2020-2021 IMPACT REPORT

FUSE Anti-Bullying and Online Safety Programme

November 2021

An initiative of:

DCU | Ionad Frithbhulaíochta Anti-Bullying Centre

UNESCO

Supported by:

FACEBOOK | RETHINK IRELAND

An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

A word of thanks

On behalf of DCU Anti-Bullying Centre and the FUSE team, I would like to express our thanks to the Primary and Post-Primary schools who engaged with the FUSE programme this year.

The past 18 months have been a challenging time for everyone. During this time, the Centre continued to build strong relationships with both new and existing partner schools, supporting them in their work to tackle bullying and raising awareness of online safety among school staff, students and parents respectively.

The FUSE team have had a busy summer, building on the existing workshops to enhance the primary and post-primary programme for 2021. These workshops are based on the most recent research and explore key topics such as understanding hate speech online, non-consensual image sharing and harmful communication.

With the support of our partnerships with Facebook, Rethink Ireland and the Department of Education, the FUSE Programme has been instrumental in helping to address the issue of bullying and online

safety in Irish school communities.

Given the context in which children are growing up in Ireland today in an increasingly digital environment and notwithstanding the challenges of Covid-19, there is renewed emphasis in schools on wellbeing and the promotion of mental health.

I hope this report conveys the benefits & positive impact that the FUSE programme has had on participating schools nationwide and reaffirms the importance of a national anti-bullying and online safety initiative which is accessible to all school communities across the country.

Darran Heaney

Project Manager,
DCU Anti-Bullying Centre

Addressing Bullying and Online Safety

Research conducted by DCU's Anti-Bullying Centre highlighted, that in Ireland, 1 in 3 teenagers have been bullied offline and 1 in 10 teenagers have been victimised online, to that end, national policy has sought to address this pressing issue.

Between 2013 and 2018, the Irish Government published a series of policy documents that included Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, an Action Plan for Online Safety, a Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice & Child Protection Policies for Primary and Post Primary schools.

However, research by the DCU Anti-Bullying Centre has evidenced that such policy developments need to be matched by resources that support schools in developing adequate responses to tackle bullying and to promote online safety among children and young people.

With over 25 years of dedicated research on this topic, the Centre was ideally placed to develop "FUSE" the first research based anti-bullying and online safety programme in Ireland.

FUSE and the Whole Education Approach

The word FUSE means: to blend or join to form one single entity. This reflects the overall goal of the programme, to connect everyone in the school community (young people, parents/guardians, school staff) to work together to tackle bullying and promote online safety to yield real and tangible impact.
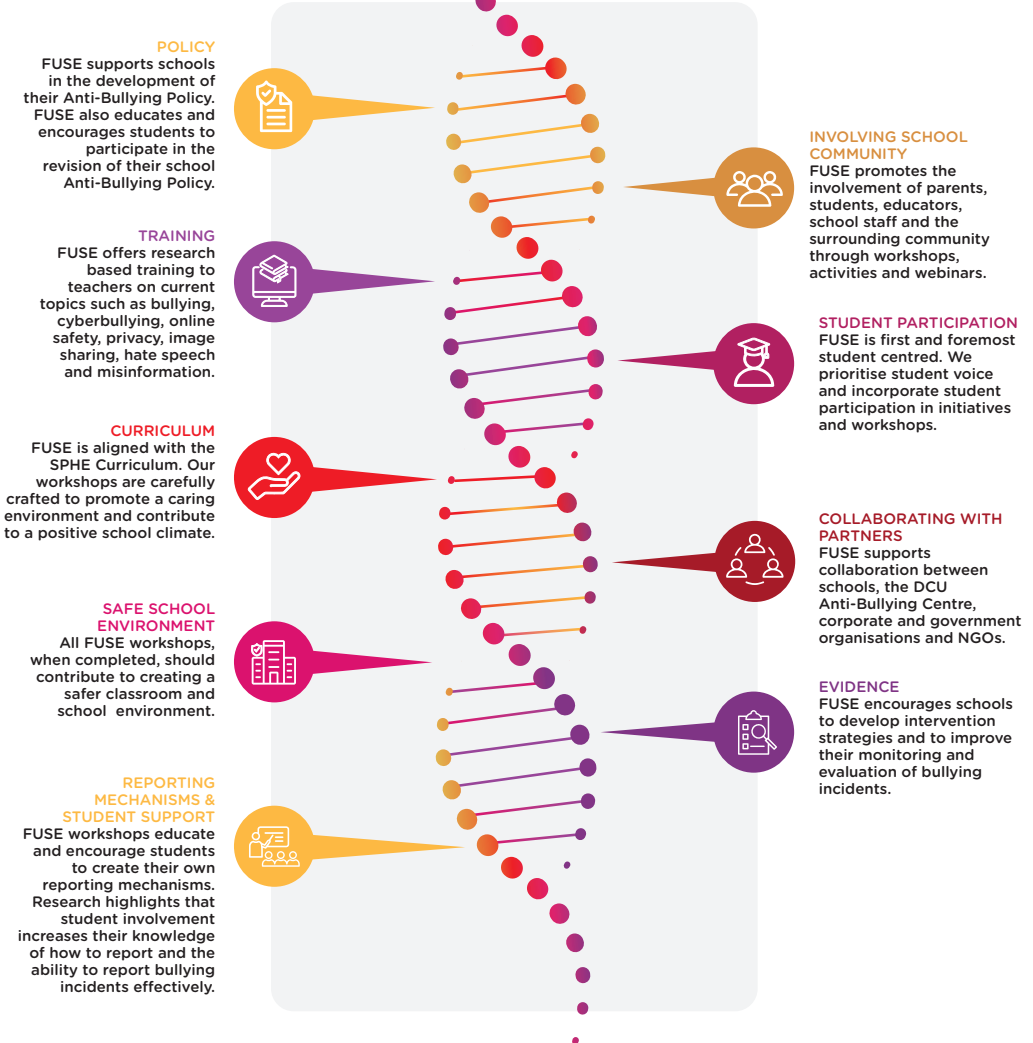
FUSE is designed as a suite of workshops to empower the school community to engage in open discussion and to build capacity within schools themselves to address bullying and online safety.

Research tells us that when school communities work together and are supported by the wider education system they can develop successful initiatives and strategies to tackle bullying and promote online safety.

The FUSE programme is evidence based, underpinned by UNESCO's Whole Education Approach, which recognises the importance of the interconnectedness of the local school with the wider education system, community, and society.

UNESCO'S WHOLE EDUCATION APPROACH & FUSE

POLICY
FUSE supports schools in the development of their Anti-Bullying Policy. FUSE also educates and encourages students to participate in the revision of their school Anti-Bullying Policy.

TRAINING
FUSE offers research based training to teachers on current topics such as bullying, cyberbullying, online safety, privacy, image sharing, hate speech and misinformation.

CURRICULUM
FUSE is aligned with the SPHE Curriculum. Our workshops are carefully crafted to promote a caring environment and contribute to a positive school climate.

SAFE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT
All FUSE workshops, when completed, should contribute to creating a safer classroom and school environment.

REPORTING MECHANISMS & STUDENT SUPPORT
FUSE workshops educate and encourage students to create their own reporting mechanisms. Research highlights that student involvement increases their knowledge of how to report and the ability to report bullying incidents effectively.

INVOLVING SCHOOL COMMUNITY
FUSE promotes the involvement of parents, students, educators, school staff and the surrounding community through workshops, activities and webinars.

STUDENT PARTICIPATION
FUSE is first and foremost student centred. We prioritise student voice and incorporate student participation in initiatives and workshops.

COLLABORATING WITH PARTNERS
FUSE supports collaboration between schools, the DCU Anti-Bullying Centre, corporate and government organisations and NGOs.

EVIDENCE
FUSE encourages schools to develop intervention strategies and to improve their monitoring and evaluation of bullying incidents.

ENGAGEMENT WITH THE FUSE PROGRAMME IN 2020/2021

PRIMARY AND POST PRIMARY

12,000 STUDENTS
439 TEACHERS
120 SCHOOLS
570 TEACHER TRAINING HOURS

POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS ACROSS 26 COUNTIES IN REPUBLIC OF IRELAND PARTICIPATED IN THE FUSE PROGRAMME

70% CO-EDUCATIONAL SCHOOLS

59% IN URBAN AREAS

41% IN RURAL AREAS

DATA DRIVEN INSIGHTS ON FUSE IMPACT

IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS OF STUDENT PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK ON THE IMPACT OF FUSE POST PROGRAMME COMPLETION SHOWS THAT IT IS BOTH SUCCESSFUL AND EFFECTIVE IN EMPOWERING POST-PRIMARY STUDENTS TO TACKLE BULLYING AND IMPROVE ONLINE SAFETY.

83.1% REPORTED INCREASED CONFIDENCE IN THEIR ABILITY TO NOTICE IF SOMEONE WAS TRYING TO BULLY THEM.

79.9% REPORTED INCREASED CONFIDENCE IN THEIR ABILITY TO RECOGNISE THE NEED TO TELL SOMEONE.

78.5% REPORTED INCREASED CONFIDENCE TO SPEAK OUT ABOUT BULLYING.

82.5% NOW KNOW WHO TO ASK FOR HELP.

STUDENT ATTITUDES TO ONLINE SAFETY FOLLOWING PARTICIPATION IN FUSE

81.3% REPORTED INCREASED CONFIDENCE IN THEIR ABILITY TO NOTICE IF SOMEONE WAS TRYING TO HARASS/BULLY THEM ONLINE

78.1% REPORTED INCREASED CONFIDENCE IN THEIR ABILITY TO RECOGNISE THE NEED TO TELL SOMEONE.

77.2% REPORTED INCREASED CONFIDENCE TO SPEAK OUT REGARDING ONLINE SAFETY/ BULLYING.

81.5% NOW KNOW WHO TO ASK FOR HELP TO TACKLE ONLINE SAFETY/CYBERBULLYING.

Snapshot of Student Feedback
regarding the FUSE Programme

"

FUSE is a good opportunity to learn about bullying and online safety

The FUSE modules were very enjoyable and allowed time to unwind and just talk and interact with your class.

A fun and creative way to learn about bullying

The programme is a great way to understand the importance of speaking out about bullying

A very educational and enjoyable experience

FUSE helped open my eyes to bullying online and in-person and know how and who to ask for help

The FUSE programme expanded my knowledge and understanding of bullying and internet safety. This is really useful now as we spend an average of 4 and a half hours a day on our phone.

"

Snapshot of Teacher Feedback
regarding the FUSE Programme

"

I have to say that this is an excellent programme - it really struck a note with the students, they engaged fully and students were capable of a good discussion

The FUSE Anti-Bullying programme was well received by both our SPHE teachers and the 2nd year students - both teachers and students alike found the videos very helpful and they have encouraged discussion and debate.

The FUSE programme is a brilliant resource that should be utilised in all schools.

"

The FUSE Programme

A Primary School's Perspective

Lesley Cahill is Principal of Springdale National school, a mixed primary school in Dublin 5. There are 226 pupils in the school, from Junior Infants to 6th Class. The school first engaged in the FUSE Programme in 2019, following a FUSE training session. The programme began in 4th class to 6th class and delivery of FUSE began in the classroom and was completed online through Zoom due to school closures as a result of the pandemic.

With research showing that currently, in Ireland 1 in 3 children experience offline bullying and 1 in 10 experience some form of online bullying, how does this impact on schools?

A major problem in school is the fact that a lot of offline bullying can often go unnoticed. 'A fully loaded look' or 'nasty comment' will not be spotted in the busy playground. While other children might be aware that it is happening, they may not always know how to respond or have the confidence to tell an adult about the bullying incident. As a result become silent bystanders.

Although online bullying may not take place in school, the impact is evident in the classroom and yard. Often conversations take place in school following online bullying and children become very upset. As well as this, children who were completely unaware that they were targets of such behaviour are often informed of it in the school. For example, the child who has no device may not be aware that a group was making comments about him/her online until someone in the group informs him/her the following day.

What was your school's existing approach to bullying prevention and awareness? Why did taking part in FUSE appeal to you?

Our existing approach was teaching the children to talk to a trusted adult if they were being bullied or aware of anyone else being bullied. We also teach them about the difference between being an 'upstander' and a 'bystander'. As ours is a small school this approach has worked well in the past. However, taking part in FUSE appealed to us because of the training offered and the lesson plans and resources provided. It gave teachers a concrete plan to work with and supported our existing approach to tackle bullying and online safety.

How have you found the FUSE Programme so far?

Both children and staff have found the FUSE programme beneficial. Staff felt it was easy to follow and found the resources very useful. In evaluation of the programme, they reported that the programme was age appropriate pitched for middle to senior classes. They found that the fact that children's voices were used helped children to relate to the characters and empathise with them.

The FUSE Programme

A Post-Primary School's Perspective

Aine Flanagan is an art and learning support teacher with Sacred Heart Secondary School (CEIST - Catholic Education An Irish Schools' Trust) all girls school in Clonakilty Co. Cork, with 544 students enrolled. Aine delivers the FUSE programme to all second years since 2019, as a wellbeing module which ties in nicely with the Junior Cycle wellbeing hours.

The school strives to exercise justice and fairness in their structures and behaviour management strategies and to be consultative in their decision making. This is their belief and value system.

With research showing that 1 in 3 children in Ireland today experience offline bullying and 1 in 10 experiencing some form of online bullying, how does this impact on schools today?

Technology, specifically social media is a juggerknot that is increasing with new platforms popping up each year - Whatsapp, Tik Tok, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Vscos, Snapchat etc thus increasing the opportunities to bully online. Now more than ever we need support and resources, like FUSE, in our schools around cyberbullying.

Bullying has a ripple effect, impacting the students' attendance, school work, relationships, mental health and self-esteem. Cyberbullying can go unnoticed for a long time and often it is only when the target begins to show the consequences of the bullying outwardly, that others around them start to notice.

What is your school's existing approach to bullying prevention and awareness? And why did taking part in FUSE appeal to you?

Sacred Heart has recently updated their bullying policy and code of behaviour, the policy and code of behaviour have been added to the school journal, parents and students sign this page at the start of every year.

The school provides peer mentors for first years, the mentors check in with the first years regularly, their photos and names are provided within the journal. After delivering the FUSE programme we saw the importance of the role of an active bystander. This prompted the school to dedicate a page on this in school journals, right beside the page on reporting.

Bullying is tackled in SPHE classes however we felt students needed a more targeted approach. FUSE addresses bullying head on. It also links in nicely with wellbeing hours that need to be delivered within the junior cycle.

How have you found the FUSE Programme so far?

I found the FUSE programme very enjoyable to deliver as it engaged with real life issues the students are facing, which led to interesting and interactive classes. My own knowledge on the subjects of bullying and online safety has increased. I now value the role of a bystander exponentially - the bystander can support the bully by being an active audience or they can be supportive of the victim.

FUSE made classes easy to deliver as they provided lesson plans, PowerPoints and worksheets. The resources provided in the programme are both informative and interactive, they get the students to engage in discussions and offer up their thoughts and opinions.

A Centre of Anti-Bullying and Online Safety Expertise

The DCU Anti-Bullying Centre (ABC) is a University designated research centre located in Dublin City University Institute of Education. The Centre has a global reputation as a leader in the field of Bullying and Online Safety.

It holds the prestigious UNESCO chair in tackling bullying in schools and cyberspace and the Irish Research Observatory on Cyberbullying, Cyberhate and Online Harassment. Over the past 25 years , the reserchers, scholars and academics at the Centre were the first in Ireland to conduct research on school, workplace, homophobic and cyberbullying. The aim of the Centre is to contribute to solving the real-world problems of bullying and online safety through collaboration

with an extensive community of academic and industry partners. The extent of our resources and the collaboration between disciplines drive quality education, understanding and innovation in this field.

The objectives of the Centre are aligned to support the UN's overarching goal to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030 (SDG4) and support the implementation of the Government of Ireland's Action Plan on Bullying (2013), Action Plan for Online Safety (2018-2019), Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice (2018-2024), and the WRC/HSA Joint Code of Practice on the Prevention and Resolution of Bullying at Work (2021).

James O'Higgins Norman

Director, ABC Prof.

Prof. James O'Higgins Norman is a clinical sociologist with interests in school bullying, cyberbullying and online safety. He is a Professor of Sociology and holds the prestigious UNESCO Chair on Tackling Bullying in Schools and Cyberspace at DCU, where he is also Director of the DCU Anti-Bullying Centre. James is a co-founding Editor-in-Chief of the International Journal on Bullying Prevention and in 2019 he was Chair of the World Anti-Bullying Forum. In 2018, he was appointed as a member of the Government of Ireland's National Advisory Council on Online Safety.

Darran Heaney

Project Manager

As the Project Manager, Darran Heaney leads the FUSE team ensuring programme goals are met and is responsible for planning, overseeing and leading the project from ideation through to completion. Darran has over fifteen years' experience in Event and Project Management, Marketing and Public Relations and holds an MSc in Education & Training Management from DCU.

Aikaterini Sargioti

Research Assistant, FUSE

Aikaterini Sargioti is a Research Assistant for FUSE. She has a Bachelor's Degree in Primary Education (BEd) and a Master of Science (MSc) in Educational Sciences with a specialism in natural sciences in education. Aikaterini's field of expertise is research methodology and quantitative data analysis. She leads all aspects of data collection for FUSE and areas that require specialized data analysis techniques.

Paloma Viejo Otero

Post-Doctoral Researcher

Paloma is a Postdoctoral Researcher at FUSE. As an experienced researcher & practitioner, Paloma ensures that intervention methods prescribed in FUSE have a solid research foundation, and that such research is adaptable for students and operational for school frontliners. Paloma has undertaken a PhD in DCU, where she has researched Hate Speech in Social Media. She obtained her MPhil in Race, Ethnicity and Conflict from Trinity College Dublin, and holds a MA in Culture Studies and Arts Management from the Instituto de Investigación Ortega y Gasset, Spain.

Colm Canning

Education Officer

Colm is an Education Officer on the FUSE Programme with responsibility for supporting all post-primary schools engaging in the programme. Colm also designs and delivers training for teachers, parents and students, and coordinates the Centre's social media channels, creating and sharing content. Colm is a graduate of the University of Limerick, with a Bachelor of Science in Sport and Exercise Sciences (2018). Colm also holds a Masters in Work & Organisational Behaviour Psychology 2020.

Angela Kinahan

Education Officer

Angela is an Education Officer on the FUSE team sharing responsibility for the development of training resources and engagement with schools nationwide. Prior to joining the FUSE team, Angela provided project administration support to the Lead PIs in the Centre on a number of projects including: those focused on identifying the prevalence & impact of bullying amongst Roma Children and ethnic minorities in schools in Ireland and Cyprus and another on the use of Artificial Intelligence based bullying interventions as a mechanism for preventing cyberbullying and online harassment against young people. Angela was recently awarded a Distinction in both Business Management and Communications.

For schools who wish to participate in the FUSE Programme this year (2021/2022), please visit the FUSE website at:

www.antibullyingcentre.ie/fuse

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