

Galway Educate together

Dignity at Work Policy

Index:

1. Introduction
2. Rationale
3. Vision
4. Positive Work Environment & Well Being of Staff
5. Definitions
 - a. Bullying
 - b. Harassment
 - c. Sexual Harassments
6. Policy
 - a. Procedures in response to an allegation of bullying or harassment
7. Summary
8. Ratification

1. Introduction

Galway Educate Together National School is committed to creating and maintaining a working environment that encourages and defends the right to dignity at work. All who work here, including members of the Board of Management and Parent-Teacher Association, are expected to respect the right to dignity in the work setting. Every person will be treated equally and be respected for their individuality and diversity. Bullying or harassment in any form, from any party within and without the school, is unacceptable and will be proactively addressed. Our policies and procedures will underpin the objectives of this charter.

All individuals, whether directly employed or contracted by Galway Educate Together National School or volunteering as a member of the Board of Management or Parent-Teacher Association or who are volunteering or completing work experience in another capacity have a duty and responsibility to uphold this Dignity at Work Charter.

2. Rationale

Galway Educate Together N.S. is committed to protecting the dignity of all those who work within the school. In particular, we are committed to ensuring that our school is free from any form of bullying or harassment at work and that our work environment is conducive to providing a high-quality education in an atmosphere of respect, safety and equality. Bullying behaviour or lack of respect for others' dignity, by its very nature, undermines and dilutes the quality of work and imposes psychological damage. As such, it is an issue which must be positively and firmly addressed through a range of school-based measures and strategies through which all members of the school community are enabled to act effectively in dealing with this behaviour. Both the school's management and its employees have responsibilities for creating and contributing to the maintenance of a work environment free from bullying and harassment. Employees also have an obligation to cooperate with the investigation of complaints of bullying or harassment in the school.

Bullying and harassment at work are incompatible with the vision of our patron body, Educate Together, and with the characteristic spirit of our school.

3. Vision

Staff who work in Galway Educate Together N.S. will be encouraged to reach their full potential mentally, physically, spiritually, emotionally and socially, in an atmosphere and environment in which they feel safe, valued and secure and in which respect for self and others is the norm. The staff of our school, conscious of their role in creating a positive working environment, will

encourage the involvement of the wider school community in the achievement of these ends through a whole-school approach whereby every individual is involved in the development of a school environment where each person is respected and valued.

4. Positive Work Environment and Well Being of Staff

G.E.T.N.S. will work to create a positive climate within which the dignity of all in the whole-school environment is respected. We are committed to:

- Creating a supportive and nurturing environment atmosphere
- Facilitating effective and open communication (e.g. through regular ISM professional dialogues, mentoring conversation, opportunities for team to collaborate at staff meetings, parent teacher meetings, professional development experiences etc)
- Promoting appropriate interpersonal behaviour
- Collaboration and an emphasis on the positive opportunity that can be derived from diversity of opinion or perspective.
- Open to constructive discussion and resolution of conflict
- Providing recognition, feedback and affirmation as appropriate
- Ensuring fair treatment of all staff (including fair systems of selection and promotion in line with agreed procedures)
- Opportunities for social interaction that helps build relationships based on mutual respect
- Respecting and valuing the unique strengths of each member of our staff

Well-being of Staff

Furthermore, support for the wellbeing of staff is also an essential element, and crucial to sustaining teacher/resource staff engagement, enthusiasm and ability to model resilience. It builds staff capacity to cope with challenges and adapt to change, and creates conditions to

support and motivate staff to be effective.” (Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice)

GETNS management and staff prioritise the well-being of every staff member and the adoption of this policy, “Dignity at Work”, actively demonstrates this proactive approach to supporting the well-being of all staff.

Every person in the school community of G.E.T.N.S. has a responsibility to play his/her part in contributing to our positive work environment. We each have a clear responsibility to raise concerns about dignity at work and threats to this, in an appropriate and timely manner. A person who is a witness or bystander to threats has a responsibility to follow the school’s policy. They have a duty to take action.

5. Definitions of Bullying and Harassment

Unacceptable behaviours: The policy focuses on three threats to dignity – bullying, harassment and sexual harassment.

The following definitions have been adopted.

Bullying

- “Bullying” is defined here as ‘repeated, inappropriate behaviour which is specifically targeted at the recipient in order to undermine his or her dignity’.
- ‘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.

Bullying may include behaviours such as:

- Verbal abuse/insults, undermining remarks
- Excessive or unfounded monitoring of work
- Withholding work-related information
- Exclusion
- Inappropriate overruling of a person's authority.

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.

Harassment

- Harassment is any act of conduct including spoken words, gestures or the production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other material, if the action or conduct is unwelcome to the employee and could reasonably be regarded as offensive, humiliating or intimidating.
- Harassment also includes 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.'

Examples include ridicule, written harassment through email or text messages etc., physical harassment, exclusion and persistent negative body language.

“Sexual harassment” is defined as any act of physical intimacy, request for sexual favours, other acts or conduct including spoken words, gestures or the production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other material that is unwelcome and could reasonably be regarded as sexually offensive, humiliating or intimidating. Sexual harassment may consist of a single incident or repeated inappropriate behaviour. It may be targeted at one person or a group.

An act (or acts) of bullying, harassment or sexual harassment which occur outside the school premises or normal school hours, may be considered to be Workplace Bullying/ Harassment provided the perpetrator was acting in the course of employment, for example, at a training course, conference or school-related event.

6. Policy

Management is committed to intervening in an appropriate manner utilising one of the accepted Management/INTO/IMPACT/ Fórsa 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.

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 of workplace bullying or harassment. Supportive and effective procedures, in accordance with nationally-agreed practice, are in 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 an emphasis on confidentiality.

Procedures in response to an allegation of bullying or harassment

1. If any staff member or visitor feels that he or she is being subjected to behaviour which undermines his or her dignity or is a witness to such behaviour targeted at a colleague, he/ she should let his/her objections be known, otherwise the person engaging in the unwelcome behaviour may be unaware of the effect of his/her actions.
 - a. The staff member may either approach the alleged perpetrator directly and make the person aware that the behaviour in question is unwelcome or request the

Principal or another designated member of staff to approach the person on his or her behalf.

- b. An employee who feels he or she is being bullied or harassed may seek information and advice regarding the policy and procedure on a confidential basis from any of the following: a colleague, the principal, the staff union representative or the chairperson of the Board of Management.
 - i. If, having consulted with the appropriate person, the staff member decides to pursue the matter, he or she may approach the alleged perpetrator directly or request the intervention of the Principal.
 - ii. In a case involving the Principal, the intervention of the Board of Management can be requested.

2. Where the staff member is not confident about approaching the alleged perpetrator or where a direct approach has not resolved the matter, he or she should request the intervention of the principal or staff representative.
 - a. The principal or staff representative will attempt to resolve the matter in an informal low-key and non-confrontational manner by making the alleged perpetrator aware of the effects of his or her behaviour.
 - b. Where this does not bring about a satisfactory outcome, the matter may be referred to the Board of Management, who will make every effort to resolve the matter between the parties.
 - c. Where the matter remains unresolved, the Board of Management may request both parties to consider mediation.

3. Mediation is the preferred method under this policy for the resolution of complaints of bullying and harassment which are not capable of being resolved by school staff.
 - a. The objective of mediation is to resolve the matter speedily and confidentially without recourse to a formal investigation and with the minimum of conflict and stress for the individuals involved.

- b. Mediation requires the voluntary participation and co-operation of both parties in order to work effectively.
- c. An assigned mediator will meet with both parties, usually separately to begin with, to discuss the alleged offending behaviour.
- d. The mediator will then bring both parties together to reach a common understanding and agreement on acceptable future behaviour.
- e. A mediated agreement seeks to reach an accommodation between the parties, thereby restoring harmonious working relations.
- f. A mediated solution will not result in the issues being dealt with under the disciplinary policy.
- g. The parties will be requested to attend mediation before the alleged offending behaviour is the subject of a formal investigation.

4. If the mediation process does not produce a satisfactory outcome, the complainant may seek to have the matter resolved through formal investigation.
 - a. Any information that emerges during the course of the mediation process will remain strictly confidential and cannot be disclosed as part of the formal investigation.
 - b. The complaint will be clearly formulated in writing, setting out details of the offending behaviour (including dates and witnesses, if any) and the context in which it occurred.
 - c. The alleged perpetrator will be advised that the complaint is the subject of a formal investigation.
 - d. He or she will be given a copy of the written complaint and invited to respond to the allegations in writing within two weeks.
 - e. A copy of the response will be forwarded to the complainant.

5. The investigation will be conducted thoroughly and objectively and with due respect for the rights of both the complainant and the alleged perpetrator.

- a. Both parties will be required to cooperate fully with the investigation.
- b. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the investigation to the greatest extent consistent with the requirements of a field investigation.
- c. It is not possible, however, to guarantee the anonymity of the complainant or any person who participates in the investigation.
- d. Notwithstanding the difficult circumstances, both the complainant and the alleged perpetrator may be expected to continue with their normal duties and maintain a professional working relationship during the course of the investigation.
- e. The Board of Management will, however, have due regard at all times for its obligations to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of staff and students.
- f. The investigator may interview anyone they feel can assist with the investigation.
- g. Staff are expected to cooperate fully with the investigation and would be fully supported throughout the process.
- h. Employees who participate in the investigation process will be required to respect the privacy of the parties involved by refraining from discussing the matter with other work colleagues or persons outside school.
- i. It will be considered a disciplinary offence to intimidate or exert pressure on any person who may be required to attend as a witness.

6. The investigation will be conducted by a designated person(s) nominated by the Board of Management who is not connected to the complaint in any way.
 - a. The investigation will be governed by *clear terms of reference* based on the written complaint and any other matters relevant to the complaint.
 - b. The terms of reference shall specify the following: the timescale within which the investigation will be completed and the scope of the investigation.
 - c. Both parties will be given copies of all relevant documentation prior to and during the investigation process.

- Where complaints against visitors to the school are the subject of a formal investigation, the alleged perpetrator will be expected to cooperate fully with the process and will be afforded fair procedures and an opportunity to respond fully to the complaint.
- Where the complaint is upheld, appropriate sanctions will apply which may include exclusion of the individual from the premises or suspension or termination of service or other contract.

7. 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 by another person against an employee, Board member and/ or a visitor to the school. Together, we are committed to building and maintaining a work environment where respectful, open and equal relationships are the norm.

8. Ratification

Following consultation with all staff members, the Board of Management of Galway Educate Together N.S. adopted this policy on _____

Signed:  Date: 25/5/22

Chairperson

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