



Woodstock Educate Together National School

Equality & Anti- Harassment Policy 'Dignity at Work Policy'

This document is intended to provide details of the main policies of Newtownmountkennedy Educate Together National School (NTMK ETNS). It is intended to help parents and guardians understand the environment and approach of the school.

This document is regularly reviewed. All feedback is encouraged and welcome.

Version	Description	Authors
September 2019 2 nd Review: 2021 Ratified & Reviewed: Sept 2021	First version of policy Second revision	Principal on behalf of Board of Management Policy Team & BoM

Dignity at Work:

Building and Maintaining a Positive & Effective Work Environment Introductory Statement

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 in the process of devising this policy.

Rationale:

Woodstock ETNS. is committed to protecting the dignity of all those who work within the school. In particular, we are committed to ensuring that our firm 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 Woodstock ETNS 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.

Relationship to the Characteristic Spirit of the School:

The Dignity at Work Policy reflects the overall ethos of the school which states: Woodstock ETNS is one of a number of 'Equality-Based' Primary National Schools throughout the country. The representative organisation and Patron for these schools is *Educate Together-*

"Educate Together aims to meet a growing need in Irish society for schools that recognise the developing diversity of Irish life and the modern need for democratic management structures. In particular, Educate Together guarantees children and parents of all faiths and none equal respect in the operation and governing of education."

The schools operated by the member associations of Educate Together are fully recognised by the Irish Department of Education and Science and work under the same regulations and funding structures as other national schools. However, they have a distinct ethos or governing spirit. This has been defined in the following terms:

- **Equality –based-** i.e. all children having equal rights of access to the school, and children of all social, cultural and religious backgrounds being equally respected
- **Co-educational** and committed to encouraging all children to explore their full range of abilities and opportunities,
- **Child centred** in their approach to education
- **Democratically run** with active participation by parents in the daily life of the school, whilst positively affirming the professional role of the teachers. (*Source: Educate Together Charter*)

Whilst the concepts of child-centeredness and co-educationalism are now widely accepted in Irish primary education, what distinguishes the Educate Together schools is their hard work in developing a culturally inclusive and democratic ethos. This has pioneered unique approaches to inclusion of minority opinions and faiths in the Irish context.

The schools have developed education programmes which open the eyes of children to the naturally positive contribution that social, religious and cultural diversity and difference of viewpoint and opinion make to society. (Learn Together for all)

The other characteristic feature of these schools is that they are democratically organised and governed. This maximises the potential for building a genuine partnership between the professional, objective role of the teacher and the necessarily personal involvement of the parent in contributing to their children's education. (*Information taken from the Educate Together website www.educatetogether.ie*)

Woodstock ETNS makes the distinction between denominational education and moral/religious education. The Ethical Curriculum followed by the school is called the *Learn Together Curriculum*. It is comprised of four strands:

- Morality & Spirituality
- Equality & Justice
- Belief systems
- Ethics & the environment.

Denominational instruction is facilitated by the school insofar as groups are permitted to use the school premises. This is organised by parents outside of school hours. The Dignity at Work Policy recognises and endeavours to adopt the values that are set out in the ethos of the school for those at work in the school. It attempts to support and sustain a harmonious environment in which the potential of all staff is nurtured through the co-operation between staff, pupils, parents, board members and all other relevant parties.

Aims:

The Dignity at Work policy at Woodstock ETNS aims to:

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

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 and harassment 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 one of the accepted Management/INTO/IMPACT procedures - to investigate and deal with allegations of bullying or harassment. The provisions of Circular 40/97 on *Assaults on Staff in Primary Schools* will be utilised as appropriate.

What is 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 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.

Creating a Positive Work Environment:

It is agreed that all staff work to make this school a positive place to work. A progressive 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, use of school emails, whiteboard noticeboard)*
- *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.

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 as a Problem:

Our school recognises that Adult Bullying and Harassment are problems where 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. 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 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 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.

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 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 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. In summary, we are committed to cultivating a progressive place to work.

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 at Woodstock ETNS 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.

Implementation Date:

This policy was implemented September 2019. Amendments will be implemented immediately.

Timetable for Review:

This policy is to be reviewed during the school year 2020.

Ratification and Communication

The amended policy will be communicated to members of the Board of Management prior to the meeting of the **interim BOM** on 29th August 2019. Parents will be made aware in the next school communication that the policy is available for viewing on our new website or by appointment in the school.

Date of ratification: September 2021

Signed: Anne Gregory (Chairperson of BoM)

Date: 29th September 2021

Witness Signature:
