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# Caherline National School

## Respect & Dignity in Our Workplace/Anti-Harassment Keeping Our Workplace Positive & Effective

Revision	Date	Description	Approved

*"Judge each day not by the harvest, but by the seeds you sow."*

## **Introduction**

It is the policy of the Board of Management of Caherline National School to promote an environment within which all employees will be treated with dignity. This school is committed to a positive work environment where work is done in an atmosphere of respect, collaboration, openness and equality.

The Board of Management further recognises that all employees have the right to a workplace free from bullying and harassment (including sexual harassment) and is fully committed to ensuring that all employees are able to enjoy that right.

It is recognised that harassment and bullying can seriously damage working, teaching, learning and social conditions and it will not be tolerated during the course of work or any other activity of the school.

There is a responsibility on all employees to be aware of this policy and to promote a working environment, free of threat, harassment and intimidation. It is important to distinguish harassment, including sexual harassment, from normal social interaction at work involving mutually acceptable behaviour.

This policy applies to harassment not only by staff but also by any person with whom an employee might reasonably expect to come in contact in the course of his/her school activities including visitors to the school. In any case, the commitment to a positive workplace, where dignity at work is respected, prevails.

Caherline N.S. 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 pleasant, including adult bullying and harassment in the workplace are phenomena which we as a staff at Caherline N.S. 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. In the unlikely event of experiencing less than pleasant behaviour, we will immediately explain to our partner(s) of communication that their behaviour is offensive to us and the reasons why we deem this so. If it continues, the school management team will intervene 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 Community**

Our School Team has adopted the definition of adult bullying as:

*'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', all school staff 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. In either case, our commitment to a positive workplace where dignity at work is respected prevails.

## **A Positive Work Environment**

All school staff agree that they will all work to make this school a good place to work and have created this policy to copperfasten that commitment. Caherline N.S. is a great 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)
- Making all staff are aware and having access to copies of school policies and procedures covering curricular and administrative areas
- Recognising that it is critical to resolve conflict at the earliest opportunity before it is allowed to fester and result in inevitable conflict.

Every person in the school community of Caherline N.S. 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.

In developing and adopting this policy in Caherline N.S., 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 school staff and supported by management. Reflecting our commitment to a positive workplace, we have agreed to review this policy each year.

## **Adult Bullying & Harassment**

Caherline N.S. 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
- Excessive monitoring of work
- Withholding work-related information
- Exclusion with negative consequences
- Intimidation
- Purposely undermining someone

Key factors of workplace bullying are that the behaviour is generally persistent, unwanted, subtle and non-physical.

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.

Harassment is any form of unwanted conduct related to any of the discriminatory grounds. Sexual harassment is any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. In both cases it is 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.

The Employment Equality Act (1998) defines sexual harassment as any act of

- Physical intimacy - This may include unwanted physical contact such as unnecessary touching, patting, pinching or brushing against another employee's body, assault or coercive sexual intercourse.
- Verbal conduct of a physical nature - This includes unwelcome sexual advances, propositions or pressure for sexual activity, continued suggestions for social activity outside the workplace after it has been

- made clear that such suggestions are unwelcome, unwanted or offensive flirtations, suggestive remarks, innuendos or lewd comments.
- Non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature - This may include the display of pornographic or sexually suggestive pictures, objects, written material, emails, text- messages or faxes. It may also include leering, whistling or making sexually suggestive gestures.

## **Making a complaint of workplace bullying/harassment**

Any employee who feels that they are being bullied or harassed should ask the perpetrator to stop. Where this form of action is unsuccessful the employee may report the matter to the Principal, Deputy Principal or Chairperson of the BoM.

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 In-school management team and Board of Management will take seriously any allegations or workplace bullying or harassment. Any complaint of harassment shall be fully and properly investigated by the BoM and if substantiated, will be regarded as grounds for disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Supportive and effective procedures, in accordance with nationally-agreed practice, are in place in Caherline N.S. 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.

## **Conclusion**

As members of Caherline N.S., school community, 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.

- 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)*'.