



Respect & Dignity in Our Work Keeping Our Workplace Positive & Effective

A Commitment to Dignity & Respect

Powerscourt National School is a school which is committed to creating, maintaining and constantly striving to enhance a positive work environment where work is done in an atmosphere of respect, collaboration, openness and equality.

Behaviour which is not nice, including adult bullying and harassment in the workplace are phenomena which we as a staff at Powerscourt National School will seek to prevent. Further we declare that such unacceptable behaviour will not be tolerated. As a team, we believe that all employees have the right to be treated with dignity and respect. As a team we recognise that we all have our part to play in modelling and promoting good behaviour, and that in the unlikely event of experiencing bullying behaviour, we will immediately explain to our partner(s) of communication that their behaviour is offensive to us and why. If it continues, those school staff members who are the management team are committed to intervening in an appropriate manner.

Accepted procedures will be used to investigate and deal with allegations of harassment, bullying and other inappropriate behaviour. It is accepted that the procedures used will depend on the context. We have identified such appropriate procedures to be those outlined in the IPPN document '*Supporting each other*', the INTO document '*Working Together*' and '*DES Circular 40/97 - Assaults on Staff in Primary Schools*'.

Definition of what we consider Bullying & Harassment in our Work Place

Our School Team has adopted the definition of adult bullying as set out by the Task Force (2001):

'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.'

In reaching consensus on our definition of 'Harassment' we consulted with each other, reviewed current Employment Equality legislation and researched generally but not exclusively based on a person's standing within one of the nine categories specified in legislation such as gender, marital status, religion, sexual orientation etc. We view harassment as '*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.*'

We recognise that bullying and harassment complaints may arise among work colleagues, but may also arise in relation to visitors to the school. Visitors to the school include frequent substitute staff, extra-curricular activity (ECA) staff, specialist staff, work experience students, volunteers and student teachers. In either case, our commitment to a positive workplace where dignity at work is respected prevails.

A Positive Work Environment

We agree that we will all work to make this school a good place to work and are creating this policy to copperfasten that commitment. Powerscourt National School is a good place to work and we will strive to keep it that way, through

- A supportive atmosphere
- Good and open communication (e.g. through opportunities and 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 in the school staff of Powerscourt National School has a responsibility to play his/her part in contributing to our positive work environment, including a team member who may witness behaviour that is not nice. We each have a clear responsibility to raise concerns about dignity at work and threats to this, in an appropriate and timely manner.

Reflecting our commitment to respect and dignity, our Safety Statement will be amended to include a commitment to a positive work environment.

In developing and adopting this policy in Powerscourt National School, we have taken a number of steps to examine our work environment and, as necessary, have agreed changes which reflect a commitment to dignity at work. These steps will be initiated both by the team generally and supported by management. Reflecting our commitment to a positive workplace, we have agreed to review this policy each year.

Adult Bullying, Harassment & Not Nice Behaviour Can Be a Problem

Powerscourt National School recognises that adult bullying and harassment are problems if they occur in any workplace. These behaviours generally amount to psychological abuse which causes serious pain and suffering. We believe that in addition to its unacceptable effects on our team who may be targeted, these behaviours do not help our effectiveness as a team.

Bullying may include behaviours such as:

- Verbal abuse/insults, undermining remarks
- Shaming or embarrassing people publicly
- Excessive monitoring of work
- Withholding work-related information
- Exclusion with negative consequences

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. Where bullying or harassment does occur, we will deal with it through the agreed procedure.

Procedures in Response to an Allegation of Bullying or Harassment

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 a stress on confidentiality. The Board of 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 against an employee of this school by any other person. Together we are committed to building and maintaining a work environment where inclusive, respectful, open and equal relationships are the norm.

If any staff member or visitor feels that she or he is being subjected to behaviour which undermines his or her dignity 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. 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.

An employee who feels he or she is been 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. 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 on their behalf. In a case involving the Principal, the intervention of the Board of Management can be requested.

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, on their behalf. 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. 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. Where the matter remains unresolved, the Board of Management may request both parties to consider mediation.

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

requested to attend mediation before alleged offending behaviour is the subject of a formal investigation.

If the mediation process does not produce a satisfactory outcome, the complainant may seek to have the matter resolved through formal investigation. 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. 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. The alleged perpetrator will be advised that the complaint is the subject of a formal investigation. He or she will be given a copy of the written complaint and invited to respond to the allegations in writing within two weeks. A copy of the response will be forwarded to the complainant.

The investigation will be conducted thoroughly and objectively and with due respect for the rights of both the complainant and the alleged perpetrator. Both parties will be required to co-operate fully with the investigation. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the investigation to the greatest extent consistent with the requirements of a field investigation. It is not possible, however, to guarantee the anonymity of the complainant or any person who participates in the investigation. 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. 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. The investigator may interview anyone they feel can assist with the investigation. Staff are expected to co-operate fully with the investigation and would be fully supported throughout the process. 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. It will be considered a disciplinary offence to intimidate or exert pressure on any person who may be required to attend as a witness.

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. The investigation will be governed by clear terms of reference based on the written complaint and any other matters relevant to the complaint. The terms of reference shall specify the following: the timescale within which the investigation will be completed and the scope of the investigation. Both parties will be given copies of all relevant documentation prior to and during the investigation process. The investigator(s) will conduct separate interviews with the complainant and the alleged perpetrator with a view to establishing the facts surrounding the allegations. Both the complainant and the alleged perpetrator may be accompanied by staff representative or work colleague if so desired. The investigator(s) will interview any witnesses to the alleged incidents of bullying or harassment and other relevant persons. Persons may be required to attend further meetings to respond to new evidence or provide clarification on any of the issues raised. On completion of the investigation, the investigator(s) will submit a written report of the findings and recommendations to the Board of Management. Both parties will be given a copy of the investigation report and an opportunity to comment before any action is decided upon by the Board of Management.

If the complaint is upheld, the matter may be progressed through the disciplinary procedure or other appropriate action may be taken such as counselling and mediation. The complainant and the alleged perpetrator will be informed in writing of management's decision. When a complaint is not sustained, no action will be made against the complainant, provided that the complaint was made in good faith. Retaliation against a complainant, witness or any other party will constitute a serious disciplinary offence.

We acknowledge that any one of us have the right to take such advice or steps as they themselves may decide but accept that the ISM team and Board of Management will take seriously any allegations or workplace bullying or harassment.

These procedures to address and investigate allegations focus on the earliest possible resolution and will proceed as necessary from informal to formal stages and will have a stress on confidentiality.

In Conclusion

As members of Powerscourt school staff, we all have a duty of care to ourselves and each other. Management has a duty of care towards employees. Similarly, employees have a duty of care towards one another. In formulating this policy, we sought to set out principles and practices to support the exercise of that duty in our school.

Just as inappropriate and undermining behaviour among colleagues is taken seriously, so is such behaviour when perpetrated against an employee of this school by any other person.

Together we are committed to building and maintaining a work environment where respectful, open and equal relationships are the norm. We are committed to having a good place to work.

- Following consultation with all staff members, the Board of Management of Powerscourt National School has adopted this policy on _____.
- 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)*'.

Ratified by the Board of Management

Chairperson: _____

Date: _____

10th May '22 .