

St. Fintan's High School Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

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The Board of Management of St. Fintan's High School has adopted the following policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

This policy fully complies with the requirements of *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2024*.

The board of management acknowledges that bullying behaviour interferes with the rights of the child as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. We all, as a school community, have a responsibility to work together to prevent and address bullying behaviour and to deal with the negative impact of bullying behaviour.

We are committed to ensuring that all students who attend our school are kept safe from harm and that the wellbeing of our students is at the forefront of everything that we do. We recognise the negative impact that bullying behaviour can have on the lives of our students and we are fully committed to preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.

We confirm that we will, in accordance with our obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the harassment of students or staff on any of the nine grounds specified: gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.

Definition of bullying

Bullying is defined in *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* and *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* as targeted behaviour, online or offline that causes harm. The harm caused can be physical, social and/or emotional in nature. Bullying behaviour is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power in relationships between two people or groups of people in society. The detailed definition is provided in Chapter 2 of the Bí Cineálta procedures.

Each school is required to develop and implement a Bí Cineálta policy that sets out how the school community prevents and addresses bullying behaviour. Strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour that is not bullying behaviour are provided for within the school's Code of Behaviour.

Section A: Development/review of our Bí Cineálta policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour

All members of our school community were provided with the opportunity to input into the development/review of this policy.

	Date consulted	Method of consultation
School Staff	20th August 2024 & 21st May 2025	Staff Meeting
Students	April/May 2025	Survey Focus Group
Parents	April/May 2025	Survey of Parents Survey of Parents' Assoc
Board of Management	Insert date of review of last Anti-Bullying Policy - 16th December 2024 Insert Date of most recent review: April-June 2025	Consultation at BOM meeting
Wider school community as appropriate, for example, bus drivers	21st May 2025	Consultation as deemed necessary
Date policy was approved: 10th June 2025		
Date policy was last reviewed:		

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

This section sets out the prevention strategies that will be used by the school. These include strategies specifically aimed at preventing online bullying behaviour, homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour, racist bullying behaviour, sexist bullying behaviour and sexual harassment as appropriate (see Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

PREVENTION STRATEGIES

Culture and Environment

The school:

- strives to create a positive school climate where all students feel safe, connected and supported
- promotes a culture that is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on kindness and inclusivity
- promotes positive relationships between all members of the school community based on respect, care, integrity and trust

- encourages open communication between the patron, board of management, school staff, students and their parents to foster a collaborative approach and shared responsibilities in relation to preventing and addressing bullying behaviour
- ensures that each member of school staff has a responsibility to develop and maintain a school culture where bullying behaviour is unacceptable
- ensures that a consistent approach to addressing bullying behaviour is taken
- encourages a culture of telling, with particular emphasis on the role of bystanders in telling. In this way pupils gain confidence in 'telling'. It is made clear to all pupils that when they report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales, but are instead behaving responsibly.
- regularly encourages students to report to any trusted adult in the school if they or another student is experiencing bullying behaviour.
- ensures that pupils know how to tell: (a) direct approach to a trusted adult at an appropriate time, for example after class, (b) hand a note up with homework, (c) get a parent/guardian or friend to inform a teacher or other trusted adult
- regularly encourages students who witness bullying behaviour to report the behaviour to a trusted adult in the school so it can be addressed
- ensures that students are aware that if they witness bullying behaviour on social media, they have an important role in helping to address the behaviour by reporting the witnessed behaviour to a trusted adult
- ensures that all staff know to reassure the student that they have done the right thing by reporting the behaviour.
- ensures that all staff know that a trusted adult should, without delay, inform the member of staff who has responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour. The people responsible are the Year Head, Deputy Principals and Principal.
- ensures that all staff know that the trusted adult should continue to support the student, as appropriate, while the behaviour is being addressed by the relevant member of staff.
- has surveyed the school environment to check for hidden spaces where there could be a greater risk of bullying behaviour to occur and has introduced strategies to make these areas safer
- ensures that appropriate supervision is assigned to help prevent and address bullying behaviour

Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)

- Teaching and learning is collaborative and respectful
- Integration of anti-bullying messages into the school curriculum
- Teaching students about bullying and its effects
- Fostering and enhancing self-esteem in all of our pupils through both curricular and extracurricular activities
- Providing students with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth through formal and informal interactions
- Providing opportunities for students to develop social and emotional skills
- Opportunities given to students to work in small groups with their peers which builds a sense of connection, belonging and empathy among students
- Opportunities to foster inclusion and respect for diversity are provided through the curricular subjects on offer
- Full implementation of the SPHE, RSE and CSPE curricula
- Implementation of the FUSE anti-bullying programme in 2nd and 3rd Year
- Programmes like Religious Education, CSPE, SPHE, History and other subjects, raise awareness of racism and students learn the root causes of bias and prejudice.

- Consideration is given to the additional needs of some pupils with regard to programme implementation and the development of skills and strategies to enable all pupils to respond appropriately
- Schoolwide awareness raising and training on all aspects of bullying
- The implementation of regular whole school awareness measures, including periodic surveys, assemblies, lessons presented through SPHE/RSE and Tutor classes, Friendship Week, Stand Up and Be You week, etc.
- Use of GoGuardian as an oversight tool for teachers when students are working with Chromebooks

Policy and Planning

- The wellbeing of the school community is at the heart of school policies and plans.
- The school has developed a clear and consistent Bí Cineálta Policy and student-friendly Bí Cineálta policy that is enforced by all staff members. Both of these policies are reviewed and updated annually.
- Clear procedures have been established for reporting and responding to bullying incidents.
- The school's approach to tackling and preventing bullying will take particular account of the needs of pupils with disabilities or with additional educational needs.
- The school's Acceptable Use Policy, AEN Policy, Code of Behaviour, Social Media Policy, Mobile Phone Policy, 1:1 Devices Policy support implementation of the school's Bí Cineálta policy
- Student voice in the development and implementation of school policies and plans helps increase awareness and ensure effective implementation
- Teacher training for staff on how to recognise and respond to bullying is repeated every year. Teachers are encouraged to share their experiences and examples of best practice in preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.
- The school has a very active Culture, Diversity and Inclusion Committee

Relationships and Partnerships

The school ensures strong interpersonal connections to effectively prevent and address bullying behaviour through some of the following:

- Tutor and Year Head system
- Tutor Time
- Prefect support
- Student Council
- School Clubs
- School Library
- Student Care Team
- Parents' Association
- Age appropriate awareness initiatives around navigating friendships, identity-based bullying, racist bullying, homophobic/transphobic bullying, sexism and sexual harassment
- Encouraging students to take part in the huge variety of extra-curricular activities at school
- Encouraging active participation of parents in school life
- Supporting activities that build empathy, respect and resilience
- Encouraging peer support such as student mentoring
- Promoting acts of kindness

- Working with parents and students to educate them about the dangers of cyberbullying

Preventing Cyberbullying Behaviour

The school promotes digital literacy, digital citizenship and fosters safe online environments in order to prevent cyberbullying by:

- implementing the SPHE curriculum
- communicating our Acceptable Use policy for technology, our 1:1 Chromebook Device policy, our Social Media policy and our Mobile Phone policy
- referring to appropriate online behaviour as part of the standards of behaviour in the Code of Behaviour
- holding an internet safety day to reinforce awareness around appropriate online behaviour
- providing parents of incoming 1st Year students with a pamphlet on internet safety and advice on how to monitor their son's use of the internet, social media and games, including age limits, privacy settings, and parental permissions etc.
- monitoring student use of technology in the classroom through the use of GoGuardian which blocks and shields students from harmful content
- Using Webwise and Digiwise resources to educate students about digital literacy
- Liaising with parents to highlight issues around internet safety, social media etc.

Preventing homophobic/transphobic bullying behaviour

The school prevents this type of bullying behaviour by:

- maintaining an inclusive physical environment by displaying relevant posters
- encouraging peer support such as student mentoring and empathy building activities
- challenging gender stereotypes
- encouraging students to speak up when they witness homophobic behaviour
- creating a safe and inclusive environment for all students, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity
- educating students about the importance of respecting all people, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity
- CDI activities including our Allyship Club and Cairde sa Chúirt

Preventing Racist Bullying Behaviour

The school prevents this type of bullying behaviour by:

- fostering a school culture where diversity is celebrated and where students 'see themselves' in their school environment
- having the cultural diversity of the school visible and on display
- encouraging peer support such as peer mentoring and empathy building activities
- encouraging bystanders to report when they witness racist behaviour
- providing supports to school staff to support students from ethnic minorities, including Traveller and Roma students, and to encourage communication with their parents

- ensuring that library reading material and textbooks represent appropriate lived experiences of students and adults from different national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds
- providing support to students who have been targeted by racist bullying
- CDI activities including our Allyship Club and Cairde sa Chúirt

Preventing Sexist Bullying Behaviour

The school prevents this type of bullying behaviour by:

- ensuring members of staff model respectful behaviour and treat students equally irrespective of their sex
- celebrating diversity at school and acknowledging the contributions of all students
- encouraging parents to reinforce these values of respect at home
- teaching students about the importance of gender equality, e.g. Gender Equality Matters

Preventing Sexual Harassment

The school prevents this type of bullying behaviour by:

- using the updated SPHE specifications at post-primary level to teach students about healthy relationships and how to treat each other with respect and kindness
- promoting positive role models within the school community
- challenging gender stereotypes that can contribute to sexual harassment

The school has the following supervision and monitoring policies in place to prevent and address bullying behaviour (see Chapter 5 of the Bí Cineálta procedures):

Supervision

- All staff members are trained to recognise and respond to bullying behavior.
- Non teaching and ancillary staff are encouraged to be vigilant and report issues to relevant teachers.
- Teachers monitor and supervise classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours and extra-curricular activities.
- Support offered by prefects to 1st and 2nd Year students, both before school starts in the morning and during lunchtime on rainy days, further contributes to a safe school environment.
- Visitors to the school are supervised at all times and are not left alone with students.

Monitoring

- Incident reporting: The year head investigates all instances of reported or suspected bullying behaviour with a view to establishing the facts and records the information on an incident report form.
- Incident investigation: all reports of bullying will be investigated promptly and thoroughly. The investigation will include interviews with the student who reported the incident, the student who was allegedly bullied and any witnesses.
- Follow-up: The school will take appropriate action to address the bullying behaviour

By implementing these procedures, St. Fintan's High School can create a safer and more positive school environment for all students.

Section C: Examples of Bullying Behaviour

Examples of bullying behaviour are outlined in this section. Please note that 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 will 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.

Examples of bullying behaviours (please note: this list is not exhaustive and is reviewed each year)

General behaviours which apply to all	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Harassment based on any of the nine grounds in the equality legislation e.g. sexual harassment, homophobic bullying, racist bullying etc.• Physical aggression• Damage to property• Name calling• Slagging• The production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other materials aimed at intimidating another person• Offensive graffiti• Extortion• Intimidation• Insulting or offensive gestures• The "look"• Invasion of personal space• A combination of any of the types listed.• Spreading rumours
Cyber	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Denigration: Spreading rumours, lies or gossip to hurt a person's reputation• Harassment: Continually sending vicious, mean or disturbing messages to an individual• Impersonation: Posting offensive or aggressive messages under another person's name• Flaming: Using inflammatory or vulgar words to provoke an online fight• Trickery: Fooling someone into sharing personal information which you then post online• Outing: Posting or sharing confidential or compromising information or images• Exclusion: Purposefully excluding someone from an online group• Cyber stalking: Ongoing harassment and denigration that causes a person considerable fear for his/her safety• Silent telephone/mobile phone call• Abusive telephone/mobile phone calls• Abusive text messages• Abusive email• Abusive communication on social networks e.g. Snapchat/TikTok/ Twitter/YouTube etc. or on games consoles

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abusive website comments/Blogs/Pictures • Abusive posts on any form of communication technology
Identity Based Behaviours Including any of the nine discriminatory grounds mentioned in Equality Legislation (gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community).	
Homophobic and Transgender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spreading rumours about a person's sexual orientation • Taunting a person of a different sexual orientation • Name calling e.g. gay, queer, lesbian...used in a derogatory manner • Physical intimidation or attacks • Threats
Race, nationality, ethnic background and membership of the Traveller community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discrimination, prejudice, comments or insults about colour, nationality, culture, social class, religious beliefs, ethnic or traveller background • Exclusion on the basis of any of the above
Relational	This involves manipulating relationships as a means of bullying. Behaviours include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Malicious gossip • Isolation & exclusion • Ignoring • Excluding from the group • Taking someone's friends away • "Bitching" • Spreading rumours • Breaking confidence • Talking loud enough so that the victim can hear • The "look"
Sexual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unwelcome or inappropriate sexual comments or touching • Harassment
Additional Educational Needs (including gifted students), Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name calling • Taunting others because of their disability or learning needs • Taking advantage of some pupils' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to recognise and defend themselves against bullying • Taking advantage of some pupils' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to understand social situations and social cues. • Mimicking a person's disability • Setting others up for ridicule

Section D: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

The teacher with responsibility for addressing bullying behaviour is as follows:

- Relevant Year Head

When bullying behaviour occurs, the school will:

- ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour is heard and reassured
- seek to ensure the privacy of those involved
- conduct all conversations with sensitivity
- consider the age and ability of those involved
- listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation
- take action in a timely manner
- inform parents of those involved

The steps taken by the school to (a) determine if bullying behaviour has occurred, (b) address the bullying behaviour and (c) review progress are outlined below:

The school's procedures for investigation, follow-up and recording of bullying behaviour and the established intervention strategies that may be used by the school for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour are as follows:

Reporting bullying behaviour

- Any pupil or parent(s)/guardian(s) may bring a bullying incident to their year head, tutor, teacher, principal or deputy principals or any trusted adult in the school.
- Teaching and non-teaching staff such as Secretaries, Special Needs Assistants (SNAs), Caretaker, etc., must report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher.
- All school staff must know what to do when bullying behaviour is reported to them.
- A school is not expected to deal with bullying behaviour that occurs when students are not under the care or responsibility of the school. However, where this bullying behaviour has an impact in school, schools are required to support the students involved. Where the bullying behaviour continues in school, schools should deal with it in accordance with their Bí Cineálta policy.

Investigation of an allegation of bullying behaviour

- All reports of suspected bullying behaviour will be investigated and dealt with by the Year Head and overseen by the relevant Deputy Principal and the Principal with a view to establishing the facts and managing the behaviour.
- The Year Head will be fair and consistent, and will take a calm and unemotional problem-solving approach when addressing bullying behaviour.
- All recording of bullying incidents will be carried out in an objective and factual manner.
- In investigating and dealing with bullying, the Year Head 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. They are an integral part of the school community and play an important role, in partnership with schools, in addressing bullying behaviour.
- 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 concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this way.
- When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the Year Head 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 students involved should be met as a group.
- At the group meeting, each student should be asked for their account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's views. It may be helpful to ask the students involved to write down their account of the incident
- 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.
- The following principles must be adhered to when addressing bullying behaviour:
 - Ensure that the student experiencing bullying behaviour feels listened to and reassured
 - Seek to ensure the privacy of those involved
 - Conduct all conversations with sensitivity
 - Consider the age and ability of those involved
 - Listen to the views of the student who is experiencing the bullying behaviour as to how best to address the situation
 - Both the student who is experiencing bullying behaviour and the student who is displaying bullying behaviour need support
 - Take action in a timely manner
 - Inform parents of those involved
- The primary aim of the Year Head's investigation of bullying is to resolve issues and to restore relationships. Ongoing supervision and support may be required for both the student who has experienced the bullying behaviour as well as the student who has displayed the bullying behaviour. In some cases, relationships may never be restored to how they were before.
- In cases where it has been determined by the relevant Year Head that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the parties involved will 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 can give parent(s)/guardian(s) an opportunity to discuss ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the support provided to the pupils.
- Where the Year Head has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to him how he is in breach of the school's Bí Cineálta policy and efforts should be made to try to get him 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 (under GDPR) between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school.
- The Year Head is required to complete an official Incident Report Form (document available via hyperlink [here](#)) This form must detail the nature of the bullying behaviour, the parties involved and any relevant context. These forms must be stored in the Principal's office.

Follow up and recording

The Year Head will engage with the students and parents involved no more than 20 school days after the initial discussion to review progress following the initial intervention.

- In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed, the Year Head 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
- 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 Deputy Principal/Principal/Board of Management as appropriate.
- 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 Office of the Ombudsman for Children.

Established intervention strategies may include:

- 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 interventions
- Other intervention strategies as deemed suitable

The school will use the following approaches to support those who experience, witness and display bullying behaviour:

The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying behaviour is as follows:

- Managing the bullying behaviour
- Supporting the pupils who have experienced bullying behaviour, displayed bullying behaviour and witnessed bullying behaviour
- Involving our pastoral care team which includes:
 - Guidance Counselling service within the school
 - Prefect System
 - Tutor/Year Head system
 - Care Team
 - Supervision team
 - Deputy Principals and Principal
- Promotion of the idea that there are no innocent bystanders and that all incidents of bullying behaviour must be reported to a trusted adult
- Promoting a positive school culture where pupils feel safe, respected and valued
- Raising awareness of the appropriate programmes and teacher training
- Helping pupils raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that help develop friendships, social skills and build resilience, e.g. participation in group work in class, sports, clubs, societies and other extracurricular activities
- Making it clear that adopting the strategies is a positive step towards creating a more respectful and inclusive school environment
- Encouraging teachers and parents to focus on positive reinforcement when dealing with challenging behaviour

All bullying behaviour will be recorded. This will include the type of behaviour, where and when it took place, and the date of the engagement with students and parents. The actions and supports agreed to address bullying behaviour will be documented. If the bullying behaviour is a child protection concern the matter will be addressed without delay in accordance with *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

Requests to Take No Action

A student reporting bullying behaviour may ask a member of staff not to take any action other than to "look out" for them. The student may not want to be identified as the person who reported the bullying behaviour. They might worry that telling someone could make their situation worse. In such cases, it is crucial for the staff member to show empathy, handle the situation sensitively, and collaborate with the student to determine what steps can be taken to address the issue. Together, they should agree on how the student's parents will be informed. It is essential that the student who has experienced bullying feels safe and supported.

Parents may also notify the school of bullying behaviour and request that no action be taken. In such instances, parents should put their request in writing or be facilitated to do so if there are literacy, digital literacy, or language barriers. While the school should acknowledge the parent's request, it may still decide, based on the circumstances, that addressing the bullying behaviour is appropriate.

Section E: Oversight

The principal will present an update on bullying behaviour at each board of management meeting. This update will include the number of incidents of bullying behaviour that have been reported since the last meeting, the number of ongoing incidents and the total number of incidents since the beginning of the school year. Where incidents of bullying behaviour have occurred, the principal will also provide a verbal update which will include, where relevant, information relating to trends and patterns identified, strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and any wider strategies to prevent and address bullying behaviour. This update does not contain personal or identifying information.

This policy is available to our school community on the school's website, in students' school journal and in hard copy on request. A student friendly version of this policy is displayed in the school and is also available on our website and in hard copy on request.

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed, following input from our school community, each calendar year or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which this policy refers.