



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

The Board of Management of Le Chéile Educate Together National School has adopted this policy following consultation with all staff members.

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).

Core Principles of Policy

Le Chéile is committed to a positive work environment where work is done in an atmosphere of respect, collaboration, openness and equality.

Integral to this employment value and in particular to the principle of mutual respect is the commitment to provide a workplace free from bullying. It is in such a context that the philosophy and policy statement will be realised.

Objectives of Dignity at Work Policy

- To create and maintain a positive working environment in Le Chéile ETNS, the right of each individual to dignity at work is recognised and protected
- To ensure that all are aware of and committed to the principles set out in this policy

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.

B. 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 and welcoming atmosphere



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- Good and open communication
- Appropriate interpersonal behaviour
- Collaboration
- Recognition, feedback and affirmation for all, as appropriate
- Fair treatment of all staff (including fair systems of selection and promotion in line with agreed procedures)
- Respect for the dignity of others
- Individuals who fulfill their work duties according to their work contract
- All staff, regardless of status and whether permanent, temporary or student are afforded the same respect

Staff should operate a system of mutual respect and fairness. Individual staff members should be aware of the importance of demonstrating a sense of fair play, tolerance and goodwill. Exercising sound judgment based on relevant information, common sense and reasonableness are also significant factors in promoting positive staff relations. For example, deciding to compromise on a matter rather than holding steadfast, can often be the wisest and most sensible thing to do.

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.



The Policy

DEFINITIONS

Definition of Bullying

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.

(Codes of Practice 2002 under the Industrial Relations Act and the Health and Safety at Work Act)

Harassment and Sexual Harassment

The Employment Equality Act, 1998 and 2004 specifically deals with harassment in the workplace. This code aims to give practical guidance and advice. Harassment that is based on the following nine grounds – gender, age, status, family status, sexual orientation, disability, race, religion or membership of the Traveller Community is a form of discrimination in relation to conditions of employment. 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.*”

Sexual Harassment

Sexual Harassment is defined in the Equality Act 2004 as any form of verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature 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. The unwanted conduct may



consist of acts, requests, spoken words, gestures or the production, display, or circulation of written words, pictures or other material.

D. Adult Bullying as a Problem

There are certain behaviours which are not acceptable among staff members and which create negative relations. Such behaviours include workplace bullying, sexual harassment, rudeness and aggressiveness, offensive language, threatening or intimidating behavior, victimisation and harassment. 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, status 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
- Non-verbal behaviour e.g. passive aggression, making faces or eyes to heaven, tutting, stamping of feet
- Actions designed to undermine the other person
- Shouting
- Excessive monitoring of work
- Withholding work or 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.

E. What Happens if there is an Allegation of Bullying or Harassment?



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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.

In the vast majority of cases, teachers deploy conflict resolution skills, informally, effectively and constructively, such as:

- Listening
- Identifying the source of the conflict:
- Addressing the issue early, in a constructive manner and an appropriate venue (e.g. where the conflict relates to one particular individual it is related to that person individually and in private before being made public)
- Putting forward options for resolution which may include reaching compromises
- Acknowledging errors have been made and likewise accepting that errors may have been made by another party or that misunderstandings may have occurred
- Accepting solutions whether as a compromise or otherwise
- Closing the matter and
- Moving on

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 a stress on confidentiality.

F. Summary

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 place to work.

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.



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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.

Procedure to Address Adult Bullying/ Harassment

Please see “Working Together. Procedures and Policies for Positive Staff Relations” (INTO) attached p.19-24. This system of addressing the issue will also apply to SNAS and all personnel working in Le Chéile ETNS.

Teachers/ SNAS may also call “Carecall” for Teachers and Special Needs Assistants, a free counselling service. Phone: 1800 411 057. Available 24 hours per day, 365 days a year.