Headfort School

Anti-bullying Policy

Reviewed August 2025, Next Review August 2026

Executive Summary

Headfort School is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for our community and we have a restorative approach to the bullying of any member of our community.

Bullying is deliberately hurtful behaviour that is repeated over time, making it difficult for the person concerned to defend themselves. It can be physical, verbal and emotional and can take the form of name-calling, violence, threatened violence, isolation, ridicule or indirect action such as spreading unpleasant stories about someone.

Bullying, of any kind, is unacceptable at our school and appropriate action will be taken when it is evident that someone is allegedly being bullied in line with our Behaviour Expectations Framework. As a community who believe ardently in our core values, particularly those of being respectful, kind and safe, we encourage any member of our community to use the systems within our school for support, should the need arise.

We are a school that believes in restorative action, and in so doing, we work with all members of our community to encourage open discourse in relation to how we can continue to create the environment that Headfort is renowned for.

Articulated in our Behaviour Expectations Framework as behaviour that sits between our Tier Two and Tier Three Behaviours, our anti-bullying approaches aim to ensure that students understand their responsibilities in relation to their own behaviour and in teaching them to not be a bystander should they witness poor choices being made.

One School

We consider ourselves to be One School, united by that which makes us different, which is as unique as our seventy-six-year history. We celebrate and acknowledge the uniqueness of every member of our school and work to ensure that all feel safe to express themselves and to see themselves in other members of our community.

We have **adopted the following anti-bullying policy** within the framework of the school's Behaviour Expectations Framework

We recognise the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of pupils, particularly young pupils, and we are fully committed to the following **key principles of best practice** in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour:

We create a positive school climate and a safe environment which;

- is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity;

- encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment; and

- promotes respectful relationships across the school community

- provides robust leadership and clear lines of communication for matters pertaining to alleged bullying

- has a shared understanding and school-wide approach to bullying and its impact

- provides both educational and preventative strategies for students and staff that

  - build empathy, respect and resilience

  - explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including gender-oriented bullying

  - provide effective supervision and monitoring of the wellbeing of our students

At Headfort School we are proud of the diversity of our community, and we work hard to celebrate it in all that we do. Our commitment to inter-cultural understanding and building bridges between student experiences centres us all within the work we do.

Our Definition

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. At Headfort School we teach our young people that once is a mistake, and twice is a choice, and in making the choices they do, they need to understand what happens when they make bad ones.

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 and

- 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 the school'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.

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

What follows are some examples of bullying, that may provide context for matters which may arise when students make poor choices.

Examples

General behaviours which apply to all types of bullying	• Harassment based on any of the nine grounds in the equality legislation e.g. sexual harassment, homophobic bullying, racist bullying etc. • Physical aggression • Damage to property • Name calling • Slagging • The production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other materials aimed at intimidating another person • Offensive graffiti • Extortion • Intimidation • Insulting or offensive gestures • The "look" • Invasion of personal space • A combination of any of the types listed.
Cyber	• **Denigration**: Spreading rumours, lies or gossip to hurt a person's reputation • **Harassment**: Continually sending vicious, mean or disturbing messages to an individual • **Impersonation**: Posting offensive or aggressive messages under another person's name • **Flaming**: Using inflammatory or vulgar words to provoke an online fight • **Trickery**: Fooling someone into sharing personal information which you then post online • **Outing**: Posting or sharing confidential or compromising information or images • **Exclusion**: Purposefully excluding someone from an online group • **Cyber stalking**: Ongoing harassment and denigration that causes a person considerable fear for his/her safety • Silent telephone/mobile phone call • Abusive telephone/mobile phone calls • Abusive text messages • Abusive email • Abusive communication on social networks e.g. Facebook/Ask.fm/ Twitter/You Tube or on games consoles • Abusive website comments/Blogs/Pictures • Abusive posts on any form of communication technology

Identity Based Behaviours Including any of the nine discriminatory grounds mentioned in Equality Legislation (gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community).	
Homophobic and Transgender	• Spreading rumours about a person's sexual orientation • Taunting a person of a different sexual orientation • Name calling e.g. Gay, queer, lesbian…used in a derogatory manner • Physical intimidation or attacks • Threats
Race, nationality, ethnic background and membership of the Traveller community	• Discrimination, prejudice, comments or insults about colour, nationality, culture, social class, religious beliefs, ethnic or traveller background • Exclusion on the basis of any of the above
Relational	This involves manipulating relationships as a means of bullying. Behaviours include: • Malicious gossip • Isolation & exclusion • Ignoring • Excluding from the group • Taking someone's friends away • Spreading rumours • Breaking confidence • Talking loud enough so that the victim can hear • Use or terminology such as 'nerd' in a derogatory way
Sexual	• Unwelcome or inappropriate sexual comments or touching • Harassment
Special Educational Needs, Disability	• Name calling • Taunting others because of their disability or learning needs • Taking advantage of some pupils' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to recognise and defend themselves against bullying • Taking advantage of some pupils' vulnerabilities and limited capacity to understand social situations and social cues. • Mimicking a person's disability • Setting others up for ridicule