



Dignity at Work Policy

1. Introduction

As a school community, Navan Educate Together National School is committed to creating, maintaining and constantly striving to enhance a positive work environment. All who work here are expected to respect the right to dignity in the work setting. Every person will be treated equally and be respected for their individuality and diversity. Bullying or harassment in any form, from any party within and without our school, is unacceptable and will be proactively addressed. Our policies and procedures will underpin the objectives of this charter.

All individuals, whether directly employed or contracted by Navan Educate Together N.S. or volunteering as a member of the Board of Management or Parent Teacher Association or who are volunteering or completing work experience in another capacity have a duty and responsibility to uphold this Dignity at Work Charter.

2. Rationale

Navan Educate Together National School is committed to protecting the dignity of all those who work within the school. In particular, we are committed to ensuring that our school is free from any form of bullying or harassment at work and that our work environment is conducive to providing a high-quality education in an atmosphere of respect, collaboration, openness and equality.

Staff in Navan Educate Together N.S. are encouraged to reach their full potential mentally, physically, spiritually, emotionally and socially, in an atmosphere and environment where they feel safe, valued and secure and where respect for self and others is the norm.

Bullying behaviour or lack of respect for others' dignity, by its very nature, undermines and dilutes the quality of work and imposes psychological damage. As such, it is an issue which must be positively and firmly addressed through a range of school based measures and strategies. This charter will ensure that all members of our school community will be enabled to act effectively in dealing with this behaviour.

Both the school's management and its employees have responsibilities for creating and contributing to a positive work environment, free from bullying and harassment. Employees also have an obligation to cooperate with the investigation of complaints of bullying or harassment in the school.

Bullying and harassment at work are incompatible with the vision of our patron body, Educate Together, and with the characteristic spirit of our school.

3. Positive Work Environment

Navan Educate Together N.S. will work to create a positive climate within which the dignity of all in the whole-school community is respected. It is agreed that we will all work together to make this school a good place to work. A good place to work has a positive work environment which is characterised by:

- A supportive atmosphere
- Good and open communication (e.g. through opportunities at regular staff meetings, parent/teacher meetings, staff collaboration, formal and informal conversations, professional development experiences etc.)
- Appropriate interpersonal behaviour procedures
- Opportunities for members of our school community to collaborate on shared projects

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- Open, constructive 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)
- Opportunities for social interaction that helps build relationships based on mutual respect
- Respect and value for the unique strengths of each member of our staff

Support for the wellbeing of staff is essential and is crucial to sustaining staff engagement, enthusiasm and ability to model resilience. NETNS management and staff prioritise the wellbeing of every staff member and the adoption of this policy, "Dignity at Work", actively demonstrates a commitment to a proactive approach in supporting the wellbeing of all staff.

Every person in the school community of NETNS has a responsibility to play their part in contributing to our positive work environment. We have a clear responsibility to raise concerns about dignity at work, in an appropriate and timely manner. A person who is a witness or a bystander to threats has a responsibility to follow the school's policy. They have a duty to take action.

4. Definitions

Unacceptable Behaviours: This policy focuses on three threats to dignity – bullying, harassment and sexual harassment.

The following definitions have been adopted.

Bullying

- "Bullying" is defined here as 'repeated, inappropriate behaviour which is specifically targeted at the recipient in order to undermine their dignity.
- Workplace Bullying is repeated inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another or

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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.

Examples of bullying behaviours are:

- Verbal abuse/insults or undermining remarks
- Excessive or unfounded monitoring of work
- Withholding of work-related information
- Exclusion
- Constant humiliation, ridicule or belittling efforts, often in front of others
- Verbal abuse, including shouting, use of obscene language or spreading malicious rumours
- Inappropriate overruling of a person's authority

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.

Harassment

- Harassment is any act of conduct including spoken words, gestures or the productions, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other material, if the action or conduct is unwelcome by the employee and could reasonably be regarded as offensive, humiliating or offensive.
- Harassment also includes 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.

Examples of harassment are:

- Ridicule
- Written harassment through emails, text messages etc.
- Physical harassment

- Exclusion
- Persistent negative body language

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is defined as any act of physical intimacy, request for sexual favours, other acts or conduct including spoken words, gestures or the production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other material that is unwelcome and could reasonably be regarded as sexually offensive, humiliating or intimidating. Sexual harassment may consist of a single incident or repeated inappropriate behaviour. It may be targeted at one person or at a group.

Examples of sexual harassment are:

- Unwanted physical contact of a sexual nature such as unnecessary touching, patting, pinching or brushing against another employee's body.
- Verbal contact of a sexual nature, continued unwelcomed suggestions for social activity outside school, flirtations, suggestive remarks, innuendos or lewd comments
- Non-verbal contact such as the display of pornographic or sexually suggestive pictures, objects, written materials, emails or text messages
- Unwanted or derogatory comments about dress or appearance
- Leering and suggestive gestures

An act/acts of bullying, harassment or sexual harassment which occur outside the school premises or outside normal school hours, may be considered to be workplace bullying or harassment provided the perpetrator was acting in the course of employment, for example, at a training course, conference or school-related event.

5. Policy

Management is committed to intervening in an appropriate manner utilising one of the accepted Management, INTO, IMPACT or Fórsa procedures to investigate and deal with

allegations of bullying or harassment. The provisions of Circular 40/97 on Assaults on Staff in Primary Schools will be utilised as appropriate.

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 an emphasis on confidentiality.

Procedures in response to an allegation of bullying or harassment:

Step One: Decide to address the matter

If the complainant considers that s/he is being bullied or harassed, and decides to address the matter, s/he should follow these stages. In light of the potential effects of bullying or harassment on an individual, including loss of confidence, extreme upset, anxiety or fear, the complainant may initially decide to seek Union or other assistance, including the Employee Assistance Scheme or other counselling, in order to consider the most appropriate application of the procedures in the circumstances.

The complainant should keep a record of the pattern of behaviour or instances where s/he considers that bullying/harassment has occurred. The record should contain details such as dates, times, persons present, details of what was said or what occurred.

Step 2: Informally address the problem

The complainant who considers that s/he is being bullied, sexually harassed or harassed on other discriminatory grounds (Party A), should request a meeting with the alleged perpetrator (Party B), in order to discuss matters. The following should apply:

1. Party A should clearly outline his/her difficulties and should clearly object to the bullying/harassment and request that it stop;

2. It is important that Party A bear in mind, that the other member of staff may not be aware that his/her behaviour is causing difficulty;
3. Both parties should seek to resolve their differences and establish a pattern of interaction exclusive of any forms of bullying/harassment;
4. Party B may respond to Party A at that meeting or if requested, should be given an opportunity to consider his/her response, in which case the meeting may be adjourned. Party B should respond in a constructive manner;
5. The resolution, as appropriate, may include any of the following, e.g. a commitment to cease the particular behaviour, modify the behaviour, and plan to eliminate situations where the parties would be in conflict, or monitoring. Alternatively, it may emerge as a result of the discussions between the parties, that there may have been a degree of misunderstanding in relation to certain behaviours and the resolution may make provision for compromise or appropriate explanation or acknowledgement.

Where necessary, the meeting may be facilitated by a third party, generally a work colleague. Matters should remain confidential between the parties. If there is no satisfactory indication of resolution between the parties, Party A should refer the complaint to stage 3, i.e. formal procedures.

Step 3: Formally address the problem

Stage 3 provides a mechanism for the principal teacher to intervene and resolve the matter. However, if the principal teacher is one of the parties, the Chairperson of the Board of Management should then be involved, in an individual capacity, in order to achieve resolution. In circumstances where the Chairperson may also be involved at stage 2, another member of the Board of Management may be designated to intervene.

1. Party A should advise Party B that he/she is proceeding with stage 3.
2. Party A should state his/her complaint in writing and request the principal teacher (or Chairperson of the Board of Management, as the case may be) to investigate the matter.

3. The principal teacher (or Chairperson of the Board of Management, as the case may be or an Investigator/Facilitator/Mediator appointed by the Principal or the Chairperson) would:
 - a. obtain background details including details of what occurred at the previous stage;
 - b. consider the pattern of behaviour and the timescale;
 - c. hear the parties and seek to resolve the matter;
 - d. act in a fair and impartial manner and deal with the matter sensitively having regard to the nature of the problem and the principles of due process;
 - e. exercise judgment and make decisions which s/he considers necessary to resolve matters.

The outcome of the discussions should be noted by the parties. The matter should be dealt with confidentiality. Where resolution has not been possible, and particularly where there is a likelihood of the offending behaviour continuing, either party or the principal teacher (or Chairperson of the Board of Management as the case may be) should refer the matter to the Board in accordance with Stage 4 below.

Step 4: Board of Management (BOM)

It is open to any of the parties or the principal teacher (or chairperson of the board of management, as the case may be) to refer the matter to the BOM for investigation. The referral should be in writing and dated and should include a copy of the written complaint.

- The BOM should consider the issues and investigate the matter. The BOM may enquire into the background of the difficulties including obtaining details of the sequence of initiatives taken at previous stages;
- The BOM or the Chairperson of the BOM or an Investigator/Facilitator/Mediator appointed by the BoM may meet teachers individually or collectively, and may also request written submissions from the parties, having regard also to the principles of due process;
- The BOM may request the principal teacher to furnish a written submission;

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- The BOM may afford the parties an opportunity to present their case orally at a board meeting. For mediation purposes, this would happen in each other's presence;
- Following oral presentation the BOM may designate the Chairperson to meet with the parties again, separately or jointly, if further clarification is required or to work towards a resolution;
- The BOM may convene a number of meetings in order to achieve resolution;
- The BOM shall act in a fair and impartial manner in order to achieve resolution and shall deal with the matter sensitively, having regard to the nature of the problem.

Having considered all matters, the BOM should reach a view on the matter not later than 20 school days after receipt of the written request/referral.

Where the BOM finds that bullying/harassment has not occurred, both parties should be informed accordingly. No action shall be taken against the complainant provided the allegation was made in good faith. If the complaint was brought maliciously, it should be treated as misconduct and appropriate action taken, (as per relevant Disciplinary Procedures.)

Where the BOM finds that bullying/harassment has occurred, the BOM should deal with the matter appropriately and effectively, (i.e. invoking the relevant Disciplinary Procedures.)

This may include:

- the issuing of a clear warning that bullying/harassment is not acceptable in the school workplace and that it will not be tolerated;
- a demand that all forms of bullying/harassment cease and that acceptable patterns of interaction be established between the parties;
- an instruction to the offending party that s/he apologise/ express regret or give an assurance that the bullying/harassment behaviour will cease;
- seeking a commitment to attend counselling or seek appropriate professional assistance, perhaps through the Employee Assistance scheme;

More serious disciplinary sanctions as may be commensurate and appropriate, such as:

- oral warning

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- written reprimand
- written warning
- final written warning
- suspension
- dismissal

(Reference also: Circular 0060/2009)

As part of any resolution, the BOM should monitor the situation and should put systems in place to ensure that it is kept informed that resolutions are being implemented. The BOM should keep matters under review.

Where an employee is victimised as a result of invoking or participating in any aspect of the complaints procedure, including acting as a witness for another employee, such behaviour will also be subject to disciplinary action. (Ref: Working Together document.)

No record of any complaint will be registered on an employee's file unless the formal procedure outlined above has been invoked.

6. Summary

Management has a duty of care towards employees, Similarly, employees have a duty of care towards each other. This policy seeks to set out principles and practices to support the exercise of that duty of care in our school. Just as inappropriate and undermining behaviour among work colleagues is taken seriously, so is such behaviour when perpetrated by another person against an employee, Board member and/or a visitor to our school. Together we are committed to building and maintaining a work environment where respectful, open and equal relationships are the norm.

7. Ratification

Following consultation with all staff members, the Board of Management of Navan Educate Together National School adopted this policy on 8th February 2024.

Signed:  Date: 8/2/24
Chairperson

This policy has been formulated in light of a number of background documents, including the 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).

