
City of Dublin FET College Ballyfermot

Anti-Bullying Policy

**POLICIES AND PROCEDURES
2026 – 2028**

Version History

Version	Date	Revision Description	Originator
1	April 2025	New document	P/DP
2	December 2025	Revised document / Staff Consultation	P/DP
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1. Introduction

The aim of the Anti-Bullying Policy is to ensure that all students attending City of Dublin FET College Ballyfermot (hereafter “the College”) can learn and develop in a safe, supportive, and respectful environment. This policy:

- Affirms the College’s commitment to prevent and address bullying behaviour among students.
- Aligns with the Further Education (FE) ethos, in which adult students have the freedom of studying in an adult environment and are expected to respect peers, staff, and the broader community.
- Acknowledges that bullying undermines the rights of each student to enjoy an inclusive, welcoming education free from intimidation or harm.

This document draws on the *Bí Cineálta* document (Department of Education, 2024), the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (Department of Education, 2023, Revised) and the Adult Safeguarding Policy and Procedure (Education and Training Boards Ireland, 2021) to provide a robust framework for preventing and addressing all forms of bullying behaviour.

2. Definition and Types of Bullying

2.1 Definition

In line with *Bí Cineálta* bullying is defined as:

“Targeted behaviour, online or offline, that causes harm—physical, social, or emotional—which is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power.”

1. Targeted Behaviour: Deliberate actions intended (or likely) to cause distress or fear.
2. Repeated Over Time: A pattern of harmful actions or a single harmful post online that is likely to be shared repeatedly.
3. Imbalance of Power: A student’s inability to defend themselves due to differences in age, peer group status, race/ethnic origin, membership of the Traveller or Roma community, gender, sexual orientation, religion, disability, or other considerations.

2.2 Types of Bullying

Bullying can manifest in various ways, including (but not limited to):

- **Physical:** Pushing, shoving, kicking, damage to property.
- **Verbal:** Name-calling, mocking, targeted insults, threats.
- **Relational:** Exclusion, gossip, spreading rumours, manipulating friendships.
- **Extortion:** Demanding items or money with menace.
- **Cyber/Online:** Sending harmful or threatening content via messaging, social media, or other digital platforms (including the non-consensual sharing of images, as per Coco’s Law (2020)).
- **Identity-Based:** Harassing students over disability, family status, age, religion, or membership of a minority group.

Examples of bullying can include:

<p>General behaviours which apply to all</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harassment based on any of the nine grounds in the equality legislation e.g. sexual harassment, homophobic bullying, racist bullying etc. • Physical aggression • Damage to property • Name calling • Slagging • The production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other materials aimed at intimidating another person • Offensive graffiti • Extortion • Intimidation • Insulting or offensive gestures • Invasion of personal space • A combination of any of the types listed.
<p>Cyber</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Denigration: Spreading rumors, lies or gossip to hurt a person's reputation • Harassment: Continually sending vicious, mean or disturbing messages to an individual • Impersonation: Posting offensive or aggressive messages under another person's name • Flaming: Using inflammatory or vulgar words to provoke an online fight • Trickery: Fooling someone into sharing personal information which you then post online • Outing: Posting or sharing confidential or compromising information or images
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusion • Cyber stalking: Ongoing harassment and denigration that causes a person considerable fear for his/her safety • Silent telephone/mobile phone call • Abusive telephone/mobile phone calls • Abusive text messages • Abusive email • Abusive communication on social networks e.g. Facebook/X/YouTube • Abusive website comments/Blogs/Pictures • Abusive posts on any form of communication technology including WhatsApp

Identity Based Behaviours Including any of the nine discriminatory grounds mentioned in Equality Legislation (gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community).	
Homophobic and Transgender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spreading rumours about a person's sexual orientation • Taunting a person of a different sexual orientation • Name calling e.g. Gay, queer or lesbian and used in a derogatory manner • Physical intimidation or attacks • Threats
Race, nationality, ethnic background and membership of the Traveller Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discrimination, prejudice, comments or insults about colour, nationality, culture, social class, religious beliefs, ethnic or traveller background • Exclusion on the basis of any of the above
Relational	<p>This involves manipulating relationships as a means of bullying. Behaviours include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Malicious gossip • Isolation & exclusion • Ignoring • Excluding from the group • Taking someone's friends away • Spreading rumours • Breaking confidence • Talking loud enough so that the victim can hear
Sexual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unwelcome or inappropriate sexual comments or touching or advances • Sexually suggestive jokes or comments • Innuendo or lewd comments • Harassment • Displays of sexually suggestive material
Special Educational Needs, Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name calling • Taunting others because of their disability or learning needs • Taking advantage of some students' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to recognise and defend themselves against bullying • Taking advantage of some students' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to understand social situations and social cues. • Mimicking a person's disability • Setting others up for ridicule

3. Policy Rationale and Aims

3.1 Rationale

City of Dublin FET College, Ballyfermot is required to create an environment for both staff and students that is free from bullying and harassment but at the same time promotes a friendly, learning environment where every student feels respect. Bullying often leads to absenteeism or early course withdrawal undermining educational success (Students Attendance and Retention Policy 2024-2-26). The rationale for this policy draws on the College's obligations to ensure that it is fully compliance with the following legislation and guidelines:

- Equal Status Acts 2000-2018
- Child Protection Procedures for Schools (Revised 20215)
- Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020 (Coco's Law)
- Relevant City of Dublin ETB guidelines

Attendance & Retention:

Bullying often leads to absenteeism or early course withdrawal, undermining educational success (Student Attendance & Retention Policy, 2024 - 2026).

- **College Mission:** The College seeks to cultivate a friendly, adult environment where **every** student feels respected.
- **Legal Compliance:** This policy upholds responsibilities under **Equal Status Acts 2000–2018**, the **Child Protection Procedures for Schools (Revised 2025)**, the **Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020 (Coco's Law)**, and relevant City of Dublin ETB guidelines.

3.2 Aims

The overall aim of this policy is to educate and train all members of the College community in relation to what bullying actually is and to put measures in place to ensure that incidents of bullying do not affect teaching and learning.

- **Prevention:** Foster a culture of empathy, kindness, and respect so that bullying behaviour is significantly less likely to occur.
- **Early Intervention:** Ensure clear channels for reporting concerns and swift investigative procedures.
- **Consistent Sanctions:** Align consequences with the Colleges' **Student Code of Conduct 2026 - 2028** in a fair and transparent manner.
- **Support:** Provide guidance and resources to students who experience, witness, or exhibit bullying behaviour.



4. Scope of the Policy

1. **Who:** Applies to **all** students (including those under 18, for whom additional child protection procedures apply), staff, and the wider College community.
2. **Where:** Encompasses behaviour on campus or during any off-campus college-related activity (e.g., field trips, Erasmus+, work experience).
3. **Online:** Includes bullying actions on messaging apps, social media, or other digital platforms, where such actions affect College students or staff.

5. Guiding Principles

The College has adopted **Bí Cineálta's the following 4** key guiding pillars to mitigate against bullying behaviour within the College community.

1. **Prevention:** Building a positive College atmosphere through awareness-raising, training, and continuous reinforcement of respectful behaviour. This is introduced at induction where students are made aware of this policy and that bullying behaviour will not be tolerated in the College.
2. **Support:** Offering meaningful help to students harmed by bullying and to those who have engaged in bullying behaviour, with referrals to the College guidance counselling or external services.
3. **Oversight:** Monitoring incidents and outcomes, maintaining transparent records, and ensuring consistency in applying the policy.
4. **Community:** Involving students, staff, parents/guardians (where applicable), local communities, and external agencies to strengthen the College's anti-bullying stance.

6. Prevention and Promotion of a Positive Environment

The College strives to promote a positive environment that promotes anti-bullying by building a culture of respect and creating awareness of the potential harm that can be inflicted when bullying occurs.

6.1 Building a Culture of Respect

- **Induction:** During orientation, all students review the Student Code of Conduct and this Anti-Bullying Policy, emphasizing adult responsibility and respect.
- **Attendance Emphasis:** The Student Attendance & Retention Policy highlights how bullying can harm attendance and academic progression—students are encouraged to be present and engaged.

6.2 Awareness and Education

- **Campaigns:** Promotion of empathy and inclusion in College communication. Promotion of responsible digital citizenship, emphasizing that cyber harassment is subject to the same disciplinary measures as offline bullying.
- **Integration into Curriculum:** Where suitable, modules incorporate discussions on diversity, mutual respect, and anti-bullying strategies.
- **Staff Training:** Professional development opportunities to equip staff with strategies for identifying, preventing, and addressing bullying.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

All members of the College community have a role to play in creating a culture within the College that does not tolerate bullying.

7.1 Students

- **Comply with College Policies:** Familiarize themselves with this policy and the Student Code of Conduct.
- **Report Concerns:** Inform any staff member if they experience or witness bullying.
- **Respectful Behaviour:** Uphold an environment free from discrimination or intimidation.

7.2 Staff

- **Prevention & Detection:** Identify any bullying indicators (e.g., drop in attendance, changes in behaviour) and intervene promptly.
- **Fair Investigation:** Document and report alleged incidents to the appropriate Course Coordinator or Deputy Principal.
- **Confidentiality & Dignity:** Treat disclosures sensitively, adhering to child protection obligations for under-18 students.

7.3 College Leadership (Principal, Deputy Principals)

- **Implementation:** Ensure that this policy is actively enforced, and that staff are supported in addressing bullying.
- **Sanctions:** Oversee the disciplinary process, respecting the Student Code of Conduct's stages of warning, suspension, and, if necessary, expulsion.
- **Liaison:** When serious breaches occur, may liaise with external agencies (Tusla, Gardaí, etc.) or refer students to external supports.

8. Procedures for Reporting and Investigating Bullying

The staff who investigate and deal with bullying at the College are:

- Teacher
- Course Coordinator
- Guidance Counsellor
- Deputy Principal
- Principal

The primary aim 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 apportion blame.

8.1 Reporting Bullying Behaviour

Any student may bring a bullying incident to any member of staff in the College. The member of staff should make the students aware of the Anti-Bullying policy and the procedures therein. The College will investigate all bullying reports. Teaching staff must report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the Course Coordinator of the relevant class.

It may also be appropriate/necessary for a student or a parent(s)/guardian(s) of a student aged under 18 to report bullying incidents to an Garda Síochána.

8.2 Investigating and Dealing with Incidents

Students who feel that they are being bullied can seek to address the issue using the following approaches:

- Informal approach
- Formal approach

The objective of dealing with issues informally is to try and resolve them swiftly and effectively with the minimum amount of distress to all parties. It is good practice that all informal resolution avenues should be considered and where appropriate, exhausted before a formal process is instigated, however, it is acknowledged that there may be instances where informal options may not be appropriate.

8.2.1 Informal Approach

A student who feels that they have been subjected to bullying is encouraged to make the person causing the alleged offence aware that their behaviour is unwelcome and requests that this behaviour either stops or changes. If the student feels unable to contact or approach the person by themselves, they may have someone accompany them as a source of support, such as a classmate/friend in the College.

It may be the case that the person causing the alleged offence does not realise that they are perceived to be behaving in a manner which is negatively affecting someone else and this approach can often resolve the situation. Whilst this is not a defense, the unwelcome behaviour may cease if they are made aware of it.

The student can use the following as a guide to try and resolve the matter informally:

- Request to meet with the person causing the alleged offence in a location where the conversation can take place confidentially. The student may wish to bring a support person/friend with them to the meeting.
- Writing down the behaviours/incidents, dates they occurred and the impact they had can help the student prepare for the meeting.
- At the meeting the student should give examples of the type of behaviour that is unwelcome and

explain how it makes them feel, for example “when you addressed me in that manner in front of other people, I felt embarrassed/uncomfortable”.

- The student should request that the behaviour stops or changes.
- It is recommended that the student keep notes including notes of the resolution reached.
- Resolving matters informally can be more successful when having a face-to-face conversation with someone rather than sending an email or text message as sometimes the tone can get lost in the message, however, it may be the case that making contact in writing is the best approach for the student.

If it is recognised that a form of bullying has taken place and a solution has been agreed by both parties, it is hoped that the issue can be concluded at this stage of the process.

If, however,

(a) both parties cannot agree to a solution

or

(b) the student perceives that the solution agreed has not been satisfactorily implemented resulting in the continuation of the alleged bullying behaviour

or

(c) the student requires the support of a teacher to help resolve the issue informally,

then they should report the issue to the Course Coordinator. The Course Coordinator will assist the student to reach a resolution to the issue using the guide outlined above.

If, however, the situation is not resolved informally, then the student may lodge a formal complaint in writing to the Deputy Principal.

The template to formally report an alleged bullying behaviour is provided on the last page of this policy and should be completed by the student and provided to the Deputy Principal (see Appendix A).

8.2.2 Formal Approach

On receipt of the formal complaint, the Deputy Principal will review the complaint and may recommend that informal options may be the most appropriate means of resolving the issue(s). If this arises, the Deputy Principal will meet with the parties involved separately to discuss this further.

Where a formal approach is required, the Deputy Principal shall investigate and adjudicate the alleged anti-bullying behavior.

The Deputy Principal must advise the Principal that an investigation is underway. In the case of a complainant under 18 years of age, the Principal will report to the Board of Management as per the child protection oversight reporting requirements.

The investigation will be conducted calmly and professionally in accordance with the principles of natural justice and fair procedures within 10 College days.

- All parties involved in the investigation will be given 5 College days’ notice of the requirement to attend any formal investigation meeting and have the right to be accompanied (by a friend or family member) to the meeting. The accompanying person must be made aware, by the complainant, that they are attending in a supporting capacity only and that it is not their role to make the complaint on behalf of the student they are

supporting.

- All meetings will be conducted sensitively and with due regard to the rights of all concerned. The Deputy Principal may appoint a note-taker to take notes at meetings.
- The Deputy Principal will meet with the complainant in the first instance.
- The respondent will then be provided with a copy of the complainant's statement and will be invited to a meeting to be given an opportunity to respond to the statement.
- Where a group is allegedly involved in bullying behaviour, each respondent will be met separately.
- Both the complainant and respondent will be asked to nominate witnesses that are relevant to the investigation. The Deputy Principal can call any witnesses as deemed appropriate with a view to establishing the facts.
- Statements taken during the investigation process, including those of witnesses, will be provided to both the complainant and respondent to ensure fairness and transparency.
- Where parties are required to confirm their own statement or respond in writing to another party statement, this should be done within 5 working days.
- The complainant and respondent will be given a fair opportunity to state their position in relation to the allegations made and be given an opportunity to respond to the statements before any conclusions are reached.
- Students are required to co-operate with any investigation and assist the College in resolving any issues and restoring, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved as quickly as possible. However, the Deputy Principal may proceed with the investigation notwithstanding the non-attendance or non-cooperation of the complainant, respondent or witness/es.
- The Deputy Principal will objectively consider all material and evidence and make a decision, on the balance of probability, as to whether
 - the behaviour complained of has occurred in whole or in part
 - the behaviour complained of has not occurred or
 - that there was insufficient evidence to make a finding.
- Where the Deputy Principal finds that the behaviour complained of has not occurred or that there was insufficient evidence to reach a conclusion, then the Deputy Principal will note this in the findings.
- Where there is a finding that the behaviour complained of has occurred in whole or in part and the Deputy Principal has established that there has been a breach of the Anti-Bullying Policy then:
 - the matter will proceed to consideration under the College's Code of Conduct. The findings may be relied upon during a subsequent disciplinary procedure. Any situation where disciplinary sanctions under the Code of Conduct are required is a private matter between the student being disciplined and the College.
 - Every effort will be made to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable,

the relationships of the parties involved using established intervention strategies including negotiating agreements between students, the no blame approach and restorative approaches.

- the College may, in appropriate circumstances and at an appropriate time in the process, take action to support and protect the complainant for example, relevant support services such as the Guidance Service in the College, and advice on external support outside the College.

9. Withdrawing A Complaint

From time to time, complainants may seek to withdraw their complaint after initiating a formal investigation. Withdrawal of a complaint must be made in writing. The College reserves the right to investigate a claim that has been withdrawn and/or the reason for which it has been withdrawn.

10. Appeals

- A complainant or respondent has the right to appeal the outcome of the investigation on the following grounds:
 - there has been a material procedural irregularity which has demonstrably affected the outcome. In this instance, the appeal will focus on the conduct of the investigation in terms of fair process and adherence to procedure. It should be noted that an appeal is not a re-hearing of the original issues.

or

- there is material new information which one of the parties was unable, for valid reasons, to provide when the behaviour was being investigated and which would have significantly affected the outcome.
- The appeal, setting out the grounds for seeking the appeal, must be submitted in writing to the Principal within 5 College days of the notification of the findings of the investigation.
- The appeal will take place in the form of a review of the investigation process, including the Deputy Principal's findings, complainant, respondents and witness/es statements and any other evidence gathered as part of the investigation process.
- The Principal reserves the right to meet with any party they deem necessary for the purpose of considering the grounds of appeal. The Principal will communicate their decision in writing to both the complainant and respondent normally within 10 working days from the commencement of the appeal.
- The Principal can make one of the following decisions:
 - Dismiss the appeal
 - Uphold the appeal in whole or in part
 - Uphold the appeal and direct that a new investigator be appointed to conduct a new investigation

The decision of the Principal is final and may not be further appealed.

11. Supporting Students Affected by Bullying

Support for students affected by bullying will be provided by Teachers, Course Coordinator, members of the Guidance Team, Deputy Principal and Principal.

If students require counselling or further support, the College will endeavour to liaise with the appropriate agencies to organise same. This may be for the students affected by bullying or for those involved in bullying behaviour.

Students should understand that there are no innocent bystanders and that all incidents of bullying behaviour must be reported.

12. Policy Review and Approval

- **Annual Review:** The Principal/Deputy Principal(s), in collaboration with the Board of Management, staff, and student representatives, will review the Anti-Bullying Policy for effectiveness.
- **Ongoing Consultation:** Input from staff training sessions, student feedback, and new legislation inform updates.
- **Approval and Publication:** Ratified by the **Board of Management**, published on the College's website (bcfe.ie), and available from the Administration Office.

References and Source Documents

1. City of Dublin FET College, Southwest Campus, Ballyfermot Road, 2025, Student Code of Conduct (2025–2027) - [Link](#)
2. City of Dublin FET College, Southwest Campus, Ballyfermot Road, 2024, Student Attendance & Retention Policy (2024–2026) - [Link](#)
3. Department of Education, 2024, Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools - [Link](#)
4. Department of Education, 2023, Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (Revised 2023) - [Link](#)
5. Education and Training Boards Ireland, 2021, Adult Safeguarding Policy and Procedure - [Link](#)
6. Irish Statute Book, 2021, Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act (Coco's Law) - [Link](#)
7. Irish Statute Book, 2000, Equal Status Act 2000–2018 - [Link](#)
8. Relevant City of Dublin ETB Policies and Procedures - [Link](#)

Appendix A - Template to Formally Report Alleged Bullying Behaviour

1. Name _____ Course _____

2. Name(s) and course(es) of student(s) engaged in alleged bullying behaviour:

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

4. Brief description of bullying behaviour and its impact:

5. Details of actions taken to-date:

Signed _____ Date _____

Date submitted to Principal Deputy: _____