



Ennis National School

Dignity at Work Policy

Developed By:	G Walsh in conjunction with ENS Staff
Ratified by Board of Management	2nd December 2024

Introduction

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 for Employers and Employees on the Prevention and Resolution of Bullying at Work 2021*.

The policy is informed by the *Working Together 2024– Ag Obair Le Chéile* document, which was prepared by the following management bodies: the Catholic Primary Schools Management Association, the Church of Ireland Board of Education, Educate Together, An Forás Pátrúnachta, the National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education, the Muslim Primary Education Board.

Regular review of this policy and discussions based upon it will take place as often as is practicable, and / or when updated Codes of Practice are introduced.

Rationale: Core Principles of Policy

Ennis NS is where we spend a considerable part of our lives. Promoting and maintaining positive and professional interpersonal relationships is central to our work and wellbeing. Ennis NS 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 at ENS. 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 procedures (in line with *Working Together 2024– Ag Obair Le Chéile*) - 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 applied, as appropriate.

Ennis National School: A Positive Work Environment

We all have a responsibility to make ENS a good place to work. As indicated by data collected from staff at ENS, a good place to work has a positive work environment that is characterised by, but not limited to, the following:

- A supportive, trusting atmosphere
- Good and open communication (e.g. through opportunities at regular staff meetings)
- Appropriate interpersonal behaviour
- Collegiality
- Teacher / SNA 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)
- Staff wellbeing being a priority

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 through staff meetings, information messages, staff consultation (open and/or confidential) or other appropriate means and may 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.

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 ENS Safety Statement - as mandated under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 – will also include a commitment to a positive work environment to reflect our commitment to respect and dignity.

Definitions: What is Adult / Workplace Bullying and Harassment?

From data collected, there is a general understanding amongst staff at ENS of what harassment and bullying is and what it looks like in the workplace. To avoid any doubt, the following defines what constitutes workplace bullying, harassment and sexual harassment.

Bullying

The Board of Management defines 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 behaviour, 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
- Excessive monitoring of work
- Intimidation or harassment
- Humiliation
- Undermining
- Dominance or abuse of power
- Different or less favourable treatment
- Belittling a person's opinion / efforts
- Disseminating malicious rumours, gossip or innuendo
- Intrusion – pestering, spying or stalking
- Excessive and unreasonable monitoring
- Withholding information necessary for proper performance of a person's job
- Repeatedly manipulating a person's job content and targets
- Blaming a person for things beyond their control
- Exclusion or isolation with negative consequences

- Use of aggressive or obscene language
- Other menacing behaviour.

When considering the definition of bullying it is also important to note the following non-exhaustive list of what bullying *is not*:

- Strongly expressing differences of opinion
- Offering constructive feedback, guidance, or advice about work-related behaviour which is not of itself welcome
- Ordinary performance management
- Reasonable corrective action taken by Principal/ employer which may include monitoring of the work of the Teacher
- Workplace conflict where people disagree with or disregard the others' point of view
- Appropriate workplace engagement
- An isolated incident which may be an affront to dignity in the workplace but as it is a once-off incident, it is not considered to be bullying.

Harassment

Harassment is any form of 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, related to any of the following grounds:

1. Gender
2. Civil status
3. Family status
4. Sexual orientation
5. Religious belief
6. Age
7. Disability
8. Race, colour, nationality or ethnic or national origin
9. Membership of the Traveller community

Unlike bullying, a single incident may constitute harassment. Harassment may constitute any act or conduct, such as, spoken words, gestures or the production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other material.

Sexual 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.

Sexual Harassment may include:

- Physical conduct of a sexual nature
- Verbal conduct of a sexual nature
- Non-verbal contact of a sexual nature which may include the sharing (or threatening to share) sexually offensive images and/or the engagement of social media in a manner that is sexually offensive.

The *Code of Practice on Sexual Harassment and Harassment at Work, 2022*, states that the intention of the perpetrator of the sexual harassment is irrelevant and as such ENS recognise that parties subject to this procedure may or may not have intended for the effect of their behaviour to be the experienced effect of the alleged victim – but nonetheless may ultimately constitute sexual harassment.

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.

Digital Harassment

It is to be 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 also 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 the school community.

If members of staff agree to share contact details, they should not be expected to reply to school-related communications outside of school time if they do not wish to do so. While messages may be sent via Aladdin or email at any time, staff members are not expected to check in to them or respond to them outside of working hours.

Harassment and Wider School Community

At Ennis NS, we believe that all members of the school community have the right to feel happy, safe and to be given opportunities to learn. Anyone entering our building or grounds or those involved in school-related activities off-site should be afforded these rights. In the same light, all adults in the school community have a responsibility to ensure that others are not denied these same rights. Pupils are also expected to take on these responsibilities, in line with their level of age, social maturity and understanding. It is important that all stakeholders behave in a manner that falls within this *Dignity at Work Policy*. Some examples of acceptable behaviour are listed as follows:

- All stakeholders should speak to each other with respect. Using aggressive language or tones is not acceptable. If a stakeholder displays signs of aggression in the school building or grounds, he/she may be asked to remove themselves from the building/grounds. In certain cases, the Gardai may be called to ensure the safety of all parties.
- Stakeholders should not interrupt teacher/pupil contact time. Should a parent/guardian wish to meet with a teacher, he/she should make an appointment to do so through the school office, Aladdin or written communication to the staff member in question.
- When requesting a meeting with a staff member, it is good practice to outline the purpose of the meeting when making the appointment. This can save considerable time and help to identify supporting material for the issue at hand.
- Stakeholders should not isolate others or attempt to influence others against particular individuals or groups in the school.
- Violence or aggressive behaviour will not be tolerated. An Garda Síochána may become involved in any incident of violence or aggression between two parties.
- Staff members will only speak about a particular pupil with his/her parents/guardians. Other pupils will not be discussed. The staff of the school will respect your child's right to privacy, so it is asked that parents respect other pupil's right to privacy also.
- In line with our Child Safeguarding Statement, stakeholders should never approach a child in an aggressive manner.

The Resolution Process:

A) What Happens if there is a staff relation difficulty?

It is recommended that parties engage at an early stage in order to achieve early resolution of staff relation difficulties at ENS.

Accordingly, the first approach to resolving difficulties / areas of conflict lies initially with the individuals / parties involved. Before engagement with formal recommended procedure, it is envisaged that the parties will attempt to resolve matters informally between themselves, in the first instance before escalation to formal procedures.

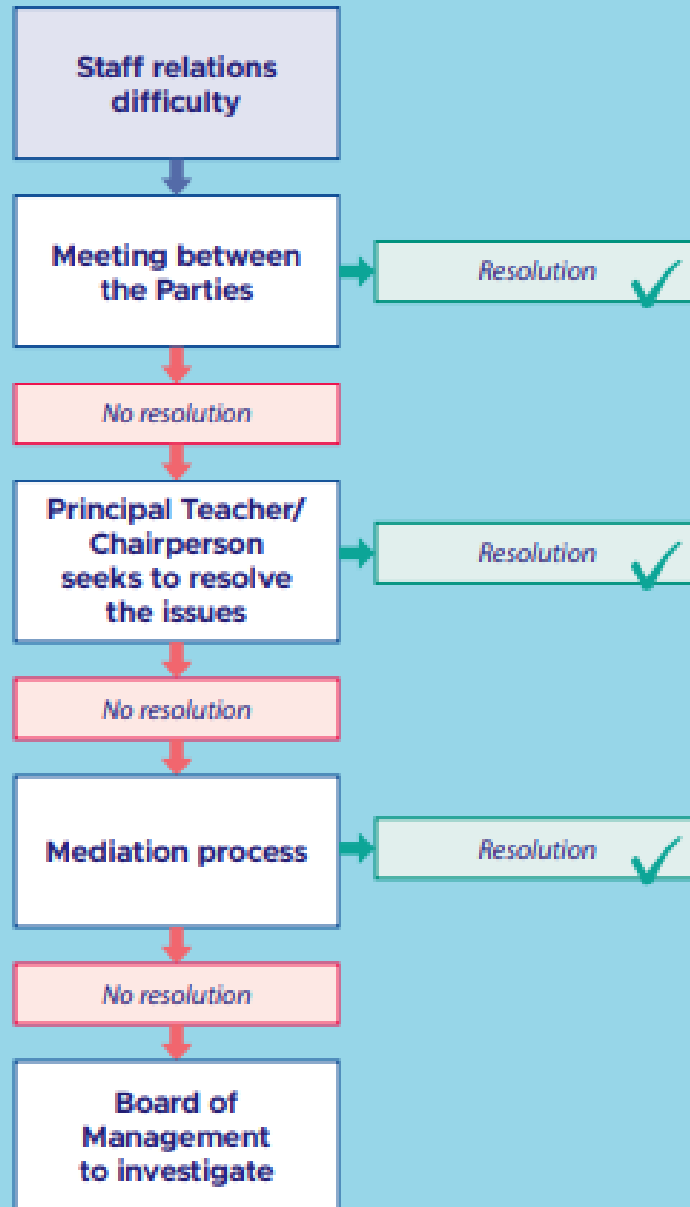
Effective, open and constructive engagement and communication is key to early resolution and is emphasised throughout this process. The parties may be open to a suggestion to involve a colleague or other mutually agreed person at the informal stage to seek a resolution. In this instance, the *Deputy Principal (DP)* and *Assistant Principal 1 (AP1)* Post Holders - an impartial group / third party, as requested by staff through data collected - may be approached to be involved, on an informal basis, to listen to concerns and grievances. This neutral third party will help to create a safe environment where both sides can openly discuss their issues and work toward a mutual solution.

When advice or guidance is requested by the parties involved from the DP or AP1, the DP or AP1 may need an agreed time - at least 3 working days in any case - to deliberate. While such guidance may help form a solution, it is not binding. Third parties may refrain from providing guidance if they feel it could jeopardize potential solutions.

It is acknowledged that sometimes informal engagement is not successful and where that is the case, the formal staff relations procedure provides a mechanism for the resolution of such issues.

An outline summary of the recommended formal staff relations procedures is as follows:

Summary



Please refer to the *Working Together 2024 - Ag Obair Le Chéile* document (attached) for further detail on the procedures and templates for recording at each stage.

B) 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.

The following stages of the procedure which should be adopted by an individual teacher for addressing complaints of adult bullying/harassment. In considering whether or not to initiate this procedure, teachers should get advice.

In this regard, advice is available from the following, as appropriate:

- INTO Head Office
- INTO Local CEC Representative
- Employee Assistance Service (contact details below)

Chairpersons and members of boards of management can seek advice from the relevant Management Body for their school, in relation to implementing the procedure. The parties to this procedure who are available to support in the above are: Catholic Primary Schools Management Association (CPSMA), Church of Ireland Education Board, Educate Together, An Forás Pátrúnachta, Muslim Primary Education Board, and National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education (NABMSE).

Fundamental tenets of this procedure are that:

- a. A complainant or complainants will be treated with fairness, sensitivity, and respect.
- b. A person or persons alleged to have bullied or harassed will be treated with fairness, sensitivity and respect.
- c. Confidentiality is assured for all parties concerned.
- d. All parties involved will not be victimised as a result of their participation in the process.
- e. All parties involved will be afforded fairness and natural justice.
- f. There is an onus on Party A to provide specific details in order for Party B to be afforded the opportunity to respond.

Timely addressing of an allegation of Bullying or Harassment

Generally, if either party to the allegation is on leave the procedure is paused for the duration of the leave. Notwithstanding this, there may be incidents/ circumstances where a party involved in this

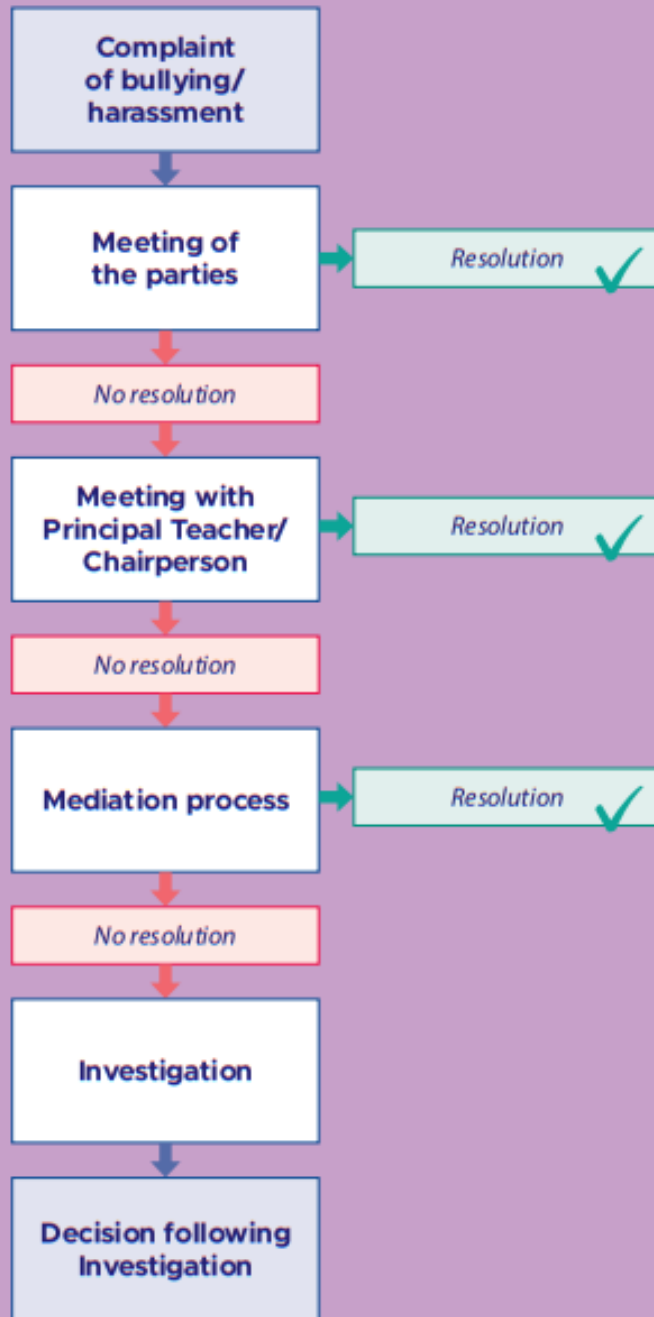
procedure who is on leave and is medically certified to, wishes to continue. This is allowable subject to consent, e.g. sick leave/career break.

It is incumbent on Party A to raise their complaint in a timely manner and as a rule, within 6 months of the issue(s) which give rise to the complaint. In exceptional circumstances, the six-month time limit may be extended e.g. in circumstances where Party A is on approved leave, school closures etc.

The time limit above does not exclude the employer's obligation to address inappropriate behaviour and take preventative action where issues of concern are brought to their attention.

An outline summary of the recommended formal bullying / harassment procedures is as follows:

Summary



Please refer to the *Working Together 2024 - Ag Obair Le Chéile* document ([attached](#)) for further detail on the procedures and templates for recording at each stage.

Supportive and effective formal procedures, in accordance with the nationally-agreed *Working Together 2024 – Ag Obair Le Chéile* document, are in place at ENS. 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. Details of the procedures are attached at the end of this policy document and are posted on the staff Health, Safety & Wellbeing Noticeboard in the ENS staffroom. For further information, please refer to the [Working Together 2024– Ag Obair Le Chéile](#) document.

Currently via [Spectrum.Life](#), the Employee Assistance Service (EAS) offers free support for digital and mental health and wellbeing. **The service is available to all school staff** and is known as ‘Wellbeing Together: Folláine le Chéile’.

The EAS provides advice to employees on a range of issues including wellbeing, legal, financial, bereavement, conflict, and mediation. It also provides support and advice to managers to help them deal with health and wellbeing issues in the workplace.

To access support, freephone 1800 411 057. Alternatively, text ‘Hi’ to 087 369 0010 on SMS or WhatsApp. The service is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and so parties can engage with the EAS at any stage.

Employees can access the Spectrum.Life wellbeing portal by signing up to the [Spectrum.Life website](#). The organisation Code may be pre-populated. If not, organisation code is **yVlIU17**

Summary

The Board of Management at ENS recognises a duty of care towards all employees. Similarly, school staff 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.

Inappropriate and undermining behaviour amongst staff is unacceptable and taken seriously, as is such behaviour when perpetrated against a staff member at ENS by any other person.

Together, we at ENS are committed to maintaining a work environment where respectful, open and equal relationships are the norm. We are also committed to resolving any potential issue that may become apparent in the workplace.

In summary, we are committed to having a good and safe place to work, where every individual's dignity is respected.

The Board of Management of Ennis National School has adopted this policy following consultation with all staff members.

Signed:

Ray McInerney

Principal

2nd December 2024

Date

Dan O'Connell

Chairperson of Board of Management

2nd December 2024

Date