Holy Family Community School

Education is Opportunity

Bí Cineálta / Anti-Bullying Policy

Title:	Bí Cineálta / Anti-Bullying Policy
Approved by:	The Board of Management
Responsibility for implementation:	The Board of Management and all staff
Date:	June 2025
Policy Review Date:	June 2026

Introduction

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

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

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

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

Definition of bullying

Bullying is defined as targeted behaviour, online or offline, that causes harm. The harm caused can be physical, social and/or emotional in nature. Bullying behaviour is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power in relationships between two people or groups of people in society.

Types of Bullying Behaviour:

1. **Physical Aggression** – Hitting, pushing, tripping, spitting, or damaging belongings.
2. **Intimidation** – Threats, aggressive language or gestures, hostile body language.
3. **Extortion** – Demanding money or possessions, forcing theft.
4. **Property Interference** – Damaging, stealing, or hiding personal items.
5. **Verbal Abuse** – Name-calling, offensive jokes, gossip, rumours, ridicule.
6. **Cyberbullying** – Abusive texts, calls, or messages via phone, apps, games, or social media.
7. **Exclusion/Relational Bullying** – Deliberate isolation, public insults, whispering campaigns.
8. **Identity-Based Bullying** – Targeting someone based on gender, race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or other protected characteristics.
9. **Mixed Methods** – Any combination of the above types.

Note: Isolated incidents or one-off hurtful messages do not constitute bullying and will be addressed under the school's Code of Behaviour

Section A: Development of our Bí Cineálta Policy

	Date consulted	Method of consultation
Staff	10th April 2025	Focus Groups
Students	24th February 2025	In Person Meeting
Parents	11th April 2025	Survey
Board of Management	24th June 2025	In Person Meeting

Section B: Preventing Bullying Behaviour

HFCS works to create a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment for all students. The HFCS Anti-Bullying Policy focuses strongly on prevention, education, and support to ensure every student feels secure and valued.

HFCS aims to prevent bullying through a wide range of proactive measures. Educational programmes such as SPHE, Religious Education, CSPE, and Digital Media Literacy help students understand respect, empathy, and appropriate online behaviour. Initiatives like the FUSE programme, tutor/wellbeing time, and Wellbeing Week build a strong foundation of mental health awareness and resilience. Guest speakers, workshops, and talks from the Community Garda reinforce these messages in a real-world context.

Our school community—including staff, students, and parents—is encouraged to remain vigilant and to report concerns early. HFCS promotes a whole-school culture of kindness and respect, supported by visual reminders such as posters, digital screens, and an established Acceptable Use Policy (AUP). Students benefit from a structured pastoral system including Tutors, Year Heads, Guidance Counsellors, Mentors, and our dedicated Student Support Team.

HFCS implements tailored interventions for identified issues, uses restorative practice to manage conflict positively, and provides counselling and extracurricular opportunities to help affected students rebuild confidence. Our mobile phone policy of phones being switched off and out of sight during the school day supports a safe school environment. Supervision at break times further assists in maintaining a safe school environment.

Through these comprehensive and compassionate strategies, HFCS works to prevent bullying and promote a positive school culture for all.

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.

Section C: Addressing Bullying Behaviour

Holy Family Community School is committed to ensuring that every report of bullying is taken seriously, handled with sensitivity, and addressed in a timely and effective manner. The school follows a structured and student-centred approach that prioritises safety, accountability, and restorative practice.

Students are strongly encouraged to speak up if they experience or witness bullying. Students may report concerns to someone they trust, such as their Year Head, Class Tutor, any member of staff, a parent or guardian, or a senior student or Mentor. All reports will be taken seriously, recorded, and investigated.

A calm, non-judgmental, and problem-solving approach will be adopted by staff handling the issue. Investigations will take place outside of classroom settings to ensure privacy and minimise any distress. Students directly involved will be spoken with to gather information from each perspective. Witnesses or students with indirect involvement may also be asked to provide information. Written reports will be obtained, and a member of the Senior Management Team will be informed.

If it is concluded that bullying has occurred, the bullying behaviour will be recorded and reported to the Board of Management. This will include the type of behaviour, where and when it took place, and the date of the engagement with students and parents. The actions and support agreed to address bullying behaviour will be documented. The student/s responsible for the bullying behaviour will be in breach of the school's Code of Behaviour, and appropriate sanctions will be applied. If bullying behaviour is a child protection concern, the matter will be addressed without delay in accordance with *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.
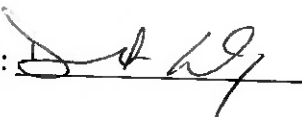
By addressing bullying with care, consistency, and transparency, the school aims to foster a safe, respectful, and inclusive school culture for all students.

Section D: Oversight

The Principal will present an update on bullying behaviour at Board of Management meetings. This update will include the number of incidents of bullying behaviour that have been reported since the last meeting, the number of ongoing incidents, and the total number of incidents since the beginning of the school year. Where incidents of bullying behaviour have occurred, the Principal will also provide a verbal update which will include, where relevant, information relating to trends and patterns identified, strategies used to address the bullying behaviour and any wider strategies to prevent and address bullying behaviour where relevant.

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

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

Signed: _____ Date: 24/6/25. (Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: _____ Date: 24/6/25 (Principal)