

Policy on Dignity in the Workplace

**Drimoleague N.S.
Uimhir Rolla 18296A**

Introduction and Rationale

The Board of Management of Drimoleague National School has adopted this policy on December 4th 2018 following consultation with all staff members.

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).

The Board of Management are committed to fostering a positive and inclusive workplace where all staff members feel welcomed, safe and fulfilled. We endeavor to uphold an ethos that promotes good and professional relationships among members of staff, and between members of staff and other stakeholders such as the board of management, parents, the wider community and outside agencies.

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.

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. The Board of 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 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".

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."*

It is recognised that bullying and harassment complaints may arise among work colleagues but may also arise in relation to visitors to the school, parents, members of the wider community or pupils. In any case, the commitment to a positive workplace, where dignity at work is respected, prevails.

A 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 characterised by

- A supportive atmosphere
- Good and open 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)

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 as 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.

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.

Bullying behaviour or harassment perpetrated towards a member of staff by a parent will not be tolerated.

Bullying or harassment perpetrated by parents may include:

- Verbal abuse
- Physical assault
- Intimidation
- Malicious gossip or rumours
- Defamatory remarks
- Cyberbullying or defamatory comments online
- Damage to property

Where such instances of bullying or harassment are reported by a member of staff, the Board of Management will be informed and shall decide the appropriate course of action. This may involve seeking legal advice or referring the matter to the Gardaí. All allegations of harassment or bullying perpetrated towards members of staff by parents will be taken seriously. Individual members of staff will be encourage

to seek advice from their union on these matters. Similar procedures will apply for harassment or bullying perpetrated by members of the wider community towards members of staff.

Incidents of bullying or harassment perpetrated by pupils in the school towards members of staff are very serious and will be dealt with under the school's Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy.

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.

Summary

The Board of 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 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.

Ratification

This Policy on Dignity in the Workplace was adopted by the Board of Management on December 4th 2018