

## Respect & Dignity in Our Work Keeping Our Workplace Positive & Effective

### A Commitment to Dignity & Respect

Sacred Heart SNS 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 Sacred Heart SNS 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. Sacred Heart SNS 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 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 Sacred Heart SNS 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.

Reflecting our commitment to respect and dignity, our Safety Statement (which is to be reviewed in 2014) will be amended to include a commitment to a positive work environment.

In developing and adopting this policy in Sacred Heart SNS, we have taken a number of steps to examine our work environment and, as necessary, have agreed changes which reflect a commitment to dignity at work. These steps will be initiated both by the team generally and supported by management. Reflecting our commitment to a positive workplace, we have agreed to review this policy each year.

### **Adult Bullying, Harassment & Not Nice Behaviour Can Be a Problem**

Sacred Heart SNS recognises that adult bullying and harassment are problems if they occur in any workplace. These behaviours generally amount to psychological abuse which causes serious pain and suffering. We believe that in addition to its unacceptable effects on our team who may be targeted, these behaviours do not help our effectiveness as a team.

Bullying may include behaviours such as:

- Verbal abuse/insults, undermining remarks
- Excessive monitoring of work
- Withholding work-related information
- Exclusion with negative consequences

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.

### **In the unlikely event that an allegation of bullying or harassment is made, the steps we will take are ....**

We acknowledge that any one of us have the right to take such advice or steps as they themselves may decide but accept that the ISM team and 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 place in Sacred Heart SNS. These procedures to address and investigate allegations focus on the earliest possible resolution and will proceed as necessary from informal to formal stages and will have a stress on confidentiality.

## In Conclusion

As members of Sacred Heart SNS 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 Sacred Heart SNS has adopted this policy on \_\_\_\_\_
- 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)**.