

## **Anti-Bullying Policy for Corpus Christi GNS.**

At Corpus Christi G.N.S. we are committed to providing a caring, safe and friendly environment for all our pupils. Our mission statement is as follows ‘ Corpus Christi is a Catholic primary school where we strive to learn together in a happy and safe environment and where everyone is valued, respected and encouraged to do their best’ Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at our school. The school actively promotes an anti-bullying environment. We are a ‘telling school’ which means that pupils are encouraged to tell if they experience or witness bullying.

The stakeholders are committed to safeguarding the safety of all children in the school and to ensuring best practice in this area. This anti-bullying policy was revised during the school year 2004-2005 by a six person committee, comprising two members of the Board of Management, two members of the teaching staff and two parents’ representatives. It was formulated in accordance with the Education Act 1998 the Education Welfare Act 2003, Department of Education and Science guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour 1993, circular 20/90 and rule 130 of the rules for National Schools.

The following definition of bullying underlies our policy.

‘Bullying is repeated aggression, verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against others. While isolated incidents of aggressive behaviour cannot be condoned they may not constitute bullying. However when the behaviour is systematic and ongoing it is bullying.’

### **Aims of the Policy**

1. To raise awareness of bullying as form of unacceptable behaviour with school management, teaching and non- teaching staff, pupils and parents/guardians.
2. To create a school ethos which encourages children to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.
3. To develop procedures for investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.
4. To support those affected by bullying.
5. To ensure comprehensive supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of school activity are kept under observation.

In Corpus Christi G.N.S. programmes for the prevention of bullying are based on positive motivation. Pupils are actively encouraged to affirm, include and support one another. The ‘Stay Safe and ‘Walk Tall ‘programmes form part of the S.P.H.E. curriculum in the school. Lessons in these areas aim to develop team work, build assertiveness skills, improve co-operative skills, raise awareness of bullying, develop empathy and improve interpersonal skills. The ‘Alive-O’ Religious Education Programme which is used in all classes reinforces these skills. The following teaching methods are employed in the school as part of the anti-bullying policy;

- \*Direct teaching of appropriate behaviour.
- \* Talk and discussion.
- \*Role play.
- \*Circle time.
- \*Collaborative learning.
- \*Videos/Stories.
- \*Co-operative games.
- \*Active discouragement of seemingly harmless remarks/jeering of attributes.
- \*‘Friendship day / week’ to raise awareness of bullying.

Links are made with many other areas of the curriculum to raise and reinforce awareness of bullying as an unacceptable behaviour e.g. history, art, drama and literature. Other opportunities to promote the policy include monthly assemblies and religious services. A staff supervision rota is in place to ensure that the yard and corridors are supervised at break times. Pupils are closely monitored when moving around the school in class groups.

Research indicates that the types of bullying behaviours manifested in all girl schools may differ from those experienced in co-educational or all boys’ schools. They may be subtle and may not be physical. They may take the form of gesturing, social exclusion, extortion or verbal bullying. Pupils and staff are aware that these are unacceptable at this school.

### **Indication of Bullying behaviour. Signs and Symptoms**

Signs and symptoms of bullying may not always be physically evident. However parents or teachers need to investigate if a child displays any of the following signs:

1. Anxiety about travelling to or from school e.g. requesting parents to drive or collect her, changing route of travel, avoiding regular times for travelling to and from school.
2. Unwillingness to go to school or truancy.
3. Deterioration in educational performance, loss of concentration and loss of enthusiasm and interest in school.
4. Pattern of physical illnesses (headaches, stomach aches).
5. Unexplained changes in mood or behaviour. It may be particularly noticeable after weekends or more especially after longer school holidays.
6. Visible signs of distress-stammering, withdrawing, nightmares, difficulty in sleeping, crying, not eating, vomiting or bedwetting.
7. Spontaneous out of character comments about either pupils or teachers.
8. Possessions missing or damaged.
9. Increased requests for money or stealing money.
10. Unexplained bruising, cuts or damaged clothing.
11. Reluctance and or refusal to say what is troubling her.
12. Reluctance to answer the door or the phone.
13. Being nervous or jumpy when a text message is received.

These signs do not necessarily mean that a child is being bullied. If repeated or occurring in combination those signs do warrant investigation, in order to establish what is affecting her.

### **Procedures for Noting and Reporting Incidents.**

Pupils are encouraged to report all incidents of bullying. If parents have concerns that their child is being bullied they should inform the class teacher. Non teaching staff are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, to the teaching staff.

### **Procedures for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying.**

Mindful of the definition as outlined, all investigations will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of the child involved. Teachers will take a calm, unemotional, problem solving approach when dealing with all reports of bullying behaviour. It is imperative that nobody is criminalised and accused of bullying without a fair investigation. All incidents will be investigated outside the classroom situation.

1. All incidents will be investigated in the first instance by the class teacher.
2. The teacher will speak separately to those involved to get both sides of the story. Pupils will then be spoken to together to provide an opportunity for them to clarify their accounts. The teacher may also speak to others who have witnessed the events.
3. Details of the incident in terms of what happened, who was involved, how, where and when the incident took place will be examined by the teacher and if necessary will be noted in writing.
4. Any such written reports will be kept confidentially by the class teacher.
5. If appropriate and in certain circumstances those parties involved may be asked to write down their accounts of what happened.
6. Isolated incidents of aggression will be dealt with under the school code of discipline.
7. Serious bullying incidents will be referred on immediately to the principal or deputy principal.

If it is concluded that a pupil is engaged in bullying behaviour the following steps will be taken.

- . \* It will be made clear that she is in breach of the code of discipline and behaviour and that the bullying is expected to stop. A commitment will be sought to that end.
- Parents of the parties involved will be informed of incidents by the class teacher.
- If necessary parents of both parties will meet with the principal to discuss the matter.
- If unresolved, parents of the parties may be met by the principal and the chairperson of the Board of Management.

Every attempt will be made to reconcile the parties involved and to help them to understand each others point of view. However, should it be necessary to apply sanctions, those outlined in the code of behaviour will apply e.g.

- \* Reasoning with the pupil.
- \* Reprimand (including advice on how to improve).
- \* Temporary separation from peers or friends.
- \* Loss of privileges.
- \* Prescribing additional work.
- \* Communication with the principal.

In extreme cases suspension will be considered (initially for one day to a maximum of three days). Any referrals to outside agencies for individuals who need specific support will be made by the principal in consultation with the child's parents or guardians.

### **Evaluating the Policy.**

The anti-bullying policy is continually monitored and integrated into the daily life of the school. It is evaluated with the help of feedback from the staff, the pupils, parents/guardians and visitors to the school. The practical indicators of its success will include;

1. An adherence to and a promotion of the aims of the policy.
2. An increased understanding of what bullying is.
3. A reduction in any bullying incidents in the school.
4. An empowerment of students through the teaching of successful conflict resolution skills.

The policy applies to all staff and all pupils. The principal has overall responsibility for the monitoring of the policy but all staff, pupils, parents and guardians have an active role to play in its implementation and success. It will be fully implemented following its ratification by the Board of Management and will be reviewed in three years. Amendments may be made to the policy if deemed necessary.