



Dignity at Work Policy

The Board of Management of Skerries Educate Together NS has adopted this policy on 26th January 2023 following consultation with all staff members.

The policy is formulated in light of the Labour Relations Commission's Codes of Practice S.I. No.17/2002 and S.I. 208/2012 for addressing bullying in the workplace and harassment/sexual harassment respectively, together with the Health & Safety Authority Code of Practice (2007) and the INTO "Working Together" document (2000), on the prevention and resolution of conflict at work.

A. Core principles of this policy

This school is committed to a positive work environment where work is carried out in an atmosphere of respect, collaboration, openness and equality.

Adult bullying and harassment will not be tolerated by this school. All employees have the right to be treated with dignity and respect. School 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 DES Circulars 61/2017 and 62/2017 with respect to the assault of teachers and SNAs will apply, as appropriate.

B. What is workplace bullying?

The Board of Management defines adult bullying as 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.

A key characteristic of bullying is that it usually takes place over a period of time, it is regular and persistent inappropriate behaviour, which is specifically targeted at one employee or a group of employees.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of examples of types of behaviour that may constitute bullying:

- Verbal abuse/insults, undermining remarks
- Exclusion with negative consequences
- Intimidation
- Aggression
- Humiliation, ridicule, belittling efforts

- Excessive monitoring of work
- Withholding work-related information

Examples of what is **not** bullying:

- An isolated incident of inappropriate behaviour may be an affront to a person's dignity at work but, as a once-off incident, is not considered to be bullying;
- Fair and constructive criticism of an employee's performance, conduct or attendance that is made directly to the employee and not to a third party;
- Reasonable and essential discipline arising from the appropriate management of the performance of an employee at work;
- Legitimate management responses in crisis situations which require immediate action;
- Reasonable instructions issued by a manager, assignment of normal duties or relating to terms and conditions of employment.

C. What is workplace harassment?

Harassment is any form of unwanted conduct related, but not limited to, any of the following **nine grounds**:

1. Gender
2. Civil status
3. Family status
4. Sexual orientation
5. Religious belief
6. Age
7. Disability
8. Race, colour, nationality or ethnic or national origin
9. Membership of the Traveller community

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. Unlike bullying, a single incident may constitute harassment.

The following behaviours are illustrative rather than exhaustive examples of types of harassment:

- Verbal harassment - jokes, comments, ridicule or songs;
- Written harassment - including faxes, messaging, emails or notices or social media;
- Physical harassment - jostling, shoving or any form of assault or other forms of unwanted physical contact;
- Intimidatory harassment - gestures, posturing or threatening poses;
- Visual displays such as posters, emblems or badges;
- Excessive monitoring of work;



- Isolation or exclusion from social activities.

Examples of what is **not** harassment:

- Fair and constructive criticism of an employee's performance, conduct or attendance;
- Reasonable and essential discipline arising from the appropriate management of the performance of an employee at work;
- Legitimate management responses in crisis situations which require immediate action;
- Reasonable instructions issued by a manager,
- Assignment of normal duties or relating to terms and conditions of employment.

D. What is sexual harassment?

Sexual harassment 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/or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the person.

The following behaviours are illustrative rather than exhaustive examples of types of sexual harassment:

- Physical conduct of a sexual nature - this may include unwanted physical contact such as unnecessary touching, patting or pinching or brushing against another employee's body, assault and coercive sexual behaviour;
- Verbal conduct of a sexual nature - this includes unwelcome sexual advances, propositions or pressure for sexual activity, continued suggestions for social activity outside the work place after it has been made clear that such suggestions are unwelcome, unwanted or offensive flirtations, suggestive remarks, innuendos or lewd comments;
- Non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature - this may include the display of pornographic or sexually suggestive pictures, objects, written materials, emails, text-messages, faxes or other forms of social media. It may also include leering, whistling or making sexually suggestive gestures; and
- Gender-based conduct - this includes conduct that denigrates or ridicules or is intimidatory or physically abusive of an employee because of his or her sexual orientation such as derogatory or degrading abuse or insults which are gender based.

E. Link with school's Communication Policy

It is recognised that events that compromise a staff member's dignity and indeed bullying and harassment complaints may arise among work colleagues, but may also arise in relation to interactions between staff members and parents/guardians, and in communicating with visitors to the school. In either case, the commitment to a



positive workplace, where dignity at work is respected, prevails.

This Dignity at Work policy covers all interactions between members of the school community, including pupils, staff members, parents/guardians, members of the Board of Management and indeed visitors to our school. Each member of the school community has the right to have their dignity upheld at all times in their communications in our school. It is important at this point to refer to the school's Communication Policy, which outlines the rights and responsibilities of all members of the school community with respect to all forms of communication.

F. A positive work environment

It is agreed that everyone is responsible for creating a positive work environment in Skerries Educate Together for all staff members. A positive work environment is characterised by:

- A supportive atmosphere for all members of staff;
- Open and respectful communication at all times (e.g. through opportunities at regular staff meetings, in conversation between staff members);
- Appropriate interpersonal behaviour;
- Respectful collaboration between staff members on all matters in the course of their work in school;
- Appropriate steps (as outlined below and in the INTO "Working Together" document) toward the resolution of any conflict;
- Respectful feedback and affirmation as appropriate, in relation to a colleague's contribution to the work of the school;
- Fair treatment of all staff (including fair systems of selection and promotion in line with agreed procedures).

Every person has a responsibility to play their 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.

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 (i.e. an annual survey of all staff to determine their views on how their dignity is upheld at work) and, as necessary, to agree changes which reflect a commitment to dignity at work. This annual survey will be carried out by Management as part of the February staff meeting.

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Registered Charity Number 20119546



G. Procedure to address staff relations difficulties

As outlined in the INTO “Working Together” document, the following is a brief overview of the procedure to be followed to address staff relations difficulties:

1. Informally address the matter between the parties
2. Involvement of school principal
3. External intervention (the Board will be notified at this point, without compromising the GDPR of any individuals involved)
4. Formally address matters with the Board of Management

The following is an extract from the “Working Together” document (p.10):

“In the vast majority of cases, teachers deploy conflict resolution skills, informally, effectively and constructively, such as:

- listening;
- identifying the source of conflict;
- addressing the issue early and in a constructive manner;
- putting forward options for resolution which may include reaching compromises;
- acknowledging if errors have been made and likewise accepting that errors may have been made by another party or that misunderstandings may have occurred;
- accepting solutions whether as a compromise or otherwise;
- closing the matter; and
- moving on.

It is recommended that each staff member foster a culture of open communication and debate, where conflict can be aired and dealt with constructively, speedily and in a reasonable manner and, if possible, without recourse to the [more formal] procedures”

H. 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 may decide, the Board of Management will take seriously any allegation of workplace bullying or harassment.

Supportive and effective procedures, in accordance with nationally-agreed procedures, “Working Together” document from INTO, 2000, are in the 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 a stress on confidentiality.

The Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme (formally called Carecall), a free and confidential counselling service, is available for teachers, SNAs and other staff, and indeed their families. The Freephone number, which is operated by Spectrum Life, is 1800 411 057 and the service can also be contacted via



text/WhatsApp at 087-3690010. This service is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

I. Summary

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

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 positive and safe place to work, where every individual's dignity is respected.

Timeframe

Timeframe for implementation: January 2023
Date of next review: January 2026

Ratification and communication

This policy was distributed for review to all staff in May 2022. This was ratified by the Board of Management in January 2023.

This plan was ratified by the Board of Management on:

Signed: [Signature] (Chairperson)

Date: 31-1-2023

Signed: Gwen D'Arcy (Principal)

Date: 31/1/2023

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