

## **Scoil Naomh Mhuire, Staplestown.**

### **DIGNITY IN THE WORKPLACE POLICY 2020**

This policy is based on a whole school approach.

Scoil Naomh Mhuire is a co-educational, Roman Catholic, primary school, which aims to promote the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the person of the pupil: intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual including a living relationship with God and with other people. We strive to utilise the full school community resources to create a well ordered, caring, happy and secure atmosphere where the intellectual, spiritual, physical, moral and cultural needs of our pupils are identified and developed.  
(Mission Statement)

#### **Rationale**

A core employment value is the commitment to ensuring that each individual is guaranteed a working environment where s/he may expect to be treated with dignity both by management, work colleagues, and all other stakeholders of the school. This approach emphasises the importance of each individual and the contribution s/he makes to the success of the workplace. It guarantees the optimal working conditions that allow individuals to freely maximise their role in the workforce. Sound management ethos is based on providing leadership that encourages individuals in this regard. This is best achieved in our school through the creation and maintenance of a positive working environment.

Integral to this employment value and in particular to the principle of mutual respect is the commitment to provide a workplace free from bullying. It is in such a context that the philosophy and policy statement will be realised.

### **Introduction to the policy:**

The Board of Management of Scoil Naomh Mhuire, Staplestown 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 policy and procedures in relation to workplace bullying.

The overall aim of the policy is to guard against and also deal with workplace bullying, and to contribute to a supportive environment where staff has the right to carry out the work of the school.

#### **Dignity At Work Charter – Objectives**

- To create and maintain a positive working environment in Scoil Naomh Mhuire, Staplestown where the right of each individual to dignity at work is recognised and protected.
- To ensure that all individuals are aware of and committed to the principles set out in the Charter.

## **Scope of the policy**

A core value of Scoil Naomh Mhuire. is the commitment to ensuring a work environment where each employee is treated with dignity by management, colleagues, and the wider school community. This policy applies to all employees of the school and also those members of the community who are involved with school regularly or periodically (eg. parents, visitors, contractors etc). This policy aims to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, that no employee shall suffer bullying from any source.

## **This policy is related to our school's**

- Mission Statement
- Ethos
- School Plan
- Health & Safety Statement

## **Objectives of this Policy**

- To clearly define what constitutes bullying in the workplace
- To promote a positive working environment.
- To put in place a Dignity at Work Charter
- To have clearly defined grievance procedures in place to deal with bullying
- To identify designated contact persons

## **Roles and Responsibilities in developing and implementing this Policy**

- The Board of Management has a duty of care towards all its employees
- All employees are responsible for their professional behaviour in the workplace
- All individuals, whether directly employed or contracted by the school have a duty and responsibility to uphold this Policy

## **Procedures**

The Policy guarantees that all complaints will be taken seriously and investigated promptly, and that all parties involved will be treated with respect. A complaint of workplace bullying will be dealt with in accordance to due process. Please see Procedures for Dealing with Workplace Bullying in this document for more information on the process.

Staff will be protected from victimisation or discrimination for assisting in an investigation. Victimisation as a result of a member of staff raising a complaint will not be tolerated.

In approving this policy, the Board has agreed that:

It is to be brought to the attention of all staff.

All staff be asked to co-operate in its implementation.

## Definitions

### Bullying:

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. (Codes of Practice 2002 under the Industrial Relations Act and the Health and Safety at Work Act)

### Harassment and Sexual Harassment:

The Equality Act 1998 (Code of Practice) (Harassment) Order 2012 specifically deals with harassment and sexual harassment in the workplace. The Code aims to give practical guidance and advice.

Harassment that is based on the following grounds - Gender, Age, Civil Status, Family Status, Sexual Orientation, Disability, Race, Religion or membership of the Traveller Community is a form of discrimination in relation to conditions of employment.

### Harassment:

Harassment is defined in Section 14A(7) of the Employment Equality Act as any form of unwanted conduct 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.

Sexual Harassment:

Sexual Harassment is defined in Section 14(A)(7) of the Employment 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.

What Constitutes 'Unacceptable Behaviour'/ Workplace Bullying? Bullying can take a number of forms. Under the Health and Safety Act there is a requirement that personnel are consulted in respect of acceptable/unacceptable behavior. Through this consultation process, the staff will have ownership of the policy as it relates to their school.

A pattern of the following behaviours are examples of types of bullying:

Exclusion with negative consequences

Verbal abuse/insults

Physical abuse

Being treated less favourably than colleagues

Unnecessary and repeated shouting

Intrusion – pestering, spying or stalking

Menacing behaviour

Intimidation

Aggression

Undermining behaviour

Excessive monitoring of work

Humiliation

Withholding work-related information

Setting unreasonable and unrealistic targets

Blame for things beyond the person's control

Unequal treatment

Spreading rumours /gossip

Undermining the professionalism of others

Deliberate non-cooperation

This list is not exhaustive. It is noted that a once-off incident is not normally considered to be bullying behaviour. While it might not be defined as bullying, a once-off incident of the above behaviour could be an affront to a person's dignity. In our school we promote positive behaviour as described on Page 6 of this document.

**Effects of Bullying** International research shows that the effects may be physiological, psychological and behavioural. There are consequences for the individuals who perceive themselves to be targets of bullying behaviour, for the alleged perpetrators(s), for organisational culture/ethos and for the Board of Management.

**Effects on the individual:** research shows that individuals who are continually bullied lose self-confidence as self-esteem is eroded and they are at an increased risk of suffering stress. There may be serious effects on health and the person's career may be adversely affected.

**Effects on the organisation:** individuals who are bullied will find it difficult if not impossible to give their best in the workplace. Among the well-documented effects are increased sickness/absenteeism, low morale, a tense atmosphere, cliques or factions.

### **Why might an individual be reluctant to take action?**

Because the particular workplace culture passively supports bullying i.e. staff in general are unaware of the seriousness of bullying.

Because of fear that the complaint may not be taken seriously.



Because s/he may be seen as unable for the job or/and a weak person.

If the alleged bully is a person in authority, there may be the fear management will support the alleged perpetrator(s).

Because making a complaint could result in further intimidation and increased bullying.

Because there are no witnesses to the bullying and it would be one person's word against another.

Because s/he might be seen to be lacking in credibility or/and personal status.

Because s/he may have concerns about job security.

Witnesses might be unwilling to come forward for a variety of reasons.

### **What can I do to ensure that workplace bullying does not occur in this school?**

By being familiar with the school policy.

By participating in in-service with respect to dignity at work.

By engaging in consultation with respect to the development and review of the dignity in the workplace policy.

By being aware and educated about workplace bullying.

### **Communication**

This may be more difficult for some individuals than for others. It is inappropriate for work colleagues to act out their behaviour in an unacceptable manner. If you find it impossible or difficult to make an approach to the person involved in the alleged bullying, tell somebody else –

the Principal, a Contact Person (Please see Procedures for Dealing with Workplace Bullying in this document), the INTO Steward, or a Deputy Principal.

### **Positive behaviour in the workplace**

In December 2020, the staff and management of Scoil Naomh Mhuire agreed on the qualities listed below as essential to a positive work environment. This list is not exhaustive.

Professionalism

Positivity

Empathy

Inclusiveness

Respect

Friendship

Fairness

Equality

Helpful

Listening

Caring

Encouraging

Consideration

E-mail etiquette

Supportive

Polite

Confidentiality

Trust

Patience

Tolerance

Integrity

We accept that there are a variety of personalities and different approaches to work.

We accept that what one may find humorous another might find offensive.

We allow other people to speak.

We apologise for mistakes made.

We try to always use appropriate language.

We try to be mindful of our gestures and body language and how they may be perceived.

We promote well-being.

We try to be aware of other people's personal space.

We have a culture of valuing others.

We strive to share methodologies and resources.

We are proud to promote environmental awareness.

### **Performance criteria for success of this policy**

The existence of a policy on Dignity in the Workplace and the prevention of workplace bullying forms part of health, safety and welfare at work.

Awareness/availability of the policy.

Existence of Charter in a visible place: Dignity in the Workplace.

Dignity in the Workplace, as well as inappropriate/bullying behaviour are defined in the policy.

Employee's right to complain is respected.

Informal resolution of complaints is encouraged.

## **Procedures for dealing with workplace bullying**

Please note: it may be relevant to read these procedures in conjunction with both the discipline and grievance procedures that have been agreed between the trade unions and the management bodies. <https://www.into.ie>

There are two stages for dealing with cases of alleged bullying:

Stage 1: Informal

Stage 2 Formal.

Sometimes individuals may be unaware of the negative effects of their behaviour on other adults in the workplace. Such individuals may simply need to be told. Thus, at times incidents of bullying can be handled effectively in an informal way under Stage 1. If an incident occurs that is offensive, it may be sufficient to explain clearly to the offender that the behaviour is unacceptable. If the circumstances are too difficult or embarrassing for an individual, support may be sought from another colleague, a contact person, staff representative, Principal, Deputy Principal.

A complainant may decide, for whatever reason, to bypass the informal procedure and proceed to Stage Two.

The following section outlines the procedures to be followed with respect to a complaint.

Code of Practice - Procedures for Addressing Bullying in the Workplace (Extract from IR Code of Practice S.I. No. 17 of 2002 Code of Practice)

1. **Informal Procedure** While in no way diminishing the issue or the effects on individuals, an informal approach can often resolve matters. As a general rule therefore, an attempt should be made to address an allegation of bullying as informally as possible by means of an agreed informal procedure. The objective of this approach is to resolve the difficulty with the minimum of conflict and stress for the individuals involved.

(a) Any employee who believes he or she is being bullied should explain clearly to the alleged perpetrator(s) that the behaviour in question is unacceptable. In circumstances where the complainant finds it difficult to approach the alleged perpetrator(s) directly, he or she should seek help and advice, on a strictly confidential basis, from a contact person.

### **Designated Contact Persons**

The following are the designated contact person(s) who can act as independent contact person(s) or counsellor(s) should an issue of bullying/harassment arise:

1. Aleisha Swords, Principal

2. Helena Walsh, 2<sup>nd</sup> Assistant Principal.

An employee/trade union representative.

Their role will be to act as an impartial mediator who would advise the complainant as to what course of action he/she should take. Contact person(s) will discuss cases in confidence and will not divulge any information without the agreement of the employee.

In this situation the contact person should listen patiently, be supportive and discuss the various options open to the employee concerned. (See Appendix 1)

(b) Having consulted with the contact person, the complainant may request the assistance of the contact person in raising the issue with the alleged perpetrator(s). In this situation the

approach of the contact person should be by way of a confidential, non-confrontational discussion with a view to resolving the issue in an informal low-key manner. (See Appendix 2)

(c) A complainant may decide, for whatever reason, to bypass the informal procedure. Choosing not to use the informal procedure should not reflect negatively on a complainant in the formal procedure.

## **2. Formal Procedure**

If an informal approach is inappropriate or if after the informal stage, the bullying persists, the following formal procedures should be invoked:-

a. The complainant should make a formal complaint in writing to his/her Principal. If the Principal/Deputy Principal is the subject of the complaint, the formal complaint should be made to the Chairperson of the Board of Management.

b. The alleged perpetrator(s) should be notified in writing that an allegation of bullying has been made against them. They should be given a copy of the complainant's statement and advised that they shall be afforded a fair opportunity to respond to the allegation(s).

c. The complaint should be subject to an initial examination by a designated member of management, who can be considered impartial, with a view to determining an appropriate course of action. An appropriate course of action at this stage, for example, could be exploring a mediated solution which would require the agreement of all parties, or a view that the issue can be resolved informally. Should either of these approaches be deemed inappropriate or inconclusive, a formal investigation of the complaint should take place with a view to determining the facts and the validity or otherwise of the allegation(s).

## **Investigation**

d. The investigation should be conducted by either a designated member or members of management or, if deemed appropriate, an agreed third party. The investigation should be conducted thoroughly, objectively, with sensitivity, utmost confidentiality, and with due respect for the rights of both the complainant and the alleged perpetrator(s).

e. The investigation should be governed by terms of reference, preferably agreed between the parties in advance.

f. The investigator(s) should meet with the complainant and alleged perpetrator(s) and any witness or relevant persons on an individual confidential basis with a view to establishing the facts surrounding the allegation(s). Both the complainant and alleged perpetrator(s) may be accompanied by a work colleague or employee/trade union representative if so desired.

g. Every effort should be made to carry out and complete the investigation as quickly as possible and preferably within an agreed timeframe. On completion of the investigation, the investigator(s) should submit a written report to the Board of Management containing the findings of the investigation.

h. The complainant and the alleged perpetrator(s) should be informed in writing of the findings of the investigation.

i. Both parties should be given the opportunity to comment on the findings before any action is decided upon by the Board of Management. The method of communicating the commentary may be in writing and/or by the individuals presenting at a Board of Management meeting.

## **Outcome**

j. 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 progressing the issue through the disciplinary and grievance procedure of the employment.

### 3. Confidentiality

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

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

the investigation undertaken.

all communications to/by the complainant

the subject of the complaint

the steps and all the decisions taken

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. Where a statement of the outcome of the investigation confirms the allegation to be true then the statement of outcome shall be placed on the file/record of the person against whom the investigation upheld the complaint.

5. Protection and Support Staff shall be protected from intimidation, victimisation or discrimination for filing a complaint or assisting in an investigation. Retaliation against a member of staff for complaining about bullying/harassment is considered a disciplinary offence. A malicious complaint made by a staff member will be treated as misconduct under the disciplinary procedure.

6. Assistance in the event of Harassment Every effort will be made to assist, if they so wish, persons who are victims of bullying/harassment to deal with the problem and where it is requested, the services of a counsellor will be made available by the Board of Management. Persons who bully/harass others may be requested to attend counselling to prevent further



incidents of harassment occurring. Access to such counselling may be made available by the Board of Management.

7. Training/Awareness It is considered that all personnel who have a role in either the informal or formal procedure – e.g. designated members of management, worker representatives, union representatives etc- should be made aware of appropriate policies and procedures which should, if possible, include appropriate training.

**Communication, involvement and dissemination** This policy was written by the policy coordinator with the support of the Dignity in the Workplace working group. Information was sourced from INTO and relevant legislation. We engaged in a process of collaboration involving school management and the staff. It is then to be shared on the website

**Evaluation** We are committed to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of this policy. In addition to the performance criteria mentioned above, important to this process is:

Legislation and other relevant guidelines

Staff feedback

Parental feedback

### **In Conclusion**

As members of the Scoil Naomh Mhuire community, we all have a duty of care to ourselves and each other. Management has a duty of care towards employees. Similarly, employees have a duty of care towards one another. In formulating this policy, we sought to set out principles and practices to support the exercise of that duty in our school.

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

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

**Review and Development:** We are also committed to the review and development of our school policies. As part of our ongoing review process, this policy will be examined to reflect feedback from our evaluation practices and also to ensure legal compliance and the maintenance of best practices.

This policy was formulated in December 2020.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Chairperson, Board of Management.

## **Appendix 1.**

### **Interview the Complainant.**

The investigation should begin with a thorough interview with the complainant to ascertain the facts behind the complaint. The problem should be described clearly. The investigator should try to discover:

- (a) Who is involved?
- (b) When the incident(s) occurred?
- (c) Where the incident(s) occurred?
- (d) Whether there were any witnesses to the event(s)?
- (e) Possible solutions to the problem.

It is advisable to record the statements in writing from all parties in the investigation, as the use of written statements tends to make matters clearer from the outset of the investigation and maintain clarity through the procedure.

The complainant should be informed of the procedures which will be followed. It is essential that the confidentiality of the complainant be maintained at this time.



## **Appendix 2.**

### **Interview the Alleged Harasser**

The alleged bully/harasser must be:

- (a) Advised of the allegation against him/her
- (b) Given an opportunity to be heard
- (c) Allowed representation, if requested
- (d) Given an unbiased hearing
- (e) Fully informed of the decision as a result of the investigation
- (f) Be assured of confidentiality (where possible)

A copy of the complainant's written statements may be given to the alleged harasser who should be afforded an opportunity to reply to the allegations made against him/her. A record in the form of a written statement of reply from the alleged harasser may also be kept.