:

Type of bullying behaviour (tick as relevant): *

- ☐ Physical
- ☐ Gender-identity bullying
- ☐ Verbal
- ☐ Extortion
- ☐ Damage to personal property
- ☐ Written bullying
- ☐ Exclusion/isolation
- ☐ Relational bullying
- ☐ Cyber-bullying
- ☐ Intimidation
- ☐ Other:

Brief description of bullying behaviour: *

Your answer

Impact of bullying behaviour: *

Your answer

Details of action taken: *

Your answer

A copy of your responses will be emailed to deputyprincipal@seamountcollege.ie

Submit

Clear form