

Anti-Bullying Policy

Introduction

The role of the school is to provide an appropriate education for all its pupils. A stable, secure learning environment is an essential requirement to achieve this goal. Bullying behaviour, by its very nature, undermines and dilutes the quality of education. Research shows that bullying can have short and long-term effects on the physical and mental well-being of pupils, on engagement with school, on self-confidence and on the ability to pursue ambitions and interests.

School-based bullying can be positively and firmly addressed through a range of school-based measures and strategies through which all members of the school community are enabled to act effectively in dealing with this behaviour. While it is recognised that home and societal factors play a substantial role both in the cause and in the prevention of bullying, the role of the school in preventative work is also crucial and should not be underestimated. School-based initiatives can either reinforce positive efforts or help counteract unsuccessful attempts of parents to change unacceptable behaviour. Parents and pupils have a particularly important role and responsibility in helping the school to prevent and address school-based bullying behaviour and to deal with any negative impact within school of bullying behaviour that occurs elsewhere. In this document, any reference(s) to parent(s) can be taken to refer also to guardian(s) where applicable. International research clearly indicates the crucial importance of the existence of and implementation of a school policy setting out the school's approach to preventing and tackling bullying. An anti-bullying policy, when developed and implemented across the school community can be the cornerstone in countering bullying behaviour in schools.

Requirement on all schools to have an anti-bullying policy within the framework of their overall code of behaviour

Under the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 all schools are required to have in place a code of behaviour. The Act requires that this code must be prepared in accordance with guidelines issued by the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB). The NEWB's 4 publication *Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools* was issued to schools in 2008.

In accordance with the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 and the guidelines issued by the NEWB, all schools are required to have an anti-bullying policy within the framework of their overall code of behaviour.

Review Update 2016

Kilsheelan N.S. Reviewed and updated its counter-bullying policy which was ratified in 2008 following NEWB guidelines and in line with Education Welfare Act 2000. In 2013 following anti-bullying procedures for Primary and Post-Primary schools issued in September 2013. Kilsheelan N.S. Policy was reviewed and updated in line with the above procedures and guidelines. It was reviewed and updated in October 2016. It was reviewed again in 2019.

Kilsheelan N.S. Anti-Bullying Policy & Procedures

This anti-bullying policy operates in conjunction with the code of Behaviour which parents and their children are informed of and agree to adhere to on enrolment.

The school has a central role in the children's social, moral development just as it does in their academic development. In Kilsheelan N.S. we work towards standards of behaviour based on the basic principles of:

Respect
Consideration
Honesty
Responsibility

It is the right of each child to be educated in a disruption free environment. As a school we believe in and promote the right of all pupils to pass safely through their school years enjoying an education which is free from fear, hurt, isolation or intimidation. Bullying is counter to our philosophy of promoting respect, consideration, honesty and responsibility for all members of the school community.

What is bullying?

“Bullying is defined as unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time. These procedures make clear that this definition includes cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying (such as homophobic bullying and racist 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. Isolated incidents of misbehaviour would be dealt with under the Code of Behaviour. However, when the behaviour is systematic and ongoing it is bullying. Bullying involves a range of cruelties designed to undermine, upset, insult, isolate, exclude, intimidate, frighten, physically hurt or emotionally wound the victim. There will at times be incidents where children fall out with each other or say a cross word to each other, as is to be expected in a large group of children but persistent behaviour like name calling, pushing, isolating, excluding children etc as outlined above is bullying.

Bullying can take many forms but its aim is always to make a person feel upset, intimidated or afraid.

The most common forms of bullying are:

Physical – pushing, shoving, kicking, hitting.

Verbal – name calling, teasing, insulting, humiliating.

Emotional – making threats, spreading rumours, excluding, ignoring.

Non-Verbal – making suggestive, provocative or intimidating gestures.

E-Bullying – sending threatening or upsetting messages or images.

Personal Property – threats against or damage to a persons property.

Indicators of Bullying

Physical Indicators

- Unexplained bruising, cuts tec.
- Loss of/damage to personal property
- Hunger or thirst
- Frequent minor illnesses, headaches, tummy aches
- Bed wetting

- Loss of appetite
- Obsessive behaviour, physical appearance, weight
- Stammering
- Requests for extra money.

School Related Indicators

- Reluctance to go, wanting to be accompanied
- Returning in bad form
- Changing routine
- Avoiding certain days/lessons
- Nervousness in class
- Punctuality problems
- Poor concentration
- Deterioration in school work
- Expressions of hopelessness
- Fewer phone calls, friends calling, invitation

Emotional/Psychological Indicators

- Outbursts of anger, temper, irritability at home
- Bullying brother and sisters, parents
- Well behaved child suddenly troublesome
- Signs of depression
- Changes in: mood, appetite, sleep pattern
- Tiredness, neglect of appearance,
- Expression of sadness, worthlessness.

Who bullies?

Bullies may emerge at any stage of the school cycle and from any social background. Many bullies operate without detection because the behaviour can be covert and the victim is too frightened to report it, the peer group or those who witnesses it also feel intimidated, and can offer tacit support to a bully by not coming forward and speaking out. When bullies operate in gangs their impact on a victim can be more dangerous and destructive.

Policy Aims

1. To foster a school ethos of mutual and self respect.
2. To raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with school management, teachers, pupils and parents.
3. To create a school ethos that encourages children to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.
4. To outline, promote and raise awareness of preventative approaches that can be used in response to reported incidents of bullying.
5. To outline procedures for noting and reporting instances of bullying behaviour.
6. To outline procedures for investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.
7. To develop a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and for those involved in bullying behaviour.
8. To promote co-operation between school and home to have a shared view on our anti-bullying policy.
9. To ensure that any incidents are investigated within an immediate timeframe of incidence occurrence.
10. That parents are fully aware of the procedures for complaint.
11. School will deal with facts only and parties involved in incident and not on heresay of parents or reference to other parties. Each complaint will be dealt with on an individual basis.
12. Bullying is a very serious matter so nonsense or trivial complaints (do not meet the criteria).
13. Family relationships or peer relationships outside of school should not dictate any investigation in school or preclude outcome.

Classic Bullying Tactics

Research indicates that bullying may be experienced by the victim as one or more of any of the following on a regular basis:

- Attention being drawn to sensitive or embarrassing physical features.
- Being cut or bruised in physical encounters.
- Having school lunches commandeered, spat upon or destroyed.
- Having school belongings temporarily hidden, damaged or destroyed.
- Having homework or schoolwork interfered with.
- Being forced to allow homework to be copied by the bully.

- Being scapegoat eg. by the class at the behest of the bully.
- Having one's choice of clothes, their quality, label or cost ridiculed.
- Conversations stopping, people turning their backs or walking away when the victim approaches.
- Having, contributions to a conversation laughed or sneered at.
- Being threatened with physical attack.
- Notes being circulated around the classroom, which are written with the intent of being personal, insulting or hurtful.
- Being forced to bring protection money to school under the threat of physical punishment or verbal abuse for non-compliance.
- Similarly having to supply the bully with sweets, crisps, etc.
- Being afraid to be out of sight of adults or teachers at school.
- Being afraid to use the school's toilet facilities or go to school lockers or frequent bicycle compound, changing-rooms or outdoor areas.
- Conversely, taking refuge in the toilets during break-times or during free periods to escape from the bully.
- Worrying that the bully may use sports activities as an opportunity to inflict physical damage.
- Derogatory sexual or racial slugging, or derogatory comments on one's family.
- Having one's sexual orientation questioned.
- Being followed home from school at an uncomfortable or intimidating distance.
- Receiving upsetting hoax phone-calls or threatening phone-calls or text messages.
- Never knowing when or how the next abuse will be inflicted.

How Bullying affects victims

Those who are bullied should not be blamed for inviting it. The effects of bullying on the victim may be both short term and long term if the bullying is permitted to continue.

Short term;

- Physical injury that requires medical attention, teeth broken etc.
- Loss of appetite, feeling sick, experiencing pains in the stomach or headaches; constantly on the verge of tears.
- Nightmares, disturbed sleep pattern, particularly on Sunday nights.

- Dreading attending school.
- Feelings of relief during breaks from school.
- Feeling inadequate, losing confidence and self-esteem.
- Losing trust in friends or in their ability to offer protection and support.
- Being afraid to socialise outside of school for fear of encountering the bully.
- Stealing to placate the bullying.
- Lying to parents or teachers to cover up the problem.
- Being angry at the school's failure to stop the bullying.
- Living in constant fear of and being angry with the bully.

Long term

- Under achieving academically.
- Avoiding conflict at the expense of being appropriately assertive.
- Holding negative or distorted ideas about oneself throughout life.
- Experiencing intense pessimism, depression, social anxiety or phobias, loneliness, isolation, shame, guilt and worthlessness.
- Increased suicidal tendencies.
- Experiencing difficulties forming and maintaining friendships.

Dealing with the Bully

- Interview the bully and point out that either you or others have seen their bullying behaviour.
- Do not tell a bully the victim has made a complaint.
- Ask the bully to give an account of the incident.
- Write down all the details, read the account back to the bully to confirm its accuracy. Allow an opportunity for the account to be reconsidered.
- Ask the bully for the names of any witnesses, note their names and inform the bully that they will be interviewed separately.
- Ensure, in the meantime, that the bully has no opportunity to meet with witnesses as they may be part of a bullying gang or be victims who could be intimidated.
- Ask the bully for a definition of bullying behaviour and ask if the incident meets definition.
- Enquire how the bully's parents are likely to respond to the incident.

- Notify the bully that his/her parents will automatically, in accordance with the school's policy on countering bullying, be called in to discuss the incident.

Dealing with the Bully's Parents

- Invite the parents to the school to discuss a breach of the school's anti-bullying policy.
- Do not discuss the incident over the phone.
- Interview the parents in the presence of another member of school staff who is aware of the problem.
- Begin with a summary of the school's bullying code and emphasize the parents agreement to it.
- Inform the parents in a clear, unemotional, unambiguous and non-judgmental manner of the evidence that their child has bullied.
- List time, dates, number of witnesses and how conclusions were reached.
- Sympathise with the parents about how upsetting it can be of a child is involved in bullying.
- Ask parents for their views on why their child should behave in this way, are there any emotional difficulties or other circumstances to cause upset?
- Inform the parents of the sanctions that the school considers appropriate to the incident and enlist their co-operation.
- These sanctions are: On Report, Suspension if the problem persists, case to be forwarded to the Board of Management with possible recommendation for expulsion if very serious bullying continues.
- Remind parents of the long-term dangers to their child if the behaviour goes unchecked.
- Make an agreement between parents, school and bully about future behavioural requirements, monitoring, consequences etc.
- Be aware of family situations where excessive discipline abuse could result from notifying parents of their child's behaviour.
- Professional help will be required for the child in these instances.

Dealing with the victim

- If the victim has disclosed the problem to you, praise their courage in doing so.
- Reassure the victim that being bullied is the responsibility of the bullies

and that victims are not to blame.

- Reassure the victim of your continuing support and help in ensuring that it does not happen again.
- Make arrangements to meet at regular intervals to discuss if the bullying has ceased.
- Find out who in the victim's class is likely to be antagonistic and establish safeguards to ensure the victim will feel secure in the future.

Dealing with the Victim's Parents

- Invite the parents to discuss bullying in the school.
- Do not discuss the matter over the phone.
- At the meeting, inform the parents of their child's disclosure or of your discovery of bullying.
- Inform them of all the steps that have been taken so far.
- Reassure parents of your continued support and vigilance and suggest follow up meetings if necessary.
- If parents are angry or blaming the school, acknowledge their upset, repeat the school policy on bullying and outline the steps taken to assist their child.
- If their child displays any annoying behaviours or lack of social skills which contribute to being bullied, discuss them sensitively with the parents.
- Discuss the benefits of referral for professional help.

Awareness within the School

- Creating a school climate, which encourages children to report bullying.
- Raising awareness of bullying through programmes like Stay Safe, Sticks and Stones and "BE Safe" Garda programme, Circle Time.
- Providing comprehensive supervision of pupils at all school activities.
- Developing clear procedures for reporting and investigating bullying.
- Providing a supportive environment for those affected by bullying behaviour.
- Liaising with relevant agencies in the local community.

Helping children Who Have Been Bullied

- Have children define bullying. What is bullying? How does it make them

feel?

- Examine the victim's behaviour. Is there something in the child's demeanour that attracts the bullying?
- Teach children to say "No" in an assertive tone of voice and to carry themselves in a confident way.
- Establish a sense of equality within the group i.e. The same entitlement to space, opinions, their own possessions, etc.
- Get other children to help.
- Alert parents.
- Let children know that they did the right thing by telling and that it is not their fault if they are being bullied.
- Keep an account of incidents.

School Climate & Culture

Our school has a wide approach to bullying which encompasses classroom practices, i.e. class rules, discussion on behaviour anti-bullying materials on display, curriculum implementation through subjects such as Religion, SPHE, RSE, assembly instruction and discussion. We encourage children to establish and maintain positive relationships with each other and deal more adequately with interpersonal conflict. Through our approaches in class, playground and assembly we encourage pupils to develop greater empathy, to act assertively when necessary, to become more resilient, and to help others who may be bullied.

Most importantly our message is if a child is being bullied he/she should know:

- (a) it is not your fault
- (b) you don't have to put up with bullying
- (c) ask for help – tell a teacher/parent.

Effect of bullying behaviour on the bully

Bullying is a learned behaviour. The bully is not immune to the effects of his/her behaviour. The truth is that being a bully is a problematic condition which is likely to lead to problems in life.

Indicators of a bullying personality

Bullies' only strategy to achieve what they want is through the use of violence or the abuse of power, accordingly they relate poorly to others in their lives.

- They are actively disliked and find themselves unpopular
- They are insecure because they wonder if others like them or pretend to like them out of fear.
- They are envious of others whom they perceive as socially or intellectually superior
- A substantial number are themselves victims of bullying.
- Adolescent boys who bully watch more television and play internet games with violent content and their parents tend not to offer any guidelines.
- Bullies tend to get into trouble more often and tend to challenge the authority of teachers in school.
- Bullies get into conflict with parents & siblings.
- Bullies tend to be emotionally insensitive to others.

Sanctions

1. Interview the parties involved, the alleged bully and victim separately and any witnesses to the incident.
2. Child writes account of action which will be signed by teacher and parent.
3. Discuss the child's action with him/her.
4. Let child know that his/her behaviour is unacceptable.
5. Child will be put in detention by school for break time(s). This can be for a period of time at teachers discretion.
6. Record of events will be kept by class teacher if child is a habitual offender.
7. Parents will be requested to meet with class teacher and/or principal to discuss their child's behaviour.
8. If a child cannot behave him/herself in school, he/she will not be allowed to attend at outside school activities eg matches, shows, school tour.
9. Inform parents of injured party what has happened and steps taken.

10. Inform B.O.M. of incidents.
11. B.O.M. may meet & discuss issues & inform parents of their decisions whereby a child may be suspended from school for a given period.
12. In cases of serious injury or of a sexual nature Tusla, family services, Child Protection Agency and Gardaí will be informed.

Procedures for anti-bullying policy

Stage 1

Reporting

The school ethos encourages victims and those who witness incidents of bullying to report it to any staff member. Anyone may report an incident of bullying: the victim, parents/guardians, other students, members of the wider community, S.N.A., Secretary etc. Incidents may be reported by direct report, by letter, by telephone or by class comment. Confidentiality is essential. Where students keep their victimization secret, teachers can help by emphasising from time to time the school's policy on bullying. They also have a role in eliminating bullying by being vigilant to its signs and effects. Unless the incident is of a very serious nature, it will be dealt with by the class teacher who will talk to the children involved. Teachers respect the need to support the esteem of each party involved in an incident.

Recording & Investigating

All reports of bullying, no matter how trivial are investigated, some reports may be recorded by class teacher especially if there is a pattern of misbehaviour. All reports are investigated, and assessed fairly, justly and objectively as soon as possible after the report is made. Incidents of bullying will be dealt with by the Class Teacher or teacher on yard duty if incidents occur in the yard. Serious incidents should be immediately reported to the Principal or Deputy Principal.

The class teacher will keep a record of incidents to aid memory by recording details of the incident, for clarity in assessment of the situation and for planning an intervention.

Parents will be informed of incidents.

At the discretion of the school if a child or parent is not satisfied that the matter is not resolved or behaviour not improved then he/she should make

this known to the teacher in a timely manner. Isolated incidents do not constitute bullying but ongoing incidents do and early intervention is the best approach to resolving matters.

Stage 2

In the event that the matter is not resolved in stage 1 the matter will move to stage 2 of our procedural policy. The Principal will arrange to meet with the parents of the child who is seen to be bullying and separately with the parents of the victim of bullying. The children themselves may be required to attend part or all of these meetings. At no point will a parent be allowed to confront another child. The child who is bullying is put on report and his/her behaviour will be monitored during the day. All positive behaviour, progress on work etc will be noted. Sanctions such as loss of playtime, or detention or “time out” may be imposed. Parents will be informed of any such sanctions and monitoring. The purpose of a report is to focus as much as possible on the positive qualities and efforts of the child and to motivate the child to move away from negative behaviour. The child should be able to see that parents and school are working together in his/her interests, so the co-operation of the parents is essential.

The child who is victim of bullying will also meet with the Principal and his/her parents. The aim of such meeting(s) will be to address emotional needs and devise strategies for the child to deal with the bullying. This may involve reinforcing programmes like Stay Safe being covered in class. It is important that the victim is made to feel safe and can have the courage to speak out and seek help. A meeting with principal, parents and the initial teacher to whom the complaint was made will be recorded. If a parent is not satisfied with the outcome of this meeting he/she should put a complaint in writing to the Principal.

Stage 3

If the parent is unhappy with the Principals response he/she can make a formal complaint in writing to the B.O.M. The Chairperson of the B.O.M. may ask to meet the parent and school principal to ascertain nature of complaint, this meeting will be minuted. The chairperson will report back to board members and inform parents of boards decision in writing. The decision of the board is final.

It is the duty of the school to provide a safe environment for all the children. Should stages 1 and 2 interventions fail and the bullying continues a programme of appropriate sanctions may be implemented by the Principal in consultation with the parents and Board of Management. Sanctions implemented aim to encourage positive behaviour and support the esteem of the child. In serious cases these sanctions may include a period of suspension during which there will be ongoing consultation with the parents to decide on the appropriate action to be taken in the best interests of the child and dealing with problems child may have. Suspension for any period of time will be recorded by the Principal and sanctioned by Board of Management in writing.

Raising awareness of bullying policy in school.

Children need to be fully informed about the school's anti bullying policy. It is insufficient to simply inform pupils that bullying will not be tolerated in school and that the school has a policy to deal with incidents of bullying. Children as well as parents, teachers and other staff need to know what the policy is for preventing bullying and handling incidents of bullying if and when they do arise. As regards approaches to informing pupils about what the school's anti bullying is, the following suggestions include

- [1] Display posters around the school and in classrooms on positive behaviour.
- [2] Include topic on bullying behaviour at assembly on regular basis through discussion, story telling, role play, drama
- [3] Have talk or lesson in class facilitated by class teacher.
- [4] Stay Safe programme
- [5] Ensure that school's anti bullying is seen as ongoing and not just when incidents arise.
- [6] Ensure that our anti bullying policy is presented to children in language and format that are appropriate to pupil's age, and an understanding of it can be highlighted through real life stories and examples of the hurt and harm bullying can do.
- [7] Children can become a target for bullying for many different reasons including their ethnicity, culture, & religion, socio-economic status, family

circumstances, how they look, dress or talk so it is important that our pupils develop respect for diversity and equality.

Cyber Bullying

In recent times cyber- bullying has become a concern for pupils, and an issue to be addressed in our anti-bullying policy.

What is cyber bullying or E-Bullying?

This is when instant messages, emails, text messages or web pages are used to spread rumours, make threats or harass. It can include written messages, photographs, videos or voice messages.

The people who are bullying may use an online social network to jeer at or target someone in a cruel way. The bully or bullies can remain anonymous to the victim which causes hurt and distress.

People who use technology to bully may say things online or by text that they would never say face to face. They need to know that they are responsible for their words and actions in cyberspace as well as in the real world.

It is important that parents are aware of and monitor their child's use of smart phones and internet.

Following an in house survey of 4th to 6th class pupils in our school whereby findings revealed that a large number had access to texting, emails, chat rooms, etc it is proposed that we engage an expert speaker to talk to pupils and parents about cyber bullying and internet safety.

Our policy is a two strand approach that comprises prevention and intervention strategies.

Key preventive measures include:

1. A dedicated anti-bullying policy as above.
2. Awareness raising about bullying.
3. Human rights education.

Key intervention measures include:

4. Encourage children to speak up if they feel they are being bullied, witness bullying or are involved in bullying
5. Parents and teachers should be alert to signs of bullying
6. Adequate supervision in schools.
7. Teachers nurture positive relationships with students
8. Child sensitive approach when dealing with issues.

Conclusion

Schools occupy a vital place in the lives of children, their families and communities. Our school is involved in promoting and protecting a wide range of children's rights on a daily basis, among these rights is a child's right to learn in a safe environment. Bullying is a challenge to this right. Therefore our school has an important role to play in the prevention of bullying and intervening when incidents of bullying arise. However tackling bullying cannot be delegated to schools, responsibility needs to be shared appropriately among children, parents, professionals working across the education system and society more generally. The teaching staff, BOM are committed to our Anti-Bullying policy. However there is not any school or workplace that can state categorically that bullying does not exist. Human beings by their very nature can at times behave in an unacceptable manner and children can be bossy, selfish, mean which on occasion can lead to bullying. It is our policy to inform children how to cope with incidents and emotions and to have rules, and strategies to deal with unacceptable behaviour. In doing this we need the support of parents. We also need children to tell their teacher if they feel bullied immediately, so we can act promptly. All parents would have and expect that their child behaves well but this might not always be the case. Therefore we need the support and co-operation of parents when dealing with incidents. Each individual's behaviour can have an effect on all our behaviour, so a team approach of child, parent, teacher, where expectations are outlined and understood by all involved. A child should feel safe and secure in the school environment. A parent likewise should feel that their child is safe and happy in school. A school should have the support of parents and that they instill in their child a sense of respect, fair play, honesty in dealings with others which are life long attributes.

Ratified on:

Signed on behalf of B.O.M.: _____

Mr. Sean Connolly, Chairperson.