

# RUSHEEN N.S.

## School Position on Bullying

The Rusheen National School community believes that each pupil has a right to an education free from fear and intimidation.

The school regards bullying as a serious infringement of individual rights and a serious threat to the self-esteem and self-confidence of targeted pupil(s). Therefore it does not tolerate bullying of any kind.

Every report of bullying is treated seriously and dealt with, having due regard for the well being of the targeted pupil(s) and the perpetrator(s).

The immediate priority, should a bullying incident occur, is ending the bullying, (*thereby protecting the person(s) being targeted*) and resolving the issues and restoring the relationships involved insofar as is practicable using a 'Reform, not Blame' approach.

All pupils are expected to contribute to the creation and maintenance of a safe environment in the school. On becoming aware of any bullying situation involving members of the school community, they should notify a trusted, responsible adult. Bullying behaviour is too serious not to report.

Pupils' participation in school life in general is encouraged through existing school structures. Awareness of bullying, and willingness to take action to prevent or stop it, is part of this participation.

## Anti-Bullying Policy

1. In accordance with the requirements of the *Education (Welfare) Act 2000* and the code of behavior guidelines issued by the NEWB, the Board of Management of Rusheen National School has adopted the following anti-bullying policy within the framework of the school's overall code of behavior. This policy fully complies with the requirements of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* which were published in September 2013.
2. The Board of Management recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of pupils and is therefore fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour:
  - A positive school culture and climate 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; See Appendix 1: Practical Tips For Building a Positive School Culture and Climate.
  - Effective leadership;
  - A school-wide approach;
  - A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact;
  - Implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that –
    - Build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and
    - Explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying;
  - Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils;
  - Supports for staff;
  - Consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behavior (including use of established intervention strategies); and

- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy
3. 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 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 behavior.

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 behavior.

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

This definition includes a wide range of behaviour, whether verbal or written, whether physical or social, whether targeting person or property, whether carried out directly or indirectly or through any electronic or other medium, which could harm a pupil or undermine her/his self-esteem or self-confidence.

Appendix 2 gives a list of specific examples of bullying behaviour. This list is not exhaustive.

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

4. The 'Relevant Teacher(s)' for investigating and dealing with bullying in Rusheen School are as follows:
- (a) All Teaching Staff
  - (b) Principal/Deputy Principal thereafter if necessary
5. The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber-bullying and identity based bullying) used by the school are as follows: (See also Section 6.5 of *The Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary & Post Primary Schools*).
- The full implementation of the SPHE curriculum and the R.S.E. & Stay Safe Programmes.
  - A number of awareness-raising exercises per school year for each class group (e.g. from the 'Awareness-Raising' strand of the *Anti-Bullying Campaign*, via its website), pro-actively explaining the nature and variety, causes, consequences and unacceptability of bullying.
    - Pupils are helped to examine the issue of bullying in a calm rational way, outside of the tense context of particular bullying incidents. In the process they are made more aware of the nature of bullying and the various forms that it can take.
    - Pupils are made aware that the consequences of bullying behaviour are always bad for those who are targeted, even if this is not always obvious at the time.

- Pupils are encouraged to recognise, reject and report bullying behaviour, either spontaneously or through questionnaires.

Through presentations or other exercises, the school staff and parents/guardians are made aware of the nature of bullying and the signs that might indicate that a pupil is being bullied. They are encouraged to be vigilant in watching out for signs of bullying and to report any suspicion of bullying they may have to the 'Relevant Teacher' (in the case of staff members) or any staff member (in the case of parents/guardians).

6. The school's procedures for investigation, follow-up and recording of bullying behaviour and the established intervention strategies used by the school for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour, (e.g. *the six step approach available from the 'Dealing with Incidents' section of the Anti-Bullying Campaign website*) are as follows:

- The 'Relevant Teacher' investigates all instances of reported or suspected bullying behaviour with a view to establishing the facts and bringing any such behaviour to an end.
- The School, through the 'Relevant Teacher' reserves the right to ask any pupil to write an account of what happened, as part of an investigation. This will be a standard procedure and does not necessarily imply that a pupil is guilty of misbehaviour.
- Pupils who are alleged to have been involved in bullying behaviour are interviewed by the 'Relevant Teacher' to establish the nature and extent of the behaviour and any reasons for it. In the event that they have been involved in bullying behaviour they will be asked to sign a promise that they will treat all pupils fairly, equally and respectfully including the targeted pupil(s).
- The 'Relevant Teacher' does not apportion blame but rather treats bullying behaviour as a 'mistake' that can and must be remedied. S/he emphasises that the intention is not to punish perpetrators but to talk to them, to explain how harmful and hurtful bullying is and to seek a promise that it will stop. If that promise is forthcoming and is honoured there will be no penalty and that will be the end of the matter. Pupils who report bullying therefore are not getting others 'in trouble' so much as enabling them to get out of trouble into which they may ultimately get if the bullying continued.
- When an investigation is completed and/or a bullying situation is resolved the 'Relevant Teacher' will complete a report, to include the findings of the investigation, the strategy adopted and the outcome of the intervention, as well as any other relevant information.

If a pupil has made a promise to stop the bullying behaviour but then chooses to break that promise and continue the bullying behaviour, this can then no longer be considered a 'mistake' and the following sanctions may apply

- Parent(s)/guardian(s) may be contacted by the 'Relevant Teacher' and informed of the nature and extent of the bullying behaviour with a view to agreeing a strategy whereby the promise to end the bullying behaviour would be honoured;
- Sanctions appropriate to the bullying behaviour may be imposed e.g. detention, loss of privilege, etc.
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) may be invited to a meeting with the 'Relevant Teacher' and the Principal and the pupil may be suspended from school.
- The case may be referred to the Board of Management and the pupil may be expelled from the school.
- The relevant teacher will use the recording template at Appendix 3 to record the bullying behaviour in the following circumstances:
  - a) In cases where he/she considers that the bullying behaviour has not been adequately and appropriately addressed within 20 school days after he/she has determined that bullying behaviour occurred; and
  - b) The school has decided that as part of its anti-bullying policy that in certain circumstances bullying behaviour must be recorded and reported immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable.

In each of the circumstances at (a) and (b) above, the recording template at Appendix 3 will be completed in full and retained by the teacher in question and a copy provided to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable. It should also be noted that the timeline for recording bullying behaviour in the recording template at Appendix 3 does not in any way preclude the relevant teacher from consulting the Principal or Deputy Principal at an earlier stage in relation to a case.

- All documentation regarding bullying incidents and their resolution is retained securely in the school.
7. The school's programme of support for working with pupils affected by bullying is as follows:
- Bullied pupils:
    - Ending the bullying behaviour,
    - Changing the school culture to foster more respect for bullied pupils and all pupils,
    - Changing the school culture to foster greater empathy towards and support for bullied pupils,
    - Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through the awareness-raising programme,
    - Indicating clearly that the bullying is not the fault of the targeted pupil through the speedy identification of those responsible and speedy resolution of bullying situations,
    - Informing parents of appropriate counselling facilities for pupils who may need them.
    - Helping bullied pupils raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that help develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school).
  - Bullying pupils:
    - Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are not blamed or punished and get a 'clean sheet,'
    - Making it clear that bullying pupils who reform are doing the right and honorable thing and giving them praise for this,
    - Informing parents of appropriate counselling facilities available to help those who need to learn other ways of meeting their needs besides violating the rights of others,
    - Helping those who need to raise their self-esteem by encouraging them to become involved in activities that develop friendships and social skills (e.g. participation in group work in class and in extra-curricular group or team activities during or after school),
    - Using learning strategies throughout the school and the curriculum to help enhance pupils' feelings of self-worth,
    - In dealing with negative behaviour in general, encouraging teachers and parents to focus on, challenge and correct the behaviour while supporting the child,
    - In dealing with bullying behaviour seeking resolution and offering a fresh start with a 'clean sheet' and no blame in return for keeping a promise to reform.
8. Supervision and Monitoring of Pupils:  
The Board of Management confirms that appropriate supervision and monitoring policies and practices are in place to both prevent and deal with bullying behaviour.
9. The Board of Management confirms that the school will, in accordance with its obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps as 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.

10. This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_ [date].
11. This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department of Education and Skills and to the patron if requested.
12. This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year. Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available to the Department of Education and Skills and to the patron if requested.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Fr. John Ryan  
(Chairperson Board of Management)

Date: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Gerard Coakley  
(Principal)

Date: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_

Date of next review: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX 1:**

### **Practical tips for building a positive school culture and climate**

The following are some practical tips for immediate actions that can be taken to help build a positive school culture and climate and to help prevent and tackle bullying behaviour

- Model respectful behaviour to all members of the school community at all times
- Explicitly teach pupils what respectful language and respectful behaviour looks like, acts like, sounds like and feels like in class and around the school
- Display key respect messages in classrooms, in assembly areas and around the school. Involve pupils in the development of these messages
- Catch them being good – notice and acknowledge desired respectful behaviour by providing positive attention
- Consistently tackle the use of discriminatory and derogatory language in the school – this includes homophobic and racist language and language that is belittling of pupils with a disability or SEN
- Give constructive feedback to pupils when respectful behaviour and respectful language are absent
- Have a system of encouragement and rewards to promote desired behaviour and compliance with the school rules and routines
- Explicitly teach pupils about the appropriate use of social media
- Positively encourage pupils to comply with the school rules on mobile phone and internet use
- Follow-up and follow through with pupils who ignore the rules
- Actively involve parents and/or the Parents' Association in awareness raising campaigns around social media
- Actively promote the right of every member of the school community to be safe and secure in school
- Highlight and explicitly teach school rules in pupil friendly language in the classroom and in common areas
- All staff can actively watch out for signs of bullying behaviour
- Ensure there is adequate playground/school yard/outdoor supervision
- School staff can encourage pupils/parents to help them to identify bullying 'hot spots' and 'hot times' for bullying in the school
  - Hot spots tend to be in the playground/school yard/outdoor areas, changing rooms, corridors and other areas of unstructured supervision
  - Hot times again tend to be times where there is less structured supervision such as when pupils are in the playground/school yard.



## Appendix 2.

***Bullying can take a number of forms. These may include any of the following (this list is not exhaustive):***

- **Repeated aggressive behaviour/attitude/body language, for example:**
  - Shouting and uncontrolled anger
  - Personal insults
  - Verbal abuse
  - Offensive language directed at an individual,
  - Continually shouting or dismissing others
  - Public verbal attacks/criticism
  - Domineering behaviour
  - Open aggression
  - Offensive gestures and unwanted physical contact such as poking, tripping, pushing, showing, punching, kicking.
- **Intimidation, either physical, psychological or emotional, for example:**
  - Treating in a dictatorial manner
  - Ridicule
  - Persistent slugging
  - Deliberate staring with the intent to discomfort
  - Persistent rudeness in behaviour and attitude toward a particular individual e.g facial expression which conveys aggression or dislike.
  - Asking inappropriate questions/making inappropriate comments re. personal life/family
  - Asking inappropriate questions/making inappropriate comments re. social life or schoolwork
- **Interference with property, for example:**
  - Stealing/damaging books or equipment
  - Stealing/damaging clothing or other property
  - Demanding money with menaces
  - Persistently moving, hiding or interfering with property
  - Marking/defacing property
- **Undermining/Public or Private Humiliation, for example:**
  - Condescending tone
  - Deliberately withholding significant information and resources
  - Writing of anonymous notes
  - Malicious, disparaging or demeaning comments
  - Malicious tricks/derogatory joke,
  - Knowingly spreading rumours
  - Belittling others' efforts, their enthusiasm or their new idea,
  - Derogatory or offensive nicknames (name-calling)
  - Using electronic or other media for any of the above (cyber bullying), which may be carried out through the use of I.C.T. such as text, social network sites, e-mail, I.M., apps, gaming sites, chat-rooms and other online technologies. Many forms of bullying can be facilitated through cyber bullying. For example a target may be sent homophobic text messages or pictures may be posted with negative comments about a persons sexuality, appearance, etc.
  - Disrespectfully mimicking a particular individual in his/her absence
  - Deliberately refusing to address issues focusing instead on the person

- **Ostracising or isolating, for example:**
  - Deliberately marginalising an individual
  - Deliberately preventing a person from joining a group
  - Deliberately preventing from joining in an activity, schoolwork-related or recreational
  - Blaming a pupil for things s/he did not do