



**TULLAMORE FURTHER EDUCATION AND
TRAINING (FET) CENTRE**

Anti-Bullying Policy

Reviewed: June 2021

Mission Statement:

Tullamore Further Education and Training (FET) Centre strives to create educational programmes of excellence that respond to the needs of local, national and international students.

We seek to create and maintain a quality, professional and stimulating learning environment where values of tolerance, respect and integrity are supported and encouraged.

We strive to enable students achieve their potential by fostering their independence, responsibility and academic development.

Scope of the Policy:

This policy, which applies to the bullying of students, forms part of a suite of policies which form part of Tullamore FET Centre's Policy on the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults. Other policies in this suite include the Code of Behaviour and the Policy on the Acceptable Use of the Centre's ICT System. This policy fully complies with the requirements of the CL 45/2013 *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* which were published in September 2013. This policy should be read in conjunction with the *Action Plan on Bullying* published by the Department of Education and Skills in 2013, and also the *Well-Being in Post Primary Schools – Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention* developed by the inter-departmental group from the Department of Education and Skills, the Health Service Executive and the Department of Health published in 2013.

Key Principles defining the Policy:

Tullamore FET Centre recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of Learners, therefore we are fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour.

Tullamore FET Centre:

- Is a positive educational culture and environment;
- It is a welcoming place of difference and diversity which is based on inclusivity;
- It is a place that encourages Learners to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment;
- It promotes respectful relationships across the Centre;
- It is a Centre-wide approach;
- It has a shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact;
- It will implement prevention strategies when needed;
- It will address issues of bullying, whether cyber-bullying, identity-based bullying or any other forms of bullying.
- It will provide effective supervision and monitoring of students;
- It will provide supports for staff;
- It will provide consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour which will include intervention strategies;
- It will review and update the anti-bullying policy, therefore live changes may be made at any given time.

Definition of Terms:

In accordance with the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* bullying is defined as follows:

Bullying is unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical conducted, by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time.

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

- deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying,
- cyber-bullying
- Identity-based bullying such as homophobic bullying, racist bullying, bullying based on a person's membership of the Traveller community and bullying of those with disabilities or special educational needs.

Isolated or once-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour, including a once-off offensive or hurtful text message or other private messaging, do not fall within the definition of bullying and should be dealt with, as appropriate, in accordance with Tullamore FET Centre's Code of Behaviour.

However, in the context of this policy, placing a once-off offensive or hurtful public message, image or statement on a social network site or other public forum where that message, image or statement can be viewed and/or repeated by other people will be regarded as bullying behaviour. This would also include the unauthorised capture/playing/posting of images/video footage or audio recording.

Negative behaviour that does not meet this definition of bullying will be dealt with in accordance with the College's Code of Behaviour.

Additional information on different types of bullying is set out in Section 2 of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*.

This Policy concerns bullying on our premises and grounds, while students are engaged in work experience, on educational visits or the Centre's social activities, and those travelling to and from courses.

Tullamore FET Centre has a duty of care to ensure that all students and staff have a safe working and learning environment in which they are treated with dignity, courtesy and respect. Bullying will not be tolerated and all incidents of bullying will be carefully recorded and fully investigated, with appropriate follow up action taken.

Students and staff, both teaching and non-teaching, have a responsibility to promote a safe learning environment for all, and have a duty to report incidents of bullying or situations where vulnerable students may be at risk. In doing so, they are acting responsibly to ensure the safety and well-being of others.

Procedures for Implementation of this Policy:

This procedure is in two main parts:

- 1. A Preventative Element: – Awareness Raising and Education Strategy**
- 2. A Responsive Element: – Code of Behaviour dimension**

Preventative Element: – Awareness Raising and Education Strategy:

The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber- bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying) that will be used by Tullamore FET Centre are as follows:

- Raise awareness amongst the student population of the anti-bullying policy;
- This must also include cyber-bullying, identity-based bullying-in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying;
- Report inappropriate use of IT;
- Maintain & foster an environment where all members of the Centre community work together to ensure that everyone is treated with mutual courtesy, dignity & respect;
- Demonstrate the mutual benefits for all by responding to and not ignoring any incidents of unwelcome behaviour directed at others;
- Where appropriate, provide students with the tools and strategies to deal with any unwelcome behaviour;
- Publish a copy of the policy on the Centre's website;
- Identify clearly the designated liaison person whom a complainant may approach to report incident/s of bullying;
- Provide in-service training for all staff-teachers, maintenance and administration staff on anti-bullying strategies;
- Review policy annually.

Responsive Element: – Pastoral Care dimension:

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

The Centre will implement a programme of appropriate support for those affected by bullying and for those involved in bullying. This will involve:

- The Centre raising awareness with the persons involved in bullying of the aspect of their behaviour which has constituted bullying and the impact of their behaviour on others.
- The Centre will put supports in place for those affected by bullying to improve the impact of the unwelcome behaviour.
- The Pastoral care dimension of the procedure will be coordinated a member of the Guidance Team.

- The Centre’s Code of Behaviour will convey the seriousness with which the Centre’s authorities view bullying/harassment thereby providing a deterrent to such behaviour.
- The Centre will endeavour to ensure that the person/s who alleges that they have been bullied will be treated with fairness, sensitivity, underpinned by the need for confidentiality with all parties concerned.

Responsive Element: – Investigation procedures:

Responsibility for the implementation of this policy is vested in the Centre Manager, Ms Michelle Shanahan. This includes responsibility for the investigation of and the dealing with incidents of bullying. The Centre Manager may delegate responsibility for investigating or dealing with a particular incident to a senior member of staff, taking into account the particular circumstances of the incident in question. The staff member to whom the investigation has been delegated would normally be a teacher who does not teach either the alleged victim or the alleged perpetrator. The Centre’s procedures for investigation, follow-up and recording of bullying behaviour and the established intervention strategies used by the Centre for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour are as follows:

- In the event of a student feeling bullied they may approach any member of staff: teaching; maintenance or administrative staff. Should any member of staff be so approached they must bring it to the immediate attention of the Centre Manager. At this point the Centre Manager will immediately commence an investigation.
- If a student is experiencing bullying but does not feel able to approach a member of staff directly he/she could ask a friend or relative to contact the Centre on their behalf. He/she might prefer to ask their family doctor to make the initial contact. In some cases a student may wish to make the Centre aware of their situation through an advocacy agency, for example:

The Samaritans:	1850 609090
BeLong To:	01-6706223

- A student experiencing bullying may not wish to make a complaint but would like to talk to someone in confidence. One of the Guidance Team will be available for such conversations.

Informal Process:

- The first step in any informal resolution of a complaint should be to establish the facts of the complaint, the specific issues complained of, when they occurred and to consider whether or not they fall within the definition of bullying.
- If bullying is established, the aim would be to eliminate it informally (if appropriate) with the consent of parties involved. This could include a non-judgemental (mediation approach). This would include clarification of what constitutes bullying, agreement by the person complained of, that they accept that their behaviour was inappropriate and that the conduct will not be repeated, or an explanation to the complainant about what occurred from the point of view of the person complained about which disposes of the complaint.

Formal Process:

This involves a formal complaint and a formal investigation. The purpose of the investigation is to determine the facts and to establish whether the complaint of bullying is well founded.

Key steps:

- The complainant should make a formal complaint in writing, signed and dated, and give it to the Centre Manager.
- The complaint should provide precise details of alleged incidents of bullying, including dates and name of witnesses where possible.
- Where this is not possible, a written account should be taken of the complaint and signed by the complainant. The Centre Manager may assign a senior member of staff to conduct the investigation of the complaint.
- The complainant should be assured of support and given a copy of the anti-bullying policy.
- The person/persons against whom the complaint is made should be notified in writing that a formal allegation of bullying has been made. He/she should be advised of the aims/objectives of the formal process. He/she should be assured of the organisation's commitment to investigating the matter in an objective and unbiased manner, with due regard to confidentiality, and the rights of all concerned. He/she should be given the opportunity to respond to the complaint in writing.
- The investigation should be completed as quickly as possible. The investigator should investigate the complaint and the response to the complaint and present his/her findings to the Centre Manager who will then issue preliminary findings to the complainant and the person(s) complained of for comment. Following receipt of such comments, the Principal will then make a decision as to whether or not the complaint of bullying has been established and will decide on appropriate action. The Centre Manager's decision should be communicated in writing to both parties.
- Every effort will be made to complete the process within 20 working days.
- If the complaint is upheld, then it is a disciplinary matter and will be considered a serious breach of the Centre's Code of Behaviour and dealt with at Stage 4 of the Disciplinary procedure by the Centre Manager.
- If a complaint is not upheld, no further action will be taken.
- If a complaint is found to have been maliciously made, disciplinary procedures will be applied. This is also considered to be a serious breach of the Centre's Code of Behaviour and dealt with at Stage 4 of the Disciplinary procedure by Centre Manager.

Monitoring of Students:

All staff will help monitor for bullying behaviour and will help facilitate early intervention where possible.

Prevention of Harassment:

The Centre 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.

Signed: 

Michelle Shanahan

Centre Manager

June 2021