

## **Dignity at Work Policy**

The Board of Management (BOM) of St Christopher's Primary School has adopted this policy following consultation with all staff members.

The policy is formulated in light of the Labour Relations Commission's Codes of Practice S.I. No.17/2002 and S.I. 208/2012 for addressing bullying in the workplace and harassment/sexual harassment respectively, together with the Health & Safety Authority Code of Practice (2007) on the prevention and resolution of bullying at work.

### **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 will not be tolerated by this school. 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 DES Circulars 61/2017 and 62/2017 with respect to the assault of teachers and SNAs will be apply, as appropriate.

### **B. What is Workplace Bullying and Harassment?**

The BOM defines adult bullying as 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.

A key characteristic of bullying is that it usually takes place over a period of time, it is regular and persistent inappropriate behavior, which is specifically targeted at one employee or a group of employees.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of examples of types of behavior that may constitute bullying:

- Verbal abuse/insults, undermining remarks
- Exclusion with negative consequences
- Intimidation
- Aggression
- Humiliation, ridicule, belittling efforts
- Excessive monitoring of work
- Withholding work-related information

Harassment is any form of unwanted conduct related to any of the following grounds:

- i. Gender
- ii. Civil status
- iii. Family status
- iv. Sexual orientation
- v. Religious belief
- vi. Age
- vii. Disability
- viii. Race, colour, nationality or ethnic or national origin
- ix. Membership of the Traveller community

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.

Unlike bullying, a single incident may constitute harassment.

Sexual harassment is any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and/or 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. 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 he/she may decide, the Board of Management will take seriously any allegation of workplace bullying or harassment.

Supportive and effective procedures, in accordance with nationally-agreed procedures 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.

The Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme (formally called Carecall), a free and confidential counselling service, is available for teachers, SNAs and other staff. The Freephone number is 1800 411 057 and is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

#### **E. 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, practices and procedures to support the exercise of that duty in our school.

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 and safe place to work, where every the dignity of every individual is respected.