

Ardfinnan National School, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary.



Policy on Dignity in the Workplace

Policy on Dignity in the Workplace

Aims:

1. To put in place clear procedures to promote dignity in the workplace and to prevent bullying.
2. To set procedures for dealing with allegations of bullying.

The Board of Management of Ardfinnan N.S. recognises that all staff members (teachers and ancillary) have the right to a workplace free from bullying. The Board is committed to ensuring that all staff members enjoy that right and that bullying by any staff member, student, parent/guardian or visitor will not be tolerated.

Dignity in the workplace allows:

- Space to be one self, personally and professionally, while respecting the space of others.
- Valuing of each staff member's contribution to the school.
- Mutual respect, courtesy, acceptance and loyalty irrespective of position held.
- The promotion of a supportive, positive environment in the school.

It is recognised that bullying undermines the confidence and dignity of individuals. Victims are at an increased risk of suffering stress and experiencing adverse effects on their careers. Bullying may also affect the school as an organisation in the form of increased absenteeism/sickness, low morale, a tense atmosphere and the formation of cliques. The Board recognises that legislation is in place to address the issue of bullying in the workplace:

- The Safety Health and Welfare at Work Act, 1989.
- The Industrial Relation Act, 1990.
- The Employment Equality Act, 1998 & 2004.

Consequently, complaints of bullying will be taken seriously and will be investigated. If upheld, they could constitute grounds for disciplinary action. If deemed appropriate, both victims and perpetrators will be advised to seek professional counselling.

The Staff of Ardfinnan N.S. recognises the need to ensure that our standard of behaviour does not cause offence. We also recognise the need to remain aware of, and be sensitive to, the issue.

The school can only be responsible for actions that take place on school property or relating to school business. All instances of bullying taking place outside of these terms should be referred to the Gardaí.

The Staff of Ardfinnan N.S. recognises that:

- Repeated inappropriate behaviour, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, undermines an individual's right to dignity at work;
- Effective teaching strategies depend on collaboration and the sharing of information;
- Bullying will not thrive where respectful, open, collaborative structures are in place;
- Cliques can be divisive and breed suspicion and exclusion;
- Respect for, and fair treatment of, all staff is central to promoting a positive and effective work environment for all;
- The effects of bullying can be devastating and can cause stress, anxiety, depression, insecurity, guilt, poor concentration and sleeplessness.

In light of the above the following inappropriate behaviour is deemed unacceptable:

- Excluding and isolating a person;
- Preventing communication;
- Eroding relationships with colleagues;
- Withholding information;
- Preventing meaningful contributions to work practices;
- Withholding recognition;
- Persistent and unfounded criticism;
- Abusive surveillance
- Withholding of support;
- Invasion of privacy;
- Angry outbursts;
- Blaming;
- Suspension of verbal communication;
- Spreading rumours and innuendo;
- Insults;
- Dismissive/dirty looks;
- Using aggression/threats;
- Shouting abuse/obscenities;
- Derogatory/offensive nicknames;
- Racist comments;
- Constant ridicule, humiliation, sneering or using a person as a constant butt of jokes;
- Undermining a person's authority, work or achievements;
- Refusing to deal directly with a colleague in the workplace;
- Vandalism of personal property;
- Unwanted/abusive phone calls or texts.

All members of staff will regularly examine her/his own behaviour in the context of possible negative and damaging effects on colleagues.

Professional Code of Conduct for Teachers:

Accordingly:

- The staff of Ardfinnan N.S. pledges to abide by the Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers as set out by the Teaching Council of Ireland. (Appendix 1)
- All teachers in Ardfinnan N.S. are expected to engage in work practices which reflect the core values of the teaching profession, namely,
 - Collegiality
 - Collaboration
 - Respect
 - Care and
 - Co-operation,Thereby promoting an atmosphere where bullying is less likely to exist.
- S.N.A.'s and other non-teaching staff are also expected to respect these core values.
- A spirit of collegiality, collaboration and co-operation promotes team-work and therefore calls for
 - an inclusive approach to the planning of work and
 - consultation regarding extra-curricular activities, trips and treats.
- We believe that a school culture based on teamwork will promote unity and inclusion and will minimise exclusion and isolation.

Professional Code of Dress:

Teachers/Staff are expected to dress in a manner which respects and reflects their status as professional.

Attendance and Punctuality:

- Teachers/Staff are expected to be punctual in the mornings and after break times.
- The Principal should be informed as soon as possible if a teacher is likely to be absent.

Mobile Phones:

With regard to mobile phones, teachers/staff should uphold the reputation and standing of the profession. They should avoid direct conflict between their private interests and their professional work. Mobile phones should be kept on silent during teaching time, supervision time and at staff meetings. (We recognise that exceptional circumstances may arise necessitating the use of a mobile phone e.g. teacher in ASD unit may need to contact parent/guardian as a matter of urgency).

Cuntas Míósúil:

Teachers are required to submit a Cuntas Míósúil to the Principal at the end of each month.

Reporting:

- Teachers are requested to be honest, accurate and professional when reporting on pupils (both written and verbal).
- Comments should be based on the class-based Sten scores of the standardised tests, where applicable.
- Where English is not the first language of the pupil, every effort must be made to communicate through basic, straightforward language.

Complaints Procedure

Informal Procedures for Staff Members:

- Any staff member who feels she/he has been, or is being, bullied should ask the offender to stop, explain that the behaviour is unwelcome, hurtful, disturbing and offensive.
- If the staff member feels unable to make this approach, the initial approach may be made by a colleague. The approach should be confidential, non-confrontational and low-key.
- Notes should be kept by the victim of bullying, detailing times, dates and whether or not the incidents were witnessed.

If the matter is still unresolved, formal complaints procedures should be adopted.

Formal Procedures for Staff Members:

- A formal complaint should be made to the Principal.
- A written, signed report should be submitted to the Board of Management by the complainant.
- The complaint will be investigated with minimum delay, as confidentially as possible.
- Prior to the investigation, the alleged bully will be given a copy of the formal written complaint and advised that an investigation will ensue and that disciplinary action may follow.
- The complaint will be investigated by:
 1. The Principal and one other person of her choice.
 2. Two individuals named by the Board.
- The investigations will be handled with due respect to the rights of both the complainant and the alleged bully.
- Both parties may be accompanied/represented by a colleague or union representative at all interviews or meetings.
- These meetings shall be recorded.
- Ultimate disciplinary action is the responsibility of the Board of Management.
- Should the Principal be the complainant or the alleged bully, or should a staff member not feel comfortable in bringing such a matter to her attention, referral should be made to the Chairperson of the Board of Management for investigation.

- Where a complaint is found to be substantiated, the following sanctions will apply:
 1. Verbal warning.
 2. Written warning.
 3. Final written warning.
 4. Suspension with or without pay.
 5. Other disciplinary action short of dismissal.
 6. Dismissal.
- Where disciplinary action is taken, the bully retains the right of appeal and the right of natural justice.
- Where an employee is victimised as a result of participating in any aspect of the complaints procedure, including acting as a witness for another employee, such behaviour will also be subject to disciplinary action.
- The on-going relationship between the individuals in the alleged case of bullying will be monitored by the Principal (or other designated person) over a number of months.

Appendix 1

The Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers (as set out by the Teaching Council of Ireland)

1. Teachers should take care of their students under their supervision with the aim of ensuring their safety and welfare insofar as it reasonably practicable.
2. Teachers should respect confidential information relating to colleagues, students and families, gained in the course of professional practice, unless the well-being of an individual or a legal imperative requires disclosure.
3. Teacher should uphold the reputation and standing of the profession. They should act with honesty and integrity in all aspects of their work. They should avoid direct conflict between their private interests and their professional work.
4. Teachers should respect students, parents, colleagues, school management, co-professionals and all in the school community. They should interact with them in a way that does not discriminate and that promotes equality in relation to gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race, ethnicity, membership of the Travelling community and socio-economic status.
5. Recognising the unique and privileged relationships that exist between teachers and the students entrusted to their care, teachers should conduct these relationships in a way that is professional, respectful and appropriate.
6. Teachers should not practice the profession while under the influence of any substance which impairs their ability or medical fitness.
7. Teachers should provide complete and accurate information and authentic documents with respect to their professional status, qualifications and experience. They should use only their own names, as set out in the register, in the course of

their professional duties. They should provide complete and accurate information on any professional matter as requested by the Teaching Council. They should not counsel or assist any person who is not a registered teacher to represent himself or herself as being so registered.

Ratified by the Board of Management .

1-5-12

Tony Kemp