



Code of Behaviour: St. Fergus' National School, Glin. September 2023

1. INTRODUCTION:

St. Fergus' National School, Glin is a Catholic Primary School under the patronage of the Bishop of Limerick and St. Senan's Diocesan Office. It is a mainstream, vertical, mixed school which caters for Junior Infants to Sixth Class.

The school has a reputation for good academic standards, with a friendly family atmosphere where each child is seen as an individual and is helped to attain their full potential. We stress the importance of the overall development of the child.

Building on this reputation is a committed staff providing a personal service to every child. The teaching staff consists of:

Administrative Principal:	Mrs Deirdre Kennelly
Junior Infants & ½ Seniors:	Mrs Katrina Fitzgerald
½ Seniors & Rang I:	Mrs. Deirdre Dillane (Deputy Principal)
Rang II	Ms Louise Healy
Rang III & Rang IV:	Mr Robert Browne
Rang V	Mrs. Rosie Ambrose
Rang VI	Mrs Ciara Fitzgerald
S.E.T. 1	Mr Séamus Lehane and Mrs Sinéad Mulroe (Job Share)
S.E.T. 2	Mrs. Mary Adams and Mr Joe Stack (Job Share)
ASD Class:	Mrs. Caroline Dalton
ASD Class:	Mrs CarolAnn Healy (AP2)
EAL (10 hours):	Mr Joe Stack

The school is run by a Board of Management, which consists of two direct nominees of the Patron, the Principal, one teachers' nominee, two parents' nominees and two community nominees. There is an active Parents' Council engaged in hosting social events, fundraising and inviting guest speakers to the school.

2. How our Code of Behaviour was developed:

This Code of Behaviour was drawn up and ratified in May 2011 in compliance with Section 23 of the Education Welfare Act 2000, by the Board of Management of St. Fergus' National School. It was made available for the pupils, staff, parents and wider school community.

It is being reviewed for the fifth time now, in February 2020, (previously in 2013 and 2015, 2016 and 2018), in accordance with the guidelines "Developing a Code of Behaviour Guidelines for Schools" published by the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB, 2008). This review was conducted following consultation by representatives from the Board of Management, the Parents' Council, parents and staff.

This current review of our Code of Behaviour demonstrates our commitment to ensuring that we maintain the best possible educational environment in the school. It also ensures that all aspects of the Education (Welfare) Act are incorporated.

In formulating this policy, the Board of Management completed the following steps:

- (i) Code of Behaviour was reviewed by staff and Board of Management and where appropriate amended in line with the feedback received.
- (ii) Parents and Staff were informed that an initial draft of the reviewed Code of Behaviour was available and they were invited to make submissions on the context of the code.
- (iii) Class teachers were requested to discuss the topic of "rules" with their classes and submit a list of suggestions to the Principal.
- (iv) The initial draft of the Code of Behaviour was reviewed in light of these contributions and where appropriate amended in line with the feedback received.
- (v) The finalised draft of the policy was submitted for the Patron's Approval.

The Code of Behaviour needs to be read in association with the school "Anti-Bullying Policy" and St. Fergus' N.S. Child Safety Statement, Risk Assessment and Review.

The Code of Behaviour is given to new parents when their child is enrolled in the school and it is available on the school website (www.stfergusns.ie).

When parents/guardians enrol their child in St. Fergus' National School, they are agreeing to support the implementation of the Code of Behaviour and all other policies in the school.

3. Our Vision:

Our aim is to create an ordered and orderly environment in which pupils can, through developing self-discipline, feel secure and make progress in all aspects of their development. All members of staff are committed to creating a positive and respectful environment to ensure that St. Fergus' National School is a happy school.

The school has two basic guiding principles:

- We respect ourselves and others
- We respect the environment and things that belong to other people.

In adapting a positive approach to the question of behaviour in the school our aim is to:

- Promote positive behaviour and self-discipline, while recognising the differences between children and the need to accommodate these differences
- Create an atmosphere of respect, and consideration for others
- Allow the school to function in an orderly way so that its pupils can thrive and develop to their full potential
- To ensure the safety and well-being of all members of the school community
- Assist the parents and children in understanding the systems and procedures that form part of the Code of Behaviour and to seek their co-operation in the application of these procedures
- Ensure that the system of expectations, rewards and sanctions is implemented in a fair and consistent manner throughout the school, recognising the differences between children and the need to accommodate these differences.

4. Whole School Approach:

The Board of Management of St. Fergus' National School recognises the importance of creating consistent values, policies, practices and relationships that support the Code of Behaviour. Such an environment may only be formed by involving the entire school community and in this respect the Board acknowledges the importance of the roles of the Principal, teachers, ancillary staff and parents in the review and operation of the Code.

St. Fergus' National School is a Catholic School and in keeping with this our Mission Statement says:

"We strive to create a learning, caring and nurturing environment, conducive to the attainment of the true educational, spiritual and moral potential of each individual, thereby enabling them to participate as responsible individuals within their immediate communities, at present, and ultimately within society as the whole. In all we do, we will collaborate with groups and individuals with whom we share common goals."

5. Encouraging High Standards of Good Behaviour:

The over-riding principles governing this code are:

- We respect ourselves and others
- We respect the environment and things that belong to other people.

A high standard of good behaviour requires a strong sense of community within the school and a high level of co-operation among staff and between staff, parents and pupils.

5.1 Expectations from Pupils:

Respecting myself: - Care for myself, my health and my belongings

- Use my talents
- Do my best both in school and for homework.

Respecting others: - Be polite in my dealings with others

- Be well behaved and show consideration for other children and adults
- Be friendly towards others
- Recognise the rights of others
- Show respect for the property of the school, other children and their belongings
- Adhere to the school uniform as laid down by the Board of Management.

Respecting teachers: - Be punctual and attend school on a regular basis

- Be truthful
- Pay attention and co-operate fully in class
- Do my homework always and to the best of my ability
- Follow the direction of teachers
- Obtain teachers permission to leave classroom or playground/yard area.

Respecting fellow pupils: - Recognise the right of each member in the class to learn and that disturbing the class deprives others of this right

- Not engage in behaviour that is hurtful to others
- Not threaten or physically or emotionally hurt another pupil/teacher/staff member
- Familiarise themselves with and obey class rules and rules of the school.

In order that a standard of discipline is maintained, pupils are expected to:

- Obey class/school /playing area rules (see Appendix)
- Attend school regularly
- Wear the full school uniform
- Help in maintaining cleanliness and good order in classrooms and around school grounds

- Play safely avoiding any games or play that are deemed rough or dangerous
- Follow the directions of supervising staff member
- Remain on school grounds at all times
- Obtain permission before re-entering the school during break periods.
- Avoid swearing, fighting or name calling
- Walk within the classroom and in the school corridors.

5.2 Expectations of Staff

The Board of Management and the Principal have overall responsibility for the implementation and on-going monitoring of the Code of Behaviour. However, all staff members have responsibility for their classes and for the general school population when on yard duty or on any organised out-of-school activity.

Teachers have the responsibility for:

- Providing a nurturing environment within their classes where respect, kindness, fairness and helpfulness are an integral part of their teaching.
- Motivating and stimulating pupils to learn and having high expectations of pupils, whilst recognising each child's ability level or special needs.
- Encouraging all pupils to be independent.
- Encouraging a positive learning environment by praising, encouraging and supporting pupils. This may involve the use of a reward system/systems, implemented in a fair and consistent way.
- Bringing the school and class rules to the attention of pupils throughout the year.
- Providing extra support to children with Special Education Needs to help them to understand the rules of the school.
- Treating all pupils as individuals regardless of gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, disability or family background.
- Modelling the standards of behaviour for pupils and the wider school community.
- Ensure appropriate level of supervision in so far as possible
- Keep a written record of all incidents of continued, serious or gross misconduct. This record will indicate the advice and/or warnings given to the child or the misbehaviour and the consequences of its repetition
- Report repeated instances of serious misbehaviour to the Principal/Deputy Principal

5.3 Expectations of Parents:

Parents play a crucial role in shaping attitudes in their children which produce positive behaviour in school.

Parents can assist the school in the following ways:

- Familiarise themselves with the school's Code of Behaviour and ensure that their children clearly understand what is expected of them in terms of their behaviour at school and that all school rules must be obeyed
- Support their children and the teachers in implementing the school rules in a way that is consistent with the procedures outlined in the Code of Behaviour
- Ensure that the school is advised of any changes in dropping off person/collecting person or contact telephone numbers immediately
- Ensure that the school is advised of the reason for any absence
- Be courteous towards pupils and staff
- Make an appointment to meet with a teacher or the Principal through the office, when necessary
- Respect school property and encourage pupils to do the same
- Drop off/Collect their children on time
- Expect that some communication will come via their children either orally or by newsletters/notes. These may pertain to messages and rules discussed at Assembly or by the Principal/class teacher
- Obey the rules for parking at school area, as have been communicated to all parents.

When arriving at the school during the day, parents/guardians are expected to respect the fact that classes are ongoing. Accordingly, they and any young children in their care should not engage in behaviour that distracts from teaching and learning e.g. shouting or running around.

As the Board of Management is responsible for the Health & Safety of all staff and students, parents are requested not to approach or reprimand another person's child on the school premises and to behave appropriately towards all people. Any incident should be reported to a teacher on duty.

Should a parent/guardian be concerned about any aspect of their child's behaviour they are encouraged to make an appointment with the class teacher to discuss their concerns. In cases of an identified pattern of misbehaviour parents will be expected to participate in the intervention process.

Parents who wish to make a complaint will be directed to the Parental Complaints Procedure for schools. Steps in this procedure must be followed.

6. Promoting Positive Behaviour:

This Code of Behaviour has been developed jointly by teachers, staff, parents and Board of Management. It provides a common definition of behaviour, thereby encouraging all parties to promote positive behaviour within the school community.

Clear communication and good relationships between parents, teachers and pupils will ensure a cohesive and healthy environment at school. This provides a sound foundation for a whole-school approach to promoting good behaviour and for responding to inappropriate behaviour. (Please refer to St Fergus' N.S. Parental Communications Policy)

All school and classroom rules are clear, consistent and easily understood by pupils of all ages. All misbehaviour will be dealt with in a clear and consistent manner and be age appropriate.

Through consistent communication of school rules at assembly and in the classroom, pupils have a clear understanding that high levels of good behaviour are expected of them whilst at school, travelling to and from school and while attending organised school events/activities.

As a general rule the school will endeavour to create an environment where positive behaviour is reinforced through praise and reward. School staff will use encouraging language and gestures, both in class and around the school, so that positive behaviour is instantly recognised and positively rewarded. Special attention will be paid to pupils who have previously been associated with poor behaviour so that not only good behaviour but also improvement in behaviour is acknowledged.

A whole school reward system for promoting positive behaviour will be used. These rewards include:

- Messages in Aladdin
- Certificates – Student of the Week/Class of the Month presented at Assembly
- Principals Postcard
- Telephone Calls
- Good News Assembly
- Pupil being sent to receive praise from another teacher- doubling the impact.

6.1 How Pupils Can Promote a Happy School:

- By being involved in discussions relating to teaching and learning.
- By learning about and taking responsibility for their behaviour and for each other's wellbeing and the wellbeing of the staff
- By using kindness in their dealings with others and understanding different behaviours
- By having insight into their own behaviour and that of others. This can build their capacity to take responsibility for their behaviour and to help each other to behave well

- By being involved in the compilation of class rules which feed into the development of this Code of Behaviour, pupils are encouraged to take ownership of it.

6.2 How Staff Can Promote a Happy School

- By promoting the traditions and ethos of the school, a sense of pride and belonging is developed amongst the school community
- By discussing social and environmental topics pupils gain the knowledge and skills to participate as responsible individuals within their immediate communities
- By focusing on promoting positive behaviour rather than punishing bad behaviour a more secure and enjoyable experience is provided
- By praising, encouraging and supporting pupils with their school work and their relationships with their peers they encourage a positive learning experience and environment
- By taking into account the individual pupil's effort and not just achievement, this ensures that reward systems are most effective
- By engaging children in interesting lessons
- By using their experience of what helps pupils learn
- By employing effective classroom management e.g. instructions will not be issued while pupils are talking
- By following the agreed procedures for behaviour, pupils are given a secure belief of fair play.

6.3 How Parents Can Promote a Happy School:

- By recognising that home values and parental attitudes can help or hinder a student's behaviour and learning in school. This may be especially important where cultural norms and values in the home differ from those of the school.
- By supporting the teacher in being honest about behaviour at home and being secure in the knowledge that a discussion with the teacher about behaviour is to help their child, and will be dealt with confidentially.
- Adults, be they parents or teachers, are expected to model the behaviour that is expected from pupils.

7. How Students, Staff & Parents can help each other to meet the standards expected in the school:

As part of our ongoing efforts to promote positive behaviour, time will be allocated at all staff meetings for discussing the implementation of the Code of Behaviour. Staff will be given opportunities to share their experience of both positive and negative behaviour and to learn from collective wisdom.

Open lines of communication between parents and teachers are encouraged to ensure that everyone is working together and that a nurturing environment prevails.

Upon enrolling their child in St. Fergus' National School, all parents and guardians are given a copy of the Code of Behaviour, and are asked to review and sign it. Their signatures indicate their acceptance of the Code and all subsequent reviews of same.

All pupils are reminded of the definition of bullying regularly throughout the school year and what they should do if they are being bullied or witness bullying behaviour. Parents must also familiarise themselves with all aspects of the school's Anti-Bullying Policy (Drawn up in keeping with DES Guidelines and Procedures on same) and ensure that their children are aware of the consequences of bullying/misbehaviour.

8. Systems for acknowledging good behaviour, progress and effort:

- A word of praise in front of a group or the class
- A reward system – "Student of the Week", "Dojo Points", occasional treats, etc.
- Stickers – Stamps – Homework Pass
- Special mention at Assembly
- Delegating some special responsibility or privilege
- This list is not exhaustive.

9. Where pupils can get help when problems arise:

Pupils can talk to:

- S.N.A.
- Their own teacher
- Any other teacher/staff member
- The Principal
- Their Parents.

10. Where parents can get help when problems arise:

Through the secretary, parents should contact:

- The teacher
- The Principal
- The Chairperson of the Board of Management.

Other information to help when problems arise, can be sought from State Agencies involved in behavioural matters:

- National Educational Psychological Services (NEPS), Department of Education & Skills, Floor 2, block 1, Marlborough Street, Dublin 1. Tel: +353 18892700.
www.education.ie
- National Education Welfare Board (NEWB), 16-22 Green Street, Dublin 7. Tel: +353 18738700. Email: ewsinfo@tusla.ie. www.newb.ie
- National Parents Council Primary (NPC), 12 Marlborough Court, Dublin 1. Tel: +353 18874034. Email: info@npc.ie. www.npc.ie.
- TUSLA Child & Family Agency, Floors 2-5, Brunel Building, Houston South Quarter, Dublin 8. Tel: +353 17718500. Email: info@tusla.ie. www.tusla.ie
- S.E.S.S. c/o Cork Education Support Centre, The Rectory, Western Road, Cork
Tel: (021) 4254241 - Fax: 021 425 5647 - Email: info@sess.ie
- School based Psychologist Ms Deirdre Folan
- School SENO Ms Carol Lysaght

11. Responding to Inappropriate Behaviour:

11.1 The School's Duty of Care:

The school and every teacher should ensure that when applying any sanction, the duty of care to the student is maintained. The teacher's duty of care is a professional duty of care, reflecting the teacher's training, skills and knowledge. This duty requires, for example, that a student is appropriately supervised at all times while at school. Appropriate arrangements must also be made to ensure that Child Protection Guidelines of the DES, Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children and St. Fergus' N.S. Child Safety Statement and Risk Assessment.

All teachers are aware of their responsibility as Mandated Persons and have signed documentation to this regard.

In order to establish a common understanding and consistent response, the Code of Behaviour classifies misbehaviour into three levels based on the degree of disruption caused by the misconduct. Teachers and/or the Principal will make judgements, having regard to the age or vulnerability of the child and the gravity and the frequency of any misbehaviour.

The Code also specifies the disciplinary actions and supportive interventions that will be employed.

11.2 Level 1 Behaviours

Level 1 behaviours are those that interfere with the orderly learning environment of the school, classroom and common areas. Students learn through their mistakes. To this extent, responses to the daily behaviours, which occur in school, will be developmentally appropriate, instructive and positive. Children will be taught what is expected and how they should behave. Listed below are some examples of the types of Behaviour that are included in Level 1. Please note, the list is not exhaustive.

- Failure to prepare for class, as defined by individual teachers
- Interrupting class work
- Talking out of turn
- Running in the school building
- Littering the school environs
- Disrespectful/derogatory language, tone or manner
- Being discourteous or unmannerly
- Ignoring staff requests
- Inappropriate behaviour, gestures or language.

11.3 Level 1 Disciplinary Actions

Consequences for Level 1 behaviour are dependent on the severity and frequency of the specific behaviour. Teachers will deal with Level 1 misbehaviours by referencing this Code of Behaviour and school/class rules, considering the normal age appropriate classroom, norms and behaviours, any SEN and through discussion with the pupil. Instances of Level 1-yard misbehaviour will be dealt with by the teacher on duty in that yard and recorded in the Red Book which is stored in Mrs Kennelly's Room. The class teacher will be informed where it is deemed necessary.

Where minor misbehaviour occurs on a regular basis, the teacher will contact the parents of the child.

Some examples of Level 1 responses are:

- Verbal reprimand/reminders
- Reinforcement of alternative positive behaviour
- Temporary separation from peers, friends or others, through a Time Out-in increments of 5 minutes
- Prescribing additional work
- Loss of privileges
- Parental contact – e.g. Aladdin
- Behaviour contract/record sheet
- Reflection/Think Sheet.

11.4 Level 1 Supportive Interventions:

Listed below are some examples of Level 1 supportive actions:

- Classroom based interventions, such as Circle Time/Friends for Life with the option of informal consultation (e.g. with parent(s)/guardian(s) or staff members.
- Discussion of behaviour with the child.
- Informal notes regarding incident/intervention/date. This information would be useful should a problem persist, and will be kept by the class teacher and copies given to the Principal where deemed necessary.

11.5 Level 2 Behaviours

Level 2 behaviours are those that seriously interfere with the orderly environment of the school and are potentially dangerous to the safety and wellbeing of the students and staff.

Listed below are some examples of the types of behaviour that are included in Level 2.

Please note that this list is not exhaustive.

- Repeated instances of Level 1 behaviour which have not been modified by intervention
- Behaviour which is dangerous to self or others (e.g. shoving, pushing, kicking, hitting)
- Intentionally damaging school or personal property.
- Stealing
- Cheating
- Use of profanity
- Derogatory reference to another person's race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, physical condition, disability or ethnic origin
- Disrespectful language or behaviour toward an adult
- Possession or use of mobile phones/electronic gadgets (e.g. i-pods) dangerous toys or dangerous sporting equipment
- Leaving school building without permission
- Leaving school grounds without permission
- Bullying behaviour (see Anti-Bullying, Anti-Cyber Bullying Policies)
- Inappropriate verbal language – this includes answering back to a teacher or any member of school community in a confrontational manner
- Speaking in a cheeky or disrespectful manner, shouting, mimicking or any inappropriate body language.
- Using abusive language to fellow pupils.
- Using abusive language to staff members.

11.6 Level 2 Disciplinary Actions:

The disciplining of students for Level 2 behaviour is dependent upon the severity and frequency of the specific behaviour and developmentally appropriate levels. The disciplinary actions at Level 2 are administered by the Classroom Teacher/Teacher on Yard/Principal and may include formal notification of parents with written documentation. Some examples of Level 2 responses are:

- In-school supervised detention – a) In own yard
b) In opposite yard
c) Outside staffroom
(In increments of 5 minutes each time).
- Report submitted to the Board of Management
- Meeting with parent(s)/guardian(s)
- Suspension from school of one to five days, depending on the severity of the behaviour
- Implementation of a more extensive behaviour plan.

11.7 Level 2 Supportive Interventions:

Listed below are some examples of Level 2 supportive actions:

- Team conference to include classroom teacher/Deputy Principal/Principal (or a combination of the three, depending on the severity of the case) and parents.
- Request for assistance from external agencies such as National Educational Psychological Service, TUSLA, Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services, National Council for Special Education, Special Education Support Services
- Referral of a child displaying behavioural problems for psychological assessment (with the parent(s)/guardian(s) consent).

11.8 Level 3 Behaviours:

Level 3 behaviours are considered the most serious violations. These behaviours endanger the immediate health, safety and personal wellbeing of the pupils and staff of the school. They represent a direct threat to the orderly operation of the school environment. Situations, which include illegal activity, may result in contact with the Garda Síochána as well as parental involvement.

Listed below are some examples of the types of behaviour that are included in Level 3. Please note, that the list is not exhaustive.

- Repeated or serious instances of Level 2 behaviour which has not been modified by intervention
- Setting fires to school property or on school grounds
- Intentional possession or use of weapons, or dangerous substances at school, including drugs and alcohol
- Violent fighting or intentionally causing physical harm to others
- Assault on a fellow pupil or on a staff member
- Deliberately injuring any member of the school community
- Discriminatory or prejudicial activities or actions towards another person or group involving race, gender, religion, physical condition, sexual orientation, handicap or ethnic origin.

11.9 Level 3 Disciplinary Actions:

Behaviour at Level 3 may involve suspension from school. The length of the suspension will depend upon the severity and frequency of the specific behaviour. Specific information about due process and procedures in respect of the issuing of a suspension is contained in this document.

Level 3 responses may include:

- Suspension from school for one to five days. This response may occur with the first incidence of Level 3 behaviour or Level 2 behaviour of significant severity. The Principal, following due process and procedure, can issue a suspension
- Suspension from school for five to ten days. This response may occur with the repeated incidence of Level 3 behaviour or a severe expression of this behaviour. A suspension of this magnitude will only be issued with the approval of the Board of Management.
- Expulsion from St. Fergus' N.S. following the procedures laid out in this policy.

12. PROCEDURES FOR SUSPENSIONS & EXPULSIONS

12.1 Suspension

Definition of Suspension:

'requiring the student to absent himself/herself from the school for a specified, limited period of school days'

-Developing A Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools, National Educational Welfare Board

Authority to Suspend:

The Board of Management of *St. Fergus NS* has formally and in writing delegated the authority to impose an 'Immediate Suspension' to the Principal Teacher.

An 'Immediate Suspension' may be for a period of one to three school days depending on the severity of the specific Behaviour, in exceptional circumstances and with the approval of the Chairperson of the Board the suspension may be for a longer period but in any event will not exceed 5 school days.

Furthermore, the Board of Management has formally and in writing delegated to the Principal Teacher the authority to impose an 'Automatic Suspension' for named behaviours detailed in this policy. An Automatic Suspension may be for a period of one to three school days depending on the severity of the specific behaviour, in exceptional circumstances and with the approval of the Chairperson of the Board the suspension may be for a longer period but in any event will not exceed 5 school days.

The Board retains its authority to suspend a student in all other cases/circumstances.

Immediate Suspension and Automatic Suspension

An 'Immediate Suspension' will be deemed to be necessary where after a preliminary investigation the Principal reaches the determination that the continued presence of the pupil in the school at the time would represent a serious threat to the safety and wellbeing of pupils or staff of the school. An 'Immediate Suspension' may be for a period of one to three school days depending on the severity of the specific Behaviour, in exceptional circumstances and with the approval of the Chairperson of the Board the suspension may be for a longer period but in any event will not exceed 5 school days.

An 'Automatic Suspension' is a suspension imposed for named behaviours. The Board of Management of *St Fergus NS*, having given due consideration to its duty of care as prescribed by Health & Safety Legislation, has determined that the following named behaviours will incur 'Automatic Suspension' as a sanction;

- Physical assault/violence resulting in bodily harm to a pupil or member of staff
or
- Physical violence resulting in serious damage to school property
or
- Leaving the school without permission during the school day.

An Automatic Suspension may be for a period of one to three school days depending on the severity of the specific Behaviour, in exceptional circumstances and with the approval of the Chairperson of the Board the suspension may be for a longer period but in any event will not exceed 5 school days.

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) will be informed of an Immediate or Automatic Suspension by telephone, and arrangements will be made with them for the pupil to be collected. In no circumstance will a student be sent home from school prior to his/her parent(s)/guardian(s)

being notified. Formal written notification of the suspension will issue in due course, but no later than 2 school days after the imposition of the suspension. Such a notification will detail:

- the duration of the suspension and the dates on which the suspension will begin and end
- the reasons for the suspension
- any study programme to be followed
- the arrangements for returning to school, including any commitments to be entered into by the pupil and the parent(s)/guardian(s).

The Board of Management acknowledges that the decision to impose either an Immediate or Automatic Suspension does not remove the duty to follow due process and fair procedures. In this regard, and following a formal investigation, to be completed no later than 2 school days after the incident the Board will invite the pupil and his/her parent(s)/guardian(s) to a meeting to discuss;

- the circumstances surrounding the suspension,
- interventions to prevent a recurrence of such misconduct.

The Board of Management of *St. Fergus NS* acknowledges the fundamental importance of impartiality in the investigation process. In this regard the following undertaking is given;

- No person with a vested interest or personal involvement in the matter will be involved in the organisation or implementation of the investigation procedure.

Procedures in Respect of Other Suspensions:

In cases other than those of Immediate or Automatic Suspension the following procedures will apply;

Where a preliminary assessment of the fact confirms serious misbehaviour that could warrant suspension, the Board of Management of *St. Fergus NS* will initiate a formal investigation of the matter.

The following procedures will be observed;

A written letter containing the following information will issue to Parent(s)/guardian(s);

- i. details of the alleged misbehaviour, details of the impending investigation process, and notification that the allegation could result in suspension.
- ii. An invitation to a meeting, to be scheduled no later than 5 school days from the date of the letter, where parent(s)/guardian(s) are provided with an opportunity to respond before a decision is made or a sanction imposed.

The Board of Management of St. Fergus' N.S. acknowledges the fundamental importance of impartiality in the investigation and decision-making process. In this regard the following undertakings are given;

- i. No person with a vested interest or personal involvement in the matter will be involved in the organisation or implementation of the investigation procedure, nor will such a person be involved in the decision-making process.
- ii. The person(s) involved in the investigation process will on presentation of a full report of the facts absent himself/herself/themselves from the decision-making process.

Where a decision to suspend has been made the Chairperson of the Board of Management will provide written notification to the parent(s)/guardian(s) and the pupil of the decision.

The letter will confirm:

- the duration of the suspension and the dates on which the suspension will begin and end
- the reasons for the suspension
- any study programme to be followed
- the arrangements for returning to school, including any commitments to be entered into by the pupil and the parent(s)/guardian(s)
- the provision for an appeal to the Board of Management.

Where a suspension brings the total number of days for which the pupil has been suspended in the current school year to twenty days the parent(s)/guardian(s) will be informed of their right to appeal to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Skills under Section 29 or the Education Act 1998 and will be provide with information on the submission of such an appeal.

13. Expulsion

Definition of Expulsion:

'A student is expelled from a school when a Board of Management makes a decision to permanently exclude him or her from the school, having complied with the provisions of section 24 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000.'

-Developing A Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools, National Educational Welfare Board

Authority to Expel:

The authority to expel a pupil is reserved by the Board of Management.

Procedures in Respect of Expulsion:

Where a preliminary assessment of the facts confirms serious misbehaviour that could warrant expulsion the following procedures will apply:

- a) A detailed investigation will be carried out under the direction of the Principal (or a Nominee of the Board if required)

As part of the investigation a written letter containing the following information will issue to parent(s)/guardian(s);

- iii. details of the alleged misbehaviour, details of the impending investigation process, and notification that the allegation could result in expulsion.
- iv. An invitation to a meeting, to be scheduled no later than 5 school days from the date of the letter, where parent(s)/guardian(s) are provided with an opportunity to respond

- b) The Principal (or BoM Nominee) will make a recommendation to the Board of Management

Where the Principal (or nominee) forms a view, based on the investigation of the alleged misbehaviour, that expulsion may be warranted, the Principal (or nominee) makes a recommendation to the Board of Management to consider expulsion.

In this event the Principal (or nominee) will:

- i. inform the parent(s)/guardian(s) that the Board of Management is being asked to consider expulsion
- ii. ensure that parent(s)/guardians have records of: the allegations against the student; the investigation; and written notice of the grounds on which the Board of Management is being asked to consider expulsion
- iii. provide the Board of Management with the same comprehensive records as are given to parent(s)/guardian(s)

- c) Consideration by the Board of Management of the Principal's (or BOM's Nominee) Recommendations & the Holding of a Hearing

If, having considered the Principal's report, the Board of Management decides to consider expelling a student a hearing will be scheduled.

The parent(s)/guardian(s) will be notified in writing

- i. as to the date, location and time of the hearing
- ii. of their right to make a written and oral submission to the Board of Management
- iii. that they may if they so choose be accompanied at the hearing

The Board of Management undertakes that the timing of such written notification will ensure that parent(s)/guardian(s) have enough notice to allow them to prepare for the hearing.

In respect of the expulsion hearing the Board gives an undertaking that;

- i. the meeting will be properly conducted in accordance with Board procedures
- ii. the principal (or BoM nominee) and parent(s)/guardian(s) will present their case to the Board in each other's presence
- iii. each party will be given the opportunity to directly question the evidence of the other party
- iv. the parent(s)/guardian(s) may make a case for a lesser sanction if they so choose

d) Board of Management Deliberations & Actions following the Hearing

Where the Board of Management, having considered all the facts of the case, is of the opinion that the pupil should be expelled the Board

- i. Will notify the Educational Welfare Officer in writing by registered post of its opinion, and the reasons for this opinion.
- ii. Will not expel the student before the passage of 20 school days from the date on which the Educational Welfare Officer receives this written notification
- iii. Will in writing notify the parent(s)/guardian(s) of their decision and inform them that the Educational Welfare Officer is being contacted
- iv. Will be represented at the consultation to be organized by the Educational Welfare Officer
- v. Will suspend the student, if it is deemed likely that the continued presence of the student during this time will seriously disrupt the learning of others, or represent a threat to the safety of other pupils or staff.

e) Confirmation of the Decision to Expel

Where the twenty-day period following notification to the Educational Welfare Officer has elapsed, and where the Board of Management remains of the view that the student should be expelled, the Board of Management will formally confirm the decision to expel.

Parent(s)/guardian(s) will be notified in writing that the expulsion will now proceed. They will also be informed of their right to appeal to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Skills under Section 29 or the Education Act 1998 and will be provided with information on the submission of such an appeal.

The Board of Management of St. Fergus' National School acknowledges the fundamental importance of impartiality in the investigation and decision-making process. In this regard the following undertakings are given;

- i. No person with a vested interest or personal involvement in the matter will be involved in the organisation or implementation of the investigation procedure, nor will such a person be involved in the decision-making process.

- ii. The person(s) involved in the investigation process will on presentation of a full report of the facts absent himself/herself/themselves from the decision-making process.

14. Appeals.

A parent, or a student aged over 18 years, may appeal a decision to expel to the Secretary General of the Department of Education & Skills (Education Act 1998 Section 29). An appeal may also be brought by the NEWB on behalf of a student.

The appeals process under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998 will appoint a mediator nominated by the Appeals Committee (Department of Education & Skills). The Chairperson, Principal and delegated member of the Board of Management will furnish required documentation for this process and will liaise with this mediator.

15 Review of use of Suspension and Expulsion:

The Board of Management of St. Fergus' National School will review the use of suspension and expulsion when the Code of Behaviour is being reviewed and updated. It will also review their use at the first meeting of each new Board of Management. The review of suspension and expulsion may be reviewed sooner if it is deemed appropriate to do so in order to remain consistent with other school or Department of Education & Skills policies. It may also be reviewed in an effort to identify factors that may be influencing behaviour in the school and to ensure that suspension and expulsion are used appropriately.

14. Inappropriate Sanctions Include:

- Physical punishment or the threat of physical punishment, physical chastisement of a student is illegal under section 24 of the Non-Fatal Offences against the Person Act 1997
- Ridicule, sarcasm, or remarks likely to undermine a student's self-confidence
- Public or private humiliation
- Applying sanctions to whole groups or classes in cases of individual wrongdoing
- Leaving a student in an unsupervised situation (e.g. a corridor) while in the care of the school
- Persistent isolation of or ignoring a student in class
- Sanctions that are used in a discriminatory way. The Equal Status Act 2000-2004, require that schools do not discriminate in the use of sanctions
- Temporarily removing a student from the classroom to a supervised location (e.g. another classroom) may be appropriate in the interests of classroom management in order to ensure the learning of other students and to help the individual student to recognise and learn about the impact and the consequences of their behaviour. However, consistently denying a student access to a particular part of the curriculum as a general sanction (e.g. Art) would not be appropriate except in extreme circumstances (e.g. Health & Safety reasons).

15. School Policy to Deal with Bullying:

St. Fergus' National School updated Anti-Bullying and Anti-Cyber Bullying Policies can be found on the school website (www.stfergusns.ie) and are freely available to all.'

16. When and Where Behaviour will be subject to the School's Code of Behaviour:

It is expected that the school's Code of Behaviour applies during school hours (9.10 a.m. to 3.15 p.m. – 10 minutes before and after official tuition included) at all extra-curricular activities on school grounds or off-site and travelling to and from school and school activities. This includes all events organised by, on behalf of, or in the name of St. Fergus' N.S. (to include all fundraising and social events organised by the school or by the Parents' Council including school sports, school tours and school competitions).

17. Notification of A Child's Absence from School

Parent(s)/guardian(s) should adhere to the following procedures when notifying the school of a pupil's absence;

- the school should be notified of the absence on the first day of the child's absence or when the pupil returns to school
- the reason for the absence should be notified to the class teacher
- the absence should be notified in writing by letter / using the school journal
- details pertaining to the absence, such as duration and reason, should be provided
- significant absences caused by ill health (i.e. absences longer than 10 school days) should be certified.

This notification can be done using the Aladdin App or by emailing the school on office@stfergusns.ie.

The school will inform the Education Welfare Officer in writing where a child is suspended or expelled for 6 days or more, where the child has missed 20 or more days in a school year, where attendance is irregular and when the pupil is removed from the school register

Policy reviewed in September 2023 (6th review)

Ratified by the Board of Management at its meeting on _____

Next review September 2025, or sooner if deemed necessary

Signed: *Thomas Barrett*

Signed: *Deirdre Kennelly*

Chairperson of Board of Management
Management

Principal/Secretary to the Board of

Date: 2nd October 2023

Date: 2nd October 2023

ST. FERGUS' NATIONAL SCHOOL: ANTI BULLYING POLICY

Introduction:

In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the code of behaviour guidelines issued by the NEWB, the Board of Management of St. Fergus' National School 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. This current review is being conducted by the Board of Management and Staff of St. Fergus' NS in February 2020, in conjunction with the Parents' Council.

Key Principles of Best Practice:

The Board of Management recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of 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;
- 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); and
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

Definition and Types of Bullying:

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

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

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

- deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying,
- cyber-bullying 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 the School’s Code of Behaviour.

Additional information on different types of bullying is set out in Section 2 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

Investigating and Dealing with Bullying:

The relevant teachers for investigating and dealing with bullying at St. Fergus' National School are the Classroom Teachers.

Education and Prevention Strategies:

The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying) that will be used by the school are as follows:

The implementation of the highly structured and effective Anti-Bullying Campaign Programme- 'Break through the Cloud of Bullying' throughout the Senior end of the school. The Principal is the Anti-Bullying Coordinator for the school overseeing this Anti-Bullying Campaign Programme.

- Following staff discussion on this programme, we have decided that contrary to the follow up section of this programme, parents of all children involved in incidents of bullying behaviour will be informed, either by the class teacher/principal.

This campaign offers a two-strand approach:

1. Raising pupil's awareness and understanding about the unacceptability of bullying
 2. How to deal effectively with alleged/suspected bullying situations.
- SPHE lessons that explicitly address the issues of cyber bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.
 - Stay Safe programme for all class levels to enhance children's self-protection skills including their ability to recognise and cope with bullying.
 - Strategies to engage pupils in addressing problems when they arise. Strategies to build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils.
 - Curricular and extracurricular programmes, to provide pupils with opportunities to develop a positive sense of self-worth.
 - The implementation of the anxiety prevention and resiliency building programmes "Fun Friends" and "Friends for Life" throughout the school. These programmes are designed to teach students the skills required to manage their thoughts, emotions and body responses to life stresses.
 - Educate pupils regarding appropriate on-line behaviour, how to stay safe while on line and also on developing a culture of reporting any concerns about cyber-bullying.
 - Focusing on inclusion and the development of social skills with all pupils so as to decrease the likelihood of bullying for pupils with SEN.

- CPD to include a staff day on the subject of bullying.
- An awareness day for pupils and parents on the subject of bullying.
- 'Friendship Week' to celebrate and embrace friendship with a focus on developing and maintaining positive relationships between pupils throughout the school.
- A weekly 'Good News Assembly' whereby positive pupil behaviour is commended and highlighted and in which the whole school can gather thus promoting unity and a sense of belonging.
- The use of a 'Buddy Bench' in the Senior yard helps to advocate inclusiveness and develop awareness of helping friends during yard time.
- Pupils will design their own anti-bullying slogans and posters and display these in areas of the school where other pupils can frequently view them.
- Potential 'Bullying Hot-Spots' (school areas which pupils highlight as a place where bullying occurs) will be monitored and supervised.

Procedures for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying:

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

- (i) 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);
- (ii) In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved;
- (iii) All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be documented, investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. In that way pupils will gain confidence in 'reporting'. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It should 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;
- (iv) Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, special needs assistants (SNAs), bus escorts, caretakers, cleaners must be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the relevant teacher;
- (v) Parents and pupils are required 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;
- (vi) It is very important that all involved (including each set of pupils and parents) understand the above approach from the outset;
- (vii) Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents;

- (viii) Incidents are generally best investigated outside the classroom situation to ensure the privacy of all involved;
- (ix) All interviews should 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;
- (x) When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher should seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This should be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner;
- (xi) If a group is involved, each member should be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved should be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member should be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements;
- (xii) Each member of a group should be supported through the possible pressures that they may face from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher;
- (xiii) In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher that bullying behaviour has occurred, the parents of the parties involved may be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken (by reference to the school policy). The school 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;
- (xiv) Where the relevant teacher has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it should be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the school's anti-bullying policy and efforts should be made to try to get him/her to see the situation from the perspective of the pupil being bullied;
- (xv) 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;
- (xvi) Follow-up meetings with the relevant parties involved should 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;
- (xvii) 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 c.f. Appendix 2.
- (xiii) In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant teacher must, as part of his/her professional judgement, take the following factors into account:
- Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased;
 - Whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable;
 - Whether the relationships between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable; and
 - Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the school Principal or Deputy Principal;
- (xx) Where a parent is not satisfied that the school has dealt with a bullying case in accordance with these procedures, the parents must be referred, as appropriate, to the school's complaints procedures;

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

(xxii) Incidents of Bullying which meet the threshold of abuse under Child Protection Guidelines will be dealt with using reporting procedures as covered in DES Guidelines and referred to TUSLA by the DLP, Mrs Deirdre Kennelly.

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 must be in place. Such pupils may need counselling and/or 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.
- A programme of support for those pupils involved in bullying behaviour must 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. It is, therefore, important that the learning strategies applied within the school allow for the enhancement of the pupil's self-worth. Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour may need counselling 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.

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.

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.

Ratification and Communication:

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management in February 2013.

This current review is being conducted in September 2023.

Implementation and Review:

This policy has been made available to school personnel, is readily accessible to parents and pupils on request and provided to the Parents' Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year. Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, provided to the Parents' Association and made available to parents and pupils on request. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Date of next review: September 2025 (or sooner if deemed necessary)

Signed: *Thomas Barrett*

Chairperson of Board of Management
Management

Date: 2nd October 2023

Signed: *Deirdre Kennelly*

Principal/Secretary to the Board of

Date: 2nd October 2023

PATRON'S APPROVAL

This policy was approved by St. Senan's Education Office

Appendix 1 Practical tips for building a positive school culture and climate

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.

- ❖ Model respectful behaviour to all members of the school community at all times.
- ❖ Explicitly teach pupils what respectful language and respectful behaviour looks like, acts like, sounds like and feels like in class and around the school.
- ❖ Display key respect messages in classrooms, in assembly areas and around the school. Involve pupils in the development of these messages.
- ❖ Catch them being good - notice and acknowledge desired respectful behaviour by providing positive attention.
- ❖ 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.
- ❖ Give constructive feedback to pupils when respectful behaviour and respectful language are absent.
- ❖ Have a system of encouragement and rewards to promote desired behaviour and compliance with the school rules and routines.
- ❖ Explicitly teach pupils about the appropriate use of social media.
- ❖ Positively encourage pupils to comply with the school rules on mobile phone and internet use. Follow up and follow through with pupils who ignore the rules.
- ❖ Actively involve parents and/or the Parents' Association in awareness raising campaigns around social media.
- ❖ Actively promote the right of every member of the school community to be safe and secure in school.
- ❖ Highlight and explicitly teach school rules in pupil friendly language in the classroom and in common areas.
- ❖ All staff can actively watch out for signs of bullying behaviour.
- ❖ Ensure there is adequate playground/school yard/outdoor supervision.

- ❖ School staff can get pupils to help them to identify bullying “hot spots” and “hot times” for bullying in the school.
 - o Hot spots tend to be in the playground/school yard/outdoor areas, changing rooms, corridors and other areas of unstructured supervision.
 - o 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.
- ❖ Support the establishment and work of student councils

Appendix 2: Recording Bullying Behaviour

1. Name of pupil being bullied and class group

Name _____ Class _____

2. Name(s) and class(es) of pupil(s) engaged in bullying behaviour

3. Source of bullying concern/report
(tick relevant box(es))*

Pupil concerned	
Another Pupil	
Parent	
Teacher	
Other	

4. Location of incidents (tick relevant box(es))*

Playground	
Classroom	
Corridor	
Toilets	
School Bus	
Other	

5. Name of person(s) who reported the bullying concern

--

6. Type of Bullying Behaviour (tick relevant box(es)) *

Physical Aggression		Cyber-bullying	
Damage to Property		Intimidation	
Isolation/Exclusion		Malicious Gossip	
Name Calling		Other (specify)	

7. Where behaviour is regarded as identity-based bullying, indicate the relevant category:

Homophobic	Disability/SEN related	Racist	Membership of Traveller community	Other (specify)

8. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact

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9. Details of actions taken

--

Signed _____ (Relevant Teacher) Date _____

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal _____

Anti-Cyber-Bullying Policy

St Fergus' N.S. aims to ensure that children are safe and feel safe from bullying, harassment and discrimination. This school is committed to teaching children the knowledge and skills to be able to use ICT effectively, safely and responsibly.

UNDERSTANDING CYBER-BULLYING:

- Cyber bullying is the use of ICT (usually a mobile phone and or the internet) to abuse another person
- It can take place anywhere and involve many people
- Anybody can be targeted including pupils and school staff
- It can include threats, intimidation, harassment, cyber-stalking, vilification, defamation, exclusion, peer rejection, impersonation, unauthorized publication of private information or images etc.
- While bullying involves a repetition of unwelcome behaviour, the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools, September 2013, states:

“2.1.3. 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.”

WHAT IS CYBER-BULLYING?

There are many types of cyber-bullying. The more common types are:

1. **Text messages** – can be threatening or cause discomfort. Also included here is ‘Bluejacking’ (the sending of anonymous text messages over short distances using Bluetooth wireless technology)

2. **Picture/video-clips via mobile phone cameras** – images sent to others to make the victim feel threatened or embarrassed
3. **Mobile phone calls** – silent calls, abusive messages or stealing the victim's phone and using it to harass others, to make them believe the victim is responsible
4. **Emails** – threatening or bullying emails, often sent using a pseudonym or somebody else's name
5. **Chat room bullying** – menacing or upsetting responses to children or young people when they are in a web-based chat room
6. **Instant messaging (IM)** – unpleasant messages sent while children conduct real-time conversations online using SnapChat, BeReal, X or similar tools
7. **Bullying via websites** – use of defamatory blogs (web logs), personal websites and online personal 'own web space' sites such as YouTube, Facebook, Snapchat, BeReal, X, although there are others.

Explanation of slang terms used when referring to cyber-bullying activity:

1. **'Flaming'**: Online fights using electronic messages with angry and vulgar language
 2. **'Harassment'**: Repeatedly sending offensive, rude, and insulting messages
 3. **'Cyber Stalking'**: Repeatedly sending messages that include threats of harm or are highly intimidating or engaging in other on-line activities that make a person afraid for his or her own safety
 4. **'Denigration'**: 'Dissing' someone online. Sending or posting cruel gossip or rumours about a person to damage his or her reputation or friendships
 5. **'Impersonation'**: Pretending to be someone else and sending or posting material online that makes someone look bad, gets her/him in trouble or danger, or damages her/his reputation or friendships
 6. **'Outing and Trickery'**: Tricking someone into revealing secret or embarrassing information which is then shared online
 7. **'Exclusion'**: Intentionally excluding someone from an on-line group, like a 'buddy list'
- This list is not exhaustive and the terms used continue to change.

AIMS OF POLICY:

- To ensure that pupils, staff and parents understand what cyber bullying is and how it can be combated
- To ensure that practices and procedures are agreed to prevent incidents of cyber-bullying
- To ensure that reported incidents of cyberbullying are dealt with effectively and quickly.

PROCEDURES TO PREVENT CYBER-BULLYING:

- Staff, pupils, parents and Board of Management (BoM) will be made aware of issues surrounding cyber bullying through the use of appropriate awareness-raising exercises
- Pupils will learn about cyber bullying through Social, Personal and Health Education

(SPHE), assemblies, friendship week activities and other curriculum projects

- The school will engage a speaker to facilitate a workshop on cyber bullying for 5th and 6th classes bi-annually. Classes 1st to 6th will participate in the 'Bullying in a Cyber World' programme.
- Alternate years the company ZEEKO/Cybersafe Kids will speak to pupils, staff and parents in relation to use of digital learning/ICT specifically in St. Fergus' N.S.
- Staff CPD (Continuous Professional Development) will assist in learning about current technologies
- Parents will be provided with information and advice on how to combat cyber bullying
- Pupils will sign an Acceptable Use of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) contract
- Parents will be expected to sign an Acceptable Use of ICT contract prior to enrolment and to discuss its meaning with their children
- Pupils and parents will be urged to report all incidents of cyber bullying to the school
- All reports of cyber bullying will be investigated, recorded, stored in the Principal's office and monitored regularly
- Procedures in our school Anti-bullying Policy shall apply
- The police will be contacted in cases of actual or suspected illegal content
- This policy will be reviewed bi-annually. Pupils, parents and staff will be involved in reviewing and revising this policy and any related school procedure

INFORMATION FOR PUPILS:

If you are being bullied by phone or on the Internet:

- Remember, bullying is never your fault. It can be stopped and it can usually be traced.
- Don't ignore the bullying. Tell someone you trust, such as a teacher or parent or call an advice line.
- Try to keep calm. If you are frightened, try to show it as little as possible. Don't get angry, it will only make the person bullying you more likely to continue.
- Don't give out your personal details online – if you are in a chat room, do not say where you live, the school you go to, your email address etc. All these things can help someone who wants to harm you to build up a picture about you.
- Keep and save any bullying emails, text messages or images. Then you can show them to a parent or teacher as evidence.
- If you can, make a note of the time and date bullying messages or images were sent, and note any details about the sender
- There is plenty of online advice on how to react to cyberbullying. For example, <https://www.cybersafekids.ie/>, <https://www.webwise.ie/>, ie.reachout.com and www.wiredsafety.org have some useful tips.

Text/video messaging

- You can easily stop receiving text messages for a while by turning-off incoming messages for a couple of days. This might stop the person texting you by making them believe you've changed your phone number
- If the bullying persists, you can change your phone number. Ask your mobile service provider about this.
- Don't reply to abusive or worrying text or video messages.
- Your mobile service provider will have a number for you to ring or text to report phone

bullying. Visit their website for details.

- Don't delete messages from cyber bullies. You don't have to read them, but you should keep them as evidence.

Useful Websites

www.spunout.ie

www.childnet.int.org

www.kidsmart.org.uk/beingsmart

www.antibullying.net

www.bbc.co.uk/schools/bullying

<http://ie.reachout.com>

www.childline.ie/index.php/support/bullying/1395 www.abc.tcd.ie

www.chatdanger.com

www.sticksandstones.ie

www.kidpower.org

www.zeeko.ie

POLICY RATIFICATION

This policy is being reviewed in September 2023, along with

-The Code of Behaviour

-The Anti-Bullying Policy

The policy was ratified by the Board of Management of St. Fergus National School at its meeting held on 2nd October 2023.

Signed: *Thomas Barrett*

Signed: *Deirdre Kennelly*

Chairperson of Board of Management
Management

Principal/Secretary to the Board of

Date: 2nd October 2023

Date: 2nd October 2023

NEXT REVIEW: September 2025, or sooner if deemed necessary

PATRON'S APPROVAL

The content of this policy has been approved by St. Senan's Diocesan Office

