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Dignity at Work Policy

This policy has been formulated to establish guidelines and procedures which will support the establishment of a positive climate for the adults working in our school.

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Introduction

Ballinteer Educate Together National School commits itself to working to maintain a workplace environment that encourages and supports the right to dignity at work. All who

work here and are members of the Board of Management and Parent-Teacher Association are expected to respect the right to dignity in the workplace. Every person will be treated equally and be respected for their individuality and diversity. Bullying or harassment in any form and from any party within the school is not accepted by us and will not be tolerated. Our policies and procedures will be underpinned by the objectives of this policy. All individuals, whether directly employed or contracted by Ballinteer Educate Together National School or volunteering as a member of the Board of Management or Parent-Teacher Association or who are volunteering or completing work experience in another capacity have a duty and responsibility to uphold this Dignity at Work Charter.

Aims and Objectives:

- To establish working definitions for bullying and harassment.
- To describe procedures for responding to claims of bullying or harassment.
- To identify ways to promote a positive working environment for all adults in our school community.

Rationale:

This school is committed to a positive work environment where work is done in an atmosphere of respect, collaboration, openness and equality. Adult bullying and harassment in the workplace are phenomena which this school will seek to prevent and will not tolerate. 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 Management/INTO procedures - to investigate and deal with allegations of bullying or harassment. (Appendix A)
The provisions of Circular 40/97 on Assaults on Staff in Primary Schools will be utilised as appropriate (Appendix D).

Procedures:

Establishing a Positive Working Environment

A good place to work has a positive work environment characterised by:

- A supportive atmosphere
- Good and open communication (e.g. at regular staff meetings, parent/teacher meetings, formal and informal conversations, professional development experiences, etc.)
- Appropriate interpersonal behaviour procedures
- Opportunities for staff members to collaborate on shared projects
- Open discussion and resolution of conflict
- Recognition, feedback and affirmation as appropriate
- Fair treatment of all staff (including fair systems of selection and promotion)
- Opportunities for social interaction that helps build relationships based on mutual respect.

Every person has a responsibility to play their part in contributing to a positive work environment. In this regard, a person who is a witness or bystander has a responsibility to

raise concerns about dignity at work and threats to this, in an appropriate and timely manner.

The Health and Safety Policy includes a commitment to a positive work environment 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.

Definitions:

The Board of Management defines **adult bullying** as ‘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.

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, belittling
- Excessive monitoring of work
- Withholding work-related information

Harassment 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
- religion
- Disability
- Civil status
- Family status
- Sexual orientation
- Age
- Race
- Membership of the Traveller community

Harassment is defined in law as “unwanted conduct” related to one or more of these 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”.

The following are examples of inappropriate behaviour which may constitute harassment. These examples of harassment are illustrative but not exhaustive:

- Verbal harassment such as jokes, derogatory comments, ridicule or song;
- Written harassment such as text messages, emails or through social media;
- Physical harassment such as jostling or shoving;
- Intimidatory harassment such as gestures or threatening poses;
- Visual displays such as posters, emblems or badges;
- Persistent negative body language; or
- Ostracising a person

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.

The following are some examples of inappropriate behaviour which may constitute sexual harassment. These examples are illustrative but not exhaustive:

- Unwanted physical conduct of a sexual nature, for example unnecessary touching, patting or pinching or brushing against another employee's body.
- Verbal conduct of a sexual nature, for example unwelcome sexual advances, propositions or pressure for sexual activity, continued suggestions about social activity outside the school after it has been made clear that such suggestions are unwelcome, unwanted and offensive flirtations, suggestive remarks, innuendos or lewd comments.
- Non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature, for example the display of pornographic or sexually suggestive pictures, objects, written materials, emails or text-messages.
- Unwanted or derogatory comments about dress or appearance.
- Leering or suggestive gestures.

This policy covers an act of harassment or sexual harassment which occurs outside the school premises or normal school hours provided the perpetrator was acting in the course of employment, for example, at a training course, conference or school-related event.

It is recognised that bullying and harassment complaints may arise among work colleagues but may also arise in relation to any adults or visitors (including parents or guardians) in the school. In either case, the commitment to a positive workplace, where dignity at work is respected, prevails.

Parent Teacher Communication and Interactions:

In Ballinteer ETNS we place great value and importance on relationships and communications between parents/ guardians and teachers. It is expected that all communications (be they in person, on the phone or through email) are conducted with the greatest level of respect for each party involved.

- All discussions should be conducted respectfully, calmly and in the spirit of collaboration with a view to resolving issues effectively and for the maximum benefit of the child in question

- The professional role of staff members should be acknowledged and respected.
- Issues should be directly communicated between the staff member and parent/ guardian rather than entering into unhelpful conversations outside of the school or on social media that will not result in a resolution, and could potentially exacerbate an issue.
- A person's right to disconnect from work (e.g. by not routinely emailing or calling outside normal working hours) should be respected. Where possible, emails should be checked or sent only during normal working hours. It is expected that if a parent/ guardian or staff member writes an email outside of working hours, they use the 'schedule send' function to send the email the following work day.

Communication that falls outside of these guidelines includes:

- Aggressive, threatening or derogatory communications of any form.
- Public defamation - in person or through social media.
- Repeatedly sending emails outside of working hours.

Staff members who fail to reach these expectations will be dealt with under the normal disciplinary procedures.

Parents / Guardians whose communications repeatedly fall outside expectations:

- May be asked to meet with a staff member only when another staff member is present.
- May be invited to engage in a restorative conversation with a member of staff with the support of senior management.
- In extreme circumstances, the Board of Management reserves the right to revoke permission for parents / guardians to enter the premises.

Digital Harassment

Email Communication Expectations

Ballinteer ETNS recognises email as an important communication tool between the school, its staff, and the wider school community. To ensure respectful, effective, and healthy communication practices, the following guidelines apply:

- **Response Time:**
Staff members will respond to emails within a five day time frame. In the event of absence, staff may activate an **"Out of Office"** notification to inform senders of expected response times or alternative contact information.
- **After-Hours Communication:**
Staff are **not expected or encouraged** to check or respond to emails outside of their contracted working hours. Should staff choose to do so, the Board accepts no responsibility for emails answered outside of school hours.
- **Tone of Communication:**
All email communication **must be respectful**.
Staff are **not obliged** to respond to emails they consider disrespectful or inappropriate in tone. In such cases, it is recommended that the staff member invite

the parent/guardian to arrange a **face-to-face meeting** instead of responding by email.

Email Behaviours Considered Digital Harassment

“Mailbombing,” defined as the excessive sending of emails to a staff member, is strictly prohibited. All email users should be mindful that their actions may unintentionally cause distress. Examples include:

- Excessive forwarding of resources, links, or information
- Inappropriate use of “**Reply All**”
- Excessive individual contact (e.g., daily check-ins about a child or repeated messages), unless explicitly agreed in advance

Unsolicited Email (Spam)

Ballinteer ETNS uses Google’s email services, including spam-filtering tools, to limit unsolicited messages. Staff may use the in-built reporting functions to identify spam. The Board is **not responsible** for spam received in staff inboxes.

Any email communication that meets the definition of **harassment** will be treated with the same seriousness as all other forms of harassment under school policy.

Other Forms of Digital Harassment

In the digital age, staff are expected to be mindful of their online presence and to adhere to the **Teaching Council’s Professional Standards**. However, staff members are also entitled to privacy and autonomy in their personal online lives.

For example:

- Staff should **not feel pressured** to “friend,” follow, or connect with colleagues, parents/guardians, or others in the school community on social media or personal digital platforms.

Further guidance is provided in the school’s **Internet Acceptable Usage Policy (AUP)**.

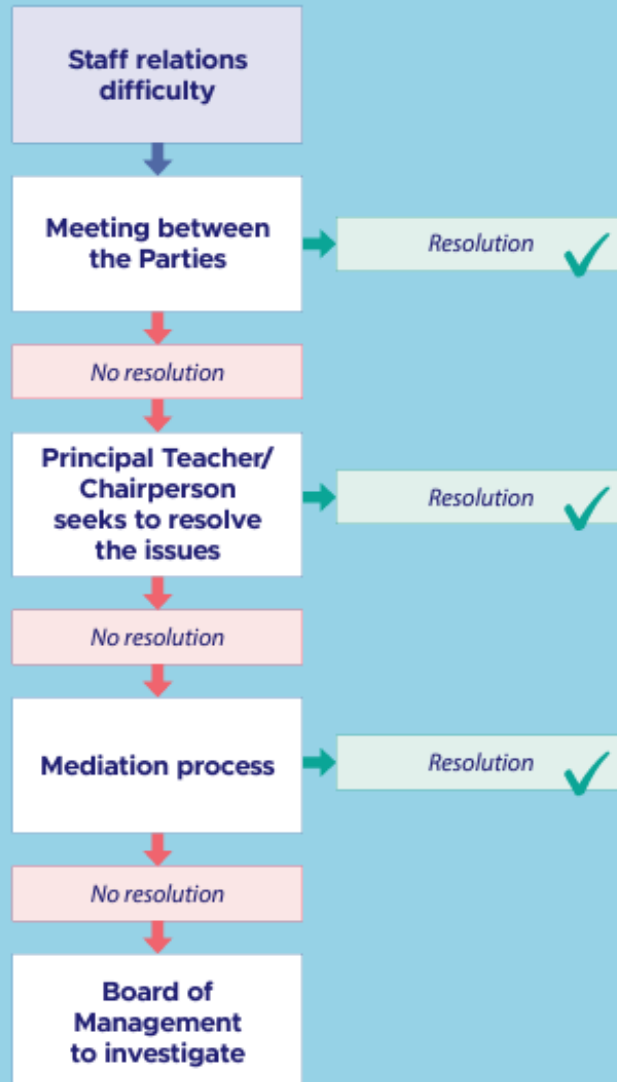
Procedures in response to an allegation of Bullying or Harassment

As per the INTO Working Together 2024 Document [Working Together 2024](#)

1. Procedure to address staff relations difficulties

Procedure 1: Staff Relations Difficulties

Summary

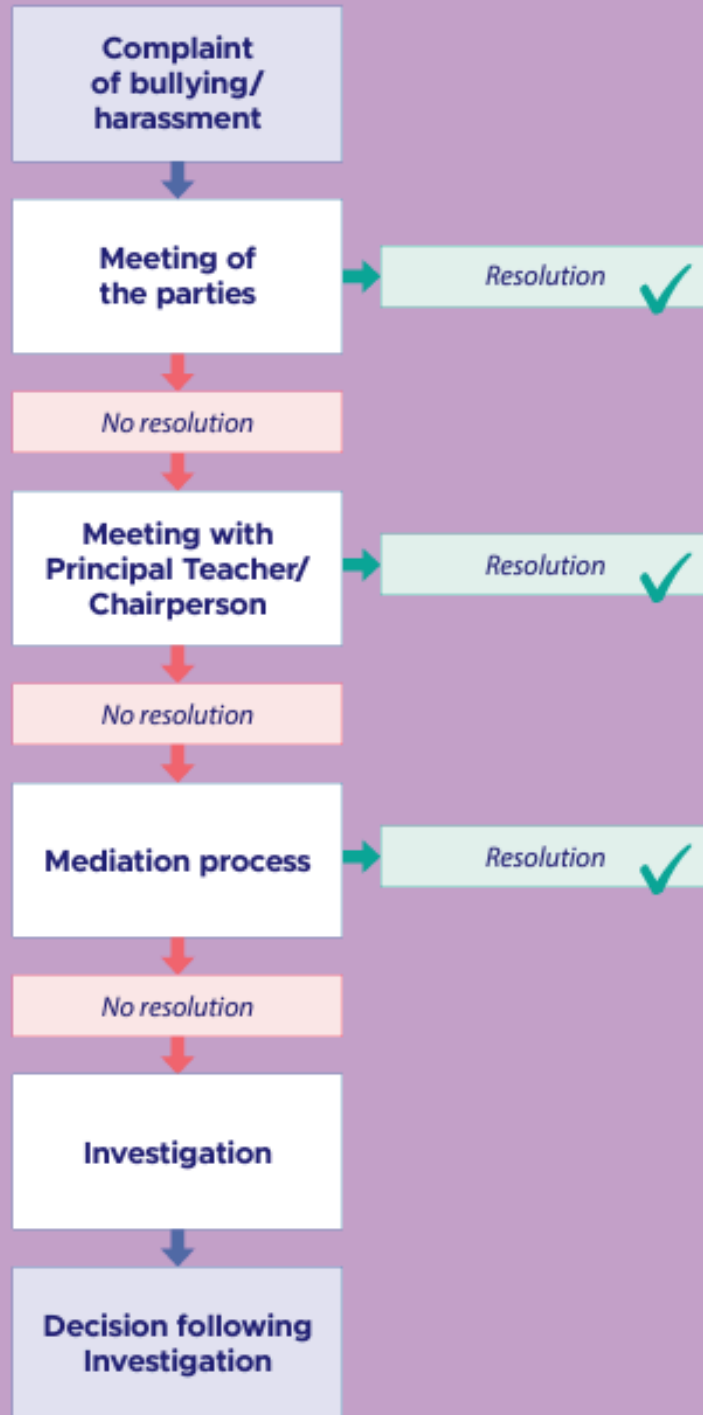


Appendix C: Cost of mediation is in keeping with those outlined in the Educate Together Service Legal Agreement January 2025

2. Procedure to address adult bullying/harassment [Working Together 2024](#)

Procedure 2: Bullying and Harassment

Summary

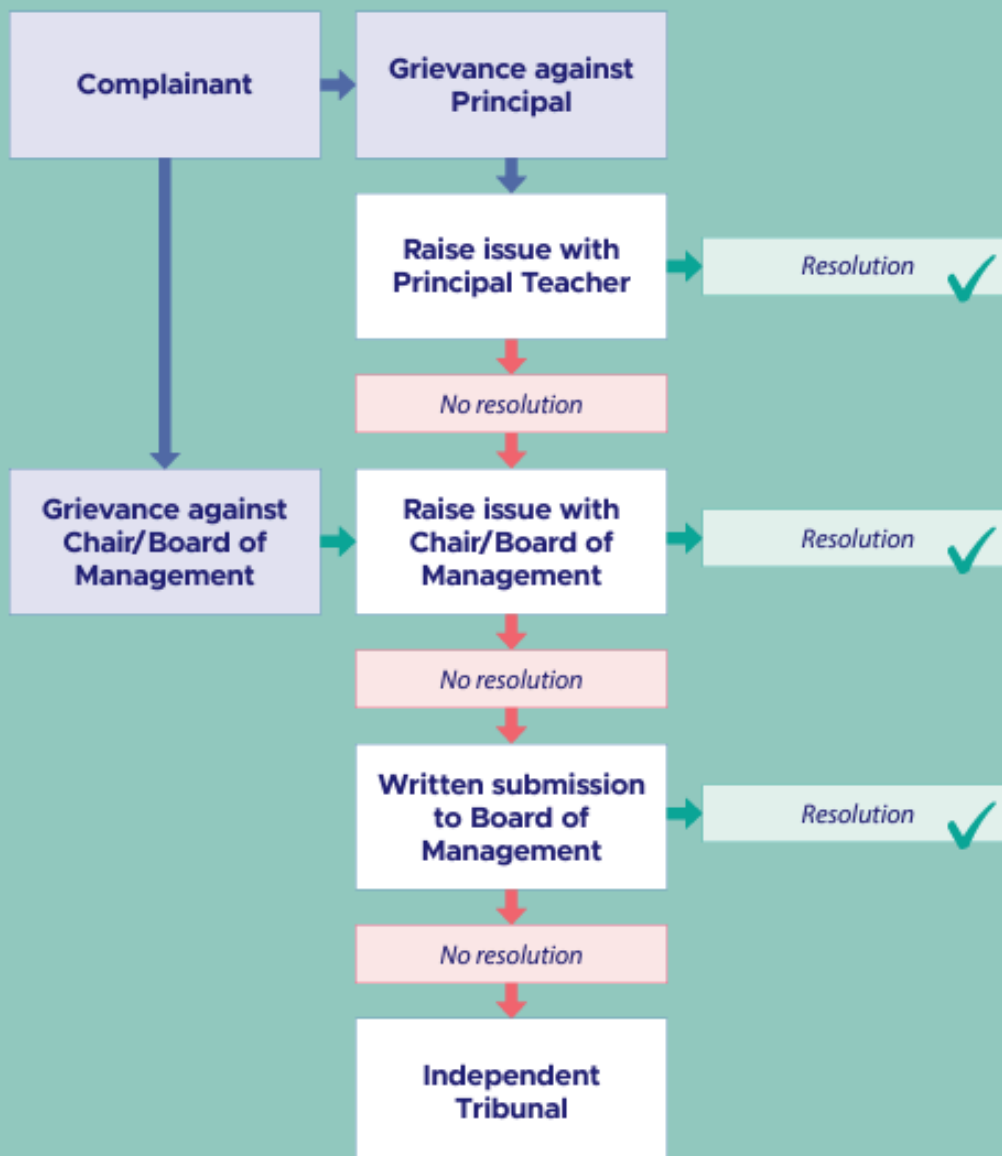


Appendix C: Cost of mediation is in keeping with those outlined in the Educate Together Service Legal Agreement Jan'2025

- Grievance procedure [Working Together 2024](#)

Procedure 3: Grievance

Summary



Contact Details

Queries about this policy should be addressed to the Principal in the first instance:

The Principal

Ballinteer Educate Together National School

Parkvale, Balally,

DUBLIN 16

D16 N6T0

(01) 296 3017

info@ballinteeretns.ie
School Roll Number: 20400E

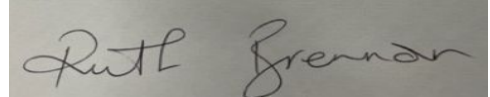
Ratification and Communication:

This policy was ratified on the date below. The policy will be distributed to all staff. It will be available electronically on the school website for access at any time. It will be reviewed as necessary but no later than November 2028.



Chairperson

Date: 04/12/2025



Principal

Date: 04/12/2025

Appendix A: [Working Together 2024](#)

Procedure to address staff relations difficulties	Pages 4-9
Template 1A Staff relations procedure: Stage 1 outcome	Page 10
Template 1B Staff relations procedure: Stage 2 outcome	Page 11
Template 1C Mediation agreement	Page 12
Procedure to address adult bullying/harassment	Pages 16-22
Template 2A Recording outcome at Stage 2 of the Bullying and Harassment Procedure	Page 23
Template 2B Mediation agreement	Page 24
Template 2C Appeal of the investigation process	Page 25
Template 2D Notification of appeal to investigator/s	Page 26
Grievance procedure	Pages 28-32

Appendix B: Stage 1 Suggested Prompts:

AGREED APPROACH FOR DEALING WITH CONFLICT Initiating the discussion

Mechanism for Conflict Resolution

Step 1: Identify the issue	• Having identified the issue, be aware of context and sensitive to demands being made on the other person. • Assess possible impact against your actual intent.
Step 2: Choose a good time and place	
Step 3: Bring the issue to the person	➢ Don't gossip about doing this, either before or after the conversation. ➢ Be careful about what is/isn't our/others' business. However, it is acceptable to seek advice from a trusted colleague who respects confidentiality.
Step 4: Broaching the issue	Possible examples of how to start.... ➢ Can we have a chat about something that is bothering me? ➢ Remember what happened yesterday, it's been on my mind... Could we have a chat about it? ➢ I am worried/ a bit concerned about something, can we discuss it? ➢ There is an issue I'd like to discuss.

<u>Responsibilities of the Speaker</u>	<u>Responsibilities of Listener/Responder</u>
Be prepared to ➔ Start with a positive comment e.g "thanks for taking the time to meet with me" or "I like working with you/ this team/class...." ➔ Use the "I" statement e.g. "when this happens...I feel uncomfortable" or "it upset me a bit when I heard you say" (don't blame). ➔ Be reasonable e.g. "I know you have a lot to do but I have noticed that" ➔ Stick with one issue and be specific ➔ Stay curious ... 'help me understand..'	Be prepared to ➔ Listen actively – do not interrupt ➔ Ask clarifying questions - 'do you mean'? ➔ Avoid becoming defensive ➔ Reflect back...'you are saying....am I right when I hear....?' ➔ Stay open to the fact that the other person has an issue and it has taken courage to address it.

→ Use Restorative Practice question – What happened vs Why etc	
<u>Joint Responsibilities of Speaker and Listener:</u>	
● Be open to the other person's point of view – “just because you think something is true, doesn't mean it's always true”. ● Separate the issue from the personality. ● Be willing to compromise – an incomplete resolution may be the only possibility or agree to disagree. ● Settle on a solution that allows for a ‘win-win’ on both sides - if one person leaves the discussion feeling very dissatisfied, the issue will continue to be an issue. ● Remember this might be the first time that the responder was made aware of the issue and they might need a little time to process what has been said. Sometimes it is best to say “maybe we should think about this and come back to it again.” ● Be aware of your body language. ● Be aware of your tone ● Remain respectful ● End with a positive comment. ● Depending on the issue , make a note of resolution and date it, and agree on a date to discuss it again. ● If no resolution can be found, the issue should be brought to the next in line - assistant principal, deputy principal, or principal, who will decide how best to proceed, depending on the context, and in consultation with the relevant parties.	

- If you decide not to raise an issue, it is your responsibility not to gossip about it or let it simmer/fester. This will show in your body language and will cause bad feeling so.. *DEAL WITH IT OR LET IT GO*

Appendix C: Educate Together Service Legal Agreements



Service Level Agreement between Educate Together as management body & Member Educate Together Primary Schools' Boards of Management, for the purposes of mediation and arbitration board costs.

Purpose of the Agreement

This service level agreement has been drawn up for the purposes of recovering costs for:

- Mediation- in accordance with the requirements of the *Working Together – Ag Obair Le Chéile (2024)* document.
- Arbitration boards – in accordance with the requirements of *Circular 44/2019* and Appeal Procedure in respect of Assistant Principal Posts and Deputy Principal Posts filled through internal recruitment.

Procedures of Mediation Agreement

It is proposed that if mediation is required at any stage of the procedures outlined in the *Working Together – Ag Obair Le Chéile (2024)* document, prior approval of both the INTO and Educate Together will be obtained.

- The chairperson of the board of management must contact Educate Together school support in writing with request, stating what *Working Together – Ag Obair Le Chéile (2024)* procedure and stage is ongoing.
- Educate Together will then contact the INTO to agree to mediation.
- Educate Together and INTO agree a mediator from the agreed panel of mediators.
- Mediation costs will be shared between INTO and Educate Together, each paying 50% costs.
- Educate Together will invoice the school for their 50% of mediation costs.

Procedures of Arbitration Board Agreement

If, as part of the appeals procedure, the chairperson of the board of management has been notified in writing that the appellant wishes to proceed to arbitration, the follow procedures will be followed:

- Within 5 school days, the chairperson of the board of management will contact Educate Together and the INTO Central Executive Committee (CEC) representative for the district.
- Educate Together will then contact the INTO to agree on the arbitration panel membership – One Educate Together representative, one INTO representative and an independent chairperson.
- Expenses incurred by the arbitration board will be shared between INTO and Educate Together, each paying 50% costs.
- Educate Together will invoice the school for their 50% of costs.

Parties to the Agreement

This service level agreement is entered into between the management body Educate Together, and member Educate Together primary schools' boards of management.

Date of Agreement

This agreement applies from 27th January 2025. The agreement will be reviewed annually.

Role of Educate Together and school boards of management

The role of Educate Together is to work with INTO to:

- agree a mediator or an arbitration panel with the INTO
- arrange payment for:
 - o services as required as part of the *Working Together – Ag Obair Le Cheile (2024)* procedures, and
 - o arbitration board expenses that are incurred as part of appeal procedures for internal recruitment of Assistant Principals and Deputy Principals as outlined in Circular 44/2019.

The role of a member school board of management in this agreement is to ensure that:

- Prior approval is sought before engaging mediation services as part of *Working Together – Ag Obair Le Cheile (2024)* procedures, or
- Educate Together is contacted within five school days in relation to arbitration board appointments as part of appeal procedures for internal recruitment of Assistant Principals and Deputy Principals as outlined in Circular 44/2019
- and that invoices for 50% of costs incurred are paid on time.

Exclusions:

This agreement does not apply to mediation services engaged by school boards of management that are separate to the *Working Together – Ag Obair Le Cheile (2024)* procedures.

Assurance requirements

Educate Together confirms that it:

1. Will contact the INTO to agree mediation if prior approval is received in writing from chairperson of board of management.
2. Will contact the INTO to agree arbitration board representatives, once a request is received from a board of management.
3. Will arrange payment of the upfront 50% of mediation/arbitration board costs to INTO on behalf of the school board.
4. Has appropriate procedures in place to ensure that invoices will issue to the school within one month to recoup this 50% of mediation costs.

The school board of management confirms that it:

1. Will seek advance approval for mediation services or appointment of arbitration board from Educate Together.
2. Will pay the invoice received from Educate Together for 50% of mediation service/arbitration board costs.

Signature:

Name: Emer Nowlan

Role: CEO

Educate Together

Date:

Chairperson
[SCHOOL NAME]

Appendix D: Circular 40/97 Assaults on Teachers and School Employees
<https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-education/circulars/assaults-on-teachersschool-employees/>