St. Fergal's College
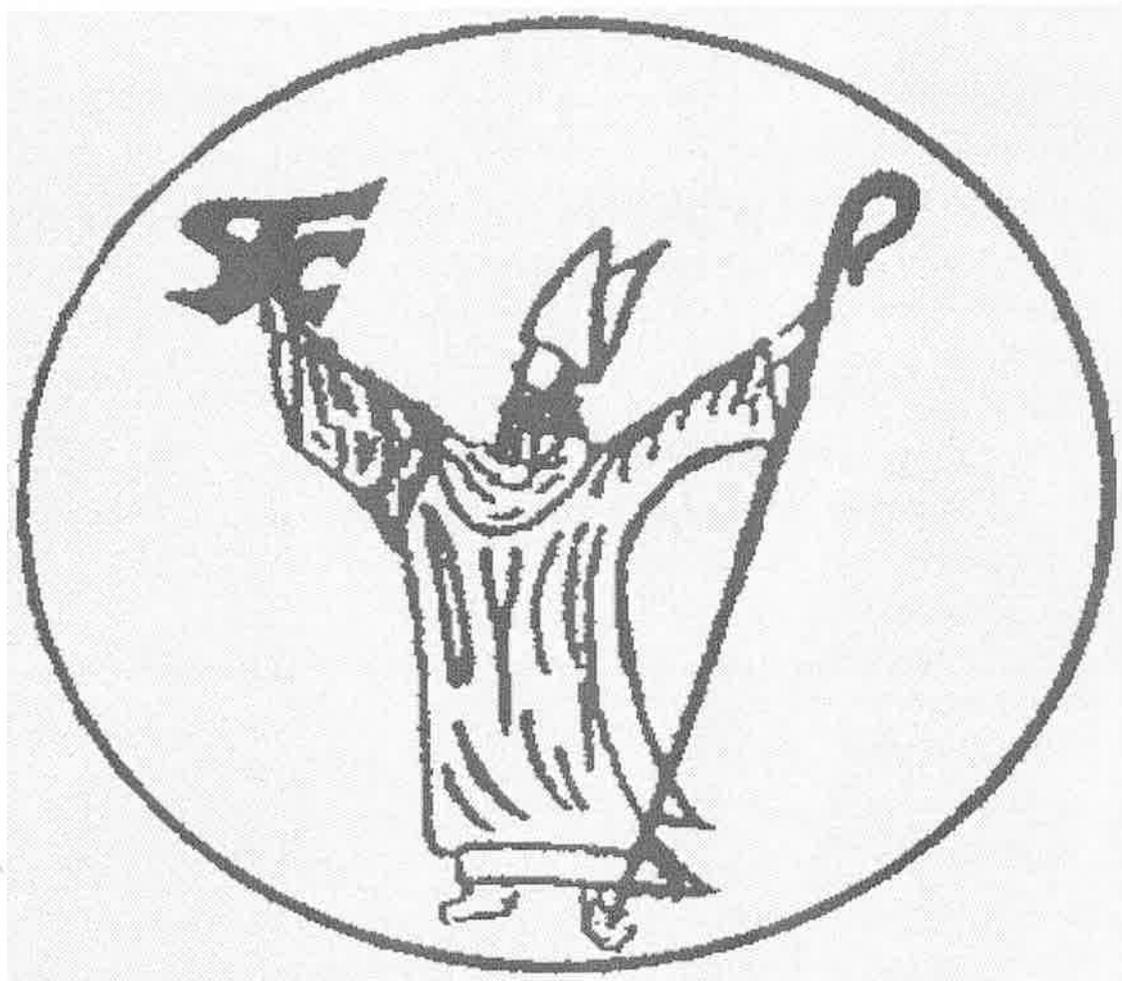# Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour
2025-2026

Contents

Introduction

The Board of Management of St. Fergal's College has adopted this policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour in compliance with Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2024).

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 replaces the previous anti-bullying policy and ensures alignment with updated legal frameworks, including the Children First Act 2015 and Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020 (Coco's Law).

Bullying behaviour undermines students' rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. As a school community, we are committed to creating a safe, inclusive, and respectful learning environment for all students and staff.

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

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, all ancillary staff, bus drivers, local clubs and NEPS/HSE partners. The care and wellbeing of students is the responsibility of all members of the school community.

At St. Fergal's College, while we are not responsible for addressing bullying behaviour that occurs outside of school hours or beyond our duty of care, we recognise that such behaviour can still have an impact within our school community. When this happens, we are committed to supporting the students involved. If bullying behaviour continues within the school environment, we will address it in line with our Bí Cineálta policy.

In cases where the student engaging in the bullying behaviour is not a student of St. Fergal's College, but the student experiencing the bullying behaviour is, we will provide appropriate support to the affected student. We will also engage with them and their parents/guardians to explore the best course of action to ensure their well-being.

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.

When Bullying Behaviour Becomes a Child Protection Concern

Under Section 10 of the Children First Act, 2015, schools have a legal responsibility, as a "provider of a relevant service," to ensure that every child in their care is safe from harm while attending school or participating in school activities, as far as reasonably possible.

Teachers who are registered with the Teaching Council are considered Mandated Persons under the Children First Act. They are legally obligated to report any harm to children that meets or exceeds a specified threshold to Tusla and to assist Tusla

in assessing a concern if requested. If the concern does not meet the threshold for mandatory reporting but the teacher believes it to be a reasonable concern regarding a child's welfare or protection, they should still report it to Tusla under the Children First National Guidance. This guidance applies to everyone, and all school staff and volunteers must report any reasonable concerns to Tusla.

The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (Revised 2023) state that school staff should report any reasonable concerns to the Designated Liaison Person (DLP), who may seek advice and/or report the concerns to Tusla. If the staff member is a registered teacher and the concern meets or exceeds the threshold for mandatory reporting, the concern should be submitted to Tusla as a mandated report, jointly by the DLP and the teacher. For more information, see Chapter 5 of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (Revised 2023).

The Children First Act defines harm as assault, ill-treatment, neglect, or sexual abuse, and this can apply to both single and multiple incidents. The threshold for harm is met when the mandated person believes that a child's health, development, or welfare has been, is being, or is likely to be seriously affected.

The Children First National Guidance (2017) provides overarching national guidelines on child safeguarding. It specifies that in cases of severe bullying where the behaviour may be considered abusive, a referral may need to be made to Tusla or An Garda Síochána, depending on the circumstances.

Typically, bullying behaviour can be addressed without involving Tusla. However, bullying may become a child protection concern if it causes significant physical or emotional harm, or if it becomes persistent and severe, and the measures taken to address it are ineffective.

When deciding whether bullying behaviour should be reported to Tusla, schools should consider the following factors:

- The impact on the child
- The actions taken by the parents to protect the child
- The actions taken by the school to address the issue
- The engagement of the child or family with support services, such as NEPS

If there is uncertainty about whether bullying behaviour constitutes a child protection concern, schools should contact Tusla's social work department for advice. This allows the social worker to work with the school staff to assess the situation and provide guidance on the best course of action.

Section A: Development and Review of the Policy

This policy was developed following consultation with all members of the school community.

	Date Consulted	Method of Consultation
School Staff	25/02/25 & 19/05/25	Surveys, staff meetings, focus groups
Students	27/02/25 & 27/08/25	Anonymous surveys, student council discussions
Parents	06/12/24, 13/02/25, 28/02/25	Parent emails, surveys.
Board of Management	04/12/24, 26/02/25	Policy review meetings, legal compliance checks
Wider School Community	30/08/25	Phone call, survey

Date of Approval: 03/12/2025

Date of Last Review: N/A

Policy Statement

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).

Aims of our Bi Cinealta Policy

Bullying is an experience that no child or young person should have to endure. It can affect engagement with school, self-confidence, and the child or young person's sense of self and belonging. Bullying behaviour can impact a child's agency and their ability to take effective action.

Bullying is a children's rights issue. Bullying interferes with the following rights of the child set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child:

> the right to freedom of expression (Article 13)
> the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 14)
> the right to freedom of association and freedom of peaceful assembly (Article 15)
> the right to privacy (Article 16)
> the right to be protected from all forms of abuse and neglect (Article 19)
> the right to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health (Article 24)
> the right to education (Article 28)
> the right to enjoy their own culture, religion or language (Article 30)

(Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, 2024: 1.1)

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.

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

- The Education (Welfare) Act 2000
- The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2017)
- School Self-Evaluation (SSE) Guidelines
- The National Strategy on Bullying 2013-2017 (and beyond)
- The Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools (2017)
- The Equality Act 2004
- Safe, Supportive and Inclusive Schools (SSIS) Guidelines

Definition of Bullying

As defined in Bí Cineálta: Procedures, bullying is targeted behaviour, online or offline, that causes harm. This harm can be physical, social, or emotional and is repeated over time, involving an imbalance of power in relationships. A detailed definition is provided in Chapter 2 of the Bí Cineálta procedures.

Targeted Behaviour

Bullying involves intentional, unwanted actions that cause harm to others, where the person engaging in the bullying knows or should know that their behaviour will be perceived as harmful by the student on the receiving end. Bullying is neither accidental nor careless behaviour. The harm caused can be physical (e.g., personal injury, property damage or loss), social (e.g., isolation, loneliness, exclusion), and/or emotional (e.g., low self-esteem, depression, anxiety), and it can have a significant and long-lasting negative effect on the person being bullied. If harm occurs repeatedly but is unintended by the student engaging in the behaviour, it is not classified as bullying; however, it should still be addressed within the framework of the school's code of behaviour.

Repeated Behaviour

Bullying typically involves a consistent pattern of harmful behaviour over time. A single incident of intentional negative behaviour, even if it involves an imbalance of power, is not considered bullying, but it should still be managed according to the school's code of behaviour. A single harmful post online—such as a message, image, or video—if shared or reposted by others, may be considered bullying behaviour.

Imbalance of Power

In bullying situations, the person being bullied struggles to defend themselves due to a real or perceived power imbalance. This imbalance can arise from factors such as physical size, strength, age, ability, peer influence, socioeconomic status, social standing, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, family situation, gender, gender identity, gender expression, disability, experience in the care system, or membership in Traveller and/or Roma communities. In the case of online bullying, the power imbalance can stem from factors like anonymity, technical expertise, possession of compromising information or images, and the targeted student's inability to remove offensive content or avoid further harassment.

Behaviour That Does Not Constitute Bullying

A single instance of negative behaviour towards another student is not considered bullying. However, a single harmful message posted on social media can be classified as bullying behaviour, as it has the potential to reach a wide audience and is likely to be shared multiple times, making it a repeated behaviour.

Disagreements between students, or situations where students choose not to be friends or wish to end a friendship, do not constitute bullying unless there is a deliberate and repeated effort to cause emotional harm, exclude others, or foster negative feelings, including intentional manipulation of friendship groups.

Some students with special educational needs may experience social communication challenges, which could lead them to express their needs in ways that unintentionally hurt themselves or others. It is important to understand that these behaviours are not intentional or planned but are automatic responses over which they may have little control.

Bullying is not accidental or reckless behaviour. If harm occurs repeatedly but is unintentional by the other student, it is not considered bullying. While these behaviours are not classified as bullying, they can still be distressing.

Strategies for managing inappropriate behaviour are outlined in the school's Code of Behaviour.

Criminal Behaviour

Bullying behaviour may, in certain situations, be classified as criminal behaviour and could result in legal consequences. In Ireland, the age of criminal responsibility is 12 years.

Some online activities may be illegal, and students should be aware of the serious repercussions of posting inappropriate or harmful content online. For example, the Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020 (commonly referred to as Coco's Law) makes it a crime to share intimate images without consent, as well as to threaten to share such images.

If bullying behaviour involves physical violence or threats of violence, it may be regarded as assault.

Bullying behaviour that includes discrimination or hate speech targeting a student based on their race, religion, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or membership in the Traveller community could be considered a hate crime under the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989, and those responsible may face criminal charges.

If the bullying behaviour involves sexual harassment or sexual assault, it may also be considered criminal conduct.

An Garda Síochána is the appropriate authority to investigate suspected criminal behaviour

Bullying behaviours can take many forms, which can occur separately or together. These can include the following which is not an exhaustive list:

General behaviours which apply to all types of bullying	- 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) - 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.
Cyber	**Denigration**: Spreading rumors, 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 their safety - Silent telephone/mobile phone call - Abusive telephone/mobile phone calls - Abusive text messages - Abusive email - Abusive communication on social networks e.g. Instagram/Facebook/Ask.fm/Twitter/You Tube/Snapchat or on games consoles - 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	• 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	• 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: • 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" • Use terminology such as 'nerd' in a derogatory way
Sexual	• Unwelcome or inappropriate sexual comments or touching • Harassment

Special Educational Needs, Disability	• 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

(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
• unexplained bruising, cuts • loss of damage to personal property • hunger and thirst • frequent minor illness, headaches, tummy aches • bedwetting • loss of appetite	• reluctance to go, wanting to be unaccompanied • returning in bad form • changing route • avoiding certain days /lessons • nervousness in class • punctuality problems	• outbursts of anger, temper, irritability at home • bullying brother & sisters, parents • well behaved child suddenly troublesome • changes in mood and appetite, sleep pattern

• obsessive behaviour, physical appearance, weight • stammering • requests for extra money	• poor concentration • deterioration in school • expressions of hopelessness	• tiredness, neglect of appearance • expression of sadness /worthlessness

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	• May develop feelings of insecurity, humiliation and extreme anxiety and thus may become more vulnerable • Lowering of self-esteem • Changes in mood and behaviour • Extreme cases may result in self-harm
Pupils who witness bullying	• 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.
Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour	• Can be at higher risk of depression • Increased risk of developing an anti-social personality • Anxiety disorders • Likelihood of substance abuse, law-breaking behaviour in adulthood, decreased educational attainment, decreased occupational attainment...etc.

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour: School-Wide Approach to Education & Prevention

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

Education and Preventive Strategies

A cornerstone in the deterrence of bullying is "a positive and inclusive school culture and environment is essential to prevent and address bullying behaviour. The school environment should be a space where students and school staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported. Relationships between all members of the school community should be based on respect, care, integrity and trust." (Bi Cinealta, 2024; 5.1).

Encouraging a Reporting Culture

Fostering a school environment where students feel safe and supported in reporting bullying is essential.

Research conducted in Ireland highlights a persistent reluctance among students to report bullying incidents. To address this, students must feel confident and reassured when raising concerns about bullying behaviour.

Some common reasons why students may hesitate to report include:

- Fear of retaliation from the individual engaging in bullying or their peer group.
- Concerns about being labelled a "tell-tale" for speaking up.
- Worry that adult intervention may escalate the situation.
- Doubts about whether adults have the knowledge or skills to handle bullying effectively.
- Anxiety over losing access to their smartphone as a consequence.
- Uncertainty about what will happen after making a report.
- Fear of not being believed.
- Concerns about facing repercussions for speaking out.
- Lack of tangible evidence, particularly in cases of relational bullying.

Our school aims to acknowledge these concerns through our anti-bullying policy and intervention strategies. A safe and inclusive school environment should actively promote and normalise the reporting of bullying behaviour, ensuring that students feel heard, supported, and protected.

We believe that implementing preventive measures will help reduce the incidence of bullying behaviour. Our education and prevention strategies, including strategies specifically aimed at cyber-bullying, homophobic, and transphobic bullying, include

Whole-School Approach

- Fostering respect for all members of the school community.
- Promoting the value of diversity to address prejudice and stereotyping while highlighting the unacceptability of bullying behaviour.
- Enhancing the self-esteem of all pupils through curricular and extracurricular activities, providing opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth.
- Whole staff professional development on bullying to ensure awareness, recognition, and response strategies.
- Annual audit of professional development needs to assess staff requirements.
- Specific training for relevant teacher(s) and awareness training for pupils, parents/guardians, and the wider school community.
- Supervision and monitoring of classrooms, corridors, school grounds, school tours, extracurricular activities, and student use of communication technology.
- Involvement of the Student Council and Prefects in maintaining a safe school environment through buddy systems, mentoring, and Lunchtime Pals.
- Development and promotion of an Anti-Bullying Code to be included in student journals and displayed in classrooms and common areas.
- Communication of the anti-bullying policy to all students and parents as part of the school's Code of Behaviour.
- Regular whole-school awareness initiatives such as Friendship Week, student surveys, parent seminars, and assemblies by school leadership.
- Encouraging a culture of telling, emphasizing the responsibility of bystanders in reporting bullying incidents.
- Clear protocols for reporting bullying, including direct approaches to teachers, anonymous reporting through a Niggle Box, confidential student questionnaires, and parental engagement.
- Development of an Acceptable Use Policy to monitor technology access and mobile phone use.
- Identifying and utilizing available external supports such as GLEN (www.glen.ie) and BeLonGTo (www.belongto.org).

Additional supports may also include:

- MindOut Programme for post-primary mental health and resilience development.
- UNESCO's Teaching Respect for All as a resource to promote global anti-discrimination education.

Implementation of Curricula

- Full implementation of the SPHE and CSPE curricula, including RSE and the Stay Safe Programme.
- Continuous Professional Development for staff in delivering these programmes.
- Delivery of lessons on bullying from evidence-based programmes (e.g., Cool School Lessons, #UP2US, Stay Safe Programme, Walk Tall Programme, On My Own Two Feet).
- School-wide delivery of lessons on relational aggression, cyberbullying, homophobic and transphobic bullying, diversity, and interculturalism (e.g., Cool School Programme, Be Safe-Be Webwise, Web Wise resources, Growing Up LGBT, Stand Up Programme, The Trust Pack, Yellow Flag Programme).
- Garda SPHE Programmes addressing personal safety and cyberbullying.
- Special consideration for the needs of SEN pupils in programme implementation.
- Implementation of advice from "Sexual Orientation Advice for Schools" (RSE and other post-primary resources).

Relationships and Partnerships at St. Fergal's College

At St. Fergal's College, we recognise that strong interpersonal connections are essential for effectively preventing and addressing bullying behaviour. These relationships create a supportive and inclusive school environment where students feel valued, respected, and safe.

We foster positive relationships through both formal and informal structures, including the Student Council, extracurricular clubs, the Parents' Association, and our student support team. These groups play a vital role in strengthening communication and collaboration among students, parents, and staff.

To further enhance these connections, we actively promote initiatives that encourage positive relationships within the school community. These include:

- Age-appropriate awareness initiatives exploring the causes and impacts of bullying, including friendship dynamics, identity-based bullying, racism, homophobic and transphobic bullying, sexism, and sexual harassment.
- Encouraging active student participation in school life through leadership roles, peer mentoring, and extracurricular activities.
- Supporting parental involvement, particularly for parents who may find engagement challenging due to unfamiliarity with the education system, language barriers, or cultural differences.
- Workshops and seminars for students, staff, and parents to raise awareness of bullying, its impact, and strategies for prevention.
- Promoting activities that build empathy, respect, and resilience, helping students develop emotional intelligence and positive relationships.

- Encouraging peer support initiatives, such as peer mentoring and buddy systems, to foster friendships and guidance between students.
- Recognising and celebrating acts of kindness, reinforcing a culture of respect and inclusion.
- Teaching problem-solving skills, enabling students to navigate conflicts and challenges constructively.

At St. Fergal's College, we align with Cineáltas: The Action Plan on Bullying, which highlights the importance of strong relationships across the education community. The active involvement of our Board of Management, staff, students, and parents in the development, implementation, and review of our Bí Cineálta policy and student-friendly version is key to ensuring a proactive and united approach to preventing and addressing bullying.

By working together, we can continue to build a school environment that fosters empathy, understanding, and respect for all.

At St. Fergal's College, we recognise that preventing bullying behaviour requires a whole-school and community-based approach. A range of prevention strategies can be implemented to foster a safe and respectful learning environment.

Member of School Community	*Specific Roles & Responsibilities*
All members of the school community	• 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 • Demonstrate the school values and especially positive relationships • Being open, welcoming and inclusive
Parents	• 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 • Equip the student with a range of life skills • 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 • To continue monitoring of the students use of technology at home

	• Recognise the potential of all students to behave in bullying ways
Students	• Have a responsibility for the safety and welfare of fellow students and school staff • Be an Up-stander rather than a By - stander • Report any concerns regarding bullying to any member of staff • Look after and out for each other, especially year groups • Have a responsibility not to engage in any bullying behaviour
Board of Management	• Formally adopt and implement an Anti-Bullying Policy that fully complies with the Bi Cinealta Procedures. • 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 • 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) • 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)
School Leadership	• Development of Anti-Bullying Policy • Implementation of policy • Monitoring & review of policy • Apply Code of Conduct when necessary • Report to Board of Management regarding Anti-Bullying (termly and annually) • Raise awareness • 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.

	• Support and lead initiatives with Student Welfare Team • Consult with and seek assistance from external agencies (NEPS, HSE, social workers, community workers, bus drivers, Gardaí...etc.) where necessary • Make referrals to Túsla (as Designated Liaison Person for Child Protection) in cases of severe bullying •
All School staff	• Share a collegiate responsibility, under the direction of the Principal, to act in preventing bullying/aggressive behaviour by a member of the school community • Model the school standards of behaviour and demonstrate the school values • Strive to engender an ethos under which bullying is unacceptable • Be fair, firm, consistent and clear in disciplinary measures
Relevant teachers	• Listen to any concerns • Investigate allegations of bullying • Consult with any staff member or other persons during the course of their investigation in order to seek guidance or further relevant information • Exercise their professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved • Resolve any issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame) • Complete relevant forms and keep records • Liaise with Principal and Year Heads • Liaise with students and parents • Attend meetings if required

At St. Fergal's College, every staff member plays an important role in implementing our *Bí Cineálta* policy. However, certain members of staff are specifically

responsible for addressing bullying behaviour. The teachers responsible for managing bullying at the school level include:

- Senior Management Team: The leadership team is tasked with overseeing bullying behaviour and ensuring the school's policy is implemented effectively.
    - Principal
    - Deputy Principal
- Assistant Principals with Year Head Responsibilities: Year Heads are responsible for managing bullying behaviour for students in their respective year groups. The following teachers hold this responsibility:
    - Assistant Principal 1 – First Year Year Head
    - Assistant Principal 1 – Second Year Year Head
    - Assistant Principal 1 – Third Year Year Head
    - Assistant Principal 1 – Fifth Year (& TY) Year Head
    - Assistant Principal 1 – Sixth Year Year Head

These teachers are the primary points of contact for addressing bullying behaviour at St. Fergal's College, and they work closely with the wider school community to ensure that our *Bí Cineálta* policy is upheld.

When implementing prevention strategies, we also acknowledge the importance of engaging with key members of the wider school community who interact regularly with our students. These include, but are not limited to:

- School bus drivers who oversee student interactions during transport to and from school.
- Education welfare officers who provide guidance on student attendance and wellbeing.
- Local businesses near the school who may witness student interactions outside of school hours.

We encourage these members of our wider school network to be vigilant and proactive in recognising and reporting any concerns regarding bullying behaviour. By fostering open communication and collaboration, we aim to create a unified and supportive environment where all students feel safe, respected, and valued.

Preventing Racist, Sexist Bullying, and Sexual Harassment at St. Fergal's College

At St. Fergal's College, we are committed to fostering an inclusive and respectful school environment where every student, regardless of their cultural background or gender, feels valued and supported. Our goal is to eliminate all forms of bullying and harassment, including racist bullying, sexist bullying, and sexual harassment, and to create a safe space where all students can thrive. We believe in promoting

equality, respect, and kindness, and we take a proactive approach to preventing all forms of discrimination and harmful behaviour.

Preventing Racist Bullying Behaviour

St. Fergal's College is proud of its culturally diverse student body, with students from a wide range of national, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. To ensure that all students feel valued and are free from discrimination, we have implemented the following steps to prevent racist bullying:

- **Celebrating Diversity**: We foster a school culture where diversity is celebrated, ensuring that students see themselves reflected in our school environment through visible displays of cultural diversity.
- **Raising Awareness**: Workshops and seminars are conducted for students, staff, and parents to raise awareness about racism and strategies for combating it effectively.
- **Peer Support**: We encourage peer support through activities such as peer mentoring and empathy-building programs, where students can learn from each other's experiences and build mutual respect.
- **Bystander Involvement**: Students are encouraged to report any racist behaviour they witness, creating a sense of shared responsibility in preventing racism within the school community.
- **Targeted Support**: We offer support to students for whom English is an additional language and ensure effective communication with their families. We also provide tailored support for ethnic minority students, including Traveller and Roma students.
- **Cultural Engagement**: We invite speakers from diverse ethnic backgrounds to engage students and help them learn about different cultures and experiences.
- **Inclusive Resources**: We ensure that school resources, including textbooks and library materials, reflect the lived experiences of students from various national, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds.

Preventing Sexist Bullying Behaviour

At St. Fergal's College, we are dedicated to fostering a culture of gender equality and respect. We believe that every student, regardless of gender, should feel empowered to fully participate in all aspects of school life. To prevent sexist bullying, we implement a variety of strategies:

- **Modelling Respectful Behaviour**: We ensure that all staff treat students equally and respectfully, regardless of their gender, setting a positive example for the entire school community.
- **Equal Opportunities**: We provide equal opportunities for all students to engage in school activities, from sports to leadership roles, ensuring that every student, regardless of gender, can participate fully.

- **Celebrating Contributions**: We acknowledge and celebrate the contributions of all students, fostering an environment where everyone's talents and perspectives are valued.
- **Parental Involvement**: We work closely with parents to reinforce the values of respect, equality, and kindness, ensuring these principles are consistently upheld both in school and in the wider community.

Preventing Sexual Harassment Behaviour

At St. Fergal's College, we take a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment and are committed to ensuring that all students understand that such behaviour is unacceptable. We aim to educate students about healthy relationships, respect, and kindness, and we are dedicated to providing a safe environment where sexual harassment is not tolerated in any form. Our strategies to prevent sexual harassment include:

- **SPHE Curriculum**: We implement the SPHE curriculum at post-primary level to educate students about healthy relationships, respect, and how to treat one another with kindness and dignity.
- **Positive Role Models**: We encourage students to look up to positive role models within the school community who embody respect and equality.
- **Challenging Gender Stereotypes**: We actively work to challenge gender stereotypes that can contribute to harmful behaviours such as sexual harassment, creating an environment where everyone is free to express themselves without fear of judgement.

Creating a Respectful School Culture

Through these initiatives, we aim to create a school culture that not only prevents racist and sexist bullying and sexual harassment but also promotes respect, understanding, and equality among all members of the school community. At St. Fergal's College, every student, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or cultural background, should feel safe, valued, and respected. Our anti-bullying and anti-harassment policies are central to achieving this vision, and we are dedicated to maintaining a supportive and inclusive environment for all students

Preventing Cyberbullying Behaviour at St. Fergal's College

At St. Fergal's College, we recognise that technology and social media provide valuable opportunities for learning, entertainment, and social engagement. As digital platforms continue to shape the way young people interact, it is essential to ensure that students are equipped with the skills to navigate the online world safely and responsibly.

However, the increased use of technology has also made students more vulnerable to cyberbullying and inappropriate online behaviour. As a school, we are committed to addressing these challenges by promoting digital literacy, fostering a culture of respect online, and ensuring that students develop a strong sense of digital citizenship.

To proactively prevent cyberbullying, St. Fergal's College implements the following strategies:

- Delivering the SPHE curriculum, which includes lessons on online safety, respectful communication, and the impact of cyberbullying.
- Implementing the Digital Media Literacy curriculum, which educates students about responsible online behaviour and digital citizenship.
- Encouraging regular conversations with students about developing respectful and kind relationships online.
- Establishing and clearly communicating the Acceptable Use Policy for technology, ensuring students understand appropriate and responsible digital behaviour.
- Including references to appropriate online behaviour as part of the Code of Behaviour, reinforcing expectations for students' digital conduct.
- Hosting online safety events for parents to help them monitor and guide their children's online activity.
- Organising an Internet Safety Day to reinforce awareness around respectful and responsible online interactions.

Digital Age of Consent

The digital age of consent in Ireland is 16 years old. This means that social media and internet companies cannot collect, process, or store a user's data unless they are at least 16 years old.

For students between the ages of 13 and 16, parental permission is required to sign up for social media services that rely on user consent for data collection. Most social media platforms set a minimum age requirement of 13, meaning that children under this age should not have a social media account.

Parental Awareness and Support

At St. Fergal's College, we encourage parents to take an active role in monitoring their child's use of technology, including smartphones, social media platforms, and gaming consoles. Ensuring that young people use digital spaces safely is a shared responsibility between the school, parents, and students. By working together, we can create a supportive and informed community that prioritises respectful and responsible online behaviour.

Ethos and Pastoral Care

- Students are encouraged to treat everyone with respect.
- Promotion of a "listening school" culture, where students feel safe expressing their concerns.
- Opportunities to celebrate diversity and positive behaviour reinforcement.
- Building understanding of differences through the curriculum, role models, and visible representation of diverse backgrounds.
- Whole-school activities such as invited speakers, poster competitions, and designated awareness weeks.

Peer Support and Student Leadership

- 6th-year prefects mentor 1st-year students and monitor 2nd and 3rd years.
- Student Council involvement in fostering a safe school environment.

Supervision and Monitoring

- Supervision of corridors and recreational areas during lunch and break times.
- Vigilant monitoring of student interactions by staff.
- Use of CCTV in accordance with school policy.

Additional Preventative Strategies

- Whole-school Wellbeing Initiatives promoting positive relationships and respect.
- Cyberbullying Awareness Programmes to educate students on online safety.
- SPHE, CSPE, and Wellbeing curricula to develop students' empathy, resilience, and conflict resolution skills.
- Staff training to recognise and address bullying behaviour.
- Supervision and monitoring in classrooms, corridors, school grounds, and school transport.
- Peer Support Systems such as buddy programs and mentoring.
- Parental Engagement through workshops and awareness campaigns.
- Annual Awareness Week focused on bullying prevention and positive behaviour reinforcement.
- Involvement of Student Council in initiatives promoting a safe and inclusive environment.
- Restorative Practices encouraging dialogue and conflict resolution.
- Classroom discussions on friendship, bullying prevention, and digital safety.
- Clear reporting mechanisms, including an anonymous reporting system for students.

Additional Support may also include:

- Digital Wellbeing & Social Media Literacy – Incorporate digital citizenship modules such as **Be Internet Legends.**
- Bystander Intervention Training using **STEP UP!** to empower students to act responsibly when witnessing bullying.
- Peer Mediation & Conflict Resolution Workshops
- Trauma-Informed Practices to support students who have experienced bullying-related distress.
- Student-Led Awareness Campaigns, encouraging pupils to create and lead initiatives that promote a safe school environment.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

Procedures for Dealing with Incidents of Bullying Behaviour at St. Fergal's College

At St. Fergal's College, we are committed to maintaining a safe and supportive school environment, where all students feel valued, respected, and free from bullying. Our procedures for investigating, addressing, and recording bullying behaviour are based on a proactive approach to resolve issues and restore relationships. These procedures ensure that incidents of bullying are dealt with appropriately, and that parents, students, and external agencies are involved where necessary.

- ➤ 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.

Reporting Bullying Behaviour

- Any pupil, parent, or guardian may report bullying behaviour to any teacher at St. Fergal's College.
- All reports, including anonymous ones, will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher.
- Teaching and non-teaching staff, such as secretaries, SNAs, caretakers, and cleaners, are also required to report any incidents of bullying they witness or are made aware of to the relevant teacher.

Investigating and Dealing with Incidents of Bullying Behaviour

The primary aim of investigating bullying is to resolve issues and restore relationships, not to apportion blame. The process includes:

- The relevant teacher will use their professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best to resolve the situation.

- Parents and pupils are expected to cooperate with the investigation, supporting the school's efforts to restore relationships and resolve any issues.
- Teachers will take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach to all incidents.
- Where possible, incidents will be investigated outside of the classroom to ensure privacy.
- Interviews will be conducted sensitively, with respect for the rights of all involved.
- Teachers will seek answers to the following questions: What happened? Where and when did it happen? Who was involved? Why did it happen?
- If a group is involved, each member will be interviewed individually first, followed by a group meeting where each member will share their version of events.

Contacting Parents and Guardians

- When it is determined that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher will contact the parents or guardians of all parties involved to inform them of the situation and explain the actions being taken.
- Parents will be given the opportunity to discuss how they can reinforce the actions taken by the school and support the pupil involved.
- If a pupil is found to be engaging in bullying behaviour, the teacher will ensure they understand how their actions are in breach of the school's *Bí Cineálta* policy, and efforts will be made to help them see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied.
- In cases where disciplinary sanctions are required, these will remain a private matter between the pupil, their parents or guardians, and the school.

Follow-Up and Recording of Bullying Behaviour

To ensure bullying is adequately addressed, the following follow-up and recording procedures will be followed:

- The relevant teacher will consider whether the bullying behaviour has ceased, whether the issues between the parties have been resolved, and whether relationships have been restored, as far as is practicable.
- Feedback will be gathered from the parties involved, their parents, and school management (Principal or Deputy Principal).
- Follow-up meetings may be arranged to check on the progress of resolving the issue and to see if further action is necessary. If appropriate, students may be brought together at a later date.
- If parents are dissatisfied with how a bullying case has been dealt with, they will be directed to the school's complaints procedures.
- If the issue is not resolved through the complaints procedure, parents will be informed of their right to contact the Ombudsman for Children.

Recording Bullying Behaviour

It is essential that all bullying incidents are recorded objectively and factually. The following procedures will be adhered to:

- **Informal Stage (Pre-determination of bullying):** All staff must keep written records of any incidents of bullying they witness or are made aware of. These incidents should be reported to the relevant teacher, and the teacher will keep a record of actions taken.
- **Formal Stage 1 (Determination that bullying has occurred):** If bullying is confirmed, the teacher will keep appropriate written records of the incident and the actions taken to resolve it.
- **Formal Stage 2 (Appendix 3 from DES Procedures):** If bullying behaviour has not been adequately addressed within 20 school days, or if the school decides that certain bullying behaviours must be reported immediately, the teacher will use the recording template (Appendix 1) to document the situation and inform the Principal or Deputy Principal.

Established Intervention Strategies

At St. Fergal's College, we use a range of intervention strategies to address bullying behaviour. These include:

- Teacher interviews with all involved pupils.
- Negotiating agreements between pupils and following up on their progress, either informally or through structured mediation.
- Collaborating with parents to support the interventions being implemented by the school.
- No Blame Approach: This approach focuses on resolving the issue by working with the pupils involved without assigning blame, encouraging empathy and understanding.
- Restorative interviews and restorative conferencing to help students understand the impact of their actions and repair relationships.
- Implementing sociogram questionnaires to assess peer relationships and identify issues.
- Peer mediation, where appropriate, provided suitable training has been given.

Additional Intervention Strategies

St. Fergal's College also draws on additional intervention strategies. These include:

- The traditional disciplinary approach.
- Strengthening the victim by providing support and building resilience.
- Mediation and Restorative Practices (Trained teachers only).

- The Support Group Method, where a group of peers works together to address and resolve the bullying issue.
- The Method of Shared Concern, which involves engaging all students involved in the bullying to address the issue collectively.

Through these procedures and intervention strategies, St. Fergal's College aims to create a safe and supportive environment for all students, ensuring that bullying behaviour is effectively addressed and that all members of the school community are treated with respect and dignity.

Requests to Take No Action at St. Fergal's College

At St. Fergal's College, we recognise that a student who reports bullying behaviour may ask that no action be taken beyond monitoring the situation. A student may not want to be identified as the person reporting the bullying, or they may feel that bringing it to someone's attention could make things more difficult for them. In such cases, the staff member involved must approach the situation with empathy and sensitivity.

When a student requests that no formal action be taken, the staff member will:

- Listen carefully to the student's concerns, ensuring they feel supported and safe.
- Work with the student to explore possible steps that can be taken to address the situation in a way that respects their wishes, while still ensuring their safety and well-being.
- Discuss how the student's parents will be informed of the situation and involve the student in this process, ensuring that they are comfortable with the communication.

It is essential that the student who has experienced bullying behaviour feels safe throughout this process. We will always prioritise the emotional and physical safety of our students, ensuring they feel supported and heard.

In some cases, parents may also inform the school of bullying behaviour and specifically request that no action be taken. In such instances, parents should submit their request in writing to the school, or be supported in doing so if there are literacy, digital literacy, or language barriers.

While we will acknowledge the parent's request, it is important to note that St. Fergal's College may decide that, depending on the circumstances, it is in the best interest of the student and the school community to address the bullying behaviour. The safety and well-being of all students remain our priority, and we will take appropriate action as needed, in line with our *Bí Cineálta* policy.

Determining if Bullying Behaviour Has Ceased at St. Fergal's College

At St. Fergal's College, we are committed to ensuring that bullying behaviour is effectively addressed and that any ongoing issues are closely monitored. No more than 20 school days after the initial discussion regarding the bullying incident, the relevant teacher will follow up with the students and their parents to review the progress of the situation following the initial intervention.

As part of the review, the teacher will consider:

- The nature of the bullying behaviour that occurred.
- The effectiveness of the strategies and actions taken to address the bullying behaviour.
- The relationship between the students involved, ensuring that any tensions or issues are properly addressed.

Even if the bullying behaviour appears to have ceased, it is important to continue providing support for both the student who was bullied and the student who displayed the bullying behaviour. Building trust and restoring relationships can take time, and ongoing supervision and support may still be necessary to ensure that everyone involved feels safe and supported.

In some cases, relationships may not return to how they were prior to the bullying, but it is essential that we continue to work towards fostering a positive and respectful school environment for all students.

If the bullying behaviour has not ceased, the teacher will review the strategies used in consultation with the students and their parents. A follow-up meeting will be arranged with an agreed timeframe to assess further progress until the bullying behaviour is fully resolved.

If it becomes clear that the student displaying the bullying behaviour is continuing their actions, the school will consider using the appropriate strategies outlined in the school's Code of Behaviour. Should disciplinary sanctions be necessary, this will be discussed directly with the relevant student and their parents, in line with the school's procedures

Recording Bullying Behaviour at St. Fergal's College

At St. Fergal's College, all incidents of bullying behaviour are carefully recorded to ensure that each case is addressed effectively and consistently. The record should document the following details:

- The form and type of bullying behaviour, if known.
- The date, time, and location where the incident took place.
- The date of the initial engagement with the students and their parents.

The record should also include the perspectives of the students and their parents regarding the actions taken to address the bullying behaviour. Following the intervention, the record should reflect the follow-up review with the students and parents to assess whether the bullying behaviour has ceased. It should include the views of all parties involved on this matter.

It is crucial to document the date of each engagement, as well as the date it is determined that the bullying behaviour has ceased. If external services or supports are involved, this should also be noted in the record.

All records are retained in line with St. Fergal's College's record-keeping policy and in compliance with data protection regulations.

For students who have a Student Support File, a copy of the bullying incident record should be placed in the file. This will assist the Student Support Team in providing a coordinated and holistic response to support the wellbeing of the students involved. If a Student Support Plan exists for any of the students involved, the plan should be updated to include response strategies and relevant support mechanisms. This ensures a consistent and informed approach to supporting students throughout the resolution process.

St. Fergal's College Anti-Bullying Policy

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

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 the *St. Fergal's College 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 section 6.8.9 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, parents and students are expected to cooperate 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

- St. Fergal's College promotes a policy of restorative justice, encouraging students to resolve their differences through supervised discussion.
- Working with the people concerned, the Year Head/Deputy Principal/Principal will devise a plan for the resolution of the conflict. This plan (usually verbal) will include targets for acceptable behaviour and will outline support measures to be provided for the students involved.
- The Year Head will monitor the progress of the students involved by liaising with class tutors, teachers, and arranging 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 at the school where their assistance in supporting a resolution to the issue will be sought. Sanctions may be imposed in accordance with the *St. Fergal's College Code of Behaviour*.
- If the situation is not satisfactorily resolved, the matter will be referred to the Board of Management. Sanctions may be imposed in accordance with the *St. Fergal's College Code of Behaviour*.
- Offenders and victims of bullying may be referred, with their parents' permission, to the school guidance counsellor. Parents may also be advised to seek a referral to the Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Service (HSE).

Sanctions that may apply, 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 external agencies such as NEPS, the HSE, and the Gardaí, where it deems such assistance necessary to effectively address bullying behaviour. In cases where bullying behaviour is considered potentially abusive (see sections 6.8.12, 6.8.13, and 6.8.14 of the DES Anti-Bullying Procedures), the school will consult with the HSE's Children and Family Services to draw up an appropriate response, seek advice, or 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 timeframe by the Year Head.

V. Prevention of Harassment

The Board of Management confirms that St. Fergal's College will, in accordance with its obligations under equality legislation, take all steps reasonably practicable to prevent sexual harassment or harassment 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.

VI. 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

Complaint Process

If a parent is not satisfied with how bullying behaviour has been addressed by the school, in accordance with these procedures, they should refer to St. Fergal's College's complaints procedure.

For more information regarding the school's complaints procedures, parents can consult the following link: https://www.stfergals.ie/complaints-procedure

In the event that a student and/or parent is dissatisfied with how a complaint has been handled, they may make a formal complaint to the Ombudsman for Children if they believe that the school's actions have had a negative effect on the student.

The Office of the Ombudsman for Children can be contacted via email at: ococomplaint@oco.ie

Section D: Oversight

St. Fergal's College: Policy Adoption and Review

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on December 4th 2025. The implementation and effectiveness of St. Fergal's Bi Cineálta 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 appropriate actions will be taken. This reflective practice will contribute to the annual review.

Anti-bullying will also be an agenda item for staff meetings to ensure 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 to monitor levels of bullying behaviour and identify issues requiring attention. This analysis will complement other information gathered, such as bullying surveys.

Bullying Behaviour Update to the Board of Management

At each ordinary Board of Management meeting, the Principal must present an update on bullying behaviour, outlining:

- The number of incidents of bullying behaviour reported since the last meeting.
- The number of incidents currently ongoing.
- The total number of incidents reported since the beginning of the school year.

Where incidents of bullying behaviour have been reported, the Principal will provide a verbal report, including:

- Trends and patterns identified, such as the form, type, location, and timing of bullying behaviour.
- Strategies used to address bullying behaviour.
- Wider school strategies implemented to prevent bullying.
- If any serious incidents have occurred that had a significant adverse impact on a student.

- If a parent has reported that a student left the school due to bullying behaviour.
- Any additional support required from the Board of Management.
- Whether the school's Bi Cineálta policy requires urgent review ahead of the annual review.

This update will not include any personal information or identifying details of students involved.

The minutes of the Board of Management meeting will document the number of new incidents, the number of ongoing incidents, and the total number of incidents since the beginning of the school year, as reported by the Principal. The Board will consider the verbal report and document any decision regarding an urgent review of the school's Bi Cineálta policy.

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.

Policy Review

The Board of Management will undertake an annual review of the school's Bi Cineálta Policy and its implementation in accordance with Section 7.2 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools. This will involve:

- Using the checklist included in Appendix 2 of this policy.
- Ensuring that an action plan is in place to address any areas for improvement identified.
- Providing written notification of the review to school personnel, publishing it on the school website, and informing the Parent School Association.
- Recording details of the review in the minutes of the Board of Management meeting that adopted the review.
- Making the record of the review available to the Patron and the DES upon request.

The Inspectorate will focus on the actions taken by the school to create a positive school culture and prevent and address bullying.

Annual Review and Reporting of Bi Cineálta Policy

The school's Bi Cineálta policy must be reviewed annually or as soon as practicable when warranted by the Board of Management. The review process will involve

input from the entire school community, including students, parents, staff, and the Board of Management. Engagement with the Student Council and Parent School Association (where applicable) will ensure that all voices are considered in assessing the effectiveness of the policy.

Feedback will be sought regularly through open discussions with staff, students, and parents on the school's approaches to preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.

In cases where bullying behaviour has had a significant adverse impact on a student, the school will review the measures taken and identify lessons learned to prevent recurrence. This may result in updates to the Bi Cineálta policy.

Once the annual review is completed, the school community will be notified, and the confirmation form included in Appendix F will be published on the school website.

National Reporting of Bullying Behaviour

To effectively prevent and address bullying behaviour at a national level, anonymised data on bullying behaviour in schools will be collated for an annual national report. St. Fergal's College will participate in this initiative as part of the implementation of Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying. The anonymised data will support professional learning, policy development, and research on bullying prevention.

Schools will receive notifications regarding the data submission process once the national system is developed and launched.

Role of the Inspectorate

The Inspectorate evaluates compliance and quality in the implementation of the Bi Cineálta procedures to prevent and address bullying behaviour. Inspections will assess the effectiveness of policies, staff training, and student support strategies.

SPHE curriculum inspections will review how bullying prevention is taught, and Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections will assess the effectiveness of student learning about bullying and school responses to reported cases.

Wellbeing-focused Whole School Evaluations will include a broad review of the school's efforts to create a positive and inclusive environment, ensuring that all necessary documents, including minutes from Board of Management meetings, are maintained and made available upon request.

Schools will receive further guidance on the parameters for these inspections once the framework is finalized and launched in late 2024.

Signed: _John King_ (Chairperson, Board of Management)
Date: 03/12/2025

Signed: _Cole June_ (Principal)
Date: 03/12/2025

This policy is available on the school website and in hard copy upon request.

Appendices

Appendix C – Bullying Behaviour: Checklist for Determining if Bullying has Occurred

This checklist is to be completed by the relevant teacher when investigating a reported incident.

1. Was the behaviour targeted and intentional? □ Yes □ No

2. Was the behaviour repeated (or could it reasonably be expected to be repeated)? □ Yes □ No

3. Was there an imbalance of power? □ Yes □ No

If the answer to all three questions is 'Yes', then the behaviour should be regarded as bullying in line with the 2024 Bí Cineálta Procedures.

Appendix D – Template for Recording Bullying Behaviour

This form must be used to record established incidents of bullying behaviour.

Name of student(s) affected: _____

Name(s) of student(s) engaged in bullying behaviour:

_____

Class/Year group: _____   Date of incident: _____

Type of bullying behaviour (tick all that apply):
□ Physical □ Verbal □ Racist □ Homophobic/Transphobic □ Cyber □
Sexual/Harassment □ Other

Equality Ground(s) involved (if relevant):
□ Gender □ Civil Status □ Family Status □ Sexual Orientation □ Religion □ Age □
Disability □ Race □ Traveller Community

Description of behaviour (include details, location, context):

_____
_____
_____

Actions taken (interventions, supports, referrals):

_____
_____
_____

Follow-up planned (check-ins, monitoring): _____

Recorded by: _____   Date: _____

Appendix E – Checklist for Annual Review of the Anti-Bullying Policy and its Implementation

This checklist is for completion by the Board of Management at the annual review.

1. Has the policy been reviewed in line with the 2024 Bí Cineálta Procedures? □ Yes □ No

2. Has the policy been made available to school staff, parents and students? □ Yes □ No

3. Is the policy published on the school website? □ Yes □ No

4. Has the Principal provided a report on bullying at each ordinary Board of Management meeting? □ Yes □ No

5. Have prevention strategies been implemented across curriculum and school culture? □ Yes □ No

6. Have records of bullying behaviour been maintained using the official template? □ Yes □ No

7. Have these records been analysed for patterns and trends? □ Yes □ No

8. Has a student-friendly version of the policy been developed and displayed? □ Yes □ No

9. Has the annual review been formally minuted and adopted by the Board? □ Yes □ No

Appendix F – Notification regarding the Board of Management's Annual Review

The Board of Management of _____ St Fergal's College wishes to inform the school community that:

• The Board of Management has completed the annual review of the school's Anti-Bullying Policy and its implementation in line with the 2024 Bí Cineálta Procedures.

• This review was conducted at a meeting of the Board held on: _____

• The Board confirms that the review was conducted in accordance with the checklist set out in Appendix E of the Procedures.

Signed: _____ (Chairperson, Board of Management)

Date: _____

St. Fergal's College – Bí Cineálta: Be Kind

Our Student-Friendly Anti-Bullying Policy

What is Bullying?

Bullying is when someone:

- Targets another person on purpose
- Repeats harmful behaviour (in person or online)
- Has more power (size, numbers, status, or online advantage)
- Causes harm: physical, emotional, or social

A single nasty message online can count as bullying if it is shared around.

Examples

- Name-calling, slagging, or "the look"
- Excluding or spreading rumours
- Racist, sexist, homophobic or transphobic comments
- Sharing images or private info without consent
- Hitting, pushing, damaging property
- Online abuse, fake accounts, nasty group chats

What To Do If You're Worried

- Tell: Year Head, Guidance Counsellor, teacher, Deputy Principal or Principal
- Write: Use the anonymous "Niggle Box" or reporting form
- Ask: A parent, guardian or friend to report for you
- Remember: You will be listened to, and action will be taken

What Happens Next

1. Teacher listens and investigates fairly.
2. Parents/guardians are contacted if bullying is confirmed.
3. Supports are given to everyone involved.
4. Actions are agreed to stop the bullying.
5. Situation is checked again to make sure it has stopped.

Your Rights

At St. Fergal's College, everyone has the right to:
- Feel safe and respected
- Be included and treated fairly
- Learn in peace
- Be yourself without fear

Be an Upstander, not a Bystander

- If you see bullying, don't join in.
- Report it – speaking up is not telling tales, it's helping.
- Support your friends – kindness matters.

Remember

Bullying is never OK.
Our school is a Bí Cineálta school: Be kind. Be respectful. Be supportive.