



St Fergal's College

## **Anti Bullying Policy 2024-25**

# **St. Fergal's College Anti-Bullying Policy (2024-25)**

**We believe that all students have the right to learn, and all adults have a right to work, in an environment which is free from intimidation and fear.**

## **Introduction**

In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the code of behaviour guidelines issued by the NEWB, the Board of Management of St Fergal's College has adopted the following anti-bullying policy within the framework of the school's overall code of behaviour. This policy fully complies with the requirements of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools which were published in September 2013.

## **Policy Context and Rationale**

This Anti-Bullying Policy has been drawn up in consultation with all the school partners, including the Board of Management, school staff, students and parents/guardians. Involving and encouraging all members of the school community to participate in formulating and reviewing this policy promotes partnership, ownership and implementation of the living policy. It takes cognisance of the responsibility of St Fergal's College guiding vision within the Mission Statement to ensure that all of its students are educated in a happy, safe, respectful and optimal learning environment.

This policy is founded on the following documents:

- Education Welfare Act (2000)
- Equal Status Acts (2000-2004)
- Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools as published by the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB Guidelines 2008)
- Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (DES 2013)
- DES Circular Letter 045/2013

This Anti-Bullying Policy complies with the provisions of all relevant legislation and with the Anti-Bullying Guidelines for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (DES, 2013). The purpose of this policy is to provide clarity, direction and guidance to school authorities and school personnel in preventing and tackling school-based bullying behaviour amongst its pupils and in dealing

with any negative impact within school, of bullying behaviour that occurs elsewhere.” (DES 2013) It is a requirement of the Department of Education and Skills to have a written anti-bullying policy that is easily accessible (as an online PDF or hard copy on request) for the whole school community. Laois & Offaly Education and Training Board (LOETB) has a statutory obligation to ensure that a policy is in place that reflects the principles, values and educational philosophy of St Fergal’s College.

## Links to Mission Statement and Ethos

*St. Fergal’s College is a co-educational school, which aims to provide a quality education for all our students in a caring and respectful environment.*

*We enable students to develop fully a sense of their own unique worth by providing a broadly based curriculum, which fosters intellectual, spiritual, moral, emotional and physical growth.*

*We are committed to promoting good relationships between students, staff, parents and our community.*

*We aim to create a safe, healthy, learning environment that nurtures self-discipline and encourages our students to take responsibility for their own learning.*

*We aim to educate our students not only for now, but also for life.*

- Our School aims to provide a working, caring and happy environment in which the potential of every child can be realised.
- We wish to promote in all our pupils such values as will make them caring, responsible citizens.
- We believe in the dignity and worth of each individual and in the development of the whole person.
- All members of staff share these values and work to ensure a pupil-centred approach in which pastoral care is a shared responsibility of all staff.

These values underpin and shape all our school policies.

## Scope

*It is important to recognise that any pupil can be bullied or can engage in bullying behaviour (DES, 2013).*

This policy applies to all relationships within the whole school community: students, teachers, SNA's, management, Board of Management, members of the ETB, parents, office, and all ancillary staff. The care and wellbeing of students is the responsibility of all members of the school community.

Bullying behaviour which occurs outside of St Fergal's College and does not have an impact in school is outside the scope of this policy e.g. in the community, sports clubs, within families...etc.

The matter of intra-staff bullying is addressed in the following LOETB policies:

- Bullying Prevention Policy – Complaint Procedure for ETB Staff
- Harassment/Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy – Complaint Procedure for ETB Staff

## Policy Statement

*The role of the school is to provide an appropriate education for all its pupils. A stable, secure learning environment is an essential requirement to achieve this goal. Bullying behaviour, by its very nature, undermines and dilutes the quality of education. Research shows that bullying can have short and long-term effects on the physical and mental well-being of pupils, on engagement with school, on self-confidence and on the ability to pursue ambitions and interests." (Department of Education and Skills Anti Bullying Procedures, 2013; 1.1)*

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 the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour:



## ***Key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour***

The Department of Education and Skills (DES) Anti-Bullying Procedures have outlined the following key principles of best practice for both preventing and tackling bullying and St Fergal's College commit to these principles in our anti-bullying policy.

The key principles are:

- positive school culture and climate which is
  - welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity
  - encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment
  - promotes respectful relationships across the school community.
- effective leadership
- a school-wide approach
- a shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact
- implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying;
  - effective supervision and monitoring of pupils;
  - supports for staff
  - consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies)
  - on-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy (Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools).

## **1. Aims of our anti-bullying policy**

*"School-based bullying can be positively and firmly addressed through a range of school-based measures and strategies through which all members of the school community are enabled to act effectively in dealing with this behaviour. While it is recognised that home and societal factors play a substantial role both in the cause and in the prevention of bullying, the role of the school in preventative work is also crucial and should not be underestimated." (DES, 2013; 1.1.2)*

We will work to create an environment within which cultivates a positive and inclusive school culture. Within such an environment, any form of aggressive and/or bullying behaviour such as racist, religious, cultural, sexual, sexist and trans/homophobic offence, the offensive targeting of disability, SEN and cyber incidents, is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

## **2. Objectives of our anti-bullying policy**

- To clearly define bullying behaviour.
- To raise the awareness within the whole school community that bullying behaviour is unacceptable.
- To cultivate an ethos which encourages students to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour with a view to promote a positive and safe learning environment, an ethos that reflects the importance of being part of an inclusive and supportive community
- To outline preventative measures taken by the school.
- To provide procedures for dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour including supports offered to those affected by bullying or involved in bullying.
- To facilitate ongoing reflection and evaluation of the effectiveness of St Fergal's College Anti-Bullying Policy.

## **3. Related school policies and documents**

- Wellbeing policy
- SPHE and RSE policies.
- Child Protection Policy.
- Code of Behaviour,
- Critical Incident Policy
- Substance Misuse Policy
- Health & Safety Statement
- Internet/Acceptable Use Policy
- Social Media Policy

### ***Other related Documents***

- Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post Primary Schools (DES 1993)

- Dealing with Bullying in schools: a Consultation with Children and Young People. (Ombudsman for Children, 2013)
- Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (DES 2013)
- Circular 0045/2013

## 4. Defining Bullying Behaviour

In accordance with the 2013 Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools:

**Bullying is defined as unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time.**

The following types of bullying behaviour are included in this non-exhaustive definition:

- deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of **relational bullying**
- **cyber-bullying**
- **identity-based bullying** such as homophobic bullying, racist bullying, bullying based on a person's membership of the Traveller community and bullying of those with disabilities or special educational needs.

Although the definition states that the behaviour is usually repeated over time, **a once-off/isolated incident can be regarded as bullying.** For example: "placing a once-off offensive or hurtful public message, image or statement in a social network site or other public forum where that message, image or statement can be viewed and/or repeated by other people will be regarded as bullying behaviour". (DES, 2013, 2.1)

Isolated or once-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour including a once-off offensive or hurtful text message or other private messaging do not fall within this definition of bullying and should be dealt with, as appropriate, in accordance with the school's code of behaviour.

Those who bully others in a non-physical way often do not realise that their actions may have serious legal consequences for them. **The reality, however, is that bullying may constitute a criminal offence under the following sections of legislation:**

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Non-Fatal Offences against the Person Act 1997 | <p>Section 10 of this act deals with harassment and provides that a person may be guilty of a crime if s/he:</p> <p><i>‘without lawful authority or reasonable excuse, by any means including by use of the telephone, harasses another by persistently following, watching, pestering, besetting or communicating with him or her’.</i></p> <p><i>‘For the purpose of this section, a person harasses another where</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>a) He or she, by his or her acts intentionally or recklessly, seriously interferes with the other’s peace and privacy or causes alarm, distress or harm to the other, and</i></li> <li><i>b) b. His or her acts are such that a reasonable person would realise that the acts would seriously interfere with the other’s peace and privacy or cause alarm, distress or harm to the other’.</i></li> </ul> <p>Section 10: Harassment is an arrestable offence and, if convicted on indictment, carries a jail term not exceeding 7 years. On conviction also, a court may make an order that the guilty party may not, for a specified period, communicate by any means, or come within a specified distance of a person’s home or workplace.</p> |
| Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act (1989) | <p>Section 2 of the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act (1989), makes it a criminal offence for a person to publish or distribute, show or play a recording of visual images or sounds, if the written material, words, behaviour, visual images or sounds, as the case may be, are threatening, abusive or insulting and are intended or, having regard to all the circumstances, are likely to stir up hatred. Those convicted on indictment under this provision may be sentenced to a maximum of 2 years imprisonment and/or a fine of up to £10,000.00 (euro equivalent).</p>  |

Negative behaviour that does not meet this definition of bullying will be dealt with in accordance with St Fergal’s College Code of Behaviour. Additional information on different types of bullying is set out in Section 2 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2013*.

The list of examples that follow is non exhaustive, and partners may wish to add behaviours which reflect St Fergal’s own circumstances.

### Examples of bullying behaviours

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>General behaviours which apply to all types of bullying</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harassment based on any of the nine grounds in the equality legislation e.g. gender, marital status, family status, age disability, sexual orientation, race, religion, and membership of the Traveller community (Equal Status Act 2000)</li> <li>• Physical aggression</li> <li>• Damage to property</li> <li>• Name calling</li> <li>• Slagging</li> <li>• The production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other materials aimed at intimidating another person</li> <li>• Offensive graffiti</li> <li>• Extortion</li> <li>• Intimidation</li> <li>• Insulting or offensive gestures</li> <li>• The “look”</li> <li>• Invasion of personal space</li> <li>• A combination of any of the types listed.</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Cyber</b></p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Denigration:</b> Spreading rumors, lies or gossip to hurt a person’s reputation</li> <li>• <b>Harassment:</b> Continually sending vicious, mean or disturbing messages to an individual</li> <li>• <b>Impersonation:</b> Posting offensive or aggressive messages under another person’s name</li> <li>• <b>Flaming:</b> Using inflammatory or vulgar words to provoke an online fight</li> <li>• <b>Trickery:</b> Fooling someone into sharing personal information which you then post online</li> <li>• <b>Outing:</b> Posting or sharing confidential or compromising information or images</li> <li>• <b>Exclusion:</b> Purposefully excluding someone from an online group</li> <li>• <b>Cyber stalking:</b> Ongoing harassment and denigration that causes a person considerable fear for their safety</li> <li>• Silent telephone/mobile phone call</li> <li>• Abusive telephone/mobile phone calls</li> </ul> |



|   |   |
|---|---|
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abusive text messages</li> <li>• Abusive email</li> <li>• Abusive communication on social networks e.g. Instagram/Facebook/Ask.fm/Twitter/You Tube/Snapchat or on games consoles</li> <li>• Abusive website comments/Blogs/Pictures</li> <li>• Abusive posts on any form of communication technology</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Identity Based Behaviours</b><br><b>Including any of the nine discriminatory grounds mentioned in Equality Legislation</b> (gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community). |   |
| <b>Homophobic and Transgender</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spreading rumours about a person's sexual orientation</li> <li>• Taunting a person of a different sexual orientation</li> <li>• Name calling e.g. Gay, queer, lesbian...used in a derogatory manner</li> <li>• Physical intimidation or attacks</li> <li>• Threats</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Race, nationality, ethnic background and membership of the Traveller community</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discrimination, prejudice, comments or insults about colour, nationality, culture, social class, religious beliefs, ethnic or traveller background</li> <li>• Exclusion on the basis of any of the above</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Relational</b>   | <p>This involves manipulating relationships as a means of bullying. Behaviours include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Malicious gossip</li> <li>• Isolation &amp; exclusion</li> <li>• Ignoring</li> <li>• Excluding from the group</li> <li>• Taking someone's friends away</li> <li>• "Bitching"</li> <li>• Spreading rumours</li> <li>• Breaking confidence</li> <li>• Talking loud enough so that the victim can hear</li> <li>• The "look"</li> <li>• Use terminology such as 'nerd' in a derogatory way</li> </ul> |
| <b>Sexual</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unwelcome or inappropriate sexual comments or touching</li> </ul>  |

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harassment</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Special Educational Needs, Disability</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Name calling</li> <li>• Taunting others because of their disability or learning needs</li> <li>• Taking advantage of some pupils' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to recognise and defend themselves against bullying</li> <li>• Taking advantage of some pupils' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to understand social situations and social cues.</li> <li>• Mimicking a person's disability</li> <li>• Setting others up for ridicule</li> </ul> |

*(adapted from Anti-Bullying Supports-PDST)*

## Indicators of bullying behaviour

The following signs and symptoms may suggest that a pupil is being bullied:

1. Anxiety about travelling to and from school e.g. requesting parents/guardians to drive or collect them, changing travel routes, avoiding regular times for travelling to and from school
2. Unwillingness to go to school, refusal to attend, truancy
3. Deterioration in educational performance, loss of concentration and loss of enthusiasm and interest in school
4. Pattern of physical illnesses e.g. headaches, stomach aches
5. Unexplained changes either in mood or behaviour which may be particularly noticeable before returning to school after weekends or more especially after longer school holidays
6. Visible signs of anxiety or distress e.g. stammering, withdrawing, nightmares, difficulty in sleeping, crying, not eating, vomiting, bedwetting
7. Spontaneous out-of-character comments about either pupils or teachers

| PHYSICAL INDICATORS  | SCHOOL RELATED INDICATORS  | EMOTIONAL INDICATORS  |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• unexplained bruising, cuts</li> <li>• loss of damage to personal property</li> <li>• hunger and thirst</li> <li>• frequent minor illness, headaches, tummy aches</li> <li>• bedwetting</li> <li>• loss of appetite</li> <li>• obsessive behaviour, physical appearance, weight</li> <li>• stammering</li> <li>• requests for extra money</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reluctance to go, wanting to be unaccompanied</li> <li>• returning in bad form</li> <li>• changing route</li> <li>• avoiding certain days /lessons</li> <li>• nervousness in class</li> <li>• punctuality problems</li> <li>• poor concentration</li> <li>• deterioration in school</li> <li>• expressions of hopelessness</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• outbursts of anger, temper, irritability at home</li> <li>• bullying brother &amp; sisters, parents</li> <li>• well behaved child suddenly troublesome</li> <li>• changes in mood and appetite, sleep pattern</li> <li>• tiredness, neglect of appearance</li> <li>• expression of sadness /worthlessness</li> </ul> |

There may be other signs/examples depending on the individual and their circumstances. The above signs do not necessarily mean that a pupil is being bullied but if repeated or occurring in combination, these signs do warrant investigation in order to establish what is affecting the pupil.

### Impacts of bullying behaviour

| Pupil                                   | Possible impacts may include  |
|---|---|
| Pupils who are bullied                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May develop feelings of insecurity, humiliation and extreme anxiety and thus may become more vulnerable</li> <li>• Lowering of self-esteem</li> <li>• Changes in mood and behaviour</li> <li>• Extreme cases may result in self-harm</li> </ul>  |
| Pupils who witness bullying             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils who witness bullying may also be affected and may suffer in similar ways to those who are bullied. For example, pupils who witness identity-based bullying and share that identity can experience anxiety and feel under threat themselves. Pupils may also feel guilt or distress at not being able to help the person being bullied.</li> </ul> |
| Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be at higher risk of depression</li> <li>• Increased risk of developing an anti-social personality</li> <li>• Anxiety disorders</li> <li>• Likelihood of substance abuse, law-breaking behaviour in adulthood, decreased educational attainment, decreased occupational attainment...etc.</li> </ul>   |

## School Wide Approach to Education & Prevention

The most effective way for schools to raise awareness and prevent bullying behaviour is through a school wide approach, which encompasses classroom practices, curriculum implementation, and individual pupil needs.

### 5. Education and Preventive Strategies

*A cornerstone in the prevention of bullying is a positive school culture and climate that is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity and respect. (DES, 2013; 6.1)*

We believe that the implementation of preventive measures will help to reduce the incidence of bullying behaviour. The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber- bullying, homophobic and transphobic bullying) that will be used by the school are as follows (see Section 6.5 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*):

**School-wide approach**

- A school-wide approach to the fostering of respect for all members of the school community.
- The promotion of the value of diversity to address issues of prejudice and stereotyping, and highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour.
- The fostering and enhancing of the self-esteem of all our pupils through both curricular and extracurricular activities. Pupils will be provided with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth through formal and informal interactions.
- Whole staff professional development on bullying to ensure that all staff develops an awareness of what bullying is, how it impacts on pupils' lives and the need to respond to it-prevention and intervention.
- An annual audit of professional development needs with a view to assessing staff requirements through internal staff knowledge/expertise and external sources
- Professional development with specific focus on the training of the relevant teacher(s)
- School wide awareness raising and training on all aspects of bullying, to include pupils, parent(s)/guardian(s) and the wider school community.
- Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extra- curricular activities. Non-teaching and ancillary staff will be encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers. Supervision will also apply to monitoring student use of communication technology within the school.
- Involvement of the Student Council/Prefects in contributing to a safe school environment e.g. Buddy system, mentoring, Lunchtime Pals and other student support activities that can help to support pupils and encourage a culture of peer respect and support.
- Development and promotion of an Anti-Bullying code for the school-to be included in student journals and displayed publicly in classrooms and in common areas of the school.



- The school's anti-bullying policy is discussed with pupils and all parent(s)/guardian(s) are given a copy as part of the Code of Behaviour of the school (every year).
- The implementation of regular (e.g. per year/per term/per month/per week) whole school awareness measures e.g. a dedicated notice board in the school and classrooms on the promotion of friendship, and bullying prevention; annual Friendship Week and parent(s)/guardian(s) seminars; annual or term or monthly student surveys; regular school or year group assemblies by principal, deputy principal, year heads etc.
- Encourage a culture of telling, with particular emphasis on the importance of bystanders. In that way pupils will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It should be made clear to all pupils that when they report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.
- Ensuring that pupils know who to tell and how to tell, e.g.:
  - Direct approach to teacher at an appropriate time, eg: after class.
  - Hand note up with homework.
  - Make a phone call to the school or to a trusted teacher in the school.
  - Anti-bully or Niggle box
  - Get a parent(s)/guardian(s) or friend to tell on your behalf.
  - Administer a confidential questionnaire once a term to all pupils.
  - Ensure bystanders understand the importance of telling if they witness or know that bullying is taking place.
- Identify clear protocols to encourage parent(s)/guardian(s) to approach the school if they suspect that their child is being bullied. The protocol should be developed in consultation with parents.
- The development of an Acceptable Use Policy in the school to include the necessary steps to ensure that the access to technology within the school is strictly monitored, as is the pupils' use of mobile phones.
- The listing of supports currently being used in the school and the identification of other supports available to the school e.g. GLEN [www.glen.ie](http://www.glen.ie), BeLonGTo [www.belongto.org](http://www.belongto.org)



### Implementation of curricula

- The full implementation of the SPHE and CSPE curricula and the RSE and Stay Safe Programmes.
- Continuous Professional Development for staff in delivering these programmes.
- School wide delivery of lessons on bullying from evidence-based programmes, e.g. Cool School Lessons, #UP2US, Stay Safe Programme, The Walk Tall Programme, On My Own Two Feet.
- School wide delivery of lessons on **Relational aggression** (Cool School Programme: A Friend in Deed), **Cyber Bullying** (#UP2US, Be Safe-Be Web wise, Think Before you Click, Let's Fight it Together, Web Wise resources), **Homophobic and Transphobic Bullying** (Growing up LGBT, Stand Up Programme, The Trust pack) **Diversity and Interculturalism**, Yellow Flag Programme.
- Delivery of the Garda SPHE Programmes at primary and post-primary level. These lessons, delivered by Community Gardai, cover issues around personal safety and cyber-bullying
- The school will specifically consider the additional needs of SEN pupils with regard to programme implementation and the development of skills and strategies to enable all pupils to respond appropriately.
- The school will implement the advice in "Sexual Orientation advice for schools" (RSE and other post primary resources).

### Ethos and pastoral care:

Students will be encouraged to treat everyone with respect. We will seek to be a "listening school", in which students are encouraged to express their feelings, fears and concerns. We will actively promote positive behaviour. There are many opportunities to celebrate difference within schools. We aim to cherish diversity in our students and make it possible for any student to thrive in our school environment.

### Curriculum:

We will address the issue of bullying specifically in our SPHE programme. This programme will help young people to develop a range of skills including assertiveness and communication skills. The process of teaching and learning provides opportunities to discuss aspects of bullying and to explore appropriate ways of behaving towards one another. We will build understanding

about difference by teaching and incorporating it into school life. For example, teach pupils about different races, cultures and religions and have visible role models and positive images of people with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people (LGBT), women, people from different faiths and minority communities across school. We will undertake a range of whole-school activities to raise awareness such as invited speakers, anti-bullying poster competition, anti-bullying week, Stand Up Week etc, programmes and designated days /activities.

### **Mentoring and Student Council Involvement:**

6<sup>th</sup> year prefects play a vital role in helping first years settle into school and through their programmes enable students to speak out about bullying, should it occur. (This is then referred to the care team for action.) This year 2024-25 the prefects will also monitor 2<sup>nd</sup> year and 3<sup>rd</sup> year students.

Student Council involvement has an important role in fostering a safe school environment.

### **Supervision and CCTV**

All corridors and recreational areas are supervised at lunchtime and break. Supervisors are vigilant in discreetly observing student interactions and will intervene/report as appropriate. Monitoring by CCTV is part of school policy.

## **6. Agreed Code of Conduct for the School Community**

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

The Anti-Bullying Policy, operating within the overall framework of the Code of Conduct, can either reinforce positive efforts or help counteract unsuccessful attempts of parents to change unacceptable behaviour (DES, 2013).

It must be stated explicitly that the role of parents and students in the implementation of the Anti-Bullying Policy is of paramount importance. Parents and students have a particularly important role and responsibility in helping St Fergal's to prevent and address school-based bullying behaviour.

The term relevant teacher is used by the DES to describe the person(s) specifically responsible for investigating and dealing with allegations of bullying behaviour. Consequently, a relevant teacher will investigate an allegation, decide whether the behaviour is bullying in nature, and deal with bullying behaviour. They will also support the students and parents to the best of their ability. The “primary aim of the relevant teacher in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame)” (DES, 2013).

Some of the other specific roles and responsibilities regarding the implementation of the Anti-Bullying Policy are listed on the next few pages. This list is non-exhaustive and should not be read in isolation from the rest of the policy or the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (DES, 2013).

| <b><i>Member of School Community</i></b> | <b><i>Specific Roles &amp; Responsibilities</i></b>   |
|--|---|
| All members of the school community      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helping St Fergal’s College to prevent and address school based bullying behaviour and to deal with any negative impact within school of bullying behaviour that occurs elsewhere</li> <li>• Demonstrate the school values and especially positive relationships</li> <li>• Being open, welcoming and inclusive</li> </ul>   |
| Parents                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Since the example set by parents is a powerful source of learning for pupils, parents are expected to model the standards that students are asked to respect</li> <li>• Equip the student with a range of life skills</li> <li>• Co-operate with any investigation and assist St Fergal’s in resolving any issues and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved as quickly as possible</li> <li>• To continue monitoring of the students use of technology at home</li> <li>• Recognise the potential of all students to behave in bullying ways</li> </ul> |
| Students                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a responsibility for the safety and welfare of fellow students and school staff</li> </ul>  |

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
|                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be an Up-stander rather than a By - stander</li> <li>• Report any concerns regarding bullying to any member of staff</li> <li>• Look after and out for each other, especially year groups</li> <li>• Have a responsibility not to engage in any bullying behaviour</li> </ul>   |
| Board of Management | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formally adopt and implement an Anti-Bullying Policy that fully complies with the DES procedures (2013)</li> <li>• Ensure that the policy is regularly highlighted and promoted on a schoolwide basis within the St Fergal's with particular attention being given to incoming pupils and their parents</li> <li>• Ensure that all members of school staff have sufficient familiarity with the school's Anti-Bullying Policy to enable them to effectively and consistently apply the policy (under the direction of the Principal)</li> <li>• Make appropriate arrangements to ensure that temporary and substitute staff have sufficient awareness of the Code of Conduct and the AntiBullying Policy (under the direction of the Principal)</li> </ul>  |
| School Leadership   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of Anti-Bullying Policy</li> <li>• Implementation of policy</li> <li>• Monitoring &amp; review of policy</li> <li>• Apply Code of Conduct when necessary</li> <li>• Report to Board of Management regarding Anti-Bullying (termly and annually)</li> <li>• Raise awareness</li> <li>• Exploit opportunities provided by the school curriculum to raise awareness, foster an attitude of respect for all and influence attitudes to bullying behaviour in a positive manner, e.g. SPHE, CSPE, RSE, Physical Education...etc.</li> <li>• Support and lead initiatives with Student Welfare Team</li> <li>• Consult with and seek assistance from external agencies (NEPS, HSE, social workers, community workers, bus drivers, Gardaí...etc.) where necessary</li> <li>• Make referrals to Túsla (as Designated Liaison Person for Child Protection) in cases of severe bullying</li> </ul> |

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| All School staff  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>• Share a collegiate responsibility, under the direction of the Principal, to act in preventing bullying/aggressive behaviour by a member of the school community</li> <li>• Model the school standards of behaviour and demonstrate the school values</li> <li>• Strive to engender an ethos under which bullying is unacceptable</li> <li>• Be fair, firm, consistent and clear in disciplinary measures</li> </ul>  |
| Relevant teachers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen to any concerns</li> <li>• Investigate allegations of bullying</li> <li>• Consult with any staff member or other persons during the course of their investigation in order to seek guidance or further relevant information</li> <li>• Exercise their professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved</li> <li>• Resolve any issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame)</li> <li>• Complete relevant forms and keep records</li> <li>• Liaise with Principal and Year Heads</li> <li>• Liaise with students and parents</li> <li>• Attend meetings if required</li> </ul> |

## **7. Procedures for dealing with incidences of bullying behaviour, including contact with parents and external agencies**

The school's procedures for investigation, follow-up and recording of bullying behaviour and the established intervention strategies used by the school for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour are as follows (Section 6.8 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools and section that follows 6.8.9):



#### **6.8.9. Procedures for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying**

The primary aim in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame);

*The school's procedures must be consistent with the following approach.*

Every effort will be made to ensure that all involved (including pupils, parent(s)/guardian(s)) understand this approach from the outset.

##### **Reporting bullying behaviour**

- Any pupil or parent(s)/guardian(s) may bring a bullying incident to any teacher in the school.
- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying, will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher.
- Teaching and non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), caretakers, cleaners must report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher

##### **Investigating and dealing with incidents: Style of approach (see section 6.8.9)**

- In investigating and dealing with bullying, the (relevant)teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved;
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) and pupils are required to co-operate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving any issues and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved as quickly as possible;
- Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach.
- Where possible incidents should be investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved;

- All interviews should be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this way;
- When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher should seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This should be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner;
- If a group is involved, each member should be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved should be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member should be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements;
- Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that may face them from the other members of the group after the interview by the teacher;

It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s)

- In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the parties involved should be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken (by reference to the school policy). The school should give parent(s)/guardian(s) an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports provided to the pupils;
- Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts should be made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied;
- It must also be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parent(s)/guardian(s)) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required,

this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school;

#### **Follow up and recording**

- In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant teacher must, as part of his/her professional judgement, take the following factors into account:
  - Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased;
  - Whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable;
  - Whether the relationships between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable;
  - Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parent(s)/guardian(s) or the school Principal or Deputy Principal
- Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved should be arranged separately with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date if the pupil who has been bullied is ready and agreeable.
- Where a parent(s)/guardian(s) is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parent(s)/guardian(s) must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures.
- In the event that a parent(s)/guardian(s) has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, the school must advise the parent(s)/guardian(s) of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

#### **Recording of bullying behaviour**

It is imperative that all recording of bullying incidents must be done in an objective and factual manner.

The school's procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour are as follows:

#### **Informal- pre-determination that bullying has occurred**

- All staff must keep a written record of any incidents witnessed by them or notified to them. Consideration needs to be given to where the records will be made e.g. incident book. All incidents must be reported to the relevant teacher
- While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the relevant teacher must keep a written record of the reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same
- The relevant teacher must inform the principal of all incidents being investigated.

#### **Formal Stage 1-determination that bullying has occurred**

- If it is established by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher must keep appropriate written records which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.
- The school in consultation with the relevant teacher/s should develop a protocol for the storage of all records retained by the relevant teacher.

#### **Formal Stage 2-( Appendix 3 From DES Procedures)**

The relevant teacher must use the recording template at **Appendix 1 (St Fergal's Anti Bullying Policy)** to record the bullying behaviour in the following circumstances:

a) in cases where he/she considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour occurred; and

b) Where the school has decided as part of its anti-bullying policy that in certain circumstances bullying behaviour must be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable.

The school should list behaviours that must be recorded and reported immediately to the principal. These should be in line with the school's code of behaviour.



### **Established intervention strategies**

- Teacher interviews with all pupils
- Negotiating agreements between pupils and following these up by monitoring progress. This can be on an informal basis or implemented through a more structured mediation process
- Working with parent(s)/guardian(s) to support school interventions
- No Blame Approach
- Restorative interviews
- Restorative conferencing
- Implementing sociogram questionnaires
- Peer mediation where suitable training has been given

The Procedures mention the following intervention strategies and reference Ken Rigby;

[www.bullyingawarenessweek.org/pdf/BullyingPreventionStrategiesinSchools Ken Rigby.pdf](http://www.bullyingawarenessweek.org/pdf/BullyingPreventionStrategiesinSchools%20Ken%20Rigby.pdf)

- The traditional disciplinary approach
- Strengthening the victim
- Mediation
- Restorative Practice
- The Support Group Method
- The Method of Shared Concern



- St Fergal's College students, parents, non-teaching staff, visitors or members of the wider community should feel welcome to report any concerns regarding bullying behaviour to any member of school staff.
- A student who feels that they are being harassed or bullied should speak to their Year Head, Guidance Counsellor, Deputy Principal or Principal or to any staff member.
- Students may, if they so wish, ask parents/guardians to report the situation or may speak to another student and ask for the information to be reported to a staff member on their behalf.
- 

Each case of bullying will be dealt with individually and follow-up action will be tailored to meet the individual needs of the students concerned.

The following steps will be followed.

## **I. Reporting of an incident**

When a bullying incident is reported, the information will be passed on to the following people confidentially, verbally and on **St Fergal's College Recording Bullying Report Form (Appendix 1)**:

- The Year Head of any student involved
- The Principal/ Deputy Principal

## **II. Investigation of an incident**

- The alleged victim and alleged perpetrator(s) will be interviewed and a record made of their responses.
- Witnesses will be interviewed discreetly and a record made of their responses.

- The CCTV system will be reviewed to confirm allegations, where possible.

**Please note:**

In accordance with 6.8.9 of the [Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post- Primary Schools](#) parents and students are expected to co-operate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving any issues and, restoring as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved as quickly as possible’.

### **III. Agreeing a plan for resolution**

- This school promotes a policy of restorative justice and so students will be encouraged to resolve their differences through supervised discussion.
- Working with the people concerned, the Year Head/ Deputy Principal/ Principal will devise a plan for resolution of the conflict. This plan (usually verbal) will include targets for acceptable behaviour and will set out support measures which will be provided for the students concerned.
- The Year head will monitor the progress of the students involved by liaising with class tutor, teachers and follow-up meetings with the students.
- If deemed appropriate, parents may be contacted.
- If the behaviour persists the parents/guardians of both the victim and the bully/bullies will be contacted by the Principal/Deputy Principal. They will be invited to attend a meeting in school where their assistance in supporting a resolution to the issue will be sought. Sanctions may be imposed in accordance with the Code of Behaviour.
- The matter will be referred to the Board of Management if not satisfactorily resolved. Sanctions may be imposed in accordance with the Code of Behaviour.
- Offenders and victims of bullying may be referred, with their parents’ permission for counselling to the school guidance counsellor. Parents may be advised to ask their doctor for a referral to the Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Service (HSE)
- Sanctions which may apply, and not necessarily in this order:
  - Good Behaviour Contract
  - School community service

- Detention
- Suspension
- Permanent exclusion

St Fergal's College reserves the right, in accordance with Section 6.3.5 of the [DES Procedures](#) to seek the assistance of agencies such as NEPS, the HSE, and the Gardaí, where it deems such assistance is necessary to dealing effectively with bullying behaviour. In any case, where the School/College deems bullying behaviour to be potentially abusive (see sections 6.8.12, 6.8.13 and 6.8.14 of the [DES Anti-bullying Procedures](#)) it will consult with the HSE's Children and Family Services to assist it in drawing up an appropriate response or to obtain advice or to make a formal child protection report to the HSE or the Gardaí (as appropriate) in accordance with the DES [Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools](#)

#### **iv. Reviewing the situation**

The situation will be monitored and formally reviewed within an agreed time by the Year Head.

#### **8. Prevention of Harassment**

The Board of Management confirms that St. Fergal's College 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.

#### **9. Implementation:**

Once ratified by the Board of Management this policy will supersede and replace all previous policies and will be effective immediately. All members of the school community will be bound by this policy from the date of ratification.

### **Policy Adoption and Review**

This policy was originally adopted by the Board of Management on October 13<sup>th</sup> 2021.

The implementation and effectiveness of St Fergal's Anti-Bullying Policy will be discussed at the Student Welfare and Support Team Meetings with areas for improvement noted.

An informal review may take place in light of incidents of bullying behaviour encountered and actions are taken. This reflective practice will feed into the annual review.

Anti-Bullying will also be an agenda item for staff meetings so that concerns about the policy and/or the welfare of individual students including identifying bullying “hot spots” on campus can be shared and effectively addressed. Data gathered through the reporting templates will be collated and analysed annually with a view to monitoring levels of bullying behaviour and identifying issues requiring attention. This analysis will complement other information gathered, e.g. bullying surveys.

The Principal will provide a termly report to the Board of Management setting out the following:

- The overall number of bullying cases reported since the previous meeting
- Confirmation that all cases reported to the Board of Management have been or are being dealt with in accordance with the DES Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.

The minutes of the Board of Management meeting will record the Principal’s report but in doing so will not include any identifying details of students involved.

## **12.0 Policy Dissemination and Publication**

This policy will be made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parent School Association.

## **13.0 Policy Review**


- The Board of Management will undertake an annual review of the school’s anti-bullying policy and its implementation in accordance with the procedures set out in Section 7.2 of the [Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools](#) using the checklist included: Appendix 2 of this policy.
- The Board of Management will ensure that an action plan is put in place to address any areas for improvement identified by the annual review.



- Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parent School Association.
- Details of the review will be recorded in the minutes of the Board of Management' meeting that adopted the review and a record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, will be made available to the Patron and the DES. In the case of the DES, it is appreciated that the Inspectorate will place a strong focus on the actions the School/College takes to create a positive school culture and to prevent and tackle bullying.

Signed:   
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Date: 03/03/2025      Date of next review: August 2025

Signed:   
(Principal)

Date: 03/03/2025



## Appendix 1 – St Fergal’s College Recording Bullying Behaviour Form

### 1. Name of pupil being bullied and class group

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Name(s) and class(es) of pupil(s) engaged in bullying behaviour

|  |
|--|
|  |
|  |
|  |

### 3. Source of bullying concern/report (tick relevant box(es))\*

|                 |                          |
|-----------------|--------------------------|
| Pupil concerned | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other Pupil     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Parent          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Teacher         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other           | <input type="checkbox"/> |

### 4. Location of incidents (tick relevant box(es))\*

|            |                          |
|------------|--------------------------|
| Yard       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Classroom  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Corridor   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Toilets    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| School Bus | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other      | <input type="checkbox"/> |

### 5. Name of person(s) who reported the bullying concern

|  |
|--|
|  |
|--|

### 6. Type of Bullying Behaviour (tick relevant box(es)) \*

|                     |                          |                  |                          |
|---------------------|--------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| Physical Aggression | <input type="checkbox"/> | Cyber-bullying   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Damage to Property  | <input type="checkbox"/> | Intimidation     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Isolation/Exclusion | <input type="checkbox"/> | Malicious Gossip | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Name Calling        | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other (specify)  | <input type="checkbox"/> |

### 7. Where behaviour is regarded as identity-based bullying, indicate the relevant category:

|                          |                          |                          |                                   |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Homophobic               | Disability/SEN related   | Racist                   | Membership of Traveller community | Other (specify)          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>          | <input type="checkbox"/> |

### 8. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact

|  |
|--|
|  |
|--|

### 9. Details of actions taken

|  |
|--|
|  |
|--|

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ (Relevant Teacher) Date \_\_\_\_\_

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal \_\_\_\_\_

**\* Note:** The categories listed in the tables 3, 4 & 6 are suggested and schools may add to or amend these to suit their own circumstances.

## Appendix 2 Checklist for annual review of the anti-bullying policy and its implementation

The Board of Management (the Board) must undertake an annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation. The following checklist must be used for this purpose. The checklist is an aid to conducting this review and is not intended as an exhaustive list. In order to complete the checklist, an examination and review involving both quantitative and qualitative analysis, as appropriate across the various elements of the implementation of the school's anti-bullying policy will be required.

|  | Yes /No |
|--|---------|
| Has the Board formally adopted an anti-bullying policy that fully complies with the requirements of the <i>Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools</i> ?                             | yes     |
| Has the Board published the policy on the school website and provided a copy to the parents' association?  | yes     |
| Has the Board ensured that the policy has been made available to school staff (including new staff)?   | yes     |
| Is the Board satisfied that school staff are sufficiently familiar with the policy and procedures to enable them to effectively and consistently apply the policy and procedures in their day to day work? | yes     |
| Has the Board ensured that the policy has been adequately communicated to all pupils?  | yes     |
| Has the policy documented the prevention and education strategies that the school applies?   | yes     |
| Have all of the prevention and education strategies been implemented?  | yes     |
| Has the effectiveness of the prevention and education strategies that have been implemented been examined?   | yes     |
| Is the Board satisfied that all teachers are recording and dealing with incidents in accordance with the policy?   | yes     |
| Has the Board received and minuted the periodic summary reports of the Principal?  | yes     |
| Has the Board discussed how well the school is handling all reports of bullying including those addressed at an early stage and not therefore included in the Principal's periodic report to the Board?    | yes     |
| Has the Board received any complaints from parents regarding the school's handling of bullying incidents?  | no      |
| Have any parents withdrawn their child from the school citing dissatisfaction with the school's handling of a bullying situation?  | no      |
| Have any Ombudsman for Children investigations into the school's handling of a bullying case been initiated or completed?  | no      |
| Has the data available from cases reported to the Principal (by the bullying recording template) been analysed to identify any issues, trends or patterns in bullying behaviour?                           | n/a     |
| Has the Board identified any aspects of the school's policy and/or its implementation that require further improvement?  | no      |
| Has the Board put in place an action plan to address any areas for improvement?  | n/a     |

Signed \_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson, Board of Management

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_  
Principal

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Guidelines for Students

- Tell an adult straight away. Teachers will take you seriously and deal with it promptly.
- Silence is the bully's greatest weapon.
- Stay with a group or a friend. There is safety in numbers.
- Tell an adult if you know someone is being bullied.
- Do not take matters in to your own hands

### Useful contacts:

Childline      1800 666666

LGBT Helpline

1890 929539

Bodywhys      1890- 200444

Teenline Ireland Helpline

1800 833634

## Guidelines for Parents

It is very important that you talk to your child about their school life and listen to their likes, dislikes, hopes and fears. Monitor, and regularly check access to internet sites, especially Facebook and Twitter and ensure your child has maximum security/privacy protocols in place.

### If your child is bullied:

- Inform the school immediately if you feel your child is a victim of bullying behaviour.
- Advise your child not to fight back, it makes matters worse.
- Comfort your child; it is not his/her fault.
- Ensure your child knows the school policy on bullying and encourage him/her to report the matter.

### If your child is involved in bullying behaviour:

- Early intervention is vital to break a learned pattern of bullying behaviour. Excusing your child's behaviour will only encourage repetition.
- Insist your child accepts responsibility for his/her behaviour and apologises to the victim.
- Support your child in overcoming this behaviour by taking an interest in their activities and school life.

**Useful contacts:**

[www.childline.ie](http://www.childline.ie)

[www.bully4u.ie](http://www.bully4u.ie)

Pieta House 01 6010000

Aware Helpline 1890 303302

**Procedures for Teachers**

If a student informs you of an incidence of bullying affecting either themselves or a friend, follow these steps:

- Listen: encourage the student to tell their story
- Take notes: record all the details: date, time location etc.
- Reassure; tell the victim help is available. Do not promise confidentiality. The student's privacy will be respected as far as possible.
- Inform the Year Head **in writing**, without delay.
- Note: allegations of bullying of teachers by students will be dealt with by the Principal/Deputy Principal.