



Willow Park Junior School **Anti-Bullying Policy**

Sep 2025

1. Introduction

In accordance with contemporary 'good practice', the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, the newly released 'Cineáltas' programme and the code of behaviour guidelines issued by the NEWB, the Board of Management of Willow Park Junior School has adopted the following anti-bullying policy within the framework of the school's overall code of behaviour. This policy fully complies with good practice and the requirements of the *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2024*. This policy applies to the whole school community in their relationships with pupils, teachers, management, Board of Management, parents, office and all ancillary staff.

2. Rationale:

- 2.1 Schools are required to have a written policy on bullying and the prevention of bullying.
- 2.2 The Board of Management has an obligation to ensure that a policy is in place that reflects the principles and values of the religious and educational philosophy of the school.
- 2.3 Involving and encouraging all members of the school community in developing, formulating and reviewing this policy on fostering an anti-bullying climate in Willow Park promotes partnership, ownership and implementation of a 'living' policy.

3. Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

The Board of Management of Willow Park Junior School has adopted the following policy to prevent and address bullying behaviour.

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. We all, as a school community, have a responsibility to work together to prevent and address bullying behaviour and to deal with the negative impact of bullying behaviour.

We are 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. We recognise 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.

We confirm that we will, in accordance with our obligations under equality legislation, take all such 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.

Catholic schools have a distinctive understanding of the human person, recognising that every person

is created in God's image and likeness and has inherent dignity as a child of God. This is the basis for ensuring that each person in our school is treated with respect and care.

As a Catholic school, we are committed to respecting the dignity of every individual. No human person is to be diminished or devalued, and all have an indispensable part to play in the school community, regardless of difference.

4. Links to our Ethos and Mission Statement:

Willow Park Junior School is dedicated to the pursuit of excellence in all areas of education. Our aim is to generate and maintain an inclusive climate of learning within which every pupil is enabled to develop and fulfil his own unique potential. Care, courtesy and tolerance are at the heart of our Spiritan ethos.

We aim to nurture a community built on trust, kindness, and care, where diversity is celebrated and everyone feels safe, valued, and included. Guided by empathy, humility, and integrity, we foster fairness, equality, and accountability in all we do. With gratitude and pride in our shared purpose, we embrace a growth mindset that empowers individuals and strengthens relationships, creating lasting happiness and positive impact for all.

'Fides et Robur' (Faith and Strength) is our motto and central to the Willow ethos. Our Catholic centrality fosters a tolerant climate within our school which allows pupils to develop in a caring and secure environment. Providing a stimulating education within a moral and supportive community requires a proactive and preventative approach towards bullying. The active essence of our ethos promotes the positive reinforcement of civil and courteous behaviour and requires continual vigilance on our part to prevent behaviour that militates against our Catholic and caring ethos.

The Board of Management recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of pupils and is therefore fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour: **A positive school culture and climate which-**

- ✓ is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity;
- ✓ encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a nonthreatening environment; and
- ✓ promotes respectful relationships across the school community;

Effective leadership at all levels of the school.

- ✓ A school-wide approach involving all members of the school community and integrating with the school ethos, all school policies, activities and curricular areas.
- ✓ A shared understanding by the whole school community of what bullying is and its impact children, adults and families.
- ✓ Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that-
 - ✓ build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and
- ✓ explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying.
- ✓ Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils at all times and in key, 'hot-spot' areas.
- ✓ Supports for staff in dealing with areas of conflict.
- ✓ Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies); and
- ✓ On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

In accordance with the *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2024*, **bullying is defined as follows:**

Bullying is 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.

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

- ✓ deliberate exclusion, name-calling, negative or inappropriate comments, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying;
- ✓ cyber-bullying; and
- ✓ identity-based bullying such as racist bullying or bullying of those of other abilities, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or special educational needs etc.

The definition also encompasses a wide range of behaviour, whether verbal or written, whether physical or social, whether targeting person or property, whether carried out directly or indirectly or through any electronic or other medium, which could harm a pupil or undermine their self-esteem or self-confidence.

It is important for parents and staff to realise that anyone can be a bully and that anyone can be a target of bullying. It is also important to realise that not all disagreements between pupils is classified as bullying, such as isolated or once-off incidents of negative behaviour.

Willow Park Junior School makes it clear to the entire school community that bullying of any kind is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

The relevant teacher/s for investigating and dealing with bullying is (are) as follows:

The Class teacher (plus the relevant Peripatetic teacher/LS teacher)

The relevant Dean

The Dep Principals

The Principal

Prevention Strategies in Willow Park Junior School align with the 'Bí Cineálta' Anti-Bullying Policy and is consistent with the 4 key areas for wellbeing promotion within the school which are:

- 1. Our School Culture and Environment**
- 2. Our Curriculum**
- 3. Our Relationships and Partnerships**
- 4. Our Policy and Planning**

- All Form groups will participate in class discussions with their teachers regarding bullying, how to prevent it and how to cope with it should it arise. The purpose of such discussions is to build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils.
- The regular use of 'Circle-Time' will be encouraged in class-rooms.
- Class teachers and the LS team will take especial care to support pupils with SEN.
- The SPHE curriculum, the 'Stay Safe' programme, the 'Weaving Well-Being' programme and the school's RSE programme will all be used to nurture a climate of courtesy in Willow and provide 'pupil-appropriate' strategies for coping with incidents of bullying or conflict.
- A Restorative Practice Programme is being formulated to complement the school's ethos.

- The broad 'extra-curricular' activities in Willow will provide ample scope for pupils to learn the importance of 'fair play' and respect. Games Coaches will all be directed towards this policy on antibullying.
- Deans will use Form Assemblies to remind pupils of positive behaviour and deal with any 'behavioural issues' that might arise within a Form group.
- The use of role-play, poster-displays, anti-bullying charters to be explored in class.
- Pro-active, 'Positive Behaviour' norms will be cultivated throughout the school on an ongoing basis.
- Specific 'Anti-Bullying' Awareness Weeks will be scheduled into the School Calendar.
- Willow Park School has an excellent pastoral care system in place, and reports of all incidents (wherever they may have been reported) will be filtered through the class teacher, who is the primary person for pastoral care of the student in her/his form class.
- Positive reinforcement of behaviour for the better good of the community is encouraged through the Record Books which parents sign.
- Wellbeing Wednesdays once per month begin with our 'Spirit of Willow' certificates are given to certain pupils who are seen as good role models and live our nine principles of: Kindness, Courtesy, Respect, Gratitude, Inclusion, Love, Courage, Honesty and Openness.
- Pupils proudly sing our school song which encompasses the 9 principles above and includes a chorus of: 'Be kind to others and ourselves'.
- Parents have a primary role in influencing their son's social behaviour and responses.
- Discussion with pupils and their families regarding the prevention of bullying and coping with bullying remains a live issue and is an item on the September Induction Evening agenda.
- WPA class reps. may liaise with the class-teacher when reports of 'bullying' take place.
- Input from staff in addressing bullying as a live and regular class issue for discussion.
- The Willow Junior Leadership Programme prepares boys as Playground Pals- and gives guidance on conflict scenarios and civic norms.
- The School Council (representing boys from all Forms) allows for regular discussion on the social climate of the school and pupils' issues/relationships therein.
- The School sees 'pastoral care' as a core responsibility of all Staff members. The 'Chain of Support' within the school involves: Pupil / Class Teacher, peripatetic teachers and Learning Support Teachers/Ancillary Staff// Dean / Chaplain / Deputy-Principals / Principal.
- Home Support, as mentioned above, is essential in deal with bullying: Parents / siblings / Friends / Family doctor / other significant adults can all play a supporting role in overcoming bullying.
- Utilising our Sensory Room as a space for pupils to relax.
- Specific advice and support on Cyberbullying are available on the School Cyberbullying Guidelines and Advice literature.
- Pupils are advised in class on online 'best-practice' and provided with strategies and ways to deal with negative and personalised online comments etc.
- Proper and pro-active supervision of pupils will take place at all times and in all school scenarios- especially in 'hot spots' like the playground and the changing rooms.
- Our Welfare team consists of a deputy principal and two counsellors who liaise with class teachers and parents after a pupil who may need help with their wellbeing is identified.

In addition to our strategies to address general bullying behaviours, these prevention strategies include strategies aimed at preventing online bullying behaviour, homophobic and transphobic bullying behaviour, racist bullying behaviour, sexist bullying behaviour and sexual harassment as appropriate.

In developing preventative strategies which this school will use to prevent all forms of bullying behaviour, we come from the context of our Catholic ethos where inclusivity permeates the school in a real way.

Willow Park Junior School takes positive steps to ensure that the culture of the school is one which welcomes a respectful dialogue and encounter with diversity and difference by ensuring that prevention and inclusivity strategies are given priority and discussed regularly at board of management and staff meetings.

The dignity and the wellbeing of the individual person is of paramount concern in our Christian response. This school will listen closely to, and in dialogue with parents, and thereby build a relationship of mutual understanding, respect, trust and confidence.

In continuing to develop prevention strategies, this school will take as much time as is practicable listening to young persons and parents, to help establish their particular context and needs. Frequent periods of reflection and further engagement, by the school, young persons and parents, will be used to discern appropriate supports for young people in this school and will help inform future prevention strategies.

5. Reporting incidents or allegations of bullying:

- Pupils should discuss any incident of bullying with a teacher or another trusted adult within the school system; this is responsible behaviour rather than “telling tales”.
- Parents/guardians should contact the Class Teacher regarding incidents of bullying behaviour which they might suspect or that have come to their attention through their children or other parents.
- Parents are discouraged from approaching the parent or guardian of an ‘alleged bully’ directly and are encouraged to report ‘incidents’ to the class teacher in the first instance.
- Minor incidents of alleged bullying behaviour should always be addressed by the class teacher with the parties concerned and resolved in a sensitive, yet clear manner. Where the bullying behaviour persists or where an incident is deemed to be of a more serious nature, class-teachers should fill in the Bullying Incident Report Sheet (*see appendix 1*) and (where appropriate) ask the relevant pupils to write down an account of the incident/s.

6. Investigating Procedure

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

- The Class teacher will investigate incidents pertinent to his/her class group.
- The Class teacher (and where necessary, other appropriate personnel) will interview all of the students involved in an alleged bullying incident.
- The alleged victim and alleged perpetrators of the incident will be spoken to and encouraged to solve the problem.
- All interviews will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils involved.
- Records will be kept of all serious incidents and of the procedures that were followed (*See Bullying Incident Report Form, Appendix 1.*) • The Deans will be kept informed of all incidents and have access to relevant written records.
- The relevant Dean will monitor progress of pupils involved in a bullying incident by liaising with the Class Teacher and pupils involved.
- Where the incident is deemed to be minor, a verbal warning will be given to the bully to stop the inappropriate behaviour, pointing out how he is in breach of the Code of Behaviour of the School and trying to get him to see the situation from the victim’s point of view. If deemed appropriate, parents may be contacted. Should the unacceptable behaviour cease, that will be the end of the matter. • If the behaviour persists, the Dean and the parents/guardians of the

victims and bullies will be informed by the Class Teacher. Thus, they will be given the opportunity of discussing the matter and are in a position to help and support their children before a crisis occurs. Appropriate sanctions (*see below*) will be imposed. The incident will no longer be considered if there is no recurrence within that academic year. • If there is serious incident (perhaps repeated name-calling or irritating and repeated 'nudging'), the matter should be reported to the relevant Class teacher and Dean and thereafter, if necessary, the Deputy-Principal or Principal. Parents will be involved and appropriate sanctions applied.

- Where the incident is deemed to be more serious (e.g. gross misbehaviour or physical assault), the Deputy-Principal and/or Principal should be informed immediately. The Chairman of the Board of Management will be informed, if deemed necessary by the Principal.
- The parents of offenders and victims of bullying may be advised to refer their son/s to counselling.

5.2 Sanctions may include:

- ✓ A verbal or written apology.
- ✓ A contract of good behaviour.
- ✓ A Daily Report Sheet.
- ✓ Detention.
- ✓ School community service.
- ✓ Withdrawal of privileges.
- ✓ Other sanctions as may be deemed appropriate eg. A period for 'reflection' and home discussion.
- ✓ Suspension.
- ✓ Expulsion.

In order to appeal a decision, a parent/student may request a review by writing to the Principal (who should then bring it to the attention of the Chairman of the Board of Management if the sanction being considered is Suspension or Expulsion).

- In the case of a complaint /allegation regarding a staff member, this should be referred immediately to the Principal.
- Where cases, relating to either student or Staff member, remain unresolved at school level, the matter should be referred to the Chairman of the Board of Management.
- In cases where the relevant teacher considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, it must be recorded by the relevant teacher in the Bullying Incident Report Form (*see Appendix 1*).
- In determining whether a bullying case has been adequately and appropriately addressed the relevant teacher must, as part of his/her professional judgement, take the following factors into account:
 - Whether the bullying behaviour has ceased;
 - Whether any issues between the parties have been resolved as far as is practicable;
 - Whether the relationships between the parties have been restored as far as is practicable; and
 - Any feedback received from the parties involved, their parents or the relevant Dean, the school Principal or Deputy Principals;

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

7. Roles and Responsibilities:

The school management team and staff are responsible for ensuring that the policy is implemented. Parents are expected to support and foster the spirit of the policy in their family-life and their son's school life. Pupils are encouraged to care and look out for each other.

The school's **programme of support** for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows:

School support:

- See above Education and Prevention Strategies
- All Staff, particularly the Class-room teacher and Dean.
- Peer support: class-mates and friends.
- Circle-time, relevant curricular subjects eg. SPHE /RE
- Home support
 - ✓ See above Education and Prevention Strategies
 - ✓ Parents /Guardians
 - ✓ Significant others in the boy's relationships (brothers/sisters/uncles etc.)
- Other support
 - ✓ Counselling and our Welfare Support Team in Willow Park JS
 - ✓ National services.

7.1 Referral of serious cases to Tusla

- ✓ In relation to bullying in schools, *Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011* (Children First) and the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* provide that in situations where "the incident is serious and where the behaviour is regarded as potentially abusive, the school must consult Tusla Children and Family Social Services with a view to drawing up an appropriate response, such as a management plan".
- ✓ Serious instances of bullying behaviour should, in accordance with the Children First and *the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, be referred to the HSE Children and Family Services and/or Gardaí as appropriate.
- ✓ The *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* also provide that where school personnel have concerns about a child but are not sure whether to report the matter to Tusla, the Designated Liaison Person must seek advice from Tusla the child and family agency.

7.2 Supervision and Monitoring of Pupils

The Board of Management confirms that appropriate supervision and monitoring policies and practices are in place to both prevent and deal with bullying behaviour and to facilitate early intervention where possible.

8. Ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti- bullying policy

- ✓ The effectiveness of this anti-bullying policy will be subject to continuous review in the light of incidents of bullying behaviour encountered. The school should provide periodic examination

of the prevention and intervention strategies in place. Pupils, staff and parents will be provided for a eg. (Circle Time, School Council, Staff Meetings, Form Meetings, WPA meetings, P/T Meetings, Deans' Meetings, Board Meetings), to provide feed-back on the effectiveness of the anti-bullying measures in place and identify any significant behavioural trends that may benefit from early intervention.

- ✓ The Bullying Incident reporting Form (*see Appendix 1*) for recording and reporting bullying to the school Principal/ Deputy Principal/ Dean will be a valuable and readily accessible source of data in relation to bullying behaviour in the school. Data gathered from these reports will be regularly (at least once in every school year) collated and analysed with a view to monitoring levels of bullying behaviour and identifying any particular issues that require attention or any significant trends in behaviour. A record of this analysis will be retained and be made available to the Board of Management. Appropriate responses to any issues identified should be drawn up and implemented.
- ✓ The implementation and effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy be included as an agenda item for Deans' Meetings, Form Meetings, School Council Meetings and Staff Meetings so as to ensure that concerns about the policy or the welfare of individual pupils can be shared and effectively addressed.

9. Prevention of Harassment

The Board of Management confirms that the school will, in accordance with its obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the sexual harassment of pupils or staff or the harassment of pupils or staff on any of the nine grounds specified i.e. gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Willow Parents' Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to our Trustees (DEA), if requested.

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year (*See Appendices 2 & 3*). Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Willow Parents' Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to our Trustees (S.E.T.).

Signed: _____
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Date: _____

Date of next review: Sep 2026

Appendix 1

Bullying Incident Report Form

1. Name of pupil being bullied and class group

Name _____ Class _____

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

3. Source of bullying concern/report

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

Pupil Concerned	<input type="checkbox"/>	Playground	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Pupil	<input type="checkbox"/>	Classroom	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parent	<input type="checkbox"/>	Corridor	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	Toilets	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dart	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Name of person/s who reported the bullying concern

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

Physical Aggression	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cyberbullying	<input type="checkbox"/>
Damage to Property	<input type="checkbox"/>	Intimidation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Isolation/Exclusion	<input type="checkbox"/>	Malicious Gossip	<input type="checkbox"/>
Name Calling	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

Homophobic	Disability/SEN related	Racist	Membership of Traveller community	Other (specify)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact

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9. Details of actions taken

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Signed _____ (Relevant Teacher)

Date _____

Date submitted to Principal/Deputy Principal/Dean _____

Appendix 2

Checklist for annual review of the anti-bullying policy and its implementation in Willow Park Junior School

The Board of Management of Willow Park Junior School undertakes an annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation. The following checklist is used for this purpose. The checklist is an aid to conducting this review and is not intended as an exhaustive list. In order to complete the checklist, an examination and review involving both quantitative and qualitative analysis, as appropriate across the various elements of the school's anti-bullying policy will be required.

	Yes/No
Has the Board formally adopted an anti-bullying policy that fully complies with the requirements of the <i>Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools</i> ?	
Has the Board published the policy on the school website and provided a copy to the parents' association?	
Has the Board ensured that the policy has been made available to school staff (including new staff)?	
Is the Board satisfied that school staff are sufficiently familiar with the policy and procedures to enable them to effectively and consistently apply the policy and procedures in their day to day work?	
Has the Board ensured that the policy has been adequately communicated to all pupils?	
Has the policy documented the prevention and education strategies that the school applies?	
Have all the prevention and education strategies been implemented?	
Has the effectiveness of the prevention and education strategies that have been implemented been examined?	
Is the Board satisfied that all teachers are recording and dealing with incidents in accordance with the policy?	
Has the Board received and minuted the periodic summary reports of the Principal?	
Has the Board discussed how well the school is handling all reports of bullying including those addressed at an early stage and not therefore included in the Principal's periodic report to the Board?	
Has the Board received any complaints from parents regarding the school's handling of bullying incidents?	
Have any parents withdrawn their child from the school citing dissatisfaction with the school's handling of a bullying situation?	
Have any Ombudsman for Children investigations into the school's handling of a bullying case been initiated or completed?	

Has the data available from cases reported to the Principal (by the bullying recording template) been analysed to identify any issues, trends or patterns in bullying behaviour?	
Has the Board identified any aspects of the school's policy and /or its implementation that require further improvement?	
Has the Board put in place an action plan to address any areas for improvement?	

Signed _____ Date _____

Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed _____ Date _____

Principal

Notification

Regarding the Board of Management's annual review of the anti-bullying policy

To: DEA

The Board of Management of Willow Park Junior School wishes to inform you that:

- ✓ The Board of Management's annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation was completed at the Board meeting of 6th October 2025 [date].
- ✓ This review was conducted in accordance with the Board of Management checklist as set out in the Department of Education *Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2024*.

Signed P. McA. C. C. Date 10/11/2025

Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed _____ Date _____
Principal