

## **Ardcoil Mhuire**

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Ardcoil Mhuire App



# Dignity at Work Policy



**CEIST**  
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An tArdcoil Mhuire



**Scoileanna Cothaithe Sláinte**  
**Health Promoting Schools**

**Ardscoil Mhuire**

**Dignity at Work Policy and  
Code of Procedures**

**(Required under Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005)**

**Formulated**

**Academic Year 2016/2017**

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### **Ardcoil Mhuire Mission Statement**

In the tradition of the Sisters of Mercy we in Ardcoil Mhuire strive to build our school on the values of a Christian community. We aim to treat each member of our school community with dignity and Christian love. In this atmosphere students are encouraged to realise their full potential.

## **Dignity at Work Charter**

**Ardscoil Mhuire adopts the HSA Dignity in the Workplace Charter endorsed by IBEC and ICTU and adopted by JMB and ASTI.**

JMB and ASTI “Commit ourselves to working together to maintain a workplace environment that encourages and supports the right to dignity at work. All who work here are expected to respect the right of each individual to dignity in their working life. All will be treated equally and respected for their individuality and diversity.

Bullying in any form is not accepted by us and will not be tolerated. Our policies and procedures will underpin the principles and objectives of this Charter.

All individuals, whether directly employed or contracted by us, have a duty and a responsibility to uphold this Dignity at Work Charter.

Supervisors, Managers, and Trade Union Representatives where applicable in the workplace have a specific responsibility to promote its provisions.”

# **Dignity in the Workplace Policy and Procedures**

## **Introduction:**

A core employment value is the commitment to ensuring that each individual is guaranteed a working environment where s/he may expect to be treated with dignity both by management and work colleagues. This approach is a positive emphasis on the importance of each individual and the contribution s/he makes to the success of the workplace. It guarantees the optimal working conditions that allow individuals to freely maximise their role in the workforce. Sound management ethos is based on providing leadership that encourages individuals in this regard. This is best achieved in our school through the creation and maintenance of a positive working environment.

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 Ardscoil Mhuire where the right of each individual to dignity at work is recognised and protected.
- To ensure that all are aware of and are committed to the principles set out in this policy.

The Board of Management of Ardscoil Mhuire is committed to providing all employees with an environment that is free from any form of workplace bullying.

The purpose of this document is to outline the Board's policy and procedures in relation to workplace bullying.

A complaint of workplace bullying will be taken seriously and dealt with promptly and in accordance with due process.

In approving this policy, the Board has agreed that:

- It be brought to the attention of all staff.
- All Staff are expected to co-operate in its implementation.

### **The Policy**

The objective of the Policy is to eliminate workplace bullying and to contribute to a supportive environment where Staff have the right to carry out the work of Ardscoil Mhuire.

The Policy guarantees that all complaints will be taken seriously and investigated promptly, and that all parties involved will be treated with respect.

Staff will be protected from victimisation or discrimination for assisting in an investigation. Victimisation as a result of a member of Staff raising a complaint will not be tolerated

## **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. The new Code aims to give practical guidance and advice. Harassment that is based on the following nine grounds - Gender, Age, Marital 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.

### **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.



**Harassment:**

Harassment on the other eight grounds covered by the legislation is any unwanted conduct related to any of the eight grounds (other than gender) and the conduct 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. (Employment Equality Act 2004)

**Non Workplace bullying, sexual harassment and harassment:**

The scope of this policy re sexual harassment and the harassment provisions extend beyond the workplace, for example, to work related conferences and work related training that occur outside the workplace. It also extends to work related social events.

**What Constitutes 'Unacceptable Behaviour'/ Workplace Bullying?**

It is inappropriate for work colleagues to behave in an unacceptable and unprofessional manner.

Bullying can take a number of forms. Under the Health and Safety Act there is a requirement that personnel are consulted in respect of acceptable/unacceptable behaviour and that through this consultation process, the staff will have ownership of the policy as it relates to their school /organisation.

A pattern of the following behaviours are examples of types of bullying:

- Exclusion with negative consequences
- Verbal abuse/insults (Direct or indirect)
- Physical abuse
- Being treated less favourably than colleagues
- Shouting
- Intrusion – pestering, spying or stalking
- Menacing behaviour
- Intimidation
- Aggression
- Undermining behaviour
- Excessive monitoring of work
- Humiliation
- Withholding work-related information
- Setting unreasonable and unrealistic targets
- Blame for things beyond the person's control

- Unequal treatment

This list is not exhaustive.

It is noted that a once-off incident is not normally considered to be bullying behaviour.

### **What are the Effects of Bullying?**

International research shows that the effects may be physiological, psychological and behavioral.

**Effects on the individual:** Research shows that individuals who are continually bullied lose self-confidence as self-esteem is eroded and they are at an increased risk of suffering stress. There may be serious effects on health and the person's career may be adversely affected.

**Effects on the Organisation:** Individuals who are bullied will find it difficult if not impossible to give of their best in the workplace. Among the well-documented effects are increased sickness/absenteeism, low morale, a tense atmosphere or cliques.

### **An individual may be reluctant to take action for the following reasons:**

- The particular workplace culture could passively support bullying i.e. staff in general could be unaware of the seriousness of bullying.
- The fear that the complaint may not be taken seriously.
- S/he may be seen as unable for the job or/and a weak person.
- If the alleged bully is a person in authority, there may be the fear that management will support the alleged perpetrator(s).
- Making a complaint could result in further intimidation and increased bullying.
- There may be no witnesses to the bullying and it could be one person's word against another
- S/he might be seen to be lacking in credibility or/and personal status
- Where there are witnesses, these might be unwilling to come forward because they may be afraid of being branded troublemakers

### **Occurrence of Workplace bullying can be avoided by:**

- Being familiar with the school policy.
- Participating in in-service with respect to dignity at work.
- Engaging in consultation with respect to the development and review of the dignity in the workplace policy.
- Being aware and educated about workplace bullying.

### **What can I do to stop people bullying me?**

Tell them it has to stop! If you find it difficult to make an approach, tell somebody who may be able to give you support– The Principal, the Deputy Principal, the ASTI Steward, the school Chaplain, the school Counsellor or colleague.

### **What may be the consequences of not dealing with workplace bullying?**

There are consequences for the individuals who perceive themselves to be targets of bullying behaviour, for the alleged perpetrators(s), for organisational culture/ethos and for the Board of Management.

### **The following performance criteria exist**

- A policy on Dignity in the Workplace (and the prevention of workplace bullying forms part of the health, safety and welfare strategies at work)
- Awareness/availability of Policy
- Existence of Charter in a visible place: Dignity in the Workplace
- Dignity in the Workplace as well as inappropriate/bullying behaviour are defined in the Board Policy
- Employee's right to complain is respected
- Informal resolution of complaints is encouraged.

## **Procedures for Dealing with Workplace Bullying**

### **Methods:**

There is an informal and formal method of dealing with alleged cases of bullying:

#### **Informal**

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. 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 another colleague, a Contact Person, Staff Representative, Principal, Deputy Principal.

#### **Formal**

A complainant may decide, without prejudice, to bypass the informal procedure and proceed with formal procedures

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

### **The Procedure for dealing with bullying in the workplace is as follows:**

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.



- a. Any employee who believes he or she is being bullied should explain clearly 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 a Contact Person. A Contact Person in the school environment could, for example, be one of the following;

- A work colleague
- A member of management
- An employee
- An ASTI representative

In this situation the Contact Person should listen patiently, be supportive and discuss the various options open to the employee concerned.

- b. 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.
- c. A complainant may decide, without prejudice, to bypass the informal procedure. Choosing not to use the informal procedure should not reflect negatively on a complainant in the formal procedure.

## **2. Formal Procedure.**

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

- a. 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.
- b. 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).

- c. 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 the validity or otherwise of the allegation(s).

## **2.1 Investigation**

- a. 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).
- b. The investigation should be governed by terms of reference, agreed between the parties in advance.
- c. The investigator(s) should meet with the complainant and alleged perpetrator(s) and any witness or relevant persons on an individual confidential basis with a view to establishing the facts surrounding the allegation(s). Both the complainant and alleged perpetrator(s) may be accompanied by a work colleague or employee/ASTI representative if so desired.
- d. 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.
- e. The complainant and the alleged perpetrator(s) should be informed in writing of the findings of the investigation.
- f. Both parties should be given the opportunity to comment on the findings before any action is decided upon 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.

## **2.2 Outcome**

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.

## **3. Confidentiality**

All individuals involved in the procedures referred to above should maintain absolute confidentiality on the subject.

## **4. Record Keeping**

At all stages of the process a clear record should be kept of the following;

- the investigation undertaken.
- all communications 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 be included in 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 be included in all other files. Where a statement of the outcome of the investigation confirms the allegation 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 member of staff for complaining about bullying/harassment is considered a disciplinary offence. A malicious complaint made by a staff member will be treated as 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.

**The policy is subject to periodic review**

Signed:   
(For and on behalf of the Board of Management)

Date: 13/06/2017