

## **Dignity at Work-2024**

### **Introductory Statement**

The policy was formulated as we are developing our Wellbeing SSE.

The policy has been formulated in light of a number of background documents:

- Health & Safety Authority's Code of Practice for Employers and Employees on the Prevention and Resolution of Bullying at Work (2007)
- 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).

### **Rationale**

St Michael's N.S is committed to protecting the dignity of all those who work within the school. We are committed to ensuring that staff are free from any form of harassment or bullying from the school community which may lead to a lack of respect or dignity.

St Michael's N.S strives to ensure the work environment is conducive to providing a high- quality education in an atmosphere of respect, safety and equality. Lack of respect for others' dignity and/or bullying behaviour can undermine and dilute the quality of work and affect wellbeing and mental health. Dignity at Work can be positively and assertively addressed through a range of school- based measures and strategies through which all members of the school community are enabled to act effectively in dealing with unwanted, negative or disrespectful behaviour.

Both the school's management and its employees have responsibilities for creating and contributing to the maintenance of a work environment free from harassment and bullying.

Members of the wider school community such as parents/guardians and external agencies also have a responsibility in sustaining a positive school environment.

All members of the school community have an obligation to cooperate with

investigations of complaints of harassment, bullying or any incidents which affront or violate staff's dignity in their workplace.

## **Vision**

St Michael's staff will be encouraged to reach their full potential mentally, physically, spiritually, emotionally and socially, in an atmosphere and environment in which they feel safe, valued and secure and in which respect for self and others is the norm.

Staff, conscious of their role in creating a positive working environment, will encourage a whole-school approach whereby every individual is involved in the development of a school environment where each person is respected and valued.

The involvement of the wider school community and their positive interactions with staff is critical in the achievement of a respectful and dignified work place for all staff.

## **Relationship to the Characteristic Spirit of the School**

The Dignity at Work Policy reflects the mission statement of our school.

We aim to facilitate a culture where dignity and respect are everyday expectations found in St Michael's as a place of work, a place of teaching and learning.

The staff and Board of Management promote an inclusive school community reflecting the ethos in their daily interactions with other staff members and children, and in their relations with the wider school community. The principal and other leaders in the school model and develop a strong culture of mutual trust, respect and shared accountability. They seek to foster a positive school climate and to encourage respectful interactions at all levels within the school community.

Parents/Guardians and the wider school community are expected to actively promote this positive, inclusive culture in their communications and interactions.

## **Aims**

This Dignity at Work policy aims to:

- create and maintain a positive working environment whereby the right of the individual to dignity at work is recognised and protected
- provide awareness regarding the steps which individuals may take if they believe that they have been bullied, harassed or their right to dignity or respect at work has been affected.
- encourage the use of informal resolution methods and the use of mediation as often and as early as possible during disputes
- ensure that all members of the school community are aware of and are committed to the principles outlined in this policy

For the purpose of this policy, members of the school community are defined as

- All Staff
- Parents
- Children
- Parents Association
- Board of Management
- External persons/agencies in communication with or working with the school

### **Core Principles of the Policy**

This school is committed to a positive work environment where work is done in an atmosphere of respect, collaboration, openness and equality.

Adult bullying, harassment or actions which lead to staff feeling unsafe in the workplace are phenomena which this school will seek to prevent and will not tolerate. All employees have the right to be treated with dignity and respect. Management is committed to intervening in an appropriate manner – utilising accepted Management/INTO/IMPACT procedures – to investigate and deal with allegations of such actions by members of the school community.

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

### **Workplace Bullying and Harassment**

The Board of Management adopts 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". Harassment is covered by Employment Equality legislation and is based on a person's standing within one of the nine categories (or grounds) specified in that legislation (gender, marital status, religion, sexual orientation etc.)

Harassment is defined in law as "unwanted conduct" related to one or more of the discriminatory grounds 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.

It is recognised that bullying and harassment complaints and incidents which may diminish a staff member's dignity may arise not only among work colleagues but may also be actuated by other members of the school community. In either case, the commitment to a positive workplace, where dignity at work is respected, prevails.

## **Workplace Bullying and Harassment**

A good place to work has a positive work environment characterised by

- A supportive atmosphere
- Good and open communication (e.g. through opportunities at staff meetings, use of school emails, whiteboard noticeboard)
- Appropriate interpersonal behaviour
- Collaboration
- Cooperation
- Compromise
- Open discussion and resolution of conflict
- Recognition, feedback and affirmation as appropriate
- Fair treatment of all staff

Every person within the school community has a responsibility to play their part in contributing to a positive work environment for school staff. 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.

Adoption of this policy in our school is supported 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, and be repeated by way of review at appropriate intervals.

The actions to be undertaken may generally be described as a 6-Step Process outlined within the School Self Evaluation Guidelines.

### **Adult Bullying as a Problem**

Bullying in the workplace has been described in various ways. The Health and Safety Authority’s definition is that it 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.”

For the purposes of this policy, a staff member can be understood to be ‘another’ and, a staff team and/or the school staff as ‘others’.

Our school community recognises that Adult Bullying and Harassment are problems which occur in any workplace.

Studies have shown that any person may become a target, irrespective of their personality, identity or ability. In addition to its unacceptable effects on persons who are its targets, workplace bullying and harassment is extremely detrimental to organisational effectiveness.

Bullying of staff members may include behaviours such as:

- Verbal abuse/insults to staff or about staff to others
- Undermining remarks to staff or about staff to others
- Gossiping about staff
- Comments about staff members' personal lives
- Using an inappropriate tone in gesture, person or in writing
- Negative or undermining remarks on social media platforms including text platforms
- Comparisons of staff members or teachers within the school
- Comparisons of staff members or teachers to staff members or teachers in other schools
- Excessive monitoring of work
- Withholding work-related information
- Exclusion with negative consequences
- Identity-based bullying e.g. homophobic and transphobic. Such behaviours should not be part of a workplace.

This policy aims to ensure that a positive environment prevents such behaviours from occurring. Where bullying or harassment does occur or is alleged to have occurred, there are means of tackling it through the agreed procedure.

### **What Is Cyberbullying?**

Cyberbullying is a form of bullying. This form of bullying happens online on social media, online forums, text and email. As negative, abusive and hurtful messages on the internet can be viewed repeatedly, a single such message on the internet is considered cyber bullying. Refer to <https://www.webwise.ie>

Cyberbullying of staff members may include behaviours such as:

- Posting negative, abusive or hurtful remarks about staff members to social media. Inappropriate posts include – using inappropriate language, personal attacks or insulting messages, bullying of any member of the school community, voicing grievances with the school, the staff, or with individual members of the WhatsApp group. As negative, abusive and hurtful messages on the internet can be viewed repeatedly, a single such message on WhatsApp is considered cyber bullying.
- Texting negative or abusive remarks about staff members to text groups on such platforms as WhatsApp, TikTok, Discord etc.
- Spreading rumours online

- Posting images of a staff member when they have not given permission
- Re-posting of a text or email from a staff member to a public forum without their request or permission.
- Sharing of a text or email from a staff member without their request or permission

This policy aims to ensure that a positive environment prevents such behaviours from occurring. Where cyber bullying does occur or is alleged to have occurred, there are means of tackling it through the agreed procedure.

### **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 they themselves may decide, the Board of Management will take seriously any allegations or workplace bullying or harassment.

Supportive and effective procedures, in accordance with nationally-agreed practice, are in place in St Michael's. 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 reasonable confidentiality. Complaints by employees or other persons in the workplace of bullying or harassment at work will be treated with fairness, sensitivity and respect for all parties concerned. Any person accused of bullying or harassment will be afforded natural justice and treated with fairness and sensitivity.

### **Incidents Which May Affect the Dignity of a Staff Member**

While an isolated behaviour as described above may not be defined as bullying it can be unpleasant and affect a staff member's well-being and dignity at work.

This policy aims to ensure that a positive environment prevents such behaviours from occurring. Singular incidents of such behaviours or alleged incidents will be recorded and will be treated with fairness, sensitivity and respect for all parties concerned.

### **Summary**

Management has a duty of care towards employees. The ethos of our school community predicates communications and relationships with staff which are respectful and polite, and lend themselves to the dignity of the staff while they are at work.

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 enacted against an employee of this school by any other person in the community. Together we are committed to building and maintaining a work environment where respectful, open and equal relationships are the norm.

### **Success Criteria –**

Our Dignity at Work Policy will be seen to be working well when;

- we receive positive feedback from staff members
- a positive working environment is identified and maintained in St Michael's N.S. whereby the right of the individual to dignity at work is recognised and protected
- procedures which individuals may take if they believe that they have been bullied, harassed, or sexually harassed are carried out in accordance with national best practice guidelines
- steps which individuals may take if they believe that they have been subject to an incident that may affect the dignity of a staff member are carried out in accordance with school guidelines
- the use of informal resolution methods and the use of mediation as often and as early as possible during disputes is evident in practice
- in the event that a case of bullying or harassment is identified, procedures are followed and the case has a successful outcome
- in the event that an incident which may affect a staff member's dignity at work is identified, procedures are followed and the case has a successful outcome

### **Roles and Responsibility**

All staff of the school under the positive and supportive leadership of the Board of Management and Principal have both a role and a responsibility in successfully implementing this policy. All other members of the school community have both a role and a responsibility in successfully implementing this policy.



The policy will be monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis.

### **Implementation Date**

This policy was implemented on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2024.

Amendments will be implemented immediately.

### **Timetable for Review**

This policy is to be reviewed during the school year 2026.

### **Ratification and Communication**

Parents will be made aware in the next school communication that the policy is available on the website.

Date of ratification: 13<sup>th</sup> May 2024

Signed: Deirdre Kelly