

CODE OF BEHAVIOUR 2026-2027

Ethos

The Catholic ethos is deeply important to us in St. Finian's College. We seek to develop a sense of community that attempts to live out the teaching of Christ, especially in our treatment of others. The values of Respect, Accountability, Fairness and Honesty are what are most important in our school community. These core qualities underpin the relationships in our school in all of our interactions with each other. We aim to be restorative in our approach.

Restorative Practice

Restorative Practice is based on a set of core values. The core values include respect, and being respectful of everyone. It is the promotion of empathy and having the skill set to find solutions to specific problems. People learn to respect each other. By showing empathy, we are able to harness the notion of fairness in our relationships. Where conflict arises, it is the ability to resolve conflict and repair harm to a relationship in a collaborative manner.

Restorative Practice allows for building trust between people. It provides a platform for dealing with conflict in a healthy manner.

Purpose

Our code has been developed in partnership with the Board of Management, Staff, Learners and Parents. It is hoped that adherence to this code will allow each student to achieve their full potential during their time in St Finian's College and ensure the health and safety of all members of our school community.

This is in keeping with Section 23 (2) of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, and is in accordance with the Guidelines issued by the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB).

We, in St Finian's, would like each student to be happy at school and to benefit fully from their post-primary education. High standards of behaviour are expected to protect the values we seek to uphold. Each student can make a positive contribution towards maintaining those high standards in line with our Christian ethos.

St Finian's College Code of Behaviour is a set of standards, practices and procedures designed to encourage and reinforce positive behaviour, and maintain an orderly and effective learning environment for all learners and members of staff.

Admission to the College is on the understanding that parents and learners accept the code of behaviour of the College.

Our code applies at the following times:

- During the school day, including before and after class, and at break times.
- While wearing the school uniform.
- While travelling to and from school.
- While using school transport.
- While on school field trips, tours or exchanges.
- While involved with or supporting teams or any extra-curricular activity.
- While on online platforms
- Where an issue arises outside of school, which has a negative impact within our school, the school reserves the right to investigate.

Promotion of positive behaviour

We, in St. Finian's College, will always try to:

- promote a respectful atmosphere which creates a positive and safe environment for our school community.
- develop positive relationships between learners, staff and parents/guardians.
- encourage learners to participate fully in all aspects of learning.

This is established by:

- our learners, parents and guardians accepting our Bí Cinéalta & Anti Bullying Policy.
- being a Restorative Practice school.

- easing the transition from primary to secondary school for our learners and parents.
- having a Pastoral Care Team comprised of Principal, Deputy Principals, Year Heads, Class Tutors, Guidance Counsellors, School Chaplain, School Prefects, and Mentors who support our learners during their time in the college.
- having our Mentor Programme where first year learners are mentored by our senior learners. Our younger learners feel better supported having older students to speak to and to ask questions about life as a learner in this school.
- our school community modelling respectful behaviour.
- involving our Student Council in the decision making process.
- affirming positive behaviour through our House System.
- rewarding groups within the school for positive contributions to school life.
- acknowledging academic and extra-curricular achievement in our annual awards ceremony
- highlighting achievement and positive behaviour in the daily announcements.
- reinforcing positive behaviour at class and year group assemblies and on the VSWare system.
- learners & parents/guardians accepting our code of behaviour by reading and signing it before they enrol in the school.
- recognising the importance of the Dignity in the Workplace Charter for our school community

Class rules/ Class conduct

Co-operation with staff and fellow learners is essential in creating a positive classroom environment. We encourage learners to behave well and to become independent learners.

Respecting others includes:

- Recognising the learners' right to learn and to achieve their potential and the teachers' right to teach.
- Dealing respectfully with staff and each other at all times.

- Treating my friends and members of my class well.
- Following the teachers' instructions.
- Being punctual to class.
- Swiping my attendance each morning.
- Participating in class to the best of my ability.
- Having the necessary homework, text-books and equipment for class.
- Being respectful of school property, public property and other people's property.
- Understanding the importance of a persons' dignity.
- Having my mobile phone switched off and in my bag.
- Using a Chromebook correctly under the direction of the teacher.

Behaviour which is disrespectful and un-cooperative will not be accepted.

In the event of a learner causing difficulties in class, the class teacher will deal with issues that arise. If the unacceptable behaviour continues/escalates, it will be addressed by class Tutor, Year Head, Guidance Counsellors, Deputy Principals, Principal or Board of Management, as appropriate.

Curriculum

Junior Cycle: Our learners study 7 core subjects: English, Irish, Maths, Religious Education, Science, History and Geography. Learners also choose 3 option subjects.

Learners who are awarded full Schola or Associate Schola places in 1st year must take Music as one of their options to Junior Cycle.

Senior Cycle: Our learners study 7 core subjects: English, Irish, Maths, Non-exam Religion, PE, SPHE and Careers. Students also choose 4 option subjects.

Free Book Scheme 2026-2027

The Free School Book Scheme was introduced in 2023. In September 2026, all learners in St Finian's College will have received their school books from the free school book scheme. Learners will have received Textbooks, Workbooks and for exam classes, Exam Papers, in many subject areas.

All books are distributed using the student attendance card. All students must have a valid student card.

Please note the following important information:

- Workbooks are the property of the learner. Learners can write in these and put their name on the front cover. These are not returned.
- **Textbooks & Novels: These books remain the property of the school** and have a unique barcode. When a book is issued to a student, it is issued onto their school attendance profile page.

The following terms and conditions are accepted by parents/guardians where students have accepted receipt of books/textbooks under the Free School Book Scheme:

1. **Your child is responsible for the books that they receive.** They must ensure that they do not write on the textbooks or damage them in any way.

Any book damaged must be replaced by the parent/guardian of the student to whom the book was issued.

2. **They should not loan their books to any student.**

At the end of the academic year, books will be returned by students in a timely and orderly manner as outlined by the post holder responsible for the delivery of the Book Scheme: Ms Byrne & Ms Keenan.

Books for the following year will be distributed in August. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to collect the books during the timeframe they are given by Ms Byrne & Ms Keenan. Failure to collect books on time may result in a delay for a learner receiving their books.

Attendance/Punctuality

Attendance is recorded each morning. Each student is responsible for swiping their attendance.

An attendance swipe card is mandatory for all learners.

Regular attendance is essential. **Full and half day absences should be explained** to the school secretary by an email or on the iClass App from the parent/guardian to secretary@stfinianscollege.ie before 9am. Parents/Guardians will receive a text message where no explanation has been offered for a student's absence. . Please ensure that contact details are up to date.

The **National Education Welfare Board – TUSLA** must be informed of any student who has missed 20 days or more. A letter at 12 days' absence will be sent by the Attendance Officer. This must always be complied with even if there is a genuine reason for the absence, for example, illness. Parents will also be notified by letter should this arise. Letters to parents/guardians of senior learners will be sent to alert them to concerns re absence from classes and /or Attendance issues. The Attendance Officer will meet with learners and will contact parents/guardians where there are significant concerns.

Punctuality is important. **Late-comers are required to swipe in and register their arrival at** the office on arrival to school. Students who present late to class without a valid reason will have their lateness recorded on VSWare. The Attendance Officer may speak with students and their parents/guardians if punctuality or attendance is an issue.

A student who absents themselves from class and/or leaves the college without permission is liable to be suspended

Students Leaving School Early

Illness

- If a student is ill, they should report to the school office.
- **If a student is very unwell and needs to go home,** the student's parent/guardian will be contacted by the office and it will be arranged for the student to be collected where possible. The parent/guardian collects the student at the school office and only then does the student exit the building.
- Parents/Guardians must leave a contact number with the school for this purpose or any other emergency. This contact number should be that of the parent/guardian the student resides with. This number should be updated if changed.

- We encourage parents to inform the school of instances of Infectious Illness (we assure all parents/guardians of absolute confidentiality regarding disclosure of sensitive health information). Parents/Guardians will be informed of any outbreak of serious infections within the school. Communication will be guided by Public Health Advice.

Students should not contact home themselves without reporting to the office.

Students should not go to the bathroom without telling a teacher, particularly if feeling unwell.

Appointments

All medical and dental appointments should be arranged, if possible, outside of school hours.

- Where a student wishes to leave the school premises, the parent/guardian must contact the school office by email.

All students under 18 years of age must be collected by a parent/guardian (or by an adult with parental consent) when leaving school early. This is the law. The school is not allowed to release any student under the age of 18 during school hours.

- Students over 18 years may sign themselves out for appointments (with parental consent by email or by phone). Please avoid weekly appointments.
- The secretary notes on VSWare early leavers.
- Transition Year students' parents/guardians give signed consent at the beginning of the year for students to leave the school only on Transition Year business as overseen by a member of staff.

Students may not leave the school grounds during school hours without permission. A student who leaves the college grounds without permission is liable to be suspended.

Home-School Communication

Parents/Guardians have access to our Information System VSWare. On VSWare each student has a profile page showing Term Reports, Attendance, Punctuality, Behaviour to allow parents/guardians to monitor progress. Each parent has a username and password. It is very important that parent's/guardian's details are up to date on our systems. If you have not received your username, please contact the school office at 0449348313 or secretary@stfinianscollege.ie

- End of term and other reports as well as the annual Parent/Teacher meeting inform parents/guardians of general progress.
- Parents/guardians are always welcome to visit the school **by appointment only** to discuss their child's progress or to notify the school of any changes in their family circumstances.
- Parents/guardians will be notified by text or by email of changes to school calendar.

Parents/guardians are asked to check the VSWare system to remain informed as to their child's daily progress.

Journal

The School Journal is an important source of information. It is the responsibility of each student to ensure their journal is maintained well and without graffiti. The Journal contains both our Code of Behaviour and our Anti-Bullying policies. It is important that both of these are signed each year.

The Journal is designed to:

- Record homework given on a daily basis.
- Provide important information and support.
- be a source of communication with students.

Each student should have their St. Finian's College Journal with them in every class and it is important that students bring the journal home each evening.

Homework

Homework is key to success.

- Homework should be recorded in the journal at the end of each class, even if the teacher is posting homework to Google classroom.
- Students should complete their class work and homework, both oral and written to the best of their ability.

- Parents/Guardians will be informed **by the class teacher** if a student is not considered to be working to their potential. Teachers may notify parents where they are concerned about a student in their class. Please refer to your child's profile on VSWare.
- Students are asked to adhere to the guidelines for the completion of projects, classroom assignments and work assigned by the teacher. Deadlines are set by the Department of Education and should be met.

Parental support of our Homework policy is greatly appreciated.

Damage to Property

On occasion, students who cause damage to school property/school furniture, property of members of the school community will be asked to replace/repair the item or to pay a sum to compensate for the loss/damage of the item.

The school policy is to invoice the parent/guardian the cost to replace/repair damage caused by their child.

The school does not accept responsibility for this damage.

We have a CCTV system which assists the school leaders to be vigilant re property of students, please do not leave personal items unattended. The school does not accept responsibility for any loss/ damage to personal property.

Uniform/ Personal Appearance

In the interest of all students, full school uniform is to be worn:

- on school premises.
- when coming to and leaving school each day.
- during in-house and state examinations.
- on school excursions or at school functions.

and when requested by school staff and/or management.

Our School uniform is available from Tot's Paradise, Mullingar and from the Uniform Boutique Mullingar.

Our PE Uniform is supplied by KC Sports: kcsports.ie/collections/st-finians-college-mullingar.

Essential items of school uniform include:

Senior Cycle students:

- Crested navy jumper, crested navy polo shirt with navy trousers or check skirt.
- School Jacket with Crest.

Transition Year students:

- Have the option of purchasing a Transition Year Half Zip.

Junior Cycle students:

- Crested green jumper, crested navy polo shirt with navy trousers or check skirt.
- School Jacket with Crest.

Essential items for all students

- All students must wear black footwear. **All footwear must be completely black with no other colours. Branded white footwear / white soled footwear is not allowed.**
- P.E. Uniform: KC Sports supply our PE uniform. It can be ordered online at kcsports.ie/collections/st-finians-college-mullingar. Please wear supportive runners.
- A navy fleece with school crest is available from Tots Paradise in Mullingar. **This is a non-compulsory uniform item.**

Please note:

- Students should not substitute an alternative item of clothing for a uniform item of clothing.
- Skirts are worn to the knee. Students are not permitted to wear shorter skirts/or to roll their skirts up.
- Hoodies are not accepted as uniform at any time.
- No uniform tracksuit bottoms are allowed in classes unless it is PE class.
- If a pupil comes to school without their correct uniform parents/guardians will be contacted and asked to provide the correct uniform. **Students may not attend classes if out of uniform.**
- Items of uniform should be replaced when outgrown or worn out. If any student needs help to replace an item of uniform, please go to the school office and speak with our secretaries. We have

a small range of items in stock that have been donated back to the school by past pupils on graduation which are available to families at no cost.

- Items of clothing which do not form part of the uniform will be confiscated and returned to the student the same day, e.g. non-uniform jackets, non-uniform shoes, etc. If the uniform violation happens a second time, the item is returned to the parent/guardian.
- Students are required to pay particular attention to personal appearance and to the neatness of their uniform, books and schoolbags.

Please note that students should ensure their name is on all items of uniform e.g. jumper & jacket.

Jewellery

Pupils are asked to minimise the wearing of jewellery:

- Jewellery that may cause injury is not allowed. No expensive jewellery should be worn to school. Students may be asked to remove items of jewellery for practical subjects for Health and Safety reasons.
- No loud, colourful items allowed.

Personal Grooming

Students are expected to be neat and well-groomed in appearance.

- The wearing of **excessive / inappropriate make-up** is not allowed while in school uniform/ or in school.
- The wearing of **fake / artificial acrylic nails** is **not advisable** while in school on health & safety grounds.
- Hairstyles should be neat and tidy.
- **Extreme hairstyles are forbidden.** School management reserves the right to decide whether a particular hairstyle is acceptable or not. Home will be notified in the event of breaches.
- Head coverings on religious grounds should be plain navy blue or black.

The school would like full co-operation from parents/guardians in ensuring their child is in correct uniform at all times.

Please note that the school is the final arbiter with regard to personal appearance.

Mobile Phones/Smart Devices/Audio devices

The following guidelines were drawn up in order to ensure the quality of teaching and learning in St Finian's College is not interfered with by the use of mobile phones/smart devices and other electronic devices.

The Minister for Education wrote to all schools about the intention to instruct schools to implement a ban on the use of mobile phones during the school day. In this letter it was stated that schools are best placed to determine the specific approach and policy required to achieve a school day that is free from mobile phone use by students. This policy has been compiled in consultation with our students, our parents/guardians and our staff.

Mobile phones should be left at home where possible. Access to a school phone is available to students from the school office. Students who wish to contact their parents/guardians in the course of the school day may only do so from the school office.

- **Where a student is in possession of a phone, the phone must be switched off and in the students' schoolbag.**

- **Mobile phones should not be used or seen in the school buildings, on corridors or moving between buildings between classes. Mobile phones seen or being used in such cases may be automatically confiscated with SIM card and kept for one day in the school office. They will be returned at the end of the school day. * Contact will be made with parents/guardians about the breach of the policy.**

***First confiscation:** The phone is logged into the office under the name of student, class/year group and at the end of the school day the student can sign their phone out of the office. Parent/Guardian will be notified by text from school office. Air pods/Head phones/Smart watches have the same rules as mobile phones. In the event of further breaches of the policy, please note:

*** Second confiscation:** Parent/Guardian are required to sign out the phone at the end of the day it is confiscated.

***Third confiscation:** Student must hand their phone into the office every morning before school and collect at the end of each day (for a period of time to be decided)

1. Students will be reminded at the beginning of each class that phones / digital devices or headphones/ear pods are to be switched off and are only allowed in school bags. No student can

have a phone in their pocket in class. No student can wear ear pods in the building / in class. Ear pods/ headphones must be stored in their school bag.

2. Where a student has a medical condition which requires their mobile phone to be switched on, this is allowed once the appropriate documentation is in the school office. These students' will be provided with a permission card.
3. Where a student requests a toilet break during a class time, **their mobile phone must be placed on the teacher's desk** before leaving the classroom.
4. Where students use a digital device for payment in the food village, a phone can be used to make payment at the till only.
5. Mobile phones may be used under the direction of a teacher only for the purposes of Teaching & Learning as an ICT tool.
6. Mobile phones cannot be used to take photographs without permission.
7. Mobile phones cannot be used to record without permission.
8. Mobile phones cannot be used to take videos without permission.

Students are responsible for the content on their mobile phones/smart devices.

Breaches to points 6,7,8 will be subject to serious sanction under our Code of Behaviour

Parents/Guardians should be aware of advice issued to education authorities regarding the risks to young people from overuse of mobile phones/smart devices. Parents/Guardians should also be warned that any student with a mobile phone which has internet access can easily download inappropriate pictures, jokes and illegal or inappropriate content.

St Finian's College cannot accept responsibility for the loss or theft of mobile phones/smart devices or personal audio devices.

Parents/Guardians who need to contact students in the case of emergency can do so through the school office at 044 9348313

Students who wish to contact their parents/guardians in the course of the school day may do so from the school office.

All smart devices, which can be worn by a person, have the same rules as mobile phones.

Cars/Scooters/E bikes

No student cars are allowed on the school grounds or in the staff car park.

We strongly advise against students taking other students in their car during the school day.

Students with E bikes and/or E- Scooters must walk the e-bike or the e-scooter up the avenue to the bike sheds, where they are parked during the school day.

Property

While every care is taken to protect the property of students, the college does not accept responsibility for articles lost or stolen.

While the school respects the privacy of students, it reserves the right to inspect students' bags and/or jackets **with prior consent** in the interest of Health & Safety and the good of all the student body.

Fire Drill/ School Evacuation Procedures.

Evacuation routes and assembly points are illustrated on 'Fire Exit Map' in each classroom. It is important that you are aware of these and follow the correct procedure as follows:

If the fire siren activates falsely, an announcement will be made.

If the Fire Siren activates and it continues to ring:

- Teacher/Student(s) exit the room in orderly manner.
- Leave all belongings in situ, these are replaceable you are not.
- Staff/ Students out of classroom during ongoing alarm must exit building and locate with their class at the designated 'Assembly Point' in the Handball Alleys, the Basketball Courts or the Astro pitch.
- Always follow the designated exit route as illustrated on 'Exit Map' in each classroom unless the prescribed route is inaccessible.
- Do not run and co-operate with each other/instructions.
- DO NOT USE LIFT.

- Always descend stairs on the right hand side as usual.
- Students remain with Teacher/Supervisor at all times.
- Assemble in line at designated 'Assembly Point'.
- Keep all access routes/points clear for emergency personnel/vehicles/equipment.
- Teacher/Supervisor calls attendance and class remain together.
- DO NOT RE-ENTER the buildings, await further instruction.
- Principal/Deputy Principals/ Health and Safety Representative will permit re-entry to building, await their instruction(s).
- Full co-operation is expected and appreciated. Keep safe.

The Health & Safety Officer in St Finian's College is Mr D Farrell.

Breach of expected standards

Purpose

Accountability is one of the pillars of a restorative school. Students are held accountable for their actions/behaviours. The purpose of any sanction within a school is to highlight that unacceptable behaviour will not be tolerated. If a student disregards school regulations, the school will impose **"In-house" sanctions**.

These include:

- **Detention** may be used as an appropriate sanction for breaches of our Code of Behaviour. Students are given 24-hour notice of detention. Parents/Guardians will be contacted regarding detention so that suitable arrangements can be put in place re collection etc.
- **Confiscation:** Any items that can damage school property or cause harm to other students/staff are prohibited. If found they will be confiscated and not returned to the student. Parents/guardians will be informed.
- The school reserves **the right to withdraw school privileges** from any student **with a poor disciplinary record** i.e. school tours, school concerts, sports competitions etc.

Procedures for Suspensions and Expulsions.

- If a student **continues to breach standards**, they will be advised that an extra-ordinary sanction will be imposed if the conduct does not improve. **Extra-ordinary sanctions include severe detention, internal suspension, suspension and expulsion.**
- Where an issue arises with a student which may involve suspension/expulsion, the parents/guardians together with the student involved, may be required to attend a meeting with the school authorities and will be entitled to a full impartial hearing and a right of reply.
- All negotiations in such matters will be conducted only between the College authorities and the parents/guardians of the student involved.

Suspension.

Suspension is always a very serious matter and will only be used for persistent misconduct or a serious once-off incident. Where suspension is being considered, the following procedures will apply:

- The misconduct or incident will be fully investigated by appropriate personnel. Witnesses to the misconduct or incident may be interviewed. A written record of the investigation will be kept.
- The student against whom the complaint is made will always be given an opportunity to present their side of the story. A written record will be kept.
- Upon completion of the investigation, a meeting of the student, their parents/guardians and the appropriate discipline committee will be held. At this meeting the nature of the misconduct will be outlined and both the student and parents/guardians will be given a right of reply.
- If a decision to suspend is considered to be warranted, the Principal will outline the reasons for such a decision and the duration of and effective date(s) of the suspension.
- The student will be advised of the school's expectations upon their return to school. The student may be on Report Card on their return to school. This involves a daily tracker of behaviour and participation completed by the students' teachers.
- If the student's parents/guardians request that the suspension be reconsidered, they will be asked to withdraw temporarily from the meeting and the discipline committee will consider their request. After doing so the discipline committee will invite the parents/guardians and student to return and the suspension will either be reconfirmed, amended or withdrawn. The reasons for this decision

will be outlined. Appeals can be made to the Board of Management. Parents/Guardians write a letter outlining their grounds for appeal.

- All decisions to suspend will be confirmed to parents/guardians in writing.
- All suspensions will be noted in the school's suspension register.
- The National Education and Welfare Board will be notified about any student who has reached a cumulative suspension of more than twenty days.
- At the beginning of each school year the Board of Management will delegate authority to the Principal to suspend for up to three days. All suspensions will be reported to the Board of Management at their next ordinary meeting.
- The Board of Management will consider suspensions for a period longer than three days in the case of a very serious incident, requiring immediate action. In such cases the Board of management has delegated authority to the Principal to suspend for a longer period of time. This will involve consultation between the chairperson of the Board of Management and the Principal and will be confirmed by the Board of Management subsequently.
- For a very serious reason involving health and safety a student may be suspended for longer than three days by the Principal while a decision on the matter is pending from the Board of Management.
- Where the Board of Management suspends a student, and the cumulative number of days' suspension for that student exceeds twenty in any school year, parents/guardians will be informed of their right to appeal the decision to the Trustees and/or the Department of Education and Skills.
- In cases of extreme indiscipline or where other sanctions appear to have failed the matter may be referred to the Board of Management, which has the power to exclude a pupil. In such a case parents/guardians will be informed of their right of appeal to the Board.

Re-integrating the student

On return from suspension, the student may meet with the Deputy Principal/Principal. This may be with/or without their parent/guardian, depending on the reason for suspension. This helps to support the student to catch up with work missed. This helps to avoid the possibility that suspension starts or amplifies a cycle of academic failure. A student returning from suspension, may feel angry or resentful about their

suspension. These feelings can lead to further problem behaviour. The teachers, the Tutor, Year Head, Guidance Dept., Deputy Principal and Principal provide support to the student during the reintegration process.

Note: Parents/Guardians and students are asked to note that it is not possible to detail every regulation governing one's behaviour at school. Each student is accepted into the school on the understanding that they comply with the school regulations as detailed in the journal and school policies. Parents/Guardians and students are asked to re-sign the Code of Behaviour and Anti Bullying Policy at the beginning of each school year. The values of Respect, Accountability, Fairness and Honesty are what are most important in our school community.

The following actions may merit a suspension:

- In cases where the health and safety of the student or of others in the school community could be at risk, it may be necessary to suspend a student with immediate effect pending an investigation and the following of due procedures.
- A serious breach of the Code of Behaviour that indicates that the student should be removed from the school.
- Repeated less serious breaches of the Code of Behaviour that have not been rectified by other interventions and disciplinary measures short of suspension.
- Threatening and or abusive behaviour or language towards staff/students.
- Threatening and or abusive behaviour or language towards visitors to our school or towards others, whilst off school grounds representing the school.
- Persistent bullying as per school Anti-Bullying Policy
- Leaving the school grounds without permission
- Any interference with school security or fire alarm systems
- Instigating or being involved in a physical fight on the school premises.
- Failure to turn up for detention
- Truancy i.e. missing school or classes, even on a first offence.
- Damaging school property
- Inappropriate use of mobile phone/smart device. Please see Appendix 2 Acceptable User Policy
- Stealing / Theft
- Inappropriate use of technology/chrome books
- Smoking / Vaping in the school building or school grounds. Smoking/Vaping is prohibited in accordance with government legislation. The possession of electronic cigarettes is also prohibited.

- The ingestion of any dangerous substance – including tobacco, narcotics, aerosol, glue, deodorant, - in any form is prohibited. This list is not exhaustive.
- Abusive or disparaging comments about St Finian’s College, its staff on social media or otherwise.

The possession and/or consumption of alcohol and the possession and/or use of drugs or other substances by students on the school premises, in school uniform or while representing the school is absolutely forbidden. Breach of this regulation will normally be referred to the Board of Management and/or Gardaí and may lead to expulsion from the school.

This list is not comprehensive and the school reserves the right to impose sanctions for other violations which it considers serious.

By sending your child to St Finian’s College, your child, and you as parent(s)/legal guardian(s) automatically accept the school’s ethos and with implicit agreement to observe the rules and regulations as set out in the schools Code of Behaviour.

Restrictive Physical Intervention and Behaviours of Concern — Policy Context

Relevant Department of Education and Youth Guidance

St Finian’s College aligns with the "Understanding Behaviours of Concern and Responding to Crisis Situations: Guidelines for Schools in Supporting Students," published by the Department of Education (Circular 0081/2024) and aligns with the “*Understanding Behaviours of Concern and Responding to Crisis Situations – Update on Training, and Monitoring and Oversight arrangements*”, published by the Department of Education (circular 0042/2026)). These guidelines emphasise a whole-school, preventative approach, prioritising de-escalation and early intervention rather than restrictive practices. They make clear that physical restraint may only be used as a last resort, in crisis situations where there is imminent risk of serious physical harm to a student or others. Seclusion is not permitted in recognised school settings. Recording, reporting, and review of any use of physical restraint is required: schools must document the incident, report it to the school principal and Board of Management, and from September 2025, report to the National Council for Special Education (NCSE).

Key principles (per Department guidance)

- Intervention should never be used as a form of punishment.
- Any use of force must be proportionate and last only as long as required to manage the crisis.
- After an incident, there should be reflection and review to reduce the likelihood of recurrence.

- Continued supervision of the pupil is required during and after the crisis situation.
- Appropriately trained staff must conduct physical restraint when needed.

When Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI) May Be Used

RPI is used only in exceptional, crisis circumstances where there is imminent risk to the physical safety of a pupil or others. All other strategies, including prevention, de-escalation, and diversion, must be attempted first or be clearly planned for in line with Department guidelines. The intervention must be timely, measured, proportionate, and carried out by trained, authorised staff.

Who May Use RPI

Only staff authorised by the Board of Management, who have been trained in line with Department guidance, may use RPI. These staff should prioritise their own safety and that of the pupil. If removing themselves from the situation is safer, they should do so. The Board recognises the difficult nature of situations requiring RPI and values staff exercising their duty of care under these circumstances.

Seclusion

Seclusion is not permitted under any circumstances, in accordance with Department guidance.

Communication and Reporting

If RPI is used, it must be recorded carefully using our school's agreed incident form. The incident must be reported to the Principal and the Board of Management, as required by Circular 0081/2024. From September 2025, such incidents must also be reported to the NCSE for monitoring. After the use of RPI, the event must be reflected upon and reviewed, with a view to reducing future risk. Parents or guardians must be informed about the nature of the intervention, why it was necessary, and what follow-up actions will occur.

Support and Training

The school will ensure that relevant staff receive appropriate training, in line with Department recommendations, to manage crisis situations safely. The school will maintain a positive behavioural framework, emphasising prevention, early intervention, and self-regulation in line with Department guidance.

Who may use restrictive physical intervention in St Finian's College Mullingar

The following staff are authorised by the Board of Management to have control of pupils and must be aware of this Policy and its implications. The Board of Management believes that staff should not be expected to put themselves in danger, and that removing pupils and themselves is the right thing to do.

The Board of Management values staff efforts to rectify what can be very difficult situations and in which they exercise their duty of care for the pupils.

Names of authorised staff

Name of Staff Member	Position	Date of Training
John Mc Hale	Principal	19 th June 2026
Aisling Ryan	Deputy Principal	19 th June 2026
Emma Carey	Deputy Principal	19 th June 2026
Ruth Burke	Class Teacher	TBC
Ger Corcoran	Class Teacher	19 th June 2026
Mary Moffatt	SNA	19 th June 2026
Breege Taylor	SNA	19 th June 2026
Colette Ward	SNA	19 th June 2026
Sarah Curran	SNA	19 th June 2026
Regina Mc Donnell	SNA	19 th June 2026
Caroline Smyth	SNA	19 th June 2026
Gemma Reilly	SNA	19 th June 2026
Breege Mc Ardle	SNA	19 th June 2026
Marie Mc Donnell Dunne	SNA	19 th June 2026

Planning the Use of Restrictive Physical Interventions at St Finian's College

Staff may use reasonable force only when it is believed to be necessary to maintain safety or restore appropriate behaviour. The following principles guide the use of restrictive physical intervention (RPI):

- **Care, Not Punishment:** RPI is an act of care and control, never used to enforce compliance.
- **Necessity:** It is used only when there are reasonable grounds to believe immediate action is required, balancing the safety of all pupils and staff with the best interests of the child.

- **Prevention:** Staff will use dialogue, diversion, and other strategies appropriate to the child's level of understanding to avoid the need for RPI.
- **Proportionality:** Force is used only as a last resort and in a manner proportionate to the immediate risk.
- **Appropriateness:** Staff must ensure that any intervention is suitable for the specific incident.
- **Support and Witnesses:** Every effort will be made to have other staff present to assist or act as witnesses.
- **Restoration:** RPI will be relaxed as soon as it is safe to allow the pupil to regain self-control.
- **Individualised Approach:** RPI should be a one-off response to specific circumstances, not a routine feature of school policy or School Support Plans/Positive Behaviour Plans.
- **Avoiding Escalation:** Staff will avoid actions that could escalate the situation or increase risk.
- **Child-Centred Considerations:** The age, understanding, and competence of the pupil will always be taken into account.
- **School Support Plans/Positive Behaviour Plans:** Behaviour plans will reflect strategies appropriate to each pupil's circumstances.

Following any incident, procedures are in place to support and debrief pupils and staff to safeguard emotional well-being.

Acceptable Forms of Physical Contact

Staff may have physical contact with pupils in the following situations:

- To comfort a pupil appropriately for their age.
- To gently guide or direct a pupil.
- For curricular activities (e.g., PE, drama).
- In emergencies to prevent harm.
- In rare circumstances, when RPI is warranted.

Considerations for Physical Contact:

- The pupil's age, understanding, and individual history.
- The location of contact—private contact without others present should be avoided.
- Physical contact is never punitive; corporal punishment is prohibited.
- Staff must avoid contact with sensitive areas (neck, chest, abdomen, genitals) or pressure on joints, and contact must not become habitual with any pupil.

High-Risk Situations:

- Holding or forcing a pupil to the floor.

- Any procedure that restricts breathing or airway function.

Developing a Positive Handling Plan

If a pupil is identified as likely to require RPI, a Positive Handling Plan will be developed to prevent incidents and manage behaviour safely. The plan will include:

- Relevant medical conditions or injuries affecting intervention decisions.
- Collaboration with parents/carers and pupils, clarifying when and why intervention may occur.
- A risk assessment, documenting options considered, strategies used, and lessons learned.
- De-escalation strategies and clear criteria for using RPI.
- Identification of key staff responsible for intervention, ideally familiar to the pupil.
- Procedures for summoning additional support.
- Staff training requirements.
- Medical advice as needed for pupils with specific health concerns.

Guidance and Training for Staff

The Board of Management recognises the importance of high-quality guidance and training in RPI, including:

- Awareness for staff, parents, and the Board of Management.
- Behaviour management for all staff.
- Conflict management in challenging situations.
- Training in specific RPI techniques.

Complaints

This policy aims to prevent disputes. Any complaints regarding the use of force will be addressed according to the school's Parental Complaints Policy.

Procedures for Planned Interventions

1. The **Board of Management** authorises staff to use RPI in structured, planned interventions.
2. The **Principal (John Mc Hale)** ensures that all planned RPIs are risk assessed.
3. Risk assessments are kept in the office, reviewed after each incident, and on a termly basis.
4. Only staff listed as authorised may carry out planned RPIs. No other staff should engage in such interventions.

5. Only staff who have received appropriate training within the last two years may be authorised to carry out planned restrictive physical interventions. The **Principal, John Mc Hale**, is responsible for ensuring that such training is provided and regularly updated.
6. Records of all training are maintained in the school office.
7. Staff who are not involved in risk assessments but supervise children may use reasonable force in emergency, unplanned situations where it is necessary to prevent serious injury.
8. Reporting: Every use of restrictive physical intervention must be reported on the same day to the Principal or Deputy Principal in charge. The Principal or Deputy Principal will ensure that a parent or guardian is informed on the same day, either by phone or in person.
9. Documentation: Details of each use of restrictive physical intervention must be recorded on a Pupil Incident Report Form, which is kept in the school office. The staff member leading the intervention—whether planned or unplanned—must complete this form.
10. The Principal will review all recorded instances of physical intervention to ensure compliance with policy and to evaluate any lessons learned.

Monitoring & Review

This policy document and its implementation is reviewed at monthly staff meetings.

This policy is reviewed annually after consultation with the staff, Board of Management and Parent's Association. This policy was reviewed and approved by the Board of Management in the academic year 2025/2026.

Expulsion.

The Board of Management has approved this expulsion policy and its procedures having consulted with students, staff and parents/guardians. The policy has been developed in line with the guidelines issued by the National Education Welfare Board pertaining to expulsions.

The Board of Management will consider expulsion only in extreme cases of unacceptable behaviour. Such consideration will normally only occur following the failure of all other possible interventions to address the misbehaviour. These interventions will include following the code of behaviour and using all the counselling, psychological and appropriate psychiatric services available to the school.

A decision to exclude a student will require serious grounds such as:

- A student's behaviour is a persistent cause of significant disruption to the learning of others or to the teaching process.

- The student's continued presence in the school constitutes a real and significant threat to health and safety.
- The student is responsible for serious damage to property.
- The student being uncontrollable or grossly insubordinate to school management or other staff members and not amenable to any form of school discipline or authority.
- Parents/Guardians being unable or refusing to exercise their responsibility for the student's behaviour
- The student's behaviour being a danger to themselves or to others
- When guarantees of reasonable behaviour following repeated suspensions are not forthcoming or are not being met
- The student's conduct acting as a source of serious bad example and having an adverse influence on other students in the school.

Expulsion for first offence

There may be exceptional circumstances where the Board of Management forms the opinion that a student should be expelled for a first offence. The kinds of behaviour that will result in a proposal to expel on the basis of a single breach of the Code of Behaviour include but are not limited to:

- A serious threat of violence against another student or member of staff
- A serious act of violence or serious physical assault
- Supplying drugs to others in or out of school
- Supplying restricted substances to others in or out of school
- Sexual assault
- Sexual harassment
- Criminal damage to school property/to staff property/to others' property
- Carrying a weapon on their person / in their school bag

Where expulsion is being considered the following procedure will apply:

Step 1. *A detailed investigation will be carried out.*

- The parents/guardians of the student involved will be informed in writing about the details of the alleged serious misconduct and the proposed investigation.
- The parents/guardians and student will be given every opportunity, including meeting with Principal and/or appropriate discipline committee, to respond to the complaint.
- If parents/guardians fail to meet the Principal when requested to do so, they will be invited to a further meeting and advised that if they fail to meet with the Principal the school will regrettably be still obliged to make a decision in the matter and respond to the alleged misconduct.

Step 2. *A recommendation to the Board of Management by the Principal.*

The Principal will:

- Inform the parents/guardians and the student that the Board of Management is being asked to consider expulsion.
- Ensure that the parents/guardians have all the records of the allegations against the student, and written notice of the grounds on which the Board of Management is being asked to consider expulsion.
- Provide the Board of Management with the same records as those given to the parents/guardians.
- Notify the parents/guardians of the date of the hearing by the Board of Management and invite them to the hearing.
- Advise the parents/guardians that they can make a written and oral submission to the Board of Management and also that they can be accompanied at the hearing.
- Ensure that the parents/guardians are given adequate notice of the date of the hearing in order to allow them to prepare for same.

Step 3. *Consideration by the Board of Management of the Principal's recommendations and the holding of a hearing.*

It is the responsibility of the Board of Management to ensure that the investigation has been properly conducted.

When the Board of Management decides to consider expulsion it will:

- Hold a hearing.
- At the hearing the Principal, parents/guardians or a student over the age of 18 will put their case to the Board of Management in each other's presence. Each party will be allowed to question the evidence of the other party directly. The parents/guardians or student over the age of 18 can make a case for the lessening of the sanction. In the conduct of the hearing, the Board of Management will take care to ensure that they are, and are seen to be, impartial as between the Principal and the student. After both sides have been heard, the Board of Management will ensure that the Principal and the parents/guardians or student are not present for the Board of Management's deliberations on the matter.

Step 4. *The Board of Management deliberations and actions following the hearing.*

- Having heard from all the parties, it is the responsibility of the Board of Management to decide whether or not the alleged misconduct is substantiated and, if so, whether or not expulsion is the appropriate sanction. If the Board of Management decides to exclude the student, the following will apply:
- The Board of Management will notify the Education and Welfare Office (EWO) in writing of its opinion, and the reasons for this opinion.
- The student cannot be excluded for twenty days from the date on which the Education Welfare Officer receives written notification from the Board of Management of its proposed expulsion.
- The Board of Management will inform the parents/guardians in writing about its conclusions and will also inform them that the Education Welfare Officer has been so informed.

Step 5. *Consultations arranged by the Education Welfare Officer.*

Within twenty days of receipt of a notification from the Board of Management of its opinion that a student should be excluded, the Education Welfare Officer will:

- Make all reasonable effort to meet with the Principal, parents/guardians and the student, and anyone else who may be of assistance.
- Convene a meeting of those parties who agree to attend. The discussions may result in an agreement that avoids expulsion, or it may focus on alternative educational possibilities.

- While these discussions and consultations are ongoing, the Board of Management may suspend the student, if their presence in the school could pose a threat to the health and safety of other students or would interfere with the teaching and learning of other students.

Step 6. *Confirmation of the decision to exclude.*

When the twenty-day period following notification to the Education Welfare Officer has elapsed, and where the Board of Management is still of the view that the student should be excluded, the Board of Management will formally confirm the decision in writing to the parents/guardians or student aged over 18.

- The parents/guardians will be notified immediately that the expulsion will now proceed.
- The parents/guardians and the student will be told of their right to appeal and will be supplied with the standard form on which to lodge an appeal.
- A formal record will be made of the decision to exclude the student.

Right to Appeal.

A parent, or a student aged over 18 years, may appeal a decision to exclude to the Trustees and/or to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Skills under section 29 of the Education Act 1998. The National Education and Welfare Board may also lodge an appeal on behalf of the student.

The school reserves the right to apply its Code of Behaviour in respect of negative behaviour that occurs outside of school and is not school related, if in the opinion of the principal and/or the BOM, the alleged negative behaviour has created a hostile environment at school for a member of the school community, or has infringed on the rights of a member of the school community and/or has materially or substantially disrupted the education process of the orderly operation of the school.

ACCEPTANCE OF THE RULES

We have read the rules and regulations of the College and are willing to abide by them.

Signed:..... (Parent/Guardian)

Date:.....

I have read the rules and regulations of the College and am willing to abide by them.

Signed:..... (Pupil)

Date:.....

After consultation with the school community, this Code of Behaviour was ratified by The Board of management on

It will be reviewed every two years. Our Code of Behaviour is due to be reviewed 2028/2029

Signed: Mr Aidan Farrell **Date:** 12th March 2026 **Chairperson**

Signed: Mr John Mc Hale **Date:** 12th March 2026 **Principal** PCT: review 12/03/2026