



Dignity at Work: Building & Maintaining a Positive & Effective Work Environment

1.0 Introduction

The policy is formulated incorporating information from several 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).

Objectives of Dignity at Work Policy

- To foster and maintain a positive working environment in Our Lady's Grove Primary School where the right of the individual to dignity at work is recognised and protected.
- To ensure that all are aware of and committed to the principles outlined in this policy.

The Board of Management (BoM) is committed to providing all employees with an environment that is free from any form of workplace bullying. The purpose of this document is to outline the school's policy and procedures in relation to workplace bullying. A complaint of workplace bullying will be taken seriously and dealt with promptly and in accordance with due process. In approving this policy, consultation has taken place with all staff members invited to contribute, a committee was set up to draft a Dignity at Work policy and the staff as a whole and BoM will/have signed off on the agreed definitions, rationale and procedures as detailed below.

2.0 Core Principles of Policy

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

2.1 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 - utilizing

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.

2.2 What is Workplace Bullying and Harassment?

The Board of Management adopts the definition of adult bullying as set out by the Report of the Task Force on the Prevention of Workplace Bullying (2001):

2.3 "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".

2.4 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 (gender, marital status, religion, sexual orientation etc.) 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."

3.0 Sexual Harassment is defined in the Equality Act as any form of 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. The unwanted conduct may consist of acts, requests, spoken words, gestures or the production, display, or circulation of written words, pictures or other material.

3.1 It is recognized 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.

3.2 Positive Work Environment

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 characterized by

- A supportive atmosphere.
- Open and honest communication (e.g., through opportunities at regular staff meetings)

- Appropriate interpersonal behaviour
- 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)

3.3 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.

3.4 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 as to prevent “*improper conduct or behaviour*” likely to put health and safety at risk.

3.5 *It is agreed that the adoption of this policy in our school will be accompanied by several 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.

4.0 Adult Bullying as a Problem

Our Lady’s Grove Primary School recognizes 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 organizational 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.

4.1 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 or workplace bullying or harassment.

Supportive and effective procedures, in accordance with nationally agreed practice, 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. *(See Appendix 1)*

4.2 Summary

Management has a duty of care towards employees. Similarly, employees have a duty of care towards one another. This policy seeks to set out principles and practices to support every employee's right to dignity at work.

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.

4.3 The Board of Management of Our Lady's Grove Primary School has adopted this policy on 13 September 2022, following consultation with all staff members.

Signed: 
Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed: 
Principal/Secretary to the BoM

Date: 13th September 2022

Date: 13th September 2022

Appendix 1 - Procedure

What Happens if there is an Allegation of Bullying or Harassment?

The procedure set out below may be initiated in relation to any of the following circumstances, which may occur in the workplace or otherwise in the course of employment:

- Adult bullying
- Sexual harassment
- Harassment on other specified discriminatory grounds which could, in the circumstances, be regarded as offensive, humiliating, or intimidating.

Stage 1: Decide to Address the Matter

1. The party (party A) who considers that s/he is being bullied, sexually harassed, or harassed on other specified discriminatory grounds, should decide to address the matter. However, considering the potential effects of bullying or harassment on an individual, including loss of confidence, extreme upset, anxiety or fear, party a may initially decide to seek INTO or other assistance, including Employee Assistance Scheme or other counselling, to consider the most appropriate application of the procedures, in the circumstances.

2. Party A should keep a record of the pattern of behaviour or instances where s/he considers that bullying/harassment has occurred. The record should contain details such as dates, times, persons present, details of what was said or what occurred.

Stage 2: Informally Address the Problem

1. The party who considers that he/she is being bullied, sexually harassed, or harassed on other discriminatory grounds (party A), should request a meeting with the other party (B), in order to discuss matters. The following should apply:

- Where necessary, the meeting may be facilitated by a third party, generally a teaching colleague
- Party A should clearly outline his/her difficulties and should clearly object to the bullying/harassment and request that it stop
- It is important that party A bear in mind, that the other member of staff may not be aware that his/her behaviour is causing difficulty

- Both parties should seek to resolve their differences and establish a pattern of interaction exclusive of any forms of bullying/harassment
- Party B may respond to party A at that meeting or if requested, should be given an opportunity to consider his/her response, in which case the meeting may be adjourned. Party B should respond in a constructive manner
- The resolution, as appropriate, may include any of the following, e.g., a commitment to cease the particular behaviour, modify the behaviour, plan to eliminate situations where the parties would be in conflict or monitoring
- Alternatively, it may emerge because of the discussions between the parties, that there may have been a degree of misunderstanding in relation to certain behaviours and the resolution may make provision for compromise or appropriate explanation or acknowledgement

2. If there is no satisfactory indication of resolution between the parties, party A should refer the complaint to stage 3, i.e. formal procedures.

Stage 3: Principal Teacher or Chairperson of the Board of Management

1. Stage 3 provides a mechanism for the principal teacher to intervene and resolve the matter. However, if the principal teacher is one of the parties, the Chairperson of the Board of Management, should then be involved, in an individual capacity, to achieve resolution. In circumstances where the chairperson may also be involved at stage 2, another member of the board, may be designated to intervene.

2. Party A should advise party B that he/she is proceeding with stage 3, formal procedures.

3. Party A should state his/her complaint in writing and request the Principal Teacher (or Chairperson of the Board of Management, as the case may be) to investigate the matter

4. The Principal Teacher (or Chairperson of the Board of Management, as the case may be) should:

- Obtain background details including details of what occurred at the previous stage
- Consider the pattern of behaviour and the timescale
- Hear the parties and seek to resolve the matter; act in a fair and impartial manner and deal with the matter sensitively having regard to the nature of the problem and the principles of due process; exercise judgment and make decisions which s/he considers necessary to resolve matters

5. The outcome of the discussions should be noted by the parties.

The matter should be dealt with confidentially. Where resolution has not been possible and particularly, where there is a likelihood of the offending behaviour continuing, either party or the Principal Teacher (or Chairperson of the Board of Management as the case may be) should refer the matter to the Board of Management in accordance with stage 4 below.

Stage 4: Board of Management

- It is open to any of the parties or the Principal Teacher (or Chairperson of the Board of Management, as the case may be) to refer the matter to the Board of Management for investigation. The referral should be in writing and dated and should include a copy of the written complaint.
 - The Board of Management should consider the issues and investigate the matter
 - The Board may enquire into the background of the difficulties including obtaining details on the sequence of initiatives taken at previous stages
 - The Board or the Chairperson of the Board may meet teachers individually or collectively and may also request written submissions from the parties, having regard also to the principles of due process
 - The Board may request the Principal Teacher to furnish a written submission
 - The Board may afford the parties an opportunity to present their case orally at a board meeting, in each other's presence
 - Following oral presentations, the Board of Management may designate the Chairperson to meet with the parties again, separately, or jointly, if further clarification is required or to work towards resolution; the Board of Management may convene several meetings in order to achieve resolution
 - The Board of Management shall act in a fair and impartial manner to achieve resolution and shall deal with the matter sensitively, having regard to the nature of the problem
1. Having considered all matters, the Board of Management should reach a view on the matter not later than 20 school days after receipt of the written request/referral.
 2. Where the Board of Management finds that bullying/harassment has not occurred, both parties should be informed accordingly. No action shall be taken against the complainant

provided the allegation was made in good faith. If the complaint was brought maliciously, it should be treated as misconduct and appropriate action taken.

3. Where the Board of Management finds that bullying/harassment has occurred, the board should deal with the matter appropriately and effectively.

This may include:

- The issuing of a clear warning that bullying/harassment is not acceptable in the school workplace and that it will not be tolerated
- A demand that all forms of bullying/harassment cease and that acceptable patterns of interaction be established between the parties
- An instruction to the offending party that s/he apologise/ express regret or give an assurance that the bullying/harassment behaviour will cease
- Seeking a commitment to attend counselling or the welfare service
- More serious disciplinary sanctions as may be commensurate and appropriate, such as:
 - Oral warning
 - Written reprimand
 - Written warning
 - Final written warning
 - Suspension
 - Dismissal

4. As part of any resolution, the Board of Management should monitor the situation and should put systems in place to ensure that it is kept informed that resolutions are being implemented. The Board of Management should keep matters under review.

Outcome

Should the Board of Management decide that the complaint is well founded; the alleged perpetrator(s) should be given a formal interview to determine an appropriate course of action. Such action could, for example, involve Counselling and/or monitoring or taking the issue through the disciplinary and grievance procedure of the employment.

Confidentiality

All individuals involved in the procedures referred to above should maintain absolute confidentiality on the subject.

Recording

At all stages of the process a clear record should be kept of:

- The investigation undertaken
- All communication to/by the complainant (Party A)
- The subject of the complaint (Party B)
- The steps taken, and all the decisions made

The above records should be held by the Chairperson of the Board of Management in a confidential manner in a secure place.

- Where a complaint has been rejected or has not been upheld, a statement to that effect shall conclude the record in the personnel file of the complainant
- All records in relation to a rejected/not upheld complaint shall be removed from the personnel file of the subject of the complaint
- A statement of the outcome of the investigation will conclude all other files