

**Scoil Oilibhéir Naofa
Junior Primary School
Bettystown
Co Meath**



**DIGNITY IN THE
WORKPLACE
POLICY**



**Roll Number: 20216L
Principal: Maria White
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Dignity at Work:

Building & Maintaining a Positive & Effective Work Environment

The Board of Management of **Scoil Oilibhéir Naofa** has adopted this policy in **September 2024**, following consultation with all staff members.

Introduction

The Board of Management of Scoil Oilibhéir Naofa recognises that the creation of a work environment where all employees feel valued, recognised and safe, and can work in an atmosphere of respect and collaboration is central to the delivery of the highest possible quality of service to the school community. The promotion and maintenance of the dignity of all staff and respect for diversity plays a key role in ensuring this environment.

The Dignity at Work Policy aims to provide a safe working environment for all employees which recognises their right to be treated with dignity and respect and which is free from all forms of bullying, harassment and sexual harassment.

Purpose

In achieving its aims, the Policy has a strong preventative focus, which emphasises the duties of all employees and leadership to create and maintain a working environment in which everyone is treated with dignity, courtesy and respect and diversity is valued. Where complaints of bullying, harassment or sexual harassment occur, the Policy aims to ensure that all parties will be treated with fairness, sensitivity, respect and confidentiality, and with due regard to the rights of all parties, using both informal and formal procedures.

The Policy recognises the importance of early intervention in managing complaints of bullying, harassment and sexual harassment. A key objective is to ensure that all reasonable efforts are made to deal with complaints at local level, informally where appropriate. The Policy promotes mediation as an essential tool in resolving complaints. Mediation is a voluntary process that can be entered into at any stage of the complaints management process and will be actively encouraged from the earliest stage possible where appropriate.

The Policy provides a framework in which complaints of bullying, harassment and sexual harassment will be taken seriously and will be followed through to resolution, and in which employees who make a complaint or those who support such employees, will not be victimised. Where complaints are upheld, appropriate action will be taken which may include disciplinary action or other appropriate sanctions. Vexatious or malicious complaints may also lead to disciplinary action or other appropriate sanctions.

The Policy will be reviewed two years after its implementation and thereafter every three years. The Policy will be reviewed at an earlier stage as circumstances or legislation require.

Shared Understanding

Bullying, harassment and sexual harassment may have a devastating effect on the health, confidence, morale and performance of those subjected to such behaviours. They may also have serious effects for those who are accused, wrongly or otherwise, and for those who witness such actions or have knowledge of them.

Workplace bullying and harassment adversely affect the quality of service by undermining employee morale and can result in absenteeism, stress-related illnesses, higher turnover of staff and litigation.

Legislative Base

- The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 obliges an employer to provide a safe working environment as far as is reasonably practicable which is free from bullying and harassment.
- The Employment Equality Acts 1998 -2015 prohibit sexual harassment and harassment on the nine discriminatory grounds.
- The Dignity at Work Policy is an essential control measure for organisations in meeting their statutory health and safety obligations with regard to preventing and managing risks associated with the hazards of bullying, harassment and sexual harassment in the workplace.

Collective Responsibility

Employers and Employees have specific duties under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 directly or indirectly related to preventing, managing and controlling the risks arising from bullying, harassment and sexual harassment.

These include but are not limited to:

Employer Responsibilities:

- Manage and conduct work activities in such a way as to prevent, so far as is reasonably practicable, any improper conduct or behaviour likely to put the safety, health or welfare at work of their employees at risk (Section 8 (2) (b));
- Provide the information, instruction, training and supervision necessary to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health, and welfare at work of their employees (Section 8 (g));
- Identify the hazards in the place of work under their control, assess the risks presented by those hazards and be in possession of a written assessment (known as a “risk assessment”) of the risks to the safety, health and welfare at work of their employees, including the safety, health and welfare of any single employee or group or groups of employees who may be exposed to any unusual or other risks under the relevant statutory provisions (Section 19(1));
- Prepare, or ask to be prepared, a written statement (to be known and referred to in this Act as a “safety statement”), based on the identification of the hazards and the risk assessment carried out under section 19, specifying the manner in which the safety, health and welfare at work of their employees shall be secured and managed (Section 20(1)).

Employee Responsibilities

- Co-operate with their employer or any other person so far as is necessary to enable their employer or the other person to comply with the relevant statutory provisions, as appropriate (Section 13 (d));
- Not engage in improper conduct or other behaviour that is likely to endanger their own safety, health and welfare at work or that of any other person (Section 13 (e));
- Attend such training and, as appropriate, undergo such assessment as may reasonably be required by their employer or as may be prescribed relating to safety, health and welfare at work or relating to the work carried out by the employee (Section 13(f))

Scope

The Policy applies to all employees working in Scoil Oilibhéir Naofa

The Policy aims to protect employees at work from bullying, harassment and sexual harassment by other staff/managers and from other persons with whom they come into contact in the course of their work.

Bullying, harassment and sexual harassment activities involve actions and behavioural patterns, directly or indirectly, spoken and/or written and could include the use of cyber or digital means. The definitions of bullying, harassment and sexual harassment are set out in Section XX. The intention of the person engaging in the unwelcome behaviour is irrelevant; the effect of the behaviour on the employee concerned is what is important.

What is Workplace Bullying and Harassment?

Definition:

Workplace bullying is repeated inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons 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.

Typical Bullying Behaviours

Behaviours which makes for a bullying pattern will likely include not just one but a range of behaviours, including:

- Exclusion with negative consequence
- Verbal abuse/insults
- Being treated less favourably than colleagues in similar roles
- Belittling a person's opinion
- Disseminating malicious rumours, gossip or innuendo
- Socially excluding or isolating a person within the work sphere
- Intrusion - pestering, spying or stalking
- Intimidation/aggressive interactions
- Excessive monitoring of work
- Withholding information necessary for proper performance of a person's job
- Repeatedly manipulating a person's job content and targets
- Blaming a person for things beyond their control
- Use of aggressive and obscene language.

Examples of Behaviours that are not bullying include:

- Ordinary performance management.

- Offering constructive feedback, guidance, or advice about work-related behaviour which is not of itself welcome.
- Expressing differences of opinion strongly.
- Appropriate engagement on role change.
- Reasonable corrective action taken by an employer relating to the management and direction of employees. For example managing a worker's performance/conduct/attendance, taking reasonable disciplinary actions, or assigning work.
- Workplace conflict where people disagree or disregard the others' point of view.

Harassment

- Harassment may be targeted at one employee or a group of employees.
- Harassment may consist of a single incident or repeated inappropriate behaviour.
- The following are examples of inappropriate behaviour which may constitute harassment. These examples of harassment are illustrative but not exhaustive:
 - Verbal harassment, e.g. jokes, derogatory comments, ridicule or song
 - Written harassment, e.g. graffiti, faxes, text messages, emails, social media or internet posts
 - Physical harassment, e.g. jostling, shoving or any form of assault
 - Intimidatory harassment, e.g. gestures or threatening poses
 - Visual displays, e.g. posters, emblems or badges
 - Persistent negative body language
 - Excessive monitoring of work
 - Isolation or exclusion from social activities
 - Unreasonably changing a person' job content or targets.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment relates to the gender ground under the Employment Equality Acts 1998 to 2015 and is any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature 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.

Managing Complaints

- Agreed national procedures
- The BOM will respond sensitively to complaints raised, aiming to resolve matters informally at an early stage.
- Mediation will be actively encouraged.
- The parties to a complaint will be expected to continue with their normal duties and maintain a professional working relationship during the course of the complaint management process including investigation. In certain circumstances alternative arrangements may be considered, for example to discharge the employer's duties to protect the safety, health and welfare of relevant parties.

- Confidentiality of all parties will be maintained to the maximum extent possible, taking into account the requirements of natural justice and fair procedures. Breaches of confidentiality may be addressed through the disciplinary procedure.
- All parties will be offered supports throughout the process
- Complaints which are upheld may lead to disciplinary action.
- Complaints which are found to have been made maliciously or vexatiously at any stage of the procedures may lead to disciplinary action.

Roles and Responsibilities

Employees have responsibility to:

- Comply with their duties under the Safety Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 including to not engage in improper conduct, endangering their own or another's health and to cooperate with their employer in its efforts to carry out its health and safety responsibilities
- Treat everyone they encounter in the course of their work with courtesy, dignity and respect and ensure that their behaviour does not cause offence.
- Make themselves aware of this Policy, and the options which are available to them if they are subjected to, or accused of, bullying, harassment or sexual harassment.
- Cooperate with the provisions of the Policy in terms of the prevention measures (e.g. attending training) and in the management of complaints, both in the informal and formal procedures.
- Continue to work as normal where directly involved in a complaint, unless otherwise advised.
- Not engage in victimisation, intimidation or hostility towards an alleged perpetrator of bullying, harassment or sexual harassment, or a complainant.
- Maintain confidentiality where directly involved or aware of a complaint of bullying, harassment or sexual harassment.

Senior Leadership has responsibility to:

- Comply with responsibilities under the health and safety legislation in terms of preventing improper conduct; conducting risk assessments and the identification and management of controls where bullying and harassment have been identified as hazards in the workplace; and facilitating their inclusion in site specific safety statements.
- Implement this Policy and make every effort to create a positive work environment where diversity is valued and ensure that bullying and harassment do not occur in their areas of work.
- Set a good example by treating all employees and any other person with whom they come into contact in the course of their work with dignity and respect and ensure that their behaviour does not cause offence.
- Foster a positive, supportive work environment, where good communication, support and mutual respect are the norm.
- Implement good people management and supervision systems. Be vigilant to team members' behaviour. Where inappropriate behaviour is observed on the part of any team member, act promptly and address the behaviour with the individual.
- Deal promptly and effectively with any incidents of bullying or harassment of which they are aware or ought to be aware.

- Respond sensitively to any employee who makes a complaint of bullying or harassment.
- Respond promptly and discreetly to requests from employees to intervene and seek to resolve the matter informally where appropriate.
- Explain the Policy to all employees and ensure that they understand their roles and responsibilities and how the complaints procedure operates. Revisit the Policy in team meetings, reminding staff of their obligations.
- Encourage the use of mediation as a means of resolving complaints from early in the complaint management process and throughout the process where appropriate.
- Explain the Policy and complaints procedure to new employees as part of their induction.
- Promote awareness of and communicate the Policy to non-employees.
- Ensure that an employee is not victimised for making a complaint of bullying or harassment in good faith, and that there is not victimisation or retaliation against any other party or witness.
- Monitor and follow up after a complaint is made so that the behaviour complained of does not reoccur.

Summary

Management has a duty of care towards employees. Similarly, employees have a duty of care towards one another. 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.

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.