

Kilchreest National School

Anti-Bullying Policy

Link to Characteristic Spirit of the School

The school has a central role in the children's' social moral development just as it does in their academic development. In school, we work towards standards of behaviour based on the basic principles of fairness, respect and honesty. The individuality of each child needs to be accommodated while at the same time acknowledging the right of every child to education in a disruption free environment.

This anti-bullying policy operates in conjunction with the Code of Behaviour, which is used to address isolated instances of misbehaviour.

Definitions of Bullying

Bullying is defined as repeated aggression, whether verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against others. Examples of bullying include physical aggression, damage to property, intimidation, isolation, name-calling, taunting or 'slagging'. Child to child bullying, teacher to child, intra staff bullying, parent to staff and parent to child bullying (including a child other than their own) are examples of the areas where bullying may occur.

Isolated instances of aggressive behaviour, which would be dealt with under the Code of Behaviour, would not be described as bullying. However when the behaviour is systematic and on-going, it is bullying.

The school acknowledges that there are three parties involved in bullying – those who bully, those who are bullied and those who witness the bullying. Staff and teachers bear this in mind when dealing with bullying incidences and try to support and work with all parties involved.

Rationale

Following a recent survey of 5th & 6th class children, 41% out of 29 believed that they had been bullied in school. 70% of the class have seen bullying taking place in the school.

These statistics highlight that bullying is an issue that the school community needs to deal with.

Aims of the Policy

- To foster a school ethos of mutual and self-respect.
- To raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour.

- To outline, promote and raise awareness of preventative approaches that can be used in response to reported incidences of bullying.
- To develop a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and for those involved in bullying behaviour.
- To outline procedures for noting and reporting instances of bullying behaviour.
- To outline procedures for investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.

School Practices for the prevention of Bullying Behaviour

The school will use several strategies to help in the prevention of bullying:

- Children will be encouraged to report incidents immediately they occur. A “telling” atmosphere will be created in the school. It will be made clear to children that when they report incidents that they are not telling tales, but are acting in a responsible manner. It is important to counteract a culture of secrecy where “telling” is equated with “informing”.
- The school recognise that this can be a difficult concept for children to buy into so a Truth Box will be available in classes from 1st-6th so pupils can report incidences of bullying. The Truth Box will primarily be in operation for the 6 weeks prior to Christmas each year. Every Friday the Box will circulate around the room and every child has to write something on a piece of paper whether they have something to report or not. The class teacher will read the information and if appropriate use it to monitor a situation, or proceed with the steps for dealing with bullying behaviour.
- Children's self-esteem will be fostered and developed through the use of strategies such as “Circle Time” and curricular areas such as Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE).
- Programmes such as Stay Safe, Walk Tall, Alive-0 Web Wise and other suitable anti-bullying programmes will be used in the school.
- A whole school anti-bullying week supported by the B.O.M and in conjunction with the Parents Council will be held once a year in the second week in September. This will involve talks for parents around the area of Cyber-bullying organised by the Parents Council through the National Parents Council. Every 2nd year the children in the senior classes will participate in the Sticks and Stones Anti-Bullying programme funded by the B.O.M.
- The school will also use the services of outside agencies, e.g., local Gardaí, Psychologists and Counsellors where this is felt to be appropriate in order to counteract bullying.

Procedures for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying

- All reports of bullying, no matter how trivial, will be investigated and dealt with by class teachers. In that way pupils will gain confidence in “telling”. This confidence factor is of vital importance. All class teachers have hardback copies for recording incidences of bullying that is reported to them.
- Teachers will take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents/guardians. In any incident of bullying, the teacher will speak separately to the pupils involved, in an attempt to get both sides of the story. All interviews will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all the pupils concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide useful information in this way.

- When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the teacher will seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why, in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with the conflict in a non-aggressive manner.
- If a group is involved, each member will be interviewed individually and then the individuals are met as a group. Each member will be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone is clear about what everyone else has said. Other pupils may also be interviewed to get a clearer picture.
- Incidents of once off aggression will be dealt with according to the schools Code of Discipline. If it is concluded that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it will be made clear to him/her to see the situation from the victim's point of view.
- The 'No Blame' approach may be used to resolve less serious incidents of bullying.

The 'No Blame' Approach:

1. Interview the child being bullied and the bully.
 2. Interview others involved.
 3. Explain the problem.
 4. Share responsibility.
 5. Encourage pupils to identify solutions.
 6. Meet them again.
- Teachers who are investigating cases of bullying behaviour will keep a written record of their discussions with those involved. It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident.
 - In cases where it has been determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, meet with the parents or guardians of the two parties involved as appropriate to (a) explain actions being taken and the reasons for them, referring them to the school policy, (b) discuss ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions taken by the school.
 - Separate follow-up meetings, with the two parties involved will be arranged, with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date if the victim is ready and agreeable. This can have a therapeutic effect.
 - Serious incidences of Bullying will be reported to the Principal.

Disciplinary Actions and Sanctions to deal with Bullying

Stage 1:

In cases where it has been found that bullying has taken place, pupils will be warned officially to stop their bullying behaviour and asked to apologise to the victim. This will be recorded in the class teachers copy. Parents of both parties will be informed of the matter and victims and perpetrators will be asked to write an account of the incident/s that lead to the Bullying behaviour and what consequences and impact that this has had on their lives – parents must sign this. This will kept in the teacher's copy. (In the case of Infants parents will write on their behalf). The class teacher will then monitor the behaviour of both parties for as long as it's deemed necessary

Stage 2:

If this fails to stop the bullying behaviour , the teacher and Principal will request a meeting with the parents or guardians of the two parties involved (separately).The purpose of the meeting is (a) to inform parents/guardians of the on-going problem and their assistance will be sought in preventing a

repeat of the behaviour. (b) Explain actions being taken and (c) the reasons for them. Sanctions at this point will involve Loss of specific privileges as appropriate or additional home work to be given. These will be discussed with the parents/guardians before implementation and can include the following

- ❖ Exclusion from break/lunch times for a specific number of days (no less than 3 no more than 5)
- ❖ Exclusion from school activities i.e. School Trails/Tours/Sporting events.
- ❖ Extra homework will be given for a specific number of days (no less than 3 no more than 5)

A record of communication with all parties will be recorded in the teachers copy. Separate follow-up meetings, with the two parties involved, may be arranged, with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date, if the victim is ready and agreeable. This can have a therapeutic effect.

Stage 3:

It is the duty of the school to provide a safe environment for all the children. Should the above interventions fail and the bullying continue a programme of appropriate sanctions may be implemented by the Principal in consultation with the parents and Board of Management. Sanctions implemented will aim to encourage positive behaviour and support the esteem of the child. These sanctions may include a period of suspension of no more than 3 days during which there will be on-going consultation with the parents to decide on appropriate action(s) to be taken in the best interests of the child. Suspension for any period of time will be reported in writing by the Principal to the Chair of the Board of Management.

Stage 4:

If the matter is not resolved at Board level by the above measures it will be referred to the local inspectorate for advice on what steps to follow next

School advice for Children and Parents

Children: If you feel you are being bullied in school:

- Tell a teacher, through the Truth Box, or in private, what is happening. Remember, this is a “Telling school” you are not “ratting” or telling tales. Teachers cannot help if they do not know that bullying is happening.
- Tell your parents as soon as you go home.,
- Keep on telling.

People who are bullying do not have the right to make you feel bad. If you see someone being bullied or if you know someone is being bullied, report it to a teacher straight away. Bullying is always wrong, do not accept it - always report it.

Parents: If your child is being bullied or you have noticed any of the signs of bullying please talk to your child.

- Explain what a bully is.
- Teach your child to:
 - o Say no.
 - o Walk away.
 - o Tell a teacher.
- Do not teach your child to hit back, it does not address the reasons for bullying and could lead to a child being seriously hurt in further incidents.
- Keep a record to see if there is a pattern of bullying behaviour.
- Inform the school as soon as possible. We can only deal with a problem if we are aware of it.
- Parents should not approach individual children, please inform teacher/principal of the incidents.

If incidents occur outside of school inform the parents of the child who is bullying as soon as possible. The school is not responsible for any incidents that occur outside of school hours except school activities that occur outside the normal school day.

Bullying by Adults

In the case of intra-staff bullying, Kilchreest National School will adopt the procedures outlined in Section C (c2) of the INTO booklet: 'Working Together: Procedures and Policies for Positive Staff Relations'. A copy of this document is available for free download on the INTO website.

In the case of Teacher – Child bullying, a complaint should in the first instance be raised with the teacher in question by the parent/guardian of the child if possible and then if necessary referred to the Principal. Where it has not been possible to agree a framework for resolution, the matter should be referred in writing by both parties to the Board of Management for investigation.

In the case of Parent – Teacher bullying, the Principal should be informed in the first instance, and if deemed necessary the Board of Management should subsequently be informed in writing.

In the case of Parent/Visitor to the school – Child bullying, the complaint should be referred in the first instance to the child's class teacher and subsequently to the Principal if unresolved.

In the case of Principal – Parent/ Child bullying, the matter should be raised with the Principal if possible, or referred to the Chairperson of the Board of Management.

This Anti-Bullying Code has been drawn up by the teachers in consultation with Board of Management, parents and pupils. It will be reviewed regularly at teachers' meetings. Parents are also welcome to make suggestions at any time. Any necessary changes will be made. All changes in the Anti-Bullying Code will be notified to parents.