

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

A Commitment to Dignity & Respect

St Ailbe's N.S. 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 Ailbe's N.S. 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 ISM 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**'.

Aims and 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 happened
- What steps to take if it does occur to ensure that adequate procedures are readily available

This policy also aims to ensure that the Board of Management of ST Ailbe's N.S. is compliant with current legislation in relation to the health and Safety Act 2005 and the Code of Practice on the Prevention of Workplace bullying May 2007

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.

Recommended Good Practice

The Board of Management endorses the Dignity in the Workplace Charter issued by the Health and Safety Authority . This is displayed in our Staffroom. The Board of Management of St Ailbe's N.S. further recognises the importance of promoting positive harmonious relationships within the school community by ensuring that all people , both adults and pupils , are treated with dignity and respect. It is agreed that we will work to make our school a good safe and happy place to work . To that end in ST Ailbe's N.S. we aim to create a supportive workplace atmosphere .

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 copper fasten that commitment. St Ailbe's N.S. 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
- The different roles performed in the school by each member of staff teaching and non teaching are acknowledged and affirmed.
- 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 goodwill is created.
- All staff are aware of and have access to copies of relevant school policies and procedures covering curricular and administrative areas.
- These policies are implemented fairly and consistently and where the Board will ensure their implementation.

Every person in the school community of St Ailbe's N.S. 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.

Reflecting our commitment to respect and dignity, our Safety Statement includes a commitment to a positive work environment.

In developing and adopting this policy in St Ailbe's N.S. 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 Ailbe's N.S. 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
- Targeting someone for special negative treatment;
- Manipulation of an individual's reputation;
- Intimidation;
- Aggressive or obscene language;
- Jokes that are obviously offensive to one individual by spoken word or social media;

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.

Key factors of workplace bullying are that the behaviour is generally;

- Persistent
- Unwanted
- Subtle
- Non physical

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, the ISM team supported by the Board of Management will deal with it through the agreed procedure. The exercise of legitimate management functions, in a reasonable and fair manner, does not constitute bullying and this view of the Board of management is endorsed by the INTO.

Sexual Harassment

Harassment is any form of unwanted conduct related to any of the discriminatory grounds. Sexual harassment is any form of unwanted verbal, non verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. In both cases it is 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.

Employment Equality Act 1998 defines sexual harassment as any act of

Physical intimacy- this may include unwanted physical contact such as unnecessary touching, patting, pinching, or brushing against another employee's body, assault or coercive sexual intercourse.

Verbal conduct of a physical nature- This includes unwelcome sexual advances, propositions or pressure for sexual activity, continued suggestions for social activity outside the workplace after it has been made clear that such suggestions are unwelcome, unwanted or offensive flirtations, suggestive remarks, innuendos or lewd comments.

Non Verbal conduct of a sexual nature – This may include the display of pornographic or sexually suggestive pictures, objects, written materials, emails, text messages or faxes. It may include leering, whistling or making sexually suggestive gestures.

Digital Harassment

Teaching staff are using teacher email addresses to connect with their class/classes. This address is accessible to all of their pupils and their parents/guardians. This allows anyone to email a teacher 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 teacher 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.)
- Teachers are not expected to check their email after hours. Teachers are instructed not to give themselves access to their school email after hours on their personal devices. The Board cannot be responsible if teachers 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.

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

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 [Insert School Name]. 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.

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

Stage 1: Informal and

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 Principal, and any member of the ISM team. A complainant may decide, for whatever reason, to bypass the informal procedure and proceed to Stage 2.

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

Code of Practice Detailing 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.

1. Any employee who believes he or she is being bullied should explain 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 the Principal or any member of the ISM team.

In this situation the contact person should listen patiently, be supportive and discuss the various options open to the employee concerned

1. 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.
2. 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.

3. Formal Procedure

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

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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 validity or otherwise of the allegation/s.

Investigation

1. 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.
2. The investigation should be governed by terms of reference, preferably agreed by the parties in advance.
3. The investigator/s should meet with the complainant and alleged perpetrator/s and any witnesses or relevant persons on an individual confidential basis with a view to establishing the facts surrounding the allegation/s. Both the complainant and the alleged perpetrator/s may be accompanied by a work colleague or employee/trade union representative if so desired.
4. 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.
5. The complainant and the alleged perpetrator/s should be informed in writing of the findings of the investigation.
6. Both parties should be given an opportunity 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

1. 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.

2. **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 communication 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 allegations 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 staff member for complaining about bullying/ harassment is considered a disciplinary offence. A malicious complaint made by a staff member will be considered 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 incidences 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.

In Conclusion

As members of St Ailbe's N.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 Ailbe's N.S. has adopted this policy on _____
- 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)**.