



Dignity at Work Policy

The Board of Management of Kingsland National School has adopted this policy on 24/3/2025, 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) on the prevention and resolution of bullying at work, the WRC *Code of Practice for Employers and Employees on the Prevention and Resolution of Bullying at Work* (2021) and the *Code of Practice on Sexual Harassment and Harassment at Work* (2022)

A. 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 will not be tolerated by this school. All employees have the right to be treated with dignity and respect. It is incumbent on the staff and management of this school to promote a culture of positive working relations which promotes inclusion and respect for difference. Management is committed to supporting this culture and intervening in an appropriate manner utilising the framework set out in *Working Together 2024 -Ag Obair le Chéile*-if requested to investigate and deal with allegations of bullying or harassment. The provisions of Department of Education Circulars 61/2017 and 62/2017 with respect to the assault of teachers and SNAs will be apply, as appropriate.

B. What is Workplace Bullying and Harassment?

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. Disrespectful behaviour, while not ideal, is not of itself bullying. Conflicts and disagreements do not, of themselves, make for a bullying pattern either. There are various workplace behavioural issues and relationship breakdowns which are troubling, upsetting and unsettling but are not of an adequate level of destructiveness to meet the criteria required for a bullying case.

Objective criticism and corrections that are intended to provide constructive feedback to an employee are not usually considered bullying, but rather are intended to assist the employee with their work. Bullying does not include:

- expressing differences of opinion strongly,
- offering constructive feedback, guidance, or advice about work-related behaviour which is not of itself welcome,
- ordinary performance management,
- reasonable corrective action taken by an employer or supervisor relating to the management and direction of employees (for example managing a worker's performance, taking reasonable disciplinary actions, or assigning work), or
- workplace conflict where people disagree with or disregard the others' point of view."

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
- Being treated less favourably than colleagues in similar roles
- Intimidation and/or Aggression
- Humiliation, ridicule, belittling efforts
- Disseminating malicious rumours, gossip or innuendo
- Excessive monitoring of work
- Repeatedly manipulating a person's job content and targets
- Blaming a person for things beyond their control
- Withholding work-related information
- Intrusion – pestering, spying or stalking
- Use of aggressive and obscene language

Harassment is any form of unwanted conduct related to any of the following grounds:

- i. Gender
- ii. Civil status
- iii. Family status
- iv. Sexual orientation
- v. Religious belief
- vi. Age
- vii. Disability
- viii. Race, colour, nationality or ethnic or national origin
- ix. 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.

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.

C. 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
- ✓ A co-operative relational climate within the workplace
- ✓ Good and open communication (e.g. through opportunities at regular staff meetings)
- ✓ Appropriate interpersonal behaviour
- ✓ Promoting positive behaviour to others
- ✓ Collaboration
- ✓ Open discussion and resolution of conflict
- ✓ Relating in clear, civil and respectful ways to everybody in the workplace
- ✓ Recognition, feedback and affirmation as appropriate
- ✓ Fair treatment of all staff (in line with agreed procedures)
- ✓ Taking reasonable care to protect safety, health and welfare of others
- ✓ Not engaging in improper conduct

There are several elements important to a positive workplace including good leadership (leading by example), a culture of involvement and a proper flow of communication, intolerance of inappropriate behaviour, training of staff on acceptable behaviour or conduct, an open and transparent pattern of relating based on mutual respect and dignity for all. A positive culture is one in which employees are comfortable raising issues of concern to them, especially of inappropriate behaviours and where there are supportive, effective and fair processes underpinning this in place.

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.

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.

Preventative measures will be put in place such as:

- Promotion and reinforcement of a positive workplace culture.
- Effective Anti-Bullying policies developed, used and promoted regarding improper and proper behaviours. In this school, the Board of Management recognises the Working Together 2024 Procedures as a means of addressing allegations of adult bullying/harassment.
- Widespread policy awareness.
- Appropriate training as required for those managing complaints and for line management.
- Contact Person/appropriate advisory support services available, where possible.
- Clear roles and goals for all.

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. 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.

D. 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 2024 Procedures 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 Service, Inspire Wellbeing, provide a free and confidential counselling service, which is available for teachers, SNAs and other staff. The Freephone number is 1800 411 057 and is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

E. Summary

Management has a duty of care towards employees. Similarly, employees have a duty of care towards one another and to contribute to a positive workplace culture. 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.

Signed: _____ Chairperson

On behalf of the Board of Management – Kingsland N.S.

Date: _____