



**\*\*Meánscoil Gharman Secondary School\*\***

**\*\*Dignity in the Workplace\*\***

**\*\*Introduction: \*\***

The Board of Management of Meánscoil Gharman Secondary School recognizes the right of every employee to work in a workplace free from any form of harassment. The Board of Management will make every effort to ensure that this right is upheld.

**\*\*Objectives: \*\***

The purpose of this document is to outline the policy and procedures of the Board regarding harassment in the workplace. It is the responsibility of all employees to be aware of this document. Employees are also responsible for ensuring that the workplace is free from harassment.

**\*\*Policy: \*\***

Complaints of harassment will be taken seriously and addressed promptly, confidentially, and in an understanding manner. The Board will not tolerate any member of the school staff engaging in harassment toward another staff member, as such behaviour is inconsistent with the ethos of the school.

The ethos of Meánscoil Gharman Secondary School is one of being Irish, Christian, caring, supportive, respectful, inspiring, welcoming, helpful, and understanding (Respectful Policy). In the case of a harassment complaint, an attempt will be made to resolve the matter informally first. However, if this approach is unsuccessful, a formal process will be initiated. The Board of Management will ensure a thorough and appropriate investigation of all complaints.

It should be understood that disciplinary action may be required in cases of harassment. In serious cases, an individual may be dismissed from their post in accordance with the law and relevant employment procedures.

**\*\*This policy applies to: \*\***

- Complaints of harassment (including sexual harassment) by one employee against another.

- Complaints of harassment (including sexual harassment) by a staff member against someone in a management position.
- Complaints of harassment (including sexual harassment) by someone in a management position against a staff member.

**\*\*This policy does not apply to: \*\***

- Complaints of harassment (including sexual harassment) by a staff member against a student. These complaints will be addressed under the school's discipline code or other relevant codes of practice.
- Complaints of harassment (including sexual harassment) by a student(s) against a staff member. Such complaints will be addressed according to standard grievance procedures.
- Complaints of harassment under the terms of the Employment Equality Act (1998), as such matters are dealt with under that legislation.
- Anonymous complaints.
- Complaints involving legal proceedings.

**\*\*1. Harassment of Adults in the Workplace: \*\***

What is harassment?

The Health and Safety Authority defines harassment as follows:

Bullying in the workplace is a regular verbal, psychological, or physical attack by an individual or group of individuals on another person or group. It is bullying when the behaviour involves aggression, cruelty, unfair treatment, intimidation, or humiliation. While conflicts and interpersonal difficulties arise in the workplace, they are legitimate issues that should be dealt with through appropriate industrial relations systems. Harassment refers to persistent behaviour, not occasional or minor incidents.

Types of harassment of adults include:

- Intimidation
- Physical assault
- Verbal abuse
- Humiliation
- Undermining a person
- Abuse of power
- Treating someone differently or unfairly
- Leaving someone out or isolating them

The key characteristics of adult harassment are:

- Persistent
- Unsolicited
- Subtle
- Non-physical

## **\*\*2. Sexual Harassment of Adults in the Workplace: \*\***

What is sexual harassment?

Sexual harassment is a pattern of aggressive behaviour directed at another person, behaviour that is neither requested nor wanted by the person it targets. It shows a lack of respect for the dignity of the individual and interferes with the person's work environment. A reasonable person would view such behaviour as hostile, intimidating, or humiliating.

Examples of sexual harassment in the school context include:

- **\*\*Verbal Sexual Harassment\*\***: Sexual remarks, suggestive comments, sexually inappropriate jokes, whistling, sexual phone calls, or unwanted social interaction.
- **\*\*Non-verbal Sexual Harassment\*\***: Pornographic images, sexually suggestive pictures, calendars, or written/electronic communications with a sexual content.
- **\*\*Physical Sexual Harassment\*\***: Unwanted physical contact.

## **\*\*3. Procedures for Allegations of Harassment (Including Sexual Harassment): \*\***

**\*\*Informal Procedure: \*\***

**\*\*Step 1: \*\***

(a) If a staff member feels they are being harassed or sexually harassed, they should arrange a meeting with the person causing the issue and ask them to stop immediately. It is enough to explain that the behaviour is unwelcome, disruptive, and affecting their work.

(b) If the complainant feels they cannot speak directly to the person causing the harassment, they may ask a designated individual to speak on their behalf. This could be a colleague, a member of the school's management, or a union representative. The designated person should attempt to resolve the matter informally and sensitively through a discreet and non-confrontational conversation.

(c) The complainant may choose not to go through the informal procedure and proceed directly with the formal process, without any negative consequences.

**\*\*Formal Procedure: \*\***

## **\*\*Step 2: \*\***

- (a) If the complainant chooses not to use the informal procedure, or if inappropriate behaviour continues despite attempts to address it informally, the complainant should submit a formal written complaint to the Principal. If the complaint is against the Principal, it should be addressed to the Chairperson of the Board of Management.
- (b) The Principal or, if appropriate, the Chairperson of the Board will inform the Board of Management about the complaint.
- (c) The Principal or Chairperson (or a third-party agreed upon) will investigate the complaint as soon as possible.
- (d) The complainant will be informed that the complaint has been received, and a written copy will be provided to the person the complaint is about, requesting a written response. A copy of the response, if any, will also be given to the complainant.
- (e) A meeting will be scheduled between the complainant and the person the complaint is against, either together or separately, to try to resolve the issue. A third party may also be involved in the investigation. Both the complainant and the person being complained about may bring a colleague or other representative to the meeting.
- (f) The investigation will be conducted as quickly as possible within an agreed timeframe.
- (g) When the investigation is complete, the Principal/Chairperson/third party will provide a written report to the Board of Management with the investigation findings.
- (h) The complainant and the person the complaint is about will be informed of the outcome of the investigation.
- (i) Both parties will have an opportunity to respond to the findings in writing or in person before the Board.
- (j) If the Board finds the complaint to be justified, a formal interview will be held with the person the complaint is about to determine the best course of action to resolve the issue, which may include counselling or monitoring of progress. In some cases, employment procedures may be used to address the matter.

## **\*\*4. Confidentiality\*\***

All individuals involved in the process must maintain confidentiality throughout.

## **\*\*5. Record-Keeping\*\***

Clear records should be kept at each stage of the process:

- The investigation carried out
- All communications with the complainant
- All communications with the person the complaint is about
- The steps and decisions taken during the investigation and who made them
- The findings of the investigation (whether the complaint was upheld or not) and the actions taken by the Board based on the findings.

If the complaint is not upheld, a statement will be added to the complainant's personnel file. Records of complaints not upheld and rejected will be removed from the personnel file of the person the complaint was made against. If the complaint is found to be valid, a statement will be added to the file of the person the complaint was made against.

## **\*\*6. Protection and Support\*\***

Staff will be protected from retaliation, discrimination, or victimization due to making a complaint or assisting with the investigation. Any retaliation against a staff member for making a harassment or sexual harassment complaint will be treated as misconduct. Malicious complaints will also be addressed under the disciplinary procedure.

## **\*\*7. Support for Harassment/Sexual Harassment Victims\*\***

Every effort will be made to assist victims of harassment or sexual harassment in addressing the issue. The Board of Management will provide counselling services if requested. The person responsible for sexual harassment may also be encouraged to seek counselling to avoid future occurrences.

## **\*\*8. Right to Disconnect\*\***

The right to disconnect from work is vital for well-being, and to help employees maintain a healthy work-life balance.

Meánscoil Gharman Secondary School acknowledges that every employee is entitled to time away from their normal working hours and to enjoy their free time without interference, unless there is an emergency or agreement to the contrary, such as being "on call".

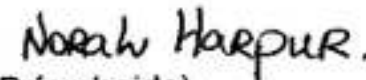
To encourage and support employees in balancing their work and personal lives, the school has adopted a "Right to Disconnect" policy, which includes best practices for well-being, working hours, the use of technology, and more:

- Emails should not be checked or sent outside of normal working hours, where possible.
- The sender should consider the timing of their communications and the possibility of it being disruptive, and the recipient should understand that they are not expected to respond until their working hours resume.
- Employees should not feel obliged to respond to social communications outside of their working hours.

## **\*\*9. Review\*\***

This policy will be reviewed after a period of two years.

Sínte:   
(Cathaoirleach an Bhoird Bhainistíochta)

Sínte:   
(Príomhoide)

Dáta: 16.5.24 Dáta: 16.5.24

Dáta an chéad athbhreithnithe eile: 2025