



INTRODUCTION

It is the policy of the Board of Management of St. Mary's National School to promote an environment within which all employees will be treated with dignity. This school is committed to a positive work environment where work is done in an atmosphere of respect, collaboration, openness and equality.

The Board of Management further recognises that all employees have the right to a work place free from bullying and harassment (including sexual harassment) and is fully committed to ensuring that all employees are able to enjoy that right.

Adult bullying and harassment in our workplace are experiences which we as a staff at this school will seek to prevent and will be intolerant of. We believe that all employees have the right to be treated with dignity and respect. As a staff, we recognize that we all must take responsibility for modelling and promoting positive behaviour,

The ethical values that underpin the professional code of conduct for teachers include 'respect, integrity, trust and care' for others. It is clear therefore that teaching staff, as professionals, are ethically, contractually, and professionally bound to develop a culture ensuring a working environment that promotes dignity and respect for all.

As a workplace, all employees and visitors benefit from a wide range of statutory protections. Health and Safety standards must be adhered to. There are protections relating to employment, terms and conditions, and specific protections relating to assaults (physical or verbal), discrimination, bullying and harassment and work activities in such a way as to prevent "*improper conduct or behaviour*" likely to put health and safety at risk.

Notwithstanding these statutory protections, management bodies and unions have agreed a range of procedures to be utilised in dealing with complaints, grievances, conduct or competence issues arising in the workplace.

These procedures recognise that employees, stakeholders, and visitors must proactively seek to promote positive relations to ensure that the school is free from conflict which is destructive. In other words, we share responsibility for promoting positive relations

This policy applies to harassment not only by staff but also by any person with whom an employee might reasonably expect to come in contact in the course of his/her school activities including visitors to the school. In any case, the commitment to a positive workplace, where dignity at work is respected, prevails.

Aims & Objectives

This policy aims to raise awareness among staff about the importance of fostering positive working relations with one's colleagues and to give practical guidance to employers and employees on:

- ❑ What is meant by workplace bullying and sexual harassment
- ❑ How it may be prevented
 - provide protocols for respectful interactions in the workplace for staff, visitors, parents, and others
 - defining what are acceptable and unacceptable behaviours
 - What steps to take if it does occur to ensure that adequate procedures are readily available to deal with the problem and to prevent its recurrence.

This policy also aims to ensure that the Board of Management of St. Mary's National School is compliant with current legislation in relation to the Health & Safety Act 2005 and the Code of Practice on the Prevention of Workplace Bullying (May 2007)

DEFINITIONS (AS PER THE IPPN Dignity, Respect at Work Policy document)

1. Adult Bullying

The BoM 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, is regular and persistent inappropriate behaviour, specifically targeted at one employee or a group of employees.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of behaviours 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

Workplace Bullying and Harassment?

The Staff and 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".

2. Harassment

Harassment is 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. Unlike bullying, a single incident may constitute harassment.

It may be related to any of the following:

- Gender
- Civil status
- Family status
- Sexual orientation
- Religious belief
- Age
- Disability
- Race, colour, nationality or ethnic or national origin
- Membership of the Traveller community

3. 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.

It is recognised 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.

1. Best Practice for a Positive Working Environment

1. Dignity at Work Culture

A culture of Dignity in the Workplace underpins the two key Dimensions contained in Looking at our Schools (2016) namely, 'Teaching and Learning' and 'Leading and Managing'. Standards that relate directly to Dignity at Work include the requirement to:

- *Establish an orderly, secure, and healthy learning environment and maintain it through effective communication*

- *Manage the school's human, physical and financial resources so as to create and maintain a learning organization*
- *Manage challenging and complex situations in a manner that demonstrates equality, fairness and justice*
- *Develop and implement a system to promote professional responsibility and accountability*
- *Promote a culture of respect and dignity that accommodates diversity*

The school's leadership team has significant responsibility for promoting positive relations across the school. In addition, each staff member, by virtue of the role they play in the workplace, also has significant responsibilities in this regard.

The following key practices are very important for promoting positive working relations. Their presence within the school can determine the school climate, culture, and the dynamics of working relations among staff.

- ☐ Regular, transparent, open and direct communication and opportunities for debate are encouraged.

It is important to note that as the person responsible for the day-to-day management of the school, the principal may have cause to speak with individuals related to 'giving direction', 'the instruction provided', 'the education and personal development of students', 'evaluations of students' (i.e. assessments). There may also be conversations relating to following agreed procedures, policies and/or carrying out contractual duties.

Conversations such as these are commonplace in workplaces and should not be construed as being part of a grievance, complaints, or disciplinary procedure unless the parties are clearly informed that this is the case. It is incumbent on all parties to show respect and adhere to the principles of Dignity at Work, due process, and fair procedures during any such conversations.

- ☐ Collaborative decision making and constructive discussion based on consultation within the school community is fostered.
- ☐ The different roles performed in the school by each member of staff (teaching and non-teaching) are acknowledged and affirmed.
- ☐ There is fair treatment of all staff (including fair systems of selection and promotion in line with agreed procedures)
- ☐ The entitlement of each member of staff to be treated with respect and dignity is recognised.
- ☐ An awareness of the importance of demonstrating a sense of fair play, tolerance and good will is created.
- ☐ It is recognised that there are certain behaviours which are not acceptable among staff members and which create negative staff relations.
- ☐ It is recognised that it is critical to resolve conflict at the earliest opportunity before it is allowed to fester and result in inevitable conflict.
- ☐ All staff are aware of and have access to copies of school policies and procedures covering curricular and administrative areas.

- ❑ These policies are implemented fairly and consistently and where the Board of Management will ensure their implementation.

A sense of fairness

Individuals should be aware of the importance of demonstrating a sense of fair play, tolerance, and goodwill. Exercising sound judgement based on relevant information, common sense and reasonableness are also significant factors in promoting positive staff relations and positive relations across the school community. For example, working to achieve an agreed solution that both parties can '*live with*' will result in better long-term relationships.

A supportive, affirmative, and collaborative atmosphere

It is the responsibility of everyone in the workplace to conduct themselves in a manner which is supportive of their colleagues and to alter any behaviour not conforming to this standard when brought to their attention.

Individual staff members do not work in isolation and are required by this policy to collaborate with school leadership and colleagues in relation to teaching and learning in the school.

UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR

In our school we expect everyone to be kind, supportive, courteous, polite, patient, and positive, in their dealings with each other, with staff, with pupils, with parents and with visitors to the school. Openness and co-operation are encouraged.

There are certain behaviours which we consider to be unacceptable in our school. These include publicly criticizing, blaming, using threatening language, rudeness, aggressiveness, shouting at, being dismissive, ignoring or isolating others, undermining or making derogatory, defaming or insulting comments or personal remarks, using offensive language, threatening or intimidating behaviour, victimisation and harassment, workplace bullying and/or sexual harassment. This also applies to comments on social media.

Every individual is entitled to their good name and to have their dignity respected by colleagues and visitors. While any member of staff or individual can 'have a bad day', it is important that where an individual, a colleague, or person acting on their behalf, brings to it to an individual's attention that his/her behaviour towards another was perceived as rude, curt or not consistent with our dignity at work policy, this individual is expected to reflect on this and take appropriate steps to resolve the matter, ensuring the continuance of positive working relations.

Mutual respect

Every member of staff performs a different role in the school and each staff member is fully entitled to be always treated with dignity and respect. The principal teacher is both a staff member and a team leader with overall responsibility for the day-to-day activities in the school. Functions and responsibilities may be delegated to the other members of the Leadership Team in the school, Deputy Principal and Assistant Principal(s).

As well as being responsible for their individual classes, each teacher has a responsibility to adhere to school policies. SNAs and Ancillary Staff also have responsibilities in terms of duties and tasks and likewise must adhere to school policies.

Where an individual chooses to raise an issue with a colleague, mutual respect dictates that this would be done on a 1:1 basis initially. Criticisms or complaints aired publicly, shared on-line, or to third parties circumvent fair process and breach the dignity at work policy.

In relation to adult bullying and sexual harassment, the BoM has adopted a policy and procedure which includes a clear statement that any such behaviour is not acceptable within the school. A complaint of sexual harassment or bullying may result, following investigation, in disciplinary action.

Roles and Responsibilities Guidelines

The BoM endorses the Guidelines below as an aid to clarifying roles and responsibilities for everyone in the school community. Clarity around roles and responsibilities is essential in relation to the implementation of a proper Dignity at Work Policy.

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITIES
Dept. of Education, Patron, Management Bodies and Unions	Ensure legislative framework in place for the protection of employees in keeping with due process, fair procedures and the principles of dignity and respect. Agree appropriate procedures for dealing with conduct and competence issues and/or for handling grievances and discipline in the workplaces e.g., Circular 49/2018, Circular 72/2011 Statutory Instrument No 146 2000
Board of Management	Are fully aware of their statutory obligations and ensure compliance with all legislative and policy requirements relating to Dignity in the Workplace and for dealing with conduct and competency issues Support the principal and staff in creating and maintaining a climate of security and wellbeing in the school Provide training for BoM members in relation to: • The BoM's responsibilities as an employer

	• The BoM's role in ensuring dignity and respect in the school community Ensure that the school has a suitable Dignity at Work Policy which has been agreed by all sections of the school community and is regularly reviewed and consistently implemented and which: • Protects employees • Deals with conduct and competence issues Provide training for staff on workplace expectations and on the procedures to be followed Adjudicate on grievance and discipline issues in accordance with the agreed procedures set out above Ensure that the school enshrines values of equality, fairness, and justice
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Senior & Middle Leadership Team	Establish an orderly, secure, and healthy learning environment and maintain it through effective communication Manage the school's human, physical and financial resources so as to create and maintain a learning organisation Manage challenging and complex situations in a manner that demonstrates equality, fairness, and justice Develop and implement a system to promote professional responsibility and accountability Promote a culture of respect and dignity that accommodates diversity Model and promote dignity, respect, and follow agreed procedures In relation to the school Dignity at Work Policy: - • Ensure that the Policy is updated as required and is fit for purpose • Communicate the Policy to all school community stakeholders • Explain the Policy to all staff and others, as the need arises • Abide by the spirit and letter of the Policy in their personal and professional behaviour
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	Set a good example by treating all staff, service providers and any other person with whom they come into contact in the workplace with courtesy and respect Be vigilant for signs of bullying and harassment and take any complaint seriously while remaining impartial and non-judgmental Respond sensitively to any member of staff who makes a complaint of harassment, sexual harassment, or bullying Respond promptly to requests from staff members and seek to resolve the matter informally where appropriate and bring such requests to the notice of the principal or DP, where appropriate and possible Ensure that staff members are not victimised for making a bona fide complaint of harassment, sexual harassment, or bullying Monitor and follow up the situation after a complaint is made so that the behaviour complained of does not recur Keep a record of all complaints and how these were resolved
All staff members	Familiarise themselves with the Dignity at Work Policy and support its implementation across the school Share responsibility for maintaining a working environment in which the dignity of all individuals is respected Comply with this policy Be conscious that their behaviour does not cause offence to colleagues, or any person with whom they come into contact during their work Discourage bullying and harassment by objecting to inappropriate behaviour Report and/or inform the principal or other person in position of responsibility where there are concerns that this policy has been breached or a colleague is being bullied or harassed Follow agreed procedures to constructively and effectively resolve issues that relate to Dignity at Work
Parents, visitors, and pupils	Share responsibility for maintaining a respectful environment in which the dignity of all individuals is respected

	Comply with this policy. Be conscious that their behaviour does not cause offence to individuals, staff, or any person with whom they come into contact during the course of their work Notify staff about concerns relating to bullying, harassment, and inappropriate behaviour Report and/or inform the principal or other person in position of responsibility if there are concerns that this policy has been breached Follow agreed procedures to resolve issues constructively and effectively. These include the Parental Complaints Procedure, Dignity at Work procedures, Code of Behaviour
Complainant	Consider approaching the person directly to make them aware that the behaviour in question is unwelcome Alternatively consider requesting a person in a position of responsibility to approach the person on their behalf Seek advice if unsure of what is happening and how best to stop it Be prepared to accept that there may have been a misunderstanding Be prepared to work towards constructively to resolve any difficulties
Person complained of unacceptable behaviour.	If you are approached about your behaviour towards another staff member, listen, take all complaints seriously and be prepared to work to resolve the issue If there was a misunderstanding it must be clarified with the staff member concerned Be prepared to work constructively to resolve any difficulties Understand that difficulties not resolved under Dignity at Work may be escalated to other equally relevant policies or procedures Co-operate with any investigation
Third Party <i>(Union Representative, Staff members, Other)</i>	Provide a supportive space, while remaining impartial and non-judgemental: • Provide confidential and active listening • Empower the individual • Provide information on options available

	• Assist the individual staff member in thinking through options with a view to resolving issues • Keep issues confidential to the parties involved
Investigator	Indicate clearly to the complainant or person being complained, that you are impartial. Your role is to investigate and report on the facts of what is alleged to have happened Listen to both sides Maintain Confidentiality - Avoid discussing the case with any person, whether within or outside of the workplace, other than those to whom you must speak during the investigation Do not indicate your views regarding the credibility or otherwise of the complaint or the evidence given by the complainant, the person against whom the complaint is made or any witnesses Do not get drawn into speculation with any party as to the likely outcome of the investigation Maintain a record of all interviews or meetings held during the investigation.
Union Representative	Co-operate with efforts to resolve complaints locally Be present at any interviews if the complainant or person complained so wishes Co-operate fully with attempts to conduct the investigation fairly and without undue delay Ensure total confidentiality relating to all proceedings

Conflict resolution

While the origins of a conflict can be complex it generally presents as two or more people disagreeing over issues of organisational substance, having a personal disagreement and/or experiencing difficulties with each other. The principal, staff, and/or management may spend significant amounts of time dealing with conflict situations, either as a third party in trying to resolve matters or as one of the parties to the conflict.

In so far as the school as a workplace is concerned, it is important to recognise that:

- over time conflict is inevitable and
- it is critical to resolve conflict at the earliest opportunity ideally at an 'informal stage'.

In most cases, individuals deploy conflict resolution skills, effectively and constructively. This is done by:

- active listening
- identifying the source of conflict
- addressing the issue early and in a constructive manner
- putting forward options for resolution which may include clarifying perspectives, 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
- being willing to put forward solutions with a view to resolving the issue
- closing the matter
- moving on.

This policy seeks to promote a culture of open communication where conflicts can be aired and resolved respectfully, constructively, speedily and in a reasonable manner without recourse to the more formal procedures. Such a resolution allows staff to move on from conflict and repair relations. Where parties are unable to resolve their issues using the Dignity at Work policy, they can be referred to other agreed procedures.

1. Recognised Conflict Resolution Procedures

The following Conflict Resolution Procedures have been arrived at between various parties, including unions and management bodies, over many years. The BoM of St Mary's N.S, has formally adopted these as part of this Dignity at Work Policy. The formal steps of these procedures are to be used in the resolution of all interpersonal disputes following honest and sincere efforts to resolve the issues informally.

1. Choose the appropriate procedure

Having identified the difficulties and referenced the Dignity at Work Policy with a view to resolving them informally, individuals may decide to work through more formal procedures.

It is important to note that all procedures are designed to resolve issues with the mutual agreement of the parties at an informal stage, or by relying on third party intervention. Before engaging in any formal procedure third parties should establish the steps taken by both sides to resolve issues prior to invoking formal procedures.

2. Parental Complaints Procedure

This procedure should be followed in the case of a conflict between a parent and teacher. The procedure has 5 stages, the first two of which are informal. It places the emphasis on addressing staff relations difficulties in a consensus and voluntary type approach and it includes a mediation facility. If no resolution is reached after Stage 3, the BoM will investigate the matter and issue a binding judgement

Click here to view Parental Complaints Procedure
[Revised Parental Complaints Procedure](#)

1.3 INTO Procedure to Address Staff Difficulties

This procedure should be used in the case of a conflict between staff members, including the principal. It is specific to the matter of allegations of bullying, sexual harassment, or other specific discriminatory harassment, that may occur in the workplace or otherwise in the course of employment.

Please see p4 in the link below
[Working Together 2024](#)

1.4 Grievance Procedure

Grievance procedure TNC2014_16 available at this link
[Grievance Procedure](#)

This procedure is available to teachers/principals who have a grievance against

- The BoM
- The Chairperson of the BoM
- The Principal

1.5 Bullying / Harassment Procedure

This procedure is available in the following cases

- adult bullying
- sexual harassment
- harassment on other specified discriminatory grounds which could, in the circumstances, be regarded as offensive, humiliating or intimidating

Please see p12 Procedure 2 in the link below
[Working Together 2024](#)

Summary, Review and Ratification

Summary

The BoM recognises that it has a duty of care towards all school staff. Similarly, school staff 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 good and safe place to work, where every individual's dignity is respected.

Review

The BoM will review this policy periodically, but at least once every two years. The Policy must be reviewed by Staff at the beginning of each school year. School leaders are asked to be particularly vigilant in ensuring that all new or temporary staff are fully appraised of the Policy and of their rights and obligations under it

Ratification

This Policy was reviewed and ratified by the BoM on the following date:

Signed: _____

Chairperson

Signed: _____

Principal