

# Desmond College

## Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

### Introduction

The Board of Management of Desmond College has adopted this comprehensive policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour within our school community.

This policy is fully aligned with the requirements outlined in *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2024)* and reflects our commitment to creating a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment for all students and staff.

The Board of Management acknowledges that bullying behaviour infringes upon the rights of children, as established in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. As a school community, we all share a collective responsibility to actively work together in preventing and addressing bullying while mitigating its harmful impact on students' wellbeing.

At Desmond College, we are deeply committed to ensuring that every student feels safe, valued, and supported. We recognise the serious and lasting effects that bullying behaviour can have on a young person's emotional, social, and academic development, and we are fully dedicated to both preventing bullying and responding effectively when it occurs.

Furthermore, in line with our obligations under equality legislation, we will take all reasonable and proactive steps to prevent the harassment of students or staff based on any of the nine protected grounds:

- Gender
- Civil status
- Family status
- Sexual orientation
- Religion
- Age
- Disability
- Race
- Membership of the Traveller Community

By fostering an environment of respect, inclusivity, and equality, we aim to create a school culture where bullying behaviour is not tolerated, and every student can thrive in a safe and supportive learning environment.

### 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.

- **Physical:** Hitting, pushing, damaging property.
- **Verbal:** Name-calling, insults, or persistent teasing.
- **Social/Relational:** Exclusion, spreading rumours, manipulation of friendships.
- **Cyberbullying:** Harassment via text, social media, gaming platforms, or other digital means.

A **one-off incident** is not considered bullying unless it involves widespread online sharing or extreme harm.

Bullying behaviour is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power in relationships between two people or groups of people in society.

**Types of Bullying:** Bullying can be based on various factors, including but not limited to:

- Disability or exceptional ability
- Gender identity and LGBTQ+
- Physical appearance
- Race, ethnicity, or religion
- Socioeconomic background
- Sexist behaviour or sexual harassment

**Online bullying behaviour:** Cyber-bullying is carried out via text, direct messaging/instant messaging, social media platforms, email, apps, digital gaming sites, gaming consoles, chat rooms and other online technologies. This can include:

- Sending or sharing of insulting and offensive or intimidating messages or images via online means as mentioned above.
- Posting information which is personal, private or sensitive without consent.
- Making and/or participating in fake profiles on a social network to impersonate and/or humiliate other students.
- Exclude/disrupt access to a student on purpose on online chat groups/access to accounts/from an online game.

Schools are not expected to address bullying behaviour that occurs when students are not under the care or responsibility of the school. However, if this bullying behaviour, including cyber-bullying behaviour, continues into the school environment, schools are required to address the bullying behaviour. Bullying behaviour, including cyber-bullying behaviour, which has occurred outside of school can often continue in school.

This Bí Cineálta policy sets out how our school community prevents and addresses bullying behaviour. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour that is not bullying behaviour are provided for within our 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.

### Action Plan towards Creating the Policy

	Date consulted	Method of consultation
School Staff	April 2025	Staff Meeting: Staff provided with the opportunity to discuss the new Bi Cinealta action plan and stemming from this discussion, staff were informed of the important points in dealing with an incidence or report of bullying. Staff given time to discuss and relay feedback.  Staff Survey
	May 2025	Sharing of draft policy with staff to discuss / consult and make any amendments
Students	March 2025	Wellbeing Tutor Time Class on Bullying and Policy. Students were given a questionnaire to seek their knowledge about bullying behaviour  Student input at Tutor Time in developing a Child Friendly Format – their wording, examples and suggestions were all taken into account when drafting this Policy.
Parents	September 2024	Principal spoke with Parents Association re Policy.
	Mary 2025	Parents were given a questionnaire to seek their knowledge about bullying behavior and have input into the Policy.
Board of Management	January 2025	Principal and Board discussed the new Policy
	September 2025	Board reviewed and ratified the new Policy

Date policy was approved: September 2025

Date policy next policy reviewing: September 2026

## Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

This section sets out the prevention strategies that will be used in Desmond College. 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

Our commitment includes:

- Welcoming students at the start of the day.
- Fostering a school culture where bullying is not tolerated, using a consistent approach to address such behavior.
- Actively involving parents as partners in maintaining an anti-bullying environment.
- Reinforcing the message that our school encourages openness and speaking up.
- Promoting the concept of a trusted adult, ensuring students know who to turn to for support.
- Establishing safe spaces throughout the school, both indoors and outdoors, with increased visibility.
- Using artwork and signage to reflect our school values, including equality, inclusion, and respect, as part of a school charter.
- Encouraging students to take ownership of their environment through art and creative expression.
- Maintaining bright, colorful, and clutter-free classrooms and corridors.
- Providing safe spaces for students to gather during lunchtime.
- Enhancing security with CCTV coverage in as many areas as possible.
- Ensuring consistent messaging about respect and inclusion through policies, Tutor Time, and social media.

We aim to create a positive school culture and climate that:

- Welcomes diversity and promotes inclusivity.
- Encourages students to openly discuss concerns about bullying in a safe and supportive environment.
- Fosters respectful relationships throughout the school community.

Steps We Take to Achieve These Goals

- Staff have a clear understanding on the guidelines on handling reports of bullying

- Organizing Anti-Bullying Week activities, such as random acts of kindness, poster-making, and slogan creation.
- Implementing a Child-Friendly Anti-Bullying Policy, developed with input from students and parents, and distributed to all stakeholders. This policy outlines different ways for students to seek help.
- SPHE lessons on positive behavior into the curriculum for all classes.
- Ensuring effective supervision and monitoring during lunchtime and between classes.
- Developing a notice board, to promote kindness and encourage student responsibility.
- Running a buddy system, pairing first-year students with Transition Year students for guidance and support.
- Conducting workshops and interactive activities on bullying awareness in Wellbeing CSPE/SPHE.
- Celebrating multicultural events, such as Languages Week, School of Sanctuary, to promote inclusivity and respect for different backgrounds.

### **Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)**

Our goal is to:

- Deliver teaching and promote learning that is collaborative, inclusive, and respectful, fostering a culture of diversity and belonging.
- Ensure a shared understanding of bullying, its effects, and how to address it.

How We Work to Achieve This

- Incorporate SPHE and RSE lessons that support student wellbeing, build self-confidence, and encourage personal responsibility for actions and behavior.
- Lead by example, demonstrating respectful interactions with colleagues, students, and visitors.
- Use both curricular and extracurricular activities to promote self-worth, teamwork, inclusion, and respect.
- Provide regular opportunities for students to work in small peer groups, fostering connection, belonging, and empathy.
- Encourage student-led teaching wherever possible.
- Conduct SSE wellbeing surveys to assess and support student needs.
- Celebrate our diverse school community through art, displays, photographs, and international events that recognize different cultures.
- Implement education and prevention strategies that:
  - Develop empathy, respect, and resilience in students.
  - Address cyberbullying and identity-based bullying, including homophobic and transphobic bullying.
- Offer support for staff who witness or address bullying behavior.
- Ensure consistent recording, investigation, and follow-up of bullying incidents using established intervention strategies.
- Continuously evaluate the effectiveness of our Antibullying Policy to ensure its

impact.

## **Policy and Planning**

The Bi Cineálta Policy at Desmond College aims to:

- Increase awareness of bullying as unacceptable behavior among staff, students, and parents/guardians.
- Foster a school ethos that encourages students to speak up and discuss incidents of bullying.
- Ensure effective supervision and monitoring so that all areas of school activity remain under observation.
- Establish clear procedures for documenting, investigating, and addressing bullying incidents.
- Implement support programs for both those affected by bullying and those involved in it.
- Collaborate with relevant agencies to combat all forms of bullying and promote a culture of respect.

The Supervision Policy, Special Education Policy, and Code of Behaviour all play a crucial role in supporting the Bi Cineálta Policy.

Effective leadership is key to its implementation, with the Principal, Deputy Principal, and middle management actively overseeing and supporting this Policy.

## **Relationships and Partnerships**

We support positive interpersonal connections through both formal and informal structures, including our Parents' Association and Student Council.

Key initiatives include:

- Age-appropriate awareness programs that encourage students to reflect on their own behavior, promote kindness and friendship, and explore the causes and impact of bullying during Tutor Time and SPHE lessons.
- Workshops and seminars for students, staff, and parents to enhance awareness of bullying and its effects.
- Peer mentoring and support, facilitated through our Buddy System.
- Encouraging active student participation in school life, alongside meaningful parental involvement.
- Engaging parents and students in shaping a Child-Friendly Anti-Bullying Policy, ensuring they play an active role in identifying, addressing, and preventing bullying, while understanding reporting procedures.

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

In addition to the strategies mentioned above, our school has implemented the following measures:

- Staff consistently encourage mutual respect among students.
- The SPHE curriculum is fully implemented to support students' social and emotional development.
- Positive self-esteem is nurtured by celebrating individual differences, recognizing good behavior, and providing opportunities for success.
- The Digital Media Policy educates students on responsible online behavior and digital citizenship, with an Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) in place for technology use in the school.
- The Antibullying Policy is regularly discussed with students to reinforce its importance.
- Staff remain especially vigilant in monitoring students who may be at risk of bullying.
- Any reported incidents of bullying are thoroughly and consistently investigated, following the established procedures and recorded on vsware and/or My Concern
- A school-wide awareness campaign ensures supervision and monitoring in classrooms, corridors, school grounds, tours, and extracurricular activities.
- Students are actively involved in creating a safe school environment through initiatives like Kindness/Anti-Bullying Week and other peer-support activities.
- Pupils are clearly informed about who to report to and how to seek help if they experience or witness bullying.
- Online safety awareness is promoted through events and resources for parents.
- The school maintains a list of available supports, including:
  - [www.tacklebullying.ie](http://www.tacklebullying.ie)
  - [www.antibullyingcentre.ie/fuse](http://www.antibullyingcentre.ie/fuse)
  - [www.webwise.ie](http://www.webwise.ie)
- A shared Google Drive with anti-bullying resources, including lessons from the above websites, is accessible to all teachers in the Wellbeing Drive
- Gender stereotypes are actively challenged, ensuring equal participation and recognition for all students.
- Homophobic bullying awareness is raised, encouraging students to speak up against discrimination.
- A culture of diversity and inclusion is fostered so that all students feel represented and valued in the school environment.
- Staff model respectful behavior towards everyone, regardless of gender.
- All students are given equal opportunities to participate in school activities.
- A zero-tolerance policy on sexual harassment is enforced, as outlined in the Code of Behaviour.

## Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

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

First Year: Shirley Supple- Looney

Second Year: Simone Walsh

Third Year: Margaret O'Mahony

TY & 5<sup>th</sup> Year: Damien Culhane

LCA1 & LCA2: Donal Enright

Colaiste: Siobhan O'Connor

6<sup>th</sup> Year: Marie Corkery

The Year Head will oversee recording of bullying reports for students in their Year Group- this includes using the procedure guidelines to investigate reports of bullying and recording bullying behavior on the correct form on vsware/My Concern.

The DLP will follow up after 20 days to investigate if the bullying has ceased.

All staff will be vigilant to bullying behavior

The Principal will report all incidents of bullying behavior to the Board of Management.

**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:

The school has established clear procedures for investigating, following up, and recording bullying behavior, as well as intervention strategies to address cases effectively.

- **Investigation and Record-Keeping:**
  - All reports of bullying, including anonymous reports, must be investigated by the Year Head.
  - The Year Head will use professional judgment regarding the records to be kept, actions taken, and discussions held.
  - If bullying is confirmed, the Year Head must maintain written records to help resolve the issue and restore relationships.
  - The incident must be recorded in vsware/My Concern while under investigation to determine if bullying has occurred or not.
  - The Year Head takes note of all incidents to see if there is a pattern of behaviour
  - The Principal is involved if a pattern of behaviour persists.
  
- **Approach to Investigation:**
  - The primary goal is to resolve the issue and restore relationships rather than assign blame.
  - The Year Head will assess whether bullying has occurred, its nature, and the best approach for resolution.
  - Investigations should foster trust in the reporting process, ensuring students understand that speaking up is responsible behavior.
  - Non-teaching staff (e.g., SNAs, secretaries, caretakers, cleaners) are encouraged to report incidents to the Year Head.
  - The Year Head will take a calm, problem-solving approach when dealing with reports from students, staff, or parents.
  - The first step involves interviewing the victim(s) to understand their experience.
  - Investigations may occur within or outside the classroom, depending on the need for privacy.
  - The Year Head will seek clear answers about what happened, where, who was involved, when, and why, setting an example of conflict resolution.
  
- **Dealing with Groups Involved in Bullying:**
  - Initial individual interviews will be conducted before holding a group meeting to clarify perspectives.
  - Students will be supported in handling peer pressure after interviews.
  
- **Addressing the Perpetrator's Behavior:**
  - If a student has engaged in bullying, it will be clearly explained how their behavior violates the school's Antibullying Policy.
  - Efforts will be made to help them understand the victim's perspective rather than simply assigning blame.
  - Students will receive from Guidance Counsellor

