



Scoil Fhionáin **An Fál Carrach**

Anti- Bullying Policy

1. In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the code of behaviour guidelines issued by the NEWB, the Board of Management of Scoil Fhionáin has adopted the following anti-bullying policy within the framework of the school's overall code of behaviour. This policy fully complies with the requirements of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools which were published in September 2013. We are bound by our obligations under the Children First Act 2015, and guided by the Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017 guidelines.

Bullying is defined as "unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against another person (or persons) **and which is repeated over time**. These procedures make clear that this definition includes cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying (such as homophobic bullying and racist bullying)". (Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools) During Covid 19 school closures, parents/guardians and children are reminded of their responsibilities around online etiquette, when engaged in distance learning.

2. 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:

A positive school culture and climate which:

- is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity;
 - encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment; and
 - promotes respectful relationships across the school community; The Green Flag project, which fosters respect and care for people and the environment, through the themes of Global Citizenship.
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- Effective leadership;
 - A school-wide approach i.e., Scoil Fhionáin Wellbeing Policy which was introduced in 2018/19.
 - 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 through programmes as F.R.I.E.N.D.S and Circle Time delivered to senior classes.

To explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.

Whole-school planning ensures lessons on Bullying and its Prevention take place during the following months: October, November, January and February. Stay Safe lessons are taught in April/May.

Programmes effective in ensuring children's voices are heard are delivered to 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th classes.

- Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils; the formation of a Student Council in 2018/19.
- Supports for staff, for example wellbeing workshops during after-school staff meetings.
- Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies); and
- Ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy, particularly getting feedback from 5th and 6th class pupils.

3. In accordance with the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools bullying is defined as follows:

Definition of Bullying

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

(Department of Education & Science September 2013)

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

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

3.2 In addition, in the context of these procedures 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.

3.3 Isolated or once -off incidents of intentional negative behaviour including once- off offensive or hurtful text message or other private messaging do not fall within this definition of bullying and should be dealt with, as appropriate, in accordance with the school's code of behaviour. A single incident can have a serious effect on a pupil and may also constitute harassment which is legally prohibited in schools under equality legislation. Harassment is any form of unwanted conduct related to any of the nine discriminatory grounds (gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community).

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

Every child has the right to enjoy his / her learning and leisure free from bullying, both in the school and in the surrounding community.

Our school community will NOT tolerate any form of bullying, even if the unkind actions were not intended to hurt.

TYPES OF BULLYING

- **Intimidation**

Some bullying behaviour takes the form of intimidation: it may be based on the use of aggressive body language with the voice being used as a weapon. Particularly upsetting can be a facial expression which conveys aggression and/or dislike.

- **Physical Aggression**

This behaviour includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping people. It may also take the form of severe physical assault. While pupils often engage in 'mess fights', they can sometimes be used as a disguise for physical harassment or inflicting pain.

- **Name calling**

Persistent name-calling directed at the same individual(s) which hurts, insults or humiliates should be regarded as a form of bullying behaviour. Often name calling of this type refers to physical appearance, e.g., size or clothes worn. Accent or distinctive voice characteristics may attract negative attention. Academic ability can also provoke name calling. This tends to operate at two extremes. There are those who are singled out for attention because they are perceived to be weak academically. At the other extreme there are those who, because they are perceived as high achievers, are also targeted.

- **Isolation / Exclusion and other relational bullying**

This occurs where a certain person is deliberately isolated, excluded or ignored by some or all of the class group. This practice is usually initiated by the person engaged in bullying behaviour and can be difficult to detect. It may be accompanied by writing insulting remarks about the pupil in public places, by passing around notes about or drawings of the pupil or by whispering insults about them loud enough to be heard. Relational bullying occurs when a person's attempts to socialise and form relationships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined. One of the most common forms includes control: "Do this or I won't be your friend anymore" (implied or stated); a group ganging up against one person (girl or boy); non-verbal gesturing; malicious gossip; spreading rumours about a person or giving them the "silent treatment".

- **Damage to property**

Personal property can be the focus of attention for bullying behaviour. This may result in damage to clothing, mobile phone or other devices, school books and other learning material or interference with a pupil's locker or bicycle. The contents of school bags and pencil cases may be scattered on the floor. Items of personal property may be defaced, broken, stolen or hidden.

- **Extortion**

Demands for money may be made, often accompanied by threats (sometimes carried out in the event of the targeted pupil not delivering on the demand). A pupil may also be forced into theft of property for delivery to another who is engaged in bullying behaviour.

- **Online (Cyber) Bullying**

This type of bullying is increasingly common and is continuously evolving. It is bullying carried out through the use of information and communication technologies such as text, social network sites, e-mail, instant messaging (IM), apps, gaming sites, chat-rooms and other online technologies. Being the target of inappropriate or hurtful messages is the most common form of online bullying. As cyber-bullying uses technology to perpetrate bullying behaviour and does not require face to face contact, cyber-bullying can occur at any time (day or night). Many forms of bullying can be facilitated through cyber-bullying. For example, a target may be sent homophobic text messages or pictures may be posted with negative comments about a person's sexuality, appearance etc.

IMPACT AND INDICATORS OF BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

Impacts of bullying behaviour

- Pupils who are being bullied may develop feelings of insecurity, humiliation and extreme anxiety and thus may become more vulnerable. Self-confidence may be damaged with a consequent lowering of self-esteem. While they may not talk about what is happening to them, their suffering is indicated through changes in mood and behaviour. Extreme cases of bullying may result in suicide. It is, therefore, essential to be alert to changes in behaviour as early intervention can be very effective.
- 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 can also feel guilt or distress at not being able to help the person being bullied.
- There are also consequences for individuals who engage in bullying behaviour. Pupils who become involved in such behaviour can be at higher risk of depression. Other possible long-term consequences may include an increased risk of developing an anti-social personality, anxiety disorders, a likelihood of substance abuse and law-breaking behaviour in adulthood and decreased educational and occupational attainment

Indicators of Bullying Behaviour

They include:

- (a) Anxiety about travelling to and from school.
- (b) Unwillingness to go to school: mitching.
- (c) Deterioration in educational performance.
- (d) Pattern of physical illness (headaches etc.)
- (e) Unexplained change of mood or behaviour.
- (f) Visible signs of anxiety or distress. (Stammering, nightmares, bed-wetting etc.)
- (g) Spontaneous out-of-character comments about pupils or teachers.
- (h) Possessions missing or damaged.
- (i) Increased requests for money or stealing money.

(j) Unexplained bruising or cuts or damaged clothing.

(k) Reluctance to say what is troubling him/her.

There may be other signs depending on the individual and his/her 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.

Role of Bystander:

Children are reminded that they are obliged to speak up for one who is suffering bullying. If they do not report incidences of bullying, they are enabling the bullying to continue. For further information, see www.tacklebullying.ie, and www.webwise.ie

4. CHARACTERISTICS ASSOCIATED WITH BULLYING

It is important to recognise that any pupil can be bullied or can engage in bullying behaviour.

4.1 The pupil who engages in bullying behaviour

- A significant proportion of bullying is not merely behavioural but is rooted in a lack of respect for diversity and in social inequalities. "Prejudice-based" or "identity based" bullying can be a significant factor in bullying behaviour.
- Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour tend to display aggressive attitudes combined with a low level of self-discipline. They may lack any sense of remorse convincing themselves that the other person deserves the treatment they are receiving.
- Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour can be attention seeking: setting out to impress bystanders and responding to the reaction their behaviour provokes. They can lack the ability to empathise. They can appear unaware or indifferent to the other person's feelings. It is of note that pupils who exhibit bullying behaviour often suffer from a lack of confidence and have low self-esteem.
- However, it must also be recognised that pupils who engage in bullying behaviour do not always intend to bully or may not recognise the potential negative impact of their words and actions on others.
- It is not uncommon to find that pupils who engage in bullying behaviour may also have been bullied themselves.

4.2 The pupil who is bullied

- Any pupil through no fault of their own may be a target of bullying. It is common in the course of normal interaction for pupils to tease or taunt each other. However, at a certain point, teasing and taunting may become forms of bullying behaviour. As pupils can be particularly quick to notice differences in others, pupils who are perceived as different in some way can be more prone to encounter such behaviour. However, the pupils who are most at risk of being bullied are those who react in a vulnerable and distressed manner. The seriousness and duration of the bullying behaviour can be related to the pupil's continuing response to the verbal, physical or psychological aggression.
- Pupils who are bullied often experience difficulties in speaking up about bullying. The difficulties include:
 - (i) Fear of reprisals;
 - (ii) Concerns about being perceived as a "tell-tale" for reporting bullying;

- (iii) Concerns about “getting into trouble” with the principal or teacher for reporting bullying;
- (iv) Not having evidence to back up a bullying allegation;
- (v) Not knowing how the matter will be dealt with by the school; and
- (vi) Not feeling fully confident of being believed.

4.3 More vulnerable pupils

- While bullying can happen to any pupil, it is known that some may be more vulnerable to or at risk of experiencing bullying. Such vulnerable groups include pupils with disabilities or special educational needs, those from ethnic minority and migrant groups, pupils from the Traveller community, lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT+) pupils and those perceived to be LGBT+ and pupils of minority religious faiths.
- There can be an increased vulnerability to bullying amongst pupils with special educational needs and particularly those who do not understand social cues and/or have difficulty communicating. Some pupils with complex needs may lack understanding of social situations and therefore trust everyone implicitly. Such pupils may be more vulnerable because they do not have the same social skills or capacity as others to recognise and defend themselves against bullying behaviour. Research suggests that children with disabilities and with special educational needs (SEN) are more likely to be bullied than others. Bullying can also have a more severe impact on such children. For example, some studies which compare the impact of bullying on children with and without certain disabilities, such as a speech and language difficulty, show that bullying has a greater impact on self-esteem for those with a disability.
- Homophobic and transphobic bullying (bullying targeted at those who are or who are perceived to be LGBT+) has also been found to be prevalent with evidence that such pupils have particular difficulty in speaking up or reporting the bullying behaviour.

4.4 Where does bullying happen?

Bullying can happen anywhere at any time but there are certain times and places which particularly facilitate bullying.

- **Online bullying:** Access to technology means that cyber-bullying can happen around the clock and the pupil’s home may not even be a safe haven from such bullying. Pupils are increasingly communicating in ways that are often unknown to adults and free from supervision. The nature of these technologies means digital content can be shared and seen by a very wide audience almost instantly and is almost impossible to delete permanently. While online bullying often takes place at home and at night, the impact can also, be felt in school. With the advent of Covid 19 related schools’ closures, children may have increased access to internet. Therefore parents/guardians are reminded of their safeguarding responsibilities at this time.
- **Areas of unstructured activity:** Bullying in schools frequently takes place in the playground/schoolyard. School grounds with hidden or obscured parts may provide an environment conducive to bullying. Many common playground/schoolyard games present opportunities for bullying because of their physical nature. It is relatively easy to single out and bully another pupil. The noise level masks much of what is going on. The playground/schoolyard provides the opportunity for older pupils to pick on younger pupils. It can also be the setting for bullying by groups. Continuing provocation may eventually lead to a physical fight and ironically in some cases the person being bullied may appear to be the aggressor because he/she finally gives vent to his/her frustration. Toilets, corridors, cloakrooms, locker areas, changing rooms, showers, the gym and assembly hall may be the scene of verbal, psychological and physical bullying. The behaviour of pupils in those areas needs careful monitoring.
- **Bullying in the classroom:** Bullying may also take place in class. It may occur

subtly through glances, looks and sniggers but may take the more overt form of physical intimidation. It may also be exacerbated if a classroom atmosphere prevails whereby pupils are allowed to make derogatory comments about their classmates or other teachers. However, teachers need to be alert to the underlying reasons for such comments in case pupils are trying to disclose something which is disturbing them and thus needs further investigation. Bullying may also occur between class periods irrespective of whether the class or the teacher moves.

- **Coming to and from school:** The area immediately outside the school, the local shops and local neighbourhood are often the scenes of bullying. Bullying can also take place at the bus-stop or on the journey to and from school whether the individuals are walking, cycling or on school buses.

SCHOOLS DO MAKE A DIFFERENCE!!

School Staff

Create a positive, caring atmosphere where complaints and problems are dealt with.

Provide: Incentives & Rewards

Avoid: Threats and Punishments.

Encourage. Co-operative Learning,
Peer Tutoring
Peer Support: *Mediation*
 Counselling
 Befriending

Remember school staff are significant role models at all times. It is important to note here that interventions by teachers can be most effective- most often, a quiet word at the right time can be effective in bringing the behaviour to an end. A Daily, then Weekly, then Monthly check in with pupil who has been affected, ensures that there is a satisfactory outcome to the case in question.

Parents /Guardians

How do we involve parents in awareness raising?

THINGS PARENTS/GUARDIANS CAN DO

Prevention is better than cure.

1. Empower schools to act.
2. Empower pupils to report injury.
3. Discuss Bullying Behaviour with your children. It is the repeated behaviour/incidents that constitute bullying, although online bullying can be a matter of a single incident.
4. Challenge every incident of Bullying Behaviour that is witnessed

PARENTS

- Enhance self-esteem
- Promote confidence
- Avoid inconsistent discipline
- Avoid power-assertive methods of discipline
- Give children responsibility
- Exercise democracy.

REMEMBER: Lead by example!

TO BE SUCCESSFUL A POLICY ON BULLYING MUST:

- *Have the support of the managerial authority of the school*
- *Be drawn up in consultation with the managerial authority, the Principal, the staff, academic and non-academic, parents and pupils.*
- *Recognise that bullying is a serious offence.*
- *Apply to everyone.*
- *Be implemented.*

POLICY IS ONLY EFFECTIVE IF THERE IS A SCHOOL CLIMATE WHICH ENCOURAGES

Respect

Tolerance

Caring

Trust

Support

These criteria must apply to relationships between

<i>Pupil</i>	<i>=></i>	<i>Pupil</i>
<i>Staff</i>	<i>=></i>	<i>Pupil</i>
<i>Staff</i>	<i>=></i>	<i>Staff</i>

PROCEDURES FOR INVESTIGATING & DEALING WITH BULLYING

It is agreed that the following procedures will be followed in Scoil Fhionáin if a case of bullying behaviour is reported or detected.

1. The class teacher will ask the victim to give an account of what happened: he/she will seek answers of what, where, when, who and why. The child will be assured that it was correct to tell.

It may be useful to appoint one staff member to whom all bullying cases are referred. All children would be made aware of who that member was.

2. The alleged perpetrator will be asked for his/her account of what happened. If a number of children are involved, each member will be interviewed individually.
3. A written record of discussions with those involved will be made by the teacher. He/ She will report the matter to the Principal and they will have a

detailed discussion on all aspects of the case.

4. Since many cases of bullying are of an unpremeditated and thoughtless nature the teaching and SNA staff will attempt to deal with the problem in school by discussion and reasoning with the parties involved.
5. If it is determined that serious bullying behaviour has occurred or that it remains ongoing in spite of the efforts of the Staff, the Principal will arrange to discuss the matter with the parents of the victim.
6. The Principal will then also arrange to discuss the matter with the parents of the alleged culprit.
7. It would be expected that the matter could then be resolved in the context of the school's code of Behaviour and Discipline.
8. Follow-up meetings with the two parties involved will be arranged if considered desirable and useful.
9. Counselling may be deemed necessary for both victim and culprit. This will be arranged in consultation with the parents.

If a parent wishes to inform the school of a case of bullying they can approach their child's teacher to discuss or they can bring it to the attention of the principal.

- The teacher/principal will record the incidents being brought to their attention
- They will arrange a date for a follow up meeting with the parent within 14 days to allow for an investigation in to the matter using the procedures outlined above. 1 – 9

It is agreed that in the matter of countering bullying behaviour in our school the utmost co-operation should prevail between the school authorities and parents and guardians.

Support for the victim

Support will be provided to the victim in a number of ways as it is important for the victim to be aware that there are so many people in the school that care for them too.

1. Action will be taken in a swift manner to provide reassurance
2. The victim will be separated from the bully when discussing the details of the bullying and will be fully supported.
3. The victim will be offered additional protection in regards to lunch breaks and incident hotspots
4. Bullying prevention practices will be adopted to reduce the possibility of further distress
5. A buddy/mentor may be assigned to the victim
6. The victim will also be provided with a list of resources and websites for both themselves and their parents.

AIMS OF ANTI- BULLYING POLICY

The aims of the anti-bullying policy in Scoil Fhionáin are as follows:

1. To create a school ethos which encourages children to feel free to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.
2. To raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with school management, teachers, pupils, parents/guardians.

3. To foster the attitude in school that there are no "bystanders" in a bullying situation, i.e., that everyone has an obligation to report and prevent bullying.
4. To ensure comprehensive supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of school activity are kept under observation.
5. To develop procedures for noting and reporting incidents of bullying behaviour.
6. To develop procedures for investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.
7. To foster the atmosphere within the school where a child can feel free to look for help if they are being bullied and to have an expectation that their problem will be investigated fairly and acted upon.
8. To develop a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and for those involved in bullying behaviour.
9. To continue the support and to be seen to be continuing the monitoring after the event for whatever length of time is needed to ensure that the bullying has stopped.
10. To work with and through the various local agencies in countering all forms of bullying and anti-social behaviour.
11. To evaluate the effectiveness of school policy on anti-bullying behaviour on a regular basis.

Children from 1st Class to 6th Class participated in a personal survey. Information from this survey was used to inform teaching and also involved the principal engaging with a number of students that wished to make recommendations and comments in regards to their experiences and observations.

Parents completed a survey at home which also informed this policy.

This policy will be reviewed and revised every October, and presented to the Board of Management for ratification, and will be again reviewed at teachers' meeting in November. The Student Council will be asked for their views, and the Parents' Association will be notified when review has taken place. Notice of review will be placed on school website.

This policy was reviewed on the 5th October 2021 (Staff meeting 20/10/21, children's survey 16/10/21, and parent's questionnaire 19/10/21) It will be reviewed annually or as necessary.

Signed: Fr James Gillespie, on behalf of Board of Management of Scoil Fhionáin

Signed: Stiofán Ó Canainn, principal

APPENDIX 1:

Practical tips for building a positive school culture and climate

1. The following are some practical tips for immediate actions that can be taken to help build a positive school culture and climate and to help prevent and tackle bullying behaviour.
2. Model respectful behaviour to all members of the school community at all times.
3. Explicitly teach pupils what respectful language and respectful behaviour looks like, acts like, sounds like and feels like in class and around the school.
4. Display key respect messages in classrooms, in assembly areas and around the school. Involve pupils in the development of these messages.
5. Catch them being good - notice and acknowledge desired respectful behaviour by providing positive attention.
6. Consistently tackle the use of discriminatory and derogatory language in the school – this includes homophobic and racist language and language that is belittling of pupils with a disability or SEN.
7. Give constructive feedback to pupils when respectful behaviour and respectful language are absent.
8. Have a system of encouragement and rewards to promote desired behaviour and compliance with the school rules and routines.
9. Explicitly teach pupils about the appropriate use of social media.
10. Positively encourage pupils to comply with the school rules on mobile phone and internet use.
11. Follow-up and follow through with pupils who ignore the rules.
12. Actively involve parents and/or the Parents' Association in awareness raising campaigns around social media.
13. Actively promote the right of every member of the school community to be safe and secure in school.
14. Highlight and explicitly teach school rules in pupil friendly language in the classroom and in common areas.
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15. All staff can actively watch out for signs of bullying behaviour.
16. Ensure there are adequate playground/school yard/outdoor supervision.
17. School staff can get pupils to help them to identify bullying 'hot spots' and 'hot times' for bullying in the school:-
 - a. Hot spots tend to be in the playground/school yard/outdoor areas, changing rooms, corridors and other areas of unstructured supervision.
 - b. Hot times again tend to be times where there is less structured supervision such as when pupils are in the playground/school yard or moving classrooms.
18. Support the establishment and work of student councils.