



## **Anti-bullying and Anti-harassment Policy**

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## **1. Introduction**

We believe that having a culture that is diverse, equitable and inclusive is core to everything that we strive to achieve and to the organisational environment we wish to protect. We do a lot to support our inclusive culture and you can read more about this on our school website and in our ALN policy.

One key to protecting our culture and our people is seeking to eradicate bullying or harassment at work. This policy supports this aim by setting out the steps we will take to investigate and deal with complaints of bullying or harassment, and how we support those affected.

The policy accompanies our Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) policy.

This policy does not form part of your contract of employment and we reserve the right to amend or withdraw it at any time.

## **2. Scope**

This policy applies to all employees. School Governors are bound by the employment legislation detailed in this policy and have the discretion to adopt this policy within their respective schools.

It includes workers, contractors, volunteers, interns and apprentices. The policy also relates to job applicants and is relevant to all stages of the employment relationship. The policy also applies to bullying or harassment by third parties.

## **3. Our commitment to you**

We are committed to taking proactive measures to prevent all forms of bullying and harassment, including sexual harassment, of our workers by:

- ensuring all new starters attend equality, diversity and inclusion training and anti-bullying and anti-harassment training, as part of their onboarding programme;
- requiring all employees to attend regular equality, diversity and inclusion training and anti-bullying and anti-harassment training as part of our mandatory training programme;
- providing additional training for line managers to ensure that they understand how to implement this policy effectively and their role in preventing and stopping bullying and harassment from occurring in the workplace and by third parties that you may have contact with;
- encouraging individuals to support our equality, diversity and inclusion, and anti-bullying and anti-harassment, initiatives by attending events and workshops organised by the [employee resource

groups/workstreams/support groups] to educate themselves on the challenges faced by others and how to help alleviate these in the workplace;

- monitoring our workplace culture through anonymous surveys, exit interviews, one-to-one conversations, return-to-work meetings and employee resource groups to identify and address any issues;
- undertaking regular risk assessments to determine reasonable measures that can be implemented to minimise the risk of exposure to sexual harassment in the workplace and by third parties that you may have contact; and
- ensuring that our zero approach to all forms of discrimination, and bullying and harassment, is communicated to all workers and third parties that you may have contact with.

We believe that a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion not only benefits our organisation but supports wellbeing and enables our people to work better because they can be themselves and feel that they belong.

We are committed to providing a safe and respectful workplace and promoting a working environment based on dignity and trust, and one that is free from discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation.

A toxic workplace culture, where bullying or harassment is tolerated, is harmful to the wellbeing of the workforce as well as the wider organisation.

We therefore adopt a zero-tolerance approach to instances of bullying or harassment. This includes all forms of sexual harassment.

#### **4. Your responsibility**

We expect you, and every one of our people, to take personal responsibility for observing, upholding, promoting and applying this policy. Whatever your job is, this is part of your role.

Any dealings you have with third parties, including customers, suppliers, contractors, agency staff and consultants, must be free from discrimination, harassment, victimisation or bullying. For more information on discrimination and victimisation, please refer to our Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) policy.

If any of our people is found to have committed, authorised or condoned an act of bullying or harassment, we will take action against them (for those to whom it applies) under our Disciplinary procedure, up to and including dismissal.

There is no justifiable reason to bully or harass someone else. For example, observing a particular religion is not a legitimate reason for bullying or harassing a colleague because of their sexual orientation. Even if you do not intend to bully or harass someone else, this does not legitimise your behaviour as it is the impact on the recipient that is important.

You should be aware that you can be personally liable for harassment.

If you experience bullying or harassment, we encourage you to speak up without delay and to ask for appropriate support.

## **5. Who is protected from harassment**

The Equality Act 2010 prohibits discrimination because of certain protected characteristics. These are:

- disability;
- sex;
- gender reassignment;
- marital or civil partnership status;
- race;
- religion or belief;
- sexual orientation; and
- age.

Although pregnancy and maternity and marriage and civil partnership are not specifically protected under the legal provisions on harassment, we consider harassment on any ground to be unacceptable.

## **6. Meaning of harassment**

Harassment is unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic that has the purpose or effect of:

- violating someone else's dignity; or
- creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for someone else.

Harassment can occur where someone perceives another person to have a protected characteristic, for example a perception that someone is transgender even if they are not.

Harassment can also arise by association, where someone is harassed because they are associated with someone with a protected characteristic, for example having a family member of a particular religion.

### *Examples of harassment*

Harassment can occur in many forms, and can take place either at work, outside work, in person, or online. While this is not an exhaustive list, examples include:

- "banter", jokes, taunts or insults that are sexist, racist, ageist, transphobic, homophobic or derogatory against any other protected characteristic;
- unwanted physical behaviour, for example, pushing or grabbing;
- excluding someone from a conversation or a social event or marginalising them from the group;
- derogatory comments about pregnancy, maternity leave or IVF treatment;
- mimicking or making fun of someone's disability;
- derogatory or offensive comments about religion;
- unwelcome comments about someone's appearance or the way they dress that is related to a protected characteristic;
- "outing" (ie revealing their sexual orientation against their wishes), or threatening to "out", someone;
- consistently using the wrong names and pronouns following the transition of a person's gender identity;
- displaying images that are racially offensive; and
- excluding or making derogatory comments about someone because of a perceived protected characteristic, or because they are associated with someone with a protected characteristic.

## **7. Meaning of sexual harassment**

Harassment may be sexual in nature. The law defines sexual harassment as:

- conduct of a sexual nature that has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment; and
- less favourable treatment related to sex or gender reassignment that occurs because of a rejection of, or submission to, sexual conduct.

Employers are legally obliged to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of their workers in the course of their employment and by third parties.

### *Examples of sexual harassment*

Sexual harassment can occur in many forms, and can take place either at work, outside work, in person, or online. While this is not an exhaustive list, examples include:

- physical conduct of a sexual nature, unwelcome physical contact or intimidation;
- persistent suggestions to meet up socially after a person has made clear that they do not welcome such suggestions;

- showing or sending offensive or pornographic material by any means (eg by text, video clip, email or by posting on the internet or social media);
- unwelcome sexual advances, propositions, suggestive remarks, or gender-related insults;
- offensive comments about appearance or dress, innuendo or lewd comments;
- leering, whistling or making sexually suggestive gestures; and
- gossip and speculation about someone's sexual orientation or transgender status, including spreading malicious rumours.

## 8. Bullying

There is no legal definition of bullying. However, we regard it as conduct that is offensive, intimidating, malicious, insulting, or an abuse or misuse of power, and usually persistent, that has the effect of undermining, humiliating or injuring the recipient.

Bullying can be physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct. It is not necessarily face to face and can be done by email, phone calls, online (cyber-bullying) or on social media. Bullying may occur at work or outside work.

If the bullying relates to a person's protected characteristic, it may also constitute harassment and, therefore, will be unlawful (see Harassment).

### *Examples of bullying*

While this is not an exhaustive list, bullying may include:

- physical, verbal or psychological threats;
- excessive levels of supervision; and
- inappropriate and derogatory remarks about a person's performance.

It is important to understand that legitimate, reasonable and constructive criticism of a person's performance or behaviour, or reasonable instructions given to people in the course of their employment, will not of themselves amount to bullying.

## 9. Microaggressions

Microaggressions - sometimes called micro-incivilities - are statements, actions, or incidents that are regarded as indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalised group such as a racial or ethnic minority. They are sometimes referred to as "death by a thousand cuts". Microaggressions generally take one of three forms:

- **Micro-assaults:** Conscious and obvious insults made verbally or non-verbally to a marginalised individual or group, for example directing limp-wristed hand gestures towards a gay colleague and saying "It's just a joke".

- **Micro-insults:** Unintentionally insensitive remarks or assumptions based on stereotypes, for example saying to a person with a disability "You don't look disabled to me".
- **Micro-invalidations:** Where a person denies, or seeks to cancel, the feelings and lived experiences of a marginalised individual or group, for example a white person saying "I don't think the UK has a problem with racism - some people are just too sensitive".

Serious microaggressions can amount to unlawful harassment, bullying or discrimination but even less serious microaggressions can negatively impact the health and wellbeing of the person experiencing them.

## 10. What to do if you are being bullied or harassed

### Informal route

#### *Bully/harasser is a colleague*

If you feel able to, you may decide to raise the issue with the individual themselves, to make clear that their behaviour is not welcome and to ask them to stop. They may not be aware that their behaviour is offending you.

Alternatively, if you do not feel up to speaking directly to the individual, you may consider asking your manager, a colleague, or HR for support.

You may or may not want them to talk to the individual on your behalf and, where possible, we will respect your wishes. However, if the welfare or safety of you or others is at risk or where your allegations are particularly serious, we may have to approach the individual and instigate a formal investigation. In such a case we will, where possible, discuss this with you first.

If you would prefer not to discuss the issue with anyone at work, help and support is also available through our employee assistance programme (EAP). You can use our EAP to speak to an independent adviser on a confidential basis about any issue that is troubling you. See our [HR Hub](#) for details of how to access our EAP.

#### *Bully/harasser is a third party*

Bullying and harassment by third parties, such as customers, clients, suppliers and/or contractors, will not be tolerated.

If you are experiencing bullying or harassment by a third party, we encourage you to report this to your manager or the HR team without delay so that they can advise and support you on the best course of action.

### Formal route

If you are not happy with the outcome of an informal process, or if you feel it is not appropriate to approach the issue informally, you may decide to raise it formally.

To make a formal complaint, you should discuss this first with your line manager. If your complaint is about your line manager, you should raise this with their manager.

If for any reason you are unable to approach your line manager or a more senior manager, you can speak to [the HR department].

You can raise a formal complaint of bullying or harassment under our Grievance procedure or Whistleblowing policy.

Under these formal procedures, we will usually:

- ask you to set out your complaint in writing and include as much detail as possible, for example the alleged bully/harasser's name, the nature of the bullying/harassment, the dates of the alleged acts of bullying/harassment, names of any witnesses, and details of any action taken to address the matter so far;
- hold a meeting with the alleged bully/harasser to ascertain their response to the allegations;
- carry out further investigations where necessary, including interviewing potential witnesses who we will instruct to keep the matter confidential;
- invite you to a meeting to discuss your complaint in full and where you will have the right to be accompanied by a colleague or trade union representative;
- hold a meeting with you to enable us to ask you further questions in light of any information we have gathered from the alleged bully/harasser and/or witnesses;
- consider all the evidence in full and make a decision; and
- inform you of our decision and, if we uphold the complaint, instigate disciplinary action up to and including dismissal against the bully/harasser.

We will investigate fully every formal complaint in an objective and confidential way, while also ensuring that we respect your rights as well as the rights of the alleged bully/harasser.

We will use every effort to complete an investigation into bullying or harassment as quickly as possible.

Where the alleged bully/harasser is a third party, we may need to adjust the procedure under this policy to ensure we conduct appropriate investigations and we will discuss this with you.

## **11. Support for those affected or involved**

We understand that anyone affected by, or involved with, a complaint of bullying or harassment may feel anxious or upset and we will do what we can to support you.

If you feel you cannot continue to work in close contact with the alleged bully/harasser, we will consider seriously any requested changes to your working arrangements during our investigation into the matter.

For emotional support, you can access free, confidential counselling from our EAP.

Anyone who complains or takes part in good faith in a bullying or harassment investigation must not suffer any form of detrimental treatment or victimisation. If you feel you have suffered such victimisation, please inform your line manager or your HR contact as soon as possible.

Regardless of the outcome of your complaint, we will consider carefully how to best approach any ongoing working relationship between you and the individual concerned, including any third party. For example, depending on the specific circumstances, we may consider amending the job duties, location or reporting lines of either you or the other person. Alternatively, we may decide workplace mediation or counselling is appropriate.

### **Sensitivity and confidentiality**

Anyone involved with an informal or formal complaint about bullying or harassment, including witnesses, must keep the matter strictly confidential and act with appropriate sensitivity to all parties.

If you are found to have breached confidentiality or acted without due care or sensitivity in a case of bullying or harassment, we may take disciplinary action against you up to and including dismissal.

### **12. Consequences of breaching this policy**

If, following a formal investigation, we find that you have committed, authorised or condoned an act of bullying or harassment, we will deal with the issue as a possible case of misconduct or gross misconduct.

We may take disciplinary action against you, up to and including dismissal. You should be aware that any aggravating factors, such as abuse of power over a more junior colleague, will be considered in deciding what disciplinary action to take.

Anyone who complains or takes part in good faith in a bullying or harassment investigation must not suffer any form of detrimental treatment or victimisation. If we find that you have victimised anyone in this way, we will instigate disciplinary action against you

### **13. Record-keeping**

We process personal data collected in relation to bullying or harassment complaints in accordance with our data protection policy. In particular, data collected in relation to the investigation of bullying or harassment complaints is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of responding to the complaints and conducting an investigation. You should immediately report any inappropriate access or disclosure of employee data in accordance with our Data protection policy as this constitutes a data protection breach. It may also constitute a disciplinary offence, which we will deal with under our disciplinary procedure.

### **14. Monitoring and review**

This policy is reviewed [annually] and, if necessary, amended to ensure that it remains effective. We analyse data around allegations of bullying or harassment (in compliance with our data protection obligations) on an ongoing basis to assess the impact of this policy and our wider equality, diversity, and inclusion strategy.

## Appendix

**Anti-harassment laws:** The Equality Act 2010 prohibits harassment against workers and job applicants because of certain protected characteristic. Under the Act, the protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. While the harassment provisions do not apply to the protected characteristic of pregnancy and maternity, cases of harassment in relation to pregnancy and maternity may be brought as sex-related harassment claims.

**Third-party harassment:** There are no specific provisions in the Equality Act 2010 to cover third-party harassment. However, employees who have been subjected to harassment by a third party may still be able to bring a claim against their employer, for example for constructive dismissal, if the employee resigns and claims that the employer's failure to protect them amounts to a breach of contract. An employer could also be liable for negligence if the employee suffered mental and/or physical injury because of harassment by a third party.

**The preventative duty:** On 26 October 2024, the new Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023 will come into force. The Act introduces a new duty on employers to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of their workers "in the course of their employment". This means that employers will need to take reasonable proactive measures to prevent sexual harassment from occurring in the workplace. The breadth of the wording in the Act - ie that employers are required to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment against staff "in the course of their employment" - means that the duty also includes taking steps to prevent sexual harassment by third parties, such as clients and customers. This is confirmed in the EHRC's guidance on sexual harassment and harassment at work, which states that "the preventative duty includes prevention of sexual harassment by third parties" and "if an employer does not take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of their workers by third parties, the preventative duty will be breached". The result is that the EHRC may enforce a standalone breach of the duty as an unlawful act under its existing enforcement powers. This policy has been updated to include examples of prevention measures that could be taken by an employer to comply with this new preventative duty (see Our commitment to you section). These measures are provided as examples only and should be adapted as appropriate.

**Equality, diversity and inclusion:** We provide a separate Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) policy that can be used in conjunction with this policy to set out the

organisation's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion and the general framework within which issues of bullying and harassment will be tackled.

**Policy backed up by action:** An anti-harassment and anti-bullying policy will not be a sufficient demonstration of the employer's commitment to eradicating this type of behaviour. It must be backed up by proactive employment practices that reflect a zero-tolerance approach.

**Regular reviews:** Employers must review regularly their anti-harassment and anti-bullying policy to monitor its effectiveness.