

## **Dignity at Work: Building & Maintaining a Positive & Effective Work Environment** (Reviewed: April / May 2021)

### **Introduction:**

This policy was originally drafted in 2003 and was reviewed by the staff as part of our Croke Park Hours Schedule in 2013, 2017 and now again in April / May 2021, in consultation with officers of the Parents' Association and the Board of Management.

The Board of Management of Scoil Náisiúnta Chaisleáin Uí Liatháin recognises that all employees have the right to a workplace free from harassment and is fully committed to ensuring that all employees are able to enjoy that right. There is a responsibility on all employees to ensure a workplace free from harassment for all other employees and to be aware of this policy.

Any complaint of harassment shall be fully and properly investigated and, if substantiated, will be regarded as grounds for disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. An attempt will be made to resolve the complaint informally in the first instance but if this is not possible, a formal procedure will be invoked. Confidentiality will be insured, insofar as is possible, at all times during the investigation for all parties involved.

The policy is formulated in light of a number of background documents, including the Health & Safety Authority's Code of Practice for Employers and Employees on the Prevention and Resolution of Bullying at Work (2007) and the Equality Authority's Code of Practice, given legal effect in the Statutory Instrument entitled, Employment Equality Act 1998 (Code of Practice) Harassment Order 2002 (S.I. No. 78 of 2002).

This policy is intrinsically linked to our Wellbeing Policy (which is currently being developed).

### **Core Principles of this Policy**

This school is committed to a positive work environment where work is done in an atmosphere of respect, collaboration, openness and equality. Adult bullying and harassment in the workplace are phenomena which this school will seek to prevent and will not tolerate. All employees have the right to be treated with dignity and respect. Management is committed to intervening in an appropriate manner, utilising one of the accepted Management / INTO procedures to investigate and deal with allegations of bullying or harassment. The provisions of Circular 40/97 on Assaults on Staff in Primary Schools will be utilised as appropriate.

### **What is Workplace Bullying and Harassment**

The Board of Management adopts the definition of adult bullying as set out by the Task Force (2001). "Workplace bullying is repeated inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more person(s) against another or others, at the place of work and / or in the course of employment, which could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individual's right to dignity at work. An isolated incident of the behaviour described in this definition may be an affront to dignity at work but, as a once off incident, is not considered to be bullying".

Harassment is covered by Employment Equality legislation and is based on a person's standing within one of the nine categories (or grounds) specified in that legislation, (i) gender (ii) marital status (iii) family status (iv) age (v) disability (vi) race (vii) sexual orientation (viii) religious belief (ix) member of the Traveller community. Harassment is defined in law as "*unwanted conduct*" related to one or more of the discriminatory grounds which "has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the person". It is recognised that bullying and harassment complaints may arise among work colleagues but may also arise in relation to visitors to the school. In either case, the commitment to a positive workplace, where dignity at work is respected, prevails.

It is agreed that we will all work to make this school a good place to work. A good place to work has a positive work environment characterised by:

- A supportive atmosphere;
- Good and open communication (e.g. through opportunities at regular staff meetings etc);
- Appropriate interpersonal behaviour / relationships;
- Collaboration;
- Open discussion and resolution of conflict;
- Recognition, feedback and affirmation as appropriate;
- Fair treatment of all staff (including fair systems of selection and promotion in line with agreed procedures).

Every person has a responsibility to play his / her part in contributing to a positive work environment. In this regard, a person who is a witness or bystander has a clear responsibility to raise concerns about dignity at work and threats to this, in an appropriate and timely manner.

The Safety Statement as mandated under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 will also include a commitment to a positive work environment in light of the Employer's obligations as outlined at Section 8 of that Act, including the duty to manage work activities in such a way to prevent "*improper conduct or behaviour*" likely to put health and safety at risk. It is agreed that the adoption of this policy in our school will be accompanied by a number of steps to examine our work environment and as necessary, to agree changes which reflect a commitment to dignity at work. These steps will be initiated by management and be repeated by way of review at appropriate intervals. The actions to be undertaken may generally be described as Identification, Assessment, Implementing Strategies and Monitoring.

## **Adult Bullying as a Problem**

Our school recognises that adult bullying and harassment are problems where they occur in any workplace. Bullying behaviour generally amounts to psychological abuse which causes serious pain and suffering. Studies have shown that any person may become a target, irrespective of their personality or ability. In addition to its unacceptable effects on persons who are its targets, workplace bullying and harassment is extremely detrimental to organisational effectiveness.

Bullying may include behaviours such as:

- Verbal abuse / insults, undermining remarks;
- Excessive monitoring of work;
- Withholding work-related information;
- Exclusion with negative consequences.

Such behaviours need not and should not be part of a workplace. This policy aims to ensure that a positive environment prevents such behaviours from occurring. Where bullying or harassment does occur, or is alleged to have occurred, there are means of tackling it through the agreed procedure.

## **What happens if there is an allegation of bullying or harassment**

Without prejudice to an individual's right to take such advice or steps as they themselves may decide, the Board of Management will take seriously, any allegations of workplace bullying or harassment.

Supportive and effective procedures, in accordance with nationally agreed practice, are in place in this school. These procedures to address and investigate allegations will focus on the earliest possible resolution, will proceed as necessary from informal to formal stages and will have an emphasis on confidentiality.

Any employee who feels he / she has been harassed or bullied should, in the first instance, ask the perpetrator to stop. Where this form of action is unsuccessful, the employee may report the matter to any of the following- the principal, INTO staff representative or teacher nominee of the Board of Management.

Attempts will be made to resolve the matter informally, if appropriate. If it is not possible to resolve the matter informally, a formal complaints' procedure shall be applied, incorporating the following steps:

1. A written report to the Board of Management should be made by the complainant or an authorised person to whom the complaint is being made and signed by the complainant;
2. The complaint will be investigated with minimum delay as confidentially as possible by two individuals named by the Board of Management, one of whom shall be the same gender as the complainant, if so requested. Due respect shall be had for the rights of the complainant and the alleged perpetrator;
3. Both parties may be accompanied / represented at all interviews / meetings held and these shall be recorded;
4. Where a complaint is found to be substantiated, the extent and the nature of the harassment will determine the form of action to be taken. These actions may include a verbal warning, a written warning, suspension from some duties with or without pay, suspension from full duties with or without pay or dismissal;
5. Where an employee is victimised as a result of invoking or participating in any aspect of the complaints' procedure, including acting as a witness for another employee, such behaviour will also be subject to disciplinary action.

No record of any complaint will be registered on an employee's file unless the formal procedure outlined above has been invoked.

It is the policy of the school that issues of harassment are best dealt with within the school. However, no aspect of this policy affects any employee's individual legal rights to take their complaint outside of the school.

The document, "Working Together - Procedures and Policies for Positive Staff Relations" (INTO) has been adopted as part of this school's Dignity at Work Policy.

Please see the following link for a copy of this document or a copy is available in the school office on request: <https://www.into.ie/app/uploads/2019/07/WorkingTogether.pdf>

### **Summary**

The Board of Management has a duty of care towards employees. Similarly, employees have a duty towards one another. This policy seeks to set out principles and practices to support the exercise of that duty in our school.

Just as inappropriate and undermining behaviour among work colleagues is taken seriously, so is such behaviour when perpetrated against an employee of this school by any other person.

Together, we are committed to building and maintaining a work environment where respectful, open and equal relationships are the norm.

In summary, we are committed to having a good place to work where everybody feels safe and secure.

This policy was reviewed by the staff of the school as part of Croke Park Hours Schedule in April 2021, in consultation with officers of the Parents' Association and Board of Management.

It will be reviewed again in the 2023 / 2024 school year, as per as the school's "3 Year Policy Development / Review Plan", or prior to that if it is deemed necessary.

This policy was reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management in May 2021.