



# **Thomond Primary School**

## **Dignity at Work Policy**

## **Dignity at Work: Building & Maintaining a Positive & Effective Work Environment**

This policy is 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) and 'Working Together *Ag Obair le Chéile*', 2024.

### **Section A. Core Principles of the Policy**

This school is committed to maintaining a positive work environment where work is done in an atmosphere of care and support, respect, collaboration, openness and equality. The school strives to implement the principles and core values of Restorative Practice as much as possible.

Adult bullying and harassment in the workplace are phenomena which this school will seek to prevent and manage effectively and discreetly should it arise.

Everybody who works in Thomond Primary School has the right to be treated with dignity and respect and the responsibility to treat everyone with dignity and respect.

Management is committed to intervening in an appropriate manner - utilising the accepted Management/INTO procedures - to investigate and deal with any allegations of bullying and/or harassment.

Management agrees that 'Best practice makes good prevention' (Working together p.2) and thus promotes a warm collaborative workplace based on collegiality and professional respect.

Each staff member understands and accepts the need for:

#### **Individual Responsibility**

Each member of staff has a responsibility to conduct themselves professionally, to be courteous and respectful to their colleagues and not to engage in unacceptable behaviour. Individuals should be conscious and vigilant as to their conduct and its possible impact on others. Teachers and Management should treat each other with professional courtesy and respect and are entitled to expect the same in return. Fostering positive interactions should be an on-going endeavour and it is incumbent on each teacher and member of the Board of Management to promote a culture of positive working relations.

Each staff member understands and accepts the need for:

#### **Respect for Differing Roles and Responsibilities**

Teachers and Management should appreciate the different roles and responsibilities held by the various school personnel. In this regard, the decision-making authority and obligations on parties will differ depending on the role they hold for example, the decision-making authority and obligations on

the Board of Management, Chairperson or Principal Teacher differs from that of the Assistant Principal or a classroom teacher. Within that framework, each teacher must be prepared to work in collaboration with their colleagues and within the management and leadership structures of the school.

Each staff member understands and accepts the need for:

**Formal adoption of the Procedures**

It is strongly recommended that Working Together 2024 – Ag Obair le Chéile document be formally adopted by boards of management, it should be communicated to teachers and discussed at a staff meeting at least once per year, thereby raising awareness of best practice and the procedures. Boards of Management and the Principal should make it clear that all forms of bullying or harassment will not be tolerated and that the dignity of the individual must be respected. In this regard, boards of management, Principal Teachers and in-school management teams should ensure that standards of behaviour are applied fairly and consistently, that unacceptable behaviour is dealt with and that those who report it are not victimised as a result. Please note, schools may wish to apply these procedures for non-teaching staff where agreeable to all parties.

Each staff member understands and accepts the need for:

**Effective Communication**

Regular, transparent and open communication should be encouraged. As part of that process, staff may wish to raise issues, as appropriate, with each other or with the Principal/Management. Each party should be open to hearing and addressing others' viewpoints and to responding in a constructive manner to any issues raised. Communication is a two-way process, and it is important that differing views are heard, respected and responded to in an appropriate and reasonable manner. There should be regular staff meetings (i.e. at least one per term) where staff are fully aware of the agenda in advance and given an opportunity to submit items for discussion. Staff meetings should be conducted in an open, constructive and professional manner and consideration of a shared approach to chairing meetings is encouraged. There should be clarity about the issues discussed, the decisions taken, if any, and any follow-up action where such is agreed. The minutes of the meeting should record the decisions taken and any follow-up action required. At the next staff meeting, minutes should be adopted. In addition, the effective and regular dissemination of relevant information is important and can prevent staff members feeling isolated or excluded from school activities.

Each staff member understands and accepts the need for:

**Effective Decision Making**

Decision making is vital to the success of any enterprise and effective and transparent processes for making decisions are vital to promoting good working relationships. Staff can consider, discuss and, if appropriate, review its processes of decision making. However, decision-making processes will vary depending on the decision required and the circumstances and in addition, the Principal's role and responsibilities must be respected in accordance with DE Circular 16/'73 and relevant legislation. In some instances, decisions will be relatively automatic, particularly if governed by an established rule,

policy or circular. In other cases, decisions are required to be made on the basis of consensus or following a consultative Working Together 2024 | 2process. Custom and practice can also influence decision making. In order to foster collaborative decision making, members of staff should be willing to make constructive contributions, to listen and respect each other's viewpoints, to be flexible, to compromise if necessary and to uphold the majority decision. Those chairing staff meetings and other decision-making forums should encourage open, constructive, and respectful discussions.

Each staff member understands and accepts the need for:

### **School Policy and Procedure**

The processes of developing and communicating school policies and procedures are critical to the promotion of positive staff relations. Policies and procedures should be developed in consultation with staff and others in the school community and should be agreed and adopted by the staff and the Board of Management. Once a policy has been agreed, it is important that it is communicated and implemented fairly, consistently and in an open and transparent manner. Each teacher has a responsibility with regard to the implementation of school policy. All staff should be aware of and have access to all current school policies. Policies and procedures should be reviewed on a regular basis including when relevant circulars are issued by the Department of Education. New members of staff should be briefed on school policies and procedures.

Each staff member understands and accepts the need for:

### **Conflict Resolution**

The approach to conflict resolution should be proactive and constructive. Workplace conflict is not unusual and is often inevitable. It should be addressed at the earliest opportunity – for example by listening, identifying the source of the conflict, seeking to deescalate, suggesting solutions, being open to compromise, acknowledging misunderstandings, apologising, moving on. If necessary, the procedures outlined in Working Together 2024 – Ag Obair le Chéile may be invoked.

## **Section B. What is Workplace Bullying and Harassment?**

### **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 or ability. In addition to its unacceptable effects on persons who are its targets, workplace bullying and harassment is extremely detrimental to organisational effectiveness.

The Board of Management adopts the definition of adult bullying as set out by The Health and Safety Authority (HAS) and the Code of Practice for employers and Employees on the Prevention and resolution of Bullying at Work, 2021.

*"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."*

It goes on to say

*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".*

**Adult bullying can take many different forms which usually include:**

- Intimidation or harassment.
- Aggression.
- Verbal abuse/insults.
- Humiliation.
- Undermining
- Dominance or abuse of power.
- Different or less favourable treatment.
- Belittling a person's opinion.
- Disseminating malicious rumours, gossip or innuendo.
- Intrusion – pestering, spying or stalking.
- Excessive and unreasonable monitoring.
- Withholding information necessary for proper performance of a person's job.
- Repeatedly manipulating a person's job content and targets.
- Blaming a person for things beyond their control.
- Exclusion or isolation with negative consequences.
- Use of aggressive or obscene language.
- Other menacing behaviour.

**Key features of adult bullying are that the behaviour is, generally:**

- Persistent and/or systematic.
- Unwanted.
- Subtle.
- Non-physical.

When considering the definition of bullying, it is also important to note that

**Bullying is not:**

- Strongly expressing differences of opinion
- Offering constructive feedback, guidance, or advice about work-related behaviour which is not of itself welcome.
- Ordinary performance management.
- Reasonable corrective action taken by Principal/ employer which may include monitoring of the work of the Teacher.
- Workplace conflict where people disagree with or disregard the others' point of view.

- Appropriate workplace engagement.
- An isolated incident which may be an affront to dignity in the workplace but as it is a once-off incident, it is not considered to be bullying.

The above list is not exhaustive.

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.

It is important to note that it is the view of INTO and Management, that the exercise of legitimate management functions, in a reasonable and fair manner, does not constitute bullying.

## Harassment

The Employment Equality Acts (EEA) explicitly provides that sexual harassment and other harassment on legally defined discriminatory grounds, is unlawful and constitutes discrimination, contrary to the EEA.

It 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 important to distinguish harassment, including sexual harassment, from normal social interaction at work involving mutually acceptable behaviour.

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.

## Section C. A Positive Work Environment

It is widely accepted that a positive work environment is a great deterrent to difficulties in the workplace. Therefore, we will all work to make this school a good and happy place in which to work. A good place to work has a positive work environment characterised by;

- A supportive atmosphere
- Early intervention in all conflicts using the Restorative Practice questions
- Good and open communication (e.g. through opportunities at regular staff meetings)
- Appropriate interpersonal behaviour

- Collaboration and cooperation
- 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.

## **Section D. 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 confidentiality.

c.f. **'Working Together'** document for steps, procedures and recording templates.

## **Section E. The Grievance Procedure**

For the purpose of this procedure, a grievance is defined as a complaint which an employee/s has/have in relation to breaches of school rules, policies, practices, procedures and acts, or omissions of management, that affect their employment conditions and/or roles and/or responsibilities.

Accordingly, the Grievance procedure is an upwards only procedure and cannot be taken against another Teacher. Such issues may be addressed through the other procedures outlined in this document.

The purpose of this procedure is to provide a mechanism for the resolution of a grievance or grievances which a Teacher or a Principal Teacher in a national school, has against:

- The Principal Teacher in respect of their duties and responsibilities for the organisation, conduct and day to day activities of the school,
- The Chairperson of the Board of Management in their individual capacity, or
- The Board of Management/employer in respect of the exercise of any of its responsibilities for the governance of the school.

c.f. ‘**Working Together**’ document for steps, procedures and recording templates.

## Section F. Summary

The management of Thomond Primary School 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 creating and maintaining a good and happy workplace.

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed, following input from our school community as required or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which this policy refers.

## Ratification and Communication

This plan was formally approved by the Board of Management of Thomond Primary School on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2025.

Signed:   
Michael Condon  
Chairperson of the Board of Management

Date: 17/06/2025