

# **Caring for our Children**

## **Spiritual, Moral and Social Development**

Responsibility for the spiritual, moral and social development of the child rests with the parents. Teachers in Ballintubber National School are privileged to support and complement the work of parents in fulfilling their role in this regard.

The following are important aspects of this development:

**The Sacraments**

**Self-Esteem**

**Countering Bullying**

**Protecting our Children**

### **The Sacraments**

- The Sacraments of Confession, First Holy Communion and Confirmation are memorable occasions in the life of every primary school pupil. The children receive the sacraments of First Confession and First Holy Communion in second class and Confirmation in fifth or sixth class.
- Preparation for these Sacraments is very much a co-operative venture, with the teachers and the priests supporting the parents. The programme used is the “Alive-O” series. In the children’s book you will find a general introduction for parents and also notes for parents at the end of most lessons. These notes help you, the parents, to play your part in passing on the faith to your children.
- By way of preparing for these Sacraments, meetings for parents are held during which parents will have the opportunity to meet the school chaplain and teacher to share thoughts about the preparations for these important. Dates and locations for the various ceremonies are set in conjunction with the parish authorities and the local schools.

### **If you wish to withdraw your child from Religious Education**

Ballintubber National School is a co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Archbishop of Tuam, Dr. Michael Neary. We are proud of our Catholic faith and heritage and privileged to pass on the faith of our predecessors who through good and bad times remained committed to Christianity.

Our school has always exercised an inclusive approach to holistic education and always welcomed those of different and no faiths into our school community. Indeed, we embrace diversity as it brings opportunities for greater understanding and respect. We see our faith as a gift, and we are in no doubt of its benefits for our students as it offers a pathway towards their complete development as human beings. We recognise too that we only play a supportive role in the children’s faith formation as the primary responsibility lies with the parents. We thank all our parents for their acceptance of our Christian ethos and for their understanding of our faith practices when they enrol their children in our school.

We understand and respect that some parents might not wish for their children to partake in our sacraments and ceremonies. In trying to facilitate this diversity of choice, the Board of Management of the school has asked the teachers to change the R.E. class to the last 30 minutes of each day. If parents wish, they can take their children home at 1:10pm for the infant's class and 2:10pm for the rest of the school, if they do not want their children in R.E. class. We believe that this offers all parents the opportunity to decide freely on their preference for their children.

If you intend to withdraw your children early each day, then please contact the school principal, Mr. McConnell, for clarification on procedures and legalities. Please understand that we are a committed Catholic school and the ethos that pervades our daily programme is steeped in Christian values.

## **Self-Esteem and your Child**

More and more studies show that those who carry an inner picture of themselves as capable, generally manage well. If your experiences of life lead you to believe you are not a worthwhile person, then you face life and all its problems, large and small, at a disadvantage. This self-esteem picture we carry of ourselves is developed very early in childhood. To our children, parents are gods; they accept at face value everything you do and say. If, by your words and actions, you are continually giving signals that they are "lazy", "not to be trusted", "bold", then they are likely to believe you and act accordingly. Whether you mean it or not, everything you say and do to the child gives him/her messages.

It is an unfortunate fact that although we love and care for the children in our lives, we often tend to emphasise to them how they are not worthwhile. We are quicker to notice faults rather than merits.

Parents can have a positive effect on a child's self-esteem:

- By respecting him/her as an individual
- By being mannerly to him/her
- By encouraging responsibility, requiring him/her to finish tasks
- By giving recognition for effort rather than results
- By helping their child to see that making mistakes is part of the learning process
- By being reasonable in your expectations – each child is different
- By above all giving plenty of praise and attention

Finally, research indicates that only 10% of the population have high self-esteem. Most of us have middle to low levels and tend to pass this level to our children. We must try to be models for our children.

## **Countering Bullying**

### **Bullying:**

Bullying is a widespread phenomenon. It is recognised internationally that bullying behaviour is not confined to pupils and school alone; it is prevalent in society, in the workplace and in the home. Clearly any attempts to deal effectively with bullying will require the co-operation of all local agencies. The extent to which these agencies become involved is their prerogative, however, a positive response by the teaching staff of

Ballintubber National School is assured.

### **Definition:**

Bullying is repeated aggression verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group, against others. Such behaviour can involve name-calling, being threatened, being abused, either physically and/or psychologically. However, a clear distinction must be made between systematic, on-going bullying and isolated incidents of aggression.

### **Profile of a Bully:**

It is generally agreed and accepted that bullying is a learned behaviour. Pupils who bully tend to display an aggressive attitude. They can lack any sense of remorse. Often, they convince themselves that the victim deserves the treatment meted out. They are unaware of, or indifferent to the victim's feelings. Bullies seem to enjoy inflicting pain. It is noted that many bullies suffer from a lack of confidence and have low self-esteem.

### **Profile of the Victim:**

Any pupil, through no fault of his/her own, may be bullied. Pupils perceived to be different by virtue of attitude, dress or physical appearance are often subjected to hurtful and insulting remarks. The pupils who are most at risk of becoming victims are those who react in a vulnerable and distressed manner.

### **Prevention Strategy:**

- **School Ethos:** The likelihood of bullying taking place in a school is greatly reduced where the school atmosphere is one of trust, care and understanding, combined with a no-nonsense attitude to what is acceptable behaviour. Courtesy, consideration and mutual respect are the hallmarks of social interaction. In Ballintubber National School, a spirit of kindness, gentleness, tolerance and of peace guides our words and actions.

- **Awareness:** Children are made aware through classroom discussion, of the total unacceptability of bullying behaviour and of their responsibility for the safety and welfare of others. This includes accepting the need to report incidents of bullying for the benefit and safety of all. Bullying behaviour thrives in an atmosphere of uncertainty and secrecy. Children should come to understand that they are free to talk to their teachers or parents about bullying activity as it affects themselves or others.

- **Supervision:** A high level of supervision ensuring that all areas of pupil's activities are under observation must be in place. Clearly the co-operation and support of parents is essential, particularly in relation to behaviour in play areas.

### **Self-Esteem and a Sense of Self-Worth:**

These are crucial factors in developing the personal qualities and social skills that enable a child to relate effectively with his/her peers. By building up our children's sense of self-worth and guiding our children to respect themselves and others as individuals, we are reducing the possibility of them turning into bullies or of being bullied.

## **Procedures for dealing with bullying within the school**

When bullying is suspected, the following procedure will apply:

- All reports of bullying will be noted and investigated by the class teacher.
- Written accounts will be obtained by those involved.
- The class teacher will refer serious incidents to the principal.
- Parents of perpetrators and victims will be informed in writing of their children's behaviour.
- Procedures will follow that as laid out in the school's Code of Discipline.

We in Ballintubber National School have found that the response of parents has invariably proved to be positive and most effective. In most instances, with the class teacher acting as mediator, the matter has been resolved and the pupils involved have been reconciled.