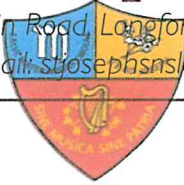


# St. Joseph's National School

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## Respect & Dignity in Our Work Keeping Our Workplace Positive & Effective

### A Commitment to Dignity & Respect

St Joseph's NS is a school which is committed to creating, maintaining and constantly striving to enhance a positive work environment where work is done in an atmosphere of respect, collaboration, openness and equality.

Behaviour which is not nice, including adult bullying and harassment in the workplace are phenomena which we as a staff at St Joseph's NS will seek to prevent. Further we declare that such unacceptable behaviour will not be tolerated. As a team, we believe that all employees have the right to be treated with dignity and respect. As a team we recognise that we all have our part to play in modelling and promoting good behaviour, and that in the unlikely event of experiencing less than nice behaviour, we will immediately explain to our partner(s) of communication that their behaviour is offensive to us and why. If it continues, those school community members who are the management team are committed to intervening in an appropriate manner.

Accepted procedures will be used to investigate and deal with allegations of harassment, bullying and other inappropriate behaviour. It is accepted that the procedures used will depend on the context. We have identified such appropriate procedures to be those outlined in the IPPN document '**Supporting each other**', the INTO document '**Working Together**' and '**DES Circular 40/97 - Assaults on Staff in Primary Schools**'.

### Definition of what we consider Bullying & Harassment in our Community

Our School Team has adopted 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.'*

In reaching consensus on our definition of 'Harassment' we consulted with each other, reviewed current Employment Equality legislation and researched generally but not exclusively based on a person's standing within one of the nine categories specified in legislation such as gender, marital status, religion, sexual orientation etc. We view harassment as '*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.*'

We recognise that bullying and harassment complaints may arise among work colleagues, but may also arise in relation to visitors to the school. In either case, our commitment to a positive workplace where dignity at work is respected prevails.

### A Positive Work Environment



We agree that we will all work to make this school a good place to work and are creating this policy to copperfasten that commitment. St Joseph's NS is a good place to work and we will strive to keep it that way, through

- A supportive atmosphere
- Good and open communication (e.g. through opportunities and 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 in the school community of St Joseph's NS has a responsibility to play his/her part in contributing to our positive work environment, including a team member who may witness behaviour that is not nice. We each have a clear responsibility to raise concerns about dignity at work and threats to this, in an appropriate and timely manner.

In developing and adopting this policy in St Joseph's NS, we have taken a number of steps to examine our work environment and, as necessary, have agreed changes which reflect a commitment to dignity at work. These steps will be initiated both by the team generally and supported by management. Reflecting our commitment to a positive workplace, we have agreed to review this policy each year.

#### **Adult Bullying, Harassment & Not Nice Behaviour Can Be a Problem**

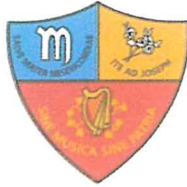
St Joseph's NS recognises that adult bullying and harassment are problems if they occur in any workplace. These behaviours generally amount to psychological abuse which causes serious pain and suffering. We believe that in addition to its unacceptable effects on our team who may be targeted, these behaviours do not help our effectiveness as a team.

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. Our policy aims to ensure that we create a positive environment which will prevent such behaviours from occurring. Where bullying or harassment does occur, we will deal with it through the agreed procedure.

**In the unlikely event that an allegation of bullying or harassment is made, the steps we will take are:**



## **Stage 1: Decide to address the matter**

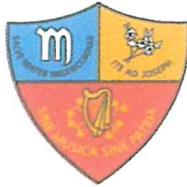
1. The party (party a) who considers that s/he is being bullied, sexually harassed or harassed on other specified discriminatory grounds, should decide to address the matter. However, in light of the potential effects of bullying or harassment on an individual, including loss of confidence, extreme upset,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

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 judgement 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 a number of meetings in order to achieve resolution.
- The board of management shall act in a fair and impartial manner in order to achieve resolution and shall deal with the matter sensitively, having regard to the nature of the problem.

3. 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.

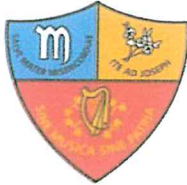
4. Where the board of management finds that bullying/harassment has not occurred, both parties should be informed accordingly. No action shall be taken against the complainant provided the allegation was made in good faith. If the complaint was brought maliciously, it should be treated as misconduct and appropriate action taken.

5. 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

6. 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.



We acknowledge that any one of us have the right to take such advice or steps as they themselves may decide but accept that the ISM team and 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 place in St Joseph's NS. These procedures to address and investigate allegations focus on the earliest possible resolution and will proceed as necessary from informal to formal stages and will have a stress on confidentiality.

### **In Conclusion**

As members of St Joseph's school 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.

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 good place to work.

- Following consultation with all staff members, the Board of Management of St Joseph's NS has adopted this policy on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2021.
- The policy has been formulated in light of a number of background documents, including IPPN document '**Supporting each other**' the INTO document '**Working Together**' and '**DES Circular 40/97 Assaults on Staff in Primary Schools**', 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)**'.

### **Ratification of Policy**

Signed: Frank Gearty

Chairperson of Board of Management

Signed: Mrs. O. Egan

Principal

Date: 24/3/2021.

Date: 24.3.21