



Coláiste Pobail Acla

Dignity in the Workplace Policy

**Coláiste Pobail Acla,
Polranny,
Achill,
Co. Mayo.**

Roll No.: 76150V
Phone: 09845139
Email: info@cpacla.ie
Web: www.colaistepobailacla.ie

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1. General Information for Staff

Dear Staff Member,

The purpose of this document is to ensure that the Board of Management of Coláiste Pobail Acla is compliant with current legislation in relation to the Health and Safety Act 2005 and the Code of Practice on the Prevention of Workplace Bullying (May 2007).

The objective of the policy is to ensure school management is compliant with their duties under section 8 (2) (b) of the 2005 Act as regards ‘managing and conducting work activities in such a way as to prevent, so far as is reasonably practicable, any improper conduct or behaviour likely to put the safety, health and welfare at work of his or her employees at risk’.

It also applies to employees in relation to their duties under section 13 (1) (e) of the 2005 Act to ‘not engage in improper conduct or behaviour that is likely to endanger his or her own safety, health and welfare at work or that of any other person’.

A copy of this document will be issued to each staff member of Coláiste Pobail Acla.

It is each employee’s responsibility to ensure that they become familiar with the contents of this document.

A copy of the Dignity at Work Charter is displayed in a visible part of the school premises in order for management, staff, visitors and the general public to view.

In the event of a complaint in relation to bullying in the workplace in Coláiste Pobail Acla the procedures contained within this policy will be followed.

This document will be subject to periodic review.

Secretary, Board of Management

Paul Fahy

2. Background

Coláiste Pobail Acla is a co-educational designated community college in Polranny, Achill Island, Co Mayo. Our school operates under the patronage of Mayo, Sligo, and Leitrim Education and Training Board. It serves the catchment area of Achill, Mulranny, Currane, Ballycroy and Newport. Coláiste Pobail Acla is a designated DEIS school offering the new Junior Cycle Programme, Junior Cycle Schools Programme (JCSP), Transition Year and Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). We have an Autism Spectrum Continuum Unit attached to our school that caters for students with such a diagnosis and deemed eligible for enrolment in our catchment area also. Our staff is made up of teaching staff, SNAs, auxiliary staff; one part-time secretary, the school Librarian, caretaker and two part-time cleaners. School Completion Programme staff work in our school on a weekly basis along with other specialist workers who work regularly with staff and students, including speech therapists, occupational therapists, behavioural analysts, educational psychologists and visiting speakers. All personnel are included in this policy document.

3. Dignity at Work Charter

Coláiste Pobail Acla, Achill, Co Mayo, adopts the HSA Dignity in the Workplace Charter endorsed by IBEC and ICTU and adopted by ETBI (Education and Training Boards Ireland), ACCS (Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools), ASTI (Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland) and TUI (Teachers' Union of Ireland).

MSLETB, ASTI and TUI “Commit ourselves to working together to maintain a workplace environment that encourages and supports the right to dignity at work. All who work here are expected to respect the right of each individual to dignity on their working life. All will be treated equally and respected for their individuality and diversity.

Bullying in any form is not accepted by us and will not be tolerated. Our policies and procedures will underpin the principles and objectives of this Charter.

All individuals, whether directly employed or contracted by us, have a duty and a responsibility to uphold this Dignity at Work Charter.

Supervisors, Managers, and Trade Union Representatives where applicable in the workplace, have a specific responsibility to promote its provisions”

4. Mission Statement

We strive to motivate our school community to realise its full potential academically, spiritually, physically and emotionally in a safe, supportive environment.

5. Policy Rationale

A core employment value is the commitment to ensuring that each individual is guaranteed a working environment where s/he may expect to be treated with dignity both by management, work colleagues, and all other stakeholders of the school. This approach emphasises the importance of each individual and the contribution s/he makes to the success of the workplace. It guarantees the optimal working conditions that allow individuals to freely maximize their role in the workforce. Sound management ethos is based on providing leadership that encourages individuals in this regard. This is best achieved in our school through the creation and maintenance of a positive working environment.

Integral to this employment value, and in particular to the principle of mutual respect, is the commitment to provide a workplace free from bullying. It is in such a context that the philosophy and policy statement will be realised.

6. Objectives of Dignity at Work Policy

- To create and maintain a positive working environment in Coláiste Pobail Acla, where the right of each individual to dignity at work is recognised and protected.
- To ensure that all are aware of, and committed to, the principles set out in this policy.

The Board of Management of Coláiste Pobail Acla is committed to providing employees with an environment that is free from any form of workplace bullying.

The purpose of this document is to outline the Board's policy and procedures in relation to workplace bullying.

A complaint of workplace bullying will be taken seriously and dealt with promptly, and in accordance with due process.

In approving this policy, the Board has agreed that:

- It be brought to the attention of all Staff
- All Staff be asked to co-operate in its implementation

7. About the Policy

The Objective of the Board policy is to eliminate workplace bullying and to contribute to a supportive environment where Staff has the right to carry out the work of the school- '*the education of the whole person*'.

The policy guarantees that all complaints will be taken seriously and investigated promptly, and that all parties involved will be treated with respect.

Staff will be protected from victimisation or discrimination for assisting in an investigation. Victimisation as a result of a member of Staff raising a complaint will not be tolerated.

8. Definitions

8.1. *Bullying*

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. (Code of Practice 2002 under the Industrial Relations Act and the Health and Safety at Work Act)

8.2. *Harassment*

The Employment Equality Act, 1998 and 2004 (Code of Practice) (Harassment) Order 2012 specifically deals with harassment in the workplace. The Code aims to give practical guidance and advice. Harassment that is based on the following nine grounds- Gender, Age, Marital Status, Family Status, Sexual Orientation, Disability, Race, Religion or membership of the Traveller Community, is a form of discrimination in relation to conditions of employment.

8.3. *Sexual Harassment*

Sexual Harassment is defined in Section 14A (7) of the Employment Equality Act 2004 as any form of verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature 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.

The unwanted conduct may consist of acts, requests, spoken words, gestures or the production, display, or circulation of written words, pictures or other material.

9. What Constitutes Unacceptable Behaviour/Workplace Bullying?

Bullying can take a number of forms. Under the Health and Safety Act there is a requirement that personnel are consulted in respect of acceptable/unacceptable behaviour. Staff are consulted each time this policy is reviewed and therefore have the opportunity to make recommendations/suggestions. Through this consultation process, the staff will have ownership of the policy as it relates to their school.

A pattern of the following behaviours are examples of types of bullying:

- Exclusion with negative consequences
- Verbal abuse/insults
- Physical abuse
- Being treated less favourably than colleagues
- Unnecessary and repeated shouting
- Intrusion; pestering, spying or stalking
- Menacing behaviour
- Intimidation
- Aggression (Physical and Verbal)
- Undermining behaviour
- Excessive monitoring of work
- Humiliation
- Withholding work-related information
- Setting unreasonable and unrealistic targets
- Blame for things beyond the person's control
- Unequal treatment
- Spreading rumours/gossip
- Undermining the professionalism of others
- Deliberate non-cooperation

This list is not exhaustive.

It should be noted that a once-off incident is not normally considered to be bullying behaviour. While it might not be defined as bullying, a once-off incident of the above behaviour could be an affront to a person's dignity. In Coláiste Pobail Acla we promote positive behaviour and interactions with all stakeholders.

10. Effects of Bullying

10.1. Research

International research shows that the effects of bullying may be physiological, psychological and behavioural. There are consequences for the individuals who perceive themselves to be targets of bullying behaviour, for the alleged perpetrator(s), for the organisational culture, for the Board of Management and Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim Education and Training Board (MSLETB).

Effects on the Individual: research shows that individuals who are continually bullied lose self-confidence as self-esteem is eroded. They are at an increased risk of suffering stress. There may be serious implications for their health and their career may be adversely affected.

Effects on the Organisation: individuals who are bullied may find it difficult if not impossible to give their best in the workplace. Well documented implications of bullying are increased sickness/absenteeism, low morale, a tense atmosphere, cliques or factions.

10.2. Why might an individual be reluctant to take action?

- If workplace culture passively supports bullying; i.e. staff in general are unaware of the seriousness of bullying.
- Fear the complaint may not be taken seriously.
- Because s/he may be seen as unable for the job and/or a weak person.
- If the alleged bully is a person in authority there may be fear management will support the alleged perpetrator(s).
- Fear the complaint could result in further intimidation and increased bullying.
- Because there are no witnesses to the bullying and it would be one person's word against another.
- Because s/he might be seen to be lacking in credibility and/or personal status.
- Concerns of the implications of reporting an incident on job security.
- Where there is a witness or witnesses there may be an unwillingness on their part to come forward for fear of being branded a trouble-maker or for a variety of other reasons

10.3. What can I do to ensure that workplace bullying does not occur in Coláiste Pobail Acla?

- Be familiar with the school policy.
- Participate in available in-service in the area of dignity at work.
- Engage in consultation with respect to the development and review of the dignity in the workplace policy.
- Be aware and educated about workplace bullying.

11. Communication

Communication around the area of bullying and harassment can be difficult for all individuals. It may prove to be more difficult for some individuals than for others. It is inappropriate for work colleagues to act out their behaviour in an unacceptable manner. If you find it impossible or difficult to make an approach to the person involved in the alleged bullying tell somebody else; the Principal, Deputy Principal, TUI representative, a Contact Person as outlined in *Procedures for Dealing with Workplace Bullying* in this document.

12. Performance Criteria for Success of this Policy

- The existence of a policy on Dignity in the Workplace and the prevention of workplace bullying forms part of Health, Safety and Welfare at work.
- Awareness/availability of the policy
- Existence of Charter in a visible place: Dignity in the Workplace.
- Definitions of inappropriate/bullying behaviour are defined in the policy.
- Employee's right to complain is respected.
- There is an encouragement of the informal resolution of complaints.

13. Procedures for Dealing with Workplace Bullying

There are two stages for dealing with cases of alleged bullying:

- Stage 1: Informal
- Stage 2: Formal

Sometimes individuals may be unaware of the negative effects of their behaviour on other adults in the workplace. Such individuals may simply need to be told. Thus, at times incidents of bullying can be handled effectively in an informal way under Stage 1. If an incident occurs that is offensive, it may be sufficient to explain clearly to the offender that the behaviour is unacceptable. If the circumstances are too difficult or embarrassing for an individual, support may be sought from another colleague, a contact person, staff representative, Principal or Deputy Principal.

A complainant may decide, for whatever reason, to bypass the informal procedure and proceed to Stage 2.

The following section outlines the procedures to be followed with respect to a complaint: **Code of Practice – Procedures for Addressing Bullying in the Workplace (Extract from IR Code of Practice S.I. No. 17 of 2002 Code of Practice)**

13.1. Informal Procedure

While in no way diminishing the issue or the effects on individuals, 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.

- (a) Any employee who believes he or she is being bullied should explain clearly to the alleged perpetrator(s) that the behaviour in question is unacceptable. In circumstances where the complainant finds it difficult to approach the alleged perpetrator(s) directly, he/she should seek help and advice, on a strictly confidential basis, from a contact person. A contact person in the school environment could, for example, be one of the following:
- A work colleague
 - A member of management
 - An employee/Trade Union Representative

In this situation the contact person should listen patiently, be supportive and discuss the various options open to the employee concerned.

- (b) Having consulted with the contact person, the complainant may request the assistance of the contact person in raising the issue with the alleged perpetrator(s). In this situation the approach of the contact person should be by way of a confidential, non-confrontational discussion with a view to resolving the issue in an informal low-key manner.
- (c) A complainant may decide, for whatever reason, to bypass the informal procedure. Choosing not to use the informal procedure should not reflect negatively on a complainant in the formal procedure.

13.2. Formal Procedure

If an informal approach is inappropriate, or after the informal stage the bullying persists, the following formal procedures should be invoked:

- (a) The complainant should make a formal complaint in writing to his/her Principal. If the Principal/Deputy Principal is the subject of the complaint, the formal complaint should be made to the Chairperson of the Board of Management.
- (b) The alleged perpetrator(s) should be notified in writing that an allegation of bullying has been made against them. They should be given a copy of the complainant's statement and advised that they shall be afforded a fair opportunity to respond to the allegation(s).
- (c) The complaint should be subject to an initial examination by a designated member of management, who can be considered impartial, with a view to determining an appropriate course of action. An appropriate course of action at this stage, for example, could be exploring a mediated solution which would require the agreement of all parties, or a view that the issue can be resolved informally. Should these approaches be deemed inappropriate, and no other appropriate approach is found, a formal investigation of the complaint should take place with a view to determining the facts and the validity or otherwise of the allegation(s).

13.3. Investigation

- The investigation should be conducted by either a designated member or members of management or, if deemed appropriate, an agreed third party. The investigation should be conducted thoroughly, objectively, with sensitivity, utmost confidentiality, and with due respect for the rights of both the complainant and the alleged perpetrator(s).
- The investigation should be governed by terms of reference, preferably agreed between the parties in advance.
- The investigator(s) should meet with the complainant and alleged perpetrator(s) and any witness or relevant persons on an individual confidential basis with a view to establishing the facts surrounding the allegation(s). Both the complainant and alleged perpetrator(s) may be accompanied by a work colleague or employee/ Trade Union Representative if so desired.
- Every effort should be made to carry out and complete the investigation as quickly as possible and preferably within an agreed timeframe. On completion of the investigation, the investigator(s) should submit a written report to the Board of Management, working on behalf of MSLETB, containing the findings of the investigation.
- The complainant and the alleged perpetrator(s) should be informed in writing of the findings of the investigation.
- Both parties should be given the opportunity to comment on the findings before any action is decided upon.

13.4. Outcome

Should the Board of Management/MSLETB decide that the complaint is well founded, the alleged perpetrator(s) should be given a formal interview to determine an appropriate course of action. Such action could involve counselling and/or monitoring or progressing the issue through the disciplinary and grievance procedures put in place by MSLETB.

13.5. Confidentiality

All individuals involved in the procedures referred to above should maintain absolute confidentiality on the subject.

13.6. Record-Keeping

At all stages of the process a clear record should be kept of:

- The investigation undertaken
- All communications to/by the complainant
- The subject of the complaint
- The steps and all the decisions taken.

The above records should be held by the Chairperson of the Board of Management in a confidential manner in a secure place.

Where a complaint has been rejected or has not been upheld, a statement to that effect shall conclude the record in the personnel file of the complainant. All records in relation to a rejected/not upheld complaint shall be removed from the personnel file of the subject of the complaint. A statement of the outcome of the investigation will conclude all other files. Where a statement of the outcome of the investigation confirms the allegation to be true then the statement of outcome shall be placed on the file/record of the person against whom the investigation upheld the complaint.

13.7. Protection and Support

Staff shall be protected from intimidation, victimisation or discrimination for filing a complaint or assisting in an investigation. Retaliation against a member of staff for complaining about bullying/harassment is considered a disciplinary offence. A malicious complaint made by a staff member will be treated as misconduct under the disciplinary procedure.

13.8. Assistance in the Event of Harassment

Every effort will be made to assist if they so wish, persons who are victims of bullying/harassment to deal with the problem and where it is requested, the services of a counsellor will be made available by the Board of Management on behalf of MSLETB. Persons who bully/harass others may be

requested to attend counselling to prevent further incidences of harassment occurring. Access to such counselling may be made available by the Board of management acting on behalf of MSLETB.

13.9. Training/Awareness

It is considered that all personnel who have a role in either the informal or formal procedure – e.g. designated members of management, worker representatives, union representatives etc., should be made aware of appropriate policies and procedures. This should, if possible, include appropriate training.

14. Communication, Involvement and Dissemination

This policy was written in consultation with relevant stakeholders; management and staff. Information was sourced from relevant legislation and ETBI and Unions Nationally agreed Bullying Prevention Policy procedures agreed for implementation on 1st September 2013. It was then shared with the Student Council and the Parents' Association.

15. Evaluation

At Coláiste Pobail Acla we are committed to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of this policy. In addition to the performance criteria mentioned above, important to this process is:

- Legislation and other relevant guidelines
- Pupil feedback
- Staff feedback
- Parental feedback
- Board of Management feedback

16. Links with other School Policies/Documents

- Code of Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Code of Practice for Employers and Employees on the Prevention and Resolution of Bullying at Work. (2021)

17. Declaration

This Coláiste Pobail Acla Policy was formed following consultation with all staff, members of the Board of Management, Parents/Guardians and the Student Council. It is recommended that this policy be reviewed every three years or whenever it is deemed necessary by School Management. It was adopted by the Board of Management of Coláiste Pobail Acla on:

Signed: _____

Mr. Pat Kilbane

Chairperson of the Board of Management

Date: _____

Signed: _____

Mr. Paul Fahy

Board Secretary & School Principal (Acting)

Date: _____