

## Anti-Bullying Policy

In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the code of behaviour guidelines issued by the NEWB, the Board of Management of St. Felim's N.S 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.

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;
- promotes respectful relationships across the school community;
- Effective leadership;
- A school-wide approach;
- A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact;
- Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils;
- Explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.
- Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils;
- Supports for staff;
- Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies);
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy

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

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

The following types of bullying behaviour are included in the definition of bullying:

- deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying,
- cyber-bullying 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.

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

However, in the context of this policy, **placing a once-off offensive or hurtful public message, image or statement on a social network site or other public forum where that message, image or statement can be viewed and/or repeated by other people will be regarded as bullying behaviour.**

Negative behaviour that does not meet this definition of bullying will be dealt with in accordance with St. Felim's NS school's code of behaviour.

### **DEFINITION AND TYPES OF BULLYING**

In the context of the DES procedures, bullying is defined as unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time.

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

- (i) Deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying;
- (ii) cyber-bullying; and
- (iii) 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.

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.

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

### **Types of Bullying**

The following are some of the types of bullying behaviour that can occur amongst pupils:

**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.

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

**Isolation/exclusion** and other relational bullying: This occurs where a certain person is deliberately isolated, excluded or ignored by some or the entire 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”.

**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.

**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.

**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

#### **4. Procedures for Reporting of Bullying and the relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying**

A pupil or parent may bring a bullying concern to any teacher in St. Felim’s N.S.

Individual teachers must take appropriate measures regarding reports of bullying behaviour in accordance with this policy.

In this policy, the member of teaching staff who has responsibility for investigating and dealing with bullying is referred to as the “relevant teacher”, this teacher will normally be the class teacher and or the supervising teacher on duty in the yard. Serious cases of bullying will be referred to the principal. Reports of bullying behaviour on the way to and from school will be investigated by the principal.

**5. The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber bullying & identity based bullying including anti-racist bullying and bullying of members of the Traveller Community))**

The prevention of bullying is an integral part of the anti-bullying policy of St. Felim's N.S. Effective practice includes prevention and awareness raising measures across all aspects of bullying and involves strategies to engage pupils in addressing problems when they arise. In particular, these strategies will build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils.

As self-esteem is a major factor in determining behaviour, St. Felim's NS will, through both curricular and extra-curricular programmes, provide pupils with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth.

In St. Felim's N.S. through teaching the Social, Personal, Health Education (SPHE) Programme, Stay Safe Programme and Relationships and Sexuality Programme (RSE) and participating in the Yellow Flag Programme we will raise awareness, build self-esteem and encourage the pupils to celebrate our differences and respect diversity. All teachers have a role to play in the promotion of a positive self-concept in students. This will be achieved by: rewarding effort as well as success, using praise in a meaningful way; giving responsibility; asking for opinions; requesting assistance; avoiding communications that are critical, derogatory or belittling.

Teaching strategies that make use of cooperative learning structures will help to increase levels of acceptance of and respect for other students. Where possible, team teaching can also open students' eyes to accepting more than one opinion and to acting more cooperatively with others.

In St. Felim's NS the pupils will be taught how to recognize different types of bullying and in particular, emphasis will be placed upon teaching about the role of the bystander in bullying and also the response that should be taken by the Victim i.e. CALM Approach to Bullying. This will be done through class lessons, discussion and the showing of video clips, posters, stickers etc.

Prevention and awareness raising measures will also deal explicitly with cyber-bullying. Prevention and any awareness raising measures will focus on educating pupils on appropriate online behaviour, how to stay safe while on-line and also on developing a culture of reporting any concerns about cyber-bullying. The school-wide approach and the links fostered between St. Felim's NS and its Parent community is of importance in this regard.

St. Felim's NS approach to tackling and preventing bullying will take particular account of the needs of pupils with SEN. Approaches will include improving inclusion, focusing on developing social skills, paying attention to key moments such as transitioning from primary to post-primary and cultivating a good school culture which has respect for all and helping one another as central. These pupils will be taught to use the CALM Approach when dealing with a bully. *(Also particular account will be taken of the needs of pupils from diverse cultures see policy on Anti-racism)*

### **The Education and Prevention Strategies including strategies specifically aimed at anti-racism.**

Initiatives and programmes in St Felim's N.S will focus on developing pupils awareness and understanding of all types of bullying (as seen in the anti-bullying policy) in particular racist bullying, bullying based on a person's membership of the Traveller community and bullying of those with disabilities in SEN.

St Felim's NS will take account of the age of the pupils and will raise the awareness of the pupils to bullying in particular to anti-racist bullying and bullying of pupils from the Traveller Community.

The use of the Yellow Flag Programme will be of particular relevance in raising awareness of anti-racist bullying and promotion of respect for diversity and inclusiveness.

In particular the various initiatives which are used during the Yellow Flag Programme will heighten awareness among the school community. These include;

- Forming a diversity committee including parents, teachers and pupils.
- Show Racism The Red Card programme with the senior classes.
- Visits from and presentations by members of the Traveller Community.
- Traditional food tasting from around the world.
- Wearing of traditional dress on specific dress.
- Competing in the Yellow Flag Art competition.
- Compiling of videos by students on diverse food from various countries.
- Visits of parents to classes to engage with the children in various activities.
- Composing of the Diversity Code.
- Building links with various groups in the local community.
- Annual diversity and cultural fortnight.
- Traditional games from all over the world played in the school yard.
- Projects to be completed on various countries/ nationalities/ cultures.  
*(This is not an exhaustive list)*

In addition to raising awareness we in St Felim's N.S will equip the children with strategies to respond to anti-racist bullying or bullying of members of the Traveller Community. This will include teaching the children the CALM Approach to bullying.

**C = Stay cool and do not respond in an aggressive manner.** Teach pupils to recognise stress signals and learn calming strategies e.g. deep breathing, positive value statements etc.

**A = Assert yourself.**

Through teaching social skills, videos, role playing pupils will learn to display assertiveness that can deflect bullying attempts.

**L = Look them in the eye.**

Pupils are taught where possible to look the bully in the eye.

**M = Mean it.**

Pupils should learn non-confrontational scripts i.e. "Stop that" "Leave me Alone" "Don't touch my things."

This will be done through class lessons, discussion and the showing of video clips, stickers etc.

**St. Felim's NS procedures for investigation, follow-up and recording of bullying behaviour and the established intervention strategies used for dealing with cases of bullying are as follows**

St. Felim's NS will make reference to the new National Anti-Bullying Website which has been recently established and this will act as a resource on an ongoing basis including assess to videos, lesson plans etc

In St. Felim's NS

- The primary aim for the relevant teacher in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame). In St. Felim's NS the relevant teacher will use

their professional judgement in deciding at what stage the Principal Teacher is to be involved in the process and on-going procedures.

- In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher will exercise his/her professional judgment to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved;
- All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying will be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. In this way the pupils will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It will be made clear to all pupils that when they report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly; (*this will be taught in lessons where the importance of the role of the bystander is emphasised*)
- Non-teaching staff including our secretary, special needs assistants (SNAs), bus escorts (with Speech & Language class), caretaker, cleaners will be encouraged to report bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher;
- Parents and pupils are required to co-operate with any investigation and assist the school in resolving any issues and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved as quickly as possible;
- It is very important that all involved (including each set of pupils and parents) understand the above approach from the outset;
- Teachers will take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents;
- Incidents will generally be investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved;
- All interviews will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this way; (*The Bystander*)
- When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher will seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This should be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner;
- If a group is involved, each member will be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved will be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member will be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements;
- Each member of a group will be supported through the possible pressures that may face them from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher;
- It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s);
- In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved should be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken. The school should give parents an opportunity of discussing ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school and the supports for their pupils;
- Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it will be made clear to him how he is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts will be made to try to get him to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied;
- It must also be made clear to all involved (each set of pupils and parents) that in any situation where disciplinary sanctions are required, this is a private matter between the pupil being disciplined, his or her parents and the school;
- Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved will be arranged separately with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date if the pupil who has been bullied is

ready and agreeable This can have a therapeutic effect; except in the case of pupils with SEN as it has been advised that this is not appropriate-*“Students who are victimized are usually not very good at advocating for themselves. It is also argued that the students do not have sufficient intellectual and emotional maturity to mediate in the complexity of bullying situations” APoB.*

- In cases where the relevant teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, it must be recorded by the relevant teacher in the recording template at Appendix 3
- In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant teacher must, as part of his/her professional judgment, take the following factors into account:
  - ❖ Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased;
  - ❖ Whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable;
  - ❖ Whether the relationships between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable; and
  - ❖ Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the school Principal or Deputy Principal;
- Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents will be referred, as appropriate, to the school’s complaints procedures;(written referral to the Principal who will bring the matter to the BoM)

In the event that a parent has exhausted the school's complaints procedures and is still not satisfied, St. Felim’s NS must advise the parents of their right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman for Children.

### **Procedures for Recording Bullying Behaviour**

The Board of Management of St. Felim’s NS ensures that all records of bullying will be maintained in accordance with relevant data protection legislation. The school’s procedures for noting and reporting bullying behaviour will adhere to the following:

(i) While all reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher, the relevant teacher will use his/her professional judgement in relation to the records to be kept of these reports, the actions taken and any discussions with those involved regarding same;

(ii) If it is established by the relevant teacher that bullying has occurred, the relevant teacher must keep appropriate written records which will assist his/her efforts to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.

(iii) The relevant teacher must use the recording template at Appendix 3 to record the bullying behaviour in the following circumstances:

- A) In cases where he/she considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour occurred;
- B) And where the school has decided as part of its anti-bullying policy that in certain circumstances bullying behaviour must be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable.

In each of the circumstances at (a) and (b) above, the recording template at Appendix 3 must be completed in full and retained by the teacher in question and a copy provided to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable. It should also be noted that the timeline for recording bullying behaviour in the recording template at Appendix 3 does not in any way preclude the relevant teacher from consulting the Principal or Deputy Principal at an earlier stage in relation to a case.

**Bullying as part of a continuum of behaviour** It is also important to note that bullying behaviour can be part of a continuum of behaviour rather than a stand-alone issue can escalate. To ensure that such cases are dealt with appropriately this bullying policy is linked to St. Felim's Code of Behaviour and referral will be made to external agencies and authorities where appropriate. In relation to serious concerns over managing the behaviour of a pupil advice from NEPS, School Completion Programme, 365 etc will be sought.

### **Referral of serious cases to the HSE**

In relation to bullying in schools, Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011 (Children First) and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools provide that in situations where "the incident is serious and where the behaviour is regarded as potentially abusive, the school must consult the HSE Children and Family Social Services with a view to drawing up an appropriate response, such as a management plan".

Serious instances of bullying behaviour should, in accordance with the Children First and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, be referred to the HSE Children and Family Services and/or Gardaí as appropriate.

The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools also provide that where school personnel have concerns about a child but are not sure whether to report the matter to the HSE, the Designated Liaison Person must seek advice from the HSE Children and Family Social Services.

### **Supports for pupils affected by bullying**

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

A programme of support for pupils who have been bullied will be put in place.

Such pupils may need opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem, to develop their friendship and social skills and thereby build resilience whenever this is needed. (The CALM Approach will be revisited with these pupils)

A programme of support for those pupils involved in bullying behaviour will also be part of the school's intervention process. Pupils involved in bullying behaviour need assistance on an ongoing basis. For those with low self-esteem, opportunities should be developed to increase feelings of self-worth, through learning opportunities both within class and on withdrawal basis.

Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour may need counseling/assistance to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others.

Pupils who observe incidents of bullying behaviour should be encouraged to discuss them with teachers through lessons on the role of the by-stander.

### **Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils**

#### **Supervision and Monitoring of Pupils**

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

In St. Felim's NS good supervisory and monitoring measures are in place both to prevent and deal with bullying behavior. School activities are constantly monitored and supervised. "Hot spots" and "Hot times" have been identified, ie the yard at breaks, classrooms during wet breaks, outings to swimming pool, football etc and these are continually supervised and monitored. SNAs and other non teaching staff are aware of our policy in St. Felim's NS and therefore contribute and are part of the process to counter bullying.

### **Prevention of Harassment**

The Board of Management confirms that the school will, in accordance with its obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the sexual harassment of pupils or staff or the harassment of pupils or staff on any of the nine grounds specified i.e. gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.