

# **Dignity in the Workplace Policy**

Dignity in the workplace allows the space to be oneself, personally and professionally, while protecting the space of others. It is valuing each person's contribution to the school, both staff and student, and respecting the methods and opinions of others. It implies mutual respect, courtesy and acceptance of one's worth as a teacher, colleague and individual, irrespective of the position held. If organisations are to create genuine no-blame cultures, they need an environment of trust and honesty. Creating such a culture gives people the opportunity to be self-aware, to take pride in their role and to self-motivate.

**The Presentation Brothers Schools Trust** sees ...each is precious. The Presentation vision of education involves a deep respect for the individuality and integrity of each person and recognises that all men and women are children of God who have been embraced by Christ's redemptive love. This involves a deep reverence for all who form the school community based on an appreciation that they are made in the image and likeness of God. All school staff are encouraged to recognise their distinct identity as members of the Presentation Family and thus acknowledge their role as partners in ensuring the continuity of the Presentation story and ethos.

## **Scope:**

This policy applies to all employees and to all those involved with the school, e.g., parents, visitors and those who work in the school periodically. Bullying can be perpetrated by a person in a position of authority or by a work colleague against a person at any level in the workplace and it can be carried out by an individual or by a group. Bullying can also be perpetrated against an employee by a parent or student or by other clients, contractor or other contact of the school. This policy aims to ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, that no employee shall suffer bullying from any source.

## **Relationship to Mission Statement:**

The aim of Coláiste Muire is to provide a holistic education, which is driven by a Catholic ethos. We strive to create a safe environment, which fosters inclusion, honesty, dignity and respect. The school community encourages the individual in their pursuit of excellence. We aim to promote among students a sense of pride in their school. This policy is in keeping with our mission statement.

## **Rationale:**

Fundamental to the concept of equality and respect for individuals in the workplace and school environment is that the environment should be free from activities that are likely to adversely affect the dignity of the individual. The key objective is to communicate clearly that instances of bullying will not be tolerated and that precautionary measures are in place both to prevent the occurrence of bullying and to deal appropriately with any cases that might arise. Bullying in the workplace constitutes a real threat to the safety, health and welfare of people in the workplace.

As it can arise in any situation where people are working together, it is recommended that an effective Bullying Prevention Policy be implemented as a precautionary measure and deterrent in the workplace. This policy is linked to the school's Health and Safety Statement and complies with current legislation.

The Employment Equality Act 1998 The Industrial Relations Act 1900 The Safety Health and Welfare at Work Act 1989 It is considered important that all staff understand their rights and responsibilities and that there are appropriate procedures in place for dealing with allegations of workplace bullying.

## **Aim:**

A core employment value is the commitment to ensure that each individual is guaranteed a working environment where she/he may expect to be treated with dignity both by management and work colleagues. This approach is a positive emphasis on the importance of each individual and the contribution she/he makes to the success of the workplace. The policy aims to promote an atmosphere of openness, honesty and respect in which all staff are encouraged to talk openly about their experiences and concerns and enable all who work in the school and are part of the school community, to create and maintain a pleasant working and learning environment within the school.

## **Definition of Workplace Bullying:**

Bullying in the workplace or school environment 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 incidence of the behaviour described may be an affront to dignity at work, but as a once off incident is not considered bullying. (*As defined in the Report of the Task Force of Workplace Bullying- published by the Stationery Office March 2001 and adopted in the*

*National Authority for Occupational Safety and Health in March 2002)*

Bullying may manifest itself in many ways, including the following- public humiliation, exclusion and isolation, lack of respect, cliques, rumours, victimisation, intrusion (e.g. pestering, spying or stalking), snide comments, age & sex discrimination and changing work duties without consultation. This list is intended to be representative, not exhaustive.

Workplace Bullying will not be tolerated by the school: This school is committed to ensuring that all staff and students are free from bullying, intimidation and sexual harassment in the workplace. Harassment can be defined as: any act or conduct which is offensive, humiliating or intimidating on a discriminatory ground including spoken words, gestures, or the production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other material. The organisation will not tolerate bullying and this policy and complaint procedure will be applied to reported incidents of bullying.

Where a complaint is upheld against staff, following a full investigation, the person or persons will be subject to disciplinary procedures up to and including dismissal. A separate policy is in place for bullying among students. The allegation of a teacher bullying a student is covered by the Grievance and Complaints Procedure agreed by the JMB and the

ASTI. Students who believe they are being bullied should inform a teacher, the ABC Committee, Deputy Principal or Principal immediately. The allegation of a student bullying a teacher is dealt with through the Code of Behaviour.

Allegations of teacher-student bullying are dealt with under

Complaints and Discipline Procedures and not by the ABC.

# **Agreed Procedure for Resolving Conflict between Colleagues**

Preamble: The ASTI and JMB have agreed a set of Grievance Procedures for use in Voluntary Secondary Schools, where disagreement arises between a teacher and the Principal, or between a teacher and another member of staff who has a managerial function, or between a teacher and the Board of Management. However, this agreement does not envisage that conflict may arise from time to time between colleagues on the staff. This internal agreement is designed to cater for such an eventuality- it relates therefore to grievances between members of staff, which are not already covered under the national agreement.

The Board of Management of this school acknowledges that from time to time disagreements may arise between any two or more members of staff and considers that it is prudent to formulate a set of procedures, which could be used in such circumstances. It recommends the following procedures to staff and would wish that all cases of disagreement be resolved in accordance with these procedures.

Each individual has basic civil and legal rights and is free to pursue them at their discretion. However, it may be possible to redress a grievance without such recourse to external measure. The procedures, which follow, may in many cases, be preferable for the individuals and for the staff as a whole. By agreeing to follow these procedures, one is not setting aside any other civil or legal rights, which may be invoked if the procedures fail to resolve the issue to the satisfaction of all. Nor does it preclude anyone from seeking legal advice. It is intended that in most cases, members of staff should attempt to resolve a grievance by reference to the informal procedures outlined in

Stage 1. However, it is recognised that exceptional circumstances may arise where a member of staff would wish to move directly to the formal stage (Stage 2), without recourse to Stage 1. For the benefit of all parties Appendix 3 sets out some guidelines on the resolution of conflict. **Conflict Resolution Procedures:** The person(s) with the grievance shall be called the complainant. The other party is the person against whom the complaint is being made.

**Complaint Procedure:** While in no way diminishing the issue or the effects on an individual, an informal approach can often resolve matters. As a general rule therefore, an attempt should be made to address an allegation of bullying as informally as possible by means of an agreed informal procedure. The objective of this approach is to resolve the difficulty with the minimum of conflict and stress for the individuals involved.

## **Informal Procedure:**

A staff member who believes that she/he is being bullied should initially explain clearly to the person against whom the complaint is made, that the behaviour in question is unacceptable and request that the bullying ceases. In circumstances where the complainant finds it difficult to approach directly the person against whom the complaint is made, she or he should seek help and advice, on a strictly confidential basis, from a contact person such as a colleague, the Principal, Deputy Principal, or where appropriate, a union representative should be considered. In this situation, the contact person should listen patiently, be supportive and discuss the various options open to the employee concerned. The Informal Procedure is set out in Appendix 1

## **Formal Procedure**

If the complaint cannot be processed informally for whatever reason, it should be processed through the school's formal grievance and disciplinary procedures. The Formal Procedure is set out in Appendix 2. Appendix 2 contains a set of internal grievance procedures for use where the disagreement may be between two employees.

## **Confidentiality:**

Every effort will be made to maintain strict confidentiality. However, it may be necessary to interview witnesses among staff members. If this is necessary, the importance of strict confidentiality will be stressed to the interviewees. Counselling and support is made available for victims of bullying as necessary.

## **Duty of Employees:**

Every employee is responsible to safeguard her/his own safety and welfare, as well as that of her/

his colleagues who may be affected by her/his actions, or omissions, while at work.

Therefore, each employee must be made aware of their duty not to place the safety and

welfare of colleagues at risk by engaging in bullying, or, where in the position of authority, to take

the appropriate steps to stop bullying, if or when it occurs. This policy is available to all staff of

this school.

# **Appendix 1**

## **Stage One (Informal Procedure)**

Employees should be advised, that, if possible, that they should attempt to resolve the problem informally in the first instance. It may be possible and sufficient for the employee concerned to explain clearly to the person engaging in the unwanted conduct that the behaviour in question is not welcome, that it offends them or makes them uncomfortable, and that it interferes with their work.

In circumstances where it is too difficult or embarrassing for an individual to do this on her/his own behalf, an alternative approach would be for an initial approach to be made to a Contact Person(s). The role of the contact person is to listen and support a complainant. A contact person does not advise a target. The contact person should ensure that the target knows about the school's anti bullying policy. It is very important for the recipient of bullying/harassment to keep notes, detailing times and dates of incidents of bullying/harassment and request eyewitnesses, if any, to note them also.

Attempts will be made to resolve the matter informally, if appropriate. Counselling and support services should be made available. If it is not possible to resolve the matter informally, Stage Two should follow, whereby a formal complaints procedure shall be applied incorporating the steps outlined in Appendix 2.

# **Appendix 2**

## **Stage 2 (Formal Procedure)**

Throughout the formal stage the complainant and the person against whom the complaint is being made shall be entitled to be represented by or accompanied by the school steward or other representative, a work colleague

1. The complainant gives notice in writing to the Principal, or if deemed appropriate, an agreed third party, of their intention to invoke the Formal Stage of the Procedures for Resolving Conflict between Colleagues. Such notice shall include a precise written factual statement of the grievance. The Principal or agreed third party shall discuss the grievance with the complainant with a view to exploring ways of resolving it. The Principal/Third Party shall inform the person against whom the complaint is being made about the grievance and will give that party an opportunity to respond to the grievance. A copy of the written notice shall be made available to the person against whom the complaint is being made. The Principal/Agreed Third Party shall attempt to resolve the issue to the satisfaction of both parties. Should the grievance require an investigation of any kind, the Principal/Third Party shall ensure that it is pursued with due respect to the rights of both parties, that it is investigated thoroughly, objectively, with sensitivity and with the utmost confidentiality as far as possible and is carried out with the minimum of delay consistent with fairness to both parties. All parties shall be informed in writing of the findings of the investigation and will be given an opportunity to comment on them before management decides any action.
2. If the grievance is not resolved within a reasonable time not exceeding 15 working days, the complainant shall be entitled to bring the matter to the attention of the Chairperson of the Board of Management. On foot of the formal adoption of these procedures by the Board of Management, The Chairperson/ or if deemed appropriate the agreed third party will have been empowered by the Board to exercise the following role at this stage. Where Step 2 has been invoked, the Principal/Third Party shall make a written report to the Chairperson setting out steps taken to date. The Chairperson/Agreed Third Party shall meet with the complainant within 5 school days of receipt of the grievance and shall immediately take such steps, as she/he considers appropriate to have the grievance solved by conciliation. If the Chairperson/Agreed Third Party is unable to resolve the matter by conciliation, she/he will make a recommendation on the grievance within 15 working days of receipt of the grievance. Where either party fails to observe the terms of this agreement, the matter may be referred to the Board of Management for decision.

3. The party who so wishes to refer the matter to the Board shall give notice in writing to the Chairperson of the Board of the intention to do so. Such notice shall be given within 10 school days of receiving the recommendation or at the end of the period specified in paragraph 2 above. The date of such notice will be referred to as the “date of referral”. The notice shall include a submission setting out the grievance and the redress that is sought.

4. The other party and the Board of Management shall be informed and presented with a copy of the referral submission. The person against whom the complaint is being made shall be afforded the opportunity of making a written submission also; where this right is invoked, the complainant and the Board will be given a copy of this response. The matter shall be presented to the Board of Management at its next ordinary meeting unless the Chairperson deems an extraordinary meeting necessary. The Board shall take whatsoever steps it deems appropriate to have the grievance resolved. Before making a decision on the matter, the Board shall give all parties to the dispute an opportunity to present their case.

5. Where management determines that a complaint is well founded, the party at fault shall be given a formal interview to determine the appropriate course of action. This action might involve counselling and/or mentoring or progressing the issue through the school’s disciplinary procedures.

6. If either party is unhappy with the outcome of the investigation, the issue may be processed through the normal industrial relations mechanisms.

# **Appendix 3**

## **Some Guidelines for Dealing with Conflict**

A key thing in dealing with conflict is to realise that there is room for only one upset at a time. If the other person is too upset to listen, that fact must be recognised; there is little benefit in listing the upsets of others at that time. In the case of one-to-one conflict there are a number of things that we can do that will make it more likely that the conflict will be well handled.

1. Listen; do not interrupt 2. Try and separate the person from the problem (try and put yourself in the other person's shoes) 3. Ask questions. (Try and put yourself in the other person's shoes) 4. Tell your own side of the story without attacking the other person. 5. Balance Inquiry and Advocacy, engage in Dialogue not Debate. (Don't argue with the other person) 6. Try to focus on finding a workable solution to the problem (Not apportioning blame) 7. Make "I" statements not "You" statements. 8. Be specific not general. 9. Don't apportion blame. Where the relationship is difficult or where the circumstances make the problem more intractable, the following approaches may make it easier to make progress: Don't Over-react: pay attention to your own feelings. Do all you can to defuse hostile emotions on both sides. Listen actively to avoid interruptions at all costs- even if you feel the other person is wrong or insulting. Acknowledge their point of view: summarise what you have learnt and clarify whether your summary is accurate. Look for points of agreement and stress these. Acknowledge the feelings of the other person and try to respond appropriately, if appropriate offer an apology. Buy time to think: Pause occasionally and say nothing, agree to meet after a short break. Don't make hasty decisions; don't feel you have to make important decisions there and then.

Try and state your views without being provocative; distinguish between thoughtless and deliberate offenses and be open to hearing of the other side. Don't reject any statement or response out of hand. Where a third party is present they can play a useful role in making a distinction between the problem and the possible solutions to the problem. A useful starting point for any third party is to separate the process of finding a solution from the process of clarifying the situation. Begin with the problem; get a clear picture of the issues involved before moving on to the process of finding solutions. Focus on listening and understanding rather than on discussion, debate or argument. Try not to comment or reply to what people say. Treat each person with respect: avoid blame or accusations. Give each person equal time to talk without interruption. No one should speak twice until everyone has spoken once. Keep it confidential:

stress this with all parties. Remember there are no magic tricks that will solve all conflicts. The key is to keep thinking about what will move things forward.

### **Remember the following:**

1. Good communication is supportive communication. 2. It focuses on the event or the behaviour rather than on individuals. 3. It is descriptive not evaluative. 4. Good communication is open and acknowledges all feelings. 5. It validates rather than invalidates all involved in the process. 6. Above all it requires good listening- probably with your eyes as well as your ears. 7. It involves appropriate feedback (empathic) that clarifies what is being said and heard and hopefully strengthens the relationship at the same time.

# **Appendix 4**

## **The Effects of Bullying Behaviour**

- Physical    ○ Disturbed sleep, feeling sick, headaches, palpitations, panic attacks, sweating, shaking,    ○ Stomach or bowel problems, frequent aches, pains/infections, numbness, trembling, loss of appetite, loss of libido, excessive thirst.
- Psychological
  - Acute anxiety, loss of confidence, feeling isolated, loss of self-esteem and motivation,
  - Depression, clinical depression, angry even murderous feelings and fantasies, mood swings,
  - Tearfulness, obsessiveness and withdrawal.
- The Impact on the Workplace
  - Increased absenteeism
  - Reduced Productivity
  - High Staff Turnover
  - Costly Re-Training
  - Low staff morale
  - De motivation
  - Civil Action for Stress
  - Damage to image