



## **Dignity at Work Policy**

The Board of Management of Kilkenny School Project has adopted this policy in 2024, 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**

Kilkenny School Project NS (KSP) is committed to having a positive work environment where work is done in an atmosphere of respect, collaboration, openness and equality.

Staff members (Teachers, Special Needs Assistant, Office Administrator and Ancillary Staff) who work in Kilkenny School Project demonstrate and bring the equality-based ethos and Charter to life through their daily interactions with parents/guardians, colleagues and pupils. These interactions are underpinned by respectful communication and building positive relationships. Each member of staff performs a different role in the school and each is fully entitled to be treated with professional respect and with dignity.

The principal is the leader of teaching and learning in a school, but also has a key role to play in establishing a school culture that ensures all members of the school community, including staff, feel welcome and are made aware of the key contribution they make to the school. Central to such a culture is for staff to be included at an appropriate level in all decision making, including changes to policy, practice and new initiatives and programmes.

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 special needs assistants will be applied, as appropriate.

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

The Board of Management 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. Ethnicity, or nationality
- 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.

The relationship between parent/guardian and teachers is based on mutual respect, trust and goodwill, and a shared commitment to the student’s best interests.

It is agreed that the adoption of this policy will be accompanied by a number of steps to examine the Kilkenny School Project NS 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, Revised Complaints Procedures are in place in the KSP. 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 Open Door Policy/Communication Policy ensures that there is a clear understanding of channels of communication in the KSP.

### **Employee Assistance Service / Spectrum.Life**

The Employee Assistance Service (EAS) is arranged and managed by the Department of Education & Skills and provides teachers and immediate family members, i.e. partner, spouse or adult child (aged 18 and over) residing at the same address as the employee, with access to confidential counselling and assists in coping with the effect of personal and work-related issues. Counselling is provided on issues such as health, relationships, addictions, bereavement, stress, conflict, critical incident and trauma.

The service is free and confidential and available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to teachers in schools. The service is provided by Spectrum.Life.

Contact Details:

Free Phone: 1800 411 057 The contact details for SMS is Text 'Hi' to 087 145 2056 and for Whatsapp is 087 3690010 Login to the [Spectrum.Life website](#)

### **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.

The Kilkenny School Project NS staff is committed to building and maintaining a work environment where respectful, open and equal relationships are the norm. It is recommended that all individuals foster a culture of open communication and debate, where conflict can be aired and dealt with constructively, speedily and in a reasonable manner.

In summary, Kilkenny School Project NS Board of Management along with the Staff are committed to having a good and safe place to work, where every individual's dignity is respected.