

Crusheen N.S. Anti-Bullying Policy

The policy was formulated in accordance with the Education Act 1998, Section 15, (1), (2), Section 21, (1), (3), (4), Section 23 (2), (3) and in accordance with Circular 20/90 of the Department of Education and Rule 130 of the Rules for National Schools of the Department of Education.

Anti -Bullying Policy/Polaisí Frith-Bhullaíochta

Definition of Bullying

Bullying is repeated aggression, verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against others. We say a pupil is being bullied, when another pupil or group of pupils say nasty or unpleasant things to him or her. It is also bullying when a pupil constantly displays a pattern of repeated negative behaviours.

Aims of the Policy

The aim of Crusheen National School Anti-Bullying policy is

- To raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with school management, teachers, pupils, parents/guardians.
- To promote a school ethos which encourages children to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To ensure appropriate supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of school activity are kept under observation.
- To develop procedures for noting, investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To implement a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and for those involved in bullying behaviour.
- To work with appropriate agencies in countering all forms of bullying and promoting anti bullying behaviour.

This policy will support the teachers in the following:

1. Each class will engage in the Stay Safe programme as part of the S.P.H.E. curriculum.
2. Classes will focus on the theme of Bullying during the school year.
3. Time will be given to focussing on the personal experience of bullying and developing an empathy for bullies and victims.
4. Each teacher will be familiar with the procedures for reporting incidents of bullying.
5. Emphasis will be placed on the importance of reporting repeated incidents to the class teacher as well as the teacher on yard supervision.
6. A rota will be drawn up to ensure that the yard is supervised at break times.
7. The identification of bullying behaviour will be highlighted at one staff meeting per year.

TYPES OF BULLYING

PHYSICAL: This includes punching, kicking, pushing, hitting or spitting etc. This also includes damaging property of a victim.

VERBAL: Verbal abuse can take the form of name calling, abusive language, slander, slugging, threats etc.

PSYCHOLOGICAL: This includes isolation – exclusion from discussions/ activities, use of the internet/email/mobile phone to hurt, name call etc. extortion – obtaining (e.g. money, lunch, sweets etc.) from a person by force or threat etc.

Indications of Bullying

The following signs/symptoms may suggest that a pupil is being bullied:-

- anxiety about travelling to and from school - requesting parents to drive or collect them, changing route of travel, avoiding regular times for travelling to and from school;
- unwillingness to go to school, refusal to attend, ‘mitching’
- deterioration in educational performance, loss of concentration and loss of enthusiasm and interest in school;
- pattern of physical illnesses (e.g. headaches, stomach aches);
- unexplained changes either in mood or behaviour; it may be particularly noticeable before returning to school after weekends or more especially after longer school holidays;
- visible signs of anxiety or distress - stammering, withdrawing, nightmares, difficulty in sleeping, crying, not eating, vomiting, bedwetting;
- spontaneous out-of-character comments about either pupils or teachers;
- possessions missing or damaged;
- increased requests for money or stealing money;
- unexplained bruising or cuts or damaged clothing;
- reluctance and/or refusal to say what is troubling him/her.

Those signs do not necessarily mean that a pupil is being bullied. If repeated or occurring in combination these signs do warrant investigation in order to establish what is affecting the pupil.

Strategies for prevention of bullying

- The SPHE curriculum, including the Walk Tall and Stay Safe programmes, is used throughout the school to support the anti bullying policy.
- Positive self-esteem is fostered among the pupils by celebrating individual differences, by acknowledging good behaviour and by providing opportunities for success.
- Pupils are helped to develop empathy by discussing feelings and by trying to put themselves in the place of others.
- Teachers respond sensitively to pupils who disclose incidents of bullying.
- The school's anti-bullying policy is discussed regularly with the pupils.
- Staff are particularly vigilant in monitoring pupils who are considered at risk of bullying/ being bullied.
- **Pupils from Junior Infants to Sixth class create their ‘Class Rules’ and signify their acceptance of these rules by writing/drawing their own signature/handprint around them. All pupils engage with their parents in September in reading and signing the ‘School Rules’ at the back page of their homework diaries. .**
- Members of the BOM are familiar with the school’s policy on bullying and actively promote it on a repeated basis among staff, parents and pupils.
- Parents contribute to and support the school’s policy on bullying by encouraging positive behaviour both at home and at school, by being vigilant for signs and symptoms that their child is being bullied or is bullying others, by communicating concerns to the school.

Maintaining awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour

Crusheen National School will emphasise and reinforce the view that bullying behaviour is unacceptable by

- Using school assemblies to remind pupils of the school’s anti bullying policy

- Using both the formal and informal curriculum to emphasise that bullying is unacceptable... visual arts activities, posters, drama, role play, SPHE, cooperative games...

Supervision

Insofar as is reasonably practicable school activities will be supervised and monitored at all times, with particular emphasis on those occasions when situations of bullying are more likely to occur, such as assembly time, play time and assembly and dismissal time.

Disclosure

Children will be encouraged to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour. They will be helped to differentiate between incidents of a minor nature and those that constitute bullying. They will also be taught the difference between 'telling tales' and asking for help.

Procedures for Dealing with Instances of Bullying

- All reports of bullying should be noted, investigated and dealt with by the class teacher so that pupils will gain confidence in telling. A special Incident Sheet will be confidentially kept in the school for this purpose only (Appendix 2)
- Serious cases should be referred immediately to the Principal
- Parents of both victims and bullies should be informed by the Principal (at her discretion), earlier rather than later. If on the conclusion of the preliminary investigation the teacher is convinced that bullying has occurred the parent(s)/guardian(s) of all concerned will be contacted.
- Parents must be informed of the appropriate person to whom they can make their enquiries regarding bullying, i.e. class teacher initially if bullying is occurring in classroom, otherwise to the Principal.
- Pupils must understand that reporting is not 'telling tales'. Parents to encourage this jointly with school.
- Non-teaching staff should be encouraged to report incidents. Discretion is important.
- Pupils will be informed that when they report incidents of bullying they are acting responsibly.
- A calm unemotional problem solving approach will be used to deal with bullying.
- On being informed of an alleged incident of bullying, the teacher dealing with the report will first interview the victim(s) and discuss the feelings which the victim(s) experienced because of the bullying behaviour.
- An interview will then take place with the alleged perpetrator(s). If the bullying involves a group of pupils members of that group will first be met individually and then as a whole. Having discussed the negative impact which bullying has on both perpetrator(s) and victim(s) responsibility will be placed on all individuals within the group to resolve the difficulty and to take appropriate steps to ensure that it does not happen again.
- Depending on the seriousness of the bullying some supportive Interventions will be utilised.
- Repeated incidents of bullying behaviour will result in the imposition of sanctions. Such sanctions will be proportionate to the seriousness of the bullying Behaviour .

Procedures for Noting and Reporting an incident of Bullying Behaviour

- All procedures of bullying, no matter how trivial, will be noted, investigated and dealt with by teachers. In that way pupils will gain confidence in reporting. This confidence factor is of vital importance.
- Serious cases of bullying behaviour by pupils will be referred immediately to the Principal/Deputy Principal.
- Parents or guardians of victims and bullies will be informed by the Principal/Deputy Principal earlier rather than later of incidents so that they are given the opportunity of discussing the matter. They are then in a position to help and support their children before a crisis occurs.
- Non-teaching staff are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, to the teaching staff.

5. In the case of a complaint regarding a staff member, this should be raised with the Principal.
6. Where cases, relating to either a pupil or a teacher remain unresolved at school level, the matter should be referred to the School's Board of Management (see Complaints Procedure).
7. If not solved at Board level, refer to the local inspectorate.

Procedures for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying

Teachers will take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour reported by either pupils, staff or parent(s)/guardians.. Such incidents will be investigated outside the classroom situation to avoid the public humiliation of the victim or the pupil engaged in bullying behaviour. In any incident of bullying, two staff members will speak to each pupil involved separately, in a room away from the view of other children 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 pupils concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide useful information in this way.

1. 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 a conflict in a non-aggressive manner.
2. 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 also has said. Other pupils may also be interviewed to get a clearer picture. 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.
3. Incidents of once off aggression will be dealt with according to the schools Code of Behaviour. 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.
4. If it is concluded that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it will be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the Code of Behaviour and Discipline and try to get him/her to see the situation from the victim's point of view.
5. In cases where it has been determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, a meeting or discussion will take place with the parents or guardians of the two parties involved as appropriate to: a) explain the 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.
6. Separate follow up meetings, with the two other 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.

Combating Bullying and the Action towards Prevention

Role of Staff

- The principal and staff exercise constant vigilance in the matter of misbehaviour. Our aim is to prevent misbehaviour rather than control. Positive behaviour is always recognised, affirmed and sought.
- Any complaints of bullying are dealt with quickly, firmly and fairly.
- The principal is informed of any instance of bullying.
- Awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour is addressed in the classroom, at school assemblies, through the school policy on pastoral care and other informal occasions when the opportunity arises.
- Pupils are taught skills and encouraged to report any incident of bullying.

Advice for Pupils

- Tell yourself that you do not deserve to be bullied, and that it is **WRONG**.
- Be proud of who you are. It is good to be individual.
- Try not to show that you are upset. It is hard but a bully thrives on someone's fear.
- Stay with a group of friends/people. There is safety in numbers.
- Be assertive – shout **NO**. Walk away confidently. Go straight to a teacher or member of staff.
- Fighting back makes things worse– So don't fight back. **REPORT** to a teacher or parent(s)/guardians instead. If you need support find a friend and both of you speak to the teacher.
- Generally it is best to tell an adult you trust straight away. You will get immediate support.

The teachers will take you seriously and will deal with bullies in a way which will end the bullying and will not make things worse for you.

Advice for Parents

- Look for unusual behaviour in your children. For example, they may suddenly not wish to attend school, feel ill regularly, or not complete work to their normal standard, ask for money or begin stealing money.
- Always take an active role in your child's education by enquiring how they are getting on.
- If you feel your child may be a victim of bullying behaviour, inform the school **IMMEDIATELY**. Your complaint will be taken seriously and appropriate action will follow.
- It is important to advise your child not to fight back. It can make matters worse.
- Tell your child there is nothing wrong with him/her. It is not her fault that they are being bullied.
- Make sure your child is fully aware of the School Policy concerning Bullying, and that they will not be afraid to ask for help.

This Policy was reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management in September 2014.

This Policy was again reviewed by staff in September 2015.

This Policy will be reviewed by staff and Board of Management in September 2017.