



The Monastery School

Dignity at Work Policy

Rationale:

The Board of Management (BoM) of The Monastery School has adopted this policy on 18th of February 2025, following consultation with staff members. The BoM recognises that all employees have the right to a workplace free from bullying or harassment. This policy explicitly covers bullying and harassment not only among staff members but also from external stakeholders, including parents, guardians, coaches, contractors and visitors. It encompasses sexual harassment, digital harassment, and other forms of inappropriate behaviour. This policy covers our school building and grounds and work-related undertakings.

Our school is a workplace, and as such, it can sometimes be a pressurised environment. Differences of opinion, misunderstandings, and conflict are both common and inevitable. Consequently, it is incumbent on our school to have procedures and guidelines to promote positive staff relations, minimise the potential for conflict, and provide a template to address conflict constructively when it does occur.

As a workplace, all employees and visitors benefit from a wide range of statutory protections. Health and Safety standards must be adhered to, and there are protections relating to employment terms and conditions, as well as specific protections against physical or verbal assaults, discrimination, etc. Notwithstanding these statutory protections, management bodies and unions have agreed on a range of procedures, including the following, to address complaints, grievances, conduct, or competence issues arising in the workplace:

- Revised Parental Complaints Procedures 2024
- Working Together, Ag Obair le Chéile 2024

Core Principles:

The Monastery School is committed to fostering a positive work environment where staff members can carry out their duties in an atmosphere of respect, collaboration, openness, and equality.

Adult bullying or harassment in the workplace are behaviours this school actively seeks 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 the

INTO procedures *Working Together - Ag Obair le Chéile 2024*—to address allegations of bullying or harassment and grievances.

Safety, Health and Welfare at Work:

The *Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act* became operative on 1 November 1989. It is an important piece of legislation for Boards of Management and school staff, as it brought schools under the scope of safety legislation for the first time.

It is recognised that school staff may be at risk from violence in the form of verbal abuse, threats, assaults, or other forms of intimidation. This behaviour may come from pupils, parents, guardians, other staff members, or intruders.

In this respect, all staff should be aware of DES Circular 40/97, which outlines the procedures to follow.

What is Workplace Bullying and Harassment?

The Board of Management adopts the definition of adult bullying as set out by the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) and the Code of Practice for Employers and Employees on the Prevention and Resolution of Bullying at Work, 2021.

"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." It goes on to state that, "An isolated incident of the behaviour may undermine a person's dignity but, as a once-off incident, is not considered to be bullying."

The following is a non-exhaustive list of examples of types of behaviour that may constitute bullying:

- Verbal abuse/insults, undermining remarks
- Exclusion/ignoring someone with negative consequences
- Intimidation
- Aggression
- Humiliation, ridicule, belittling efforts
- Excessive monitoring of work
- Withholding work-related information

Harassment is any form of 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.

It may relate to any of the following grounds:

- Gender
- Civil status
- Family status

- Sexual orientation
- Religious belief
- Age
- Disability
- Race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- Membership of the Traveller community

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,

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
- Frequent opportunities for good and open communication (e.g., through regular staff meetings)
- Appropriate interpersonal behaviour
- Collaboration
- Open discussion and resolution of conflict
- Timely recognition, constructive feedback, and appropriate affirmation
- Fair treatment of all staff (including fair systems of selection and promotion in line with agreed procedures)

Every person has a responsibility to play their 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 it in an appropriate and timely manner.

Unacceptable Behaviour:

In our school, we expect everyone to be kind, supportive, courteous, polite, patient, and positive in their dealings with each other, staff, pupils, parents, and visitors to the school. Openness and cooperation are encouraged.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of certain behaviours which we consider to be unacceptable:

- **Verbal Abuse:** Publicly criticising, shouting, using insulting language, making derogatory remarks. This also applies to comments on social media.
- **Aggressive Behaviors:** Threatening, intimidating, or insulting language, rudeness, aggressiveness.
- **Exclusion or Isolation:** Ignoring others, excluding from conversations or decisions.
- **Unprofessional Conduct:** Insubordination, undermining authority, defaming / insulting comments.

If any individual exhibits the behaviors listed above to another member of the school community, they may be asked to remove themselves from the building and/or school grounds. In exceptional circumstances, in the interest of safety, and/or of the wider school community, the school may deem it necessary to call the Gardai.

Every individual is entitled to their good name and to have their dignity respected by colleagues and visitors. While any member of staff or individual can 'have a bad day', it is important that, when behaviour perceived as rude or curt is brought to an individual's attention, they reflect and take appropriate steps to resolve the matter, ensuring the continuance of positive working relations.

What happens if there is an Allegation of Workplace Bullying or Harassment?

Without prejudice to an individual's right to take such advice or steps as they themselves may decide, Management will take seriously any allegations of workplace bullying or harassment.

The BoM has formally adopted the procedures outlined in the publication *Working Together, Ag Obair le Chéile 2024* to facilitate the resolution of staff relations difficulties and address allegations of bullying or harassment. These procedures focus on the earliest possible resolution, proceeding as necessary from informal to formal stages. Confidentiality will be upheld at all stages, with information shared only on a need-to-know basis.

The Employee Assistance Service, a free and confidential counselling service, is available for teachers, SNAs, and other staff. The Freephone number is 1800 411057 and is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

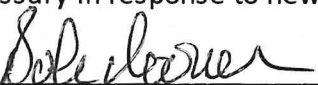
Implementation: This policy is effective from the 18th February 2025.

Ratification and Communication:

This policy was drafted in collaboration with staff. It was subsequently circulated to parents, and BoM members for consideration.

This policy will also be drawn to the attention of all staff members and parents in Term 1 of each academic year. This policy will be published on the school website, and a signed copy will be available in the office if requested.

This policy was ratified on 18th February, 2025. This policy will be reviewed every 2 years or as necessary in response to new guidelines and / or emerging needs.

Signed:  (Chairperson of the Board of Management)

Signed: _____ (Principal)

Date: 18/02/2025