



## **St. Nicholas' NS, Adare**

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

#### **Introduction:**

#### **A Commitment to Dignity & Respect**

St. Nicholas' NS 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 St. Nicholas' NS 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.

The Board of Management have identified such appropriate procedures to be outline in the Working Together document 2024. Working Together 2024– Ag Obair Le Chéile document was prepared by the following management bodies: the Catholic Primary Schools Management Association, the Church of Ireland Board of Education, Educate Together, An Forás Pátrúnachta, the National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education, the Muslim Primary Education Board.

Other appropriate procedures include procedures as outlined in the IPPN document '*Supporting each other*', and '*DES Circular 40/97 - Assaults on Staff in Primary Schools*'.

Regular review of this policy and discussions based upon it will take place as often as is practicable, and / or when updated Codes of Practice are introduced.

## **Rationale:**

### **Core Principles of Policy**

St. Nicholas' NS is where we spend a considerable part of our lives. Promoting and maintaining positive and professional interpersonal relationships is central to our work and wellbeing.

St. Nicholas' NS is committed to a positive work environment where work is done in an atmosphere of respect, collaboration, openness and equality.

Adult bullying and harassment will not be tolerated at St. Nicholas' NS

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 procedures (in line with **Working Together 2024– Ag Obair Le Chéile**) - to investigate and deal with allegations of bullying or harassment.

The provisions of DES Circulars 61/2017 and 62/2017 with respect to the assault of teachers and SNAs will be applied, as appropriate.

### **A Positive Work Environment**

We all have a responsibility to make St. Nicholas' NS a good place to work. Promoting a positive and collaborative workplace based on professional respect is for the most part dependent on the consistent application of best practice by all staff members. The following are practical ways to promote best practice :

**Individual Responsibility** – each member of staff has a responsibility to conduct themselves professionally, to be respectful to their colleagues and not to engage in unacceptable behaviour. Staff 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.

**Respecting differing roles and responsibilities** – Staff and Management should appreciate the different roles and responsibilities held by the various school personnel. Within that framework all staff must be prepared to work in collaboration with their colleagues and within the management and leadership structures of the school.

**Formal adoption of the procedures** – The working together document will be formally adopted by the Board of Management of St. Nicholas' NS. The policy will be communicated to staff and discussed annually raising awareness of best practice and the procedures

**Effective communication** – regular, transparent and open communication will be encouraged

**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 process 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.

**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

**Conflict resolution** – The approach to conflict resolution should be proactive and constructive. It should be addressed at the earliest opportunity. If necessary the procedures as outlined in the Working Together 2024 may be invoked.

## **Definitions: What is Adult / Workplace Bullying and Harassment?**

*Our School Team has adopted the definition of adult bullying as set out by The Health and Safety Authority (HSA) 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. 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.

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.

A key characteristic of bullying is that it usually takes place over a period of time. It is regular and persistent inappropriate behaviour, which is specifically targeted at one employee or a group of employees.

**The following is a non-exhaustive list of examples of types of behaviour that may constitute bullying:**

- *Verbal abuse/insults, undermining remarks*
- *Exclusion with negative consequences*
- *Intimidation*
- *Aggression*
- *Humiliation, ridicule*
- *Excessive monitoring of work*
- *Intimidation or harassment*
- *Humiliation*
- *Undermining*
- *Dominance or abuse of power*
- *Different or less favourable treatment*
- *Belittling a person's opinion / efforts*
- *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.*

When considering the definition of bullying it is also important to note the following non-exhaustive list of what 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.*

## **Harassment**

Harassment is any form of 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, related to any of the following grounds:

1. *Gender*
2. *Civil status*
3. *Family status*
4. *Sexual orientation*
5. *Religious belief*
6. *Age*
7. *Disability*
8. *Race, colour, nationality or ethnic or national origin*
9. *Membership of the Traveller community*

Unlike bullying, a single incident may constitute harassment. Harassment may constitute any act or conduct, such as, spoken words, gestures or the production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other material.

## **Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment is any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and/or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the person.

*Sexual Harassment may include:*

- *Physical conduct of a sexual nature*
- *Verbal conduct of a sexual nature*
- *Non-verbal contact of a sexual nature which may include the sharing (or threatening to share) sexually offensive images and/or the engagement of social media in a manner that is sexually offensive.*

The Code of Practice on Sexual Harassment and Harassment at Work, 2022, states that the intention of the perpetrator of the sexual harassment is irrelevant and as such St.Nicholas' NS recognise that parties subject to this procedure may or may not have intended for the effect of their behaviour to be the experienced effect of the alleged victim – but nonetheless may ultimately constitute sexual harassment.

## **Digital Harassment**

It is to be expected that staff are aware of their own online presence and they should adhere to the guidelines of the Teaching Council's Professional Standards. However, staff are also entitled to a private life online and this should be respected. For example, a staff member should not feel under pressure to "friend" another member of the school community.

If members of staff agree to share contact details, they should not be expected to reply to school related communications outside of school time if they do not wish to do so. While messages may be sent via Aladdin or email at any time, staff members are not expected to check in to them or respond to them outside of working hours.

### **Harassment and Wider School Community**

St. Nicholas NS believe that all members of the school community have the right to feel happy, safe and to be given opportunities to learn.

Anyone entering our building or grounds or those involved in school-related activities off-site should be afforded these rights.

In the same light, all adults in the school community have a responsibility to ensure that others are not denied these same rights.

Pupils are also expected to take on these responsibilities, in line with their level of age, social maturity and understanding.

It is important that all stakeholders behave in a manner that falls within this Dignity at Work Policy.

Some examples of acceptable behaviour are listed as follows:

- All stakeholders should speak to each other with respect. Using aggressive language or tones is not acceptable. If a stakeholder displays signs of aggression in the school building or grounds, he/she may be asked to remove themselves from the building/grounds. In certain cases, the Gardaí may be called to ensure the safety of all parties.
- Stakeholders should not interrupt teacher/pupil contact time. Should a parent/guardian wish to meet with a teacher, he/she should make an appointment to do so through the school office, Aladdin or written communication to the staff member in question, in conjunction with our school's communication policy.
- When requesting a meeting with a staff member, it is good practice to outline the purpose of the meeting when making the appointment. This can save considerable time and help to identify supporting material for the issue at hand.
- Stakeholders should not isolate others or attempt to influence others against particular individuals or groups in the school.
- Violence or aggressive behaviour will not be tolerated. An Garda Síochána may become involved in any incident of violence or aggression between two parties.
- Staff members will only speak about a particular pupil with his/her parents/guardians. Other pupils will not be discussed. The staff of the school will respect your child's right to privacy, so it is asked that parents respect other pupil's right to privacy also
- In line with our Child Safeguarding Statement, stakeholders should never approach a child in an aggressive manner.

## **The Resolution Process:**

### **A) What Happens if there is a staff relation difficulty?**

It is recommended that parties engage at an early stage in order to achieve early resolution of staff relation difficulties at St.Nicholas'NS.

Accordingly, the first approach to resolving difficulties / areas of conflict lies initially with the individuals / parties involved.

Before engagement with formal recommended procedure, it is envisaged that the parties will attempt to resolve matters informally between themselves, in the first instance before escalation to formal procedures.

Effective, open and constructive engagement and communication is key to early resolution and is emphasised throughout this process.

The parties may be open to a suggestion to involve a colleague or other mutually agreed person at the informal stage to seek a resolution.

In this instance, the Deputy Principal (DP) and Assistant Principal 1 (AP1) Post Holders - an impartial group / third party, as requested by staff may be approached to be involved, on an informal basis, to listen to concerns and grievances.

This neutral third party will help to create a safe environment where both sides can openly discuss their issues and work toward a mutual solution.

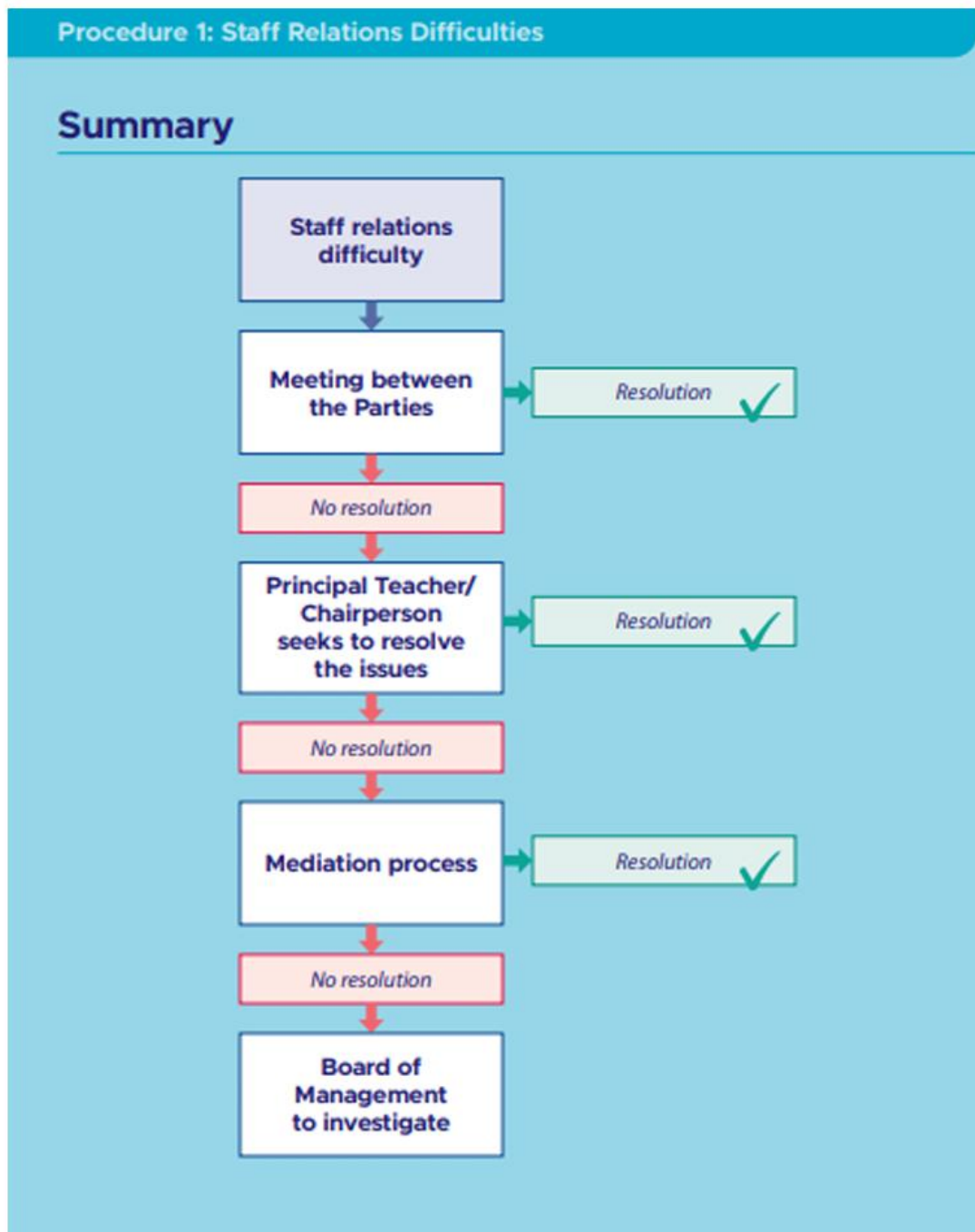
When advice or guidance is requested by the parties involved from the DP or AP1, the DP or AP1 may need an agreed time - at least 3 working days in any case - to deliberate.

While such guidance may help form a solution, it is not binding.

Third parties may refrain from providing guidance if they feel it could jeopardize potential solutions.

It is acknowledged that sometimes informal engagement is not successful and where that is the case, the formal staff relations procedure provides a mechanism for the resolution of such issues.

An outline summary of the recommended formal staff relations procedures is as follows:



Please refer to the document Working Together 2024 for further detail of procedures and templates.

## **B) 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 he/she may decide, the Board of Management will take seriously any allegation of workplace bullying or harassment. The following stages of the procedure which should be adopted by an individual teacher for addressing complaints of adult bullying/harassment. In considering whether or not to initiate this procedure, teachers and staff members should get advice.

In this regard, advice is available from the following, as appropriate: - - -

INTO Head Office  
INTO Local CEC Representative  
Employee Assistance Service (contact details below)  
Fórsa

Chairpersons and members of boards of management can seek advice from the relevant Management Body for their school, in relation to implementing the procedure.

The parties to this procedure who are available to support in the above are: Catholic Primary Schools Management Association (CPSMA), Church of Ireland Education Board, Educate Together, An Forás Pátrúnachta, Muslim Primary Education Board, and National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education (NABMSE).

### **Fundamental tenets of this procedure are that:**

- a. A complainant or complainants will be treated with fairness, sensitivity, and respect.*
- b. A person or persons alleged to have bullied or harassed will be treated with fairness, sensitivity and respect.*
- c. Confidentiality is assured for all parties concerned.*
- d. All parties involved will not be victimised as a result of their participation in the process.*
- e. All parties involved will be afforded fairness and natural justice.*
- f. There is an onus on Party A to provide specific details in order for Party B to be afforded the opportunity to respond.*

### **Timely addressing of an allegation of Bullying or Harassment**

Generally, if either party to the allegation is on leave the procedure is paused for the duration of the leave. Notwithstanding this, there may be incidents/ circumstances where a party involved in this procedure who is on leave and is medically certified to, wishes to continue.

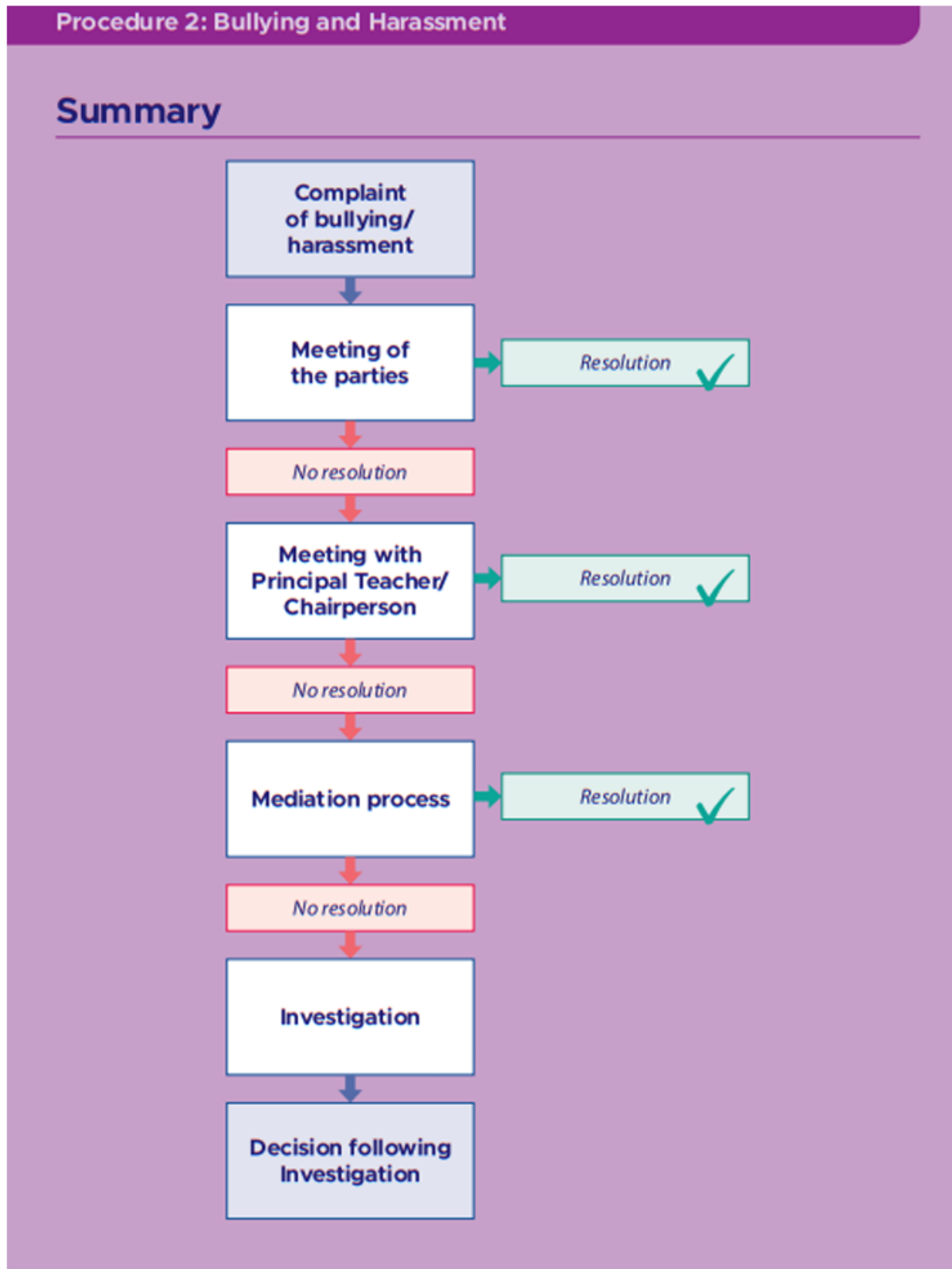
This is allowable subject to consent, e.g. sick leave/career break.

It is incumbent on Party A to raise their complaint in a timely manner and as a rule, within 6 months of the issue(s) which give rise to the complaint.

In exceptional circumstances, the six-month time limit may be extended e.g. in circumstances where Party A is on approved leave, school closures etc.

The time limit above does not exclude the employer's obligation to address inappropriate behaviour and take preventative action where issues of concern are brought to their attention.

An outline summary of the recommended formal bullying / harassment procedures is as follows:



Please refer to the document **Working Together 2024** for further detail of procedures and templates.

Templates will also be found at the end of this policy.

Supportive and effective formal procedures, in accordance with the nationally-agreed **Working Together 2024 – Ag Obair Le Chéile** document, are in place at St. Nicholas' NS.

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.

For further information, please refer to the **Working Together 2024– Ag Obair Le Chéile document**.



Currently via [Spectrum.Life](#), the Employee Assistance Service (EAS) offers free support for digital and mental health and wellbeing.

The service is available to all school staff and is known as 'Wellbeing Together: Folláine le Chéile'. The EAS provides advice to employees on a range of issues including wellbeing, legal, financial, bereavement, conflict, and mediation.

It also provides support and advice to managers to help them deal with health and wellbeing issues in the workplace.

To access support, freephone 1800 411 057. Alternatively, text 'Hi' to 087 369 0010 on SMS or WhatsApp.

The service is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and so parties can engage with the EAS at any stage.

Employees can access the Spectrum.Life wellbeing portal by signing up to the Spectrum.Life website.

## **In Conclusion**

As members of St. Nicholas' National 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.

## **Implementation:**

- Following consultation with all staff members, the Board of Management of St. Nicholas' NS 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*',

## **Timeframe for Implementation:**

The timeframe for implementation of this policy is May 2025  
This Policy was formally ratified by the Board of Management on \_\_\_\_\_.

Signed : \_\_\_\_\_Janet Bray\_\_\_\_\_

**Chairperson, Board of Management**

Date : \_\_\_\_\_29/4/2025\_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_Tanya Brown\_\_\_\_\_

**Principal**

Date : \_\_\_\_\_29/4/2025\_\_\_\_\_



**Procedure 1: Staff Relations Difficulties**

**Template 1B**

**Staff relations procedure: Stage 2 outcome**

*Principal/Chairperson:*

**Party A:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Party B:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Date of meeting/s with parties:**

\_\_\_\_\_

*The outcome of the meeting/s was:*

**Resolution not achieved**

**Resolution was achieved and the agreed outcome is listed below**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*The outcome shall be signed by:*

**Name (Party A):**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Date:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Name (Party B):**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Date:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Principal/Chairperson:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Date:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:**

\_\_\_\_\_

## Template 1C Mediation agreement

*Parties:*

**Mediator (named):**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Party A (named):**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Party B (named):**

\_\_\_\_\_

*Summary of events:*

**The mediator met/engaged with the parties on the dates listed below:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Outcome of mediation:*

**The outcome of the process entered into above was:**

**Agreement was not achieved**

**Agreement was achieved and the agreed outcomes are listed below**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*The Agreement shall be signed by:*

**Name (Party A):**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Date:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Name (Party B):**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Date:**

\_\_\_\_\_

## Procedure 2 – Bullying and Harassment Templates

### Procedure 2: Bullying and Harassment

## Template 2A

### Recording outcome at Stage 2 of the Bullying and Harassment Procedure

#### Parties:

Principal/Chairperson (named):

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Party A (named):

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Party B (named):

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#### Summary of events:

Met/engaged with the parties on the dates listed below:

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---

Party A raised complaints which were relayed to Party B:

Resolutions were suggested/sought:

Resolution was achieved at this stage and the matter has concluded:

Any further action required:

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Resolution was not achieved at this stage:

Agreed actions e.g. further check in required, further supports needed by either party etc:

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#### The agreement shall be signed by:

Name (Party A):

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Signature:

---

Date:

---

Name (Party B):

---

Signature:

---

Date:

---

## Template 2B Mediation agreement

*Parties:*

**Mediator (named):**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Party A (named):**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Party B (named):**

\_\_\_\_\_

*Summary of events:*

**The mediator met/engaged with the parties on the dates listed below:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Outcome of mediation:*

**The outcome of the process entered into above was:**

**Agreement was not achieved**

**Agreement was achieved and the agreed outcomes are listed below**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*The Agreement shall be signed by:*

**Name (Party A):**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Date:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Name (Party B):**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Date:**

\_\_\_\_\_

## Procedure 2: Bullying and Harassment

### Template 2C

#### Appeal of the investigation process

*Appellant:*

Name:

\_\_\_\_\_

Party A

Party B

*Investigator/s:*

BOM Nominee/s:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

OR Independent Third-Party name:

\_\_\_\_\_

Date of Investigation Report:

\_\_\_\_\_

Received on:

\_\_\_\_\_

*Grounds for appeal:*

(i) The agreed time scale was not adhered to

\_\_\_\_\_

(ii) Copies of all documentation being considered were not provided

\_\_\_\_\_

(iii) Investigator/s did not meet with Party A/B

\_\_\_\_\_

(iv) No opportunity to avail of representation

\_\_\_\_\_

(v) No opportunity was afforded to respond to Investigator/s' summary record

\_\_\_\_\_

(vi) Investigator/s' draft report not provided for comment on any factual inaccuracies

\_\_\_\_\_

I hereby confirm that I am submitting this appeal to the Chairperson of the Board of Management, or nominated Member of the Board of Management, within the 10-school day appeal window and understand that the outcome of this appeal is final.

Signed:

\_\_\_\_\_

Date:

\_\_\_\_\_

## Template 2D

### Notification of appeal to investigator/s

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

The purpose of this correspondence is to notify you of a formal appeal of the investigation process undertaken by you as part of a formal investigation pursuant to the Bullying/Harassment Procedure set out in Working Together 2024-Ag Obair le Chéile.

Please see below the relevant details.

You are asked to respond in writing to this formal appeal no later than:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Your written response must be provided to the following address, marked private and confidential and for the attention of the signatory/s of this notification: (Postal/Email address as appropriate)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

#### Ground/s for appeal:

Please find enclosed a copy of the formal appeal lodged by the appellant for your consideration and response.

Please note a copy of your response will be provided to the appellant.

#### Appellant:

Name:

\_\_\_\_\_

Party A

Party B

Signature:

\_\_\_\_\_

Chairperson

Nominee of BOM

Date:

\_\_\_\_\_

## Summary Of Grievance Procedure

