Coláiste Muire

Bí Cineálta Policy

2025-2026

<div align="center">**Coláiste Muire Ennis: Bí Cineálta Policy**</div>

Coláiste Muire is an all-girls voluntary secondary school with a Catholic ethos under the trusteeship of CEIST (Catholic Education an Irish Schools' Trust)

Mission Statement:

Coláiste Muire is committed to developing a dynamic, Christian school community which fosters spiritual and personal development. We strive for academic excellence and seek to nurture a sense of self-worth, while having a particular concern for the needs of the academically and socially disadvantaged.

1. Statement of Commitment

In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post Primary Schools*, the Board of Management of Coláiste Muire has adopted the following policy with and within the framework of the school's overall Code of Behaviour.

> Coláiste Muire is fully committed to ensuring that policy and practice in the school is guided by the four key principles of Cineáltas:
>
> - Prevention: Through the generation of empathy and the provision of training which provides a foundation for knowledge, respect, equality and inclusion.
>
> - Support: Tangible and targeted supports based on a continuum of needs which provide a framework for school communities to work together.
>
> - Oversight: Visible leadership creates positive environments for children and young people and all members of our school community.
>
> - Community: Building inclusive school communities that are connected to society and that support and nurture positive relationships and partnerships.

The Board of Management of Coláiste Muire 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 recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of pupils and is therefore fully committed to following the key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour. 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. Ireland ratified the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child in September 1992. In doing this, we committed to promote, protect and fulfil the rights of children. Bullying is a children's rights issue. Bullying interferes with the following rights of the child:

- The right to freedom of expression (Article 13)
- The right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 14)
- The right to freedom of association and freedom of peaceful assembly (Article 15)
- The right to privacy (Article 16)
- The right to be protected from all forms of abuse and neglect (Article 19)
- The right to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health (Article 24)
- The right to education (Article 28)
- The right to enjoy their own culture, religion or language (Article 30)

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.

These procedures relate to measures to prevent and address bullying behaviour that occur between students. Allegations of bullying behaviour by students towards school staff will be addressed through the School's Code of Behaviour. Allegations of bullying behaviour by school staff towards students will be addressed by the Principal through the disciplinary procedures for staff.

1. **Definition**

In accordance with *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* 2024, bullying is defined as a **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. (p.17 Bí Cineálta)

Core Elements of the Definition:

The core elements of the definition are:

A. Targeted behaviour: bullying is deliberate, unwanted behaviour that causes harm to others and where the young person displaying bullying behaviour knows that their behaviour is or will be perceived as harmful by the young person experiencing the behaviour. Bullying is not accidental or reckless behaviour.

B. 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 be addressed under the Code of Behaviour as inappropriate behaviour.

A single, harmful message/image/video online can be seen as bullying behaviour.

C. Causes harm: the harm can be physical (e.g. personal injury, damage or loss of property), social (e.g. withdrawal, loneliness, exclusion) and/or emotional (e.g. low self-esteem, depression, anxiety) and can have serious or long-term negative impact on the young person experiencing the bullying behaviour. If repeated harm is real for the young person experiencing the behaviour but unintended by the other young person, this is not bullying. However, it will be addressed in line with the school's Code of Behaviour.

D. Imbalance of power: the young person experiencing the bullying behaviour finds it difficult to defend themselves as a result of the abuse of a real or perceived imbalance of power. The 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, family circumstances, gender, gender identity, gender expression, experience of the care system, disability or the receipt of special education. In incidents of online/ 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 person to remove offensive, online material or escape the bullying.

4. Role of School Personnel

The relevant staff members for investigating and dealing with bullying are as follows:

Any staff member may act as the relevant staff member if circumstances warrant it. However, the investigation of incidents will normally be conducted by the Year Head under the guidance of Senior Management.

Staff	Year Head	Principal
• have a responsibility to intervene in any untoward behaviour between students.	• will decide on strategies to intervene with the primary aim to restore relationships.	• provide a Bullying Behaviour Update (Appendix 4) to the Board of Management.
• have a responsibility to report incidents witnessed by them or disclosed to them to the	• will contact parents of students involved at an early stage to inform them of the matter and to consult with them on the	• will conduct an annual review of the schools' Bí Cineálta Policy

Year Head or Senior Management Team.	actions to be taken to address the behaviour	• submit an annual report on bullying behaviour to national database
• complete a 'Bullying Report Form' (Appendix 1) and give it to the relevant Year Head.	• will report incidents of bullying at the Year Head meeting at a regular basis.	
	• will engage with the students involved and their parents again no more than 20 school days after the initial engagement.	
	• document the review with students and their parents to determine if the bullying behaviour has ceased and the views of the students and parents in relation to this.	

5. Education and Prevention Strategies

The Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice provides the following four key areas that are essential for a holistic, whole-school approach to wellbeing promotion: Culture and Environment; Curriculum (Teaching and Learning); Policy and Planning; and Relationships and Partnerships. These are the four areas that we considered when we developed our measures to prevent bullying behaviour.

5.1 Culture and Environment

A positive and inclusive school culture and environment is essential to prevent and address bullying behaviour.
  ➢ The environment of Coláiste Muire is a space where students and school staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported. Relationships between all members of the school community are based on respect, care, integrity and trust.
  ➢ The school endeavours to create a positive and inclusive environment where students and staff feel a sense of belonging and safety.
  ➢ The school will promote open communication between the Board of Management, school staff, students and their parents help to foster a collaborative approach and shared responsibilities in relation to preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.

- The school recognises the role of the leadership team in influencing school culture in setting the standards and expectations of the entire school community when preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.
- Staff have a responsibility to adopt a common and consistent approach in addressing bullying behaviour and understand the concept of 'one good adult'.
- All staff share the responsibility of developing and maintaining a school culture in which bullying behaviour is not tolerated.
- Students are encouraged to behave in a kind and inclusive manner with their peers.
- Parents, as active partners in their child's education, promote respect and empathy to foster an environment in which bullying behaviour is unacceptable.
- A 'telling environment' is promoted and the importance of upstanders is emphasized.
- Safe, physical spaces are evident throughout the school.

5.2 Curriculum

We promote an approach to teaching and learning that is both collaborative and respectful in Coláiste Muire. Students are given regular opportunities to work in small groups with their peers, which helps to build a sense of connection, belonging and empathy among students.

Curricular subjects offer the students of Coláiste Muire opportunities to foster inclusion and respect for diversity. The school provides opportunities for students to develop a sense of self-worth through both curricular and extracurricular programmes.

The Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) curricula aim to foster students' wellbeing, self-confidence and sense of belonging. They develop students' sense of personal responsibility for their own behaviour and actions. Students' social and emotional learning (SEL) skills can be improved through the SPHE curriculum. SPHE aims to help students to feel empowered to create, nurture and maintain respectful and healthy relationships with themselves and others.

RSE provides space for post primary students to examine and consider relationships and human sexuality which can foster an understanding of diversity which may help to reduce gender and identity-based bullying as well as sexism and sexual harassment.

In Civic Social and Political Education (CSPE), there is a focus on the interdependence of people in communities, at local as well as national and international levels.

History, at Senior Cycle, is used to raise awareness of racism and colonialism. By examining historical and contemporary examples of racial discrimination and colonial legacies, students can develop an understanding of the root causes of bias and prejudice.

Resources and materials are also available to support incorporating Traveller culture and history across all areas of the curriculum.

5.3 Policy and Planning

The wellbeing of the school community is at the centre of Coláiste Muire's policies and plans. The school's Acceptable Use Policy, Supervision Policy, Special Education Teaching Policy, Wellbeing Policy and Code of Behaviour supports the implementation of our Bí Cineálta policy. Coláiste Muire actively supports the participation of students in the development and

implementation of policy to ensure the communication, internalisation and implementation of such policies. Staff are supported in engaging in teacher professional learning courses that prevent and address bullying behaviour. Staff members are encouraged to share and promote best practice with fellow staff members.

5.4 Relationships and Partnerships

Coláiste Muire recognises the importance of interpersonal connections and their role in preventing and addressing bullying behaviour effectively. This connection is evident in both formal and informal structures, for example our Student Representative Council, extra-curricular activities, parents' association and in our students support teams.

We aim to strengthen these relationships by:

- Engaging in age and stage appropriate initiatives that examine the causes and impacts of bullying behaviour including those dealing with friendships, identity-based bullying, racist bullying, homophobic/transphobic bullying, sexism and sexual harassment. (See Appendix 3)
- supporting the active participation of students in school life
- supporting the active participation of parents in school life, including those who may find it difficult or daunting to engage with the school due to being unfamiliar with the education system or due to language or cultural barriers
- supporting activities that build empathy, respect and resilience
- encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring with our Leaving Cert Peer Helpers
- promoting the meaningful involvement of the Board of Management, staff, students and their parents in the development, implementation and review of their school's Bí Cineálta policy and student friendly version is essential to effectively prevent and address bullying behaviour.

6. Addressing Bullying Behaviour

The School's procedures for investigation, follow-up and recording of bullying behaviour and the established intervention strategies used by Coláiste Muire for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour are underpinned by a restorative approach, and are as follows (see Section 6.8 of the *Bí Cineálta Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):

- Incident comes to the attention of any staff member.
- The incident is then referred to the Year Head through the use of the Bullying Report Form (Appendix 1).
- The Year Head will conduct an investigation to determine if bullying behaviour has occurred and decide on the best approach in aiming to resolve the situation. The restoration of relationships is the primary aim of the process.
- Students may be required to complete a Student Statement Form (Appendix 2).
- The Year Head will exercise their professional judgement in determining whether

bullying behaviour has occurred.

- The parents of both parties will be informed and consulted with in relation to the bullying behaviour.
- All interviews should be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all students concerned.
- In cases where it has been determined that bullying behaviour has occurred it should be made clear to the student who engaged in bullying behaviour how they are in breach of the School's Bí Cineálta Policy and efforts will be made to get them see the situation from the perspective of the student being bullied.
- Following investigation: meeting to discuss findings and to agree proposed actions (including disciplinary and support actions required for parties involved).
- Year Heads will report the bullying behaviour at the Year Head Meeting.
- Senior Management will ratify proposed actions in accordance with the Bí Cineálta Policy.
- Parents and guardians and students informed of actions
- Where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a confidential matter between any student being disciplined, their parents and guardians and the School.

6.1 Record Keeping:

The Year Head must keep a record of their investigation.

The Year Head must use the recording template (Appendix 1) to record bullying behaviour in the following circumstances:

(a) in cases where they consider that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after they have determined that bullying has taken place

and/or,

(b) If the bullying behaviour is of sufficient gravity to be recorded immediately, e.g., serious assault.

In the circumstances of (a) and (b) above the recording template at Appendix 1 must be completed in full and a copy retained by the relevant teacher and a copy provided to the Principal.

6.2 Requests to take no action

In the event where a student/parent or guardian request that no action is taken in response to bullying behaviour, a request must be made in writing to the school. However, while acknowledging the parent's and guardian's request, the school may decide that, based on the circumstances, it is appropriate to address the bullying behaviour. The incident will be recorded by the School and presented to the Board of Management as part of the bullying behaviour update.

6. 3 Coláiste Muire's Programme of Support for Students Effected by Bullying

- The Student Support Team encompassing Year Heads, the Guidance Team, the Pastoral Care Team and the Senior Management Team.
- Class Directors
- Further intervention may be deemed appropriate when instances of bullying occur. This may involve assistance and counselling through outside agencies (NEPs, CAMHS, NEWB). Theses interventions may be deemed necessary for the restoration of confidence and self-esteem in both the perpetrator and the victim.
- Those who have been found to have engaged in bullying behaviour will be encouraged to recognise the seriousness of such behaviour and its effect on others in our school community in accordance with the values set out in the CEIST Charter.

7. Development 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	May 2025	Bí Cineálta Half Day
		Forms document distributed
		Overview of Bí Cineálta Procredure
		Discussion/ Feedback
Students	May 2025	Students from our Student Representative Council engaged in consultation. Student Version of Bí Cineálta to be published.
Parents and Guardians	May 2025	Consultation with our Parents Council
Board of Management	May 2025	Review and ratification
Date policy was approved	12/5/2025	
Date policy was reviewed		

8. Supervision and Monitoring of Students

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.

9. Prevention of Harassment

The Board of Management confirms that the school will, in accordance with its obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the sexual harassment of students or staff or the harassment of students or staff on any of the nine grounds specified i.e. gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.

10. Accessibility

This policy has been made available to our school community on the school's website, provided to the Parents' Council 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.

11. Review

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed, following input from our school community, each academic year or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which this policy refers. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department of Education and to the patron if requested.

11. Ratification:

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 12/05/2025.

Signed: _Mary Crawford_   Date: 12/5/2025
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: _____   Date: 12/08/2025
(Principal)

Appendix 1: Bullying Report Form

Name of Reporter	
Date	
Incident Description (evidence of event(s))	
Location of Incident(s)	
When	
Repeated Incident	Yes No
Name(s) of those involved	
Witnesses/ Bystanders to incident(s)	
Actions to be taken	

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal/Year Head: _____

Signed: _____

<u>Appendix 2: Student Statement Form</u>

Name: _____Class:_____ Date: _____

Date(s) and location of the incident: _____

Who was involved in the incident?

How were you involved?

Any other relevant details.

Signed: _____   Date: _____

Appendix 3: Anti-Bullying Awareness Programmes

Friends for Life	Friends for Life empowers participants to cope with the emotions of themselves and others by engaging with positive thoughts, emotions and self-regulation strategies. The programme also teaches creative alternatives to solving problems they would have previously shied away from, fostering the development of self-confidence and self-esteem.
Working Things Out: Positive Mental Health Workshop	As part of its work with the Elevate Foundation, Clarecare has been delivering the 'Working Things Out' positive mental health workshop to young people in secondary schools and Youth Reach Centres across Co. Clare since 2018. Developed in Ireland by the Parents Plus Organisation, 'Working Things Out' is an evidence-based programme for adolescents aged 11-16 years of age to promote positive mental health and coping strategies to overcome specific problems.
Get Up, Stand Up	'Get Up, Stand Up' is seven session social skills learning programme developed by NEPs for young people. It covers themes such as friendship, learning to solve problems and resilience and coping.
FUSE	FUSE is the first research-based Anti-Bullying and Online Safety Programme designed to comply with UNESCO's Whole Education Approach to tackle bullying and online safety in schools. Coláiste Muire is piloting this programme with our 2nd Year cohort.
Career Guidance Modules	We offer three bullying modules: Resilience, Bystanders and Online Safety.
Peer Helpers	For many years, Coláiste Muire has operated a Peer Mentoring Scheme. Leaving Cert students volunteer to participate in this programme and meet with First Year students on their Induction Day and every second week during first term. The Leaving Cert students communicate our schools guiding values, acting as role models to our first years. They are available to them throughout the year for guidance, support and direction.
Social Empathy Programme	Activating Social Empathy supports the aims of the Guidelines for Wellbeing in Junior Cycle to include learning opportunities to enhance the physical, mental, emotional and social wellbeing of students through the promotion of the development of life skills. The benefits of empathy education include: More positive classroom climate & relationships Fewer disciplinary issues Reduced levels of bullying A positive school cultures Improved academic performance
Headstrong Programme for Transition Year	HEADSTRONG, a mental health and wellbeing programme designed by Cycle Against Suicide for secondary schools aims to: Stamp out stigma Promote resilience Encourage inclusivity Enhance wellbeing Empower student voice
Life Skills for School	This TY programme is very effective in helping students to learn new ways of dealing with life and its challenges.

Stand Up Awareness Week	A committee of students and teachers organise a number of events during the week to support the Wellbeing, inclusivity of our LGBTI+ community. This week empowers students to celebrate themselves and others and to stand up against any form of bullying.
Internet Safety Day	Safer Internet Day (SID) is an EU wide initiative to promote a safer internet for all users, especially young people. It is promoted in Ireland by the PDST Technology in Education and Webwise. Presentations include: News, Information and the Problems of False Information Managing your online wellbeing Respectful communication online Self-esteem- The Full Picture
Webwise Connect	Junior cycle Digital Media Literacy. A 6-week module enabling students to become digitally literate, allowing them to be safer online.
Lockers	Lockers is an information and education resource; it assists schools in coping with and preventing the sharing of explicit, self-generated images of minors.
Be in Ctrl	'Be in Ctrl' was created in partnership with An Garda Síochána and it seeks to inform school leaders and teachers about online sexual coercion and extortion of children and how a school can address the issue, in collaboration with students parents. The resource contains three lessons to support schools as they address the issue in the context of the Social, Personal and Health Education programme.
Learning to Learn	Resilience Module
Tacklebullying.ie	Tackle Bullying is a national website to counter bullying and cyberbullying for young people, parents and teachers. The website provides information for those who are affected or concerned about bullying and cyberbullying related incidents.
The Respect Effect	A new Junior Cycle Unit of Learning; The Respect Effect on connecting and communicating online is available to schools. The unit of learning contains 8 SPHE lessons aligned to the updated curriculum explores the nuanced topic of online bullying, building empathy and promoting respect and inclusion online.
Oide Resources	https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-education/publications/resources-for-postprimary-schools/#:~:text=Tackle%20Bullying%20is%20a%20national,bullying%20and%20cyberbullying%20related%20incidents
Bí Cineálta Procedures to prevent and address bullying behaviour for Primary and Post Primary Schools	https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-education/policy-information/b%C3%AD-cine%C3%A1lta-procedures-to-prevent-and-address-bullying-behaviour-for-primary-and-post-primary-schools/#resources-for-primary-schools-post-primary-schools-and-parents
Visiting Speakers	An Garda Siochana Forensic Psychologist Clare Haven

Appendix 4: Bullying Behaviour Update for Board of Management

Having reviewed the details of the incidents of bullying behaviour that have been reported since the previous Board of Management meeting, the principal must provide the following information at each meeting of the Board of Management:

Total number of **new** incidents of bullying behaviour reported since the last Board of Management meeting.	
Total number of incidents of bullying behaviour currently ongoing.	
Total number of incidents of bullying behaviour reported since the beginning of the school year.	

Where incidents of bullying behaviour have been reported since the last meeting, the update must include a verbal report which should include the following information:

- The trends and patterns identified such as the form of bullying behaviour, type of bullying behaviour if known, location of bullying behaviour, where it occurred etc.
- The strategies used to address the bullying behaviour
- Any wider strategies to prevent and address bullying behaviour
- If any serious incidents of bullying behaviour have occurred which have had a serious adverse impact on a student
- If a parent has informed the school that a student has left the school because of reported bullying behaviour
- If any additional support is needed from the Board of Management
- If the school's Bí Cineálta policy requires urgent review in advance of the annual review

This update should not include any personal information or information that could identify the students involved.

Appendix 5: Notification regarding the Board of Management's annual review of the school's Bí Cineálta Policy

The Board of Management of Coláiste Muire, Ennis 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 12th May 2025

This review was conducting in accordance with the requirements of the Department of Education as per the checklist in Appendix E of the *Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

Signed: _Mary Crawford_   Date: _12/5/2025_
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: _____   Date: _12/08/2025_
(Principal)