

Plean Scoile

St. Fiacc's

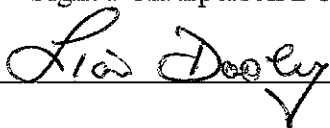
Dignity at Work Policy



St. Fiacc's N.S.
Fírinne le Misneach

Formulated/Ratified/Reviewed	By
Formulated 29/08/18	Staff
Ratified 23/10/2018	BOM
Reviewed 30/09/2020	BOM

Signed Chairperson BOM



Dignity at Work: Building & Maintaining a Positive & Effective Work Environment

Rationale

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).

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 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. 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.

B. 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. 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
- 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. 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. 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.

Digital Harassment

Every member of staff is issued with a school email address. This address is accessible to all. This allows anyone to email a staff member, which can carry a number of risks to a staff member's dignity at work. In light of this, the following ground rules apply.

- There should be a period of 5 school days allowed for a response to an email. (If the staff member is away, he/she can enable a "Vacation Responder" to let the sender know that they are out of the office and when to expect a response or instructions as to who to direct their email to.)
- Staff are not expected to check their email after hours. Staff are instructed not to give themselves access to their school email after hours on their personal devices. The Board cannot be responsible if staff check emails after hours.
- Emails sent by and to staff members should be in a respectful tone. A staff member is entitled not to respond to an email that they, themselves, deem to be disrespectful in tone. It is recommended that a staff member that receives an email like this arranges to meet a parent face-to-face rather than responding to the content of the email.
- "Mailbombing," the excessive sending of emails to a staff member falls under this policy. All users of email should be aware that, despite best intentions, their actions may cause distress to their colleagues. This can come in a number of forms:
 - Excessively forwarding on resources, links or information
 - Using Reply To All, where it is not appropriate
 - Excessive contact from an individual, e.g. checking in on a child everyday unless explicitly agreed.
- Unsolicited email (or spam). The school uses Google's services to reduce the volume of spam sent to staff members. The email application recommended by the school contains facilities to report spam. The Board cannot be responsible for any spam that arrives in a staff member's inbox.
- Any form of email that falls under the definition of harassment will be treated in the same manner as any other form of harassment.

Other Forms of digital harassment

In the digital age, it is expected that staff are aware of their own online presence and they should adhere to the guidelines of the Teaching Council's Professional Standards. However, staff are entitled to a private life online and this should be respected. For example, a staff member should not feel under pressure to "friend" another member of staff or a parent or anyone else in the school community. Further guidelines on this can be found in the school's Internet Acceptable Usage Policy.

E. 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.

F. Summary

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 safe and respectful environment in which to work.