



**St. Flannan's College,  
Ennis,  
Co. Clare.**

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**Anti-bullying Policy**

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## 1. 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. Flannan's College has adopted the following anti-bullying policy within the framework of the school's overall Code of Behavior. This policy fully complies with the requirements of the *Anti-bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* which were published in September 2013.

The Board of Management of St. Flannan's College adopts the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* issued by the Department of Education and Skills in September 2013 as the basis on which the school community addresses the issue of bullying. All school personnel are expected to be familiar with these procedures.

## 2. Key Principles of Best Practice

The Board of Management recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of students or staff and is therefore fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour:

- A 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;
  - ▶ 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.
- Support for students in devising and implementing anti-bullying initiatives.

## 3. Defining Bullying

In accordance with the *Anti-bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, bullying is defined as follows:

*Bullying is 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 the definition of bullying:

- deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying;
- cyber-bullying;
- identity-based bullying such as homophobic bullying, transphobic bullying, bi-phobic bullying (e.g. taunting a person of a different sexual orientation), racist bullying, bullying based on a person's membership of the Traveller community and bullying of those with disabilities or special educational needs.

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 the definition of bullying and should be dealt with, as appropriate, in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour.

***However, in the context of this policy, placing a once-off offensive or hurtful public message, image or statement on 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.***

Negative behaviour that does not meet this definition of bullying will be dealt with in accordance with the school's 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*.

#### **4. Reporting and Investigating Bullying**

Students, parents, non-teaching staff or members of the wider community should feel welcome to report their concerns to any member of the teaching staff – including the Principal and Deputy Principals.

In this school the Year Head and the Deputy Principal designated to deal with discipline in the specific year group where bullying is being investigated are deemed to be the relevant teachers in the context of Section 6.8.3 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

The Year Head and Deputy Principal will prepare recorded findings for the Principal. The Principal or Deputy Principal will meet with the parents.

#### **5. Education and Prevention Strategies**

(Refer to section 6.5 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.)

The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber-bullying, homophobic bullying, transphobic bullying and bi-phobic bullying that will be used by the school are as follows:

- 5.1 St. Flannan's College makes it clear to all members of the school community that bullying of any kind is unacceptable, irrespective of whether it is a student, a staff member or any other person who is the subject of such behaviour.
- 5.2 When investigating and dealing with bullying the principal focus is on resolving differences and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than apportioning blame). St Flannan's College, nevertheless, reserves the right to take disciplinary action, where such is warranted, in accordance with the College's student Code of Behaviour, against those who bully others.
- 5.3 The prevention and awareness of bullying is integral to this policy and students will, through both their curricular and extra-curricular programmes, be provided with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth.
- 5.4 The focus of the College's prevention strategy will be to build empathy, respect and resilience in students.
- 5.5 Students will be provided with opportunities to understand the causes and effects of bullying, the issue of identity-based bullying and in particular homophobic and trans-phobic bullying. This will be a component of the S.P.H.E. course. St Flannan's College recognises that the SPHE curriculum makes specific provision for exploring bullying as well as the inter-related areas of belonging and integrating, communication, conflict, friendship, personal safety and relationships. Also, that the Relationships

and Sexuality Education (RSE) programme provides opportunities to explore and discuss areas such as human sexuality and relationships, which have particular relevance to identity-based bullying. The College will make every reasonable effort to ensure that the full potential of these programmes to combat bullying is exploited.

Furthermore, it is recognised that there is potential within the teaching of all subjects and within extracurricular activities to foster an attitude of respect for all; to promote the value of diversity; to address prejudice and stereotyping and to highlight the unacceptability of bullying behaviour.

- 5.6 Prevention and awareness-raising measures will also deal explicitly with cyber-bullying, educating students about appropriate online behaviour, how to stay safe while online and also through developing a culture of reporting any concerns about or incidents of bullying to a member of the teaching staff.
- 5.7 St. Flannan's College will, in all its communications with students and their parents, commencing with the induction of the student into the College, make every effort to highlight the importance of students reporting incidents of or concerns about bullying to a member of the teaching staff on the clear understanding that these matters are being reported in confidence. More than anything else, the combating of bullying will depend on the extent to which students note and report bullying. In this context, the happiness of students is very much dependent on the vigilance of their fellow students and their preparedness to report concerns about bullying to the teaching staff and/or school management. All teaching staff will reinforce this point to students on an ongoing basis.
- 5.8 St. Flannan's College will adopt a school-wide approach (involving management, staff, parents, students and members of the wider community with a connection to the College) to prevent and combat bullying. In this context, the College is committed to engaging with parents. Firstly, the College will involve them in the development of policies and practices to combat bullying. Secondly, parents will be informed at information evenings of the way the College deals with bullying and they will be provided with reliable information on how they may contribute towards combating bullying. In this regard, it is important that parents realise that anyone can be a bully and anyone can be a target of bullying. It is not just other people's sons and daughters that can bully. In this regard, it is also important to realise that disagreements between young people are part and parcel of negotiating the road to adulthood and that every youthful disagreement should not be treated as a full-blown bullying episode.
- 5.9 In accordance with section 6.8.9(v) of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* 'parents and students 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'.
- 5.10 Where necessary, St. Flannan's College will seek the assistance of NEPS, Tusla and the Gardaí, as appropriate, to combat bullying.
- 5.11 In combating bullying, St. Flannan's College will take particular account of the needs of pupils with disabilities or with special educational needs. This will involve improving inclusion, focusing on developing social skills, paying particular attention to student induction and cultivating a school culture that respects everyone and values helping one another.
- 5.12 St. Flannan's College will seek to devote a staff development session (for teaching and non-teaching staff – as appropriate) each school year towards raising the awareness of bullying among staff, building an understanding of what bullying is and providing guidance on how it is best combated – prevented, detected, investigated, documented (as appropriate) and resolved
- 5.13 St. Flannan's College is committed to surveying the student body to identify the extent of bullying and, in so far as is possible, the students that are affected by it.
- 5.14 St. Flannan's College's RSE and SPHE programmes will specifically address the issue of bullying with each year group each year.

- 5.15 St. Flannan's College will hold a Safe Internet Awareness Day and an Anti-bullying Awareness Week to highlight the whole issue of bullying and staying safe using modern technology.
- 5.16 St. Flannan's College's senior students will be encouraged to recognise bullying behaviour, bring concerns about bullying behaviour to the attention of a teacher and support vulnerable students in relation to bullying.

## **6. Procedures for Investigation, Follow-up and Recording of Bullying Behaviour**

(Refer to section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.)

St. Flannan's College's procedures for investigation, follow-up and recording of bullying behaviour and the established intervention strategies used by the College for dealing with cases of bullying behavior are as follows:

- 6.1 Where a member of the teaching staff has a concern about a student being bullied, either as a result of a personal observation or as a result of receiving a report from a third party, s/he may investigate and deal with the matter in accordance with the procedures set out in Section 6.8 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*. Alternatively, the teacher may refer the matter to the Year Head, Deputy Principal or Principal.
- 6.2 In investigating bullying behaviour or addressing bullying behaviour in any way, teachers are welcome to seek the assistance and support of the Deputy Principal and/or Principal at any time. Indeed, given the extent to which the Deputy Principal and Principal are privy to all kinds of personal information about students, it would be prudent to check with either of them before taking any action in relation to bullying behaviour.
- 6.3 Where a teacher is concerned that a particular bullying episode is causing serious upset to a student, staff member or other person, s/he should bring it to the attention of either the Deputy Principal or Principal at the earliest possible opportunity.
- 6.4 St Flannan's College reserves the right to investigate allegations of bullying (and to take disciplinary action where necessary) where bullying is perpetrated by a member of the school community and it impinges on the work or happiness of a student in the school, even where the bullying acts are committed outside of the school.
- 6.5 St. Flannan's College reserves the right, in accordance with Section 6.3.5 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* to seek the assistance of agencies such as NEPS, Tusla and the Gardaí, where it deems such assistance is necessary to deal effectively with bullying behaviour. In any case, where the College deems bullying behaviour to be potentially abusive (see sections 6.8.12, 6.8.13 and 6.8.14 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*) it will consult with Tusla/Child and Family Agency to assist it in drawing up an appropriate response or to obtain advice or to make a formal child protection report to Tusla or the Gardaí (as appropriate) in accordance with the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools* of the Department of Education and Skills.
- 6.6 Concerns about or allegations of bullying will be investigated and addressed in accordance with Section 6.8.9 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*. These are summarised as follows:
- (a) In investigating and dealing with bullying, the primary focus will be on resolving the interpersonal issues and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved - rather than on apportioning blame.
  - (b) In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved.
  - (c) All reports of bullying, including anonymous reports, will be investigated and dealt with either by the teacher who first becomes aware of the allegations/concerns or the Year Head, Deputy

Principal or Principal. In this regard, it is incumbent on each teacher who becomes aware of bullying behaviour either to deal with such behaviour themselves or to bring such behaviour to the attention of the Year Head, Deputy Principal or Principal at the earliest possible opportunity.

- (d) It will be made clear to students in all years that when they report bullying behaviour they are not considered to be 'telling tales' but are behaving responsibly and that the happiness of other students is dependent on their reporting such behaviour to a teacher or to a senior student.
- (e) All non-teaching staff such as clerical and administrative, study supervisors, special needs assistants (SNAs), caretakers, cleaners, sports coaches and those taking extracurricular activities will be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to either a teacher or the Year Head, Deputy Principal or Principal.
- (f) Incidents of bullying will be investigated in a calm, unemotional, problem-solving manner.
- (g) Incidents of bullying will generally be investigated outside of the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved.
- (h) All interviews will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard for the rights of students, irrespective of whether they are allegedly involved in bullying behaviour or are in a position to provide information about the behaviour being investigated.
- (i) Those investigating bullying behaviour will calmly seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why.
- (j) Where a group is allegedly involved in bullying behaviour, each student will be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, where appropriate, all involved will be met as a group and, at this meeting, each member will be asked for his/her account to ensure that all are clear about what each individual is saying.
- (k) Each member of a group will be supported through the possible pressures that s/he may face from the other members of the group after being interviewed.
- (l) Where deemed appropriate, those being interviewed may be asked to write down their account of what happened.
- (m) Where the teacher investigating a bullying issue determines that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved should be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and to explain the actions being taken (by reference to the College policy). The College should give parents an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the College and the supports for their students.
- (n) Where the relevant teacher determines that a student 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 student/s being bullied.
- (o) Where the College deems it necessary to impose disciplinary sanctions, it will be made clear to all involved (both the bullied and those doing the bullying and their parents) that this is a private matter between the student being disciplined, his/her parents and the College.
- (p) As a follow up to a bullying issue being resolved, the relevant teacher should meet separately with the relevant parties to review progress. Subsequently, but only if the student who has been bullied is ready and agreeable, consideration should be given to meeting with both parties simultaneously, as this can have a therapeutic effect.
- (q) Where the relevant teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, the bullying incident must be recorded by the relevant teacher in the recording template at Appendix 1.

- (r) 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 parents or the College Principal or Deputy Principal.
- (s) Where a parent/guardian or a student who is more than 18 years old is not satisfied that the College has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, s/he will be advised of his/her right to make an appeal to the college Board of Management. Such appeals shall be submitted in writing, setting out the grounds for the appeal, to the Chairperson of the Board within 15 school days of the parent/guardian informing the Principal that s/he is of the opinion that the College has not dealt with the bullying case in accordance with the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.
- (t) Where a parent/guardian, having exercised his/her appeal to the Board of Management, is still not satisfied s/he will be advised of his/her right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

6.7 Those involved in investigating and resolving bullying behaviour will note and report developments as follows and, in doing so, they will comply with relevant data protection legislation.

- (a) The relevant teacher will use his/her professional judgement regarding the records to be kept of information received, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved with the bullying behaviour.
- (b) Where the relevant teacher establishes that bullying has occurred, s/he must keep appropriate written records to assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.
- (c) The relevant teacher must use the recording template at Appendix 1 to record the bullying behaviour in the following circumstances:
  - (i) Where s/he considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after s/he has determined that bullying behaviour occurred;
  - (ii) Where it is necessary to report serious bullying behaviour immediately to the Deputy Principal or Principal (refer 6.3 above) or where a relevant teacher at any time passes on concerns or allegations of bullying to the Deputy Principal or Principal (refer 6.1 above).

In each of the circumstances at (i) and (ii) above, the recording template at Appendix 1 must be completed in full and retained by the teacher in question and a copy provided to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable.

## **7. Supports for Pupils Affected by Bullying**

(Refer to section 6.8.15, 6.8.16, 6.8.17 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.)

7.1 St. Flannan's College will put in place a programme of supports for students who have been bullied. This programme will involve the following elements:

- (a) Students who have been bullied will be:
  - offered appropriate counselling;

- provided with opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop their social skills and to build their resilience.

(b) Students who have been involved in bullying behaviour will be:

- provided with counselling to help them to learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others;
- provided with appropriate opportunities to build their self-esteem and feelings of self-worth.

7.2 Students who observe incidents of bullying behaviour will be encouraged to discuss them with their teachers and their parents and to avail of counselling where they feel it may assist them to cope effectively with what they have experienced.

## **8. Supervision and Monitoring of Anti-Bullying**

8.1 The Board of Management confirms that appropriate supervision and monitoring policies and practices are in place to both prevent and deal with bullying behaviour and to facilitate early intervention where possible.

8.2 The implementation and effectiveness of the College's anti-bullying policy will be an annual agenda item for a staff meeting – so that the concerns about the policy and/or the welfare of individual students can be shared and effectively addressed.

8.3 Data gathered through the reporting templates (Appendix 1) will be collated and analysed annually with a view to monitoring levels of bullying behaviour and identifying issues requiring attention. This analysis will complement the information gathered through the bullying surveys (refer section 5.15 above).

8.4 At least once in every school term, the Principal will provide a report to the Board of Management setting out the following:

- the overall number of bullying cases reported (by means of the bullying recording template (see Appendix 1) since the previous report to the Board;
- confirmation that all cases referred via the recording template (Appendix 1) have been or are being dealt with in accordance with the school's anti-bullying policy and the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*;
- The minutes of Board of Management meetings will record the Principal's report but in doing so will not include any identifying details of the students involved.

## **9. Prevention of Harassment**

The Board of Management confirms that St. Flannan'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.

## **10. Adoption of Policy**

This policy was originally adopted by the Board of Management on 24 March 2015.

## **11. Dissemination of Policy**

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.



## **12. Review of Policy**

- 12.1 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 at Appendix 2 of those procedures.
- 12.2 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.
- 12.3 Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents Association.
- 12.4 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, to the patron and the Department of Education and Skills. In the case of the Department of Education and Skills, it is appreciated that the inspectorate will place a strong focus on the actions the College takes to create a positive school culture and to prevent and tackle bullying.

## **13 Next Review**

The date of the next review is May, 2024

**Signed:** *Mr. Leonard Cleary*

**Chairperson of Board of Management**

**Date:** *May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023*

**Signed:** *Fr. Ignatius Mc Cormack*

**Principal**

**Date:** *May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023*

## **Appendices**

1. Template for recording bullying behaviour.
2. Checklist for annual review of the anti-bullying policy and its implementation.
3. Notification regarding the Board of Management's annual review of the anti-bullying policy.

## Template for recording bullying behaviour

<b>Name of pupil being bullied and class group</b>	
Name:	Class:

<b>Name(s) and class(es) of pupil(s) engaged in bullying behaviour</b>

<b>Source of bullying concern/report (tick relevant box(es))</b>	<b>Location of incidents (tick relevant box(es))</b>
Pupil concerned	Playground
Other pupil	Classroom
Parent	Corridor
Teacher	Toilets
Other	School bus
	Other

<b>Name of person(s) who reported the bullying concern</b>

<b>Type of bullying behaviour (tick relevant box(es))</b>	
Physical Aggression	Cyber-bullying
Damage to property	Intimidation
Isolation/Exclusion	Malicious gossip
Name calling	Other (specify)

<b>Where behaviour is regarded as identity-based bullying, indicate the relevant category</b>				
Homophobic	Disability/SEN related	Racist	Membership of Traveller Community	Other (Specify)

<b>Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact</b>

<b>Details of actions taken</b>

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Teacher/Year-Head) Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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

## Checklist for Annual Review of the Anti-bullying Policy and its Implementation

The Board of Management must undertake an annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation. The following checklist below is 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.

Item	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> ?		
Has the Board published the policy on the school website and provided a copy to the parents' association?		
Has the Board ensured that the policy has been made available to school staff (including new staff)?		
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?		
Has the Board ensured that the policy has been adequately communicated to all pupils?		
Has the policy documented the prevention and education strategies that the school applies?		
Have all the prevention and education strategies been implemented?		
Has the effectiveness of the prevention and education strategies that have been implemented been examined?		
Is the Board satisfied that all teachers are recording and dealing with incidents in accordance with the policy.		
Has the Board received and minuted the periodic summary reports of the Principal?		
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?		
Has the Board received any complaints from parents regarding the school's handling of bullying incidents?		
Have any parents withdrawn their child from the school citing dissatisfaction with the school's handling of a bullying situation?		
Have any Ombudsman for Children investigations into the school's handling of a bullying case been initiated or completed?		
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?		
Has the Board identified any aspects of the school's policy and/or its implementation that require further improvement?		
Has the Board put in place an action plan to address any areas for improvement?		

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

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

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Notification regarding the Board of Management's annual review of the Anti-bullying Policy**

The Board of Management of St. Flannan's College wishes to inform you that:

- The Board of Management's annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation was completed at the Board meeting of
- This review was conducted in accordance with the checklist set out in Appendix 4 of the Department's *Anti-bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

**Signed:** *Mr. Leonard Cleary*

**Chairperson of Board of Management**

**Date:** *May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023*

**Signed:** *Fr. Ignatius Mc Cormack*

**Principal**

**Date:** *May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023*