St Louise de Marillac Primary School
Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

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The Board of Management of St. Louise de Marillac Primary 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.

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	11th of April 2025	School closure and whole staff training in Bí Cinéalta guidelines. Survey administered.
Students	May 2025	Questionnaire for pupils
Parents	May 2025	Questionnaire for parents Input from Parents Association on draft policy.
Board of Management	June 2025	Discussion
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers		
Date policy was approved:		
Date policy was last reviewed:		

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

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

Culture and Environment:
- Positive and inclusive school culture
- Positive relationships
- Effective leadership
- Positive culture and environment
- A telling environment
- A trusted adult
- Safe physical space (students to review the school yard and give feedback), visibility on yard/supervising; posters on windows; glass on doors should not be covered
- Display of the school's values
- Supervision
- Care Team Meetings
- Opportunities to participate in class and whole school activities to raise self – esteem

- Concern box/worry box to express a concern/worry

Curriculum (Teaching and Learning):

- SPHE Curriculum
- RSE Curriculum
- Student participation
- SPHE Methodologies
- Promoting inclusion and diversity
- Extra - curricular activities to develop positive self - worth and sense of belonging
- Group work / Collaboration
- Role - play, acting out scenarios
- Circle time
- Nurture Room
- Specific programmes that may be implemented e.g. Botvins, Zippy's Friends, Fun Friends/Friends for Life, Roots of Empathy, SALT programme

Policy and Planning:

- Student friendly Bí Cineálta policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Supervision Policy
- RSE Policy
- SPHE Policy
- Special Educational Needs and Inclusion Policy
- SSE Wellbeing in Education
- Appropriate TPL (Teacher Professional Learning)

Relationships and partnerships:

- Strong interpersonal connections
- Bullying awareness initiatives
- Student and parent active participation in school life
  - HSCL to support the active participation of parents
  - Conduct workshops and seminars to raise awareness of the impact of bullying
- TPL (Teacher Professional Learning)
- Teach problem solving
- Promoting peer support
  - Promoting acts of kindness
  - Student Council
  - Parents Association
  - Afterschool clubs

- Supporting activities that build empathy, respect and resilience

Preventing cyber bullying behaviour:

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 date. In Ireland the digital age of consent is 16. Children between 13 and 16 must have parental permission to sign up to social media services. Most social media platforms have a minimum age requirement and for the majority of these, it is 13 years old. Therefore, children under the age of 13 should not have a social media account.

- Promoting digital citizenship
- Implementing SPHE curriculum
- Implementing the Acceptable Use Policy
- Open conversations with students about developing respectful and kind relationships online
- Referring to appropriate online behaviour as part of the standards of behaviour in the Code of Behaviour
- Promoting/hosting online safety events for parents who are responsible for overseeing their children's activities online
- Holding internet safety day

Preventing homophobic/ transphobic bullying behaviour

- Maintaining an inclusive physical environment such as displaying relevant posters
- Encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
- Challenging gender-stereotypes
- Encouraging students to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour

Preventing racist bullying behaviour

- Fostering a school culture where diversity is celebrated and where students "see themselves" in their school environment
- Having the cultural diversity of the school visible and on display
- Encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
- Encouraging bystanders to report when they witness racist behaviour
- Providing supports to school staff to support students from ethnic minorities, including Traveller and Roma students, and to encourage communication with their parents
- Ensuring 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:

- Ensuring members of staff model respectful behaviour and treat students equally irrespective of their sex
- Ensuring all students have the same opportunities to engage in school activities irrespective of their sex
- Celebrating diversity at school and acknowledging the contribution of all students
- Encouraging parents to reinforce these values of respect at home

Preventing sexual harassment:

- Promoting positive role models within the school community
- Challenging 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):

- Three entry points to the school are in use. Students enter the school directly when opened by Principal/Deputy Principal and Assistant principal in their class groups. Class teacher and SNA supervise the students once they enter the school.
- Teacher and SNAs supervise students at small break while eating and in the yard for 10 mins and again while eating lunch and at yard
- Designated yards for each class level
- Dedicated yard book to record incidents or accidents in each yard
- Children are accompanied by at least one staff member on school trips
- 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.
- Code of Behaviour

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

Class teacher

- 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 as per the policy
- All staff will be vigilant to bullying behaviour
- Principal and Deputy principal /SENCO will support teacher/students as appropriate
- Principal will inform Board of Management of incidences 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*

*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 parties 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 as outlined in the school's Bí Cineálta policy. 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.
Schools should consider communication barriers that may exist when communicating with parents, for example, literacy, digital literacy or language barriers.

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):

Identify if bullying behaviour has occurred:

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

- If a group of students is involved, each student should be engaged with individually at first and two staff members can be present without parent notification or presence. Thereafter, all students involved should be met as a group.
- At the group meeting, each student should be asked for their account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's views. Each student should be supported, as appropriate, following the group meeting. The students involved may be asked to write down their account of the incident.

The following three questions should be considered to determine if bullying has occurred.
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?

Incidents can occur where behaviour is unacceptable and hurtful but the behaviour is not bullying behaviour. Strategies that deal with inappropriate behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

Where bullying behaviour has occurred

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. Please see approaches and supports described below for more detail.

Requests no action taken:

- A student may report bullying but ask staff not to take action to avoid being identified.
- They may fear that reporting the bullying could make things worse for them.
- Staff should respond with empathy, handle the situation sensitively, and collaborate with the student to find a solution.
- It should be made clear that other parties may need to be informed for the student's welfare.
- Parents may report bullying but request no action; such requests should be submitted in writing.
- Schools may still decide to intervene based on the circumstances, using the Bí Cineálta procedures and/or the Code of Behaviour where appropriate.

Determining if the bullying behaviour has ceased:

The teacher must engage with the students and parents involved no more than 20 school days after the initial discussion to review progress.

Factors to consider in the review include:
- the nature of the bullying
- the effectiveness of strategies used to address the bullying behaviour
- the relationship between the students involved

Ongoing supervision and support may be needed for both the student experiencing bullying and the student displaying bullying behaviour.

- Relationships may take time to settle and for supports to take effect, and in some cases, they may not fully restore.

- If bullying continues, the teacher should review strategies with students and parents and set a timeframe for follow-up.
- If the bullying behaviour persists, the school should consider using the strategies as provided in the Code of Behaviour to address inappropriate behaviour.
- Disciplinary sanctions, if necessary, are a matter between the school, student, and parents.

Recording bullying behaviour:

All incidents of bullying behaviour must be recorded.

The record should include:

- The form (Section 2.5) and type (Section 2.7) of bullying behaviour, if known.
- Where and when the bullying took place.
- The date of the initial engagement with students and parents.
  - The views of students and parents (*only in relation to their own child) regarding actions to address the bullying.
  - The record the review meeting with students and parents to determine if the bullying has ceased and the views of students and their parents in relation to this.
  - The date of each engagement and the date when it is determined that the bullying has ceased.
  - If deemed appropriate, update the student's SSF with the record of the bullying behaviour. Strategies and support may also be included in the student's School Support Plan.
  - Any engagement with external services/supports should also be noted.

These records should be retained in accordance with the school's record keeping policy and in line with data protection regulations.

Complaint process:

- If a parent is not satisfied with how the school has addressed bullying, they should be referred to the school's complaints procedure policy.
- If a student or parent is unhappy with how a complaint was handled, they can file a complaint with the Ombudsman for Children at: ococomplaint@oco.ie

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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):

*Please note: *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. Where the bullying behaviour continues in school, then school can deal with it in accordance with the Bí Cineálta policy.*

St Louise de Marillac will use the following approaches to support those who experience, witness and display bullying behaviour:
- Staff will be fair and consistent in their approach to address bullying behaviour.
- Staff will support both the student who is experiencing bullying behaviour and the student who is displaying bullying behaviour.
- Staff will engage with the student who is experiencing bullying without delay and will identify the supports needed for the student who is displaying bullying behaviour to better manage relational difficulties.
- Involve students by listening to them and involving them in deciding on the actions that will be taken in order to ensure that a student's agency is not decreased further.

The following principles must be adhered to when addressing bullying behaviour:
- ensure the child 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 view 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

Parents of both parties 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 as outlined in the school's Bí Cineálta policy. 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.

Supports:
- NEPS
- Oide
- 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*.

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: _____   Date: 17-6-2025
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: _____   Date: 17/6/25
(Principal)