

Sexual Harassment and Anti-Bullying Policy of St. Francis Special School

The Board of Management of St. Francis Special School recognises that all employees have the right to a workplace free from sexual harassment and is fully committed to ensuring that all employees are able to enjoy that right.

There is a responsibility on all employees to ensure a workplace free from sexual harassment for all other employees, and to be aware of this policy.

Any complaint of sexual harassment shall be fully and properly investigated and, if substantiated, will be regarded as grounds for disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. An attempt will be made to resolve the complaint informally in the first instance but if this is not possible, a formal procedure will be invoked. Confidentiality will be ensured, insofar as is possible, at all times during the investigation for all parties involved.

What is Sexual Harassment?

Sexual harassment means unwanted conduct of a sexual nature or other conduct based on a person's sex which affects the dignity of men and women at work. This can include unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct which is offensive and causes discomfort or humiliation to the individual concerned.

Examples of sexual harassment are included below but the list is not exhaustive:

1. Unwanted physical or verbal advances.
2. Unwanted touching or physical gestures.
3. Comments and remarks of a sexual or discriminatory nature.
4. Unwelcome comments about personal appearance.
5. Demands of sexual favours.
6. Displays of pinups and pornographic material.
7. Innuendoes of a sexual nature or based on a person's sex.

Adult Bullying in the Work Place

The school does not tolerate or condone bullying of any form or at any level of the school community. The Board of Management is committed to ensuring that all members of the school community – pupils, staff and Parents / Carers are enabled to act effectively to deal with bullying. This policy guides action and organisation within the school for preventing and responding to bullying.

The Health & Safety Authority states:

'Bullying in the workplace is repeated aggression, verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against another person or persons. Bullying is where aggression or cruelty, viciousness, intimidation or a need to humiliate, dominate the relationships. Isolated incidents of aggressive behaviour, while to be condemned, and should not be described as bullying. In the workplace environment there can be conflicts and interpersonal difficulties. Many of these are legitimate industrial relations difficulties, which should be dealt with through the appropriate industrial relations channels. Only aggressive behaviour which is systematic and on going should be regarded as bullying'.

In summary, Adult Bullying can take many different forms, which usually include:

- intimidation or harassment;
- aggression;
- verbal abuse;
- humiliation;
- undermining;
- dominance or abuse of power;
- different or unfavourable treatment;
- exclusion or isolation.

Key factors of Adult Bullying are that the behaviour is generally:

- persistent;
- unwanted;
- subtle ;and
- non-physical.

Making a complaint of sexual harassment/adult bullying

Any employee who feels he or she has been or is being sexually harassed or bullied should ask the perpetrator to stop. Where this form of action is unsuccessful the employee may report the matter to any of the following- the Principal, INTO staff representative or teacher/member of the Board of Management of St. Francis Special School.

Attempts will be made to resolve the matter informally, if appropriate. If it is not possible to resolve the matter informally, a formal complaints procedure shall be applied incorporating the following steps:

1. A written report to the Board of Management should be made by the complainant or an authorised person to whom the complaint is being made and signed by the complainant.
2. The complaint will be investigated with minimum delay as confidentially as possible by two individuals named by the Board of Management, one of whom shall be the same sex as the complainant and the alleged perpetrator.
3. Both parties may be accompanied/represented at all interviews/meetings held, and these shall be recorded.
4. Where a complaint is found to be substantiated, the extent and the nature of the sexual harassment or bullying will determine the form of action to be taken. These actions may include a verbal warning, a written warning, suspension from some duties with or without pay, suspension from full duties with or without pay or dismissal.
5. Where an employee is victimised as a result of invoking or participating in any aspect of the complaints procedure, including acting as a witness for another employee, such behaviour will also be subject to disciplinary action.

No record of any complaint will be registered on an employee's file unless the formal procedure outlined above has been invoked.

It is the policy of the school that issues of sexual harassment and adult bullying are best dealt with within the school. However, no aspect of this Policy affects any employee's individual legal rights to take their complaint outside of the school.

Pupil Bullying

Below are some examples of what may be considered to Pupil Bullying:

Physical Aggression:

This behaviour includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping people up. It may also take the form of severe physical assault.

Name-Calling / Slagging:

Persistent name-calling directed at the same individual(s), which hurts, insults or humiliates should be regarded as a form of bullying behaviour.

Intimidation:

Some bullying behaviour takes the form of intimidation. It is intended to frighten or threaten.

Isolation:

This form of bullying behaviour happens when a student is deliberately isolated, excluded or ignored by some, or the entire class group.

Abusive Telephone Contact

The abusive telephone call is a form of verbal intimidation or bullying.

Damage to Property:

Personal property can be the focus of attention for the bully; this may result in damage to clothing, school books and other learning material or interference with a student's possessions. The contents of school bags and pencil cases may be scattered on the floor.

All members of the school community have a role to play in the prevention of Pupil bullying as detailed below:

Board of Management

The Board of Management is responsible for ensuring that all members of the school community are enabled to deal effectively with bullying. The Board is committed to providing time and resources for the implementation of the policy. The Board will ensure that proper supervisory and monitoring measures are in place to prevent bullying and to deal with incidents appropriately as they arise. The BOM undertakes to formally review the anti-bullying policy every three years and as and when the need arises.

School Staff

The school staff will foster an atmosphere of friendship, respect and tolerance. Student's self-esteem will be developed through celebrating individual differences, achievements, acknowledging and rewarding good behaviour and manners and

providing opportunities for success throughout the curriculum and school. A positive affirmation programme is in operation within St. Francis Special School as detailed in the *Code of Behaviour*. Teachers will help pupils to develop empathy by discussing feelings and trying to put themselves in the place of others. Relationships with pupils will be based on mutual respect and trust so that pupils will have confidence in the school staff.

The formal curriculum of the school will also be used to educate all pupils against bullying behaviour. Anti-bullying issues may be raised through the school religion programme, the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Programme, the Stay Safe Programme and all areas of the curriculum as appropriate.

Pupils

Pupils are expected to be tolerant and to have mutual respect for each other. Pupils should report incidents of bullying to their Parents / Carers and teachers. As well as availing of in-school staff supports, Pupils involved in ongoing bullying behaviour may be referred to members of the multi-disciplinary team or for outside psychological or psychiatric interventions for support.

Parents / Carers

Encourage positive behaviour and discourage negative behaviour both at home and at school. Encourage children to solve difficulties without resorting to aggression. Encourage children to share, to be kind, to be caring and to be understanding towards others. Support the school in its efforts to prevent and deal with bullying.

PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING AND INVESTIGATING PUPIL BULLYING INCIDENTS

Bullying incidents should be reported to the Principal, Class Teacher, SNA or any Staff member working with the Pupil. The reporting may be done by the Pupil, Parent/Guardian or school Staff.

St. Francis Special School has a detailed code of behaviour and aims to promote positive behaviour and mutual respect in the school. If deemed necessary following an allegation of bullying, Parents/Guardians may be contacted by the school and may be required to attend a meeting. The incident may be referred to the school BOM and a school suspension in serious incidences may be necessary.

GENERAL STAFF GUIDELINES FOR DEALING WITH REPORTS OF BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

- Use your experience and discretion when dealing with alleged incidents.
- Stay calm and listen.
- Do not promise confidentiality, but assure the pupil that only those who need to know will be told.

- Investigate the alleged incident as widely as possible.
- Ask the pupil if they have ideas as to how the bullying may be stopped.
- Make a definite arrangement to speak again, even if nothing is to be done in the meantime.
- Consult with relevant members of staff.
- When dealing with the perpetrator, be non-judgemental, concentrate on the actions and not the person. Offer support but don't tolerate bullying.

This Policy will be subject to periodic review

This Policy was ratified by the Board of Management of St. Francis Special School.