



## **Maryfield College**

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

The Board of Management of Maryfield College has adopted the following policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

Bí Cineálta Policy has been developed following consultation between students, staff, parents, Principal and Board of Management.

This policy is informed by:

- The Mission Statement of Maryfield College
- Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2024
- Looking at Our Schools 2022
- Maryfield College Code of Behaviour
- Maryfield College Guidance Plan.
- Internet Acceptable Usage Policy
- Wellbeing Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Statement

Maryfield College is a voluntary girl's secondary school founded by the Sisters of the Cross and Passion and under the trusteeship of Le Cheile Schools Trust.

#### **Our Mission Statement**

We acknowledge that it is through our relationships with others that we grow to our full potential. Therefore, we aspire to create an educational environment where pupils come to learn and to understand themselves, their abilities, and their world.

In this environment they are taught to take responsibility for themselves and for their behaviour. We, in the school community, are guided by the teaching of Jesus, who urged us to love God and one another as oneself, as a way of life that would bring us to self-fulfillment. We teach and learn respect for one another and our world, accept our differences and acknowledge our interdependence. In doing so, particular attention is paid to those in most need of our help.

Maryfield College as a teaching and learning community recognises the interdependence of management, teachers, pupils, and parents in the process of forming happy, secure, well-educated, and productive young people. The school endeavours to ensure that it provides: a healthy balance between academic, social, and spiritual development in an environment that is welcoming and friendly, where a caring relationship is evident between staff, parents, and pupils, where each one is accepted, respected, and appreciated through a value system that embodies the teachings of Christ, based on the Christian ideals of freedom, truth, love, justice and self-discipline

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 of Maryfield College 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.

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.

As a Catholic school, we are committed to respecting the dignity of every individual. No human person is to be diminished or 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.**

Alleged incidents of bullying behaviour are often complex and must be considered on a case-by-case basis using this policy.

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 as bullying behaviour as it may be visible to a wider audience and has a high likelihood of being shared multiple times, so it becomes a repeated behaviour.

Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour that is not bullying behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

## **Criminal Behaviour**

The age of criminal responsibility in Ireland is 12 years.

An Garda Síochána is the appropriate authority to investigate alleged criminal behaviour if bullying behaviour falls under any of these Laws or Acts

- Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020, (Coco's Law)
- Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989.
- Physical Violence or Threats of Violence may be considered as assault.

## 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	11 <sup>th</sup> March 2025 12 <sup>th</sup> March 2025 6 <sup>th</sup> May 2025	Bi Cineálta Staff Survey through MS Forms Bi Cineálta Staff Engagement School Based Workshop Draft Policy Consultation
Students	5 <sup>th</sup> March 2025 19 <sup>th</sup> March 2025 12 <sup>th</sup> May 2025	Student Voice Forum 1 <sup>st</sup> to 6 <sup>th</sup> Years Bi Cineálta Student Survey through MS Forms Draft Policy Consultation with Student Council
Parents	19 <sup>th</sup> March 2025 6 <sup>th</sup> May 2025	Bi Cineálta Parent & Guardian Survey through MS Forms Draft Policy Consultation with Parents Association
Board of Management	June 2025	Draft Policy Consultation
Wider school community as appropriate.	June 2025	Policy presented to local business which students frequent on the way to, and going home from school and at lunchtime.
Date policy was approved: 9 <sup>th</sup> June 2025		
Date policy was last reviewed:		

## Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

**This section sets out the prevention strategies that will be used by our 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.**

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 four areas have been considered by our school, and we have identified measures under each areas that can prevent bullying behaviour.

## Key Area 1 : Culture and Environment

A positive and inclusive school culture and environment is essential to prevent and address bullying behaviour. The School Leadership Team (SLT) in collaboration with all stakeholders strive to create a school culture where students and school staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported.

The School Leadership Team in collaboration with all staff, influences the school culture and sets the standards and expectations for the school community when preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.

Each member of school staff in Maryfield College has a responsibility to develop and maintain a school culture where bullying behaviour is unacceptable and to take a consistent approach to addressing bullying behaviour.

Maryfield College students also have a responsibility to shape the school culture of our school by promoting kindness and inclusion within their peer group and maintain a positive and supportive school environment for all.

Parents, as active partners in their child's education, can help foster an environment where bullying behaviour is not tolerated through promoting empathy and respect.

### Maryfield College is a 'telling school'.

- Students are reminded that it is their responsibility to tell a trusted adult in the school if they witness or feel that someone is experiencing bullying behavior. Students who feel they are being bullied are encouraged to tell a trusted adult in the school.

### Being an Upstander

- Students are taught the meaning of being an '**upstander**' as opposed to a 'bystander'.  
An '**upstander**' is a person who challenges bullying behavior and supports the student experiencing the bullying behavior.

### Tell a Trusted Adult

- Maryfield College encourages students to have a '**trusted adult**' or a '**one good adult**' in the school.
- The concept of '**a trusted adult**' is an effective strategy to encourage students to report if they or another student is experiencing bullying behaviour.
- Staff in Maryfield College support this strategy by letting students know that they can talk to them and by having an open-door policy.  
Students who witness bullying behaviour are supported and encouraged to report the behaviour to a trusted adult in the school so that the behaviour can be addressed. Students who witness bullying behaviour on social media have an important role in helping to address the behaviour by reporting the witnessed behaviour to a trusted adult.
- The trusted adult reassures the student that they have done the right thing by reporting the behaviour.
- The trusted adult should, without delay, inform the member of staff who has

responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour. In Maryfield College this is the Year Head for the year group and in their absences the Deputy Principal and or Principal.

- The trusted adult should continue to support the student, as appropriate, while the behaviour is being addressed by the relevant member of staff

## **Safe Physical Spaces**

**Maryfield College creates and maintains safe physical spaces through the building and grounds in the following ways:**

### **1. Supervision**

Maryfield College takes all reasonable measures to ensure the safety of our students and to supervise students when they are attending school or attending school activities.

Supervision is provided 15 minutes prior to the commencement of the school day in the building, during break time, at lunchtime and at the end of the school day for 10 minutes.

Students using outdoor spaces are reminded in the Code of Behavior and continually by the SLT that the back of the school and each gable end of the school are out of bounds at break and lunchtime.

### **2. Good Lighting**

The internal school building is well lit through natural and artificial light. Darker areas of the school, including bathrooms, are kept well lit throughout the year by having the lights switched on.

### **3. CCTV**

Maryfield College uses a close circuit TV system to provide an additional layer of safety for our students and staff. Please see separate CCTV policy. When necessary, CCTV can be examined to support investigations into bullying behaviour under this policy.

### **4. Building & Grounds Maintenance**

The school building is well maintained and cleaned daily. Teachers create vibrant and colourful classrooms that are welcoming, and student centered.

School grounds, including all green areas and vegetation, is well maintained, ensuring as far as it is practically possible that students using the grounds at break and lunchtime are kept in view of staff on supervision.

## **Inclusive and Positive Environment**

**Maryfield College creates an inclusive and positive environment in the following ways.**

### **1. Curricular and Extra Curricular Activities**

Staff in Maryfield College provide a range of lunchtime activities to suit the varied needs and interests of the students. These include Art Club, Chess Club, Active School Lunchtime Activities, Public Speaking, Intercultural Group, Choir and Music Groups, Enterprise Club, Gaelbhreach Activities, Sports Teams, this list is not exhaustive.

## **2. Displays of Student Work**

Student's work is displayed and celebrated prominently throughout the school along school corridors and in classrooms.

## **3. Student Seating**

Students have access to 3 external courtyards for break and lunchtime with picnic benches and seating

## **4. Wellbeing Walkway**

Maryfield College has an established wellbeing walkway created as part of the Active School Award Programme.

## **5. A Culture of Restorative Practice**

In 2024-2025 the school begun their engagement with Connect RP and a restorative practice approach, with a small staff group completing Restorative Me. This whole school approach will be expanded in 2025-2026

### **Key Area 2: Curriculum (teaching and Learning)**

- Class teachers co develop with students agreed classroom rules and contracts.
- Class teachers use seating plans that promote inclusion in the classroom.
- Class teachers plan and implement strategies such as 'study buddies', group work and pair work and active learning strategies that engage the whole class to create supportive and positive classroom environments.
- Class teachers carefully monitor student interactions and work collaboratively with the Year Heads and SLT to mitigate against and respond to issues when they arise.
- Class teachers highlight areas in their curriculum that relate to bullying behaviour and explicitly link these areas to the school's Bí Cineálta Policy.
- Maryfield College has included SPHE, CSPE, PE and Digital Media Literacy within their 400-hour Junior Cycle Wellbeing programme. Each of these subjects strengthens the opportunities for students to engage in teaching and learning actives that support the school's Bí Cineálta Policy.
- SPHE is taught each year from 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> year.
- Guidance is provided from 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> year.
- Student workshops provided by Zeeko, Anti Bullying Facilitators and visits from the Community Police Officer (Com Pol) strengthens the school's measures to prevent and address bullying behavior.

### **Key Area 3 : Policy and Planning**

Maryfield College have the following policies in place which support the Bí Cineálta Policy.

- Maryfield College Code of Behaviour
- Maryfield College Guidance Plan.
- Internet Acceptable Usage Policy
- Wellbeing Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Statement

- Educational Technology Usage Policy for students, staff and families
- Data Protection Policy
- Critical Incident Policy

Maryfield College's Pastoral Support System and Student Support Team are key structures in the implementation of this policy.

All staff are provided with the opportunity to keep up to date their TUSLA Children's First e- learning programme.

The Principal and Deputy Principal engage in ongoing training and updates relating to their responsibilities as the Designated Liaison Person and Deputy Designated Liaison Person.

The School's School Self Evaluation Process supports the inclusion of student voice and student participation, including the Student Voice Forum which also strengthens the opportunity for students to engage with the prevention measures described in this policy.

#### **Key Area 4: Relationships and Partnerships**

In Maryfield College we strive to create relationships between all members of our school community which are based on respect, care, integrity and trust. This is the core value of our school's founding congregation, the Sisters of the Cross and Passion, who believed that it is only through our relationships with each other that we grow.

In Maryfield College we understand that open communication between Le Chéile, our boards 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.

Maryfield College have the following procedures, strategies and actions in place to support positive relationships and partnerships.

- Student Council
- Student Voice Forum
- Parents Association
- Senior Prefect System
- Pastoral Care System
- Guidance and Counselling
- Special and Additional Education Team
- Year Group Assemblies
- Form Tutor Classes
- Open Evening
- We'll establish relationships with local primary schools
- Professional working relationships with NCSE, NEPS and CAMHS.



**Maryfield College has the following procedures, strategies and actions in place to prevent;**

- > **Cyberbullying Behaviour**
- > **Homophobic/Transphobic Bullying Behaviour**
- > **Racist Bullying Behaviour**
- > **Sexist Bullying behavior**

- Mobile Phone Policy including the use of Mobile Phone Pouches
- Actions and events for Safer Internet Day.
- Zeeko Cyber Safety Workshops in 1<sup>st</sup> year
- Anti Bullying Workshops for all 1<sup>st</sup> Years and when required other year groups.
- Visits from Community Policer Officer (Com Pol)
- Digital Media Literacy as part of 400 hours of Junior Cycle Wellbeing
- SPHE and CSPE as part of 400 hours of Junior Cycle Wellbeing
- SPHE for Senior Cycle 4<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> Year
- Acceptable Usage Policy
- Educational Technology Usage Policy for students, staff and families
- Annual Intercultural Day.
- Events during Wellbeing Week that include guest speakers from Belong To.
- All students including gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students, have a right to feel safe and supported at school, Maryfield College strives to create an inclusive school culture that protects these rights.
- The school environment includes the display of relevant posters that promote agencies that support gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students
- Actions and events for International Women's Day
- At senior cycle Politics and Society includes lessons that challenge gender stereotyping and explore human rights.
- Students have a choice in the form of uniform their wear with an option of either official school skirt or official school trousers.
- As a 'telling school' Maryfield College encourages students to speak up when they witness homophobic, transphobic, racist and sexist bullying behaviour.

This list is not exhaustive.

- 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 in dialogue with parents, and thereby build a relationship of mutual understanding, respect, trust

and confidence.

- In continuing to develop prevention strategies, this school will take as much time as is practicable listening to young persons and parents, to help establish their particular context and needs. Frequent periods of reflection and further engagement, by the school, young persons and parents, will be used to discern appropriate supports for young people in this school and will help inform future prevention strategies.

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

Morning Supervision: Supervision is provided in the locker areas and through the school corridors 15 minutes before the beginning of the school day.

Break Time: Supervision is provided in the corridors and around the locker areas for 15 minutes during break.

Lunch Time: Supervision is provided for 40 minutes during lunch in the school canteen, including the lunch service queue, corridors, locker areas and supervising teachers are vigilant around bathroom areas. Supervision is provided in the schools designated outdoor eating spaces for students in the summer and spring terms.

End of the school day supervision is provided at the locker areas for 10 minutes after the last class as students are accessing lockers and leaving the building.

Classroom teachers are requested to lock classroom doors at break and lunchtime.

**Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour**

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

**The Year Head for each year group 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> year.**

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.**

To determine whether the behaviour reported is bullying behaviour the year head 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 questions is **No**, then the behaviour is not bullying behaviour. Strategies for dealing with inappropriate behaviour are provided within the school's Code of Behaviour.

Note: A **one-off instance of negative behaviour** towards another students is not bullying behaviour. However, a **single hurtful message posted on social media** can be considered as bullying behaviour as it may be visible to a wider audience and has a high likelihood of being shared multiple times, so it becomes a repeated behaviour.

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

The following steps will be taken by the year head to determine if bullying behaviour has occurred;

- The year head will meet with the student who claims they are being bullied to take account of the actions they have experienced. It can be helpful to have the student write down their account of the incident(s).
- The year head will meet the student who has been identified as engaging in bullying behavior to take their account of the incident. It can be helpful to have the student write down their account of the incident(s).
- If a group of students is involved, each student will be engaged individually first. It may also be helpful to ask the students involved to write down their account of the incident.
- 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.

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, schools should deal with it in accordance with their Bí Cineálta policy.

### **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 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 students express 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.
- Maryfield College will consider communication barriers that may exist when communicating with parents, for example, literacy, digital literacy or language barrier
- It is important that the school listens to the views of the student who is experiencing bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation.

### **Record Keeping**

- A record shall be kept of the engagement with all involved.
- This record should document the form and type of bullying behaviour, if known, where it took place and the date of the initial engagement with students involved and their parents.
- This record shall also include the views of the students and 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 bullying behaviour, the effectiveness of the strategies used to address 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 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 continues 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.

### **A note on Restorative Practice and Meditation.**

Approaches such as restorative practice and mediation should only be used to address bullying behaviour when the teachers involved have been trained in how to engage in these methods and the students involved have agreed to their use.

To ensure clarity among the school community about how instances of bullying behaviour will be dealt with, the approaches that will be used by the school must be specified in the school's Bí Cineálta policy.

### **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.

### **Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools**

If bullying behaviour is a child protection concern the matter will be addressed without delay by the Designated Liaison Person in accordance with *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

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):

It is important for school staff to be fair and consistent in their approach to address bullying behaviour.

Both the student who is experiencing bullying behaviour and the student who is displaying bullying behaviour need support.

It is important that the student who is experiencing bullying behaviour is engaged without delay so that they feel listened to, supported and reassured.

School staff should identify the support needed for the student who is displaying bullying behaviour to better manage relational difficulties and ensure that their needs are met.

The following approaches may be used by school staff to support students.

- Listen to the student with care and empathy.
- Remain nonjudgmental.
- Contact the parents.
- Referral to school guidance counsellor.
- Referral to school student support team.
- Class teachers may adjust class seating plans and class activity arrangements.
- Encourage students to speak to their parents and guardians.
- Refer students to Childline if they need support whilst at home.
- Bí Cineálta

## 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: Dec 1 Mowlds Date: 09/06/2025  
(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: Maree O'Rourke Date: 09/06/2025  
(Principal)

