



Powerstown Educate Together National School

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POWERSTOWN EDUCATE TOGETHER NATIONAL SCHOOL

RESPECT AND DIGNITY IN OUR WORK PLACE

THE OBJECTIVE OF THE GUIDE STAFF IN THE MAINTENANCE OF A POSITIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT WHERE WORK IS DONE IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF RESPECT, COLLABORATION, OPENNESS AND EQUALITY.

INTRODUCTION

The policy was formulated having been identified in a Risk Assessment as an area that required clarification. It was devised by members of policy committee and proposed to the Board of Management for approval and ratification. The policy has been formulated in light of a number of background documents, including 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). All staff were consulted by email in the process of devising this policy.

RATIONALE

Powerstown Educate Together N.S. 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, safety and equality.

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 through which all members of the school community are enabled to act effectively in dealing with this behaviour. Both the school's management and its employees have responsibilities for creating and contributing to the maintenance of a 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.

VISION

Staff who work in Powerstown Educate Together N.S. 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.

The staff of our school, conscious of their role in creating a positive working environment, will encourage the involvement of the wider school community in the achievement of these ends through a whole-school approach whereby every individual is involved in the development of a school environment where each person is respected and valued.

AIMS

The Dignity at Work policy aims to:

- create and maintain a positive working environment in Powerstown Educate Together N.S. 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 sexually harassed
- encourage the use of informal resolution methods and the use of mediation as often and as early as possible during disputes
- ensure that all staff are aware of and committed to the principles outlined in this policy

A COMMITMENT TO DIGNITY & RESPECT

Powerstown Educate Together National School 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 nice, including adult bullying and harassment in the workplace are phenomena which we as a staff at Powerstown Educate Together National School 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, and that in the unlikely event of experiencing less than nice behaviour, we will immediately explain to our partner(s) of communication that their behaviour is offensive to us and why. If it continues, those school community members who are the management team are committed to intervening 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 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.'

In reaching consensus on our definition of 'Harassment' we 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

We agree that we will all work to make this school a good place to work and are creating this policy to copperfasten that commitment. Powerstown Educate Together National School is a good place to work and we will strive to keep it that way, through

- A supportive atmosphere
- Good and open communication (e.g. through opportunities, school email, noticeboards 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)

Every person in the school community of Powerstown Educate Together National School 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.

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.

It is agreed that the adoption of this policy in our school will be accompanied 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 Identification, Assessment, Implementing Strategies and Monitoring.

ADULT BULLYING, HARASSMENT & NOT NICE BEHAVIOUR CAN BE A PROBLEM

Powerstown Educate Together National School recognises that adult bullying and harassment are problems if they occur in any workplace.

Bullying behaviour generally amounts to psychological abuse which causes serious pain and suffering. 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 may include behaviours such as:

- Verbal abuse/insults, undermining remarks
- Excessive monitoring of work
- Withholding work-related information
- Exclusion with negative consequences
- Identity-based bullying e.g. homophobic and transphobic

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.

STEPS IF ALLEGATION IS MADE

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 the 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 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.

In the unlikely event that an allegation of bullying or harassment is made, the steps we encourage staff to take are;

1. Positive, constructive, professional conversation between parties
2. Injured party seeks confidential informal advice from Principal / ISM team member
3. Re-engage in professional conversation
4. Request support from Principal
5. Principal will host mediation circle

SUMMARY

As members of Powerstown Educate Together National School 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.

- Following consultation with all staff members, the Board of Management of Powerstown Educate Together National School adopted this policy
- 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)**'.

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 Powerstown Educate Together N.S. whereby the right of the individual to dignity at work is recognised and protected
- procedures/steps 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
- 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
- all staff are made aware of the committed to the principles are out in this policy

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. The policy will be monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis by the policy committee through feedback from members of the school community.